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Environmental management systems — Requirements with guidance for use

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular, the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO document should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

ISO draws attention to the possibility that the implementation of this document may involve the use of (a) patent(s). ISO takes no position concerning the evidence, validity or applicability of any claimed patent rights in respect thereof. As of the date of publication of this document, ISO had not received notice of (a) patent(s) which may be required to implement this document. However, implementers are cautioned that this may not represent the latest information, which may be obtained from the patent database available at www.iso.org/patents. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

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For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), see www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 207, *Environmental management*, Subcommittee SC 1, *Environmental management systems*, in collaboration with the European Committee for Standardization (CEN) Technical Committee, in accordance with the Agreement on technical cooperation between ISO and CEN (Vienna Agreement).

This fourth edition cancels and replaces the third edition (ISO 14001:2015), which has been technically revised. It also replaces the Amendment ISO 14001:2015/Amd 1:2024.

The main changes are as follows:

— incorporation of latest ISO requirements for management system standards as appropriate;

— clarification of requirements associated with key topics.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

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Introduction

0.1 Background

Achieving a balance between the environment, society and the economy is considered essential to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Sustainable development as a goal is achieved by balancing the three pillars of sustainability.

Societal expectations for sustainable development, transparency and accountability have evolved with increasingly stringent legislation and growing pressures on the environment from pollution, inefficient use of resources, improper waste management, climate change, degradation of ecosystems and loss of biodiversity. Undermining the environment can carry financial, social and business consequences, not just environmental implications.

These expectations have led organizations to adopt a systematic approach to environmental management by implementing environmental management systems with the aim of contributing to the environmental pillar of sustainability. As a result, organizations are better positioned to respond to the needs and expectations of interested parties and to meet the organization's compliance obligations.

0.2 Aim of an environmental management system

This document provides organizations with a framework to protect the environment and respond to changing environmental conditions in balance with socio-economic needs. It specifies requirements that enable an organization to achieve the intended outcomes it sets for its environmental management system.

A systematic approach to environmental management provides top management with information to build success over the long term and create options for contributing to sustainable development by:

— protecting the environment through preventing or mitigating adverse environmental impacts;

— mitigating the potential adverse effect of environmental conditions on the organization;

— assisting the organization to meet its compliance obligations;

— enhancing environmental performance;

— controlling or influencing the way the organization's products and services are designed, manufactured, distributed, consumed and disposed of by using a life cycle perspective that prevents adverse environmental impacts from being unintentionally shifted elsewhere within the life cycle;

— achieving financial and operational benefits that result from implementing environmentally sound alternatives that strengthen the organization's market position;

— communicating environmental information to relevant interested parties.

0.3 Success factors

The success of an environmental management system depends on commitment from all levels and functions of the organization, led by top management. Organizations can leverage opportunities to prevent or mitigate adverse environmental impacts and enhance beneficial environmental impacts, particularly those with strategic and competitive advantages. Top management can effectively address its risks and opportunities by integrating environmental management into the organization's business processes, strategic direction and decision-making, aligning them with other business priorities, and incorporating environmental governance into its overall management system. Demonstration of successful implementation of this document can be used to assure interested parties that an effective environmental management system is in place. Adoption of the requirements in this document, however, will not in itself guarantee optimal environmental outcomes.

Application of the requirements in this document can differ from one organization to another due to the context of the organization. Two organizations can carry out similar activities but can have different compliance obligations, commitments in their environmental policy, environmental technologies and environmental performance goals, yet both can conform to the requirements of this document.

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The level of detail and complexity of the environmental management system will vary depending on the context of the organization, the scope of its environmental management system, its compliance obligations, and the nature of its activities, products and services, including its environmental aspects and associated environmental impacts.

0.4 Plan-Do-Check-Act model

The basis for the approach underlying an environmental management system is founded on the concept of Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA). The PDCA model provides an iterative process used by organizations to achieve continual improvement. It can be applied to an environmental management system and to each of its individual elements. It is briefly described as follows:

— Plan: Establish environmental objectives and processes necessary to deliver results in accordance with the organization's environmental policy.

