
Systems and software engineering — Requirements for acquirers and suppliers of user documentation

*Ingénierie du logiciel et des systèmes — Exigences pour acquéreurs et
fournisseurs de documentation utilisateur*



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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. In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1.

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The main task of ISO/IEC JTC 1 is to prepare International Standards. 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.

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ISO/IEC/IEEE 26512:2011 was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 7, *Software and systems engineering*, in cooperation with the Software and Systems Engineering Standards Committee of the IEEE Computer Society, under the Partner Standards Development Organization cooperation agreement between ISO and IEEE.

This first edition of ISO/IEC/IEEE 26512 cancels and replaces ISO/IEC 15910:1999, which has been technically revised.

Introduction

This International Standard was developed to assist users of ISO/IEC 15288:2008 (IEEE Std 15288-2008) or ISO/IEC 12207:2008 (IEEE Std 12207-2008) to acquire or supply software user documentation and documentation services as part of the software life cycle processes. It defines the documentation process from the acquirer's standpoint and the supplier's standpoint. The accurate description of the requirements for user documentation is essential in order to ensure that the documentation meets the needs of its users. This International Standard addresses the identification, definition, and fulfillment of user documentation requirements as part of the acquisition and supply processes.

This International Standard covers the requirements for information items used in the acquisition of user documentation products: the Acquisition Plan, Document Specification, Statement of Work, Request for Proposals, and the Proposal. It also discusses the use of a Documentation Management Plan and a Document Plan as they arise in the acquisition and supply processes.

This International Standard is independent of the software tools that can be used to produce documentation, and applies to both printed documentation and on-screen documentation. Much of its guidance is applicable to user documentation for systems including hardware as well as software.

Earlier standards tended to view the results of the documentation process as a single book or multi-volume set: a one-time deliverable. Increasingly, documentation acquirers and suppliers recognize that most user documentation is now produced from managed re-use of previously developed information (single-source documentation) adapted for new software versions, or presentation in various on-screen and printed media. While this International Standard does not describe how to set up a content management system, it is applicable for documentation organizations practising single-source documentation, as well as for acquirers and suppliers of one-time deliverables.

Anyone who uses application software needs accurate information about how the software will help the user accomplish a task. The documentation can be the first tangible item that the user sees, and so influences the user's first impressions of the software product. If the information is supplied in a convenient form and is easy to find and understand, the user can quickly become proficient at using the product. Therefore, well-designed documentation not only assists the user and helps to reduce the cost of training and support, but also enhances the reputation of the product, its producer, and its suppliers.

Although software developers intend to design user interfaces that behave so intuitively that very little separate documentation is needed, this is rarely possible. Today's software offers increasingly robust functionality, not only within applications, but also across applications which intelligently exchange information with one another. Further, most software includes underlying rules and calculations, or algorithms that affect the results a user can obtain when using the software. These underlying programming mechanics are discernable by users, but only through laborious testing. For these and other reasons, user documentation remains an essential component of usable software products.

Documentation is often regarded as something done after the software has been implemented. However, for high-quality software documentation, its development needs to be regarded as an integral part of the software life cycle. In fact, quality documentation or information management services are important enough to require specific planning.

Related standards for those acquiring and supplying software user documentation include ISO/IEC 26514:2008 (IEEE Std 26514-2010), *Systems and software engineering — Requirements for designers and developers of user documentation*, and ISO/IEC 26513:2009 (IEEE Std 26513-2010), *Systems and software engineering — Requirements for testers and reviewers of user documentation*. Other International Standards are in preparation or planned to address the documentation and information management processes from the viewpoint of managers and agile projects.

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This International Standard is consistent with ISO/IEC 12207:2008 (IEEE Std 12207-2008) as an implementation of the Acquisition and Supply processes, which comprise the Agreement processes, and of the Information Management and Software Documentation Management Processes.

This International Standard is intended for use in all types of organizations, whether they have a dedicated documentation department or not. It can be used as a basis for local standards and procedures. Readers are assumed to have experience or knowledge of general agreement processes for acquisition and supply of products and services.

The order of clauses in this International Standard does not imply that the acquisition activities need to be performed in this order, nor that documentation needs to be developed in this order or presented to the user in this order.

In each clause, the requirements are media-independent, as far as possible.

The checklists in Annexes A and B can be used to track conformance with the requirements of this International Standard for acquirers and suppliers of documentation products.

The Bibliography contains references to source material used in the development of this International Standard, as well as sources of additional information that might be useful to acquirers and suppliers.