



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHÉ
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY

Capital Project Classification, Escalation & Reporting Framework

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1. Executive summary

The University's Project Approval Policy & Process (Works/Related Works) (BSMOP-34) defines a project as a *“temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique produce, service or result. A project is temporary in that it has a defined beginning and end in time, and therefore defined scope and resources. A project is unique in that it is not a routine operation, but a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.”*

The University's Capital Project Governance Process (PDUOP-02) defines a capital project *“as being any undertaking which requires the use of notable amounts of capital, both financial and labour, to undertake and complete. A Capital Project helps maintain or improve a university asset, often called infrastructure.”* Capital Works Projects are managed in accordance with the public sector Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF) and Infrastructure Guidelines.

The University Management Team (UMT) has overall responsibility for the effective management and delivery of capital projects throughout their entire lifecycle. Complex capital non-works projects are overseen by the Organisational Transformation Office (OTO). While capital works projects, which follow the HEA's Capital Works Framework, are overseen by the Buildings & Estates Office.

The Finance and Resource Committee (FRC) evaluate and approve all Capital Projects falling within the delegated authority values approved by Údarás na hOllscoile and evaluate and make recommendations to Údarás na hOllscoile in respect of those Capital Projects that exceed such delegated authority values. In considering such projects, the FRC shall satisfy itself that:

- The proposed project aligns with the University's Strategic Plan and long-term objectives.
- The Business Case provides sufficient justification for the proposed investment and demonstrates value for money.
- Appropriate project governance arrangements are in place and are proportionate to the scale, complexity, and risk profile of the project.
- Adequate risk management, assurance, and reporting arrangements have been established.

This guidance provides a standard framework for the classification of capital projects within the university (based on their level of complexity). The framework sets out the project classification criteria for both routine and complex capital projects, together with the risk classifications and associated escalation pathway, trigger points and reporting requirements.

Determining the relative complexity of the capital project being undertaken will inform the appropriate Project / Programme Governance structure to be applied throughout the project lifecycle. Consistent application of this framework will enhance project governance and oversight through a robust reporting regime that promotes enhanced transparency and accountability.



2. Project classification

The university classifies projects as either routine or complex. A routine project can be defined as a low-to-moderate complexity project using established delivery methods, standard governance, limited stakeholder impact, and low strategic or operational uncertainty. While a complex project involves significant uncertainty, multiple interfaces, substantial stakeholder or operational impact, strategic significance, specialist procurement, or elevated delivery risk. This classification methodology applies to all capital projects being undertaken in the University.

3. Project complexity classification

The below classification framework is provided to assist University staff in determining the most appropriate categorisation (routine or complex) for capital projects. This will then inform the Project / Programme Governance structure to be applied throughout the project / programme lifecycle.

Based on the *Project Complexity Model* (Ref Hass & Lindbergh, 2010) and informed by project management best practice, this classification framework determines the specific dimensions of complexity within projects (Ref Table 1 below):

1. estimated time associated with the project delivery,
2. total cost associated with the project,
3. contractual arrangements and procurement procedures,
4. project team composition,
5. requirements volatility,
6. degree of organisational change/ transformation resulting from the project,
7. project risk, dependencies and external constraints.

Project dimensions	Routine Projects	Complex Projects
Time	Timeframe is less than 18 months	Timeframe is more than 18 months
Cost	<€3,000,000	>€3,000,000¹ - To ensure that the business case remains viable post-delivery, complex projects require explicit validation of the capital stack, investment modelling, long-term P&L, and affordability metrics. Operational ownership over the ongoing income and benefits analysis will be the responsibility of the Project Implementation Board (PIB).

¹ As per the Schedule of Reserved Powers and Delegated Authority of Údarás na hOllscoile, which states that (i) the Governing Authority can authorise (adhering to public policy in that regard) capital projects in excess of €4 million, (ii) FRC can authorise capital projects of the University or its subsidiaries in excess of €2 million but less than €4 million, including those spread over a number of years, which in aggregate are equal to or exceed the threshold. Furthermore, we should note the state-mandated Infrastructure Guidelines thresholds specifically the €20M threshold (which triggers mandatory PPP assessment) and the €50M threshold (which triggers external assurance reviews).



