



**British
Association
Landscape
Industries**

BALI Quality Standard

Our definition of Quality is:

To consistently and systematically deliver what the client can reasonably expect.

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Introduction

BALI is committed to continuous improvement of standards within the landscape industry. This standard has been established to enable organisations wishing to apply for Accredited Membership to clearly see the requirements of the Association. It is the benchmark for assessors completing the vetting of an applicant organisation.

In addition to the requirements of the standard, this document outlines examples of what may be deemed as suitable evidence. BALI recognises that its members and prospective member companies come in many shapes and sizes. This document and any implications resulting from the adoption and implementation of its principles is not intended to be prescriptive or restricting in any way. Adherence to this standard is considered the minimum requirement for applicants. The assessor will apply its principles as appropriate depending on the size and nature of the organisation in question. For example, a small organisation that has its Owner/Principal in a hands-on role may be able to demonstrate compliance to many of the requirements of this standard informally, relying heavily on verbal communication, and have minimal requirement for documentation, be it paper based or digital.

Larger organisations or organisations that display ambitions for significant growth or geographical coverage may be required to demonstrate greater dependence on robust, documented systems. This will demonstrate that the quality management systems and procedures are being upheld and managed in a more structured and consistent way. In any case, the minimum legislative and regulatory documentation will be required as evidence of adequate compliance to the law and, by definition, this standard.

There are a range of models available for the design and implementation of “Quality Management Systems” (such as ISO 9001) and BALI strongly supports and promotes that these be considered as a framework on which to base your quality systems.

Purpose

The purpose of this standard is to ensure that the organisation being assessed can demonstrate that they have sufficient commitment, systems, skills, resources, and controls in place to consistently meet relevant customer, legislative and regulatory requirements in a measured and professional manner.

1. Management Responsibility

1.01 Management Commitment

Senior management shall demonstrate a clear commitment to quality performance by

- a) Communicating to all elements of the organisation and clients the importance of identifying and meeting customer, legislative and regulatory requirements.
- b) Monitoring performance against identified requirements.
- c) Rectifying deviations from these requirements in a prompt and professional manner.

Guidance Notes

Here we are looking for evidence that supports the company's commitment to delivering quality, this might be a quality policy, an induction script or checklist that includes the importance of quality and/or customer satisfaction, regular and systematic use of formal contracts such as JCLI or JCT, simple slogans, any warranty or guarantees offered, fair and respectful T's & C's, statements made in quotations. The point is, how do top management make it clear to staff and maybe customers too that quality matters?

Possible Sources of Evidence: In small organisations it may be sufficient to demonstrate awareness of the BALI "Code of Conduct" and the very fact that they have applied for "Accredited Membership" and therefore agreed to adopt the Code demonstrates adequate commitment. In larger companies, it may be considered that to satisfy this element a written policy should be in place and available to all staff by way of a "Handbook", a formalised induction process or specific training records.

1.02 Customer Focus

Senior management shall ensure that customer requirements are determined and met with the aim of enhancing customer satisfaction. The organisation should determine and implement effective arrangements for communicating with customers in relation to:

- a) customer feedback, including customer complaints.
- b) Product/service information.
- c) Enquiries, contracts, or order handling, including amendments, valuations.

Guidance Notes

In this section we are looking to see that the level of and detail in the communications with the client is sufficient and appropriate for the type and style of the service being carried out, before during and after the delivery, is there a process to agree variations or changes in order? How are complaints handled, what is the approach to customer service, is correspondence conciliatory or adversarial, do they seek customer feedback?

Possible Sources of Evidence: In smaller organisations or for smaller orders this may be as simple as diary notes transferred into a clearly worded quotation detailing the requirements. As organisations and/or contracts become larger and more diverse more structured methods would be expected, these may include client briefings, plans, specifications, bills of quantity, priced schedules, VO's, contract documents and client surveys.

1.03 Responsibility, Authority and Communication

Senior management shall ensure that responsibilities and authorities are clearly defined and communicated throughout the organisation and to the Client.

Guidance Notes

It's important that people at all levels in the organisation have a clear picture of the company, where they fit in and what they are there to do. As with all the evidence requirements, it needs to be appropriate to the size of the organisation, a "a micro business" is not likely to have an org. chart let alone company handbook, but an employee may be able to describe what the future holds or where they see the business this time next year, does this validate the response to similar questions asked of the employer?

Possible Sources of Evidence: In most cases these would be documented in some way, e.g., Job Descriptions, company or corporate structures, Quality Policies, or procedures manuals.

1.04 Planning

Senior management shall ensure that there is a clearly defined plan for the business and that this plan is communicated throughout the organisation and reviewed at appropriate intervals.

