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Utgåva 1

## Information technology – Software user documentation process

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## **Foreword**

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work.

International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 3.

In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1. Draft International Standards adopted by the joint technical committee are circulated to national bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this International Standard may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

International Standard ISO/IEC 15910 was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 7, *Software engineering*.

Annexes A to H of this International Standard are for information only.

## ISO/IEC 15910:1999(E)

### Introduction

There are two major types of standards:

- a) product standards, which specify the characteristics and functional requirements of a product;
- b) process standards, which specify the way in which products are to be developed.

The ever-increasing application and complexity of computer software makes necessary the availability of complete, accurate and understandable documentation to those who use the software. This International Standard provides a tool for achieving this by specifying those activities (what is to be done, and who is to do it) that can affect the quality of software user documentation.

Documentation is often regarded as something done after the software has been implemented. However, for quality software documentation production, it should be regarded as an integral part of the software production process. If done properly, it is a big enough job to require process planning in its own right. The purpose of this International Standard is to encourage software developers to give this documentation process its due place. This International Standard also gives users and clients a tool to ensure that this process takes place.

This International Standard's main activity is the creation of a comprehensive plan for developing the documentation. This is necessary because results are more likely to happen if they are planned. To comply with this International Standard, the plan must include a style specification. This International Standard does not specify the content of this style specification (i.e. it does not specify a particular layout or typeface), but it specifies what a style specification must cover. This International Standard also specifies what kinds of information the acquirer is to make available to the documenter, and who is to review and reproduce the documentation.

Further information on this topic may be obtained by contacting relevant organizations or from other literature (see Bibliography).

This International Standard was prepared by ISO/IEC JTC 1 SC 7, based on Australian Standard AS 4258:1994. For a mapping between ISO/IEC 12207:1995 and this International Standard, see annex A.

# Information technology — Software user documentation process

## 1 Scope

This International Standard specifies the minimum process for creating all forms of user documentation for software which has a user interface. Such forms of documentation include printed documentation (e.g. user manuals and quick-reference cards), on-line documentation, help text and on-line documentation systems.

This International Standard conforms with ISO/IEC 12207:1995, *Information technology — Software life cycle processes*, as an implementation of the user documentation part of 6.1: *Documentation*.

If effectively applied, this International Standard will support the development of documentation which meets the needs of the users.

This International Standard is intended for use by anyone who produces or buys user documentation.

This International Standard is applicable to not only printed documentation, but also help screens, the help delivery system, and the on-line text and delivery system. See the bibliography.

This International Standard is intended for use in a two-party situation and may be equally applied where the two parties are from the same organization. The situation may range from an informal agreement up to a legally binding contract. This International Standard may be used by a single party as self-imposed tasks.

NOTE Annex B provides further guidance on the use of this International Standard in a contract between acquirer and documenter.

## 2 Conformance

Conformance with this International Standard is defined as the demonstration that the process set out in clause 8 of this International Standard has been followed.

## 3 Normative reference

The following normative document contains provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this International Standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. However, parties to agreements based on this International Standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent edition of the normative document indicated below. For undated references, the latest edition of the normative document referred to applies. Members of ISO and IEC maintain registers of currently valid International Standards.

ISO 216:1975, *Writing paper and certain classes of printed matter — Trimmed sizes — A and B series*.

## ISO/IEC 15910:1999(E)

### 4 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this International Standard, the following terms and definitions apply.

#### 4.1

##### **A4, A5**

International Standard paper sizes, A4 is 210 mm by 297 mm and A5 is 148 mm by 210 mm; see ISO 216:1975

#### 4.2

##### **acquirer**

an organization that acquires or procures a system or software product from a supplier

[ISO/IEC 12207:1995, definition 3.1]

**NOTE** The acquirer could be one of the following: buyer, customer, owner, user, purchaser. In this International Standard the acquirer is the party who requests the documentation. Note that the acquirer is not necessarily part of the audience for the documentation. Note also that the acquirer may belong to the same organization as the documenter, or may be the developer of the software.

#### 4.3

##### **audience**

category of users sharing the same or similar characteristics and needs (e.g. purpose in using the documentation, tasks, education level, abilities, training, experience) that determine the content, structure and use of the intended documentation

**NOTE** There may be a number of different audiences for a software product's documentation (e.g. management, data entry, maintenance).

#### 4.4

##### **audience research**

planned process of interview, and of the analysis of interview records and personnel records

**NOTE** The purpose of audience research is to determine the abilities, training, experience, limitations, prejudices and preferences of the intended readers of a document.

