

Process outline

This process description is for Sponsors, PMO teams and agile project teams. The main audiences are Sponsors and Project Ma

The purpose of the document is to explain how the Checkpoint process operates.

The Checkpoint process is conducted with two main purposes: To evaluate that the level of project delivery Risk remains commensurate with a potential successful outcome, and to ensure that the fiscal control is maintained.

Checkpoint approvals are applied in order for a project to formally exit each stage in the delivery lifecycle. The Checkpoint meeting will establish that the project has produced the mandated project artefacts and that the artefacts have received the necessary approvals

In this user guide you will find detailed information for project teams on how to get the most out of stage-gates with the least possible effort and fuss.

Towards the end of the guide you will find a Checkpoint Route Map illustrating how the checkpoints fit within an agile project lifecycle. This gives project teams and sponsors some guidelines for which meetings they should expect to use for reviewing their projects

Checklists. These provide a summary of the key things tested at each Checkpoint.

Checkpoint process

Checkpoints

Agile projects employ a Checkpoint review process. A Checkpoint is an end-of-stage review for agile projects. It asks the following questions at the end of each stage:

- Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?
- Is the project on track and have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?
- Is the project within budget or has the additional funding been approved?
- Is the project still aligned to the strategic objectives?
- Is everything in place to exit the stage?

Scope and Benefits – Checkpoint 1

Checkpoint 1 considers: the Scope, the potential Business Goals or Benefits, and evaluates the project justification. It has a Portfolio Management emphasis; is the project viable and suitable for prioritisation. [For more details](#) see section on Scope and Benefits

High-level Requirements – Checkpoint 2

This Checkpoint considers the High-level business requirements and the Release Plan in the light of the Project Brief and the Project Risk levels. [For more details](#) see section on High-level Requirements

Solution Review – Checkpoint 3

This Checkpoint considers the Architectural and Operational implications of the solution and evaluates the Impact Assessment. [For more details](#) see section on Solution Design

Test Readiness – Checkpoint 4

This Checkpoint considers the System Test metrics and evaluates that the move to integration test and or UAT is appropriate.

[For more details](#) see section on Test Readiness

Deployment – Checkpoint 5

This Checkpoint is where the go/no-go decision to deploy is made based on the results of UAT and the business change readiness.

[For more details](#) see section on Deployment

Table of Contents

Checkpoints	1
Purpose	3
Checkpoints – an Introduction	3
Checkpoint 1 - Scope and benefits	5
Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?	5
Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?	5
Is everything in place to exit the stage?	5
Checkpoint 2 – High-level requirements	6
Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?	6
Is the project on track?	6
Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?	6
Is the project within budget or has the additional funding been approved?	6
Is the project still aligned with the organisational strategic objectives?	6
Is everything in place to exit the stage?	6
Checkpoint 3 - Solution review	7
Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?	7
Is the project on track?	7
Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?	7
Is the project within budget or has the additional funding been approved?	7
Is the project still aligned with the organisational strategic objectives?	7
Is everything in place to exit the stage?	7
Checkpoint 4 Test readiness	8
Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?	8
Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?	8
Is everything in place to exit the stage?	8
Additional questions at the Test Readiness Checkpoint:	8
Checkpoint 5 Deployment readiness	9
Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?	9
Is everything in place to deploy the Solution?	9
Inappropriate questions at the Deployment Checkpoint:	9
Checkpoint Route Maps	10
Document Change History	11

Purpose

The purpose of the Checkpoint Management Standard is to affirm the appropriate controls guiding decisions regarding projects which deliver technical solutions, business capabilities and services.

This standard ensures that the practices and controls used during project delivery remain commensurate with the success of technology projects and that these are aligned with business objectives and priorities.

Checkpoints – an Introduction

A Checkpoint is the evaluation process by which a project displays its ability to move between stages or to transition iteration outputs into a production state. Often, these moves will also complete a delivery milestone or a step in the release plan. It may also be a synchronisation point for other projects which are preparing associated artefacts. The Checkpoint is a collaborative review in which all the participants play an important role in assessing the project's overall health and quality of execution.

It enables the team and those responsible to make an informed decision as to whether the project is ready to enter the next phase of its lifecycle and receive further resource commitments. It provides the PM and the Business Owner the benefit of having an independent review the project.

The standard checkpoints are:

1. Scope and Benefits,
2. High-level Requirements,
3. Solution Review,
4. Test Readiness,
5. Deployment Readiness

At the end of each Stage the Checkpoint Reviews have a common set of components to consider these include:

- **Inputs:** These are the deliverables associated with the Stage under review; the results and the findings of any related prior reviews of project artefacts. The deliverables assessment includes: Have the necessary artefacts been reviewed and approved by the relevant parties identified in the RASIC, is the content of the artefacts appropriate for the project purposes.

In particular the results of corrective actions associated with any artefact reviews or outputs from previous stages; and Change Request updates to any previously reviewed deliverables are considered.

- **Exit Criteria:** This Standard defines the exit criteria for each Checkpoint and provides guidance on the critical factors associated with the Checkpoint review. These criteria are the questions or guidelines against which the project will be evaluated in order to approve the stage exit.

