

PECB

When Recognition Matters



WHITEPAPER

ISO 21001:2018

EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS – MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS
FOR EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS – REQUIREMENTS
WITH GUIDANCE FOR USE

www.pecb.com



Principal Author

- // Eric LACHAPELLE, PECB
- // Faton ALIU, PECB
- // Enis EMINI, PECB

Contributors

- // Jetë Spahiu, PECB
- // Vincent B. Mokaya, Diverse Management Consultancy Ltd, Kenya
- // Yulius Untung, PT. Decra Group Indonesia, Indonesia
- // Peter Graham, Corsair Management Services, Australia
- // Sreechith Radhakrishnan, Global Success Systems FZ LLC, UAE
- // Gawie Roodt, Africa Industrial Engineering Services (Pty) Ltd, South Africa
- // Roland Joldis, Dot Eleven SRL, Romania
- // Dr. Mehdi El Arbi, LE PLUS, Tunisia
- // Dr. Swapan Purkait, Nettech Private Limited, India
- // Jasmina Trajkovski, Trajkovski & Partners, Macedonia
- // César Duque, CIRECOM – Círculo Empresarial de Competitividad, República Dominicana

CONTENT



- 4 Introduction
- 6 Why a management system standard for educational organizations?
- 7 Principles for an EOMS
- 9 Learners and special needs education
- 11 Achieving social responsibility with the help of ISO 21001
- 13 Structure of the ISO 21001 standard
- 14 Focusing on the needs and expectations of learners and other beneficiaries
- 15 The implementation methodology
- 16 Training and certification of professionals

INTRODUCTION

The International Organization for Standardization – ISO – being one of the oldest and most experienced in the field of industry standardization, ranging from quality management to food safety, has proven to be a global benchmark of standardization which impacts businesses, organizations, policy-makers, and various regulations around the globe.

One of its latest published standards is ISO 21001:2018 – Management Systems for Educational Organizations (EOMS). This standard focuses on educational organizations and their respective services and products, as well as the improvement and/or enhancement of educational services and products.

The EOMS is meant to serve as a management tool with a set of requirements that aim to help educational organizations/institutions establish the necessary policies and procedures which would ensure that students, staff (teachers, employees), customers and other beneficiaries' needs, requirements and objectives are met – and at the same time, the interaction between these interested parties and the educational organization is elevated to a successful level for all parties involved.

