7. Step Dependencies and the Critical Path

Column F (Predecessors) captures the dependency logic between steps. A step's planned start date should not precede the latest finish date of its predecessors. The default start-date offsets respect this logic; if you shorten or lengthen a predecessor, manually re-check the downstream successors.

Key dependency clusters that merit attention:

- Context → Interested Parties → Scope (Steps 3 → 4 → 5). The QMS scope cannot be defined without first understanding the context and the interested parties. Shortening Step 3 or 4 saves time across the entire downstream programme.
- Gap Analysis → Risks & Opportunities + Quality Policy + Objectives → 1st Management Review (Steps 7 → 8 + 9 + 10 → 12). The 1st MR (a milestone) depends on the planning architecture being substantially complete. Step 7 is itself a milestone and feeds the MR.
- Operational Planning → Customer-Facing + Suppliers + Realisation (Steps 19 → 20 + 21 → 22). Step 19 establishes the umbrella operational controls (8.1) on which the realisation processes (8.2–8.7) depend. Realisation (Step 22) integrates production with inspection and nonconforming-output handling.
- Internal Audit Programme → 2nd Management Review (Steps 25 → 26). The 2nd MR depends on a completed audit cycle; rushing the audit cycle to keep the MR on schedule is a false economy — the review has nothing to review.
- Readiness Review → Stage 1 → Stage 2 (Steps 27 → 28 → 29). The CB will not schedule Stage 2 until findings from Stage 1 are closed. Building slack into the pre-Stage-1 period pays dividends.

Critical path. The critical path — the longest chain of dependent tasks that determines the earliest programme finish — typically runs: 1 → 2 → 3 → 5 → 7 → 12 → 13 → 19 → 22 → 25 → 26 → 27 → 28 → 29. Any delay on a critical-path step pushes out the certification date. Non-critical-path steps (e.g. competence/training in Step 14, communication in Step 15) have slack and can slip without moving the target finish. Know which steps you are flexible on and which you are not.

8. Status Colours, Bar Colours, and the Legend

Row 44 defines the five colour-coded status states used by the Gantt view. Status is determined automatically by the interaction of Progress % (column K), planned dates (H, I), and today's date (E4):

Status	Meaning	When It Applies
Not Started	Planned, not yet begun	Progress % = 0 AND today is on or before the planned Start Date (H). Expected state for any task whose predecessor chain has not yet completed. Visible as a grey bar.
In Progress	Work underway, on track	Progress % > 0 AND today is between Start and Finish AND progress is broadly proportional to elapsed time. Expected state for actively worked tasks. Blue bar.
At Risk	In progress but behind schedule	Progress % > 0 AND today is between Start and Finish, BUT progress is notably lower than elapsed-time percentage. Warning state — not overdue yet. Amber bar.

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Status	Meaning	When It Applies
Complete	Finished at 100%	Progress % = 100. Task is closed out. Green bar. Keep Complete tasks on the plan — they are the audit trail of programme progression.
Overdue	Planned finish passed, work incomplete	Today is after Finish Date (I) AND Progress % < 100. Escalation state requiring immediate step-owner attention. Red bar. Overdue tasks on the critical path delay the certification date.

9. Implementation Checklists — How They Fit

Each of the 29 steps has a companion implementation checklist (QMS-CHK_Step_NN_*.docx). The checklist expands the one-line activity description in column C into a full per-step work instruction: activity title, three-paragraph description, three-item responsibilities, four-item deliverables, and seven verification check items. The filenames are held in column G of the plan.

The checklists are the execution tools; the plan is the scheduling tool. The division is deliberate: the plan answers "what happens when and by whom?"; each checklist answers "how is this specific step actually done?" Both are needed — running from the plan alone produces tasks without enough guidance; running from checklists alone produces activities without coordinated timing.

Recommended workflow: at the start of each step, the owner opens the relevant checklist (from the PR Step Index sheet — Section 13), works through its content with whoever is executing the work, produces the required deliverables, updates Progress % in the master plan weekly until the step is complete, and archives the signed checklist with the deliverables in the DMS. The 29 checklist filenames follow a strict naming convention (QMS-CHK_Step_NN_*.docx), so they sort correctly in file listings.

Making the plan a launchpad. The PR Step Index sheet (Section 13) renders the column-G filenames as clickable hyperlinks using the formula =HYPERLINK("./"&G14, G14). One-time setup: confirm the relative path matches your folder structure. After that, clicking the filename in the PR Step Index opens the checklist directly. The master sheet's column G still holds the raw filename for users who prefer to navigate from there.

10. The Gantt Sheet

Sections 10–13 cover the four supplementary worksheets. Each is a read-only view derived from the master via formulas; do not edit the supplementary sheets directly. If a value looks wrong, the source is on the master.

The Gantt sheet is a phase-level rollup of the 29-step programme. Where the master sheet's embedded Gantt shows one bar per step (29 rows), the Gantt sheet aggregates to one bar per phase (5 rows) plus a milestones overlay. It is the right view for management-level conversations about programme shape and timing.

10.1 Layout

- **Header columns (A–H):** Phase, Steps in phase, computed Start Date, computed Finish Date, Duration in working days, duration-weighted Progress %, computed Status, Notes.

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