

# Assurance Practitioner Guidance

APM Competence Framework



# Introduction

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The *APM Competence Framework 3rd edition* (Association for Project Management, 2023) comprises 29 competences covering project, programme and portfolio management, and PMO. This guide focuses on the competencies of an assurance practitioner whether experienced or new to the field. It forms part of a series of role profiles designed to help readers to navigate the *APM Competence Framework* and understand which competences are required for specific roles.

The assurance practitioner can play a critical role in any project, programme or portfolio, and they require a strong understanding of project management principles. They design and conduct risk-based, independent reviews and assessments to improve the likelihood of success and benefits delivery. They support governance and decision making and provide independent advice and guidance to stakeholders throughout the project, programme or portfolio life cycle. They can also support progression of organisational maturity and development of delivery capability. The competences required of an effective assurance practitioner focus on technical knowledge, critical thinking, analytical skills, and effective communication and engagement, which span all areas of the *APM Competence Framework*. As assurance practitioners gain professional experience, their competency naturally develops over time. However, they should be mindful and only provide assurance in areas where they have verifiable expertise.

This guidance is designed to highlight areas of consideration for those in an assurance practitioner role and should be used in conjunction with the wider *APM Competence Framework*.

## Overview of the role

Section 3.4 of the *APM Body of Knowledge 8th edition* (Association for Project Management, 2025) says:

*Assurance: The purpose of assurance is to give governance boards and stakeholders confidence in their projects, programmes and portfolios. It assesses the likelihood that initiatives achieve their objectives and realise their benefits, and it identifies weaknesses and remedial actions to improve the chances of success.*

Assurance in a project, programme or portfolio refers to the approach and activities that provide decision makers with confidence that their programme or project is being delivered in a controlled manner in accordance with good management practice and lessons learned, in order to increase the likelihood that the expected outputs, outcomes and benefits will be achieved (*APM Guide to Integrated Assurance Management*, 2025). This typically involves ensuring that the business case is valid, the objectives are being met, benefits are being realised, risks are effectively managed and quality standards are maintained.

Technical expertise for an assurance practitioner who provides assurance over projects, programmes and portfolios could include familiarity with quality and assurance frameworks and ISO standards, risk identification and management, an understanding of business resilience and continuity, a familiarity with the application of systems thinking and

knowledge of the techniques that apply during change management. The assurance practitioner needs to understand assurance tools, methods and techniques as well as portfolio, programme and project management controls and best practice. This broad expertise is likely to have developed through experience in technical, project management or delivery roles.

An assurance practitioner also needs strong analytical skills, including the ability to think critically, analyse data, recognise patterns and trends, define root causes, solve problems, develop solutions, evaluate consequences and present their conclusions. It is likely that the assurance practitioner will be required to absorb lots of detail, recognising what is fact and what is opinion.

The assurance practitioner must interact with stakeholders, project team members and possibly regulators to communicate and present their findings in a clear and logical manner. Strong interpersonal skills are therefore required, including active listening, empathy, influencing and persuasion, as well as an appreciation of kinesics<sup>1</sup> and interpretation of non-verbal communication. They also need self-awareness and emotional intelligence to understand their own biases in order to apply greater objectivity and judgement.

There are also contextual aspects: competencies related to the specific project or programme and sector. The assurance practitioner will need to develop these skills through cross-cutting experience.

<sup>1</sup> The study of how certain body movements and gestures serve as a form of non-verbal communication.

In addition, the assurance practitioner needs the skills to manage assurance engagements including performance/quality, and to work in teams, either as a team member or as a team leader. This encompasses leadership, team management, diversity, conflict resolution, report analysis and ethics, compliance and professionalism. All assurance practitioners need to improve their effectiveness and drive continuous improvement as part of their responsibilities.

## Typical responsibilities

The responsibilities of assurance practitioners can be divided into two key areas: assurance management – designing and managing assurance activities; and conducting assurance – delivery of assurance activities.

### Assurance management

The assurance practitioner requires skills to develop the overall approach (strategy) to assurance in the project, programme or portfolio. There are a number of tactical models used to organise and deliver assurance. Each of these models places different demands on the assurance professional and those demands drive the competencies required. Some of these models are described below and summarised in Table 1. There are other models available.

