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ISO/IEC 42001 Readiness Checklist

Starter checklist

August 2026

ISO/IEC 42001 Readiness Checklist

ISO/IEC 42001 gives organisations a structured way to govern the responsible development, provision or use of AI through an Artificial Intelligence Management System, usually shortened to AIMS.

Building an AIMS requires more than writing an AI policy or collecting documentation. The organisation needs visibility into how AI is being used and clear responsibility for the decisions made around it. It also needs processes that can be reviewed and improved over time.

This checklist will help you assess whether those foundations are already in place and show where more work may be needed before implementation moves forward.

Use it as an early planning tool, then follow it with a more detailed gap assessment once the intended scope of the AIMS is clear.

A high score **does not** confirm conformity with ISO/IEC 42001.

Organization:

Completed by:

Date:

How to use this checklist

In this checklist, you will encounter questions or statements about your Organizations AIMS (e.g. "There is a repeatable process for identifying and assessing risks associated with AI systems.") For each statement, you must choose the response that best reflects what your organisation can demonstrate today:

Yes — 2 points

Answer 'Yes' if clear and repeatable approach is already in place in regards to the pertinant statement.

Partly — 1 point

Answer 'Partly' if some work has been completed, but the approach is informal, inconsistent or limited to part of the organisation.

No — 0 points

Answer 'No' if he organisation hasn't addressed this area yet, or there's no evidence that it has been addressed.

Base each answer on what currently happens in practice, not what the organisation plans to introduce later. Use the notes field to record any gaps, possible actions or people who may need to be involved.

Each answer corresponds to a certain number of points (yes = 2 points, partly = 1 point, no = 0 points). For each answer, record the number of points you have earned. At the end, add all your points together for a grand total score.

1. Visibilty and scope

1.1 AI inventory

The organisation has identified the AI systems it currently develops, provides or uses, including AI features built into third-party software.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

1.2 Purpose and use

The organisation understands why each AI system is being used, who relies on it and which activities or decisions it influences.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

1.3 Organisational context

The organisation has considered the internal and external factors that could affect the way its AI systems should be governed.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

1.4 Initial AIMS scope

There is an initial view of which parts of the organisation, activities and AI systems should fall within the scope of the AIMS.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

Section 1 score: __/8

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2. Leadership and responsibility

2.1 Leadership support

Senior leadership understands why the organisation is considering ISO/IEC 42001 and has agreed what the AIMS should help it achieve.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

2.2 AIMS responsibility

A named person or role has responsibility for coordinating the establishment and ongoing management of the AIMS.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

2.3 AI system ownership

Responsibility has been assigned for individual AI systems or use cases, including authority to make decisions about their continued use.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

2.4 Resources and involvement

The organisation can provide the time and expertise needed to build the AIMS, with support available from the relevant parts of the business.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

Section 2 score: __/8

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3. Governance, risk, and impact

3.1 AI policy

The organisation has an AI policy, or an existing governance policy that can be developed to address the responsible use of AI.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

3.2 AI risk management

There is a repeatable process for identifying and assessing risks associated with AI systems.

Yes/ Partly /No

Notes:

3.3 AI impact assessment

The organisation has a way to examine how an AI system could affect the people who use it or are influenced by its outputs.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

3.4 Applicable obligations

The organisation has identified the legal, regulatory and contractual obligations that may apply to its use of AI, with responsibility assigned for keeping that information current.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

Section 3 score: __/8

4. Controls across the AI lifecycle

4.1 Approval before use

AI systems are reviewed and approved before they're purchased, developed or introduced into an operational process.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

4.2 Data Considerations

The organisation considers whether the data used by an AI system is suitable for its intended purpose and whether appropriate handling requirements are in place.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

4.3 Human oversight

The organisation has defined where human review is needed and what authority a reviewer has to question, reject or escalate an AI-generated output.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

4.4 Changes and third-party systems

The organisation has a way to review significant system updates, vendor changes or new uses of an existing AI tool.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

Section 4 score: _____ / 8

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5. Skills, communication, and evidence

5.1 Competence

People with responsibilities inside the AIMS have the knowledge needed to perform their roles, or the organisation has identified where additional training is required.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

5.2 Employee awareness

Employees understand the organisation's expectations for using AI and know how to raise a concern or report unexpected behaviour.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

5.3 Documented decisons

Important decisions about AI systems are recorded clearly enough that the organisation can explain what was decided and who approved it.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

5.4 Document control

Policies and other AIMS records are kept current and available to the people who need them, with appropriate protection against unauthorised changes.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

Section 5 score: _____ / 8

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6. Monitoring and continual improvement

6.1 Ongoing monitoring

The organisation monitors whether its AI systems continue to perform as expected and whether their risks or impacts have changed.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

6.2 Incidents and unexpected behaviour

There is a process for reporting and responding when an AI system fails or behaves in an unexpected way.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

6.3 Internal review

The organisation has a way to evaluate whether its AI governance processes are being followed and remain effective.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

6.4 Improvement

Weaknesses identified through monitoring, internal review or operational experience lead to corrective action and changes to the AIMS where needed.

Yes / Partly / No

Notes:

Section 6 score: _____ / 8

Your readiness score

Add your scores from all six sections.

Total score: _____ / 48

0-12: Early-stage foundations

Your organisation is still developing visibility into its use of AI and the responsibilities created by it.

Begin by identifying where AI is already being used and assigning ownership for those systems. This will give the organisation a clearer basis for deciding what the AIMS should cover.

13-24: Foundations are emerging

Some useful governance activity is already taking place, but it may be informal or applied inconsistently.

Review the areas marked Partly and determine which existing practices can be brought into a coordinated management system. Particular attention should be given to the scope of the AIMS and the way responsibility is assigned.

25-36: Ready to plan implementation

Your organisation has many of the foundations needed to begin a structured ISO/IEC 42001 implementation.

The next step is to carry out a more detailed gap assessment and turn the findings into an implementation plan with clear ownership. Existing processes may be reusable, but they'll need to operate consistently within the scope of the AIMS.

37-48: Strong starting position

Your organisation appears to have a developed approach to AI governance and may be well positioned to begin formal implementation.

You'll still need a detailed assessment to compare your current approach with the requirements of ISO/IEC 42001. The organisation will also need to test whether its processes work consistently and produce suitable evidence before considering certification.

Review your priority gaps

A total score provides a general indication of readiness, but some gaps will require attention regardless of the final result.

Pay particular attention to any "**No**" response concerning:

- visibility into where AI is used
- the intended scope of the AIMS
- responsibility for the management system
- AI risk assessment
- ongoing monitoring and internal review

These areas provide the foundation for much of the wider management system. Where they remain unclear, implementation can easily become focused on producing documents without establishing how AI will be governed.

Where to go next

Use your results to identify the areas that need the most immediate attention and assign responsibility for the next action.

Safeshield's ISO/IEC 42001 Hub brings together practical guidance on Artificial Intelligence Management Systems, implementation and certification readiness. Visit the Hub to continue building your organisation's approach or explore structured training when you're ready to move forward.

Explore ISO/IEC 42001 implementation resources

View ISO/IEC 42001 and AI GRC training

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About Safeshield

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- Security training for employees and executives
- AIMS and ISMS Implementation
- Risk assessments
- Security audits
- More

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