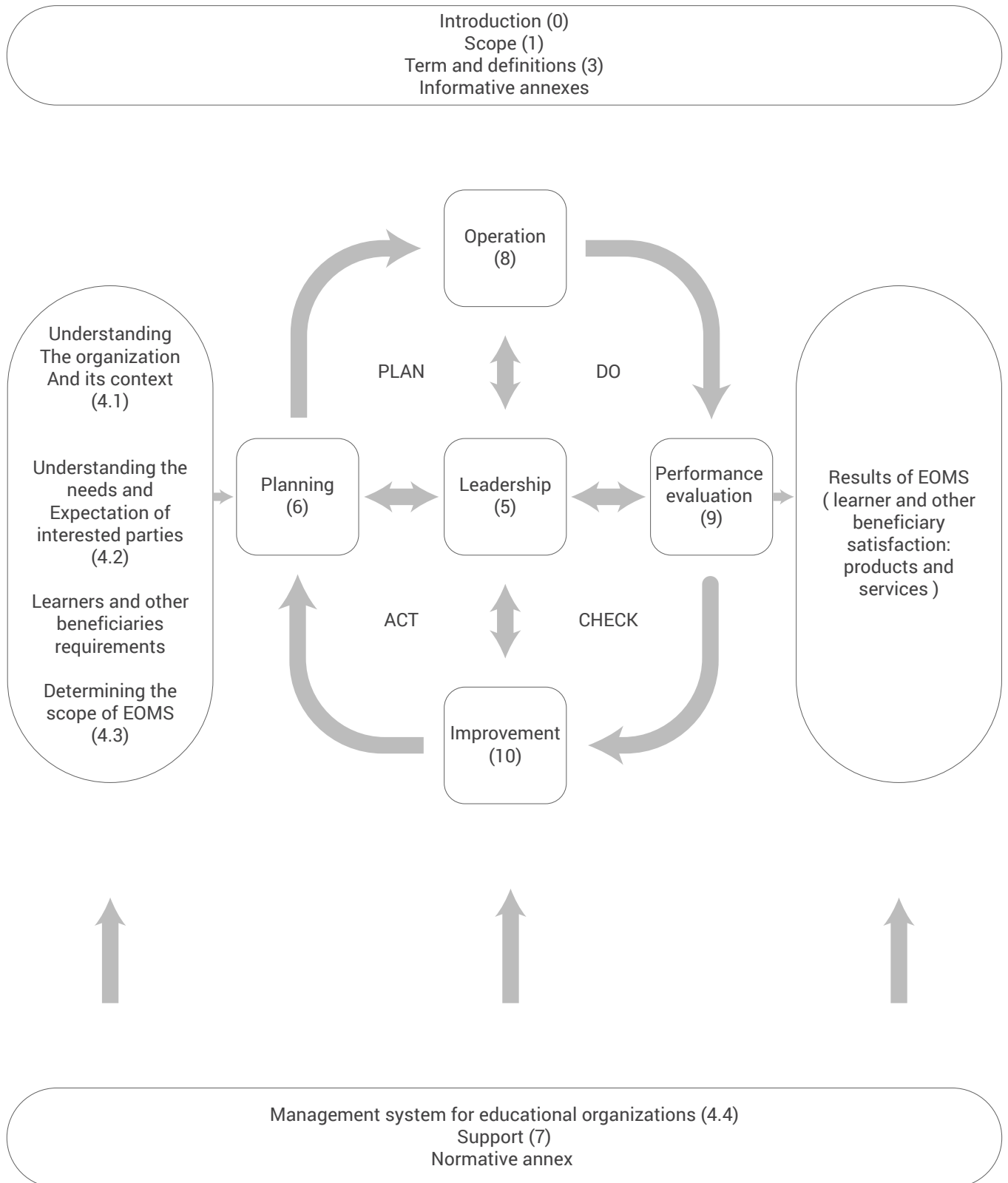
Another focus of this standard is the alignment with other ISO management system standards, which is achieved through the application of the now well-known “High Level Structure” (Annex SL). This means that the EOMS has the same structure as ISO 9001:2015 and other subsequent revised standards but with sector specific aligned content. The High Level Structure (HLS) is key for those organizations that may choose to operate a single management system (commonly known as Integrated Management System) which combines two or more management system standards.

What distinguishes ISO 21001 from other ISO management system standards, are its guidance for use annexes (A to G) which are quite extensive, and provide considerable information and guidance in regards to ISO 21001 requirements and education related concepts. However, what is more attention-grabbing is that Annex A provides further requirements for Early Childhood Education providers, which is in stark contrast to other ISO standards, since ISO standard annexes mostly serve as guidelines for use.

It must be stated that this standard is applicable across the field of education providers – be it primary, middle, or high schools, university level settings, training providers, public or private education sector, and so on. The EOMS is not confined to schools or institutions of higher learning sectors only, but also applies to any organization which utilizes a curriculum to provide, share and transfer knowledge.

Figure 1: ISO 21001 structure in the Plan-Do-Check-Act cycle

EOMS in the framework of ISO 21001



(Source: ISO 21001, Figure 2)



Why a management system standard for educational organizations?

Standards in education are not a new thing. For decades now there have been teacher standards, standards of achievement, standardized curricula, learning standards, standardized tests and so on. Even within the realm of ISO standards, standardization in educational organizations is not an entirely new concept.

In 2003, ISO published ISO 9001:2000 guidelines for the education sector with the aim of helping – as the name implies – educational organizations in providing educational products and services. The guidelines were intended for educational organizations at all levels, providing all types of education, such as: elementary, medium or higher education; including distance and e-learning. In this context, one could claim that ISO 21001 is the successor of ISO 9001, the Quality Management Systems Standard, adopted for the education sector.

