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Business Continuity Plan structure — ISO 22301:2019 Clause 8.4

Twelve sections, what belongs in each, and the failure that turns up in each one

A BCP is not the BIA and it is not a disaster recovery plan. The BIA decides what matters and how fast; the BCP says who does what; disaster recovery is the technology limb inside it. Clause 8.5 requires the plan to be exercised — an untested plan is an assumption, and the exercise record is the first evidence an auditor requests.

#	SECTION	WHAT BELONGS IN IT	COMMON FAILURE	AUDITOR ASKS FOR
1	Purpose, scope and objectives	Which activities the plan covers, which it excludes, and the MBCO it is written to achieve	Scope written so broadly it covers everything and therefore commits to nothing	The scope statement, tested against the BIA activity list
2	Activation criteria and authority	The thresholds that trigger activation and the named roles authorised to invoke it, with deputies	No named deputy, so activation waits on one person who may be unreachable	The delegation chain and evidence deputies know they hold it
3	Incident management team	Roles, responsibilities and decision rights during disruption — not job titles, functions	Roles mapped to individuals who have left, or to titles that no longer exist	The team roster with a review date inside the last 12 months
4	Communication plan	Who is told what, in what order, through which channel — staff, customers, regulators, suppliers, media	Relies on the corporate email system, which is often the thing that is down	The out-of-band channel and evidence it has been used in an exercise
5	Regulatory notification	Which regulator, what threshold, what timeframe, who signs it off	Timeframes not stated, so the clock is discovered mid-incident	The notification matrix with named thresholds and timeframes
6	Recovery procedures per activity	Step-by-step recovery for each activity in scope, sequenced to its RTO	Written by someone who knows the system, for someone who does not	A procedure walked through by a person who did not write it
7	Resource requirements	People, technology, facilities, information and suppliers each activity needs at MBCO	Assumes normal staffing levels during an event that may itself reduce them	The resource list reconciled to the BIA dependencies
8	Disaster recovery (technology)	Failover procedures, RTO and RPO per system, and the actual last-tested figures	States target RTO rather than achieved RTO — the two differ, sometimes by days	The last failover test result with actual elapsed times
9	Supplier and third-party arrangements	Critical suppliers, their own continuity commitments, and the contractual right to verify	Supplier named but never assessed, and no alternative qualified	Evidence of supplier continuity assessment inside the last 12 months
10	Return to normal operations	How you decide the disruption is over and how you transition back safely	Absent entirely — plans cover invocation but not stand-down	The stand-down criteria and who authorises them
11	Exercise programme	Schedule, scenarios, scope and objectives for each exercise, and the type (walkthrough, simulation, full failover)	A desktop walkthrough repeated annually because it never fails	The exercise schedule showing escalating scenario difficulty
12	Post-incident review and improvement	How lessons are captured, assigned and closed after an exercise or a real event	Findings recorded but never closed, so the same failure recurs	The findings register with closure dates and evidence

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