
Accelerated Financial Close and Record-to-Report Excellence Training Course

14 – 25 June 2027
Cape town





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Programme Summary

Accelerated financial close and record-to-report excellence is a two-week training course for finance directors and controllers working at strategic level, culminating in a close transformation roadmap for their own organisation. Many finance functions still close late, rely on spreadsheets and absorb a stream of post-close adjustments that weaken confidence in reported numbers. The approach treats the month-end and year-end close as one designed process, linking calendars, reconciliations, accruals, intercompany work, consolidation, automation and controls to a measured target. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in accelerated financial close and record-to-report practice.

The Business Case

Executives, lenders and auditors expect reliable figures soon after period end. A slow close delays decisions, while a rushed close without controls produces errors that surface during the audit. Finance leaders who redesign the record-to-report cycle release analyst time for forward-looking work, reduce audit friction and give management earlier sight of performance.

- Days to Close: Shortens the interval between period end and approved results through sequenced tasks and continuous accounting.
- Reporting Accuracy: Reduces post-close adjustments and reconciliation ageing through risk-based review and clear ownership.
- Audit Efficiency: Lowers year-end audit effort and queries through prepared schedules and documented controls.

Principles and Evidence Base

- COSO Internal Control - Integrated Framework: Structures the design of close controls, journal approval and segregation of duties in Sessions 6 and 7.
- IFRS and IAS 10 Events after the Reporting Period: Frame the year-end cut-off, adjusting and non-adjusting events and disclosure work in Session 8.
- SOX-Style Controls over Financial Reporting: Provide the reference for documenting, testing and evidencing key close controls in Session 7.
- Continuous Accounting and Lean Process Principles: Inform the redesign of the close calendar and the removal of waiting time in Sessions 2 and 3.



Intended Participants

- Executives accountable for the timeliness and accuracy of monthly and annual results.
- Senior leaders who own the record-to-report process across entities or shared-service centres.
- Heads of accounting who manage reconciliations, journals and consolidation teams.
- Leaders responsible for finance systems, automation and close tooling decisions.
- Finance executives who coordinate the external audit and board reporting timetable.

The programme serves finance, accounting, shared services and internal control functions across banking, energy, retail, manufacturing and public sector organisations.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to diagnose bottlenecks, rework and delays in an existing month-end close.
2. Participants will be able to construct a close calendar and checklist with owners, dependencies and deadlines.
3. Participants will be able to prioritise balance sheet reconciliations and accruals using a risk-based approach.
4. Participants will be able to design close controls and journal review routines aligned with the COSO framework.
5. Participants will be able to evaluate automation options for reconciliations, intercompany matching and consolidation.
6. Participants will be able to justify a financial close transformation roadmap with KPIs to an executive committee.

Programme Structure

Day 1: The Financial Close as a Process

What does the record-to-report cycle look like end to end, and where does time go?

- Record-to-Report Process Map From Sub-Ledger to Board Pack
- Hard Close Versus Soft Close Decisions
- Close Maturity Diagnostic
- Stakeholder Expectations of Timeliness and Accuracy
- Baseline Measurement of Days to Close

Day 2: Diagnosing Month-End Close Bottlenecks

Which tasks, handoffs and data delays extend the close?

- Critical Path Analysis of Close Tasks
- Pareto Analysis of Post-Close Adjustments
- Late Data From Subsidiaries and Upstream Teams
- Spreadsheet Dependency and Key-Person Risk
- Root Cause Review of Recurring Errors



Day 3: Close Calendar and Continuous Accounting

How is work sequenced and moved out of the close window?

- Close Calendar Design With Day Minus and Day Plus Tasks
- Close Checklist With Owners and Dependencies
- Continuous Accounting and Pre-Close Activities
- Materiality Thresholds for Estimates
- Daily Close Stand-Up and Escalation Routines

Day 4: Reconciliations, Accruals and Cut-Off

How are balances substantiated quickly without losing accuracy?

