

# What's Changing in ISO 9001:2026

## A plain-English guide for small manufacturers

Based on the draft standard (ISO/DIS 9001, August 2025) as it stands in 2026. The final standard publishes around September 2026 — wording may shift slightly. We'll update this guide when it does.

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### The short version

If you're certified to ISO 9001:2015, breathe easy. **This is an update, not a rebuild** — the core requirements stay intact, with targeted refinements around quality culture, ethical behaviour, and clearer risk management. You'll have a three-year transition window after publication — until roughly September 2029 — to make the changes.

Just as useful is what *didn't* change. Despite expectations, the draft adds no new requirements for AI, digital transformation, broader sustainability, or supply-chain resilience. If you were bracing for an “AI clause,” you can let that go.

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### The changes that actually affect you

#### 1. Quality culture and ethical behaviour — now written down

Clause 5.1.1 now explicitly requires top management to promote and demonstrate a quality culture and ethical behaviour. Before, this was implied; now an auditor will look for evidence. The good news: this doesn't mean a new culture programme or an ethics consultant — it means a light evidence trail: culture referenced in leadership communications, an ethics statement in the quality manual, and management-review discussions that go beyond just metrics.

**What to do:** Add a line or two on quality culture and ethics to your quality policy and your management-review notes. That's most of it.

#### 2. Awareness now includes culture and ethics

Clause 7.3 adds a new awareness requirement: employees need to understand “quality culture and ethical behaviour,” not just the quality policy. For most organisations, a simple addition to induction materials and training records satisfies this.

**What to do:** One slide or paragraph in your onboarding/training material, and keep the record.

#### 3. Risk and opportunity — now separated

Clause 6.1 is reorganised into new sub-clauses (6.1.1–6.1.3) to clearly separate risk actions from opportunity actions. The point is to make it easier to show an auditor how each is handled.

**What to do:** Split your risk register so risks and opportunities are listed distinctly, with the action taken next to each.

#### 4. Climate change — folded into the main standard

The 2024 climate amendment you may already know about is no longer a bolt-on. It's now built into Clauses 4.1 and 4.2, so you must consider whether climate change is relevant to your quality system.

**What to do:** Add a short statement to your context review noting whether climate is relevant to your operations (a “yes, because...” or “no, because...” is fine).

#### 5. Planning changes — a bit more structure

When you make changes, the standard now asks you to consider resource availability, monitor whether the change worked, and communicate it clearly.

**What to do:** When logging a change, note the resources, the result, and who was told. Your existing records likely already cover most of this.

#### 6. A brand-new Annex A (guidance, not rules)

For the first time, ISO 9001 includes a roughly 15-page Annex A of supplementary guidance covering Clauses 4 through 10. It creates no new mandatory requirements — it's informative. When the final standard lands, it's worth reading first; it explains the intent behind everything above.

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### Your simple transition checklist

- Add quality-culture and ethics language to your quality policy
- Cover culture/ethics in onboarding and keep the training record
- Separate risks from opportunities in your register
- Add a climate-relevance note to your context review
- Note resources / result / communication when you make a change
- Read Annex A when the final standard publishes (~Sept 2026)

**None of this is urgent. You have until ~2029. Doing one item per quarter gets you there with room to spare.**

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### Keeping the records is the other half of the job.

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