Guidance Notes

It is important for staff to understand where the company is trying to get to, in order for them to contribute effectively rather than swim alone in the opposite direction. In larger organisations we are looking to see that plans are set and effectively communicated, the bigger the company the more elaborate the plans and the methods of communication. As in 1.03 above, questioning may be required to validate the effectiveness of the communications.

Possible Sources of Evidence: In the smallest organisations this may be verbally communicated and verified through staff interview/reviews but as businesses get larger expectation will rise and a basic documented plan is likely to be required. Evidence of the communication and review throughout a larger company may include training records, minutes of meetings, handbooks, posters etc.

2. Resource Management

2.01 Human Resources; Competence, Training and Awareness

The organisation shall ensure that its personnel are competent to deliver the organisations products and services on the basis of appropriate education, training, skills and experience.

The organisation shall

- a) Determine the necessary competence for its personnel performing work that affects, product or service delivery.
- b) Where applicable, provide training and development for its personnel to achieve the necessary competence.
- c) Evaluate the effectiveness of the training and development undertaken.
- d) Maintain appropriate records of education, training skills and experience.

Guidance Notes

As the possible evidence suggests there are many ways to demonstrate, deliver and record competence, not to be confused with qualifications.

The important thing here is the quality of work and skills being displayed, coupled with conversations about what they are doing and how they plan to achieve it etc.

It may well be that training records are not held by individuals, but names should cross reference with records held by the company.

Possible Sources of Evidence: A whole range of documents may demonstrate compliance to this aspect of the standard, e.g., diary notes, staff appraisals, skills matrices, training records, Personal Development Plans, company training plans, receipts for training courses, certificates etc.

2.02 Infrastructure

The organisation shall determine, provide, and maintain an infrastructure to enable conformity of product and service delivery; such infrastructure may include but not be restricted to.

- a) Buildings, office, workspace, and associated utilities.
- b) Process equipment (such as site, yard and office plant and equipment including any appropriate software).
- c) supporting services (such as transport, communication, and information systems).

Guidance Notes

Here we are looking for suitable resources to run the business being assessed, a small business can comfortably operate from the kitchen table or spare room, whilst a larger company may need larger facilities. Today's technology can limit the paper storage requirements as well as enabling staff to work remotely, so space at a single location can be less important these days.

This section includes aspects such as equipment and vehicles including the maintenance records, COSHH records and hazardous product storage, insurances, website and use of BALI logo etc.

Possible Sources of Evidence: The resources available should be appropriate to the size and nature of the business and the work being undertaken. For example, a small company with just 2-3 people may have all they need in one van and a home office, larger businesses will be able to demonstrate storage and yard facilities, more vehicles, and possibly dedicated offices.

N.B. This will largely be determined by the effectiveness of the processes employed by the business rather than the totting up of resources that may be considered necessary.

3. Product and Service Delivery

3.01 Planning

The business shall identify the processes required to provide product or service delivery consistent with the customer, legislative and regulatory requirements. In planning product and/or service delivery, the organisation shall determine.

- a) The requirements of the project, product, or service.
- b) The processes, documents, and resources specific to the project, product, or service.
- c) The success criteria and the appropriate records to allow validation, monitoring, inspection and testing specific to the project, product, or service specification/requirements.

Guidance Notes

What we are looking for is how well the company considers the requirements of each enquiry/job. Does it have the skills, people, and money? Do they ask for deposits? Do they try and use existing material stock where appropriate to do so? Evidence of the planning should also be evident, is the job well-resourced and running to schedule or are the team held up waiting on materials or sub-contractors?

Possible Sources of Evidence: For small and simple projects this may be as simple as allocating time in a diary or work schedule and as operations become more complex it may require Gantt charts, procurement records, inspection, valuations and payment schedules, samples, and detailed validation procedures.

3.02 Customer Related Processes

The organisation shall determine.

- a) Requirements specified by the customer, including arrangements for delivery and post-delivery activities.
- b) Any other project requirements not stated by the customer but necessary for the specified or intended use/purpose, where known.
- c) statutory and regulatory requirements applicable to the product,
and
- d) Any additional requirements considered necessary by the organisation.

Guidance Notes

This is about ensuring the customer receives what they expect/asked for, whilst accepting that what has been asked for may not be fully specified. For example, the client wants a path laid from A to B but is unlikely to know what sub-base would be suitable or may not have given much thought as to the width it will need to be. Alternatively, the client may ask for a handrail or balustrade, without knowing or understanding the implications of the applicable building regulations. The company will need to fill in the gaps and detail this in the specification or quotation. This happens a lot and does pose the question as to whether it constitutes a design and if so, is it covered via a Professional Indemnity (PI) insurance policy.

We also need to see how the company applies the relevant legislation to the job. I.e., nesting birds check list/training, bat awareness, CDM, COSHH and so on.

