

Issued



## Preparing for an Assessment

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### Executive summary

This document describes an overview of the steps that have to be followed by a TSP wishing to have its Trust Service assessed against *tScheme* Approval Profiles so as to gain *tScheme* Approval or by a Supplier wishing to have its Trust Service Component assessed against *tScheme* Approval Profiles so as to gain *tScheme*-Ready status.

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Please report errors and address comments to [Editors@tScheme.org](mailto:Editors@tScheme.org).

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## DOCUMENT HISTORY

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tSi	3.00	2002-09-09	Introduction of details of Grant of Approval process.  Major revision to remove overlap with G for A and RAP:  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Section 3 on S3A reduced to general concepts plus reference to other documents.</li> <li>2. Section 4 removed, except 4.4 on legal value included as 2.2.3.</li> <li>3. Section 5 removed completely.</li> <li>4. Section 6 moved to Annex 1 and covers selecting Assessor (as referenced from Model S3A).</li> <li>5. Section 7 removed except part of Intro added to 2.2.7.</li> <li>6. Section 8 removed completely.</li> <li>7. Section 9 removed except most of intro used to replace 2.2.8.</li> </ol>	CEO
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Purpose

This document presents an overview of the major steps to be followed by an electronic trust service provider (TSP) which wishes to have its service assessed against [tScheme Approval Profiles](#) leading to Grant of Approval. It is the intention, in this document, to provide a general understanding of the steps and processes involved, not to prescribe actions against which the service or the TSP will be judged. The document points to sources of further and more definitive, detailed information.

One of these is the [Required Assessment Procedures](#) (RAP) document, which is the definitive explanation of the steps required of the various parties involved in assessments. In the event of any conflict between this present document and the RAP, the latter must be regarded as the definitive reference, having precedence over this overview.

Full details of [Approval Profiles](#) and the [Approval Process](#) may be found on the *tScheme website*.

Definitions of terms and acronyms not defined in this document may be found in the [tScheme Glossary of Terms](#).

Although the wording of this document relates to Assessments for *tScheme* Service Approvals, it is also intended to be applicable to *tScheme*-Ready Assessments. For use in the latter context:

- references to "Service Provider" shall be taken to mean "Component Supplier";
- references to "Service" shall be taken to mean "Service Component";
- references to "Service Subject to Assessment", or SSA, shall be taken to mean "Component Subject to Assessment", or CSA;
- references to "Specification of Service Subject to Assessment", or S3A shall be taken to mean "Specification of Service Component Subject to Assessment", or C3A.

## 1.2 Readership

Primarily those seeking *tScheme* Grant of Approval and Grant of *tScheme*-Ready Status and who, having not been previously through the process of having their Services or Components Assessed, wish to understand how *tScheme* works and what steps they must take.

Other readers will also benefit by gaining a better understanding of the way in which *tScheme* works, whether they are general observers, relying parties or users of Trust Services, potential or actual Members, or perhaps those who would wish to become *tScheme*-recognised Assessors or accreditation bodies who wish to accredit such Assessors.

## 2. OVERVIEW

When preparing for an **Assessment**, the first question you must ask yourself is “Why do I need an **Assessment**?”. The simple answer to which is “In order to receive the appropriate **Grant** from *tScheme*.”. We say ‘appropriate **Grant**’ because there are more than one, and these are described below.

### 2.1 Forms of Grant

*tScheme* has, at the time of this document’s release, two different forms of **Grant** that it offers. These are distinct because *tScheme* chooses to distinguish between either a specific **Operational Service** (put simply: delivering or ready to deliver a **Service** to its intended customers) or it can recognise a **Service Component** that could be incorporated into a number of different **Services**, but which is not, nor is intended to become, a **Service** itself.

#### 2.1.1 Grant of Approval

This can be informally stated as being the recognition that a **Trust Service** has been found to be compliant with some specific criteria, established by *tScheme*, and that *tScheme* is therefore making a statement as to the fact that, under its processes and according to its criteria, the **Service** is found to be compliant.

Put more formally, one would say that a **Grant of Approval** is the result of a formal confirmation, by *tScheme Limited*, that a named **Electronic Trust Service** has been subjected to an **Assessment** by a *tScheme-recognised Assessor* and, when operated by its named **Provider**, that named **Service** meets the requirements of one or more named **Approval Profiles** and other express criteria and that the named **Provider** has contracted with *tScheme Limited* in regard to its future provision of the named **Service**.

