

ISO Journey to Granting Certification



Step 1

The journey starts here

Certification Europe was founded with the simple aim of providing a certification service that goes further than simply ticking the boxes. We make the journey to certification as seamless as possible. Whether you are uncertain about where to begin or have already started the journey, we advise you to review each step of the journey and ensure everything is in order.

This document is a guide to outline the steps taken in the journey to certification.

Before Certification:

- 1 Planning
- 2 Gap Analysis
- 3 Stage 1 Assessment
- 4 Stage 2 Assessment
- 5 Certification Decision
- 6 Certification Presentation
- 7 Continous Assessment

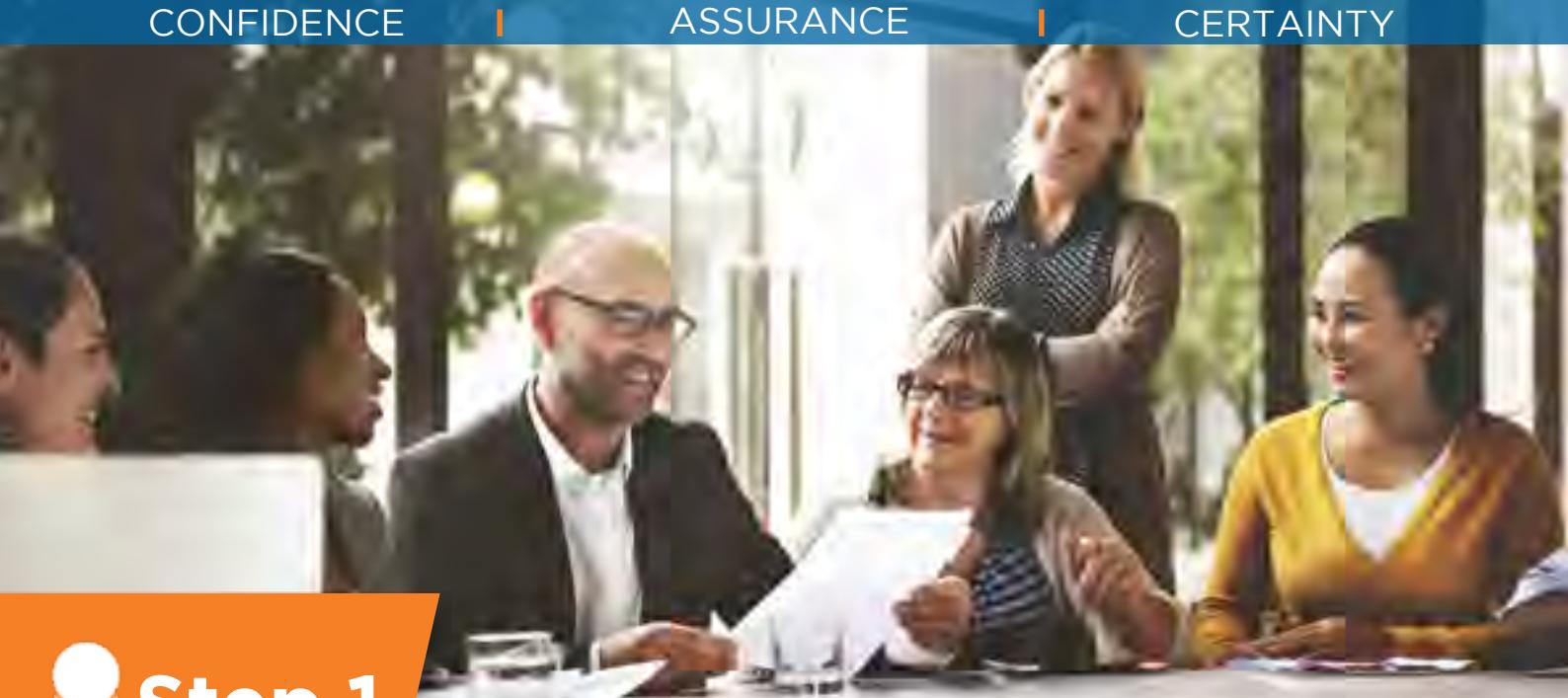
- **Implementation Team** – Assemble the team that will be directly involved in implementing the management system and ensure Upper Management are not just consulted but involved in this process. At this point, the team should review if an external ISO consultant or ISO training is required. When there is buy-in from all departments and management, the ISO system has a greater opportunity for continuous success.
- **Define Scope and goals** - Once the team is assembled, the next step is to determine the scope and business objectives the organisation wishes to achieve from obtaining certification.