- **Review Process:** The Checkpoint panel reviews the evidence that the key project artefacts have been produced and have been approved by the project processes as fit for purpose. The review may include a panel discussion between the Checkpoint panel and project teams which offer the project team an opportunity for dialogue and to respond to additional questions from the review team.
- **Outputs:** These are the results of the Checkpoint Review. Where the decision is made that the Checkpoint is incomplete then the reviewers may require the submission of a corrective plan of action and additional milestones that are necessary to address Issues to be resolved in order to exit the Stage.

During Project Planning it is expected that the Checkpoint reviews would appear among the Project Milestones as the exit point of a Stage. Where Checkpoint approval is not given the Project Status would be updated to show a missed Milestone and Issues would be recorded in the project RAID log.

Additionally Checkpoints are aligned to the Portfolio Management process with the release of funding based upon the current estimates and business benefits or goals as refined in the business case.

Checkpoint 1 - Scope and benefits

Checkpoint 1 is largely a question of pushing a business idea through the Portfolio Management process. The focus of the Checkpoint is a question of clarity regarding the scope, business goals, and benefits in a Project Brief.

Checkpoint 1
Scope and
Benefits

Approved Project Brief

Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?

During the Inception stage business ideas get expanded by the Initial Modelling activity, and the identification of business benefits. The results of this activity are documented in the Project Brief.

Checkpoint 1 is a lightweight review of the Project Brief before it is submitted for prioritisation by the portfolio management process. The purpose of this Checkpoint 1 is to establish the credibility of the idea and to ensure clarity so that rapid mobilisation is possible.

Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?

The Project Brief should be reviewed by the Sponsor and the potentially contributing line managers.

Is everything in place to exit the stage?

Clarity regarding the project Scope and potential business benefits or goals is important for many reasons not least of which is that these direct the testing and solution design activities.

In order to pass the Scope and Benefits Checkpoint it is essential that the appropriate reviews and approvals are obtained for the Project Brief.

Checkpoint 2 – High-level requirements

Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?

The High-level requirements Checkpoint will evaluate the business case, the business goals and the benefits in order to establish that the investment in the proposed project is appropriately justified.

Is the project on track?

The High-level requirements Checkpoint evaluates the latest project status and in particular considers the Initial Requirements, the Release Plan and the financial forecasts.

Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?

The High level requirements Checkpoint reviews the business case, the high-level requirements as documented in the project blueprint and the release plan paying particular regard to risks and the risk responses. It establishes that an appropriate Test Strategy & Plan has been prepared. In all of these reviews the principle of just-in-time and just enough need to be applied.

During the Inception Stage, the Business Case is created with the business benefits or goals and the Benefits Managers identified. The release plan is prepared and costs and timescales are forecast based on the initial estimates.

Checkpoint 2
Requirements

Signed off Requirements

Approved Test Strategy &
Plan

Approved Project Charter

Approved Business Case

Is the project within budget or has the additional funding been approved?

During the High-level requirements Stage, the Initial estimate is prepared. Thereafter if the need for additional funding is forecast a Project Change Request will be necessary and submitted to the portfolio management process for approval.

Is the project still aligned with the organisational strategic objectives?

The High-level requirements Checkpoint evaluates the Business case in line with the panel member's knowledge of the recent business strategic decisions and evaluates that the Project is supportive of the Business or technical strategy.

Is everything in place to exit the stage?

Checkpoint 3 - Solution review

A solution review happens at a programme integration point or where a significant delivery milestone is reached.

Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?

Over time alterations in scope and or the postponement of potential functionality result in reduced business benefits. Reductions in the potential business benefit should be noted as a revision to the Business Case may alter the project justification. The solution Checkpoint gives an opportunity for an evaluation of potential benefits to be made.

Is the project on track?

The Solution Review Checkpoint evaluates the latest project status and considers the solution delivered together with the financial and timeline forecasts. The project status will have been updated based on project performance and the delivery metrics will be reflected in the project forecasts.

The Solutions Review pays particular attention to the feedback from the project “show-and-tell” sessions. The open Issues, Assumptions and Risks making sure that these items will have minimal impact on the following Stages.

Checkpoint 3
Solution
Review

Approved Solution
Design

Approved SIT Test Plan

Revised and Approved
Business Case

Approved Project Plan

Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?

The key projects artefacts are reviewed giving due consideration to the just-in-time and just-enough agile approaches documentation may be prepared in a variety of formats depending upon Project Type.

The Systems Integration Test Plan will be used to ensure the that Programme Integration or Release establishing that it has been reviewed and approved by the appropriate roles internally, and the Project Plan paying particular regard to the Risk Management Plan

Is the project within budget or has the additional funding been approved?

During the Solution Design Stage, the Final estimate is produced and the Business Case and Project Plan updated accordingly.

If additional funding is required then a Project Change Request will be necessary. The PCR should be approved by the Portfolio Management Function before the Checkpoint review Meeting.

Is the project still aligned with the organisational strategic objectives?

