
Value for Money Reviews and Performance Auditing of Public Programmes Training Course

26 October – 6 November 2026
Madrid





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Programme Summary

Value for money reviews and performance auditing of public programmes is the subject of this ten-day training course for public-sector audit leaders at advanced level, culminating in a performance audit report on a simulated government programme. Governments spend heavily on programmes whose results are rarely tested against their cost, and legislators increasingly ask auditors whether money achieved its purpose. The approach follows the performance audit cycle, from topic selection and audit design, through evidence and analysis, to findings, reporting and follow-up. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme in value for money and performance auditing.

The Business Case

Financial and compliance audits show whether money was spent correctly; they do not show whether it was spent well. Performance audits that examine economy, efficiency and effectiveness give decision-makers evidence on which programmes deliver, which waste resources and what would improve them. Audit bodies and internal audit functions that can design and defend such audits influence budget decisions and programme redesign, and their recommendations are more likely to be implemented.

- Programme Cost per Outcome: Falls as audits identify inefficient delivery models and duplicated spending.
- Implementation Rate of Audit Recommendations: Rises as recommendations rest on sound criteria and evidence.
- Quality of Budget and Programme Decisions: Improves as legislators and executives receive independent evidence of results.

Principles and Evidence Base

- ISSAI 300 Performance Audit Principles: Its principles of economy, efficiency and effectiveness define the audit objective set in Session 1.
- ISSAI 3000 Performance Audit Standard: Its requirements for planning, evidence and reporting govern the audit design and fieldwork in Sessions 3 to 7.
- GUID 3910 and GUID 3920: The central concepts and audit process guidance structure topic selection and the audit design matrix in Sessions 2 and 3.
- Programme Logic and Theory of Change: Mapping inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes underpins the effectiveness analysis in Session 4.



Intended Participants

- Leaders who select topics and approve performance audit plans.
- Managers who supervise performance audit teams.
- Senior auditors who design and conduct value for money reviews.
- Internal audit leaders who review major spending programmes and projects.
- Officials who respond to audit findings on programmes they manage.

The programme serves supreme audit institutions, ministries of finance, government audit bureaus and state-owned enterprises.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to select and justify performance audit topics using materiality, risk and public interest.
2. Participants will be able to construct a programme logic model and an audit design matrix with questions, criteria and methods.
3. Participants will be able to evaluate economy, efficiency and effectiveness using data analysis, benchmarking and cost-effectiveness analysis.
4. Participants will be able to collect and assess evidence from surveys, interviews and case studies.
5. Participants will be able to develop findings with cause and effect and recommendations that can be implemented.
6. Participants will be able to write a performance audit report and plan its follow-up.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Foundations of Value for Money and Performance Auditing

What is a performance audit, and how does it differ from financial and compliance audit?

- ISSAI 300 Principles and the Three Es
- Performance Audit Compared With Financial and Compliance Audit
- Audit Mandate, Independence and Stakeholders
- Problem-Oriented and System-Oriented Approaches
- Types of Value for Money Review Across Government

Day 2: Selecting Audit Topics

Which programmes deserve a performance audit, and why now?

- Strategic Audit Planning and Topic Universe
- Materiality, Risk and Public Interest Criteria
- Topic Scoring and Prioritisation Matrix
- Pre-Study Design and Information Sources
- GUID 3910 Central Concepts in Topic Definition



Day 3: Designing the Audit

What exactly will the audit ask, and against what criteria?

- Audit Objectives and Scope Statements
- Audit Questions and Sub-Questions
- Sources of Audit Criteria and Their Validation
- Audit Design Matrix Under GUID 3920
- Audit Plan, Resources and Quality Control Points

Day 4: Programme Logic and Effectiveness

Is the programme achieving the outcomes it was funded to achieve?

- Programme Logic Models and Theory of Change
- Output and Outcome Indicators
- Attribution, Contribution and Counterfactuals
- Assessing Performance Information Reliability
- Effectiveness Questions in Social and Infrastructure Programmes

Day 5: Economy and Efficiency Analysis

Were resources acquired economically and used efficiently?

- Unit Cost and Input Price Analysis
- Efficiency Ratios and Productivity Measures
- Benchmarking Against Comparable Programmes
- Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Delivery Options
- Procurement and Contract Value Testing

Day 6: Evidence Collection Methods

Which methods produce sufficient and appropriate evidence for each question?

- Document Review and Process Mapping
- Survey Design, Sampling and Response Analysis
- Structured Interviews and Focus Groups
- Case Study Selection and Site Visits
- Evidence Sufficiency and Appropriateness Under ISSAI 3000

Day 7: Data Analysis for Performance Audit

How are datasets turned into reliable audit findings?



- Data Sourcing and Reliability Testing
- Descriptive and Comparative Analysis
- Trend and Variance Analysis
- Data Visualisation for Audit Messages
- Triangulating Quantitative and Qualitative Evidence

Day 8: Findings and Recommendations

What do the findings mean, and what should change?

- Finding Structure: Criteria, Condition, Cause and Effect
- Quantifying the Impact of Findings
- Developing Recommendations That Can Be Implemented
- Clearance and Management Responses
- Handling Disagreement With the Audited Entity

Day 9: Reporting and Follow-Up

How is the report written and its impact tracked?

- Performance Audit Report Structure and Key Messages
- Writing for Legislators, Executives and the Public
- Quality Review of the Draft Report
- Follow-Up Audits and Recommendation Tracking
- Measuring Audit Impact

Day 10: Completing the Simulated Performance Audit

Does the simulated performance audit stand up to review?

- Applying the Day 3 Design Matrix to Final Evidence
- Using Day 5 Cost-Effectiveness Results in Findings
- Presenting Day 8 Findings to a Review Panel
- Peer Quality Review Against ISSAI 3000
- Completing the Performance Audit Report

Methodology

The programme is built around a simulated performance audit of a government programme, carried out in teams from topic selection to final report. Each session adds a stage of the audit, supported by case analysis of published performance audits and data workshops using programme datasets. Examples are drawn from health, education, transport and public works programmes.



- Suggested activity: Scoring five candidate audit topics against materiality, risk and interest criteria.
- Suggested activity: Building a programme logic model and audit design matrix for a school meals programme.
- Suggested activity: Running a cost-effectiveness comparison of two road maintenance delivery models.

Capstone Output

Each team completes a performance audit report on the simulated programme. It contains a topic justification, a programme logic model, an audit design matrix, an evidence file, economy, efficiency and effectiveness findings, recommendations and a follow-up plan. Participants use it as a model for performance audits in their own institution.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is value for money and performance auditing training suitable for experienced auditors?

Yes. It is set at advanced level for audit leaders and senior auditors who already conduct financial, compliance or internal audits and now lead performance audits.

Which standards does value for money and performance auditing training rest on?

It rests on ISSAI 300, ISSAI 3000, GUID 3910 and GUID 3920, with programme logic and cost-effectiveness analysis.

How is the performance audit report from value for money training used at work?

You can use it as a template for topic selection, audit design matrices, findings and reports in your next performance audit.

How does value for money and performance auditing differ from a financial audit programme?

It examines whether public money achieved economy, efficiency and effectiveness, rather than whether financial statements are fairly presented and transactions are regular.