#### 4.5

##### **B5**

International Standard paper size, 176 mm by 250 mm; see ISO 216:1975

#### 4.6

##### **back matter**

material that appears at the end of a book or manual, such as an index

#### 4.7

##### **camera-ready originals**

set of images on paper, photographic film or another suitable medium from which a printing plate can be made by direct photographic transfer, and where each image contains all of the necessary text and graphic elements for one complete page of paper documentation, with each element in the correct position

#### 4.8

##### **cut-off date**

date after which changes to the software are reflected in the next, rather than the current, issue of the documentation

#### 4.9

##### **deliverables**

items whose delivery to the customer is a requirement of the contract



**4.10**

**document**

equivalent to an item of documentation (cf)

**4.11**

**documentation**

printed user manuals, on-line documentation and help text which describe how to use a software product

**4.12**

**documentation development staff**

all staff involved in any phase of the planning, writing, editing and production of documentation

NOTE This includes authors, designers, illustrators and project management staff.

**4.13**

**documentation plan**

document which sets out the essential elements of the documentation project

**4.14**

**documenter**

party preparing the documentation

NOTE The term *developer* (as defined in ISO/IEC 12207:1995, definition 3.8) is not used here, as in the case of documentation the *developer* of the software is often the *acquirer* of the documentation, and the use of the term *developer* might be confusing in this context. Consequently the term *documenter* is used.

**4.15**

**electronic copy**

computer disk or other computer-readable medium containing a file or files from which the document can be printed

**4.16**

**en dash**

dash the same width as a lower-case 'n'

**4.17**

**endnotes**

notes collected at the end of a chapter or document

**4.18**

**foldout**

single page wider than the rest, normally folded so that it does not protrude, that may be unfolded by the reader - *Contrast with Throwclear*

**4.19**

**footer**

material repeated at the bottom of each page (e.g. page number)

**4.20**

**footnote**

text at the bottom of a page, usually in smaller type, which is referenced by means of a number or other device in the text on the same page

**4.21**

**front matter**

material that comes at the front of a book or manual, such as the title page and table of contents

**4.22**

**header**

material repeated at the top of each page

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### 4.23

#### **heading**

text that identifies the topic that will be covered in the following text

### 4.24

#### **help system**

see on-line documentation system

### 4.25

#### **help text**

text which is accessed by the user through the use of software, and which is automatically selected according to the context in which it is called up; i.e. help text is context-sensitive

### 4.26

#### **item of documentation**

information designed for a specific audience for a specific purpose, and using a specific medium (e.g. book, disk, quick-reference card, video) of a particular format

### 4.27

#### **location reference**

indicator following a heading or subheading in an index, showing to which part of the document the heading or subheading refers

### 4.28

#### **mark-up**

document with comments written on it indicating changes that need to be made; also the process of producing such a document

### 4.29

#### **mechanicals**

printing, binding, production and layout details for paper-based documentation

### 4.30

#### **navigation**

means by which a user moves from one part of a software application to another

### 4.31

#### **on-line documentation**

information accessed by the user through the use of software, but that may not be sensitive to context - *See also* Help text

### 4.32

#### **on-line documentation system or help system**

ancillary part of a program, or sometimes a separate program, that allows the user to view parts of the on-line documentation or help text on request - *See also* on-line documentation *and* Help text

### 4.33

#### **orphan**

line of text on its own at the end of a page

### 4.34

#### **paper documentation**

that part of the documentation which is in printed form

### 4.35

#### **pixel**

smallest element of a screen display; short for 'picture element'

**4.36  
point**

measure of vertical distance; there are approximately 2,8 points to the millimetre (approximately 72 points to the inch)

**4.37  
process**

a set of interrelated activities, which transform inputs into outputs

[ISO/IEC 12207:1995, definition 3.17]

**4.38  
product**

complete set of computer programs, procedures and associated documentation and data designed for delivery to a user

NOTE Also referred to as a software product.

**4.39  
production**

steps involved in taking draft text and turning it into camera-ready originals, completed help text or on-line documentation

**4.40  
proof**

final copy of a paper document presented to the acquirer for review prior to publication

NOTE Unless alterations are requested, the finished document should be identical to the proof copy in all respects other than paper stock, binding and colours. Proofs are generally photocopies of the camera-ready originals.

**4.41  
prototype**

model or preliminary implementation of a piece of software suitable for the evaluation of system design, performance or production potential, or for the better understanding of the software requirements

**4.42  
recto**

page on the same side (i.e. right or left) as the front cover

**4.43  
screen dump**

representation of what the user will see while using the software

**4.44  
system**

an integrated composite that consists of one or more of the processes, hardware, software, facilities, and people, that provide a capability to satisfy a stated need or objective

[ISO/IEC 12207:1995, definition 3.31]

**4.45  
table of contents**

list of the headings in a document in page number order, with page numbers shown against each heading

**4.46  
table of effective pages**

list showing the latest version number of each page in a loose-leaf paper document; where individual pages are replaced, the table of effective pages shows the old version number for the unaltered pages, and the new version number for the replaced pages