- Risk-Based Balance Sheet Reconciliation Policy
- Bank and Sub-Ledger Reconciliation Standards
- Accruals, Prepayments and Provisions Methods
- Revenue and Purchase Cut-Off Procedures
- Reconciliation Ageing and Exception Reporting

Day 5: Intercompany and Consolidation

How are group balances matched, eliminated and consolidated on time?

- Intercompany Agreement and Settlement Rules
- Intercompany Matching and Dispute Resolution
- Elimination Entries and Currency Translation
- Consolidation Timetable and Group Reporting Packs
- Group Close Instructions for Subsidiaries

Day 6: Journals, Review and Close Controls

How are journals and estimates controlled during a compressed close?

- Journal Entry Authorisation and Segregation of Duties
- Recurring and Standard Journal Templates
- Control Activities Under the COSO Framework
- Flux and Variance Analysis Review
- Management Review Controls With Evidence

Day 7: Documenting and Testing Close Controls

How is assurance over the close documented and tested?



- Risk and Control Matrix for Record-to-Report
- SOX-Style Walkthroughs and Narratives
- Key Control Testing and Remediation
- Control Deficiency Evaluation
- Close Policy and Procedure Manual

Day 8: Year-End Close and Audit Readiness

What changes at year-end, and how is the audit prepared for in advance?

- Year-End Close Timetable and Hard Close Procedures
- IAS 10 Adjusting and Non-Adjusting Events
- Prepared-by-Client Schedules and Audit Requests
- Financial Statement and Disclosure Drafting Workflow
- Post-Audit Lessons Learned Review

Day 9: Automation and Close Performance Measures

Which tools and measures sustain a faster close?

- Close Management Software and Task Tracking
- Reconciliation Matching Automation
- Robotic Process Automation for Repetitive Journals
- Close KPI Dashboard Design
- Business Case for Close Technology Investment

Day 10: Applying Accelerated Financial Close Practice

How are diagnosis, design and controls combined into a roadmap the executive committee can approve?

- Applying the Bottleneck Diagnosis to a Participant Organisation
- Redesigning the Close Calendar for a Target Close Day
- Testing the Control Design Against an Audit Scenario
- Sequencing Automation and People Changes
- Close Transformation Roadmap Presentation to a Simulated Executive Committee

Methodology

The programme relies on structured exercises in which participants map, measure and redesign their own close processes, supported by case analysis from several industries. Close data is examined in small groups, peers challenge each redesign, and Session 10 tests each roadmap before a simulated executive committee.

- Suggested activity: Building a critical path for a retail group's month-end close.
- Suggested activity: Reviewing a bank's reconciliation backlog and setting a risk-based policy.
- Suggested activity: Preparing an audit request list for an energy company's year-end.



Capstone Output

Each participant completes a close transformation roadmap for their own organisation. It contains a baseline diagnosis, a redesigned close calendar, a reconciliation and controls plan, an automation sequence and a set of close KPIs with targets, ready to present to a finance leadership team or executive committee.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is the accelerated financial close programme suitable for finance directors and controllers?

Yes. It is designed for senior finance leaders at strategic level. It assumes working knowledge of accounting and reporting, but no prior experience of close transformation projects.

Which standards does the accelerated financial close and record-to-report programme rest on?

It draws on the COSO Internal Control - Integrated Framework for close controls, IFRS and IAS 10 for year-end cut-off and events, SOX-style practice for control documentation and continuous accounting for calendar design.

How is the financial close transformation roadmap used at work?

You leave with a roadmap covering diagnosis, calendar, controls, automation and KPIs. It can be presented to your finance leadership team as the plan for shortening your month-end and year-end close.

How does the accelerated financial close programme differ from a financial reporting course?

It focuses on the process, timetable and controls that produce the numbers each month and year, rather than on accounting treatments or the analysis of published financial statements.