

# Global Project Quality Infrastructure – China

## Standardisation in China – How does it work?

### Legal framework and classification of Chinese standards

The 1989 Standardisation Law divided standards into four categories: national standards, industrial standards, local standards and enterprise standards. The first three categories of standards were further divided into mandatory and recommended standards. The reform of the Standardisation Law in 2018 reduced the number of mandatory standard categories and introduced one new category: association standards. Figure 1 below shows the Chinese standards system before and after the new Standardisation Law came into force in 2018.

#### National Standards

(Code: GB, 国家标准, Guojia Biaozhun)

National standards are necessary if there is a need to unify technical requirements for standards throughout the country. There are two kinds of national standards:

mandatory (GB) and voluntary (GB/T 国家标准推荐 Guojiabiao zhun Tuijian). Although voluntary in nature, GB/T standards may be mandatory if they are referenced in other laws and regulations, e.g. CCC regulations or contractual agreements.

The life cycle of a product or technology sometimes makes the process of formulating a GB or GB/T standard unfeasible. In such cases, technical committees (TC) can issue a GB directive (GB/Z, 国家标准指导, Guojiabiao zhun Zhidao). These directives are similar to ISO Technical Reports (ISO/TR) and adherence to a GB/Z is entirely voluntary. The numbers for national standards are comprised of their code (GB, GB/T), the number of their announcement order and the year of issue. For example, the number for standard ‘GB 18384-2020 Electric vehicles safety requirements’ indicates that this standard is compulsory and that it was issued in 2020.

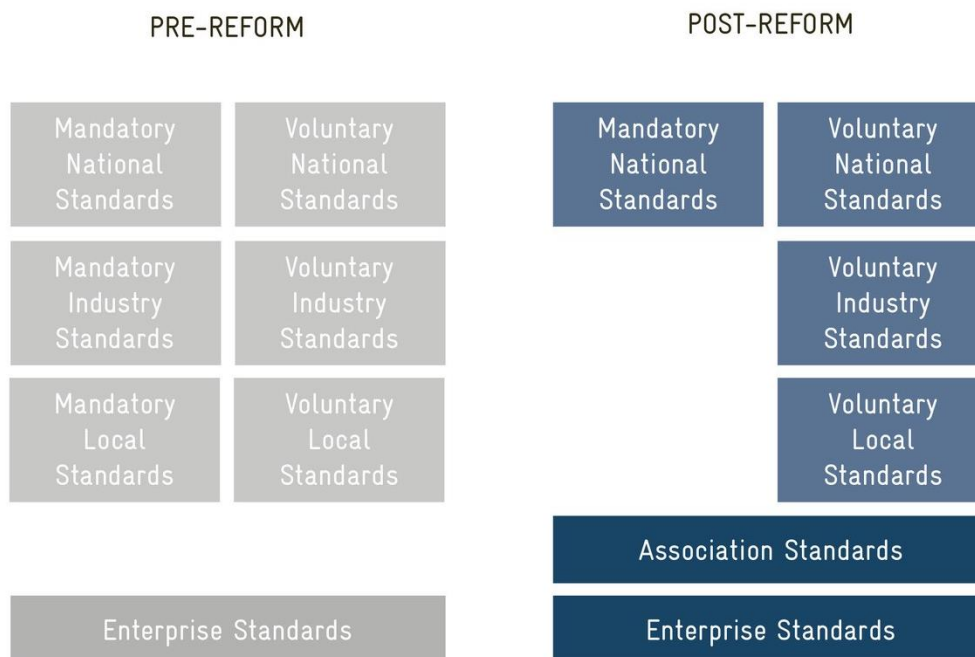


Figure 1: Chinese standardisation system pre- and post-reform

## Development of National Standards

In accordance with the 2018 Standardisation Law, the administration of nationwide standardisation is the responsibility of the Standardization Administration (SAC). SAC has been part of the State Administration for Market Regulation (SAMR) since 2018 but retains its name for external use. Other departments under the State Council, such as the Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM), the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) and local standardisation departments are responsible for the formulation and implementation of standards assigned by SAC. These departments are also responsible for undertaking the administrative responsibilities for industrial and regional standards.

SAC conducts the standards formulation process, including the establishment, coordination and management of National Standardisation Technical Committees (TC). These TCs lead the formulation of national standards.

Under the leadership of SAC and relevant departments or industry associations within their respective sectors, TCs are responsible for standards research, context drafting, comments enquiry and standards review.

TC members are selected from governments, the private sector, academic institutes and industry associations based on a consensus principle.