#### 2.1.2 Grant of *tScheme*-Ready Status

This can be informally stated as being the recognition that a **Trust Service Component** has been found to be compliant with a sub-set of some specific criteria, established by *tScheme*, and that *tScheme* is therefore making a statement as to the fact that, under its processes and according to its criteria, the **Service Component** is found to be compliant with that subset of criteria.

Put more formally, one would say that a **Grant of *tScheme*-Ready** is the result of a formal confirmation by *tScheme Limited* that a named **Electronic Trust Service Component**, intended for use within an **Electronic Trust Service**, has been subjected to an **Assessment** and meets all of the applicable (i.e. the subset of) requirements of one or more named **Approval Profiles** and other express criteria and that the named supplier

has contracted with **tScheme Limited** in regard to its future supply of the named **Component**.

In the above text, and in the remainder of the document, any capitalised terms are intended to convey the specific meaning they are given in the [tScheme Glossary of Terms](#). In the above text these defined terms are placed in bold to emphasise their status, but this is not continued in the remainder of the document.

## 2.2 *tScheme* Processes

This document describes the general processes in terms of a TSP seeking an Approval. The steps required for a Supplier seeking recognition of a Component are essentially the same. There are however some significant differences, including specific documents required, and these will be highlighted.

*tScheme* defines its processes in a number of key documents and other supporting documents, all of which are split into different classes. The two largest classes are the Definitive and the Informative documents, and their class can be inferred from their allocated reference identity, which will commence with the letters 'tSd' for Definitive documents, as opposed to the present document which is 'informative' and hence its reference starts with 'tSi' ( - refer to this page's header).

Definitive documents define how *tScheme* is constituted, what *tScheme* is, how it operates, what criteria are applied in undertaking Approvals (Approval Profiles), and other fundamental aspects of *tScheme*.

Informative documents are documents whose existence is required by, or which are derived from, *tScheme's* Definitive documents. They provide additional levels of explanation, detail, process and so on to support *tScheme's* operations. They are intended at all times to address matters within the scope of one or more Definitive documents and, in the case of conflicts arising, any Definitive document shall be considered to have precedence.

*tScheme* is built around a number of key procedures that deal with establishing the framework within which Assessors are appointed, Assessments are performed, approvals are granted and the ongoing good conduct of Approved parties is ensured. These are summarised below and then some of the key steps are explained in more detail in the following Sections. The [Required Assessment Procedures](#) gives the definitive detail and requirements for each of these areas, and is required reading for all parties wishing to have a contractual relationship with *tScheme*.

### 2.2.1 Recognition of Accreditation Bodies

*tScheme* Assessments are carried out by independent certification bodies who have been assessed as having the necessary skills and experience to assess Services and Components against the criteria specified in the Approval Profiles. This assessment of the certification bodies (hereinafter referred to as assessors) is carried out by Accreditation Bodies. For this reason, *tScheme* enters into agreements with such Accreditation Bodies to ensure that the assessors will themselves be assessed in line with *tScheme*'s requirements: this process is termed 'recognition'.

### 2.2.2 Recognition of Assessors

Similarly, once assessors have satisfied the Accreditation Bodies as to their competence, they can enter into an agreement with *tScheme* to allow them to carry out Assessments against the Approval Profiles. They thus become *tScheme*-recognised Assessors.

### 2.2.3 Legal value of Assessments

The legal value and implications of the results of any Assessment undertaken by a *tScheme*-recognised Assessor depends on the jurisdiction applying to the contract between the TSP and the Assessor for the Assessment and also to the jurisdiction applying to the TSP. Where there is any doubt in this regard, the TSP should take expert legal advice in the applying jurisdiction.

Having identified an assessing body recognised by *tScheme*, the Service Provider must now apply directly to *tScheme* for *tScheme* Registered Applicant status before entering into a formal contract with the selected Assessor.

