
Translation services — Requirements for translation services

*Services de traduction — Exigences relatives aux services de
traduction*

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation on the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the WTO principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see the following URL: [Foreword - Supplementary information](#).

The committee responsible for this document is ISO/TC 37, *Terminology and other language and content resources*, Subcommittee SC 5, *Translation, interpreting and related technology*.

Introduction

This International Standard specifies requirements for all aspects of the translation process directly affecting the quality and delivery of translation services. It includes provisions for translation service providers (TSPs) concerning the management of core processes, minimum qualification requirements, the availability and management of resources, and other actions necessary for the delivery of a quality translation service.

This International Standard is intended for implementation by TSPs of any size. Conformity requires all the International Standard's provisions to be met, but the methods of implementation may differ depending on the size and complexity of the organization and, in some cases, on the volume and complexity of the translation service being requested of the TSP.

The following auxiliary verbs used in this International Standard have the conventional usage assigned to them by ISO directives:

- *shall* – used to indicate **requirements** strictly to be followed in order to conform to the document and from which no deviation is permitted;
- *should* – used to indicate that, among several possibilities, one is **recommended** as particularly suitable, without mentioning or excluding others, or that a certain course of action is preferred but not necessarily required;
- *may* – used to indicate a course of action **permissible** within the limits of the document;
- *can* – used for statements of **possibility** and capability, whether material, physical, or causal.

In this International Standard, the following convention in use has been adopted to provide clarity where there might otherwise be confusion of concept:

- references to “requirements” relate to provisions of this International Standard, other standards, or legal regulation;
- references to “specifications” relate to provisions involving the translation service or project originating from the client, TSP, or other sources.

Translation services — Requirements for translation services

1 Scope

This International Standard provides requirements for the core processes, resources, and other aspects necessary for the delivery of a quality translation service that meets applicable specifications.

Application of this International Standard also provides the means by which a translation service provider (TSP) can demonstrate conformity of specified translation services to this International Standard and the capability of its processes and resources to deliver a translation service that will meet the client's and other applicable specifications.

Applicable specifications can include those of the client, of the TSP itself, and of any relevant industry codes, best-practice guides, or legislation.

The use of raw output from machine translation plus post-editing is outside the scope of this International Standard.

This International Standard does not apply to interpreting services.

2 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

2.1 Concepts related to translation and translation services

2.1.1

translate

render *source language content* (2.3.2) into *target language content* (2.3.3) in written form

2.1.2

translation

set of *processes* (2.1.4) to render *source language content* (2.3.2) into *target language content* (2.3.3) in written form

Note 1 to entry: A translation may refer to formats other than text-based formats (e.g. an audio file, image, etc.).

2.1.3

translation workflow

processes (2.1.4), or parts thereof, involved in achieving *target language content* (2.3.3)

2.1.4

process

set of interrelated and interacting activities performed in order to achieve a stated objective

2.1.5

product

output of *process* (2.1.4)

EXAMPLE 1 A *translated* (2.1.1) version of a book purchased from a retail shop or on the web.

EXAMPLE 2 Intellectual property in the content of a *translated* (2.1.1) book can be the subject of agreement between the author and the *translator* (2.4.4).

EXAMPLE 3 A TSP (2.4.2) translating a book for a publisher is providing a service (2.1.6). Computer software can be purchased to support a range of translation (2.1.2) processes (2.1.4).

Note 1 to entry: Many product categories comprise elements that form a generic product. Its dominant element determines whether the product is designated processed material, intellectual property, software, or services (2.1.6).

2.1.6 translation service

intangible product (2.1.5) that is the result of interaction between client (2.4.3) and TSP (2.4.2)

2.1.7 interpret

render spoken or signed information from one language to another language in oral or signed form

2.2 Concepts related to translation workflow and technology

2.2.1 computer-aided translation

CAT

part of translation workflow (2.1.3) in which a variety of software applications are used to support the task of human translation (2.1.2)

Note 1 to entry: These computer programs are usually referred to as translation (2.1.2) tools, computer-aided translation tools, or, sometimes, translation environment tools (TEnts).