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- » Scope of Certification: The activities within the organisation the certification will cover. The Scope can apply to the organisation as a whole or a specific department. For example, the I.T department.
- » Business Objectives: The team should outline the reasons for certification and the goals they wish to achieve by implementing an ISO system.
- **Read the standard** – Purchase a copy of the ISO Standard and ensure all relevant parties (Implementation team, Senior Management, Department Officials) know the ISO standard(s)
- **Review current system(s)** – Once the team is up to speed, review the system and compare what needs improvement. Different members of the implementation team can conduct an internal gap analysis. This analysis will highlight which areas of the system require the most attention and allow the team to generate a road map to achieve certification. An internal gap analysis should continue to be conducted even after certification is granted. It is recommended that the task is rotated each year to ensure no biased reporting and that the personnel involved are part of the actual implementation team.
- **Organisational buy-in** - Communication is key to successful implementation. A clearly defined road map should be communicated with all relevant dependants and senior management. The senior management team should be aware of the Scope of Certification, goals, and resources required to achieve ISO certification. Communication breakdown can lead to delays and errors that can be picked up in the audit.





Step 2

External Gap Analysis

What is the External Gap Analysis? – In short, this is an optional pre-certification assessment. A gap analysis assessment provides an external review of the procedures and practices implemented and compares them with the standard's requirements. The Gap Analysis will highlight any potential weaknesses the system may have before the actual assessment and is an excellent way for the implementation team to become familiar with the audit process. Certification Europe or an ISO consultant can provide this service. The external gap analysis should be conducted when the team feels the system is near ready to commence a Stage One assessment

Training

The implementation and assessment journey can be a long stressful task, mainly if the implementation team have never been through the process before. With over 20 years of experience conducting thousands of assessments, we have developed Advanced Implementation and Lead Auditor Training courses conducted by industry professionals who have successfully implemented and audited ISO management systems.

Our expert instructors understand the journey and will provide the implementation team with the knowledge and skills required to successfully implement the standard and empower you to pass on the knowledge within your organisation.



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Step 2

Pre-Assessment Plan

Our Certification Services Team will assign an Assessor or Team to conduct your Stage 1 Assessment and agree to dates with you.

The assigned Assessor(s) will research your organisation. They want to take the time to understand the organisation and how all teams can genuinely benefit from becoming certified. We understand that two companies may look the same on the outside but run very differently on the inside.

We want to see that you truly see a benefit in the assessments carried out and it is not just viewed as a “tick-the-box exercise”.

This will allow the Assessor(s) to develop a plan for the Stage 1 Assessment. This detailed plan which will be issued in advance of the agreed Assessment date will outline what sections (clauses) of the standard will be reviewed. It will also include meeting times against each section to allow you to plan resources effectively.

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Step 3

Stage One Assessment

The organisation will have a management system in place at this point in the journey.

The purpose of the Stage 1 visit is to enable the assessment team/lead assessor to receive sufficient information on the client and their management system to determine if the system is sufficiently developed and prepared to justify a Stage 2 certification audit.

Also, the Stage 1 assessment will allow the lead assessor/audit team to plan and be suitably prepared to undertake the Stage 2 assessment.

During the Stage One Assessment, a high-level review will be conducted on the requirements of the standard. Documented conclusions regarding the fulfilment of the Stage 1 objectives and the readiness for Stage 2 shall be communicated throughout the assessment process. The Assessor will identify at this point any areas of concern that could be classified as a non-conformity during the Stage 2.

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Objectives of the Stage 1 Assessment

- Opening meeting: The Assessor will meet the implementation team and the senior management team to discuss the agenda for the day and answer any initial questions the teams may have.
- Ensure the organisation understands the standard's basic requirements of the systems and correct documentation is in place.



