High-Level-Structure (HLS)
Common structure for management systems

Since the publication of ISO 50001:2018, all of the major ISO standards are now based on the High-Level-Structure, HLS for short. First initiated in 2012, HLS has become the common structure of all revised or newly issued ISO management system standards, with many positive effects especially for integrated systems.

A common basic structure, however, is not the only advantage: along with it, there are standardized texts for the core requirements of a management system, as well as common terminology and basic definitions. All of this is designed to facilitate merging different management systems, as per Annex L (formerly called Annex SL) of the ISO/IEC Directives part 1. These Directives stipulate how ISO management system standards should be written, such as providing a unifying and agreed upon High Level Structure, common terms and identical core text and definitions.

So what are the advantages of the High Level Structure?

Applying several standards in one integrated management system, such as quality management and information security, has just gotten much easier. Especially where the basic requirement of all applicable standards has been fulfilled, that is: complete integration of the respective standard requirements in the current management system, and thereby in the general business processes of an organization.

“HLS: the development of a common basic structure is considered a milestone in the standardization of management systems.”

- More efficiency
  Fewer rules, less maintenance effort, fewer audit days, etc.

- Less conflict
  Reduced risk of incompatibilities and conflicts of objectives among different management systems

- Competitive advantage
  Shared management systems at all sites

- More flexibility
  New requirements can be added to the management system more easily

- More transparency
  and greater acceptance
High Level Structure: overview

- Scope
- Normative references: both sections include standard-specific wording and define the objectives
- Terms and definitions: reference to the generic terms displayed in Annex SL, as well as all specific terms for the standard
- Context of the organization: understanding internal and external concerns, the needs and expectations of relevant interested parties, the management system and its scope
- Leadership: responsibility and commitment of top management, policy, organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities
- Planning: actions to address risks and opportunities, quality objectives and planning to achieve them
- Support: required resources, competence, awareness, communication and documented information
- Operation: operational planning and control
- Performance evaluation: monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation, internal audit, management review
- Improvement: nonconformity and corrective action, continual improvement

With this approach, ISO also intends to ensure the standardized use of core text, terms and definitions. More than that, though, the common basic requirements promote integration within an organization. This keeps the management system lean and efficient, without compromising its effectiveness and fulfillment of the needs and expectations of interested parties. Other key terms are process orientation and risk-based approach.

Neither the uniform structure nor the terminology present any disadvantages to an organization that employs an integrated management system with a common structure. Actually, the intention of HLS is to facilitate the integration of requirements from various standards in every corner of an organization – something that was not always easy to do until now. Meanwhile, there is no reason or requirement for structure or terminology to be applied to an organization’s documented information. ISO 9001:2015 includes two informative Annexes that contain no requirements, but are highly recommended reading:

Annex A: Clarification of new structure, terminology and concepts
Annex B: Other International Standards on quality management and quality management systems
DQS: Global presence - Local expertise

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“At DQS, we closely observe changing markets and changing economic environments. We evaluate innovations or unexplored business fields; information from stakeholders such as customers, industry, product management, marketing, sales or customer service is continuously assessed in order to provide the right solutions for our customers at the right time.”

Read more about the HLS
ISO 9001:2015

Annex A (Informative): Clarification of new structure, terminology and concepts
A.1 Structure and terminology
A.2 Products and services
A.3 Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties
A.4 Risk-based thinking
A.5 Applicability
A.6 Documented information
A.7 Organizational knowledge
A.8 Control of externally provided processes, products and services

Annex B (Informative): Other International Standards on quality management and quality management systems developed by ISO/TC 176
ISO 14001:2015

Annex A (informative): Guidance on the use of this International Standard
A.1 General
A.2 Clarification of structure and terminology
A.3 Clarification of concepts
A.4 Context of the organization
A.5 Leadership
A.6 Planning
A.7 Support
A.8 Operation
A.9 Performance evaluation
A.10 Improvement

ISO 45001:2018

High Level Structure

0 Introduction
1 Scope
2 Normative references
3 Terms and definitions
4 Context of the organization
5 Leadership and worker participation
6 Planning
7 Support
8 Operation
9 Performance evaluation
10 Improvement

Annex A (Informative): Guidance on the use of this document
A.1 General
A.2 Normative references
A.3 Terms and definitions
A.4 Context of the organization
A.5 Leadership and worker participation
A.6 Planning
A.7 Support
A.8 Operation
A.9 Performance evaluation
A.10 Improvement
0 Introduction

1 Scope

2 Normative references

3 Terms and definitions

4 Context of the organization

4.1 Understanding the organization and its context

4.2 Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties

4.3 Determining the scope of the energy management system

4.4 Energy management system

5 Leadership

5.1 Leadership and commitment

5.2 Energy policy

5.3 Organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities

6 Planning

6.1 Actions to address risks and opportunities

6.2 Objectives, energy targets and planning to achieve them

6.3 Energy review

6.4 Energy performance indicators

6.5 Energy baseline

6.6 Planning for collection of energy data

7 Support

7.1 Resources

7.2 Competence

7.3 Awareness

7.4 Communication

7.5 Documented information

7.5.1 General

7.5.2 Creating and updating

7.5.3 Control of documented information

8 Operation

8.1 Operational planning and control

8.2 Design

8.3 Procurement

9 Performance evaluation

9.1 Monitoring, measurement, analysis and evaluation of energy performance and the EnMS

9.1.1 General

9.1.2 Evaluation of compliance with legal and other requirements

9.2 Internal audit

9.3 Management review

10 Improvement

10.1 Nonconformity and corrective action

10.2 Continual improvement

Annex A (informative): Guidance for use

A.1 General

A.2 Relationship between energy performance and the EnMS

A.3 Clarification of terminology

A.4 Context of the organization

A.5 Leadership

A.6 Planning

A.7 Support

A.8 Operation

A.9 Performance evaluation

A.10 Improvement


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# ISO 27001:2013

## High Level Structure

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Annex A (normative): Reference control objectives and controls