

# **GCIO Assurance Services Guide**

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# 1. Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to provide a common definition of the different types of Independent Quality Assurance (IQA) and Technical Quality Assurance (TQA) services provided under the Government Chief Information Officer (GCIO) Assurance Services Sub-panel, with the aim of improving the consistency and quality of Assurance Services provided to agencies.

## 2. Definition of Assurance

Assurance is an independent and objective assessment that provides valuable information for decision-making by giving a level of confidence as to whether business outcomes and benefits will be achieved.

### 2.1 Guiding Principles

Assurance Services should align with the following guiding principles:

- Be risk and value-based
- Be impartial and independent
- Be planned from the outset of the project or programme
- Be forward looking by providing an assessment of 'Delivery Confidence'
- Be conducted to inform key decisions
- Be reviewed regularly to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

For more detailed information on assurance planning for ICT-enabled projects and programmes refer to the GCIO's [ICT Projects and Programmes Assurance guidance](#).

### 2.2 Assurance versus Advisory Services

In contrast to Assurance Services, Advisory Services support management in adding value and improving an organisation's governance, risk management and control processes in order to achieve business outcomes.

This distinction is important as independence and objectivity are critical to the provision of Assurance Services. The independence and objectivity of providers may be threatened if they are also providing advisory services to an ICT-enabled project or programme. A good test is to ask the question "Is a provider able to return in the future and still feel comfortable criticising the scope or quality of any of the deliverables they are reviewing?"

To help illustrate the difference, the following advisory services are not within the scope of the GCIO Sub-panel:

- Performing project or programme management activities.
- Performing technical design or implementation activities, including Privacy Impact Assessments and Security Certification and Accreditation of new system.

- Providing consulting advice on how to fix issues identified during the course of an Assurance engagement.

Conflicts of interest such as those above must be assessed prior to selecting a provider and should be continuously re-assessed throughout the lifecycle of an ongoing assurance engagement.

## 3. GCIO Assurance Services Categories

The following tables provide a high level service description of each of the GCIO Assurance Services categories and can be used as guide to define the scope of an assurance engagement.

### 3.1 IQA for ICT-enabled Projects and Programmes

Assurance Services Category	Provides the SRO with confidence that...	High Level Service Description
<b>Project Assurance</b>	The project is well positioned to deliver the expected outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment to and adoption of the agency's project management framework and public sector best practice guidelines (e.g. PRINCE2)</li> <li>• Project governance enables timely and effective decision making</li> <li>• Project is supported by a robust and viable business case</li> <li>• Planning and delivery processes ensure project activities are well controlled</li> <li>• Financial management and control of budgets are effective</li> <li>• Benefits definition, realisation planning and monitoring are sufficiently controlled</li> <li>• Risk and issue management processes are effective</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement and communication processes are effective</li> <li>• Controls over the management of vendors / sub-contractors are effective</li> <li>• Quality management and assurance processes are effective</li> <li>• Change management plan is robust and the business is well positioned to receive the project outputs</li> </ul>

Assurance Services Category	Provides the SRO with confidence that...	High Level Service Description
<b>Programme Assurance</b>	The programme is well positioned to deliver the expected outcomes and benefits related to the organisation's strategic objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment to and adoption of the agency's programme management framework and public sector best practice guidelines (e.g. Managing Successful Programmes)</li> <li>• Alignment of the programme to organisational strategic objectives</li> <li>• Programme is supported by a robust and viable business case</li> <li>• The future organisation design will deliver the expected outcomes and benefits</li> <li>• Programme governance enables timely and effective decision making</li> <li>• Programme planning and control processes are effective</li> <li>• Benefits definition, realisation planning and monitoring are sufficiently controlled</li> <li>• Risk and issue management processes are effective</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement, communication and change management processes are effective</li> <li>• Quality management and assurance processes are effective</li> </ul>
<b>Portfolio Assurance</b>	The organisation has a robust approach to "doing the right things at the right time"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment to and adoption of the agency's portfolio management framework and public sector best practice guidelines (e.g. Management of Portfolios)</li> <li>• Alignment of the portfolio to strategic objectives</li> <li>• Portfolio definition processes are robust</li> <li>• Portfolio governance and management processes are effective</li> <li>• Benefits definition, realisation planning and monitoring are sufficiently controlled</li> <li>• Portfolio risk management processes are effective</li> </ul>

## 3.2 TQA for ICT-enabled Projects and Programmes

Assurance Services Category	Provides the SRO with confidence that...	High Level Service Description
<b>Technical Design Assurance</b>	The technical solution design is fit for purpose and will meet business requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment to and adoption of the agency's and government enterprise architecture frameworks, technical design standards and best practice guidelines</li> <li>• Assessment of the quality of the technical solution design, including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Functional suitability – Extent to which the design will meet the stated business needs</li> <li>○ Performance efficiency – Extent to which the design will meet non-functional requirements in terms of responsiveness and capacity</li> <li>○ Compatibility – Extent to which the design enables information exchange and interoperability</li> <li>○ Usability – Degree to which the design enables ease-of-use</li> <li>○ Reliability – Extent to which the design will meet non-functional requirements in terms of availability and recoverability</li> <li>○ Security – Degree to which the design protects information and data</li> <li>○ Maintainability – Extent to which the design ensures the system can be maintained</li> <li>○ Portability – Degree to which the design enables the system to be transferred from one platform to another</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Completeness of technical design documentation set, including traceability of functional and non-functional requirements against the solution design and vice versa</li> <li>• Identification of any risks inherent in the design such as extent of customisation, future modification / upgrade capability and software licensing costs</li> </ul>

Assurance Services Category	Provides the SRO with confidence that...	High Level Service Description
<b>Technical Implementation Assurance</b>	The technical build is fit for purpose and ICT is well positioned to receive the new system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of code and configuration quality against the technical solution design requirements</li> <li>• Test strategy and management processes are effective</li> <li>• Data migration and master data management is sufficiently controlled</li> <li>• ICT transition plan is robust</li> <li>• Solution is operable and supportable</li> </ul>