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- Review that the system is in line with the Scope and goals set out from the start of the journey
- Interview a sample of employees and inspect the site(s) depending on the Scope of certification.
- Review the management system's overall performance and take note of the organisation's readiness to progress to the Stage Two Assessment.
- Closing meeting: During this meeting, the Assessor will sit with the implementation team and management team members to summarise the assessment results. The Assessor will explain any areas of concern that arose during the assessment and steps to be taken to address them
- A Stage One Assessment report will also be made available detailing the assessment and will be given to the implementation team to make the appropriate changes if any arose

We recommend a minimum of 8 weeks between Stage One and Stage Two assessment, but no more than 6-months. If the Stage Two assessment does not occur within 6-months, you will have to start the process again. This can be discussed with your client manager.





Step 4

Stage Two Assessment

The second part of the assessment will be a more in-depth analysis of the certification assessment, determining if the organisation will be successfully certified to the ISO standard of choice. The Stage Two Assessment can only be completed once all major non-conformances have been corrected from the initial Stage One Assessment. The Stage Two Assessment will follow the same format as the Stage One Assessment regarding the open and closing meeting and a pre-assessment plan being sent out beforehand.

The Assessor will:

- Gather evidence of the system's alignment to the requirements of the standard.
- Review that your management system complies with the appropriate legal requirements.
- Request for the team to demonstrate how the system is monitored, measured and reported on the management system based on the key goals outlined.
- Ensure that all clauses of the standard have been adhered to and that internal processes were carried out correctly, and that management involvement was accomplished.
- Clearly communicate findings if they arise. Types of findings include opportunities for improvement (OFI), Minor Non-conformance and Major Non- Conformance.
- Based on these findings, the Assessor will draw up a full report on all examined clauses



Step 4

When the Stage Two Assessment is completed, if any Major NC or Minor NC arises, the following steps will need to be taken

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- » Minor Non-conformance: a suggested plan of action and timeline will need to be submitted to the Assessor. The plan and timeline will need to be accepted by the Assessor before moving forth with a decision on certification being granted being made
- » Major Non-conformances: they will need to be resolved within 30 days of the completion of the Stage Two Assessment. If the major NC cannot be resolved within the 30-day period, a plan of action and timeline will need to be submitted for review by the Assessor. The Assessor will need to verify the effectiveness of the correction and corrective actions. The Assessor will not be in the position to can draw a conclusion regarding recommendation for certification until the verification of these actions has been confirmed. If the Assessor is not able to verify the implementation of the correction and corrective actions within 6-months after the last day of Stage 2, the Assessor will conduct another Stage 2 prior to the recommendation of certification.



Steps 5-6

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Certification Decision

Following successful completion of the Stage Two Assessment and acceptance of corrections and corrective actions of any non-conformances, the Assessor will make their recommendation for certification.

The Quality and Compliance Team will review the report, and a recommendation for certification will be made. This recommendation will be passed for final Technical Review and approval by our Certification Panel to ensure that the assessment process was conducted to the highest standard.

Certification Presentation

Upon successful completion, Certification is awarded. A member of the Certification Services Team will be in contact to issue the organisation with their official ISO certificate, framed hard copy certificate, ISO logo marks and Branding Guidelines

Life after Certification

When certification is attained, you have placed the flag on the mountain - now, it is important to keep the flag there. This is achieved through continued implementation of all processes and procedures in line with the ISO policy, internal assessments, and training.



Step 7

- 1 Planning
- 2 Gap Analysis
- 3 Stage 1 Assessment
- 4 Stage 2 Assessment
- 5 Certification Decision
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- 7 Continuous Assessment

Surveillance Audits - Continuous Assessment

The ISO certification is valid for three years. During that time, we will work with the implementation team to get the most out of the management system by conducting regular surveillance assessments. This will be scheduled with the implementation team and take place bi-annually.

At the end of the three-year cycle, you will have a recertification assessment. Following successful completion, your organisation will be awarded a further three years of Certification

For additional enquiries on ISO certification or training, don't hesitate to contact your sales representative or e-mail info@certificationeurope.com.





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