ISO Certification Audit Guidance

Introduction

This guidance is for organisations who have arranged to complete a certification audit and provides some information about the audit and certification process. In general terms an audit is a check by an independent 3rd party, the auditor, that management systems in place are effective and that ISO and other requirements are being met. The audit is intended to be a useful process and the auditor is not there to pick faults or try to find issues and non-conformances, they are looking for evidence of compliance.

To complete the audit successfully the auditor will require your co-operation and participation and this guidance provides some additional information about the audit process to assist with this.

Unless specific arrangements have been made for a pre-audit or a separate stage 1 audit the audit will be a combined stage 1 and stage 2 audit which means the audit will include a review of management system documentation and supporting evidence to confirm that the management systems reflect actual operations and that effectively managed and meeting all requirements. A pre-audit review of documentation can be completed if required and at no additional charge – please contact us to arrange this.

Audit preparation – in advance of the audit

In advance of the audit there may be some arrangements made with regards file sharing and pre-audit review of documentation or evidence as required. If no advance arrangements have been made you can prepare for the audit by checking that all the requirements as detailed in the pre-audit checklist have been completed.

Where an audit is being completed remotely, we will be in touch in advance of the audit to make arrangements to complete the remote audit including file sharing and video communication arrangements.

For onsite audits please also let us know if there are any site-specific instructions, personal protective equipment requirements or procedures our audit team need to be aware of.

Please also ensure audit fees are paid in advance of the audit - as stated in our terms it is a requirement that audit fees are paid in advance of the audit. This is common in all auditing and is required as it demonstrates that the audit outcome is not in any way prejudiced by payment or withholding of payment.

Audit preparation –management systems

Prior to booking the certification audit it is necessary to make sure that management systems are in place and compliant with the requirements of the relevant ISO standard(s).

Once management systems are fully developed there are various checklists and guidance documents available to assist with checking that ready for the certification audit or alternatively an external consultant can be engaged to assist with setup of management systems and completion of checks to ensure everything is ready for the audit. Please contact us if you require support or assistance.

It is a good idea to have the key management system documents and other key evidence that the auditor will need to review prepared and ready for the audit either electronically or in an evidence folder. Using an evidence folder filing structure can also facilitate this and since all of the folders are relevant to the audit making sure that relevant and up to date files are in each folder will ensure that everything is ready for the audit.

An example Integrated Management System (IMS) / Evidence folder structure is as follows;

1. **Management System Documentation**
2. **Forms, Policies and Procedures**
3. **Management Review and Objectives**
4. **Issues, Actions and Improvements**
5. **Customer Feedback**
6. **Audits, Risk Assessments and Monitoring**
7. **Key Suppliers**
8. **Equipment and Premises**
9. **Staff Competency and Training**
10. **Other evidence and Records**

This evidence folder structure includes a filing structure for the permanent storage of key IMS files and also a temporary evidence folder which is just populated with files for the audit and can be used to collect together other records and evidence that isn't normally held within this IMS folder structure such as records from recently completed jobs and other operational records that may need to be reviewed on the day of the audit.

The audit process and schedule

The actual process followed on the day of the audit will depend on the audit type, the preferred approach of the auditor and your own requirements as wherever possible the auditor will endeavour to complete the audit with minimal disruption or distraction from your ongoing operational activities.

The planned approach and schedule will be agreed with the auditor but all audits will require certain key activities to be completed – **Ref.** Appendix i – Example Audit Plan

Audit objectives - all certification audits will have the following objectives and criteria:

- To assess the extent that the management system conforms with the requirements of the standard(s)
- To assess the effectiveness and suitability of the management system and documentation and to determine if following own documented procedures
- To review that the operations covered by the scope of the audit are meeting all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements

This means that the auditor will be checking that effective management systems are in place, that the management systems are correct and all procedures are being followed and also that meeting all applicable requirements. Auditing is a sampling process; the auditor will need to see evidence that procedures are being followed and will require your assistance with providing access to suitable evidence, for example if the auditor is reviewing the processes for staff training and management of competence the auditor will need to see training records or systems for logging and managing staff competence.

Audit report and findings

The audit report is structured to facilitate effective and efficient auditing of management systems and an overview of the report structure is available; **Ref.** Appendix ii – Audit Report Structure

Where issues are identified during the audit these will be communicated to you by the auditor as they are identified to allow review and response to the issue before it is raised as a finding in the report.

Findings including observations and non-conformances that are added to the report will include an explanation of why they have been raised and any response or follow up required. Where significant non-conformance(s) have been identified it may be necessary for a response or follow up before certification is issued and details of how to respond will be included with the report.

Personal data – wherever possible we will endeavour to avoid collecting personal data and where it is not required it will not be logged in the report. Names will be redacted to just detail initials in the report.

ISO Certification

After the audit the auditor will submit the completed report and recommendations and once the report has been reviewed and approved, assuming the recommendation was for certification, the report and ISO certificate(s) will be issued. This is usually completed within a few working days but may take longer if additional information or a response has been requested.

Once certification has been confirmed your company can then use the relevant ISO certified logos to demonstrate that meeting the requirements of the ISO standard(s) and that have completed a certification audit with an independent 3rd party audit.