2.2.2 machine translation

MT

automated translation (2.1.2) of text or speech from one natural language (2.3.8) to another using a computer system

2.2.3 machine translation output

outcome of machine translation (2.2.2)

2.2.4 post-edit

edit and correct machine translation output (2.2.3)

Note 1 to entry: This definition means that the post-editor will edit output automatically generated by a machine translation engine. It does not refer to a situation where a translator sees and uses a suggestion from a machine translation engine within a CAT (computer-aided translation) tool.

2.2.5 check

examination of target language content (2.3.3) carried out by the translator (2.4.4)

2.2.6 revision

bilingual examination of target language content (2.3.3) against source language content (2.3.2) for its suitability for the agreed purpose

Note 1 to entry: The term bilingual editing is sometimes used as a synonym for revision.

2.2.7 review

monolingual examination of target language content (2.3.3) for its suitability for the agreed purpose

Note 1 to entry: The term monolingual editing is sometimes used as a synonym for review.

2.2.8**proofread**

examine the revised *target language content* ([2.3.3](#)) and applying *corrections* ([2.5.4](#)) before printing

2.2.9**project management**

coordinating, managing, and monitoring a project throughout its complete lifecycle

2.2.10**style guide**

set of editing and formatting instructions

2.3 Concepts related to language and content**2.3.1****content**

anything representing meaningful information or knowledge

2.3.2**source language content**

language *content* ([2.3.1](#)) to be *translated* ([2.1.1](#))

2.3.3**target language content**

language *content* ([2.3.1](#)) *translated* ([2.1.1](#)) from *source language content* ([2.3.2](#))

2.3.4**text**

content ([2.3.1](#)) in written form

2.3.5**source language**

language of the *source language content* ([2.3.2](#))

2.3.6**target language**

language into which *source language content* ([2.3.2](#)) is *translated* ([2.1.1](#))

2.3.7**language register**

variety of language used for a particular purpose or in a particular social or industrial *domain* ([2.3.10](#))

2.3.8**natural language**

written, signed, or spoken human language

Note 1 to entry: For example, languages which are not natural include programming languages such as C++.

2.3.9**text-type convention**

subset of specifications for the *target language content* ([2.3.3](#)) related to the *content* ([2.3.1](#)) type and *domain* ([2.3.10](#))

Note 1 to entry: For example, with acts of law, there are formal conventions which are always used by legislators.

2.3.10**domain**

subject field, sphere of knowledge or activity having its own specialized culture, social context, and linguistic characteristics

2.3.11

locale

set of characteristics, information, or conventions specific to the linguistic, cultural, technical, and geographical conventions of a target audience

2.4 Concepts related to the people involved in translation services

2.4.1

language service provider

LSP

person or organization who provides language-related services

2.4.2

translation service provider

TSP

language service provider (2.4.1) that provides professional *translation services* (2.1.6)

EXAMPLE Translation companies, individual translators, or in-house translation departments.

Note 1 to entry: *Language service provider (LSP)* (2.4.1) is a more general term involving other language-related and value-added services but for the purposes of this International Standard, *LSPs* (2.4.1) are considered to be *TSPs* when they are providing translation services.

2.4.3

client

customer

<translation services> person or organization that commissions a *translation service* (2.1.6) from a *TSP* (2.4.2) by formal agreement

Note 1 to entry: The client can be the person or organization requesting or purchasing the *translation service* (2.1.6) and can be external or internal to the *TSP's* (2.4.2) organization

2.4.4

translator

person who *translates* (2.1.1)

2.4.5

reviser

person who *revises* (2.2.6) *target language content* (2.3.3) against *source language content* (2.3.2)

2.4.6

reviewer

person who *reviews* (2.2.7) *target language content* (2.3.3)

2.4.7

proofreader

person who *proofreads* (2.2.8) *target language content* (2.3.3)

2.4.8

project manager

PM

person who manages specified aspects of a translation project and is responsible for the process

2.4.9

competence

ability to apply knowledge, experience, and skills to achieve intended results

2.5 Concepts related to control of the translation service process

2.5.1

verification

confirmation by the *project manager* (2.4.8) that specifications have been fulfilled

2.5.2

document

information and its supporting medium

Note 1 to entry: The medium can be paper, magnetic, electronic or optical computer disc, photograph or master sample, or a combination thereof.