Possible Sources of Evidence: Evidence may include a client brief, agreed design or specification, other client correspondence, research notes, supplier stipulations or recommendations, reference to British Standards or other relevant regulatory or statutory guidelines.

3.03 Design Control

The organisation shall plan and implement suitable arrangements to ensure that the design process clearly identifies.

- a) Design stages
- b) Responsibilities and authorities
- c) Approval process
- d) Review process

Minimum considerations throughout the design process should include.

- a) Form and function
- b) Statutory and regulatory requirements

Suitable controls should also be in place to ensure revisions and alterations to design are recorded and that any changes are evaluated against the above criteria.

Guidance Notes

In this section we are concerned that whoever undertakes the design is competent, that there is an awareness of the various legal requirements such as the Equality Act, CDM and the like. PI insurance is required for accredited designers, and advisable for all businesses carrying our design. In addition, what is the process to for getting client approval and for making sure the approved design is the one that gets implemented? It is largely about document control. If the company does not carry out design this is not assessed. Many companies outsource the design process, in which case how is the process managed, are subcontractors “vetted” and their insurances, skills and knowledge recorded?

Possible Sources of Evidence: Much of the evidence required for this section will be covered in standard terms of business or contracts implemented by the organisation. In addition, documents such as client questionnaires will demonstrate adherence to client brief (form and function) and clear knowledge of statutory requirements may be demonstrated by knowledge and use of regulation websites (www.legislation.gov.uk or similar).

3.04 Purchasing

The organisation shall ensure that a purchased product or service conforms to the specified requirements. The type and extent of control applied to the supplier/sub-contractor and the resulting product/service shall be dependent upon the effect of the product/service on the final product/service itself. Purchasing information shall describe the product or service to be purchased, including, where appropriate.

- a) requirements for approving products, procedures, and equipment,
and
- b) Requirement for qualifications and experience of personnel to be engaged on the works.

Guidance Notes

The critical question here is “Do the company get what they ordered”?

If the person ordering the goods (maybe by phone or online from the office) is not the person that will receive them (possibly a site manager or logistics team), how do they know what’s been ordered? Happily accepting and signing for the wrong goods could have huge consequences on the quality or the service i.e., wrong grade of turf, wrong colour paving?

Control of suppliers & sub-contractors is also key, how are they assessed for competence, are records kept of insurances and certification, do they receive clear instructions/orders?

Possible Sources of Evidence: Evidence for purchasing of goods may vary from informal emails, simple purchase orders to full design drawings, detailed specification and/or contracts. When engaging sub-contractors to provide a critical element of the product realisation process then clear instructions, specifications and /or contracts may be considered a requirement to evidence this element as well as evidence that the providers and their people are competent. Appropriate records of all instructions and processes should be retained as evidence.

3.05 Control of Product and Service Provision

The organisation shall plan and carry out product and service provision under controlled conditions. This will be evidenced by.

- a) The availability of the information that describes the characteristics of the product or service.
- b) The availability of work instructions, as necessary.
- c) The use of suitable equipment.
- d) the availability and use of monitoring and measuring equipment,
and
- e) The implementation of monitoring and measuring.

Guidance notes

This is mainly about the delivery; how do the team know what to do?

Do they have a job file, work instructions, drawings, a copy of material orders to cross reference? Do they have the skills, knowledge, equipment, and support to do the job and is it working? Are they doing a good job and how do they know, what is it being measured or judged against, spec., drawings, quotation etc.?

Possible Sources of Evidence: Evidence may include correspondence with the client representative, quotations, drawings, contracts, job files, plant and equipment maintenance records, invoices, calibration certificates, training records, certificates of competence, inspection forms etc.

3.06 Customer Property and Preservation of Works

- a) The organisation shall exercise care with customer property while it is under the organisation's control or being used by the organisation. The organisation shall identify, verify, protect, and safeguard customer property provided for use or incorporation into the product.
- b) The organisation shall preserve the product during the course of works and delivery to the intended destination in order to ensure that it still conforms to the specified requirement. As applicable preservation shall include but not be restricted to identification, handling, packaging, storage, and protection. Preservation shall also apply to constituent parts of a product.

Guidance Notes

This section is about clearly defining how customer property will be protected, temporarily removed, and replaced etc. for example, an existing sculpture that is to form the centrepiece of the new design, who will move it, where to and who is responsible for damage?

Other things to consider are protecting existing surfaces such as the driveway or access routes across soft ground etc. The solution can often be as simple as a line of text in the quotation but can also be included in contract documents etc.

Possible Sources of Evidence: a) Suitable correspondence which could take many forms would be appropriate to evidence this element.

Evidence for this element may vary considerably depending on the volume and type of any items requiring preservation. Remember products or assets requiring protection could be fixed (e.g., trees or buildings) as well as items you may have in stock or have delivered to your premises and are stored and transported to site later.