

Technical Bulletin: Inclusion of Climate Change considerations within Management System Standards

27 February 2024

Introduction

IAF and ISO have published a joint communique, highlighting the changes being made to a number of Management Systems Standards (MSS), in the form of additional text highlighting the importance of Climate Change as a consideration within the organisational context for the management system concerned.

https://iaf.nu/iaf_system/uploads/documents/Joint_ISO-IAF_Communique_re_Climate_Change_Amds_to_ISO_MSS_Feb_2024_Final.pdf

As the joint communique explains, the changes having been instigated in response to the London Declaration on Climate Action. Following on from this, the IAF has issued a Decision in answer to a technical paper on this topic as discussed at the 2023 IAF Technical Committee meeting.

https://iaf.nu/general_information/iaf-technical-committee-tc-searchable-decision-log/

The purpose of this Technical Bulletin, in line with the IAF Decision, is to clarify the expectations for management systems CBs and their certified clients, Certification Bodies (CBs), noting that, as stated in the joint communique:

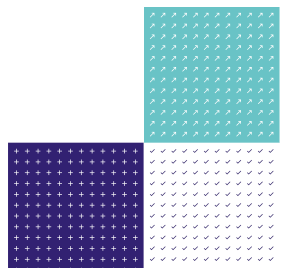
“The overall intent of the requirements for clauses 4.1 and 4.2 remain unchanged; these clauses already include the need for the organization to consider all internal and external issues that can impact the effectiveness of their management system; these new inclusions are assuring that Climate Change is considered within the management system and that it is an external factor that is important enough for our community to require organizations to consider it now.”

Recognising that the above states that the overall intent of the requirements remain unchanged, and with this amendment being treated as a clarification rather than a new requirement, a full transition programme is not needed for this situation. However, the guidance below should be considered.

Expectations on Certification Bodies

Certified organisations should already be determining all internal and external issues that are relevant to the management system’s purpose, its strategic direction and that affect its ability to achieve the intended result(s). Over time these issues are likely to change for an organisation and this includes climate change which has been clarified by the amendment in Clause 4.1 and 4.2. CBs will need to continue to audit these clauses to ensure that all internal and external issues, which includes Climate, Change have been determined by their clients as relevant or not and if so, considered in the development and effectiveness of the management system(s). The inclusion of Climate Change in the new amendment only provides clarity to the existing requirement.

If it was considered not to be a relevant issue by the organisation for its management system, the CB is expected to ensure the effectiveness of the organisation’s process to make this determination and implementing related actions, when applicable.



UKAS Activity

In accordance with the IAF decision, UKAS will, as part of the ongoing accreditation cycle, review CB activities to ensure they are confirming that their certified clients have considered all internal aspects as required by clauses 4.1 and 4.2, including the issue of Climate Change.

Timing

The changes to the standards were published on 22 February 2024. As noted above, issues related to Climate Change affecting the context of an organisations' management system(s) are typically already being considered by organisations.

Therefore, following publication, certification bodies need to include the new text in their auditing of the organisation and its context. As with normal practice, where a certified organisation cannot demonstrate that all external and internal issues, including climate change, have been determined as relevant or not, a suitable finding should be raised.

Certificates

The IAF Decision states that an update to the certificate is not necessary on the grounds that: -

- the publication year of each MSS will not change.
- there is no change in the scope of application for the certified MS.
- there is no significant impact on the effectiveness of the certified MS.
- the change does not affect the current required activities by the certified organisation apart from highlighting one aspect.

For any queries, please contact the UKAS Technical Manager - International kevin.belson@ukas.com or your Assessment Manager.