Note 2 to entry: A set of documents, e.g. specifications and *records* (2.5.3), is frequently referred to as "documentation".

[SOURCE: ISO 9000:2005, 3.7.2]

2.5.3

record

document (2.5.2) or report stating results achieved or providing evidence of activities performed

2.5.4

correction

<translation service> action taken to correct an error in *target language content* (2.3.3) or *translation process* (2.1.4) or a nonconformity to a requirement of this International Standard when conformity has been claimed

Note 1 to entry: Corrections generally arise as a result of errors found when the translator is *checking* (2.2.5) the *target language content* (2.3.3), when reported by a *reviser* (2.4.5) or *reviewer* (2.4.6) or *proofreader* (2.4.7) or *client* (2.4.3), or during an internal or external audit of the implementation of this International Standard.

2.5.5

corrective action

action taken to eliminate the cause of a nonconformity or errors in the *translation process* (2.1.4) or *target language content* (2.3.3)

Note 1 to entry: Corrective action involves an investigation to identify what went wrong and what action can be taken to ensure that it does not happen in the same way again.

3 Resources

3.1 Human resources

3.1.1 General

The TSP shall have a documented process in place to ensure that the people selected to perform translation tasks have the required competences and qualifications.

The TSP shall keep a record of the evidence upon which the professional competences of translators, revisers, reviewers, and other professionals have been demonstrated.

3.1.2 Responsibility for sub-contracted tasks

Where a TSP chooses to engage a third party to perform a translation service or any part thereof, the TSP shall retain full responsibility for ensuring that all the requirements of this International Standard are met with respect to that service or any part thereof by that third party.

3.1.3 Professional competences of translators

Translators shall have the following competences.

- a) **Translation competence:** the ability to translate content in accordance with [5.3.1](#), including the ability to address the problems of language content comprehension and language content production and the ability to render the target language content in accordance with the client-TSP agreement and other project specifications.
- b) **Linguistic and textual competence in the source language and the target language:** the ability to understand the source language, fluency in the target language, and general or specialized knowledge of text-type conventions. This linguistic and textual competence includes the ability to apply this knowledge when producing translation or other target language content.
- c) **Competence in research, information acquisition, and processing:** the ability to efficiently acquire the additional linguistic and specialized knowledge necessary to understand the source language content and to produce the target language content. Research competence also requires experience in the use of research tools and the ability to develop suitable strategies for the efficient use of the information sources available.
- d) **Cultural competence:** ability to make use of information on the behavioural standards, up-to-date terminology, value systems, and locale that characterize both source and target language cultures.
- e) **Technical competence:** the knowledge, abilities, and skills required to perform the technical tasks in the translation process by employing technical resources including the tools and IT systems that support the whole translation process.
- f) **Domain competence:** the ability to understand content produced in the source language and to reproduce it in the target language using the appropriate style and terminology.

3.1.4 Translator qualifications

The TSP shall determine the translator's qualifications to provide a service conforming to this International Standard by obtaining documented evidence that the translator can meet at least one of the following criteria:

- a) a recognized graduate qualification in translation from an institution of higher education;
- b) a recognized graduate qualification in any other field from an institution of higher education plus two years of full-time professional experience in translating;
- c) five years of full-time professional experience in translating.

NOTE 1 In some countries translation degrees may be referred to by a different name such as linguistic studies or language studies. If the course includes translation training, it is considered equivalent to a translation degree.

NOTE 2 Noting that the word "graduate" can have differing application in differing educational jurisdictions, in this International Standard it includes the first degree level of academic award issued by a recognised institution of higher education.