The Solution Review also evaluates the Business case in line with the participant’s knowledge of the recent business strategic decisions and evaluates that the Project is supportive of the Business or technical strategy.

Is everything in place to exit the stage?

Checkpoint 4 Test readiness

This Checkpoint is crucial to the management of the quality of the project outputs as such the decision to move from SIT to UAT is based upon the SIT exit criteria as defined in the Test Strategy and Plan. It should be emphasised that the Test Readiness checkpoint is a Go/No Go decision based upon criteria and not based upon a date in the project calendar.

Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?

Workarounds? How are these documented? How are the potential business impacts evaluated

Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?

The key artefact to be reviewed at the Test Readiness Checkpoint is the UAT Readiness Assessment.

The UAT Readiness Assessment will give a balanced view of the quality of the project outputs based on the SIT exit criteria identified in the Test Strategy and Plan.

Checkpoint 4
Test Readiness
Review

UAT Readiness
Assessment

Approved Operational
Documentation

Business Community
Readiness
Communications

Is everything in place to exit the stage?

Additional questions at the Test Readiness Checkpoint:

- Is the project on track?
- Do we still have the budget to spend?
- Is the project still aligned with the organisational strategic objectives?

Checkpoint 5 Deployment readiness

Have the relevant artefacts been reviewed and approved?

The key artefacts to be reviewed at the Test Readiness Checkpoint are the Deployment Readiness Assessment and the Defects and Workaround Review.

The Deployment Readiness Assessment gives a balanced view of the quality of the project outputs based upon the UAT exit criteria identified in the Test Strategy and Plan. It also assesses circumstances in the target business community and their ability to accept a deployment.

The Defects and Workaround Review identifies known defects in software which the project wants to deploy.

Checkpoint 5
Deployment

Deployment Readiness
Review

Defects and
Workaround Review

Operational Risk
Assessment

Is everything in place to deploy the Solution?

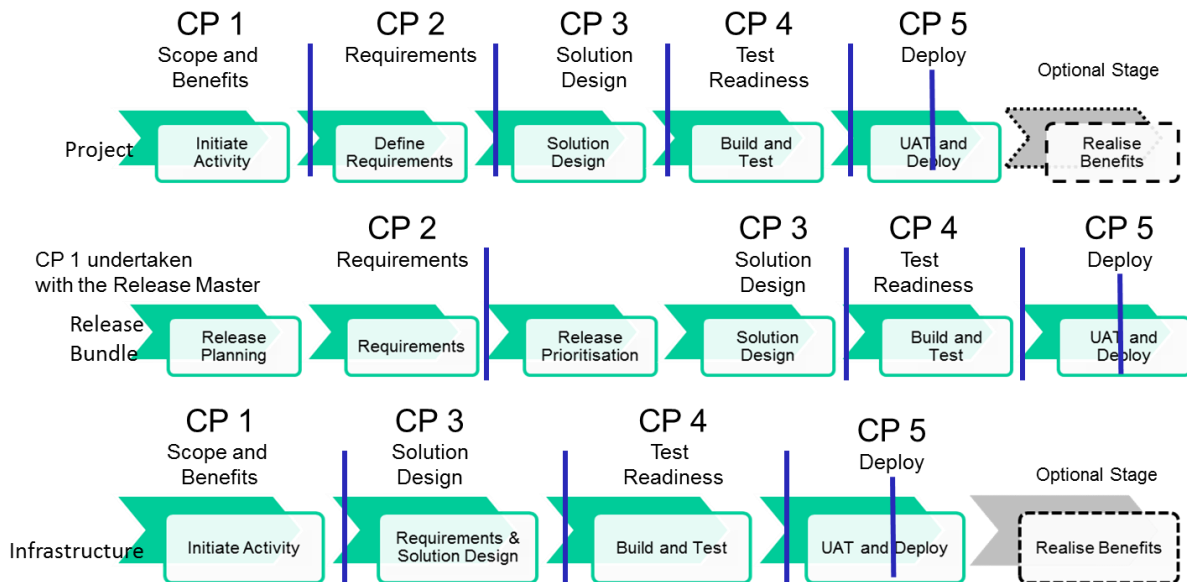
The Deployment Checkpoint with establishing that the Deployment Cadence and Run Book has been approved by Operations.

Inappropriate questions at the Deployment Checkpoint:

- Is the project on track?
- Do we still have budget to spend?
- Is the project still aligned to the strategic objectives?
- Is the project going to achieve its identified business benefits?

Checkpoint Route Maps

This section by project type will summarise the Project Lifecycle and the required Checkpoints



Document Change History

Version Number	Date Updated	Revision Author	Summary of Changes
V01		Jon Ward	Initial Document

For further information regarding XXXX, please contact [Beneficial Consulting](#).

Jonathan Ward



Beneficial Consulting Ltd
 Dashwood House
 69 Old Broad Street
 London
 EC2M 1QS

Web: <http://www.beneficialconsulting.co.uk>
 Office Tel: +44 (0) 207 562 8389
 Mobile Tel: +44 (0) 7802 884598