Springboard QMS Ltd

ISO 9001:2015 – FAQ

What is ISO 9001:2015 certification?

ISO 9001:2015 is an internationally recognised standard that is attained by an organisation that can demonstrate that its products and services meet customer and regulatory requirements and that it has the key objective of improving customer satisfaction. The 2015 iteration is the most recent version of the 9001 standard. The first version was published as a standard in 1987.

Who can be ISO 9001 certified?

Any organisation can become ISO 9001 certified, from a one-person operation to a multi-national operating in any sector.

Why should I get ISO 9001 certification?

Having the certification benefits a business in several ways including:

- It will differentiate you from your competitors by demonstrating your commitment to quality.
- It assures your prospects and customers that your processes are of a high standard and are constantly being improved.
- It will enable you to tender for more contracts because being certified is often required by organisations and Government bodies seeking suppliers.
- It enables you to become better at what you do by a formalised process of self-improvement.
- It is globally recognised as a standard of excellence.

How do I get ISO 9001 certification?

The simple answer is that your business will need to comply with the requirements of the standard. This entails ensuring your documented processes cover certain key business functions. Most businesses will already have documented processes in place covering processes such as the organisations structure, its objectives, training, how it delivers its products and services and what it does to minimise errors. The process of certification simply takes you through what is essentially a gap analysis to ensure these processes cover off all the essentials required by the standard.

Can I get a copy of the ISO 9001:2015 standard?

The ISO 9001:2015 standard is available for download for a fee from several suppliers on the internet, normally in the form of a PDF document.

What are the stages to becoming certified?

There are essentially three stages on the road to gaining and maintaining certification:

- Ensuring your internal processes comply with the requirements of the standard. Once completed this documentation will form what is known as a Quality Management System or QMS.
- Appointing a certification body who will audit you to ensure you comply. There are several certification bodies such as BSI and Lloyds Register. Some are UKAS accredited and some are not. There are normally two audits; a Stage 1 – which is a bit like a pre-MOT check to ensure you have a suitable QMS in place, and a Stage 2 – which is an in-depth analysis of your QMS. When you pass the Stage 2 audit you will be awarded the certification.
- Once certified your chosen certification body will then visit you annually to ensure you are maintaining the required QMS.

What if my business fails an ISO audit?

The Stage 1 audit will pick up any major gaps in your QMS and these will be documented, and you will be given time to rectify any problems. The Stage 2 audit is much more in-depth, and the auditor may leave you with issues you need to rectify before awarding you certification. Or you may pass first time.

Once you are certified the annual recurring audit will document any issues you need to rectify to maintain your certification.

Can I lose my ISO certification?

Yes, if you fail to maintain your QMS as required by the standard.

How will anyone know that my business has ISO 9001 certification?

You can put the ISO logo on your stationary, web site and so forth. The logo will be supplied by your certification body.

How long does the process take?

This very much depends on the state of your existing documentation, what expert help you enlist and the effort your business puts into creating the QMS. It can be a matter of a few weeks for an SME that already has its processes reasonably well documented. The time between a Stage 1 and a Stage 2 audit is usually about a month.

What are the costs involved?

There are several costs involved, these include:

- The cost of buying the standard
- The person hours required in creating your internal QMS
- The cost of employing a consultant like Springboard QMS
- The cost of engaging the certification body

Will the process result in folders of paperwork we will never use again?

No. We will work with you to ensure the QMS you put in place will be proportionate to the size and function of your organisation and that it will be useful to you. There is no point in making the QMS any more complex or voluminous than is required. In fact, a complex QMS is a great way to fail an audit.

My quality management is complete: when should I apply for an audit?

Springboard QMS recommends that you run the QMS for a few months to let it 'bed in' before you apply for certification. This is so you can demonstrate to the certification body that it is a working system.

Will my quality management change over time?

Yes. The focus of ISO 9001 is one of self-improvement. This will mean changes to your processes and as such changes to the QMS. Any such changes are managed through a formal framework within the standard.

How will Springboard QMS help me?

Springboard QMS will work with you to ensure your QMS complies with the requirements of the standard. As we have a deep understanding of the needs of the standard this will not only speed up the process of building a compliant QMS, but our guidance will ensure you focus your efforts in areas that will deliver the most benefit. This will result in not only more rapid certification but a QMS that is proportionate and useful to you every day. It is easy for a business to 'overthink' its QMS, we can ensure you remain focused on the important issues.

As qualified ISO 9001 auditors we will audit you before your certification body does to ensure any gaps are identified prior to your Stage 1 or 2 audit.

Once certified we can provide a regular audit service to ensure you remain compliant.

Springboard QMS also has a suite of template documents that mean you don't start from a blank piece of paper. A significant amount of time can be consumed producing the required plans and registers required by the standard. Using our templates will enable you to rapidly create your QMS using proven formats.

Do I have to employ a consultancy like Springboard QMS?

No. If you have a person in your organisation who is knowledgeable about the standard you can simply begin putting the QMS in place. However, if you don't possess such knowledge internally the time taken to get a person up to speed on the standard will likely be greater than the cost of employing a consultant.

My business is already certified to ISO 9001:2015: can Springboard QMS provide an independent audit service?

Yes. We can provide an independent auditor who will work with you to ensure you remain compliant with the requirements of the standard. The frequency of these 'internal' audits is up to you but you must carry them out and act on the results of them. We can offer advice on the frequency and scope of these audits.

Will Springboard QMS certify my organisation?

No. Springboard QMS recommends the use of a UKAS accredited certification body. UKAS operates under a Memorandum of Understanding with the UK Government, through the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. There are non-UKAS accredited bodies you can use if you chose to do so.