

PATHS to ISO 27001

Information Security



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The Paths

There are two main routes to ISO 27001 certification.

- “UKAS” certification
- “General” certification.

The approaches have different purposes and implications. This document will help you decide which is for you.

UKAS Certification

This style of certification is awarded by certification bodies accredited by UKAS, the national accreditation body for the United Kingdom.

UKAS accreditation is a mark of assurance and a benchmark for quality and reliability. It indicates that the certification body has been rigorously assessed against internationally recognised standards to demonstrate its competence, impartiality and performance capability in providing certification services. When a company is UKAS certified to ISO 27001, its Information Security Management System (ISMS) complies with the high standards of security practices recognised in the UK and internationally.

General Certification

This refers to certification to the ISO 27001 standard awarded by a certification body that won't be accredited by UKAS or any other nationally recognised accreditation service.

These certification bodies can still audit organisations and issue ISO 27001 certifications based on their assessment of the organisation's ISMS against the ISO 27001 standards.

UKAS Certification

- **Typical Duration** 6-9 months
- **Audit Cost** £11 to 15k

General Certification

- **Typical Duration** 6-8 weeks
- **Audit Cost** £3 to 5k

UKAS Certification

Evidence

Typically, you must build up six months of evidence before being awarded a certificate.

Why UKAS?

- Can be stipulated in some contracts that it must be UKAS.
- High depth and standard of audit.

General Certification

Evidence

The first audit is based on mandatory documentation. Subsequent audits will then examine the buildup of evidence.

Why General?

- Easier route to success.
- Lower costs.
- Still gives certification.

Comparison

Which is for you?

It can be hard to decide, but as a recommendation, if you are looking for a very formal government contract certification, then it's probably the UKAS route. It'll be more challenging but hold you to the letter of the standard. If you are looking for a quicker and less expensive path than the general path, you'll have to be more self-disciplined. Ultimately, the approach is down to your needs. Here's a table to help summarise the differences.

	UKAS	General
Accreditation	Accredited by UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service)	Not accredited by UKAS or other nationally recognised accreditation services
Quality and Recognition	High assurance, recognised in the UK and internationally	Lower assurance, is not necessarily recognised at the same level
Typical Length of Attainment	6 - 9 months	6 - 8 weeks
Typical Length of Attainment	£11k - £15k	£3k - £5k
Average Audit Cost	Requires six months of evidence before starting	Initial audit based on mandatory documentation. Subsequent audits examine evidence build-up.
Evidence Requirement	Higher assurance required for some government contracts and in highly regulated industries	Easier and quicker route, lower cost, sufficient for internal improvement and less stringent security needs
Why Choose This Certification	Mark of assurance, benchmark for quality and reliability	Provides certification, but with potentially lower levels of assurance
Notes	Accredited by UKAS (United Kingdom Accreditation Service)	Not accredited by UKAS or other nationally recognised accreditation services