

Thinking Freely
ISO Implementation, Simplified.

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Integrated Management Systems

Implementation & readiness guide

ISO 9001 | ISO 14001 | ISO 45001

A clear roadmap, practical checks and an action plan.

Thinking Freely Ltd | Practical on-site ISO consultancy

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Integrated Management Systems

Understanding the opportunity

One coordinated system. Multiple ISO standards.

An Integrated Management System (IMS) brings the shared elements of two or more management standards together. It can combine responsibilities, processes, documented information, objectives, audits and management reviews while retaining the controls unique to each standard.

Who is this guide for?

- Businesses seeking ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 certification together.
- Organisations already certified to one standard and considering another.
- Teams wanting more efficient internal audits and ongoing system maintenance.

Common combinations

- ISO 9001: quality management and consistent delivery.
- ISO 14001: environmental aspects, impacts and compliance obligations.
- ISO 45001: occupational health and safety risks and worker participation.
- Other standards, such as ISO/IEC 27001 or ISO 50001, can be integrated where relevant.

Integration does not mean every clause or operational control becomes identical. The organisation must still demonstrate conformity with every standard it seeks to certify.

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Where integration saves effort

What can usually be coordinated?

- Business context and interested parties (while retaining standard-specific requirements).
- Leadership responsibilities and a coherent policy framework.
- Document and record control, competence and communication processes.
- Objectives, action tracking and performance reporting.
- Internal audit programmes, corrective action and management review.

What must remain standard-specific?

- ISO 9001: customer requirements, operational quality controls and product/service conformity.
- ISO 14001: environmental aspects, lifecycle considerations, compliance obligations and emergency preparedness.
- ISO 45001: hazard identification, risk control, consultation and participation of workers.

Avoid these common mistakes

- A single generic risk register that does not properly address each discipline.
- Overcomplicated documentation created only for a certification audit.
- Combining audits without competent auditors or sufficient evidence for each standard.
- Assuming one certificate automatically covers every ISO standard.

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An IMS implementation roadmap

1. Scope and objectives

Define sites, activities, services, applicable standards and certification goals.

2. Gap assessment

Compare current arrangements with each standard and identify reusable controls.

3. Integrated design

Set common processes, responsibilities and documented information.

4. Operational controls

Implement discipline-specific quality, environmental and OH&S controls.

5. Evidence and competence

Train relevant people and collect records demonstrating operation.

6. Internal audit

Audit against every applicable standard, with objective and impartial auditors.

7. Management review

Review performance, risks, objectives, resources and improvement actions.

8. Certification readiness

Close gaps and prepare for assessment by an independent certification body.

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IMS readiness checklist

Use this as an initial discussion tool, not a certification audit.

- [ ] We have defined the standards, locations and processes in scope.
- [ ] Top management understands its responsibilities for all selected standards.
- [ ] We have identified common processes and standard-specific requirements.
- [ ] Interested parties and relevant compliance obligations are identified.
- [ ] Our quality, environmental and OH&S risks are properly assessed.
- [ ] Workers are consulted and involved where ISO 45001 requires it.
- [ ] Objectives and performance measures are defined and monitored.
- [ ] Relevant training, competence and communication arrangements are in place.
- [ ] We have an internal audit programme covering every standard.
- [ ] Management review covers all relevant IMS inputs and outputs.
- [ ] Corrective actions have owners, deadlines and effectiveness checks.
- [ ] Certification body arrangements and certification scope are understood.

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How Thinking Freely can help

From implementation to ongoing support

Thinking Freely provides practical consultancy for businesses implementing ISO management systems individually or together. We can also help you add a further standard to an established system, avoiding unnecessary duplication while meeting the additional requirements.

- Initial IMS gap assessments and implementation planning.
- Practical management system development and integration.
- ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 support, plus specialist standards.
- Internal auditing, management reviews and surveillance preparation.
- Ongoing support as your business grows or adds further certifications.

Discuss your requirements

Tell us which standards you hold, which you want to achieve, your industry and sites, and your intended timescale. We can discuss a proportionate plan for your organisation.

thinkingfreely.co.uk | Contact us for an IMS consultation

Thinking Freely provides consultancy and audit support. Independent accredited or other certification bodies issue ISO certificates. Any internal audits must be conducted with appropriate objectivity and impartiality.