- The Delegated Authority Model is defined in the *APM Guide to Integrated Assurance Management 2025*. Here, assurance is aligned to the governance structure. The first level operates at the sponsor level (internal audit, portfolio management office), the second level at the integration level (programme office), and the third level at the technical output level (project office). For simplicity, the Delegated Authority Model is referenced throughout this competency guide (Table 1 references all three models).
- The traditional Three Lines Model is the model promoted by the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA, 2020, updated 2024) and is widely adopted in the public and other sectors where a risk-based approach to assurance is mandated, such as banking and insurance. In initial versions of this model, assurance is delivered by line management (first line), central and specialist assurance teams (second line) and independent experts (third line). The Three Lines Model has evolved over time to align to management responsibilities to overcome implementation issues resulting from the model's rigid 'lines' construct.
- The Open Compliance and Ethics Group (OCEG) Lines of Accountability Model has five lines. Lines one, two and three align with the IIA model, with the executive team as the fourth line and the governing authority (board) as the fifth line (OCEG, 2024).

Table 1: Tactical assurance models (summary)

Feature	APM Delegated Authority	IIA Three Lines Model	OCEG Lines of Accountability
Primary focus	Alignment with project/ programme governance	Risk management and independence	Holistic governance and accountability
Total 'lines'	Three levels – sponsor, programme office, project office	Three lines: line management, central teams, internal audit/ independent experts	Five lines: aligned to the Three Lines Model with the addition of executive team and governing authority/ board
Highest level	First level: sponsor	Third line: internal audit/ independent experts	Fifth line: governing authority/board
Key strength	Directly maps to project delivery structures	Widely recognised; clear distinction of independence	Includes executive and board-level accountability

Often, it is simplistic to divide assurance constructs and activity types into 'lines' or 'levels' and there is more of a continuum where the lines are blurred. Assurance may also be delivered through a hybrid model involving two or three levels. The key to delivering effective assurance is combining the insights held by those who do the job daily with the

objectivity of those who are independent in a way that is collaborative and progressive.

Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the project and sponsor to agree a fit-for-purpose assurance operating model, establish its mandate and implement it for effective and progressive engagement.

The assurance practitioner needs the skills to create appropriate design proposals based on the nature of the activities, and then obtain the mandate and sponsorship to conduct this assurance over the life cycle of the project or programme. Assurance needs to be planned, scheduled and coordinated to deliver maximum value.

Assurance practitioners work as part of a team, may lead a team or may be part of a broader delivery team. Assurance engagements may be ad hoc, for example, in response to significant change, risks or issues, a one-off event, such as setting a project up for success or ahead of a key decision point, continuous (progressive assurance) throughout the life cycle of a project, specific to a project, across multiple projects (programmes) or across a portfolio.

The assurance practitioner needs to apply a range of competencies and skills when developing the overall approach and managing assurance. Engagements need to be planned and monitored effectively to ensure completion within agreed timeframes without compromising quality. Team selection is important, and team members must possess the appropriate skill sets to manage different tasks efficiently, so the team leader needs to understand the competencies and relevant strengths or areas for improvement for members. Diverse teams with different experiences (depth and breadth) provide different perspectives that can be valuable in providing insights. Engagements must also be managed within the agreed budget while meeting stakeholder expectations. When acting as a team leader, the assurance practitioner must oversee the team’s work, coordinate specialists and delegate tasks appropriately.

**Conducting assurance**

Individual assurance engagements can be viewed as structured assignments requiring a similar skill set and body of experience to that of a project leader.

An assurance practitioner at the first level (sponsor level) in the Delegated Authority Model conducts independent assessments of compliance, effectiveness and efficiency, providing confidence to stakeholders that projects, programmes and portfolios will achieve their objectives and realise their benefits. Their reports are generally provided to the governance functions and the board of directors.

An assurance practitioner in the second level (integration level) might conduct periodic reviews and assessments to evaluate the effectiveness of controls and risk mitigation strategies. They may provide oversight and guidance to the project team on risk management practices, with their reports and recommendations generally presented to senior leaders and sponsors.

For an assurance practitioner operating at the third level (technical level) in the Delegated Authority Model, typical responsibilities might involve monitoring for compliance with policies, procedures and regulations, identifying and mitigating risks and issues as they arise, implementing controls (checks and balances), or monitoring performance and adjusting to optimise project outcomes. Their reports and recommendations are generally provided to line management or to the programme office.

