

Standard for Organizational Quality (SOQ)

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Ver 1.1 July. 2008
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Introduction

This quality standard is designed for organizations wishing to demonstrate sound organizational management.

The first edition was based on the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) 2005, which is fairly specific in terms of processes. It reduces the risk of misinterpretation by being more prescriptive about fundamental business systems as well as outcomes.

It would be relatively easy to incorporate other relevant standards if necessary. ISO 9000 standards are the obvious candidate for inclusion.

A. Governance

1. The nature, structure, and kind of incorporation of the Organization is legally appropriate for its activities.
2. The Organization periodically reviews its articles of incorporation to keep them up to date.
3. The Board shall be either a board of management or a board of governance.
4. The Board has clearly defined responsibilities and carries them out consistently.
5. The Board makes decisions
 - a. following due process and
 - b. incorporating due diligence.
6. The Organization has systems that show
 - a. the lines of authority in the Organization,
 - b. the responsibilities of each role, and
 - c. allocation of functions.

(Examples of suitable systems include organizational charts, duty statements, terms of reference, staff induction.)
7. All activities done under auspices of the Organization have documented authorization deriving from Board resolutions recorded in its official minutes. (Note: "Deriving from" is not the same as direct authorization. For example, local representatives may establish and operate separate activities without direct Board authorization, providing they act within their designated authority.)
8. The Organization uses systematic processes for:
 - a. internal communications
 - b. institutional performance management
 - c. financial management
 - d. identifying external trends that affect its activities
9. The Organization systematically and effectively prevents conflict of interest in its governance, administration and financial management. Conflict of interest includes but is not limited to:
 - a. use of family members and other close relationships
 - b. pecuniary interests
 - c. institutional roles.

B. Compliance requirements

10. The Organization systematically identifies all current compliance requirements affecting its operations.
 - a. Its compliance requirements include its articles of incorporation (e.g. constitution) and terms of its incorporation.
 - b. It identifies legislation and other regulatory requirements.
 - c. It identifies and manages jurisdictional differences when it has activities in different jurisdictions.
 - d. It identifies any relevant codes of practice and ethical standards with which it is obliged to comply.
 - e. It includes this Standard.
11. The Organization complies with all compliance requirements relating to its activities.
 - a. It incorporates them into its policies and procedures.
 - b. It provides staff with sufficient information and training for them to comply with all compliance requirements that significantly affect their duties.
12. The Organization keeps policies and procedures for oversight of its activities.
 - a. Policies must be in writing.
 - b. Policies must cover all normal activities and risks.
 - c. Different parts of the Organization may have different policies and procedures, depending on their jurisdictions and local activities.
 - d. A procedure must be in writing if the organization identifies substantial legal risks in using an unwritten procedure.
 - e. Policies and procedures are kept under review and updated regularly.
13. The Organization ensures compliance with its policies and procedures.
 - a. The Organization circulates its policies and procedures to all parts of the Organization for which they are written.
 - b. The Organization ensures that staff members understand its policies and procedures and implement them consistently.
 - c. The Organization corrects and prevents any failure to comply with its policies and procedures.

C. Internal systems

14. The Organization has systems in place to ensure the quality of its programs across all its operations consistent with its scope of activities and scale of operations.

Planning

15. The Organization has a comprehensive, up-to-date written plan for its activities that is consistent with its scope of activities and scale of operations.
16. Its Board has formally agreed to it as a firm commitment to a future course of action.
17. It represents sound thinking of its goals and the means it uses to attain them.
18. It is used to measure performance.
19. It is regularly and systematically reviewed.

Risk management

20. The Organization systematically identifies and manages risks in a timely way across its scope of activities, including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Adverse impact of changes in government policies
 - b. Change in operational conditions
 - c. Occupational Health and Safety
 - d. Loss or non-performance of key staff
 - e. Errors or failures in operations

- f. Threats to reputation
- g. Non-performance of information technology
- h. Financial risks
- i. Legal liability
- j. Communication with stakeholders
- k. Fire

Program management

- 21. The Organization's programs are effective in furthering its objectives.
- 22. The Organization:
 - a. uses resources and staff time efficiently and effectively.
 - b. maintains effective relationships with its stakeholders.