The development of a national standard can be divided into 9 stages:

No.	Stage	Stage outcome
1.	<b>Preliminary stage</b>	Preliminary work item (PWI)
2.	<b>Proposal stage</b>	New work item proposal (NP)
3.	<b>Preparatory stage</b>	Working draft(s) (WD)
4.	<b>Committee stage</b>	Committee draft(s) (CD)
5.	<b>Voting stage</b>	Draft standard (DS)
6.	<b>Approval stage</b>	Final draft standard (FDS)
7.	<b>Publication stage</b>	GB, GB/T, GB/Z
8.	<b>Review stage</b>	
9.	<b>Withdrawal stage</b>	

Certain stages may be omitted for the adoption of international or foreign standards, revision of existing standards or classification of Chinese standards into different categories.

## Industrial Standards

Industry standards may be formulated if – in the absence of national standards – it is necessary to unify technical requirements for a certain industry.

The codes for such standards depend on the specific industry. For example, SJ is the code for the electronics sector, QC represents the automotive sector (see Useful Links for a comprehensive overview). Similar to national standards, the numbers for industrial standards are comprised of their codes (SJ/QC...), the number of their announcement order and the year of issue. According to the new Standardisation Law, all industrial standards are voluntary.

Industrial standards can be drafted by national TCs and the industrial TCs of various departments under the State Council.

## Local Standards

(Code: DB, 地方标准, Difang Biaozhun)

To address special technical requirements for local circumstances customs, etc., local standards can be formulated by the provincial standardisation administrative department and its approved municipal standardisation administrative department. The requirements for local standards shall not be lower than the relevant technical requirements of mandatory national standards the administrative area code are added to code DB.

Local standards are represented by code DB. If a standard is a provincial standard, code DB is followed by the first two digits of the administrative area code in the standard number. If the standard is a municipal standard, the first four digits of the administrative area code are added to code DB.

## Association Standards

(Code: T, 团体标准, Tuanti Biaozhun)

To address market needs, social organisations which are registered at the Ministry of Civil Affairs can formulate association standards. This is a new category of standards in accordance with the new Standardisation Law.

Association standards are represented by code T. In a standard number, code T is followed by the code for the social organisation involved in its formulation.

## Enterprise Standards

(Code: Q, 企业标准, Qiye Biaozhun)

Enterprises can formulate their own standards or jointly develop standards with other enterprises. Enterprise standards are represented by code Q. In a standard number, code Q is followed by an enterprise code.

## Participation of foreign-invested enterprises

According to the Foreign Investment Law, which took effect in 2020, foreign-invested enterprises can equally participate in national standards-setting. They can make comments and suggestions during the process of project initiation, draft consultation and the implementation of standards. Foreign-invested enterprises can also take part in national TCs, including their sub-committees and working groups.

Interested entities should contact the secretariat of the respective national TCs to inquire about access and membership opportunities.

## Useful websites



The State Council's "Work Plan of Deepening Standardisation Reform" (March 2015) requires that mandatory national standard texts are disclosed to the public and the free disclosure of public welfare-related recommended standards is promoted. These disclosed standards can be found on the website of the **Standardization Administration of China**.

It provides information on national standards, industrial standards, local standards, enterprise standards, TCs, etc. Some national standards are not published on this website, as they are adopted from international standards (in Chinese).



In addition to the full text disclosure system for national standards, there is a **national public service platform for standards information** (in Chinese).



The **American National Standards Institute (ANSI)** provides a comprehensive overview of PCR industry standard codes in English.



The **Seconded European Standardization Expert for China (SESEC)** project was launched in May 2006. Its general objective is to foster technical alignment between Chinese and European standards, to gather, analyse and advise on developments related to standardisation and technical regulation, as well as to raise awareness about the European standardisation system in China.



The **European Chamber of Commerce Standards and Conformity Assessment Working Group** is composed of standards and conformity assessment experts from sectors such as automotive, auto components, construction, cosmetics, healthcare equipment, electrical equipment, IT&T equipment and machinery.

## About GPQI

The Global Project Quality Infrastructure (GPQI) of the German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi) engages in technical and political dialogues with Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and Mexico to reduce technical barriers to trade, enhance product safety, and strengthen consumer protection.

GPQI serves as a platform to improve the mutual understanding of policies and regulations and to jointly develop positions and solutions for international technical harmonisation. Common bilateral interests are the basis for cooperation on challenges and opportunities in the fields of standardisation, conformity assessment and accreditation, legal metrology and market surveillance with a wide range of stakeholders. These include ministries, regulators, public agencies, standards and accreditation bodies, industry experts, associations, companies, and technical and scientific institutions.



Find out more about **GPQI** and the  
**Sino-German Standardisation Dialogue**.

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