NOTE 3 Full-time professional experience means full-time or equivalent.

3.1.5 Professional competences of revisers

The TSP shall ensure that revisers have all the translator competences defined in [3.1.3](#), the qualification defined in [3.1.4](#), and translation and/or revision experience in the domain under consideration.

3.1.6 Professional competences of reviewers

The TSP shall ensure that reviewers are domain specialists and have a relevant qualification in this domain from an institution of higher learning and/or experience in this domain.

3.1.7 Competence of translation project managers

The TSP shall ensure that project managers have the appropriate documented competence to support the TSP in delivering translation services to meet client and other project specifications.

Appropriate translation project management competence can be acquired in the course of formal or informal training (e.g. as part of a relevant higher educational course or by means of on-the-job training or through industry experience).

In the course of their training and the execution of their duties, translation project managers should develop a basic understanding of the translation services industry and a thorough knowledge of the translation process, as well as master project management skills.

3.1.8 Recording regular maintenance and updating of required competences

The TSP shall have a process in place to record that the competences of their translators, revisers, reviewers, project managers, and other professionals required by 3.1.3 to 3.1.7 are maintained by continuing practice and regularly updated by training or other means. The TSP shall keep a record of how competences are maintained and updated.

3.2 Technical and technological resources

The TSP shall have an infrastructure in place which, where appropriate, ensures the availability and use of the following:

- a) technical equipment required for the efficient and effective completion of translation projects and for the safe and confidential handling, storage, retrieval, archiving, and disposal of all relevant data and documents;
- b) communications equipment including appropriate hardware and software;
- c) information resources and media;
- d) translation technology tools, translation management systems, terminology management systems, and other systems for managing translation-related language resources.

4 Pre-production processes and activities

4.1 General

The TSP shall have processes in place for handling and analysing enquiries, determining project feasibility, preparing quotations, and entering into agreements with clients.

4.2 Enquiry and feasibility

The TSP shall analyze the client's enquiry in order to identify the client's specifications for the services and the TSP's capability to meet them, determining whether all the necessary human, technical, and technological resources are available.

4.3 Quotation

Unless otherwise agreed with the client, the TSP shall submit a quotation to the client indicating at least price and delivery details such as language pair(s), delivery date, format, and medium.

4.4 Client-TSP agreement

The TSP shall finalize an agreement with the client and retain a record of that agreement. If an agreement is made verbally or by telephone, the TSP shall confirm the agreement and its terms in writing (e.g. by

letter, fax, or email). The agreement, whether contractual or non-contractual, shall include or reference the commercial terms and the project specifications. The agreement may also call for conformity to this International Standard. [Annex B](#) contains a list of the items which may be included in the agreement.

Any deviation from the original agreement shall be agreed upon by all parties before any action is taken that deviates from the original agreement and the agreed amendment shall be recorded and stored with the original agreement documentation.

4.5 Handling of project-related client information

The TSP shall endeavour to obtain any additional information required with regards to difficulties in the source language content and other project specifications by contacting the client for instructions and passing that information on to all relevant parties involved in the project.

The TSP shall have a process in place for the security of information and for the safe keeping and, where appropriate, safe return or destruction of all material (documents and data) received from the client.

4.6 Project preparation

Preparation by the TSP shall cover administrative, technical, and linguistic aspects according to the project specifications of each translation project.

After receiving the source language content for translation, the TSP shall establish that it conforms to the client-TSP agreement and project specifications and, in case of non-conformity, shall contact the client for clarification.

4.6.1 Administrative activities

4.6.1.1 Project registration

The TSP shall record each accepted translation project and maintain a register for the duration of the project, as well as a project archive. The register shall make it possible to identify and track the translation project and to determine its status (see [Annex C](#)).

4.6.1.2 Project assignment

The TSP shall assign to each translation project any internal and/or external resources necessary to ensure compliance with the client-TSP agreement and project specifications.

All assignments shall be documented.

