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Systems and software engineering — Developing user documentation in an agile environment

Ingénierie du logiciel et des systèmes — Développement de la documentation de l'utilisateur dans un environnement agile

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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work. In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1.

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International Standards are drafted in accordance with the rules given in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2.

The main task of ISO/IEC JTC 1 is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the joint technical committee are circulated to national bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

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ISO/IEC/IEEE 26515 was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 7, *Software and systems engineering*, in cooperation with the Systems and Software Engineering Committee of the IEEE Computer Society, under the Partner Standards Development Organization cooperation agreement between ISO and IEEE.

In this corrected version, the cover pages, front matter, page headers and footers have been corrected to reflect that ISO/IEC/IEEE 26515 is a joint development project under the Partner Standards Development Organization cooperation agreement between ISO and IEEE.

Introduction

Anyone who uses application software needs accurate information about how the software will help the users accomplish a task. The documentation may be the first tangible item that the user sees, and so influences the first impressions the users have of the product. If the information is supplied in a convenient form and is easy to find and understand, the users can quickly become proficient at using the product. Hence, well designed documentation not only assists the users and helps to reduce the cost of training and support, but also enhances the reputation of the product, its producer, and its suppliers.

Projects that implement agile development focus on providing rapid and frequent deliveries of high value software. These methods often involve detailed planning only for the short term, and the implementation of processes in parallel, rather than planning for an entire project in distinct phases.

Although agile development methods often advocate less life cycle documentation, the users of a software product still expect and require quality user documentation to be provided with these software products. Although the end results of the user documentation process are the same, the methods to get there may be very different in an agile environment.

Agile development methods may lead to the production of less user documentation, but the user documentation developed must be sufficient to meet the needs and requirements of the users. If the deliverables of user documentation and associated life cycle documentation are agreed in a contractual relationship between an acquirer and a supplier, then the deliverables that are produced are dictated by the terms of the contract. In these circumstances, the user and life cycle documentation deliverables that are agreed upon will depend on the demands of the acquiring organization regardless of the types of development methodologies used to produce them.

Technical writers and other personnel involved in the production of user documentation should understand the agile development processes used by their organization, and use the most effective agile development methods to produce relevant and useful user documentation.

Because of the nature of agile development methods, the traditional means of developing the end user documentation (both print and onscreen) as described in the current ISO/IEC 2651*n* family of International Standards are not entirely applicable.

This International Standard was developed to assist users of ISO/IEC 15288:2008 (IEEE Std 15288:2008), *Systems and software engineering — System life cycle processes*, or ISO/IEC 12207:2008 (IEEE Std 12207-2008), *Systems and software engineering — Software life cycle processes*, and ISO/IEC 26514, *Systems and software engineering — Requirements for designers and developers of user documentation* (also available as IEEE Std 26514-2010, *IEEE Standard for Adoption of ISO/IEC 26514:2008, Systems and Software Engineering — Requirements for Designers and Developers of User Documentation*) and others in the ISO/IEC 2651*n* family of International Standards. It provides requirements and guidance to technical writers and related roles on how to adapt the processes described in the ISO/IEC 2651*n* family of International Standards to develop quality user documentation.

This International Standard is independent of the agile development methods and tools that are used to produce the software.

This International Standard will conform to ISO/IEC 12207:2008 (IEEE Std 12207:2008) as an implementation of the user documentation part of 6.1: Documentation. The primary references for this International Standard are ISO/IEC 26514:2008 and ISO/IEC 26513:2009.

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1 Scope

This clause presents the scope, purpose, organization, and candidate uses of this International Standard.

This International Standard supports the interest of technical writers and associated roles responsible for producing user documentation for software and systems developed within an agile environment. This International Standard takes a process standard approach to specify the way in which user documentation can be developed in agile development projects.

This International Standard provides requirements on information management and documentation processes appropriate for software projects that are using agile development methods.

Clause 5 covers the overall requirements for documentation in the software life cycle.

Clause 6 describes how the information development lead or project manager may plan and manage the user documentation development team in an agile environment.

Clause 7 covers the relationship between the user documentation process and life cycle documentation process in agile development.

This International Standard is intended neither to encourage nor to discourage the use of any particular agile development tools or methods.

This International Standard provides guidance on processes appropriate for developers of user documentation in software and systems projects that are using agile development methodologies. It will not be limited to the development phase of the life cycle of user documentation, but includes activities throughout the user documentation life cycle.

This International Standard is intended for use in all organizations that are using agile development, or are considering implementing their projects using these techniques. It is assumed that users of this International Standard have experience or general knowledge of traditional user documentation processes.

2 Conformance

This International Standard may be used as a conformance or a guidance document for projects and organizations claiming conformance to ISO/IEC 15288:2008 (IEEE Std 15288-2008), *Systems and software engineering — System life cycle processes* and/or ISO/IEC 12207:2008 (IEEE Std 12207-2008), *Systems and software engineering — Software life cycle processes*.

2.1 Application of conformance

Throughout this International Standard, “shall” is used to express a provision that is binding, “should” to express a recommendation among other possibilities, and “may” to indicate a course of action permissible within the limits of this International Standard.

Use of the nomenclature of this International Standard for the features of agile methodology or the parts of user documentation (that is, scrum, sprint, chapters, topics, pages, screens, windows, etc.) is not required to claim conformance.

Conformance to this International Standard may only be claimed by an organization if all of the requirements in this International Standard can be met by the organization. When conformance is claimed for a multi-supplier program, it may be the case that no individual supplier may claim conformance because no single contract calls for all the required activities. Nevertheless, the program, as a whole, may claim conformance if each of the required activities are performed by an identified party.

This International Standard may be included or referenced in contracts or similar agreements when the parties (called the acquirer and the supplier) agree that the supplier shall deliver user documentation services in accordance with this International Standard. It may also be adopted as an in-house standard by a project or organization that decides to develop documentation in accordance with this International Standard.

Organizations, projects, or multi-supplier programs intending to claim tailored conformance should consult ISO/IEC 12207/IEEE Std 12207:2008, Annex A, Tailoring Process.

3 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC/IEEE 24765:2010, *Systems and software engineering — Vocabulary*