



GAPPS

Global Alliance for the
Project Professions

A Guiding Framework for Project Controls

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Foreword

As program and project management have become more widely recognised management approaches, governments, individuals, and both public and private sector organisations have become interested in frameworks and standards that describe levels of acceptable workplace performance for program and project personnel.

The *Global Alliance for the Project ProfessionS*, formerly known as *Global Alliance for Project Performance Standards* (GAPPS) is a volunteer organisation working to create performance based frameworks and other products by providing a forum for stakeholders from differing countries, systems, backgrounds, and operating contexts to work together to address the needs of the global program and project management community.

These frameworks are intended to support the development and recognition of local standards and to provide a sound basis for mutual recognition and transferability of project, program and other management role related qualifications.

The GAPPS frameworks are intended to be used by businesses, academic institutions, training providers, professional associations, and government standards and qualifications bodies globally. Frameworks may be used “as is” to speed the development of local standards, or they may be adapted to local needs.

This document is the fourth framework produced by the GAPPS. In 2006 the GAPPS released the first version of *A Framework for Performance Based Competency Standards for Global Level 1 and 2 Project Managers*. In 2011 the GAPPS released the first version of *A Framework for Performance Based Competency Standards for Program Managers*. In 2015 the GAPPS released *A Guiding Framework for Project Sponsors*.

Future documents may address other roles involved with projects and programs.

Further information or copies of the frameworks can be found at <https://www.globalpmstandards.org>

| Version | Date | Summary of Changes |
|---------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0.01 | 30 th June 2018 | Exposure Draft |
| 0.02 | 23 rd June 2019 | Final version to release |

A Guiding Framework for Project Controls

1. Scope

Roles in Project Control cover a broad range from entry level to Board level, and include many specialist areas. This document contains a guiding framework for Project Controls Managers or Project Controllers.

The contents of this document may be used “as is” to support your organisation’s development processes or to expedite the process of competency descriptions or standards development. They may be tailored to reflect cultural differences or local practice, and they may be used as a baseline to compare, through a mapping process, with other guidelines.

The GAPPS Framework consists of:

- Six units of performance based competency for the roles in Project Controls.
- Supporting material to aid in the application of the guiding framework.

This framework follows the format of performance based competency standards and is intended to be used to assess threshold competency — demonstration of the ability to do something at a standard considered acceptable in the workplace. It is applicable to those responsible for Project Control in all fields of endeavour including, but not limited to: architecture, automotive, biotechnology, construction, defence and aerospace, design, education, engineering, financial services, government, government contracting, information systems, mining, not-for-profit operations, petro-chemical, pharmaceuticals, software development, and telecommunications.

2. Process

Work on a performance or competency based framework for a ‘Project Controls’ job family began in October 2011 at GAPPS Thought Leadership Forum No 23 hosted by the BG Group/QGC in Brisbane. The starting point was a review of existing standards for Project Controls in various forms, initially drawing on the following resources:

- ProVoc¹ / ACostE Project Control Qualifications
- National Occupational Standards for Project Control – UK NVQ 2004
- Total Cost Management Framework – First Edition, 2006, AACE International
- South African Qualification Authority standards for project controls
- APM Introduction to Project Control
- Competency Standards for Quantity Surveyors, Asia Pacific Region, 2001

¹ ProVoc is the UK ‘User Group’ for Professional level National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) that brings together companies, assessors, awarding bodies and regulatory bodies

It is noted that a number of these resources have since been updated. Revised versions and additional resources have been reviewed during the GAPPS development process to ensure currency of coverage.

Review and comparison of these documents provided a picture of coverage of roles in project controls and formed the basis for input and development over subsequent GAPPS Thought Leadership Forums. Globally representative and experienced project management and project controls professionals (see Appendix A) were asked to focus on what practitioners are required to do when providing project control services and oversight for projects. At each of the sessions where project controls were addressed the work of previous groups was reviewed and progressed in an ongoing validation process. In 2017 a review of the document was undertaken by several experienced practitioners and their comments addressed during 2018 GAPPS Thought Leadership Forums. In 2019 an exposure draft was released for public comment and the comments received were addressed at the March 2019 Thought Leadership Forum.

Accepted practice in development of performance based competencies² is to seek input from practitioners on what is considered to be minimum acceptable performance in a particular role. Therefore, the process should start with a definition of the role. This proved to be extremely difficult in the area of project controls where it was agreed that roles are both broad and deep. The roles extend from entry level project support roles to very senior Project Controls Director roles which may be at Board level. Project Controls are also provided by specialist consulting firms and include a wide range of specialist areas including cost, scheduling, risk, quality, estimation, quantity and document control.

Work to date has focused on developing an understanding of a core set of performance based competencies expected of a Project Controller or Project Controls Manager. This was intended to provide a shared understanding of the 'job family' and a basis for definition of performance based competencies for other roles in the Project Controls job family.

3. Role Context

The role of the *project controls manager* in this context may be for single or multiple projects. The role of *project controls manager* is generally to support the project manager(s) to achieve project objectives by establishing the baseline plan, confirming the control basis, metrics and assumptions, identifying deviations and recommending corrective actions.