The exact competencies required will depend on the type, size and complexity of the project or programme, which model is being applied, and where in the model the assurance practitioner is operating (Table 2).

Table 2: Key areas covered by assurance professionals

Assurance areas	Reporting to
<b>Delegated Authority Model – First level</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance</li> <li>• Risk management</li> <li>• Sponsor governance</li> <li>• Business case and value</li> <li>• Organisational capability/maturity and culture</li> <li>• Goal/mission/outcome delivery and performance</li> <li>• Early and effective strategic decision making</li> <li>• Societal and consequential impact, including sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project and sponsor</li> <li>• Governance functions</li> <li>• Board of directors</li> <li>• Project, programme or portfolio office</li> </ul>

Table 2: Key areas covered by assurance professionals (continued)

Assurance areas	Reporting to
<b>Delegated Authority Model – Second level</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration governance</li> <li>• Effective controls, forecasting and performance</li> <li>• Risk mitigation strategies</li> <li>• Scope readiness, delivery and change control</li> <li>• Benefits, value and societal impact achievement</li> <li>• Effective decision making, change control and implementation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme and project leaders and delegated sponsors</li> <li>• Scope and capability heads and delegated duty holders</li> <li>• Programme office</li> </ul>
<b>Delegated Authority Model – Third level</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project and programme governance plan and adherence</li> <li>• Effective risk, issue and value management</li> <li>• Effective controls, forecasting and performance</li> <li>• Scope delivery and fulfilment of all requirements</li> <li>• Outputs and contribution to wider benefits, outcomes and societal impact</li> <li>• Effective decision/change management and support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project and programme managers</li> <li>• Team members</li> <li>• Project office</li> </ul>

In addition, assurance practitioners may also be called upon to provide consultancy and advisory services, or they could be asked to conduct ad hoc assurance following an event or an issue. These services require a blend of subject matter expertise, analytical abilities and communication skills. Analytical thinking should be combined with problem-solving aptitude and effective communication to convey complex ideas. Building rapport with clients, understanding their needs, and adapting strategies and solutions based on changing circumstances are key.

## Summary

An assurance practitioner requires a broad range of competencies (as shown in Figure 1) to manage effective assurance engagements and deliver meaningful assurance to stakeholders. The competencies encompass technical skills, professional judgement and interpersonal skills. Additionally, the assurance practitioner must maintain independence and objectivity.

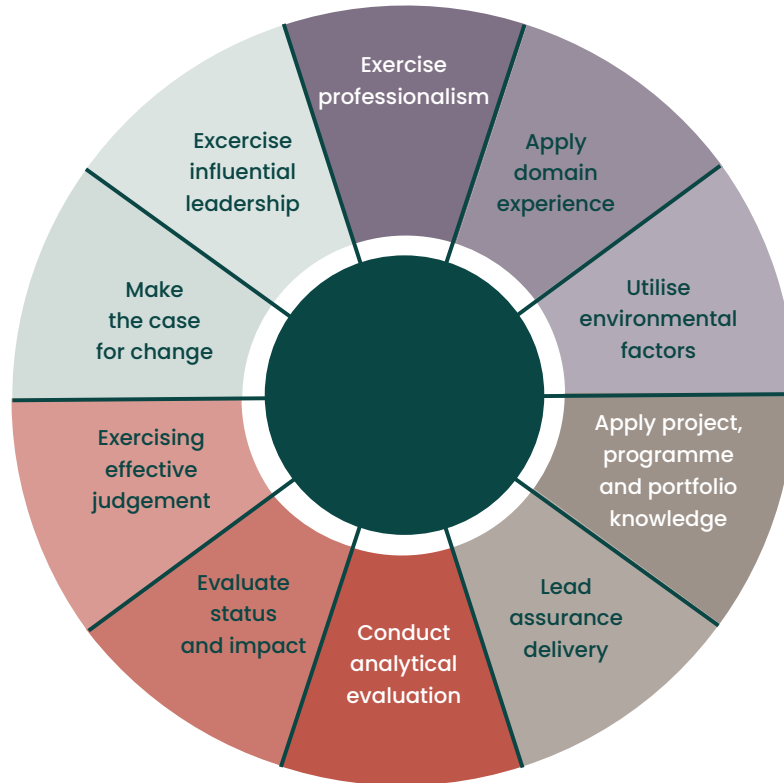


Figure 1: Project, programme and portfolio management assurance capabilities  
 Source: Reproduced with permission from A. Krolikowski