4.6.2 Technical aspects of project preparation

4.6.2.1 Technical resources

The TSP shall ensure that the technical resources required at all stages of the project are used by all relevant parties involved in the process, including sub-contractors.

4.6.2.2 Pre-production activities

The TSP shall carry out any necessary technical and pre-production tasks in order to prepare the source language content for translation. Pre-production translation tasks can include items such as those listed in [Annex D](#).

4.6.3 Linguistic specification

The TSP shall have a process in place to ensure that information concerning linguistic specifications in relation to the translation project is documented and communicated as appropriate.

Such information can include specifications for compliance with a client style guide, adaptation of the target language content to the agreed target audience, purpose and/or final use and use of appropriate terminology, and involve updating of lexical or terminological resources such as lexicons or terminological databases.

4.6.3.1 Source language content analysis

The TSP shall ensure that the source language content is analyzed to ensure efficient and effective performance of the translation project.

4.6.3.2 Terminology

The client and the TSP can agree that the TSP shall ensure that the appropriate terminology is available for the performance of the translation project. The agreement can include the scope of terminology work and descriptions of the terminology tasks to be carried out by the TSP and a specification that this terminology should be used.

4.6.3.3 Style guide

The TSP shall use the client's style guide when one is provided. The TSP should have in place its own set of rules on style.

5 Production process

5.1 General

The TSP shall ensure compliance with the client-TSP agreement from the moment it is confirmed to the agreed end of the project.

5.2 Translation service project management

Each translation project shall be coordinated by a project manager who shall be responsible for meeting the requirements for all aspects of the production process and for managing the project in accordance with the TSP's procedures, the client-TSP agreement, and any other relevant specifications.

Project management shall include the following:

- a) identifying the key requirements and translation project specifications during the pre-production process and following the procedures and specifications throughout its production;
- b) supervising and monitoring the translation project preparation process;
- c) assigning a competent translator or translators to the translation project;
- d) assigning a competent reviser or revisers;
- e) disseminating information, issuing instructions related to the assignment, and managing the translation project to all parties involved;
- f) monitoring to ensure compliance with agreed upon schedule and deadlines;
- g) communicating any changes of the project specifications, if applicable;
- h) monitoring constant conformity to the client-TSP agreement, project specifications, and, where necessary, communicating with all parties involved in the project, including the client;
- i) ensuring translation and other queries are answered;
- j) managing and handling of feedback;

- k) verifying that the translation service specifications have been complied with before approving the target language content and giving clearance for its delivery to the client;
- l) delivering of the service.

Project management may also include the following:

- a) if applicable, assigning a competent reviewer or reviewers to the translation project;
- b) if necessary, implementing corrections and/or corrective action;
- c) monitoring to ensure the project does not exceed the agreed budget;
- d) preparing and issuing the invoice;
- e) completing other activities or tasks agreed with the client.

5.3 Translation process

5.3.1 Translation

The translator shall translate in accordance with the purpose of the translation project, including the linguistic conventions of the target language and relevant project specifications. Throughout this process, the translator shall provide a service conforming to this International Standard with regards to the following:

- a) compliance with specific domain and client terminology and/or any other reference material provided and ensuring terminological consistency during translation;
- b) semantic accuracy of the target language content;
- c) appropriate syntax, spelling, punctuation, diacritical marks, and other orthographical conventions of the target language;
- d) lexical cohesion and phraseology;
- e) compliance with any proprietary and/or client style guide (including domain, language register, and language variants);
- f) locale and any applicable standards;
- g) formatting;
- h) target audience and purpose of the target language content.

The translator shall raise any uncertainty as a query with the project manager.

5.3.2 Check

This task shall at least include the translator's overall self-revision of the target content for possible semantic, grammatical and spelling issues, and for omissions and other errors, as well as ensuring compliance with any relevant translation project specifications.

The translator shall make any corrections necessary prior to delivery.

5.3.3 Revision

The TSP shall ensure that the target language content is revised.