### 2.2.4 Registering for an Assessment

In order to ensure that TSPs and Suppliers are correctly following the appropriate procedures and to avoid any unnecessary effort or expenditure by any parties, *tScheme* requires that both Providers and Suppliers register their intention to be assessed against one or more Approval Profiles. This procedure can be split into four main steps:

- Preparation of a Specification of Service Subject to Assessment (S3A). This document is a necessary pre-requisite for any TSP seeking Assessment against any *tScheme* Approval Profile(s). It is intended to define the scope of the Assessment and to form the technical basis of the contract between the TSP and its chosen Assessor. The equivalent document with which a Component Supplier



should concern them is preparation of a Specification of Component Subject to Assessment (C3A). Model descriptions of these documents are available on the *tScheme* [website](#);

- Selection of one of the [tScheme-recognised Assessors](#)
- Signing an Agreement with *tScheme* confirming their *tScheme* Registered Applicant status in connection with the Service to be assessed, and payment of the registration fee.
- Initial discussions with *tScheme* to agree the general scope and focus for the ultimate Grant of Approval, and of the Public Service Description. This will also identify whether a full Service approval or *tScheme*-Ready status is the more appropriate. *tScheme* will provide this initial consultancy at no extra charge to the applicant.

## 2.2.5 Contracting for an Assessment

Having been accepted as a *tScheme* Registered Applicant the TSP (or Supplier) can now assure themselves that they are ready to proceed with an Assessment and can enter into a contract with their chosen Assessor for that purpose. Whilst this is a private contractual matter between the TSP and the chosen Assessor, *tScheme* offers guidance as to basic good practice: see Annex 1. Selecting and Contracting with an Assessor.

## 2.2.6 Performance of Assessments

As described in §3 Preparation of a Specification of Service Subject to Assessment, the outline S3A is developed into a full S3A and this will form the basis of the actual Assessment. So now the appointed *tScheme*-recognised Assessor will review the evidence provided against the *tScheme* Approval Profiles and the defined Service to be assessed. Likewise, when a C3A has been produced.

The end of a successful Assessment will result in the issuance of an Assessment Report by the Assessor, which contains, amongst other information, the certification from the Assessor that the Service satisfies the criterion in the specified Profiles.

## 2.2.7 Applying for a Grant

An Assessor's certification does not itself confer on the Service the status of being Approved. The granting of approval requires the TSP to undertake to uphold the *tScheme* Conditions of Approval and to pay the appropriate fees. The TSP therefore makes a separate application for Approval to *tScheme*, in order that *tScheme* can satisfy itself of the completion of due process, the suitability of the applying party and establish with the applicant TSP the contract that binds the TSP to the conditions of approval.

This will lead to the processing of the Application by *tScheme* to validate the Assessor's identity, the identity and circumstances of the application, and to review the scope of the approval prior to its formal Grant.

Subject to completion of the necessary contractual requirements, this will result in the formal Grant of Approval for the Service; issue of the *tScheme* Mark and instructions for its display, and publication of the Grant on the *tScheme* website.

### **2.2.8 Ongoing good conduct**

A distinguishing feature of *tScheme* is that it continues to monitor the performance of Electronic Trust Services that have gained approval, for the duration of such approval, in order to ensure continuous achievement of the high standards that *tScheme* approval requires and implies.

The specific conditions relating to the approval of a TSP's Service will be contained within the agreement concluded by the TSP and *tScheme* at the time *tScheme* grants approval.

As a guide, the key general conditions to which the TSP will be bound on service approval are found in the *tScheme* [Approval Agreement](#), which is available from the *tScheme* website.

### **2.2.9 Access to further details and support**

Additional information will be found in the supporting [Approval Profiles](#) and the [Approval Process](#) sources, which, together with the other documents mentioned, can be found on the *tScheme* website.

Additionally, applicants can seek guidance and advice from *tScheme* through the [tScheme Secretariat](#) or other established contacts.

## **3. PREPARATION OF A SPECIFICATION OF SERVICE SUBJECT TO ASSESSMENT**

### **3.1 Introduction**

When a TSP seeks Assessment against any [tScheme Approval Profile\(s\)](#) there has to exist a reference document, accessible to all participating parties, that defines unambiguously the Service being assessed. The participating parties are the TSP itself, the Assessor and any *tScheme* representative.

The TSP must therefore prepare a document known as the Specification of Service Subject to Assessment (S3A). This document helps both the TSP in defining, for its own benefit, the scope of the Assessment they commission and informs the chosen Assessor of the scope of the work they are to perform. The S3A defines the scope of the technical content in the contract between TSP and the chosen Assessor. More detailed guidance on the expected content of the Service's descriptions and definitions is given in '[Guidance for Assessment](#)'.

The S3A provides a mapping between the TSP's Service Subject to Assessment (SSA) description; the TSP's choice of *tScheme* Approval Profiles against which they wish to have their conformance assessed; and the means by which they intend to provide evidence to support any Assessment.