### A successful assurance practitioner:

- **Exercises professionalism:** Is principled and professional, applying high ethical standards to themselves and others, driving sustainability and continuous improvement.
- **Applies domain experience:** Uses their experience to inform where and how to look at programme risks even if this goes against the consensus of key stakeholders.
- **Utilises environmental factors:** Can assess the wider operating environment when assessing projects and programmes to ensure they are not stand-alone initiatives.
- **Applies P3M knowledge:** Has a strong understanding of management principles including governance, business case development, risk management and change control.
- **Leads assurance delivery:** Is a leader, delivering effective assurance activities on behalf of key stakeholders to provide confidence that projects, programmes and portfolios will be delivered on time and to budget, and that the business benefits are realistic and achievable.
- **Conducts analytical evaluation:** Can assess complex information, consider risks and benefits, and develop evidence-based positions, explaining these in clear, understandable language.
- **Evaluates status:** Can analytically investigate
  - preservation of value for money (economy, efficiency, effectiveness and equity)
  - project and programme status and validity, and the veracity of forecasts
  - contributions to goals, outputs, outcomes and benefits
  - societal impact and consequential changes.
- **Exercises effective judgement:** Supports or evaluates decisions to ensure they are proportionate, appropriate, sufficient, timely and evidenced.
- **Case for change:** Has the ability to make and present the case for change from assurance findings supported by appropriate analysis of the: claims, arguments and evidence.
- **Exercises influential leadership:** Has an influential leadership style to positively advise and guide all stakeholders and team members.

## Assurance competence guidance

While the assurance competencies in the next section apply across all assurance activities, these can be generically grouped to better illustrate context.

It ultimately falls to the sponsor who authorises assurance activities to determine the best fit operating model for assurance and the alignment of all the competencies and capabilities needed.



Figure 2: Generic assurance competencies grouping  
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# Detailed competence guidance

	Competence	Competence definition
1	<b>Life cycles</b>	The ability to structure and organise change initiatives.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> Assurance activities need to change and adapt throughout the life cycle of a portfolio, programme or project, adapting to the point in the life cycle and responding to risks and issues as they are identified. The assurance practitioner needs to assess which assurance tools and techniques will deliver the most effective outcomes. In many cases, assurance will be progressive, being applied continuously throughout the project life cycle, building on past assurance activities and aiming for high levels of delivery confidence.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> In conducting assurance reviews, the assurance practitioner should understand the different life cycle choices available and their impact on the outcomes and benefits of projects, programmes or portfolios. They should be able to assess the suitability of the chosen life cycle for the specific circumstances. The assurance practitioner reviews evidence of the chosen life cycle's application to support successful delivery so needs to recognise the appropriate level of governance, controls and documentation required based on the type of change.</p>	
2	<b>Governance arrangements</b>	The ability to establish and maintain governance structures that define control of deployment for delivery of change initiatives, and that align with organisational practice.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> When managing assurance activities, the assurance practitioner needs to understand the governance structure of the project or programme to ensure assurance activities are endorsed by the appropriate governance body and that the outcomes of assurance activities are communicated to the right forums.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> When conducting assurance reviews, the assurance practitioner needs the ability to assess the effectiveness of governance arrangements and decision making, including escalation and reporting routes, and whether the right stakeholders are involved in decision making. They need to assess whether decisions are aligned with the objectives of the project or programme and support successful delivery.</p>	
3	<b>Sustainability</b>	The ability to balance the environmental, social, economic and administration considerations that will impact a change initiative.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs the skills to drive sustainability in assurance operations and conduct. Simple choices can be made to optimise the environmental, social, economic and administrative impacts of assurance engagement delivery.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner should appreciate the environmental, social, economic and administration considerations within a project or programme and recognise the difference between stated and aspirational measures. Where necessary, they need to highlight greenwashing (misleading people into believing performance is more environmentally responsible than it is) and similar over-ambitious claims.</p>	