— Do: Implement the processes as planned.

— Check: Monitor and measure processes against the environmental policy, including its commitments, environmental objectives and operating criteria, and report the results.

— Act: Take actions to continually improve.

Figure 1 shows how the framework used in this document can be integrated into a PDCA model, which can help new and existing users to understand the importance of a systems approach.

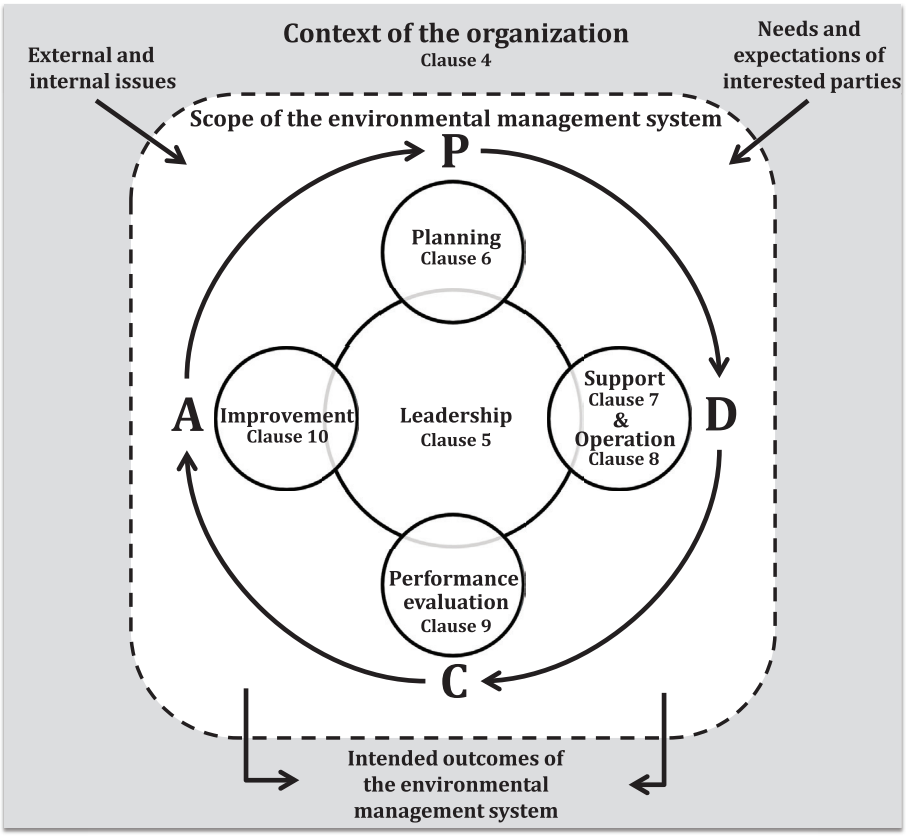


Figure 1 — Relationship between PDCA and the framework in this document

0.5 Contents of this document

This document conforms to ISO requirements for management system standards. These requirements include a harmonized structure, identical core text and common terms with core definitions, designed to benefit users implementing multiple ISO management system standards.

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This document does not include requirements specific to other management systems, such as those for quality, occupational health and safety, energy or financial management. However, this document enables an organization to use a common approach and risk-based thinking to integrate its environmental management system with the requirements of other management systems.

This document contains the requirements used to assess conformity. An organization that wishes to demonstrate conformity with this document can do so by:

— making a self-determination and self-declaration; or

— seeking confirmation of its conformance by parties having an interest in the organization, such as customers; or

— seeking confirmation of its self-declaration by a party external to the organization; or

— seeking certification/registration of its environmental management system by an external organization.

Annex A provides explanatory information to prevent misinterpretation of the requirements of this document. Guidance on applying the ISO 14001 framework to specific environmental topic areas is addressed in the ISO 14002 series. Implementation guidance on environmental management systems is included in ISO 14004.