The development of ISO 21001 was carried out by the ISO/PC 288 team. The work was led by the Korean Agency for Technology and Standards (KATS) and the working group comprised of eighty-six cross-sectoral experts from 39 national standardization bodies, with the added participation of stakeholder organizations from various educational sectors. ISO 21001 applies to management systems used by educational organizations, i.e., the “set of interrelated or interacting elements of an organization to establish policies and objectives and processes to achieve those objectives.”

In other words, ISO 21001 intends to provide a common management tool for organizations providing educational products and services, capable of meeting learner and other beneficiary needs and requirements. Although the main beneficiaries are learners and educational organizations, it is safe to say that all parties involved can benefit from a properly implemented management system for educational organizations based on ISO 21001 and accompanied with industry best practices.

Compliance with the standard will involve various mandatory activities within the management system’s scope of recognition, i.e., internal auditing, learner satisfaction evaluations, control of externally provided processes, products or services, review of programs and annual management reviews of the organization’s management systems among other aspects to address gaps.

Figure 2: Principles for an EOMS





1. **Focus on learners and other beneficiaries** – The primary focus of the EOMS is to meet learner and other beneficiary requirements and to exceed their expectations.
2. **Visionary leadership** – Visionary leadership is to engage all learners and other beneficiaries in creating, writing, and implementing the organization mission, vision and objectives.
3. **Engagement of people** – It is essential for the organization that all individuals involved are competent, empowered and engaged in delivering value.
4. **Process approach** – Consistent and predictable results are achieved more effectively and efficiently when activities are understood and managed as interrelated processes that function as a coherent system, including input and output.
5. **Improvement** – Successful organizations have an ongoing focus on improvement.
6. **Evidence-based decisions** – Decisions and curricula based on the analysis and evaluation of data and information are more likely to produce desired results.
7. **Relationship management** – For sustained success, organizations manage their relationships with interested parties, such as providers.
8. **Social responsibility** – Socially responsible organizations are sustainable and ensure long-term success.
9. **Accessibility and equity** – Successful organizations are inclusive, flexible, transparent and accountable, in order to address learners' individual and special needs, interests, abilities and backgrounds.
10. **Ethical conduct in education** – Ethical conduct relates to the ability of the organization to create an ethical professional environment where all interested parties are dealt with equitably, conflicts of interests are avoided, and activities are conducted for the benefit of the society.
11. **Data security and protection** – The organization creates an environment where all interested parties can interact with the educational organization in full confidence that they maintain control over the use of their own data, and that the educational organization will treat their data with appropriate care and confidentiality.

(Source: ISO 21001, Annex B Principles for an EOMS)



Learners and special needs education

If we were to find a common denominator across the field of education, then students must be one of them. Thus, it is only fair to see that students' needs are emphasized throughout this standard's requirements and its guidelines. Whether it is the context of the organization clause, leadership and commitment, performance evaluation or improvement requirements – all of them are clear that student needs, satisfaction, and feedback must be dealt with in an appropriate and inclusive manner.

Student needs can vary a great deal. They could be related to curriculum, instruction, mode and duration of study, or assessment methods, psychological or social needs, to those known as special needs education. This extensive range of student needs carries with itself numerous challenges that the field of education is faced with on a daily basis. There are obviously numerous approaches (best practices and researches conducted) that aim to address and overcome these challenges – all with added specifics depending on the context of the educational organization.