In some organizations the *project controls manager* is a position with that title, while in others, it may be termed differently. This may be a position or an assignment. Whenever a single individual is clearly responsible for providing project controls support to the project manager, that individual can be considered to be a ***project controls manager*** for the purposes of this framework.

Figure 1 below describes 3 levels at which the individual may be operating, what they would typically be responsible for and desirable attributes that could be required as well as some of the job titles that are used.

² Heywood, L., Gonczi, A., & Hager, P. (1992). A Guide to Development of Competency Standards for Professions. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.

| Level | At this level you would typically be responsible for: | Desirable attributes would include: |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Strategic | <p>In line with the organisational risk appetite:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – setting the overall governance and policy framework for controls including roles and responsibilities, data integrity, reporting and operating structures; assurance processes, tools, parameters for tolerances and contingencies, compliance and continuous improvement – monitoring performance of the overall project, program or portfolio to identify systemic and cumulative risk – intervening to maintain strategic alignment – developing and sustaining organisational controls capability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – interdisciplinary understanding of the business context – credibility that enables engagement with and influence of stakeholders – intuitive insight into control functions – appreciation of the need to maintain confidentiality – embodiment of desired values, behaviours and ethics. <p>Typical role titles: Head of Project Controls Controls Director</p> |
| Tactical / Integrative | <p>Within strategy, governance and policy framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – implementing policy, developing project specific procedures and making tactical level decisions – defining performance criteria and reporting guidelines – evaluating risks and dependencies within the project and applying appropriate control approaches – gathering and making sense of data, monitoring and reporting on performance – establishing tolerances for deviations from plan, as a basis for escalating decisions and incorporating approved changes to the baseline – recommending decisions, approaches and response options – managing and developing control teams – resolving conflicts as required | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – interdisciplinary understanding of the controls function – interpersonal, influencing, delegating and negotiation skills that enable coordination and timely elicitation of performance data – ability to understand the full extent of the project / program phases and related impact on the baseline – appreciation of systems architecture and tools – analytical ability – appreciation of the need to maintain confidentiality <p>Typical role titles: Controls Manager Project Controls Manager Controls Executive Officer Baseline Manager Integrative Baseline Manager Project Controller</p> |
| Discipline specific | <p>In one or more of the control disciplines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – providing expertise including production, collection, collation, dissemination, synthesis, analysis and meaningful interpretation and administration of data and information – providing timely insights, advice and contributions in areas of discipline expertise – interfacing effectively with other project disciplines and functions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – technical / sub discipline expertise – accuracy and proactive ability to obtain information and apply judgement – understanding of their role within the overall controls function – ability to identify and communicate pertinent information – appreciation of the need to maintain confidentiality <p>Typical role titles: Planning / Scheduler / Planner Cost Engineer / Cost Controller Quality Controller/ Quality Controls Manager Estimator Risk Controller / Risk Manager Cost Schedule Analyst Cost Account Manager</p> |

Figure 1. Descriptions of Role Differentiators

4. Performance Based Competency Frameworks

4.1 Overview

This section provides a brief overview of the terminology used when describing performance-based competency for potential users of this document who are not familiar with the topic.

Competent comes from the Latin root *competere* which means “to be suitable.” In today’s workplace, the term “competent” is generally used to describe someone who is sufficiently skilled to perform a specified task or to fill a defined position — a competent physician, a competent salesperson, a competent plumber. Increasingly, organisations are interested in assessing the competency of individuals in order to guide employment and development decisions.

Broadly speaking, there are two major approaches to defining and assessing competency:

- *Attribute* based wherein personal attributes such as knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and other characteristics are identified and assessed. Competency is inferred based on the presence of the necessary attributes.
- *Performance* based wherein work outcomes and performance levels are identified and assessed. Competency is inferred based on the demonstrated ability to satisfy the performance criteria.

Performance Based Competency Standards (PBCS), also called occupational competency standards, are widely used throughout the world and have been developed within the context of government endorsed standards and qualifications frameworks in Australia (Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations: DEEWR), New Zealand (New Zealand Qualifications Authority: NZQA), South Africa (South African Qualifications Authority: SAQA), and the United Kingdom (Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency: QCDA). Although all of these approaches are focused primarily on performance based competency assessment, some approaches do include aspects of attribute based competency assessment.

4.2 Design of the GAPPS Framework

GAPPS uses a PBCS approach which typically addresses at least the following two questions:

- What is *usually* done in this occupation, profession, or role by competent performers?
- What standard of performance is *usually* considered acceptable to infer competency?

In the GAPPS frameworks, these questions are answered by defining:

- **Units of Competency**

A Unit of Competency defines a broad area of professional or occupational performance that is meaningful to practitioners and which is demonstrated by individuals in the workplace. This GAPPS framework includes 6 Units of Competency.

- **Elements of Competency**

Elements of Competency describe the key components of work performance within a Unit. They describe *what* is done by individuals in the workplace but do not prescribe *how* the work is done. For example, project sponsors must “cultivate stakeholder commitment,” but they can do this using approaches and tools of their own choice. This GAPPS framework includes a total of 24 Elements of Competency.