Clause A.3 provides further insights on specific words and phrases used in this document to enhance the understanding of concepts that are relevant to an environmental management system.

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Environmental management systems — Requirements with guidance for use

1 Scope

This document specifies the requirements for an environmental management system that an organization can use to enhance its environmental performance. It is intended for use by an organization seeking to manage its environmental responsibilities in a systematic manner that contributes to the environmental pillar of sustainability.

This document helps an organization to achieve the intended outcomes of its environmental management system, which provide value for the environment, the organization itself and interested parties. The intended outcomes of an environmental management system include:

— enhancing environmental performance;

— meeting compliance obligations;

— achieving environmental objectives.

This document is applicable to any organization, regardless of size, type or nature, and applies to the environmental aspects of its activities, products and services that the organization determines it can either control or influence considering a life cycle perspective. This document does not state specific environmental performance criteria.

This document can be used in whole or in part to systematically improve environmental management. Claims of conformity to this document, however, are not acceptable unless all its requirements are incorporated into an organization's environmental management system and fulfilled without exclusion.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

ISO and IEC maintain terminology databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

— ISO Online browsing platform: available at https://www.iso.org/obp

— IEC Electropedia: available at https://www.electropedia.org/

3.1 Terms related to organization and leadership

3.1.1
management system
set of interrelated or interacting elements of an *organization* (3.1.5) to establish *policies* (3.1.3) and *objectives* (3.2.5) as well as *processes* (3.3.4) to achieve those objectives

Note 1 to entry: A management system can address a single discipline or several disciplines.

EXAMPLE Quality, environment, occupational health and safety, energy or financial management.

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Note 2 to entry: The management system elements include the organization's structure, roles and responsibilities, planning and operation.

Note 3 to entry: The scope of a management system can include the whole of the organization, specific and identified functions of the organization, specific and identified sections of the organization, or one or more functions across a group of organizations.

3.1.2
environmental management system
part of the *management system* (3.1.1) used to manage *environmental aspects* (3.2.2), meet *compliance obligations* (3.2.9) and address *risks and opportunities* (3.2.10)

Note 1 to entry: The environmental management system elements include: context of the organization (Clause 4), leadership (Clause 5), planning (Clause 6), support (Clause 7), operation (Clause 8), performance evaluation (Clause 9) and improvement (Clause 10).

3.1.3
policy
intentions and direction of an *organization* (3.1.5) as formally expressed by its *top management* (3.1.6)

3.1.4
environmental policy
policy (3.1.3) related to *environmental performance* (3.4.11)

3.1.5
organization
person or group of people that has its own functions with responsibilities, authorities and relationships to achieve its *objectives* (3.2.5)

Note 1 to entry: The concept of organization includes, but is not limited to, sole-trader, company, corporation, firm, enterprise, authority, partnership, charity or institution, or part or combination thereof, whether incorporated or not, public or private.

Note 2 to entry: If the organization is part of a larger entity, the term "organization" refers only to the part of the larger entity that is within the scope of the *environmental management system* (3.1.2).

3.1.6
top management
person or group of people who directs and controls an *organization* (3.1.5) at the highest level

Note 1 to entry: Top management has the power to delegate authority and provide resources within the organization.

Note 2 to entry: If the scope of the *management system* (3.1.1) covers only part of an organization, then top management refers to those who direct and control that part of the organization.

3.1.7
interested party (preferred term)
stakeholder (admitted term)
person or *organization* (3.1.5) that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity

EXAMPLE Customers, communities, suppliers, regulators, non-governmental organizations, investors and employees.

Note 1 to entry: To "perceive itself to be affected" means the perception has been made known to the organization.

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3.2 Terms related to planning

3.2.1
environment
surroundings in which an *organization* (3.1.5) operates, including air, water, land, natural resources, flora, fauna, humans and their interrelationships

Note 1 to entry: Surroundings can extend from within an organization to the local, regional and global system.

Note 2 to entry: Surroundings can be described in terms of biodiversity, ecosystems, climate or other characteristics.