4	<b>Financial management</b>	The ability to enable financial resource for delivery and to plan and control the finances of change initiatives, as part of the organisation's overall financial management, to ensure optimisation of the business case.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner, particularly when also a budget holder, will need the skills to manage finances to ensure the costs associated with assurance activities are managed effectively and reported as part of the financial reporting cycle.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to understand financial management and reporting to assess whether the costs of the project, programme or change initiative are being managed effectively. They need to be familiar with financial statements and the drivers for the costs, revenues and cash flows, particularly their relationship with performance against project scope, resources and timeframes.</p>	
5	<b>Business case</b>	The ability to prepare, gain approval of, refine and update business cases that justify the initiation, investment and/or continuation of change initiatives in terms of benefits, costs and risks.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> Assurance itself often has an associated business case that drives the risk-based assurance plan. The value of assurance is difficult to quantify, but assurance can be seen as a driver for value creation through avoiding business risk and providing aggregated insights, optimising the cost and speed of delivery.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to understand the different aspects of a business case as a guide for assessing the overall project trajectory. They need to assess the effectiveness of business case management through: reviewing alignment with the strategic goals and priorities; evaluating the feasibility of the project and determining whether the project is realistic and achievable within the given constraints; evaluating whether the benefits justify the investment; validating that the assumptions underpinning the business case are realistic and supported by evidence; and ensuring that governance and oversight is working effectively.</p>	
6	<b>Portfolio shaping</b>	The ability to set up portfolios to ensure efficient delivery of strategic objectives.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> Projects and programmes should be assessed in the context of the wider operating environment. Assurance is not usually delivered in isolation. Assurance engagements are often part of a portfolio of assurance activities, all working together to deliver confidence that the strategic objectives of an organisation or change initiative(s) will be met. The assurance practitioner needs to be comfortable working in this environment and understand the broader picture.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to understand the strengths and weaknesses of any given portfolio set-up to deliver the organisation's strategic objectives and the significance of each project in the wider portfolio.</p>	

7	<b>Procurement</b>	The ability to secure the provision of resources, choosing strategies for obtaining best value from supply chains.
<p><b>Assurance management:</b> As an assurance team leader, the assurance practitioner may be required to outsource assurance provision, so they also need to apply procurement principles to their own third-party engagement activities.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to understand different procurement strategies and their impact on successful delivery to assess and challenge the chosen approach. Once a third party has been engaged, the assurance practitioner needs to assess the effectiveness of third-party management, including onboarding, performance management during delivery and exit management, to ensure best value.</p>		
8	<b>Reviews</b>	The ability to manage progression through the life cycle of a change initiative.
<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner may conduct reviews or assess the effectiveness of reviews. In both cases, the assurance practitioner needs to plan the activity, setting the scope and objectives. They need to assess which assurance tools and techniques will deliver the most effective outcomes, select the right team to deliver the assurance, conduct fieldwork and testing, evaluate the findings, and communicate the outcomes to stakeholders in a clear and objective manner (see competency 9).</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> Depending on their role, the assurance practitioner may conduct reviews or assess the effectiveness of reviews. In the conduct of reviews, the assurance practitioner needs the skills to identify past and predict future issues, working with project managers to define corrective actions. In many cases, the reviews will support gateways or go-no go decisions. When assessing the effectiveness of reviews, the assurance practitioner needs to understand the factors that contribute to a successful review and advise the sponsor whether significant risks or issues have been acted upon as a condition of passing the key decision point (gate) to the next phase.</p>		
9	<b>Assurance</b>	The ability to provide confidence to the governance board that a change initiative is on track to deliver the objectives and intended value.
<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to understand the value of assurance and deliver interventions and advice in a timely and cost-effective manner which supports the project or programme's likelihood of success. They need to agree the assurance plan, types of reviews and frequency of reviews, and initiate, execute and close each assurance review. The assurance practitioner needs to understand and apply a range of tools and techniques appropriate to the type of project or programme and the stage of the project life cycle. They need to understand performance analysis and gather, analyse, synthesise and report critical information to leaders. They need to understand the wider operating environment and provide assurance that projects and programmes are integrated and aligned with business needs.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to deliver the assurance activity in line with the assurance plan. This will involve gathering evidence, analysing the evidence, gathering insights and reporting. The assurance practitioner also needs to follow up, monitor the effectiveness and completion of corrective actions, and identify lessons learned. The assurance activity needs to be conducted in a way that is efficient, effective and timely.</p>		

