

## Frequently Asked Question

Briefing from the Internal Audit Standards Advisory Board

### The role of the sponsor in the external assessment for the UK public sector

IIA Standard 1312 sets out the main requirements relating to the external assessment element of the quality assurance and improvement programme (QAIP).

However, the UK PSIAS also requires chief audit executives to appoint a sponsor for the external assessment element of the quality assurance and improvement programme as follows:

#### Public sector requirement

The chief audit executive must agree the scope of external assessments with an appropriate sponsor, e.g. the Accounting/Accountable Officer or chair of the audit committee as well as with the external assessor or assessment team.

#### Why was this requirement added to the original IIA Standards?

The IASAB considered this to be a significant addition to the PSIAS to increase the independence of the external quality assessment and to ensure appropriate senior 'buy-in' within the organisation.

#### Who can (and who cannot) act as sponsor?

The public sector requirement states that the sponsor must be 'appropriate' and suggests either the Accounting/Accountable Officer (in central government/health bodies) or the chair of the audit committee. In other public sector organisations it should be someone of a similar standing.

The characteristics of such a sponsor are that they are:

- sufficiently senior;
- knowledgeable as to the process and requirements of the PSIAS and the criteria against which a proposed external assessor should be compared;
- qualified to assist in the role;
- suitably experienced; and
- not from the internal audit activity.

#### What is the role of the sponsor?

The role of the sponsor includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- approve the terms of reference for the external assessment and agree the scope with the CAE;
- have input to the selection of the assessor;
- meet with the external assessor as necessary;
- ensure timeliness of the assessment;
- have access to reports as required;

- ensure that exceptions and instances of non-conformance are included in reports
- identify and monitor milestones; and
- ensure actions are progressed.

Note that where the internal audit activity is provided by a shared service, some of these roles may be covered by a client representative group.