Contractual arrangement & procurement procedure	• Basic or template contractual arrangement(s). • Centralised Contracts Process/ Sole Source/ Frameworks/ Quotation process. • Works or works-related services: Standard CWMF Minor Works Contracts (e.g., PW-CF7/PW-CF8).	• Complex or bespoke contractual arrangement(s). • Supplies or General Services: Tender process (National tendering competition via eTenders/ EU tendering procedure via OJEU). Works or works-related services: CWMF Major Works Contracts (PW-CF1 through PW-CF5) or bespoke, multi-disciplinary procurement strategies.
Project team composition	• Team staffed internally. • Project delivery capability available internally.	• Complex team structure of varying competencies involving multiple units supported by external service providers.
Requirements volatility	• End-user input required. • Basic requirements that are easily understood and unlikely to change.	• High end-user input required. • Complex requirements that may evolve during the project.
Level of organisational change/ transformation	• Small to medium organisational change. • Minimal impact on professional support unit/ school or one familiar business process/ IT systems etc.	• Large-scale organisational change that impacts the University. • Spans multiple functional units or external agencies. • Impacts many business processes/ IT systems etc.
Risk, dependencies and external constraints	• Considered low risk to institution. • Mostly internal influences. • No challenging integration issues. • No new or unfamiliar regulatory requirements. • No punitive/ acceptable exposure.	• Considered high risk to institution. • Overall project success is largely dependent on external factors. • Significant integration required. • New regulatory requirements. • Significant exposure.

Table 1: Project classification framework

3.1 Determination of project complexity classification

The initial determination of a capital project's respective classification will be the responsibility of the Project Implementation Board (PIB) / Project Steering Group, as appropriate, within the context of the strategic assessment stage and documented within the preliminary business case. This determination should be communicated to FRC for approval.

The classification of a project as routine or complex will depend on the number of dimensions that it meets i.e. if a project meets a majority of routine dimensions, then it shall be considered a routine project, and vice-versa.

3.2 Review of classification criteria

In order to evaluate the effectiveness and usability of this classification framework, it is proposed that the below classification criteria be reviewed 12 months following the initial implementation of this framework.



4. Governance and oversight of capital projects

4.1 Project risk classifications (routine and complex projects)

The table below sets out the proposed risk classifications for capital projects within the University (routine and complex).

As stated above, capital projects will be managed in accordance with the public sector guidelines. In line with the CWMF, project reviews will occur at defined stages from Initial Planning through Developed Planning and Implementation. These reviews will follow the clear procedures as to the steps to be taken to progress to the next stage in the project. Risk and value management will be implemented at various stages during the project. A project risk register will also be in place for complex capital projects.

Status	Description
Green	Activities are progressing on schedule and within planned parameters (e.g. spend is in line with budget, all predetermined milestones are being met). Poses a low risk to the institution with no intervention necessary.
Amber	Potential issues identified (e.g. scope creep, minor delays or risks that require monitoring), which require vigilance, ongoing review and other potential moderate interventions. Poses a moderate risk to the institution.
Red	Significant problems identified (e.g. major variances in scope, budget, or timeline, non-compliance) necessitating immediate intervention and urgent corrective actions to prevent further deterioration. Poses a high risk to the institution.

Table 2: Risk classifications for capital projects (routine and complex capital projects)

4.2 Escalation pathways and reporting requirements (routine and complex projects)

The classification of capital projects will determine the reporting requirements to the UMT, FRC and Údarás na hOllscoile. Taking account of potential changes to the project risk classification, the following table outlines the proposed escalation pathway for major complex projects within the University together with trigger points and reporting requirements. The FRC may, where it considers appropriate, amend the risk classification assigned to any project and consider the appointment of an independent external adviser to provide specialist advice and support in relation to the delivery and oversight of any capital project.