3.2.2
environmental aspect
element of an *organization's* (3.1.5) activities or products or services that interacts or can interact with the *environment* (3.2.1)

Note 1 to entry: An environmental aspect can cause (an) *environmental impact(s)* (3.2.4). A significant environmental aspect is one that has or can have one or more significant environmental impact(s).

Note 2 to entry: Significant environmental aspects are determined by the organization applying established criteria.

3.2.3
environmental condition
state or characteristic of the *environment* (3.2.1) as determined at a certain point in time

3.2.4
environmental impact
change to the *environment* (3.2.1), whether adverse or beneficial, wholly or partially resulting from an *organization's* (3.1.5) *environmental aspects* (3.2.2)

3.2.5
objective
result to be achieved

Note 1 to entry: An objective can be strategic, tactical, or operational.

Note 2 to entry: Objectives can relate to different disciplines (such as finance, health and safety, and *environment* (3.2.1)). They can be, for example, organization-wide or specific to a project, product, service or *process* (3.3.4).

Note 3 to entry: An objective can be expressed in other ways, e.g. as an intended result, as a purpose, as an operational criterion, as an *environmental objective* (3.2.6) or by the use of other words with similar meaning (e.g. aim, goal, or target).

Note 4 to entry: In the context of *environmental management systems* (3.1.2), environmental objectives are set by the *organization* (3.1.5), consistent with the *environmental policy* (3.1.4), to achieve specific results.

3.2.6
environmental objective
objective (3.2.5) set by the *organization* (3.1.5) consistent with its *environmental policy* (3.1.4)

3.2.7
prevention of pollution
use of *processes* (3.3.4), practices, techniques, materials, products, services or energy to avoid, reduce or control (separately or in combination) the creation, emission or discharge of any type of pollutant or waste, in order to reduce adverse *environmental impacts* (3.2.4)

Note 1 to entry: Prevention of pollution can include source reduction or elimination; process, product or service changes; efficient use of resources; material and energy substitution; reuse; recovery; recycling; reclamation; or treatment.

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3.2.8
requirement
need or expectation that is stated, generally implied or obligatory

Note 1 to entry: "Generally implied" means that it is custom or common practice for the *organization* (3.1.5) and *interested parties* (3.1.7) that the need or expectation under consideration is implied.

Note 2 to entry: A specified requirement is one that is stated, e.g. in *documented information* (3.3.2).

3.2.9
compliance obligations (preferred term)
legal requirements and other requirements (admitted term)
legal *requirements* (3.2.8) that an *organization* (3.1.5) has to comply with and other requirements that an organization has to or chooses to comply with

Note 1 to entry: Compliance obligations are related to the *environmental management system* (3.1.2).

Note 2 to entry: Compliance obligations can arise from mandatory requirements, such as applicable laws and regulations, or voluntary commitments, such as organizational and industry standards, contractual relationships, codes of practice and agreements with community groups, non-governmental organizations, or other *interested parties* (3.1.7).

3.2.10
risks and opportunities
potential adverse effects (i.e. risks) and potential beneficial effects (i.e. opportunities)

3.3 Terms related to support and operation

3.3.1
competence
ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve intended results

3.3.2
documented information
information required to be controlled and maintained by an *organization* (3.1.5) and the medium on which it is contained

Note 1 to entry: Documented information can be in any format and media and from any source.

Note 2 to entry: Documented information can refer to:

— the *management system* (3.1.1), including related *processes* (3.3.4);

— information created in order for the organization to operate (documentation);

— evidence of results achieved (records).

3.3.3
life cycle
consecutive and interlinked stages of a product (or service) system, from raw material acquisition or generation from natural resources to final disposal

Note 1 to entry: The life cycle stages include acquisition of raw materials, design, production, transportation/delivery, use, end-of-life treatment and final disposal.

[SOURCE: ISO 14044:2006, 3.1, modified — "(or service)" added to the definition. Note 1 to entry added.]

3.3.4
process
set of interrelated or interacting activities that uses or transforms inputs to deliver a result

Note 1 to entry: Whether the result of a process is called an output, a product or a service depends on the context of the reference.