Where the SSA is a simple Trust Service, e.g. Certificate Dissemination, the S3A may be very simple and constitute no more than one or two pages of technical content.

Where an application is being made to *tScheme* for *tScheme* Registered Applicant status during the first stage of this process, the S3A may be a brief one or two page statement of a high-level service description, target customer market, and outline technical specification. This is termed the 'outline S3A' (further defined in the 'Model S3A' and 'Model C3A' on the *tScheme* [website](#)), and is the level of detail required by *tScheme*.

Having been accepted as a Registered Applicant, this S3A needs to be expanded upon for the actual Assessment itself. Where the TSP is applying to have a number of Services assessed in parallel, or where the Service is at a high level and involves a number of elements that may be addressed by a broad service offering (for example to act as a Certification Authority), the S3A will generally be extensive. In such an instance, the S3A must address how the elements of the Service are inter-related and must apportion matters of ownership, management and operational responsibility, and delegation of liability for the functional elements as well as how they are allocated to other departments of the business or outsourced to third parties. This is termed the 'full S3A' and is the level of detail required by the Assessor and forms the basis of the Assessment. Generally *tScheme* does not require to see the 'full S3A' documentation.

## 3.2 Selection of Approval Profiles

Irrespective of the actual Service that the TSP is seeking to have assessed, the TSP must always include in its selection of *tScheme* Approval Profiles the [Base Approval Profile](#) and at least one other service-related Approval Profiles. The Base Approval Profile is directed at assessing the overall management and operation of the organisation offering the Service, along with generally applicable Service requirements. It applies a uniform set of criteria for all assessed TSPs, thus making the process more efficient by defining these criteria in only one place. Some service-specific Approval Profiles may impose particular further criteria.

For a *tScheme*-Ready Assessment, only certain criteria from some of the Approval Profiles will apply, and the TSP should indicate on the checklist in the appendix of each Profile which of the criteria is applicable to its specific Trust Service Component.

## **ANNEX 1. SELECTING AND CONTRACTING WITH AN ASSESSOR**

### **A1.1 Introduction**

The performance of any Assessment against [tScheme Approval Profiles](#) is a private contractual matter between the TSP seeking Assessment and its chosen *tScheme*-recognised Assessor. *tScheme* has no involvement in that process. However, *tScheme* offers the following guidance as basic good practice which the TSP may wish to take into account within its own contracting processes.

The TSP should note that only *tScheme*-recognised Assessors are entitled to perform Assessments against *tScheme* Approval Profiles. *tScheme* does not permit the use of its protected material except by recognised Assessors and unless the TSP is genuinely intending to apply for Grant of Approval for its Service. Assessors may **not** issue certificates expressing a Service's conformance to one or more Approval Profiles except by way of an Assessment Report intended for submission to *tScheme*.

### **A1.2 Selecting an Assessor**

The following points are recommended for inclusion within the TSP's normal business contracting processes; they address issues specific to the matter of the performance of the Assessment against *tScheme* Approval Profiles rather than attempt to define general business practice:

- identify the potential Assessors whose recognition by *tScheme* is current (by referring to the Register of [tScheme-recognised Assessors](#)) - there will be circumstances in which the status may change;
- ask the Assessor which recent Assessments they have performed on Services that have required the same *tScheme* Approval Profiles (whilst all Assessors will have fulfilled and will continue to fulfil their accrediting bodies' requirements regarding their accreditations, their individual practical experience may act as a differentiator, and they may choose to specialise in particular Service Assessments. Their abilities to respond to such enquiries may be limited by confidentiality requirements regarding their past clients).

### **A1.3 Contracting Guidelines**

Prior to entering into a contract ensure that:

- the Assessor accepts the Outline Specification of Service Subject to Assessment (S3A) that has been prepared;

- an agreement is reached in advance with the Assessor on the general quality and security standards against which the Service is to be assessed.

If, either before entering into a contract with an Assessor or at some stage during or after the performance of the Assessment, the TSP has any observations regarding the conduct of the Assessor or of the Assessment that cannot be satisfactorily resolved directly, or which are felt to be of ongoing significance, the TSP should make such views known by contacting either *tScheme* or the appropriate Accreditation Body directly. Either organisation will liaise with the other in reviewing any comments received. *tScheme* welcomes comments on the Assessment processes as much as on particular Assessors' performance and service.