STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

SOP for Writing SOPs

Document no.	SOP-QA-002
Revision	1.0
Owner	Quality Manager
Effective date	September 15, 2026
Review cycle	Every 12 months

1. Purpose

To give writers a consistent method for drafting, reviewing, testing and rolling out new or revised SOPs, so every procedure in the organization follows the same structure and is clear enough for someone unfamiliar with the task to follow.

2. Scope

Applies to drafting a new SOP or substantially revising an existing one, from identifying the need through review, approval and roll-out to the team who will use it. Numbering, versioning and archiving of the finished document are covered by the document control SOP.

Definitions

Subject matter expert	The person who currently performs the task being documented and can confirm the steps are accurate.
Roll-out	Introducing an approved SOP to the team who will use it, including training or a briefing.
Walk-through test	Having someone unfamiliar with the task follow the draft step by step to check it is clear and complete.
Review cycle	The scheduled interval at which an SOP is checked to confirm it is still accurate and current.

3. Responsibilities

SOP Author	Drafts the SOP, incorporates feedback, and leads roll-out to the team.
Subject Matter Expert	Confirms the draft matches how the task is actually performed.
Quality Manager	Reviews and approves the finished draft and schedules the review cycle.
Document Controller	Numbers, publishes and archives the approved SOP.

RACI matrix

Activity	SOP Author	Subject Matter Expert	Quality Manager	Document Controller
Draft the new SOP	R/A	C	I	-
Review draft for accuracy	C	R/A	I	-
Approve the finished SOP	C	I	R/A	I

Activity	SOP Author	Subject Matter Expert	Quality Manager	Document Controller
Number, publish and archive prior version	I	-	I	R/A
Roll out and train the team	R/A	C	C	I

R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

4. Materials and PPE

Materials, tools and systems

- SOP template
- Style guide for formatting and terminology
- Subject matter expert interview notes
- Draft review checklist

5. Procedure

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.1	**Identify the need and define scope** The SOP Author identifies why a new or revised SOP is needed and writes a clear purpose and scope statement for a single procedure. **Checkpoint:** The purpose and scope describe one clear procedure, not several bundled together.	SOP Author	☐
5.2	**Interview the subject matter expert** The SOP Author interviews the person or people who currently perform the task to understand how it is actually done, step by step.	SOP Author	☐
5.3	**Observe the task** Where possible, the SOP Author observes or walks through the actual task being performed rather than relying only on a verbal description.	SOP Author	☐
5.4	**Draft using the standard template** The SOP Author drafts the SOP using the standard section order: purpose, scope, roles, steps, quality checks and records.	SOP Author	☐
5.5	**Write steps in real order** The SOP Author writes each step in the actual order it is performed, using a short imperative title and a specific action describing who does what and how. **Warning:** Avoid vague verbs like handle or manage for a step; describe exactly what to do instead.	SOP Author	☐
5.6	**Assign ownership for each step** The SOP Author assigns a clear owning role to every step and defines the roles and responsibilities section to match.	SOP Author	☐
5.7	**Add checkpoints** The SOP Author adds a checkpoint at each point in the procedure where a mistake would be costly or hard to reverse.	SOP Author	☐

Step	Task	Owner	Done
5.8	**Get subject matter expert review** The Subject Matter Expert reviews the draft in detail, checking that every step matches how the work is genuinely done. **Checkpoint:** The subject matter expert confirms every step matches actual practice, not an idealized version of it.	Subject Matter Expert	☐
5.9	**Run a walk-through test** The SOP Author has someone unfamiliar with the task follow the draft step by step to see if it can be completed correctly without extra help.	SOP Author	☐
5.10	**Revise based on feedback** The SOP Author updates the draft based on the subject matter expert's review and the walk-through test results.	SOP Author	☐
5.11	**Submit for quality approval** The Quality Manager reviews the finished draft against the style guide and formally approves it.	Quality Manager	☐
5.12	**Send to document control** The Document Controller numbers, publishes and archives the previous version of the document once the new SOP is approved.	Document Controller	☐
5.13	**Roll out to the team** The SOP Author briefs or trains the team on the new SOP and confirms they understand the key steps before it takes effect.	SOP Author	☐
5.14	**Schedule the review cycle** The Quality Manager schedules the SOP's next review date and sets a reminder ahead of that date.	Quality Manager	☐

6. Quality checks

- Every new SOP is tested by someone unfamiliar with the task before roll-out.
- Each step has a single clear owner rather than a shared or vague one.
- Step titles use short imperative language rather than vague descriptions.
- Roll-out includes a training or briefing record for the team.

7. Records

- SOP draft with review comments
- Subject matter expert sign-off
- Walk-through test notes
- Roll-out or training attendance record

8. KPIs

- Average time from draft to approval
- Percentage of SOPs tested before roll-out
- Number of revisions requested per draft
- Employee comprehension rate after roll-out training

9. Common mistakes

- Writing steps from memory instead of interviewing or observing the actual task.
- Bundling more than one procedure into a single SOP.
- Using vague action verbs instead of specific, concrete instructions.

- Skipping the walk-through test with someone unfamiliar with the task.
- Publishing an SOP without a roll-out or training step.

10. Revision history

Revision	Date	Description	Reviewed by
1.0	September 15, 2026	Initial release	Ilia Pirozhenko

Approval

Prepared by	Approved by	Date

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