Note 2 to entry: A process can be documented or not.

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3.4 Terms related to performance evaluation and improvement

3.4.1
audit
systematic and independent *process* (3.3.4) for obtaining evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which the audit criteria are fulfilled

Note 1 to entry: An audit can be an internal audit (first party) or an external audit (second party or third party), and it can be a combined audit (combining two or more disciplines).

Note 2 to entry: An internal audit is conducted by the *organization* (3.1.5) itself, or by an external party on its behalf.

Note 3 to entry: "Audit evidence" and "audit criteria" are defined in ISO 19011.

Note 4 to entry: Independence can be demonstrated by freedom from responsibility for the activity being audited or freedom from bias and conflict of interest.

3.4.2
conformity
fulfilment of a *requirement* (3.2.8)

3.4.3
nonconformity
non-fulfilment of a *requirement* (3.2.8)

Note 1 to entry: Nonconformity relates to requirements in this document and additional *environmental management system* (3.1.2) requirements that an *organization* (3.1.5) establishes for itself.

3.4.4
corrective action
action to eliminate the cause(s) of a *nonconformity* (3.4.3) and to prevent recurrence

3.4.5
continual improvement
recurring activity to enhance *performance* (3.4.10)

Note 1 to entry: Enhancing performance relates to the use of the *environmental management system* (3.1.2) to enhance *environmental performance* (3.4.11) consistent with the *organization's* (3.1.5) *environmental policy* (3.1.4).

Note 2 to entry: The activity does not have to take place in all areas simultaneously or without interruption.

3.4.6
effectiveness
extent to which planned activities are realized and planned results are achieved

3.4.7
indicator
quantitative, qualitative or binary variable that can be measured or described, representing the status of operations, management, conditions or impacts

[SOURCE: ISO 14031:2021, 3.4.1]

3.4.8
monitoring
determining the status of a system, a *process* (3.3.4) or an activity

Note 1 to entry: To determine the status, there can be a need to check, supervise or critically observe.

3.4.9
measurement
process (3.3.4) to determine a value

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3.4.10
performance
measurable result

Note 1 to entry: Performance can relate either to quantitative or qualitative findings.

Note 2 to entry: Performance can relate to managing activities, *processes* (3.3.4), products, services, systems or *organizations* (3.1.5).

3.4.11
environmental performance
performance (3.4.10) related to the management of *environmental aspects* (3.2.2)

Note 1 to entry: For an *environmental management system* (3.1.2), results can be measured against the *organization's* (3.1.5) *environmental policy* (3.1.4), *environmental objectives* (3.2.6) or other criteria, using *indicators* (3.4.7).

4 Context of the organization

4.1 Understanding the organization and its context

The organization shall determine external and internal issues that are relevant to its purpose and that affect its ability to achieve the intended outcomes of its environmental management system.

These issues shall include environmental conditions being affected by the organization or capable of affecting the organization, such as pollution levels, availability of natural resources, climate change, biodiversity or ecosystem health (see A.4.1).

4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties

The organization shall determine:

a) the interested parties that are relevant to the environmental management system;

b) the relevant needs and expectations (i.e. requirements) of these interested parties;

c) which of these needs and expectations become its compliance obligations (see 6.1.3) and will be addressed through the environmental management system.

NOTE 1 Relevant interested parties can have needs and expectations related to environmental conditions, such as pollution levels, availability of natural resources, climate change, biodiversity or ecosystem health.

NOTE 2 The relevant needs and expectations of interested parties, other than legal requirements, become a compliance obligation when the organization decides to comply with them.

4.3 Determining the scope of the environmental management system

The organization shall determine the boundaries and applicability of the environmental management system to establish its scope.

When determining this scope, the organization shall consider:

a) the external and internal issues referred to in 4.1;

b) the compliance obligations referred to in 4.2;

c) its organizational units, functions and physical boundaries;

d) its activities, products and services;

e) its authority and ability to exercise control and influence over the life cycle of its activities, products and services.

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