

Quality assurance vs quality control

Keep four quality checks apart: process, deliverable, specification and real need.

CHECK	LOOKS AT	ASKS	DONE BY
Assurance	The process	Are we working as planned?	Often independent reviewers
Control	Each deliverable	Does it meet its criteria?	The team and testers
Verification	Output vs specification	Built as specified?	The project, early and at phase ends
Validation	Outcome vs real need	Does it meet the need?	Users or the client

The series' own summary of four checks. Assurance prevents defects; control finds them.

WHAT IT IS

Quality has two sides: how the work is done, and what it delivers. **Assurance** checks the process against the quality plan, with audits and reviews, to prevent defects. **Control** checks each deliverable against its acceptance criteria, by test or inspection, to find them. **Verification** asks whether an output was built as specified; **validation** whether the outcome meets the real need, ending in formal acceptance.

HOW IT WORKS

- 01 Plan: acceptance criteria, and who checks what, when.
- 02 Assure the process; control each deliverable.
- 03 Verify early; users validate; the client accepts.
- 04 On a finding: root cause, then corrective action.

MID-LEVEL • WORKED EXAMPLE

Apply it well

The situation: A city team has 8 months to move parking permits online with a supplier; 40 wardens will check the permits on handheld devices.

The supplier tests its code (control). The city team checks each delivery against its criteria (verification). An outsider audits whether planned reviews happen (assurance). Before go-live, 4 wardens try the handheld check (validation).

In the exam: Name the check and why: an audit for the process, a test for the product. Then give one verification and one validation from your work, and say who formally accepted the result.

SENIOR • WORKED EXAMPLE

Design and lead it

The situation: A city is joining 14 online services under one login over 30 months, with 2 suppliers and 9 owners of old systems, each with its own quality procedures.

The project manager agrees one common standard with the steering board, tailored from the city's and the suppliers' own. Independent reviews before each gate report to the board. Accessibility groups help validate each group of services, and each service owner accepts before its old portal closes.

In the exam: Show how you joined several organisations' standards into one, who audits it, how findings reach the board, and how validation is organised for each release.

WHERE IT SITS

IPMA • ICB4	PMI • PMBOK® GUIDE 8 • PMP® EXAM	APM • BOK 8 • PMQ EXAM
4.5.6: two sides, process and output; audits (4.5.6.2), verification (4.5.6.3), validation (4.5.6.4)	Guide §2.1.6.5, p. 23: Manage Quality Assurance, QA and QC; verified deliverables to Validate Scope, p. 143. PMP (Project Management Professional) outline: Process, task 7	BoK (APM's Body of Knowledge) §5.3.2–5.3.3: QA prevents, QC detects; QA is not project assurance. PMQ (APM's Project Management Qualification) outcome 18b

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)

Key: IPMA = International Project Management Association; ICB4 = IPMA's Individual Competence Baseline (4.5.6 etc.: its competence elements); PMI = Project Management Institute; PMBOK® Guide = PMI's body-of-knowledge guide; APM = Association for Project Management. 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. 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. Levels (this series' labels): Mid-level = moderately complex projects (IPMA Level C, PMI's PMP®); Senior = complex projects and people (IPMA Level B, APM's Chartered Project Professional).

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