However, when one analyzes the ISO 21001 standard, it can be seen that the committee involved in drafting this standard was quite cautious of those needs. Consequently, those needs were translated into specific and rather general requirements that can be found in this standard. Additionally, special needs education requirements were emphasized in some of the key clauses, such as:

Leadership:

- 5.1.2 Focus on learners and other beneficiaries
- 5.1.3 Additional requirements for special needs education

Support:

- 7.1.4 Environment for the operation of educational processes (which stress the need for the learning facilities dimensions to be adequate to the requirements of those using them)
- 7.1.6.2 Learning resources (organizational knowledge)



- 7.2.2 Additional requirements for special needs education
- 7.4.3 Communication arrangements - e) learner and interested parties' feedback, including learner complaints and learners/interested parties' satisfaction surveys

Operation:

- 8.1.2 Specific operational planning and control of educational products and services
- 8.1.3 Additional requirements for special needs education (highlighting the need for adaptive and flexible approaches to curriculum and instruction development, based on learners' needs)
- 8.2.1 Determining the requirements for the educational products and services
- 8.3 Design and development of the educational products and services
- 8.5.1.6 Additional requirements for special needs education (highlighting the need that students should be provided with multiple and diverse opportunities to demonstrate their mastery of the topics of instruction)

Knowing that ISO standards are meant to serve as standardizing tools, ISO 21001 makes sure to emphasize that educational organizations are the ones to address learners' specific needs. Knowing very well that a "one-size fits all" approach does not work in an education setting (or anywhere else, for that matter); moreover, it is these very uniform approaches to education curriculum, instruction and assessment that are causing quite the uproar across the educational field.

Highlighting the need for flexibility in curriculum development, instruction and assessment methods, so that all students can learn and are able to express their learning in ways that allow them to be their best – provides the necessary focus from ISO's perspective that this issue entails.

It must also be stressed out that 'special needs education', although primarily focusing on learners with special needs, provides educational organizations and all stakeholders involved in those processes the perspective that all learners (in one way or another) have special needs, and those educational organizations that are able to meet those needs will succeed.

All this focus on learners is rounded with clause 9.1.2 Satisfaction of learners, other beneficiaries and staff, which in a way concludes the circle of learner focus, by adding the component of beneficiaries (parents, community, etc.) and the staff satisfaction, knowing that these are crucial parts of monitoring the overall satisfaction with the educational services and products.



Achieving social responsibility with the help of ISO 21001

“The object of education is to teach us to love what is beautiful.”
- Plato, The Republic

In a world where there are 7.6 billion of us and we have only a finite amount of resources, there is an immediate need that we, both as individuals and societies, learn to live sustainably. Thus, investing in educational organizations, by making them more socially responsible is a good start in the long journey of ensuring long-term success and achieving our sustainability aspirations.

Education, apart from providing the foundations for social and economic development shapes us as individuals, and things that we learn through education and the habits that we create during our schooling tend to stay with us for the rest of our lives. Hence, it is only logical to assume that if we add a touch of social responsibility thinking into our existing educational organizations, we increase the chances of leaving a brighter and better planet for the future generations.

Knowing that curriculums and other standardized educational documents have “socially responsible” commitments within them, though not necessarily realized or acted upon, ISO 21001 can help in this regard by serving as a catalyzer of these initiatives and, at the same time, also provide a structured and methodical approach with a strong focus on the needs of learner and other beneficiaries. ISO 21001 can also help to amplify the message that education is better off when it gives back to and has regard for the society that is responsible for funding it and for the environment where it operates.

Young learners begin to construct their connections with the world early in their life and parents, guardians, teachers (especially kindergarten and primary school teachers), and other role models are crucial for each child’s formation of a positive and empowered relationship with the society. One of the most effective ways of helping the young learners develop this connection is to provide them with the opportunity to enter and engage with the real world around them. Failure to do so can lead to a lack of connection and commitment between self, the communities around them, and larger communities.



Within the higher education institutions, there are initiatives to embed social responsibility as a core element of the curriculum and their culture. These initiatives have the potential to further help students develop their social skills, create a sense of connection with the world surrounding them, develop their ability to study and explore questions about their responsibilities as a local and global citizen, and ultimately help them create the confidence that they make a difference in the world. For this purpose, ISO 21001 provides **clause 8.3 Design and development of the educational products and services** which lists the requirements to establish, implement and maintain a design and development process of educational products and services, including: planning, inputs, controls and outputs. The standard states the requirements for the controls on educational services, curriculum and summative assessment. All these requirements, when properly implemented and adhered to, have the potential to help higher education institutions create learning environments where all students strive for excellence in the use of their talents, seek responsibility for the integrity and quality of their work, find meaningful practices and do not yield on their endeavor to be socially responsible.

