



The Relationship Between Gateway™ Peer Review and IQA

This Guidance note has been developed in response to queries from a range of parties on how conventional IQA processes and the new Gateway Peer-Review process align and inter-relate. For further information please contact the Gateway Unit at gateway@ssc.govt.nz.

Independent Quality Assurance of Projects and Programmes

Independent Quality Assurance (IQA) is a general term which can describe a wide variety of quality assurance processes used to improve the outcomes of projects and programmes, from technical audit to project governance and peer review.

IQA though is most commonly used to describe the structured review of an organisation’s project management processes, practices, standards and guidance, their appropriateness, and the way in which they are being applied to a particular project or programme.

These processes may include (but are not limited to) management of scope, costs, schedule, benefits, risks, procurement, business change, communications, and governance. It is important that these knowledge areas are reviewed in a structured way and project IQA should be scoped accordingly.

Gateway Peer Review does not provide this detailed level of review of the processes or practices used in Project Management.

Gateway Peer Review

Gateway is a high-level Peer Review process which works at the *system*¹ level of complex and high risk projects. Gateway provides peer-to-peer advice directly to the project’s Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) on how business outcomes might be increased and their risks reduced. The independence, seniority and experience of the four Reviewers used in Gateway reviews (frequently at a Partner or Senior Director level of a company) provides a level of credibility and understanding not possible in IQA reviews of process and practice.

High complexity in large and high risk projects frequently results in standardised processes being insufficient to identify or manage many risks. Delivery confidence can also become difficult to assess. Many agencies sponsoring these projects are working in unknown territory due to the scale, or uniqueness of their objectives. Effective QA of the “System” for these projects can be difficult, but can also be very high return. Gateway can provide significant benefits for these projects that traditional IQA can not.

Differing Approaches

A Gateway Review is primarily a series of 15-20 interviews spread over four or five days, with a debrief provided to the SRO at the end of each day, and a short written report provided to the SRO on the fifth day.

An IQA Review looks in-depth at processes and documentation, usually includes a small number of interviews, and may be conducted over a period of some weeks.

¹ System here meaning the whole (not the sum) of processes, people, technology, capability and culture, for both the Project’s Owner and Client.

Figure 1 and Table 1 below provide a comparison of the differences between IQA and Gateway Peer Review.

IQA Informs Gateway

A Gateway Review team will ask to be provided key, high-level project documents before interviews commence (e.g. Business Case, Risk Report, Meeting Minutes etc). A copy of the project’s most recent IQA report/s will also be requested. The author of the IQA report will usually also be included in the Gateway interview programme.

Consultation with Monitoring Agencies

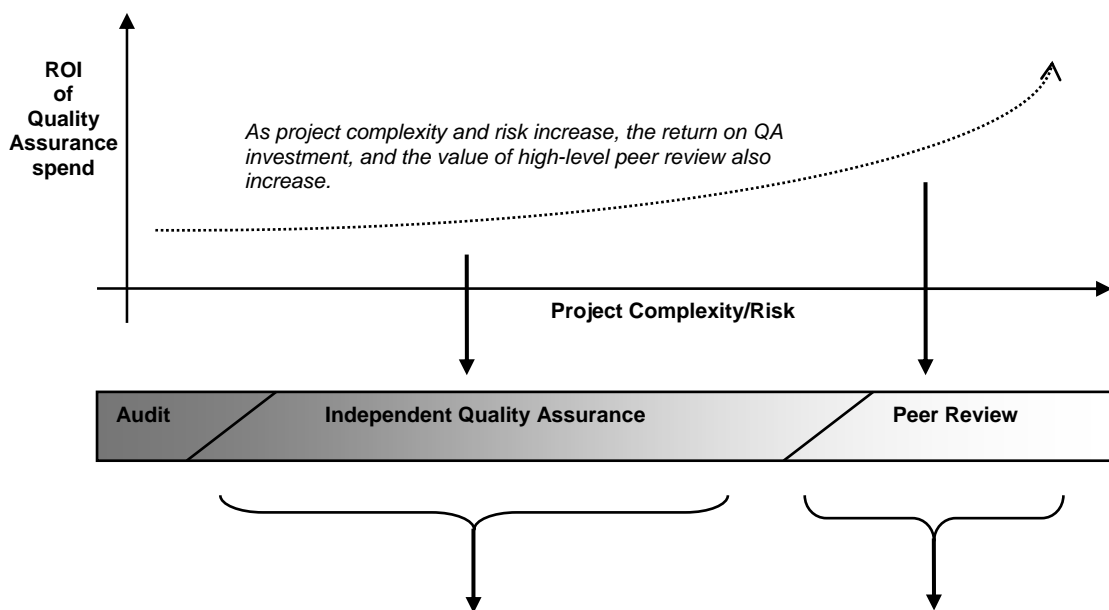
The Major ICT Projects Monitoring Regime recommends that agencies should consult with Treasury and SSC on the scope of IQA reviews, and on the selection of the IQA provider. With Gateway now adding value at the broader “system” level, the importance of this consultation is increased. Where SSC can add value is to check that the scope of the IQA is appropriate, that the IQA provider is appropriately skilled, that the price is not too high and, importantly now with Gateway, that an agency is not including significant "system" QA in their IQA scopes which a Gateway review may already be providing.

Agencies will sometimes also purchase the services of a single quality or business advisor (sometimes reporting to the CEO) to work at the system level of a large programme or project. Depending on the needs of the department and its CEO this can sometimes be a source of useful, additional assurance value.

Audit and Technical QA

Other types of project assurance activity include Audit and Technical Quality Assurance. Internal resources are generally used for these activities if they are available. Audit reviews generally focus on the effectiveness of controls being designed or built into the new system and the adequacy of security, particularly around access to data and transactions. Technical Quality assurance focuses on technical development aspects, including (but not limited to) the suitability of the architecture being used, quality of code developed, system performance, and defect/re-test results.

Figure 1 & Table 1: Differences Between IQA and Gateway Peer Review



<i>Focus of Review</i>	<i>Project IQA</i>	<i>Gateway</i>
Type of Project Reviewed	<p>Structured projects, low-through-high risk.</p> <p>Project (and Programme) Management processes and frameworks can significantly improve the efficiency and effectiveness of new investments and their implementations. The selection and application of processes and frameworks though can vary widely between agencies. IQA has been proven to significantly reduce project and programme costs, and risks to outcomes.</p>	<p>High Risk² or mission-critical only.</p> <p>High complexity results in standardised processes frequently being insufficient to identify or manage many risks. Delivery confidence can also become difficult to assess. Many agencies sponsoring these projects are working in unknown territory, due to the scale, or uniqueness of their objectives. Effective QA of the “System³” can be very difficult, but also high return.</p>
Primary Purpose of Review	<p>Assurance to the Project Sponsor or CEO (particularly for projects monitored under Cabinet’s CO(01)4 directions) of the appropriateness of relevant processes, standards, and best practice guidance, and the sponsoring agency’s compliance with them.</p> <p>The primary focus is on processes and their outputs.</p>	<p>Peer Review support to the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) in the discharge of their responsibilities to achieve a project’s business aims.</p> <p>The primary focus is on outcomes, and the project-business relationship as a system. Organisational capabilities and culture (the complement of process) and unwritten issues and risks are all key.</p> <p>Processes are not examined in detail by Gateway, and so it is important that robust IQA precede Gateway Reviews, and that the relevant IQA reports be available to the Gateway team.</p>
Methodology Used	<p>Structured (processes and standards based) review of project management outputs and capabilities (e.g. project planning documents, scoping statements, business cases), against required or recommended standards and guidance. Interviews with key people, usually within the project, are usually included.</p> <p>Review of processes is frequently based on PMI’s PMBoK, UK OGC’s PRINCE2 or a similar best practice (these must be applied “in-context”).</p> <p><i>Limited advice on delivery confidence may be provided.</i></p>	<p>Unstructured Interviews-based (with both internal and external stakeholders.)</p> <p>Typically 15 to 20 interviews are held over a four to five day period. Interviews are usually held with one individual at a time, and are non-attributable (In-confidence).</p> <p>Gateway applies the collective experience of four, highly-independent wise-heads in a relatively unstructured way.</p> <p>Guidance to reviewers is provided in the Gateway review booklets (these are not applied as a pass-fail checklist.)</p> <p>A brief review of key project documentation, including business cases, risk, and IQA reports, precedes the Gateway interviews.</p> <p><i>Direct advice to the SRO on delivery confidence is key to the methodology.</i></p>

² Simpler forms of Gateway exist for lower and medium risk projects but these are not currently available in New Zealand.

³ System here meaning the whole (not the sum) of processes, people, technology, capability and culture, for both the Owner and their clients.

<p>Review Frequency</p>	<p>Reviews occur at key project milestones and at other agreed intervals. They may be significant reviews or more simple status health-checks. A combination of these is usually applied over the project life-cycle.</p>	<p>Reviews are held at six pre-defined decision points in the project lifecycle (from strategic assessment, through business case approval, to benefits realisation.)</p> <p>The same four-person, five day structure is applied for each review.</p>
<p>Review Outputs</p>	<p>A structured report on processes, artefacts, reporting and management. Usually provided to the PM (or CEO for monitored ICT projects) and other steering committee members as required.</p> <p>Copies of reports on large or high risk projects are usually also expected to be provided to central agencies.</p>	<p>Daily (for the five day duration of the review), a 30 minute update is provided to the SRO. On the 5th day, the final written report (usually only a dozen pages) is provided in-confidence to the SRO.</p> <p>Central agencies (CAs) are not provided a copy of Gateway reports as these are In-Confidence to the project SRO.</p>
<p>Reviewers</p>	<p>One or two consultant reviewers from a contracting organisation are usually assigned to review the project throughout the project's lifecycle. Domain specialists will sometimes provide advice in a support role.</p>	<p>Four, highly-experienced, senior-level (including Partner and CEO/Deputy-CEO level) peer reviewers are selected from an international database of reviewers accredited in the Gateway methodology.</p> <p>New teams are formed for each of a project's six reviews, based on the domain, lifecycle timing, risk, and culture matching needs of the project.</p> <p>Teams may include a reviewer from an earlier review of the same project to provide continuity if deemed appropriate by the administering Gateway Unit.</p>
<p>Independence</p>	<p>May have an organisational relationship</p> <p>IQA services are provided by private sector consultants external to the project.</p> <p>These consultants may be used on work elsewhere in the same agency at a later date. The consulting IQA organisation may also have an existing or future audit or IQA relationship with the sponsoring govt agency.</p>	<p>No organisational relationship is permitted</p> <p>Gateway Reviewers, and their employers, must have had no recent association with the project being reviewed.</p> <p>Gateway Reviewers must be able to assure that both they and their employers will also have no future professional association with a project that they have Gateway reviewed.</p> <p>The test is that any future relationship between a Reviewer, or their employer, and a government agency, must not be able to be viewed as having arisen, or having been influenced, through a government agency's experience of them during a Gateway review.</p> <p>The provision of direct advice, uninfluenced by fear or favour, is key to the value of the</p>

		Gateway methodology.
Review timing	<p>IQA reviews should precede the finalisation of all important project decision making.</p> <p>IQA review reports should be available to Gateway review teams before reviews are undertaken, and to monitoring agencies before their review of centrally monitored project documents (e.g. Business Cases) and key central agency decision making.</p>	<p>After IQA is performed. Gateway reviews should be held before key decisions on the project are made by the project’s SRO or financiers, and before relevant project documents are finalised.</p> <p>This enables the project to be able to respond to the recommendations made in the Gateway report.</p> <p>Relevant project documents (e.g the relevant stage Business Case) should be available to the review team in draft form (unfinalised, so as to be able to benefit from Gateway recommendations.)</p> <p>A current, relevantly scoped, IQA report (see left-hand column) should be available to the Gateway review team.</p>