

The following is provided by IRQS as a service to clients. Also applies to.

## **Certification, registration and accreditation**

Your organization’s management system has been independently audited and confirmed as being in conformity with ISO13485:2012 or ISO13485:2003 or ISO 9001:2008 or ISO 14001:2004, for which you have been issued a certificate. In announcing this, **which is the correct term to use: “certification”, “registration”, or “accreditation”?**

Let’s take the first two. According to the standardized definitions, they are not quite the same thing. In the context of ISO13485:2012 or ISO 9001:2008 or ISO 14001:2004, **“certification”** refers to the issuing of written assurance (the certificate) by an independent external body that has audited your management system and verified that it conforms to the requirements specified in the standard. **“Registration”** means that the auditing body then records your certification in its client register.

So, **your organization’s management system has been both certified and registered.** For practical purposes then, in the ISO13485:2012 or ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 14001:2004 contexts, the difference between the two terms is not significant and **both are acceptable for general use.** “Certification” seems to be the term most widely used worldwide, although registration (from which “registrar” as an alternative to registration/certification body) is often preferred in North America, and the two are used interchangeably.

On the contrary, using “accreditation” as an interchangeable alternative for certification or registration is a mistake, because it means something different. In the ISO13485:2012 or ISO 9001:2008 or ISO 14001:2004 contexts, accreditation refers to the formal recognition by a specialized body – an accreditation body – that a certification body is competent to carry out ISO13485:2012 or ISO 9001:2008 or ISO 14001:2004 certification in specified business sectors. In simple terms, accreditation is like certification of the certification body. Certificates issued by accredited certification bodies may be perceived on the market as having increased credibility.

## **Remember !**

It is okay to state either that your organization has been “ certified ” or “ registered ” because their meanings are equivalent for practical purposes, but inaccurate to state that it has been “ accredited ” (unless your organization is a certification/registration body). Exception; a non-accredited registrar does not maintain a register of clients, therefore an organization cannot use the phrase ‘registered’ in this case.

## **Remember !**

It is time to stop using references to "ISO 9000 certification", "ISO 14000 certification", "ISO 9001 certification" and "ISO 14001 certification". **The only accurate way to refer to certification to the latest versions of the unique certification standards is “ISO13485:2012” or “ISO 9001:2008 certification” and “ISO 14001:2004 certification”.**

## **Remember**

**The terms “ISO certified” and “ISO certification” should not be used because they carry the potential for misleading people into thinking that it is ISO which has carried out the**

**certification.** Use instead “ISO13485:2012 certified” or “ISO 9001:2008 certified”, “ISO 9001:2008 certification”, “ISO 14001:2004 certified”, or “ISO 14001:2004 certification”.

## **The organization – or the system?**

With ISO13485:2012 or ISO 9001:2008 or ISO 14001:2004, it is the management system that is certified, not the organization that implements the system. However, since the management system has no independent existence, it is acceptable for organizations with certified systems to describe themselves as certified on condition that they specify the [extent of the certification](#). Certified organizations may therefore promote themselves via media such as company flags, paintwork of vehicle fleets, advertisements and letterheads as ISO13485:2012 or ISO 9001:2008 or ISO 14001:2004 certified.

## **A number of certification bodies authorize certified clients to use special logos**

developed by the former which include phrases such as “quality assured firm”, “quality assured” and variants. These are derived from the standardized definition of “assurance” which denotes a statement giving confidence that something fulfills specified requirements – such uses are acceptable.

## **Remember !**

ISO13485:2012 or ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 14001:2004 give generic requirements for management systems, not requirements for specific products or services. ISO13485:2012 and ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 14001:2004 certifications are not product certifications or product guarantees. Great care must therefore be taken in the wording of any references to them which appear in product-related information, including advertisements, or on any other medium, **in order to avoid giving the impression that they are product certifications or product guarantees.** In particular, ISO13485:2012 and ISO 9001:2008 and ISO 14001:2004 certification marks of conformity are not to be displayed on products, on product labels, on product packaging, or in any way that may be interpreted as denoting product conformity.

Is it ISO Certification or ISO Registration?

You may have heard both **ISO certification** and **ISO registration** being used in reference to the ISO quality system. Some people in the ISO business will tell you that the term ISO certification is not correct, that ISO registration is the correct term.

According to standardized definitions in the ISO standard ( See [ISO/IEC 17000, Conformity assessment - Vocabulary and general principles](#)) ISO certification and ISO registration are not exactly the same thing. ISO certification has to do with issuing a certificate; that is, a written document issued by an independent auditing body that has audited your quality management system and verified that it conforms to the ISO standard requirements. And ISO registration means that your certification has been recorded, or registered, with the auditing body. Once you have been audited by an ISO registrar, technically your quality management system has been ISO certified **and** ISO registered. For practical purposes the terms ISO certified and ISO registered can be used interchangeably. The term ISO certification is more commonly used among people not involved in the ISO quality standard on a daily basis. For some reason, in North America, many ISO consultants prefer the terms ISO registered and ISO registration. For common, practical, everyday use, however, either one -- certified or registered -- is acceptable.

The term *accredited*, in the context of ISO, refers only to formal recognition by an accreditation body that a certification body is competent to carry out quality system certification. Unless you are an ISO registrar, it is **not** accurate to say your company is accredited to the ISO standard. So, it’s OK to say your company has been either ISO certified, or ISO registered to the ISO quality standard. For practical purposes the meanings are the same. The body that does the ISO certification is usually called the ISO registrar though, and the term ISO certifier is not generally used.

There are occasionally stories in the quality world about ISO 9001 Registrars handing out ISO 9001 certificates, but who are not properly accredited. Believe it or not, there are unscrupulous people and businesses that are willing to take advantage of those who have not done their homework.

As many of you know, ISO (the [International Organization for Standardization](#)) is not actually involved in granting ISO certifications. ISO creates standards, they are not in the business of enforcing them. Other organizations actually handle the process of granting ISO certification.

Worldwide, the International Accreditation Forum ([IAF](#)) is the organization that handles all the facets associated with granting ISO 9001 Certification. The IAF works with national or regional bodies, which in turn accredit registration bodies that go out and audit organizations for compliance to the ISO 9001 standard.

Here in the U.S., the [American National Standards Institute](#) and the [American Society of Quality](#) cooperate to form the ANSI-ASQ National Accreditation Board, known as [ANAB](#). They accredit registration organizations, attempting to ensure consistency and compliance in ISO 9001 registration auditing. The lines of authority look like this.



When you hire a registrar for [ISO 9001 certification](#), be sure to verify that they are accredited by ANAB or whatever the equivalent of ANAB is in your country or region (you can find a list of members at the IAF website, <http://www.iaf.nu>). And your registration certificate should have the ANAB and the IAF logos on it. Without them, you are not truly certified.



Hope you find this helpful. For further assistance with your quality management system contact;  
[www.irqs-llc.com](http://www.irqs-llc.com), International Regulatory/Quality Services, or email [sales@irqs-llc.com](mailto:sales@irqs-llc.com).