Status	Escalation Pathway	Trigger Point	Reporting requirement(s)
Green status (unchanged)	Maintain normal lines of oversight and authority. No intervention(s) necessary. Programme governance and oversight is the responsibility of the	No change in project risk classification status (i.e. activities are progressing on schedule and within planned	Routine project (green status): With regards to the reporting requirements surrounding the ongoing progress of routine capital projects, regular written reports should be provided to the UMT (at the discretion of the President and the UMT).



	Project Implementation Board/ Project Steering Group and the UMT. Programme management and reporting is the responsibility of the Project Sponsor (a designated UMT member) and/ or the Project Director.	parameters, and the project poses a low risk to the institution).	- The Project Sponsor and Project Director are responsible for the provision of timely and complete reporting to the UMT. Complex project (green status): - With regards to the reporting requirements surrounding the ongoing progress of major complex capital projects, a written report should be provided on a monthly basis to the UMT. - On a Quarterly basis, the FRC shall receive a written report on all Complex Capital Projects from the Project Sponsor and Project Director / Manager which should include, but not be limited to budget performance and forecast, schedule performance and key milestones, material scope changes, and key risks, issues, and mitigation measures, and progress towards the achievement of intended project benefits. - The FRC and/ or Údarás na hOllscoile may require more frequent reporting at its discretion. - An annual written report should be prepared for Údarás na hOllscoile. - The Project Sponsor and Project Director are responsible for the provision of timely and complete reporting to the UMT, the FRC, and Údarás na hOllscoile. - At the conclusion of the project, the FRC shall receive a written report that enables it to ensure that the intended benefits have been delivered, and lessons learned have been captured.
Green to Amber status	Maintain normal lines of authority with more robust committee oversight (upwards to the FRC). The FRC to apply a tighter lens and request a more robust and forensic level of reporting from project sponsors/ programme leads. Responsibility for Programme governance and oversight is extended from Project Implementation Board/ Project Steering Group and the UMT to the FRC. Requirement for more robust reporting and lines of enquiry at committee-level (FRC). Programme management and	Change in project risk classification with potential issues identified (e.g. budget deviation, scope creep, minor delays or risks that require monitoring), which require vigilance, ongoing review and other potential moderate interventions. Poses a moderate risk to the institution. Reported at next PIB/ Project Steering Group and escalated at the next meeting of UMT and upwards to FRC.	Routine project (amber status): - With regards to the reporting requirements surrounding the ongoing progress of routine capital projects, regular written reports should be provided to the UMT (at the discretion of the President and the UMT). - The Project Sponsor and Project Director are responsible for the provision of timely and complete reporting to the UMT. Complex project (amber status): - With regards to the reporting requirements surrounding the ongoing progress of major complex capital projects, a written report should be provided at every meeting of the UMT and FRC highlighting the potential issues identified and mitigations/ actions being undertaken to address them. The FRC may require more frequent reporting at its discretion. - Quarterly reporting to Údarás na hOllscoile. Údarás na hOllscoile may require more frequent reporting at its discretion. - Such reports shall clearly set out the issues and risks identified, their potential impact on the delivery of the project, and the proposed measures to mitigate or otherwise address those risks.