The reviser, who shall be a person other than the translator, shall have the competences mentioned in [3.1.5](#) in the source and target languages. The reviser shall examine the target language content against

the source language content for any errors and other issues, and its suitability for purpose. This shall include comparison of the source and target language content for the aspects listed in [5.3.1](#).

As agreed upon with the project manager, the reviser shall either correct any errors found in the target language content or recommend the corrections to be implemented by the translator.

NOTE Corrections can include retranslation.

Any errors or other issues affecting target language content quality should be corrected and the process repeated until the reviser and TSP are satisfied. The reviser shall also inform the TSP of any corrective action he/she has taken.

5.3.4 Review

If the project specifications include a review, the TSP shall ensure that the target language content is reviewed. The TSP shall require the reviewer to carry out a review to assess the suitability of the target language content for the agreed upon purpose and domain and recommend corrections to be implemented by the TSP. The TSP can instruct the reviewer to make corrections. The review includes assessing domain accuracy and respect for the relevant text-type conventions.

5.3.5 Proofreading

If the client-TSP agreement and project specifications include proofreading, the TSP shall ensure that this service is provided.

Where the proofreading reveals defects, the TSP shall make corrections and take appropriate action to remedy these defects.

5.3.6 Final verification and release

The TSP shall have a process in place for final verification of the project against specifications by the PM before delivery to the client. After final verification and delivery, the TSP should have a process for invoicing and payment procedures.

If the final verification indicates any defects in meeting specifications, the TSP shall make corrections and take corrective action as appropriate.

6 Post-production processes

6.1 Feedback

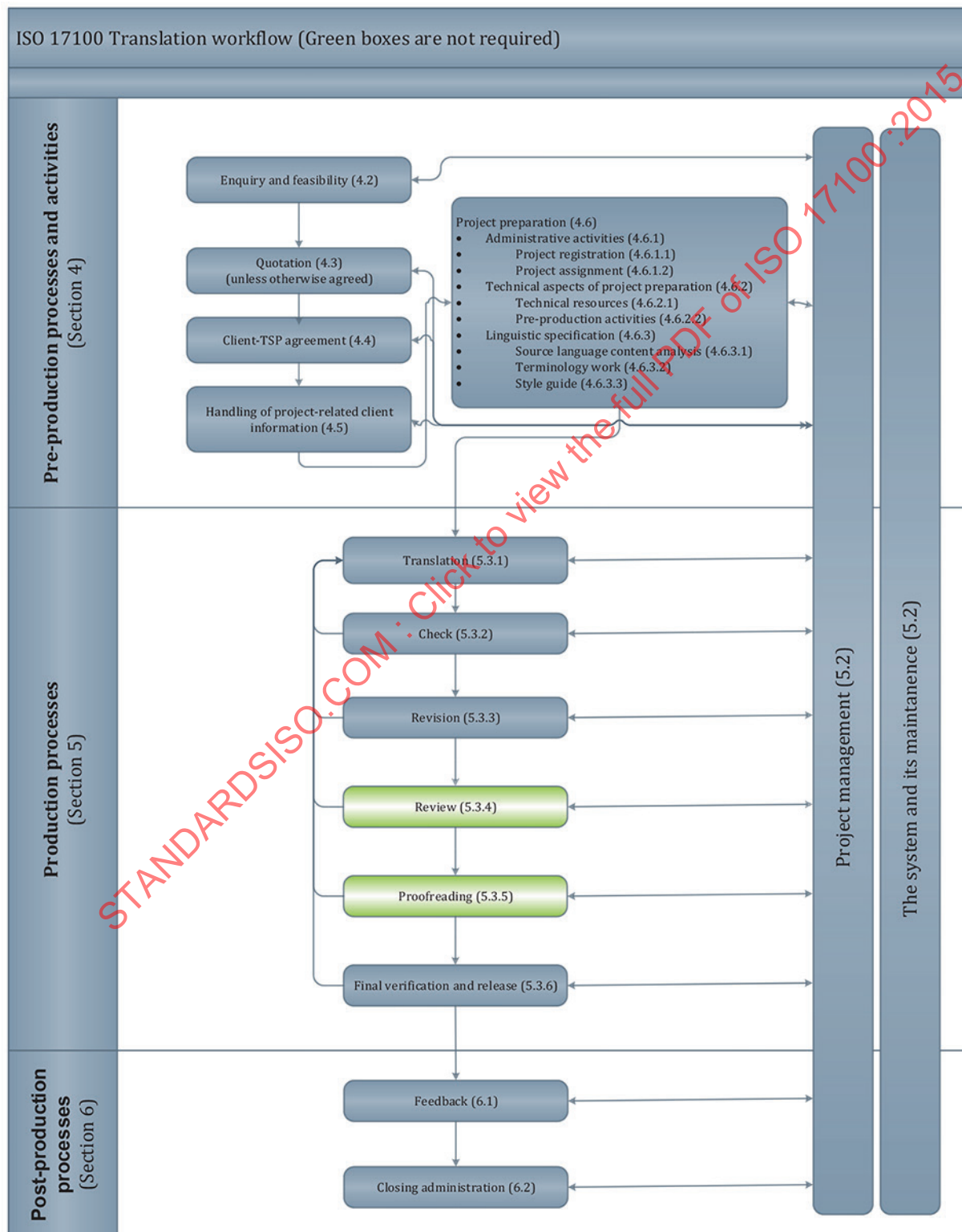
The TSP shall have a process in place for handling client feedback, for assessment of client satisfaction, and for making appropriate corrections and/or taking corrective action. If there is a need to implement any corrections, the work will be redelivered to the client. It is good practice for the TSP to share feedback from the client with all the parties involved.