10	<b>Capability development</b>	The ability to assess organisational maturity in relation to a change initiative and the wider organisation.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> Assurance practitioners, particularly those in leadership roles, also need to understand and develop the capability of the assurance team to deliver effective assurance of the project, programme or portfolio (see competencies 15 and 16). The skills and knowledge required may vary at different stages of the project life cycle.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs the skills and knowledge to assess the capacity and capability of the project or programme team, particularly its leaders, at the different stages in the project life cycle, and work with them to develop learning and coaching interventions to bridge any gaps.</p>	
11	<b>Transition management</b>	The ability to manage the integration of the outputs of a change initiative into business-as-usual (BAU), ensuring that outputs enable the intended value.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to understand the future operating model and the proposed approach to transition management to plan appropriate assurance activities to assess the effectiveness of the BAU transition (see competence 9).</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to understand how the different approaches to transition management impact the chosen life cycle and how the chosen strategy will facilitate project delivery and the successful transition to BAU. They need the skills to assess that handover arrangements, including knowledge transfer, supporting documentation and business continuity, have been planned prior to transfer of responsibilities to ensure an effective transition from the change project team to the BAU owners.</p>	
12	<b>Benefits management</b>	The ability to identify and agree the benefits and determine how they will be measured, monitored and managed throughout a change initiative until they are realised.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to plan and conduct appropriate assurance activities to assess whether benefits will be realised during and at the end of the project, programme or portfolio (see competence 9).</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner should understand benefits management and be able to challenge the credibility of plans in place to deliver the defined benefits. They need to have the skills to assess the planning and delivery and whether the assumptions, risks and any changes made support benefits delivery and realisation.</p>	

13	<b>Stakeholder engagement and communication management</b>	The ability to work with people, both internally and externally, to build support to achieve intended outcomes.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> When managing assurance activities, the practitioner should consider which stakeholders need to engage with the assurance team, building appropriate relationships through effective communication. They need to establish their credibility and become a trusted partner with these key stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to build relationships and gain the confidence of the sponsor, key stakeholders and the change leadership team to ensure that assurance interventions are appreciated and add value. They need the ability to assess complex information and develop positions, explaining these in language that is easy to understand. They may be required to assess the effectiveness of stakeholder engagement and communication management of a project as an independent advisor.</p>	
14	<b>Conflict resolution</b>	The ability to identify, address and resolve differences between individuals and/or interest groups.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner should understand and apply appropriate techniques to gain buy in to assurance initiatives and recommendations and manage resistance as the 'critical friend' speaking 'truth to power'. They need the confidence to deal with difficult situations sensitively and challenge senior leaders while providing independent and objective advice.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> If conflicts arise within the assurance team, the assurance practitioner needs to ensure that these are quickly resolved and that they do not impact the quality of the assurance engagement or the outputs communicated to key stakeholders.</p>	
15	<b>Leadership</b>	The ability to empower and inspire others to deliver successful change initiatives by providing vision, direction, feedback and support so people can do their best work.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> When leading an assurance team, the assurance practitioner needs to focus on supporting the team to deliver high quality assurance services, empowering the team to deliver both collectively and individually. The assurance leader should set the tone for the team, building relationships and trust within the team, and promoting transparency and effective communication.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to develop credibility with the project, programme or portfolio leadership team by demonstrating expertise and integrity during the conduct of assurance activities. They need to be proactive in the identification of project issues and risks, and to use analytical thinking and creative problem solving to work collaboratively with the change team to find effective solutions.</p> <p>During independent assurance activities, the assurance practitioner may be called on to assess the quality of the leadership team, particularly if the project or programme is not progressing to plan.</p>	

