Internal Audit Advisory Services Training Course: Scoping, Objectivity and Value-Adding Advice

21 – 25 December 2026
Rome

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Ref: 611_31249 **Date:** 21 – 25 December 2026 **Location:** Rome **Fees:** 5500 GBP

Programme Summary

Internal audit advisory services are the subject of this one-week training course for internal auditors, audit managers and heads of audit, ending in an advisory engagement file for one real request. Management increasingly asks auditors for advice, reviews and project support, yet the work is often taken on without agreed scope, safeguards or a clear handover. The programme shows how to accept, scope, deliver and report advisory work while protecting objectivity, applied to a request the participant selects. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on internal audit advisory services to mixed-organisation cohorts.

The Business Case

Internal audit advisory services extend the value of the audit function beyond assurance, but only when advice is scoped, independent in spirit and usable. Where requests are accepted informally, expectations drift, objectivity is questioned and managers treat advice as audit approval. Auditors who agree terms first, apply safeguards and hand ownership back to management become a trusted source of advice without weakening later assurance work.

- Advice Usefulness: Rises as scope and success criteria are agreed before work starts.
- Objectivity Risk: Falls as safeguards are recorded and reviewed for each request.
- Management Ownership: Improves as results and decisions are handed back clearly.

Principles and Evidence Base

- IIA Global Internal Audit Standards: Their guidance on advisory services shapes the request intake, scope and reporting work in Sessions 1, 2 and 4.
- Proficiency and Due Professional Care: The standards' requirements on competence and care frame the readiness check in Session 1.
- Independence and Objectivity: The standards' guidance on safeguarding objectivity underpins the safeguards register used in Sessions 1 and 4.

Intended Participants

- Internal auditors who are asked to advise on processes, controls or projects.
- Audit managers who decide which advisory requests to accept.
- Heads of audit who set the policy for advisory work.
- Quality leads who review advisory files and reports.
- Risk and compliance staff who request advice from audit.

Typical sectors include banking, energy, healthcare and public bodies.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate whether a request suits an advisory engagement or needs assurance.
2. Participants will be able to construct a scope statement and client agreement for an advisory engagement.
3. Participants will be able to justify safeguards for independence and objectivity in each request.
4. Participants will be able to design options and recommendations that management can act on.
5. Participants will be able to prioritise the content of an advisory report for its readers.
6. Participants will be able to diagnose lessons learned and feed them into the next engagement.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Internal Audit Advisory Services Foundations

Where does advice end and assurance begin, and what protects objectivity?

- Assurance and Advisory Compared
- Advisory Request Intake Form
- Independence and Objectivity Safeguards
- Proficiency and Due Care Check
- Advisory Role Boundary Statement

Day 2: Scoping and Client Agreement

What exactly has management asked for, and what has the audit function agreed to give?

- Stakeholder Expectation Interview
- Advisory Scope Statement
- Engagement Terms Letter
- Success Criteria Sheet
- Resource and Timing Plan

Day 3: Delivering Value-Adding Advice

How does an auditor reach advice that management can use and trust?

- Options Analysis Matrix
- Process Walkthrough Notes
- Control Design Review Checklist
- Recommendation Trade-Off Table
- Advice Credibility Test

Day 4: Reporting Advisory Results and Lessons Learned

How are advisory results shared so that ownership stays with management?

- Advisory Report Layout
- Verbal Briefing Outline
- Ownership Handover Note
- Escalation Trigger Rules
- Lessons Learned Log

Day 5: Applying the Tools to One Advisory Request

Do the safeguards, scope and reporting tools hold together in one advisory engagement?

- Applying the Session 1 Independence and Objectivity Safeguards
- Using the Session 2 Advisory Scope Statement
- Running the Session 3 Options Analysis Matrix
- Checking the Session 4 Advisory Report Layout
- Completing the Advisory Engagement File

Methodology

The programme uses a structured exercise method built on anonymised advisory requests, scope letters, process notes and draft reports from banking, energy and public settings. Participants work in audit teams on one shared request, role-play intake meetings with managers, and receive written facilitator feedback on every exercise set across the five sessions.

- Suggested activity: Deciding whether six incoming requests are advisory or assurance work.
- Suggested activity: Negotiating a scope statement with a role-played manager.
- Suggested activity: Rewriting a recommendation list so that ownership sits with management.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes an advisory engagement file for one request. It holds an intake record, a safeguards register, a scope statement and client agreement, an options analysis, a short advisory report and a lessons learned log. The file is used at work as a model for the next advisory request and as a basis for a policy note on advisory work.

Frequently Asked Questions

Are internal audit advisory services suitable for auditors who have only done assurance work?

Yes. Internal audit advisory services start from the difference between assurance and advice and build step by step, so they assume audit experience but no earlier advisory work.

Which standards do internal audit advisory services draw on?

Internal audit advisory services draw on the IIA Global Internal Audit Standards, including their guidance on advisory services, proficiency and due professional care, and independence and objectivity.

How is the file from internal audit advisory services training used at work?

You use the advisory engagement file as a model for the next request, as a basis for a policy note on advisory work and as a reference when briefing managers.

How do internal audit advisory services differ from internal audit assurance training?

Internal audit advisory services centre on agreeing scope, protecting objectivity and handing ownership to management, while assurance training centres on testing controls and reporting an independent conclusion.