Continual improvement

- 23. The Organization systematically implements continual improvement across all its activities and systems:
 - a. It at least annually reviews its entire scope of operations for items needing improvement
 - b. It systematically collects and analyzes stakeholder feedback and satisfaction and uses that information as a basis to review and improve its policies, procedures, and activities.
 - c. It acts on opportunities for improvement identified by any means

Internal compliance check or internal audit

- 24. The Board authorizes and oversees the conducting of a compliance check or internal audit at least annually of the Organizations compliance with its policies and procedures.¹
- 25. The Organization systematically uses its compliance report as a basis for review and improvement.
- 26. The Board reviews the Organization's compliance at least annually.

Complaints

- 27. The Organization documents and implements policies and procedures for dealing with stakeholder complaints, grievances and appeals in a constructive and timely manner.

Contractual relationships

- 28. The Organization:
 - a. maintains a register of all written agreements with other parties
 - b. complies with all agreements with other parties.

Insurance

- 29. The Organization has all the insurance cover necessary to carry out its operations.

Financial management

- 30. The Organization has effective financial management policies and procedures in place.

¹According the Institute of Internal Auditors, it is best practice is for internal audits to be done under the auspices of the Board rather than the CEO or any management. However this might not always be practical in smaller organizations. Internal audits may also include financial audits if no external audit is mandatory.

31. The Organization has designated a person with direct access to the Board, who has defined responsibility and authority to monitor and report on compliance with its financial management policies and procedures, for review and as a basis for improvement. It may be a financial auditor.
32. The Organization and its programs are financially viable.
33. At least annually, a designated officer certifies the Organization's accounts as
 - a. being a true and correct record of the organization's financial position
 - b. containing no discrepancies that would result in a qualified audit report.

Records management

34. The Organization has effective administrative and records management procedures in place.
35. The Organization documents and implements procedures to assure the integrity, accuracy and currency of records that include, but are not limited to:
 - a. secure storage, including backup of electronic records
 - b. transfer of these records in the event of closure of the Organization
 - c. safeguarding any confidential information in its keeping and by any other bodies or individuals acting on its behalf;
 - d. ensuring that, except as required under these standards or by law, information about a client is not disclosed to a third party without their written consent; and
 - e. access by clients to their personal records.
36. The Organization consistently implements version control procedures for managing documents.
 - a. Authorized and competent staff review materials for currency before issue or re-issue.
 - b. The Organization prevents the use of superseded documents.
 - c. All persons have ready access to all necessary current materials to perform their duties.

C. Staff

37. For the purposes of this Framework, a staff member is any person, whether paid or unpaid, doing work under the auspices of the Organization.
38. Each staff member of the Organization is competent for the functions he/she performs.
39. The Organization:
 - a. accurately represents to prospective staff the kind of activities for which they are being recruited
 - b. has written procedures for the recruitment, induction, and ongoing development of each member of its staff, and implements them consistently
 - c. clearly defines the role of each staff member in implementing the Organization's activities.
 - d. effectively inducts new staff into their positions.
 - e. provides relevant opportunities for their professional development.
 - f. monitors their performance.

D. Ethical marketing and advertising

40. The Organization's marketing and advertising of training and assessment products and services is ethical.
41. The Organization's marketing material is:
 - a. accurate and
 - b. approved by a duly authorized staff member.
42. The Organization:
 - a. obtains prior permission from any person for use of any marketing or advertising material which refers to that person, and
 - b. obtains prior written permission from any organization for use of any marketing or advertising material which refers to that organization, and
 - c. complies by any conditions of that permission.

43. The Organization.

E. Resources

44. The program has access to all necessary resources consistent with its scale of operations, including:

- a. staff
- b. physical facilities
- c. written materials
- d. procedures and structures
- e. other resources according to the nature of its program

End