16	<b>Team management</b>	The ability to select, develop and manage individuals to create and sustain teams.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs the skills to build an assurance team with the right capacity and capability to enable success given the size and complexity of the project or programme. They need to foster a collaborative and inclusive team environment, promoting a culture of accountability and continuous improvement, often against demanding timeframes and implicit resistance. They need to establish their position in the project team through communicating roles and responsibilities effectively while providing ongoing support, guidance and mentorship to team members.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> In the conduct of assurance, the assurance practitioner needs the skills and knowledge to assess the capacity and capability of the project or programme team, particularly its leaders, at the different stages in the project life cycle, and work with them to develop learning and coaching interventions to bridge any gaps.</p>	
17	<b>Diversity and inclusion</b>	The ability to build and maintain an inclusive environment that embraces a diverse culture.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs the skills to foster an inclusive work environment, encouraging open dialogue and listening to diverse viewpoints during the conduct of assurance activities. They need to understand the different perspectives, cultural norms and personal preferences that arise within a project or programme.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs the skills to assess whether projects, programmes or portfolio promote diversity and inclusion, and guard against the introduction of biases or inequality. By finding opportunities in diversity, the assurance practitioner can support leaders to harness these as a positive contribution to the change.</p>	
18	<b>Ethics, compliance and professionalism</b>	The ability to embody, promote and maintain a trusted profession and to navigate the cultural, legal and regulatory environment.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to be a trusted advisor and critical friend, demonstrated by their understanding of the project or programme and the legal and regulatory framework within which the change takes place. They need to gain the confidence of teams and senior leaders to provide independent, unbiased and respectful assurance and advisory services to all.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to maintain their integrity and adhere to ethical standards such as professional codes of conduct while delivering consistent, high-quality work. They should demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous learning and improvement.</p>	

19	<b>Requirements management</b>	The ability to prepare and maintain definitions of the requirements of change initiatives.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to plan and conduct appropriate assurance activities to assess whether requirements are being managed effectively as part of the project, programme or portfolio (see competence 9).</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs the ability to assess whether the requirements are appropriate and reflect the full scope of a project, programme or portfolio. In addition, they need to evaluate whether the requirements will deliver the intended outcomes and business benefits. They need the skills to assess whether changes to requirements are being managed appropriately.</p>	
20	<b>Solutions development</b>	The ability to determine the optimal solution to satisfy agreed requirements.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to plan and conduct appropriate assurance activities to assess whether the right solution has been chosen in order to deliver the project, programme or portfolio requirements (see competence 9).</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs the skills to critically evaluate the both the method of selection and mode of delivery of solutions, identifying and flagging any potential factors that might impact delivery of the requirements. As a leader or member of an assurance team, they need to conduct effective reviews of solutions development.</p>	
21	<b>Quality management</b>	The ability to ensure that outputs are delivered in accordance with requirements.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to embrace quality management in their own approach and ensure assurance outputs meet expected standards.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> During the conduct of assurance activities, the assurance practitioner needs the skills to assess whether quality planning, processes, execution and remedial actions are appropriate for the required change outcomes. They need experience of a broad range of quality management arrangements, including how technical assurance (ensuring that technical processes, systems or projects meet pre-defined standards, requirements and objectives) is obtained. They need the ability to assess the impact of potential quality issues on the delivery of the project or programme outcomes and benefits.</p>	

22	<b>Integrated planning</b>	The ability to take forward the definition of outputs into detailed planning, incorporating multiple areas into the integrated project management plan.
<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to plan effective assurance engagements, developing effective assurance plans that ensure the systematic and holistic co-ordination of assurance activities at all levels of governance over time to maximum impact of the assurance activities while minimising cost and disruption to delivery.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> During assurance engagements, the assurance practitioner needs the skills to recognise the necessary components of a plan, how these have been derived, what trade-offs have been made and how these have been validated. This requires an understanding of different structures and formats of integrated plans, their fundamental components and their effective application in different situations. They need to interpret project plans to assess their appropriateness, completeness and viability. They need to understand and assess the assumptions, interdependencies, completeness and currency.</p>		
23	<b>Schedule management</b>	The ability to undertake time-based planning with an emphasis on activities and resource.
<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to conduct effective assurance reviews to deliver confidence to stakeholders that the project, programme or portfolio schedule is being managed appropriately (see competency 9).</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to understand the tools available to develop a project schedule covering tasks, dependencies, durations and deadlines. They need to understand resource allocation to meet schedule requirements, task sequencing to optimise efficiency and minimise delays, how to accurately estimate the time required for each task and the overall project duration, how to identify the critical path, and assess the approaches to monitoring and control. They need an awareness of optimism bias, and the potential pressure in a project to make the schedule fit the deadlines.</p>		
24	<b>Resource management</b>	The ability to acquire and deploy internal and external resources.
<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to manage assurance resource needs in line with the assurance plan to ensure that resource utilisation is maintained at an appropriate level and that assurance is adding value.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> During assurance activities, the assurance practitioner needs to assess whether resources are being utilised effectively and efficiently. They need the skills to evaluate the resource dependencies between projects and BAU activities, and the potential impact(s) of project delays or delays in the recruitment of key resources. The assurance practitioner needs to understand the approach to the prioritisation and allocation of resources and their utilisation. They need the skills to assess how resource gaps could affect overall delivery of the project or programme. In addition, they need the ability to challenge over-allocation of critical resources, especially individuals with specialist skills.</p>		