To conclude, in a journal article titled “Strengthening the Foundations of Students’ Excellence, Integrity, and Social contribution”, Anne Colby and William M. Sullivan, senior scholars at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching state that:

“It is important for the institutional culture to help students think about what they want to be like as individuals, as professionals in their fields, and as citizens as well as to engage them habitually in socially responsible behaviors through providing opportunities, incentives, and structures for that behavior,” and ISO 21001 can be just the right tool to provide that.

Structure of the ISO 21001 standard

As stated above, ISO 21001 follows the Annex SL – ‘High level structure’ (HLS) for ISO management system standards. It is written in a language where the requirements are intended to be adaptable to the particular context of the educational organization, based on the complexity of their size and activities, level of maturity, their strategic direction, policies and objectives.

	High Level Structure for ISO management system standards	ISO 21001
Clause 4	Context of the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Understanding the organization and its context › Understanding the needs and expectations of interested parties › Scope of the EOMS
Clause 5	Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Leadership and commitment (including the additional requirements for special needs education) › Focus on learners and other beneficiaries › Developing and communicating the educational organization policy › Assigning the organizational roles, responsibilities and authorities
Clause 6	Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Planning of actions to address risks and opportunities › Establishing the educational organization objectives, and planning to achieve them › Planning and managing changes
Clause 7	Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Determining and providing the necessary resources for the operation of the EOMS (human resources, facilities, organizational knowledge) › Competence & training (including the competences needed for learners with special needs) › Awareness & communication › Creating, updating, and controlling the documented information
Clause 8	Operation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Planning operations and controls › Determining and communicating the requirements for the educational products and services and any changes to them › Establishing controls (including design and development controls) and procedures › Control of externally provided processes, products and services › Delivering the educational products and services
Clause 9	Performance evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Monitoring and measuring the satisfaction of learners, other beneficiaries and staff › Analysis and evaluation of the obtained information › Conducting internal audits and management reviews
Clause 10	Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Reacting to nonconformities, and taking corrective actions › Continually improving the EOMS › Determining the opportunities for improvement



Focusing on the needs and expectations of learners and other beneficiaries

As stated throughout this paper, ISO 21001 displays a consistent focus on learners; this is also reflected in regards to other beneficiaries. Be it the learners themselves (former or present), parents or guardians, governments, community, and so forth. Knowing well that these very interested parties (other beneficiaries), directly or indirectly influence the success of an educational organization.

Furthermore, the attention to learners and other beneficiaries is also in line with the main ISO 21001 principles, such as Focus on learners and other beneficiaries; Engagement of people; Social responsibility and Ethical conduct in education. All of them combined, in one way or another, complement each other in the process of meeting learners and other beneficiaries' needs.

What is more intriguing in this midst is that the guidelines provided by the standard for classifying, involving, and managing the communication process are quite detailed. This is especially true when it comes to managing the communication between the interested parties; there are four types of classification which are put forward by the standard, including:

- /// **Involvement:** represents cases where interested parties are directly involved in processes, such as: involving relevant industry actors in creating a trainee or internship policy for students.
- /// **Representation:** appointed student **representatives** as interested parties, **involved** directly in the process, such as: electing student representatives into a university's governing body and other relevant committees.
- /// **Consultation:** meaning that interested parties are **consulted**, but do not directly participate in it, such as: consulting architects regarding the accessibility of a building before purchase.
- /// **Checking:** meaning that the educational organization can check on the perspectives or positions of interested parties, but does not involve, represent or consult them. Such as: prior to starting a new program or implementing a certain policy, they can **check** their competitors.

These guidelines are by no means exhaustive as far as learners and interested parties communication and involvement in EOMS (and other) processes is concerned. They do however provide a basis for managing interested parties involvement in relevant processes.

