

The BSI guide to standardization – Section 1: Working with British Standards

③ How are standards created?

shape the future

BSI
British Standards

This series of guides is for members of BSI's technical committees and anyone interested in the development of standards. It is designed to accompany BS 0 – A standard for standards and gives you information on:

- ① the benefits of being involved in standardization
- ② how to work with BSI
- ③ how standards are created
- ④ different types of standards and related publications
- ⑤ legal aspects, training and European Directives
- ⑥ background, history and helpful links

This is a guide to the what, why, how, who and when of the creation of standards.

What?

A standard is a document defining good practice, established by consensus and approved by a recognized body. A formal definition of a standard is given in BS 0-1:2005, 3.21.

The national standards body for the UK is the British Standards Institution (BSI).

The standards bodies for Europe are the European Committee for Standardization (CEN), the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization (CENELEC) and the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI).

The worldwide standards bodies are the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC).

Why?

Standards set out clear and unambiguous provisions in order to help trade, improve competitiveness, increase efficiency and stimulate innovation.

A standard may meet other needs – for example, it may improve the use of resources, or improve the quality of life through health, safety and environmental requirements.

How?

National committees represent their communities in order to develop standards and related documents by consensus.

European and international committees represent the countries interested in the subject matter with the aim of reaching consensus.

The increase in electronic working means that more standardization work is being done without meeting around a table. Committees meet as often as required.

Who?

National committees include representatives of government, testing laboratories, suppliers, customers, academic institutions, business, manufacturers, regulators, consumers and trade unions.

International committees consist of representatives of national standards bodies.

When?

Standards are developed when there is a defined market need.

All standards are developed in the same stages:

- proposal for new work
- project acceptance
- drafting
- public comment period
- approval
- publication
- review

The stages of project acceptance, public comment period and publication are agreed by consensus for national work and by vote for European and international work.

Proposal for new work

Anyone may bring a proposal for new work to a BSI committee, although proposals are usually generated by the committee.

Project acceptance

This involves creating a business case for the project which fulfils acceptance criteria.

For national projects, the proposal is submitted to the relevant BSI Acceptance Team, which will include representatives from Business Information (Marketing and New Product Development) and British Standards, including Standards Development.

For items submitted by BSI to international or European standards bodies, the proposal is circulated to national members for consideration.

Drafting

To allow rapid progress, drafting is generally carried out by a small group of experts before being forwarded to the technical committee for wider consultation.

Public comment period

This enables a broader audience to view the document, ensuring transparency and acceptability of the resulting standard. Comments received will be addressed and the draft amended in line with decisions made by the committee.

Final approval

For national work, this is agreed by committee consensus. For European and international work, this is agreed by vote.

Endorsement to publish

Before publication of a national standard can take place, the secretary and chairman of the relevant technical and/or subcommittee must give endorsement. This table explains what the signatures mean:

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Signatures	Publication of national standard	Implementation of international standard	Implementation of European standard
Technical Committee/ Subcommittee Secretary	Text accords with BSI practices and represents committee's agreed position.	National components of the publication accord with BSI practices.	National components of the publication accord with BSI practices.
TC/SC Chairman	Committee has examined comments and agreed on technical content and that text correctly conveys it.	Text can be adopted as a BSI publication.	Ratified text has to be adopted nationally.
		National elements have been agreed by the committee.	

Once the national committee decides on the most suitable course of action, an announcement is placed in Standards Update, enabling a wide audience to comment. Comments are sent to the committee and the final action is announced in Standards Update.

International and European standards are reviewed at least once every five years. The process is similar to that for national standards.

When an International Electrotechnical Commission standard is published the foreword states how long it will remain unchanged (this is known as the period of stability). Although this can be changed immediately if there is a safety problem, potential changes are normally notified to the secretary and the international committee during the period of stability, then issued as part of the review process. If the national standards bodies agree that changes are required, a maintenance team carries out the drafting.

Signatures are also provided to show endorsement by the Chief Executive of BSI.

Publication

When a standard is published it is announced in Standards Update. For more information on the different types of publication see What are the different types of standard?

Maintenance and review

Standards are reviewed regularly. National standards are reviewed at least once every

five years. The national committee is asked to say whether a standard should be:

- confirmed without change
- confirmed after minor amendment
- confirmed after major amendment
- withdrawn
- declared obsolescent.