	reporting remains the responsibility of the Project Sponsor (a designated UMT member) and/ or the Project Director.		- The Project Sponsor and Project Director are responsible for the provision of timely and complete reporting to the UMT, the FRC, and Údarás na hOllscoile. - At the conclusion of the project, the FRC shall receive a written report that enables it to ensure that the intended benefits have been delivered, and lessons learned have been captured.
Amber to Red status	Maintain normal lines of authority with more robust committee oversight (upwards to the FRC and Údarás na hOllscoile). The FRC and Údarás na hOllscoile to apply a tighter lens and request a more robust and forensic level of reporting from project sponsors/ project leads. Committees reserve the right to consider other forms of directive intervention, including an escalation up to and including an independent review, where appropriate. Requirement for more robust reporting and lines of enquiry at committee-level (the FRC and Údarás na hOllscoile). Programme management and reporting remains the responsibility of the Project Sponsor (a designated UMT member) and/ or the Project Director.	Change in project risk classification with significant problems identified (e.g. major variances in scope, budget, or timeline, non-compliance) necessitating immediate intervention and urgent corrective actions to prevent further deterioration. Poses a high risk to the institution. Reported at next PIB/ Project Steering Group and escalated at the next meeting of UMT and upwards to the FRC and Údarás na hOllscoile.	Routine project (red status): - With regards to the reporting requirements surrounding the ongoing progress of routine capital projects (valued at more than €2 million), regular written reports should be provided to the UMT and the FRC. The FRC may require more frequent reporting at its discretion. - Such reports shall clearly set out the issues and risks identified, their potential impact on the delivery of the project, and the proposed measures to mitigate or otherwise address those risks. The FRC may determine the frequency of such reports and will ensure that this issue is included in its reporting to Údarás na hOllscoile. - The Project Sponsor and Project Director are responsible for the provision of timely and complete reporting to the UMT, the FRC, and Údarás na hOllscoile. - At the conclusion of the project, the FRC shall receive a written report that enables it to ensure that the intended benefits have been delivered, and lessons learned have been captured. Complex project (red status): - With regards to the reporting requirements surrounding the ongoing progress of major complex capital projects, the FRC should receive a written report from the Project Sponsor and Project Director / Manager: - following each consideration of the project by UMT, - at each meeting of the FRC. - Such reports shall clearly set out the issues and risks identified, their potential impact on the delivery of the project, and the proposed measures to mitigate or otherwise address those risks. - The FRC will ensure that such reports are appropriately escalated to Údarás na hOllscoile and ensure that Údarás na hOllscoile and the Audit and Risk Committee are informed of the risk implications for the University. - The FRC may require more frequent reporting at its discretion. - The Project Sponsor and Project Director are responsible for the provision of timely and complete reporting to the UMT, the FRC, and Údarás na hOllscoile.



			• The Project Sponsor and Project Director must attend every UMT, FRC, and Údarás na hOllscoile meeting to present their progress report and provide any additional information/ clarifications to the respective governance bodies as necessary. • At the conclusion of the project, the FRC shall receive a written report that enables it to ensure that the intended benefits have been delivered, and lessons learned have been captured.
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Table 3: Escalation pathway, trigger points and reporting requirements (routine and complex capital projects)

5. Conclusion

This guidance is intended to promote enhanced governance and oversight of capital projects across the University, through the provision of a robust project reporting regime. All contributors are encouraged to apply these standards rigorously and to seek support from the [Office of the Secretary for Governance & Academic Affairs](#), where needed.

6. References

6.1 Public/ internal resources

- [Infrastructure Guidelines \(replaced the Public Spending Code\)](#)
- [Údarás na hOllscoile Schedule of Reserved Powers and Delegated Authority](#)
- [Údarás na hOllscoile Standing Orders 2025-2029](#)
- [Finance and Resource Committee \(FRC\) Terms of Reference](#)
- [Capital Works Management Framework \(CWMF\)](#)
- Capital Project Governance Process (PDUOP-02)
- [Project Approval Policy & Process \(Works/Related Works\) \(BSMOP-34\)](#)
- [University of Galway Procurement Policy](#)
- [University of Galway Procurement Step By Step Guide](#)

6.2 Research/ Literature

- Hass, K. B., & Lindbergh, L. B. (2010). [The bottom line on project complexity: applying a new complexity model](#). Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2010—North America, Washington, DC. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute.
- International, Institute for Learning, et al. *Managing Complex Projects*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2010. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, Available at: <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/nuig/detail.action?docID=573717>.
- Crawford, L., Hobbs, J. B., & Turner, J. R. (2002). Investigation of potential classification systems for projects. Paper presented at PMI® Research Conference 2002: Frontiers of Project Management Research and Applications, Seattle, Washington. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute,



Available at: https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/investigation-potential-classification-systems-projects-8967?utm_source=chatgpt.com