25	<b>Resource capacity planning</b>	The ability to plan resource needs in line with the strategic direction of the organisation to ensure that resource utilisation is maintained at an appropriate level for optimal efficiency.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to optimise the cost or effort required to provide assurance based on the nature of the project, programme or portfolio and the risk appetite of the sponsor. Assurance activities need to be managed in line with competency 9.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to assess whether resources are being utilised effectively and in line with the strategic direction of the organisation. They need the skills to evaluate the resource dependencies between project, programme and BAU activities, and the potential impact(s) of project delays or delays in the recruitment of key resources. They need to assess whether resource utilisation is maintained at an appropriate level for optimal efficiency.</p>	
26	<b>Budgeting and cost control</b>	The ability to develop and agree budgets for change initiatives and understanding where costs fall over time.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner, particularly when in a leadership role, will be required to develop assurance budgets and manage costs. Demonstrating the value of assurance is often challenging, so it is important to be able to demonstrate that assurance budgets and assurance activities are targeted appropriately at the more significant risks.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> During assurance reviews, the assurance practitioner needs a good understanding of budgeting, forecasting, cost control and contingency management to identify trends and to assess whether these are being managed effectively. This includes awareness of cost drivers, factors affecting changes to actual costs against plan, cost and schedule performance indicators, and use of contingency. They need to assess whether budget plans are realistic, well-defined, and aligned with the scope of the project or programme.  They need to evaluate the accuracy and comprehensiveness of cost estimates for project expenses, assess how the budget is being monitored to identify variances and discrepancies, and assess the effectiveness of cost control measures in place to address budget changes. They need an awareness of the impact of optimism bias on budgeting and cost control.</p>	
27	<b>Contract management</b>	The ability to monitor and manage supplier performance.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> Assurance practitioners may be required to manage the contracts for third party assurance providers. Therefore, they need to set clear performance targets and appropriate milestones, and to measure performance against these criteria.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> During assurance reviews, the assurance practitioner will need to understand the contract management life cycle from initiation, through implementation and execution, to contract termination. They need to understand the different types of contracts, and the impact the choice of contract and incentivisation type may have on efficient project or programme delivery. They need to assess whether effective performance measures are in place, and whether all parties are fulfilling their contractual obligations.</p>	

28	<b>Risk and issue management</b>	The ability to identify and monitor risks (threats and opportunities); to plan and implement responses to those risks and respond to issues that affect a change initiative.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to plan assurance activities based on the risk universe, namely the categories and uncertainties that might affect a change initiative. They need to identify the risks to be investigated, define the appropriate methods and procedures that align with the identified risks, and develop the objectives, scope and budget of the assurance activity to deliver value to the sponsor.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs experience of risk management to assess whether the risk management process being used is effective in minimising adverse impacts to the change, while leveraging opportunities for improvement. They need the ability to sift the myriad of risks to identify the material risks that require proactive management. They need to understand the available risk treatments and when/where to apply these. In the conduct of reviews, the assurance practitioner needs the skills to identify past and predict future issues and future risks, working with project managers to define corrective actions. When assessing the effectiveness of reviews, the assurance practitioner needs understand the risks that contribute to a successful review and advise the sponsor whether significant risks or issues have been acted upon.</p>	
29	<b>Change control</b>	The ability to manage variations and change requests in a controlled way.
	<p><b>Assurance management:</b> The assurance practitioner needs to adapt their own assurance plans and respond to changes throughout the project and programme life cycle. This is essential if assurance is to be effective and efficient.</p> <p><b>Conducting assurance:</b> The assurance practitioner needs the skills to determine if the change control process is effective in prioritising and authorising the required changes, while managing their impact on the project. They need the ability to assess the controls in place to manage changes, and to understand the implications of changes.</p>	

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