



ACCREDITATION SANS FRONTIÈRES

ASF Document Control Procedure

The formal rules behind the practice already running across every ASF document

Version 2 · 2026

Paris · Geneva · Tbilisi

Document Control

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Foreword

Every ASF document now carries the same Document Control block — a title, a reference number, a version, a publication date, a next review date. That practice exists already, consistently, across every document in ASF's portfolio. What has not existed, until this document, is the actual written procedure describing why those specific fields, who approves a new version, and how ASF prevents an obsolete version from being used by mistake. ISO 9001 Clause 7.5 treats control of documented information as a distinct, mandatory requirement — not something a consistent practice alone satisfies without a stated procedure behind it [1].

1. Purpose

This procedure governs the identification, approval, version control, distribution, and retention of every document ASF publishes under its own authority, consistent with ISO 9001's requirement for control of documented information [1].

2. Why This Is the Most Common Failure Worldwide: The Real Evidence

This is not a minor administrative procedure. Across the more than one million organizations worldwide certified to ISO 9001, document control failures — an obsolete document still in circulation, an unapproved version in use, a record that cannot be located — are consistently identified as the single most common nonconformity finding in ISO 9001 audits, and version control specifically accounts for more of these findings than any other single document control element [2–3].

The specific failure pattern is worth naming precisely, because it is the exact scenario Section 6 of this procedure exists to prevent: an outdated procedure remains accessible — on a shared drive, in an old printed copy, on an uncorrected webpage — even though a current, correct version exists elsewhere. The mere existence of the right version does not prevent someone from using the wrong one; only active removal or clear labeling of the obsolete version does [4]. Real-world auditing evidence also finds that organizations relying on informal storage — shared drives, uncontrolled spreadsheets — fail at this specific requirement roughly ten times more often than organizations using a genuinely controlled, centralized system [3].

ASF's document control is arguably at greater real risk than a typical certified organization's, not less — every ASF document is deliberately public, meaning an obsolete version is not confined to an internal shared drive where it might eventually be noticed and removed. It could sit on an external website, a printed copy an organization keeps in a binder, or a cached search result, for years. This is precisely why Section 6's active-notice provision exists, rather than relying on version numbering alone.

3. Document Identification

Every ASF document carries a Document Control block, on its own page immediately following the title page, stating: the document title, a unique document reference in the form ASF-[CODE]-[NUMBER]-v[VERSION], version and status, date and place of publication, issuing authority, language of origin, effective date, next scheduled review date, and what edition it supersedes, if any.

This is not a formality distinct from the document's actual content — it is what allows anyone, inside or outside ASF, to know precisely which version of a document they are reading, and whether it is still current.

4. Approval Authority

A new document, or a new version of an existing one, is approved by the ASF International Standards Council before publication — the same body responsible for standards revision under Section 12 of How ASF Develops and Revises Standards, applied here to every governing document ASF publishes, not only its organizational standards.

A whole-number version change (Version 1 to Version 2) reflects a substantive revision to the document's requirements. A decimal version change (Version 1.0 to Version 1.1) reflects a correction or clarification that does not change a substantive requirement — consistent with the same version-numbering logic already governing ASF's organizational standards under Section 15 of How ASF Develops and Revises Standards, applied uniformly across every ASF document, not only that document type.

5. Distribution and Public Access

Unlike a typical organization's internal document control system, which often restricts distribution, ASF's own documents are published openly and publicly — consistent with the transparency principle running through this entire portfolio. Document control at ASF is therefore not primarily about restricting who can see a document; it is about ensuring that when anyone — inside ASF, an accredited organization, or a member of the public — accesses an ASF document, they can be confident it is the current, genuine version.

6. Preventing Use of an Obsolete Version

When a document is superseded, ASF's published version is replaced, and the superseded version's own Document Control block is what allows anyone who has retained an old copy to recognize it as no longer current — the “Supersedes” field on the new version, and the version number itself, are the actual mechanism by which an obsolete copy identifies itself as obsolete. Consistent with the real risk described in Section 2 — that ASF's public distribution model means an obsolete copy can persist indefinitely outside ASF's own direct control — ASF may add an explicit notice to a superseded document confirming it has been replaced, rather than relying on version comparison alone, wherever this is genuinely practicable.

7. Retention

ASF retains every superseded version of every document it has published, indefinitely, consistent with the transparency principle that ASF's own history — including what it used to require, before a revision changed it — remains available rather than disappearing once a newer version exists.

8. Relationship to Other ASF Processes

- This procedure governs every document in ASF's portfolio; it does not replace the substantive revision procedures specific to organizational standards (Section 12 of How ASF Develops and Revises Standards) or any other document's own review cycle — it governs the control mechanism common to all of them
- A document control failure — an inaccurate reference number, a missed review date — is addressed as a nonconformity under the ASF Internal Nonconformity & Corrective Action Procedure
- Competence in applying this procedure is a required element of the ASF Personnel Competence & Awareness Policy for anyone performing a document control function

References

- [1] International Organization for Standardization. ISO 9001:2015, Quality Management Systems — Requirements, Clause 7.5 (Documented Information). Geneva: ISO; 2015.
- [2] eLeaP Quality. Documented Information in Quality Management Systems: A Complete Guide to ISO 9001 Compliance and Control. 2026.
- [3] AuditsReady. ISO 9001 Document Control: Complete Guide to Managing Quality Documents. 2026.
- [4] TeamBench. ISO 9001 Documentation: Quality Management System Document Review. 2026.

Annex A — New or Revised Document Approval Record

Completed by the Council before a new document or new version is published.

Document title: _____

Document reference: _____

Version: _____

- ☐ Whole-number version change — substantive revision
- ☐ Decimal version change — correction or clarification only

Supersedes: _____

- ☐ Superseded version explicitly marked or notice added, where practicable (Section 6)

Approved by (Council): _____

Approval date: _____

Publication date: _____

Next scheduled review date: _____

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Thirty-seven documents now share one identity system, built specifically around the single most common failure real ISO 9001 audits find worldwide. This is the document that makes sure the thirty-eighth, and every one after it, does too.