

Global Internal Audit Standards

Key stakeholder requirements

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Global Internal Audit Standards – key stakeholder requirements

The new Global Internal Audit Standards, at Domain III Governing the Internal Audit Function, sets out important ‘essential conditions’ for the board (or audit committee) and senior management. The essential conditions, when implemented enable the internal audit function to be effective. In this briefing, we look at the role of internal audit’s key stakeholders, the requirements of Domain III, and consider some key questions stakeholders should consider asking.

In line with the Standards, the head of internal audit (HoIA)¹ must meet with the board / audit committee² and senior management. Whilst the frequency and scope of meetings may vary to some degree, the discussion will focus on:

- the purpose of internal audit, as set out in Domain I of the Standards. The HoIA will communicate internal audit’s role in providing ‘independent, risk-based, objective assurance, advice, insight, and foresight’;
- informing the board / audit committee and senior management of their responsibilities, equipping them with the information needed to fulfil the essential conditions within Domain III; and
- the possible impact on internal audit’s effectiveness, and ability to undertake its role, should the support set out in the essential conditions not be provided.

Whilst the ‘requirements’ within Domain III are the responsibility of the HoIA, the essential conditions for boards / audit committees and senior management illustrate the need for effective communication. Internal audit has always needed the support of its key stakeholders, to ensure it is positioned independently, is sighted on key emerging risks and organisational challenges and can provide assurance where it is most needed and adds value. With Domain III the role of key stakeholders is now clearer in the Standards, which can only help to further the effectiveness of internal audit services.




¹ Referred to as the chief audit executive (CAE) in the Standards.

² As the highest-level governing body with the responsibility to direct and/or oversee the organisation’s activities and hold management accountable, ‘Board’ refers to the audit committee (or equivalent), to which the governing body has delegated certain functions.




Requirements and essential conditions for effective internal audit

Domain III encompassing Principles 6 to 8, includes nine Standards. These standards set the requirements for how the HoIA must support the board and senior management in performing oversight responsibilities that enable internal audit to be effective. It emphasises the board / audit committee’s critical activities, including establishing the internal audit function, ensuring it is positioned independently and overseeing performance. The HoIA’s communications with senior management is crucial for supporting the board to deliver its responsibilities and of course, provides internal audit with unique insight into the organisation.




Domain III – Summary of key HoIA requirements and essential conditions for board / audit committee and senior management

| Principle 6 Authorised by the board | Key requirements | Essential conditions | |
|--|--|---|---|
| Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6.1 Internal audit mandate 6.2 Internal audit charter 6.3 Board and senior management support | HoIA  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide the board and senior management with information to establish the internal audit mandate, included in the charter. Develop, maintain and discuss the internal audit charter with the board and senior management. Coordinate communications and provide information to allow the board and senior management to support and promote internal audit within the organisation. | Board (audit committee)  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss internal audit’s role, authority and responsibilities. Discuss, review and approve the charter, including the mandate. Support and champion the mandate of internal audit, enabling it to fulfil its objectives, and working with senior management, enable unrestricted access to information and records. Support the HoIA through direct and regular communications. | Senior management  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share expectations of internal audit with the board as it approves the mandate. Senior management should support the mandate and promote the authority given to internal audit. Communicate management’s expectations to be considered for inclusion within the charter. Working with the board and management, enable internal audit to have unrestricted access. |

Domain III – Summary of key HoIA requirements and essential conditions for board / audit committee and senior management

| Principle 7 Positioned independently | Key requirements | Essential conditions | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | HoIA  | Board (audit committee)  | Senior management  |
| Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1 Organizational independence 7.2 Chief audit executive qualifications | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least annually, the HoIA must confirm internal audit's independence, confirming any incidence where independence may have been impaired. Any impairments within the HoIA's current or future proposed roles or responsibilities must also be communicated. Provide information to the board on the qualifications and competences of the internal audit function. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and protect the internal audit function's independence and ensure a direct reporting relationship, allowing the HoIA to discuss sensitive or significant matters with the board without senior management. Engage with senior management to ensure safeguards are in place to ensure internal audit independence is not impaired. Appoint and remove the HoIA and support senior management with performance evaluation. Identify key competencies, experience and qualifications required and appoint a HoIA with the necessary prerequisites. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position the HoIA at a level within the organisation that enables it to fulfil its role and services. Provide input to the board on appointment and removal of the HoIA and performance evaluation. Liaise with the board to understand the HoIA's qualifications, experience and professional competencies and enable HoIA appointment. |

Domain III – Summary of key HoIA requirements and essential conditions for board / audit committee and senior management

| Principle 8 Overseen by the board | Key requirements | Essential conditions | |
|---|--|---|--|
| | HoIA  | Board (audit committee)  | Senior management  |
| Standards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8.1 Board interaction 8.2 Resources 8.3 Quality 8.4 External Quality Assessment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide information (including internal audit plan and updates, budget, and results of engagements) enabling the board to undertake its oversight responsibilities. Evaluate if internal audit resources are sufficient to deliver the internal audit plan and mandate. Where they are not, the HoIA communicates the strategy and impacts of insufficient resource to the board. A quality assurance and improvement programme (QAIP) covering external and internal assessments must be in place and the results communicated at least annually. An external quality assessment (EQA) must be discussed and undertaken once every five years. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate with the HoIA to understand how internal audit is fulfilling its mandate and share information on the organisation’s strategies, risks and objectives. Understand the effectiveness of governance, risk management and internal control processes. The board should set the frequency of communications and the criteria for what should be escalated. In collaboration with senior management, ensure internal audit has the resource to fulfil the mandate and internal audit plan. At least annually, discuss with the HoIA whether internal audit resource is sufficient. Discuss the QAIP and assess the efficiency and effectiveness of internal audit, approving its performance objectives at least annually. Discuss the EQA with the HoIA and review results and assessment outcomes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communicate views on the organisation’s strategies, risks and objectives to help set internal audit priorities. Support the board to understand the effectiveness of the organisation’s governance, risk management and internal control and the process for escalation of significant matters. Engage with the board to provide internal audit with sufficient resources to fulfill the mandate and achieve the internal audit plan. Collaborate with the board on the assessment of internal audit. Review the results of the EQA and assessment outcomes. |



Key questions client boards / audit committees should ask

- What enhancements are needed to the internal audit charter to incorporate the mandate and to address the changes in the Standards?
- What opportunities are the audit committee providing for the HoIA to report directly, including without senior management present? Is this opportunity provided at least annually?
- How is the audit committee communicating across functions and monitoring internal audit's effectiveness?

Key questions client senior management should ask

- Has senior management received a resource plan and communication of any resource gaps from the HoIA?
- How is the senior management team communicating its perspective on organisational strategies, objectives, and risks to assist the HoIA when determining internal audit priorities?
- How is senior management working with the audit committee and HoIA to ensure there is a clear process of escalating matters of importance?

Delivering quality internal audit services

The internal audit charter, which will incorporate the mandate, is included within our internal audit plan. It sets out the authority, role, responsibilities, scope and types of services to be provided by internal audit. Our reporting lines and organisational positioning are also included. The charter is to be approved by the audit committee at least annually. Through this means internal audit is authorised to undertake its work by qualified and competent internal auditors. For more information on internal audit effectiveness please see our Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme (QAIP) paper published in March 2024.

Open and frequent communication is key to effective collaboration and allows internal audit to add the most value. Where there are any changes that warrant discussion with the audit committee or senior management on internal audit's mandate the HoIA will communicate this matter.

Should you have any questions about the authority, role, responsibilities, and internal audit services please get in touch with your usual RSM contact.

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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