ISO certification logos are available online here: **ISO Certification Logos**

Appendix i – Example Audit Plan

The actual audit schedule and plan for the audit will be agreed with the auditor and will include the following activities;

Activity	Details
Opening Meeting	This is when the actual audit plan and schedule can be discussed and agreed as well as making sure the auditor is made aware of any special requirements, site rules or safety procedures. Auditor will confirm the following; • Distribution / confidentiality statement • Audit objectives and criteria • Scope of certification & company details held all correct • Review / closure of any previous findings
Review of Management Systems	Depending on the ISO standards covered by the audit there will be some documentation requirements and the auditor will need to review all relevant documentation. • Management system manual / procedures • Relevant policies i.e. quality policy if ISO 9001 audit • Internal audit documentation and audit schedule • Management review and objectives • Other relevant company documentation
Lunch	Time and duration to be agreed with the auditor
Site Tour	Where an audit is being completed onsite the auditor may need to complete a site tour to check various relevant activities such as; • Equipment and premises • Physical security (ISO 27001 audits) • Emergency preparedness (ISO 14001 audits) • Health and safety arrangements (ISO 45001 audits) Please make necessary arrangements for the site tour including providing the auditor with a site induction where required.
Review of Operational Evidence	As well as looking at evidence viewed during the site tour there may be some other evidence the auditor may need to review and this may include evidence such as; • Examples of completed jobs / projects • Inspection / maintenance / calibration records • Training records • Waste management documentation The auditor will let you know what operational evidence they need to see during the course of the audit.
Audit Report Writing	As well as reviewing evidence the auditor will require some time to collate everything and write the report.
Closing Meeting	At the closing meeting the auditor will summarise the audit findings and let you know their recommendation. This will also be an opportunity to review and discuss any findings raised.

Appendix ii – Audit Report Structure

Our audit report template is structured to facilitate effective and efficient auditing of the main activities of your management system and is structured as follows;

General Requirements

General requirements section includes a review of overall management system documentation and management of documented information.

Also review of key areas for ISO compliance such as documented scope, context and interaction of processes.

Interested parties and & legal, contractual and regulatory obligations will also be reviewed.

ISO clauses covered in this section;

- **4.1 Understanding the organization and its context**
- **4.2 Understanding the needs and expectation of interested parties**
- **4.3 Determining the scope of the management system**
- **4.4 Management system and its processes**
- **ISO 14001 - 6.1.3 Compliance obligations**
- **ISO 45001 – 6.1.3 Determination of legal requirements and other requirements**
- **7.5 Documented Information**

Checks completed;

Management System Documentation suitable for the organisation and effectively managed
All company documentation and records effectively managed
Scope & Internal / External Context documented and appropriate
Interested parties (internal and external) needs and expectations identified and appropriate
Contractual and regulatory obligations considered and being met

Leadership, Commitment and Planning

Review of company policies and leadership and commitment (roles and responsibilities).

Management review and setting of suitable objectives.

Planning and actions to address risks and opportunities.

ISO clauses covered in this section;

- 5.1 Leadership and Commitment
- 5.2 Policy
- 5.3 Organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities
- 6.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities
- 6.2 Objectives and planning to achieve them
- 9.3 Management review

Checks completed;

Leadership and commitment requirements satisfactorily evidenced
Suitable Policies prepared and available to interested parties
Organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities clearly defined
Management review completed as required, documented and covering all required areas
Measurable objectives set, communicated, monitored and planning to achieve objectives
Risks and opportunities identified and actions taken to address these as required

Resource Management and Support

Resource management and support including management of staff training and competency, management of equipment and premises and communications.

ISO clauses covered in this section;

- 7.1 Resources
- 7.2 Competence
- 7.3 Awareness
- 7.4 Communication

Checks completed;

Staff training, awareness and competence managed effectively
Equipment and premises managed effectively including calibration (if applicable)
Effective communications in place for internal and external communications

Operational Processes

Review of operational processes within the organisation including control of enquiries & sales, control of purchasing and outsourced services, control of operations, management of change, variations and design.

Some of these activities may only be reviewed for ISO 9001 compliance but may also be relevant in some form for other standards also. Design is only applicable for ISO 9001 and only if design has been included in the audit scope.

ISO clauses covered in this section;

- **8.1 Operational planning and control**
- **ISO 9001 - 6.3 Planning of changes**
- **ISO 9001 - 8.2 Requirements for products and services**
- **ISO 9001 - 8.3 Design and development of products and services**
- **ISO 9001 - 8.4 Control of externally provided processes, products and services**
- **ISO 9001 - 8.5 Production and service provision**
- **ISO 9001 - 8.6 Release of products and services**

Checks completed;

Enquiries and sales process managed effectively (if applicable)

Purchasing and control of outsourced services managed effectively
Operational activities managed effectively
Design and management of variations managed effectively (if applicable)

Monitoring, Evaluation and Improvement

Review of Monitoring, measuring, analysis and evaluation including Customer Satisfaction, Control of Non-conforming Outputs, Nonconformity and corrective action, Management System Audits and Continual Improvement.

Customer satisfaction is a key component in ISO 9001 but is only applicable for this standard.

Control of nonconforming outputs is also specific to ISO 9001 but can be reviewed in conjunction with appraisal of nonconformity and corrective action which applies to all standards.

ISO clauses covered in this section;

ISO 9001 - 8.7 Control of nonconforming outputs
9.1 Monitoring, measuring, analysis and (ISO 45001 - performance) evaluation
ISO 9001 - 9.1.2 Customer satisfaction
9.2 Internal Audit
10. Improvement
10.2 Nonconformity and corrective action
10.3 Continual improvement

Checks completed;

Effective systems in place to monitor, collect and analyse feedback from customers (if applicable)
Effective systems in place for dealing with non-conforming outputs
Effective management of non-conformities, corrective action and review of issues
Audits planned, managed and completed effectively and documentation available
Evidence of continual improvement and adequate mechanisms in place to achieve this

Standard / Audit Specific Sections

Various additional sections will then be added as required which are specific to the standards and activities being audited such as;

- ISO 14001 Environmental Management
- ISO 45001 Health & Safety Management
- ISO 27001 Information Security
- ISO 22301 Business Continuity