6.2 Closing administration

The TSP shall have a process in place to ensure full project archiving for an appropriate period and to meet all legal and/or contractual obligations regarding the preservation or deletion of records and data protection.

Annex A (informative)

ISO 17100 Translation workflow



Annex B (informative)

Agreements and project specifications

B.1 Agreements are subject to national legislation.

B.2 Commercial terms can include, but are not limited to, the following elements:

- a) confidentiality clauses and non-disclosure agreements (NDAs);
- b) copyright on deliverables and restrictions on the use of by-products such as translation memories;
- c) terms of payment (such as payment within 30 days or a 2 % discount if within 10 days);
- d) warranties;
- e) liability;
- f) dispute resolution procedures;
- g) choice of governing law.

B.3 Project specifications may include the following elements:

- a) scope of work, which consists of standard services and value-added services;
- b) standard services, which are listed in [5.3](#) [translation, check (self-revision by translator), revision (by another pair of eyes), review (if requested), proofreading, final verification, and release];
- c) non-exhaustive list of value-added services that can be included in an agreement (see [Annex F](#));
- d) workplace requirements (e.g. when work should be done at a pre-determined location);
- e) project schedule and delivery dates;
- f) quotation, including currency;
- g) relevant information about the source content (such as its origin and size in words or characters);
- h) linguistic specifications for the product (i.e. standard and optional specifications);
- i) standard linguistic specifications (see [5.3.1](#));
- j) languages;
- k) audience, purpose;
- l) accuracy (including terminology) and fluency (e.g. syntax, spelling, and lexical cohesion);
- m) compliance with a style guide;
- n) compliance with locale conventions and applicable standards;
- o) additional linguistic specification when relevant (e.g. language register).

B.4 Additional specifications can include, but are not limited to the following:

- a) use of technology (see [Annex E](#));
- b) materials to be provided to the TSP by the client;
NOTE The client has to make an effort to provide source language content in machine processable form.
- c) handling of communication during the project and post-production feedback;
- d) format and layout of the target content (e.g. Word, InDesign, or XML if different from source);
- e) delivery method (e.g. email and FTP);
- f) type of translation (e.g. localized vs. generalized and transcreation);
- g) recognition (does the TSP's name or the translator's name appear in the published translation?).

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