

Proposed Prioritization Approach for IESBA Workstreams and Strategic Precommitments

Purpose

1. This paper sets out an approach for prioritizing IESBA workstreams and strategic precommitments not yet started. It is intended to support the IESBA's determination of workstream priorities by providing a clear and consistent basis for assessing which workstreams or strategic precommitments should start, continue, be deferred or be removed from the IESBA's work program.
2. The prioritization approach is designed to support the Board's judgments by taking into account both strategic considerations and workstream resource needs. It aims to enable the Board to compare workstreams and strategic precommitments from a priority perspective in a consistent manner without relying on an overly complex or formulaic scoring system.

Prioritization Decisions

3. The proposed prioritization approach is designed to support two related but distinct decisions of the Board:
 - The first decision is whether a workstream or strategic precommitment should be classified as a Top Priority or Other Priority (Medium or Low) relative to other workstreams or strategic precommitments (**Level of Priority Decision**).
 - The second decision is what action should be taken in light of available capacity (**Action Decision**). This includes whether the workstream or strategic precommitment should:
 - (a) Start now / continue;
 - (b) Start when capacity allows;
 - (c) Be deferred or put on hold; or
 - (d) Be removed.

Need for a Prioritization Approach

4. The IESBA manages a mix of current, pre-committed and potential future workstreams as well as other activities that compete for finite staff and Board resources. An agreed prioritization approach is therefore needed to help the Board make consistent assessments and decisions regarding which workstreams to prioritize for the allocation of the finite resources.
5. The prioritization approach builds on the IESBA Strategy and Work Plan 2024–2027, which states that prioritization takes into account the importance of each workstream, the public interest benefits of addressing the topic, its global relevance, the urgency of responding to the issues identified, and the feasibility of undertaking the work within anticipated timelines and resources.
6. The prioritization approach does not replace the IESBA's established due process or the PIOB's oversight of the public interest responsiveness of the IESBA's Strategy and Work Plan and any significant changes to the IESBA's work program.

Level of Priority Decision

Assessment Criteria for Level of Priority

7. The prioritization approach uses three assessment criteria to determine the level of priority for a given workstream or strategic precommitment. Each criterion includes a number of key factors for the Board's consideration:

Criteria	Question	What it Covers	Rating
Strategic Significance	How important is this workstream strategically?	- Public interest significance - Global relevance - Alignment with the Board's strategic objectives - Stakeholder expectations of high priority attention by IESBA	High / Medium / Low
Urgency	How time-sensitive is it?	- Risks from inaction - Stakeholder expectations of an IESBA response - Timeliness in light of strategic importance of the topic	High / Medium / Low
Resource Demand	How much effort will it require?	- Expected staff resource pull - Expected Board resource and agenda time needed - Technical complexity - Stakeholder outreach/consultation needs and likely duration - Need for external expertise	High / Medium / Low

8. These assessments are intended to inform discussion and judgment. They are not intended to generate an overall score or ranking of workstreams.

"Level of Priority" Classification

9. The prioritization approach uses two classifications for level of priority – **Top Priority and Other Priority**. The classification is intended to help identify those workstreams that should receive first call on available resources. However, the classification is not intended to rank every workstream or strategic precommitment from first to last. Such an exercise would create a level of precision that is unlikely to be meaningful or sustainable over time.
10. The prioritization approach *does not use a mathematical formula or a scoring system* to determine whether a workstream or strategic precommitment is Top Priority or Other Priority. Rather, the Board considers the assessments of all three criteria above collectively in determining the level of priority of a workstream or strategic precommitment within the overall portfolio.
11. In general, workstreams or strategic precommitments classified as Top Priority would be expected to demonstrate a strong public interest rationale, a high degree of urgency, or both. However, the

Board's judgment remains important and circumstances may justify a different conclusion in particular cases.

Classification	Meaning	Additional Considerations
Top Priority	Workstreams or strategic precommitments that should receive first call on available resources.	There should be a relatively small number of Top Priority items on the work plan at any one time.
Other Priority	All remaining workstreams or strategic precommitments, including those assessed as medium- or low-priority	This does not mean a workstream stops if it falls within this category. It may continue because it is already underway, was previously approved, or is capable of being resourced without displacing a Top Priority workstream or strategic precommitment.

Action Decision

12. Once a workstream or strategic precommitment has been classified as either Top Priority or Other Priority, the Board determines what action should be taken in light of available capacity.
13. In making this second decision, the Board considers whether commencing, continuing or expanding a workstream would be achievable and appropriate in light of the overall demands on the IESBA work program. This includes considering staff and Board capacity, competing priorities, sequencing considerations, and the need to maintain progress on existing workstreams. The objective is to determine whether a workstream can be undertaken at the proposed time without adversely affecting the delivery of top priority workstreams.
14. Whilst the level-of-priority classification of a workstream or strategic precommitment reflects its strategic importance, the Board's agreed action reflects what should happen next given available resources. Accordingly, a Top Priority workstream or strategic precommitment may be assigned a decision of **"Start When Capacity Allows"** if sufficient resources are not currently available. On the other hand, an Other Priority workstream may continue where resources have already been committed or sufficient capacity remains available.

Priority Status	Capacity Position	Suggested Decision	Meaning
Top Priority	Capacity Available	Start now / Continue	Allocate or maintain resources.
Top Priority	Capacity Limited or Unavailable	Start when capacity becomes available	Commence when capacity becomes available, or identify how capacity can be created before commencement or acceleration.
Other Priority	Capacity Available	Start now / Continue	Proceed where resources have already been committed or are available, and doing so does not

Priority Status	Capacity Position	Suggested Decision	Meaning
			displace a Top Priority workstream.
Other Priority	Capacity Limited or Unavailable	Defer or Hold	Lower priority, but not for the current capacity window.
Other Priority (weak case)	Capacity Limited or unavailable	Remove	Resources better deployed elsewhere; remove from the work plan unless circumstances materially change.

15. Where multiple workstreams are assessed similarly, their “Urgency” rating may provide a differentiator in determining sequencing.
16. An illustrative Workstream Assessment Template is included in the **Appendix**.

Final Step-Back Review

17. Following the assessment of the level of priority of individual workstreams and strategic precommitments and the related action determination, the Board takes a step back and considers the collective impact of the proposed work program as a whole from a public interest perspective.
18. In undertaking this step-back review, the Board should consider whether stakeholders are likely to be able to absorb the pace and volume of proposed outputs, the demand placed on stakeholders for input including through surveys, exposure drafts and other public consultations, the need for balance between standard-setting and supporting global A&I, and other operational considerations such as changes to its working methods and processes.
19. This step-back review may also inform the sequencing and timing of workstreams across the IESBA work program. For instance, the Board may assess a few workstreams as Top Priority and capable of being resourced, but that pursuing multiple consultations on these workstreams within a short period could place an unreasonable burden on stakeholders. In such circumstances, the Board may adjust the timing of individual workstreams to improve the overall balance and effectiveness of the work program.

Updating Workstream Assessments

20. Assessments on workstream priorities should be updated at least once a year. