

Governance, roles and assurance

This topic has no formulas, so this page gives four key rules, each with a worked example, then the two model sheets. They serve IPMA, PMI and APM exams alike.

KEY RULES

Who decides: the lowest level that covers it all

decision level = the lowest level whose limits cover every part of the decision (money, time, scope)

One broken limit is enough to send a decision up. Limits go down and reports go up; a decision beyond your limits goes one level up, with options and a recommendation.

Example: A project manager may approve up to €10,000 or 1 week; the steering board up to €100,000 or 1 month. A change of €25,000 and 3 days: the time fits, the money does not, so the steering board decides

Tolerance: decide inside, escalate beyond

tolerance = baseline × agreed share · forecast inside → decide and report · forecast beyond → escalate at once

Management by exception. APM calls the limit a tolerance, PMI a threshold (PMI keeps 'tolerance' for the allowed variation in quality).

Example: Budget €600,000, cost tolerance 5%: $0.05 \times €600,000 = €30,000$. A forecast of €624,000 is €24,000 over (4%): decide and report. A forecast of €640,000 is €40,000 over (6.7%): escalate now

Gate criteria and independent assurance

go only if each agreed criterion is met · only the level that set a criterion may waive it · evidence checked independently

Set measurable criteria before the gate. Assurance often comes in three lines: the team's own checks; reviews independent of the project for the sponsor and board; audit for the organisation's leaders (APM: three lines of defence).

Example: Criterion: at most 2 open critical defects at go-live. The final test leaves 6, three times the limit: the steering board that set the criterion decides, on the evidence

The RACI check (a common convention)

each row: exactly one A, at least one R, few Cs · each column: many Rs = overload; empty = ask why

Responsible: the people doing the work. Accountable: the one owner, who approves the result. Consulted: asked before. Informed: told after. Add governance decisions, such as go-live, as rows.

Example: A chart of 6 deliverables and 4 roles: the test lead holds R in 5 of the 6 rows (overload), and the go-live row has 2 As. Name 1 owner for go-live and share out the testing work

IN THIS HANDOUT

Governance levels and escalation

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RACI matrix

p. 3

Sources: IPMA ICB4 (2015); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026); IPMA International Certification Regulations (ICR) v4.4 (2025)

Key: IPMA = International Project Management Association; ICB4 = IPMA's Individual Competence Baseline; PMI = Project Management Institute; PMBOK® Guide = PMI's body-of-knowledge guide; PMP® = PMI's Project Management Professional; APM = Association for Project Management; PMQ = APM's Project Management Qualification; ICR = IPMA's International Certification Regulations. Unofficial study material for IPMA®, PMI® and APM exams. Not affiliated with, endorsed by or approved by IPMA, PMI or APM, and not an accredited or endorsed training provider. IPMA® and IPMA ICB® are registered trademarks of IPMA in Switzerland and other countries. PMI, PMP, CAPM and PMBOK are registered marks of Project Management Institute, Inc. APM is a trade mark of the Association for Project Management. Other marks belong to their owners. PMP® exam facts are from PMI's public PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); check the current version on [pmi.org](https://www.pmi.org). APM's qualifications are its own; this series is not an APM Accredited Provider or APM Endorsed. Examples use a fictional city and its projects.

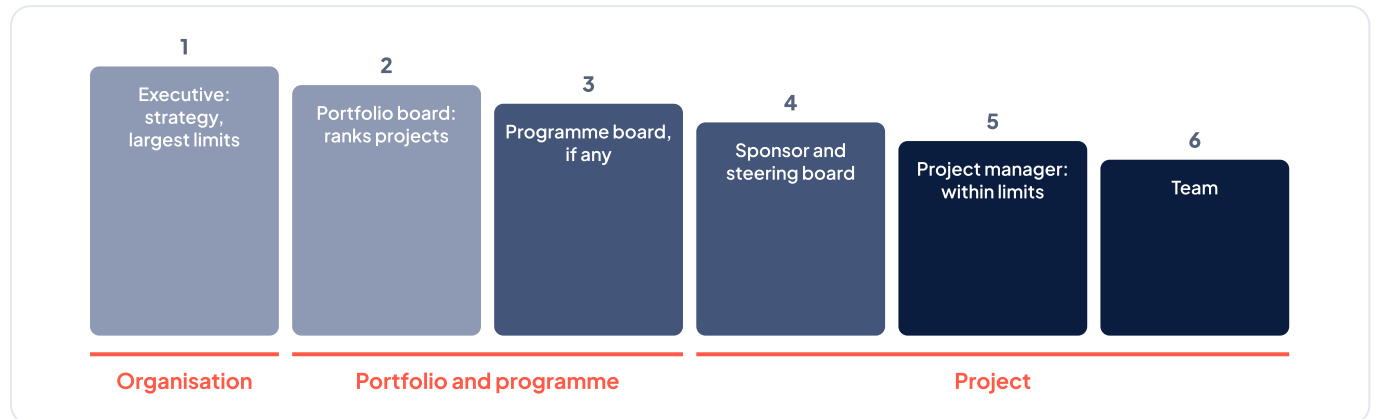


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Governance levels and escalation

Who decides what, at which level, and within which limits.



Our own picture. Limits go down, reports go up. A programme board sits in between only where there is a programme.

WHAT IT IS

Governance says who holds authority over a project and who answers for what. Each **level** sets **limits** for the one below (APM: tolerances; PMI: thresholds) and gets reports from it. Inside your limits you decide and report; a forecast that breaks one goes **one level up** at once, with options.

HOW IT WORKS

- 01 Map the levels above you and who sits on each board.
- 02 Agree your limits early: money, time, scope, quality, risk.
- 03 Report up in the format each level needs.
- 04 Breach forecast: one level up at once, with options.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city team has eight months to move resident parking permits online. Only its steering group may release the €40,000 change budget.

The supplier quotes €30,000 for renewal reminders and agrees €24,000. The project manager takes it to the steering group with options and the effect on go-live. Approved, it leaves €40,000 – €24,000 = €16,000.

In the exam: Name the levels above you, your own limits, and one decision you took up a level: what you brought, who decided, and how fast.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months, with a €1.2 million contingency and a steering board of department heads.

The project manager may commit up to €40,000 per decision from the contingency. Larger ones go to the steering board, then the chief executive; a council committee sees only budget or scope beyond the delegated limits. Scarce specialists shared with other projects are allocated at portfolio level.

In the exam: Show that you designed the ladder: limits per level, who sits where, how fast a decision moves, and how you kept it light.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · PMBOK® GUIDE 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.3.2.5: decisions beyond your own authority; delegation levels: 4.5.5.2	Guide: Governance domain, §2.1. Exam outline: Business Environment task 1 (thresholds)	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §1.1.2, §2.6.1: delegated limits ('tolerance'). PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) objective 2c

Sources: IPMA ICB4 (2015); PMI, PMBOK® Guide, 8th ed.; PMI, PMP® Examination Content Outline (2026); APM Body of Knowledge, 8th ed.; APM, PMQ handbook (v6, 2026)

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RACI matrix

Who does it, who owns it, who is asked first, and who is told.

DELIVERABLE OR DECISION	SPONSOR	PROJECT MANAGER	SUPPLIER	SERVICE DESK
Permit rules and fees	A	R	I	C
Configure, migrate data	I	A	R	–
Service-desk guide	–	A	C	R
End-to-end test	I	A	R	C
Go-live decision	A	R	C	I

Our own example: the last weeks of a city permit project. One A per row; the sponsor decides go-live with the steering group.

WHAT IT IS

A responsibility assignment matrix crosses the work with the roles. **RACI** is a common convention for its cells, used in the PMBOK® Guide (PMI's body-of-knowledge guide) and the APM (Association for Project Management) Body of Knowledge.

Responsible: the people doing the work. **Accountable:** the one owner, who approves the result. **Consulted:** asked before (two-way). **Informed:** told after (one-way).

HOW IT WORKS

- 01 Rows: main deliverables and decisions, such as go-live.
- 02 Columns: roles, including suppliers and line managers.
- 03 Each row: exactly one A, at least one R, few Cs.
- 04 Each column: many Rs mean overload; an empty one, ask why.
- 05 Fill it in with the people named; review it at each phase.

MID-LEVEL · WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city team has eight months to move resident parking permits online, with a supplier team of five and two service-desk staff lent by their department.

For the last ten weeks, the project manager fills in the chart with the team and the supplier. The sponsor owns the permit rules and go-live; she owns the build work. The two lent staff write the service-desk guide (R), and a note records that their line manager still controls their time.

In the exam: Show a small chart of four or five rows, one A per row, and say what problem it solved. Name who directs the work and who controls people's time.

SENIOR · WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months, with a platform supplier, an integration partner and nine owners of old systems.

Two levels of chart: one for decisions (steering board, chief executive, project manager, suppliers; the data protection officer consulted), and one per group of services for the work, matched to each contract. Both are reviewed at every phase gate.

In the exam: Explain how you set responsibilities across levels and organisations, how they match contracts and authority limits, and how you kept them current as teams changed.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA · ICB4	PMI · PMBOK® GUIDE 8 · PMP® EXAM	APM · BOK 8 · PMQ EXAM
4.5.5.2: define roles and responsibilities; record where line and project authority differ	Guide: responsibility assignment matrix, RACI one example, p. 194. Exam outline: Business Environment task 1	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §5.7.2: responsibility matrix from the work and organisation breakdowns, RACI coding; §2.6.1. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) 2b

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