The implementation methodology

PECB has developed a methodology for implementing a management system so as to ensure that all certification/accreditation and standard requirements are captured, thus aiding step-by-step systematic deployment and use. It is called the “Integrated Implementation Methodology for Management Systems and Standards (IMS2)” and it is based on international best practices. This methodology is based on the guidelines specified in ISO standards, which also meets the requirements of ISO 21001.

Figure 2: PECB methodology for EOMS implementation



IMS2 is based on the PDCA cycle, which is divided into four phases: Plan, Do, Check and Act. Each phase has a number of steps which are further divided into activities and tasks. This ‘Practical Guide’ considers the key phases in the organization’s implementation project from start to finish. Constructively, it suggests the appropriate ‘best practice’ for each step while directing the organization as it embarks on its journey to implement ISO 21001.

By following a structured and effective methodology, an organization can ensure that it covers all the minimum requirements for the implementation of the management system. As stated above, whatever methodology used, the organization must adapt it to its particular context. The key to a successful implementation relies on a contextualized and adaptable approach by the respective organization.



Training and certification of professionals

PECB has created a training roadmap and personnel certification schemes which are strongly recommended for implementers and auditors who wish to become certified against ISO 21001. The certification of individuals serves as documented evidence of professional competency, while also providing evidence that the individual has attended one of the related courses and successfully completed the exams. It also proves that the certified professional has the expertise to assist an educational organization in successfully obtaining an ISO 21001 certification.

Personnel certifications demonstrate that the professional possesses the defined competencies based on best practices. It also allows educational organizations to make an informed decision on the selection of employees or services based on the competencies that are represented by the certification designation. Finally, it provides opportunities for the professional to constantly improve his/her skills and knowledge, and also serves as a tool for employers to ensure that training and awareness have indeed been effective.

PECB training courses are offered globally through a network of authorized training providers; they are available in several languages and include the following: Introduction, Foundation, Lead implementer, and Lead Auditor courses. The table below provides a short description of PECB's official training courses for the ISO 21001 scheme.

Training title	Short description of the training	Who should attend? ISO 21001
ISO 21001 Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › One day training course › Introduction to the fundamental principles and concepts of an EOMS based on ISO 21001 › Not intended for certification purposes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Individuals interested in the field of education › Individuals seeking to gain knowledge about the main processes of the management system for educational organizations (EOMS)
ISO 21001 Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Two day training course › Become acquainted with the concepts, principles and some of the good practices of an EOMS based on ISO 21001 › One hour exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Individuals involved in Educational Management and Administration › Individuals seeking to gain knowledge about the main processes of Educational Organizations Management Systems (EOMS) › Individuals interested to pursue a career in the field of Education
ISO 21001 Lead Implementer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Five day training course › Master the implementation, management and maintenance of an EOMS › Three hours exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Individuals involved in Educational Management and Administration › Individuals involved in the development and provision of educational products and services › Individuals seeking to gain knowledge about the main processes of Educational Organizations Management Systems (EOMS) › Individuals interested to pursue a career in the field of education › Individuals seeking to contribute to the field of education and standardized management systems in educational organizations
ISO 21001 Lead Auditor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Five day training course › Master the auditing principles and techniques (audit of an EOMS) › Three hours exam 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Auditors seeking to perform and lead Management Systems for Educational Organizations (EOMS) certification audits › Managers or consultants seeking to master Management Systems for Educational Organizations and their respective audit processes › Individuals responsible for maintaining conformance with EOMS requirements › Technical experts seeking to prepare for an Educational Organizations Management System audit › Expert advisors in Educational Management and Administration

Although a specified set of courses or curriculum of study is not required as part of the certification process, the completion of a recognized PECB training course or program of study will significantly enhance the chances of passing a PECB certification examination as the examination is based on PECB's training material.

The list of approved organizations that offer PECB official training sessions can be found on our website: www.pecb.com.

PECB



+1-844-426-7322



customer@pecb.com



Help Center

www.pecb.com