A PRINTABLE GUIDE

QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM LAYERS



A Quality Management System (QMS) is a structured framework designed to ensure that processes, products, and services meet established guidelines. The QMS achieves this through five interconnected levels. Each represents a specific function, but together they create a cycle of continuous improvement.

01	QUALITY MISSION	*Sets the vision*
02	QUALITY PLANNING	*Turns vision into steps*
03	QUALITY ASSURANCE	*Defines the guidelines*
04	QUALITY CONTROL	*Puts guidelines into action*
05	QUALITY REVIEW	*Evaluates the results*

LAYER 1 OF 5 · SETS THE VISION

01 QUALITY MISSION



The quality mission is the foundational layer of a QMS. It defines the overarching goals and purpose of the system, providing a clear vision that guides all quality-related activities. This mission captures the organization's commitment to producing effective, engaging, and error-free outputs. It aligns the team around a common understanding of what quality means and why it matters. By anchoring the QMS in a strong mission, organizations ensure that quality management remains focused and impactful.

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARATION

- [ ] Engage stakeholders to discuss what quality means for the organization.
- [ ] Align the mission with broader organizational goals.
- [ ] Draft a clear, concise, and actionable mission statement.
- [ ] Conduct team workshops to gain consensus on the mission.
- [ ] Validate the mission with leadership and revise as necessary.

BEST PRACTICES

1. Keep the mission simple yet aspirational to inspire engagement.
2. Use the mission as a decision-making framework for all quality initiatives.
3. Regularly revisit and update the mission to reflect organizational changes.
4. Promote the mission across the organization to ensure alignment and buy-in.

NOTES

LAYER 2 OF 5 · TURNS VISION INTO STEPS

QUALITY PLANNING

02



Quality planning focuses on defining how the mission will be realized. It involves setting objectives, determining scope, and outlining the necessary steps to achieve the desired quality outcomes. During this phase, teams identify risks, allocate resources, and establish timelines to ensure the QMS is practical and sustainable. Effective planning anticipates challenges and ensures the system is both flexible and scalable.

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARATION

- [ ] Identify project goals and objectives related to quality outcomes.
- [ ] Define the scope of the QMS, including what will and will not be included.
- [ ] Create a detailed timeline with milestones and deliverables.
- [ ] Assign roles and responsibilities within the team.
- [ ] Develop a risk management plan to address potential obstacles.

BEST PRACTICES

1. Set realistic timelines and allocate resources effectively.
2. Use project management tools to monitor progress and stay on track.
3. Ensure continuous communication with all stakeholders.
4. Start small with pilot projects before scaling up the QMS implementation.

NOTES

LAYER 3 OF 5 · DEFINES THE GUIDELINES

03 QUALITY ASSURANCE



Quality assurance (QA) focuses on creating and maintaining the guidelines that support the organization's overall standard for quality. These guidelines provide clarity on the expected outcomes and how to achieve them. QA is proactive, embedding quality into the design and development process by defining best practices, accessibility standards, and content alignment requirements.

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARATION

- [ ] Develop guidelines aligned with the organizational standard.
- [ ] Collaborate with subject matter experts to ensure comprehensive coverage.
- [ ] Test the guidelines in small projects to identify gaps or ambiguities.
- [ ] Document the guidelines in a centralized and easily accessible format.
- [ ] Train team members on how to use and apply the guidelines.

BEST PRACTICES

1. Keep guidelines flexible to accommodate different project needs.
2. Regularly review and update guidelines based on feedback and new insights.
3. Use examples and templates to illustrate how guidelines should be applied.
4. Encourage team input to ensure the guidelines are practical and realistic.

NOTES

LAYER 4 OF 5 · PUTS GUIDELINES INTO ACTION

04 QUALITY CONTROL



Quality control (QC) operationalizes the guidelines established in the QA phase by implementing policies, procedures, and processes. These support the team in consistently meeting quality standards during production. QC is about execution, ensuring that tasks are carried out according to established workflows and addressing errors as they arise.

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARATION

- [ ] Create detailed policies, procedures, and workflows based on QA guidelines.
- [ ] Develop QC tools such as checklists, templates, and automated workflows.
- [ ] Assign QC responsibilities and train team members in these roles.
- [ ] Pilot the QC measures in a project and refine based on results.
- [ ] Establish a system for tracking and documenting compliance.

BEST PRACTICES

1. Integrate QC measures into daily workflows to ensure consistent application.
2. Use automation wherever possible to reduce errors and save time.
3. Clearly define the consequences of non-compliance with QC measures.
4. Continuously collect feedback to improve QC tools and processes.

NOTES

LAYER 5 OF 5 · EVALUATES THE RESULTS

QUALITY REVIEW

05



The quality review is the final layer of the QMS, focusing on evaluating whether the product meets the established standards. This layer involves systematic assessments, such as audits, checklists, and stakeholder feedback, to verify compliance with the guidelines and identify areas for improvement. Reviews typically occur at the end of a project or process but may also include interim assessments during key milestones.

CHECKLIST FOR PREPARATION

- [ ] Develop review protocols, including checklists and rubrics.
- [ ] Define the frequency and timing of reviews (e.g., interim vs. final).
- [ ] Assign review roles and responsibilities, including reviewers and approvers.
- [ ] Prepare documentation to track findings and corrective actions.
- [ ] Train reviewers on using tools and following protocols consistently.

BEST PRACTICES

1. Ensure reviews are collaborative and not punitive to foster trust.
2. Use reviews as a learning opportunity to improve future processes.
3. Provide clear feedback and actionable recommendations to stakeholders.
4. Document review outcomes to build a knowledge base for continuous improvement.

NOTES

BRINGING IT TOGETHER

INTEGRATION OF THE FIVE LEVELS



Each level of the QMS is interconnected, creating a path to continuous improvement. The quality mission sets the vision, while quality planning translates it into actionable steps. Quality assurance defines the guidelines that support the mission, and quality control provides the mechanisms to implement those guidelines.

Finally, quality review evaluates the results, offering insights to refine the system. Together, these levels ensure that quality is not an afterthought but a fundamental part of the organization's processes, driving consistent and effective outcomes.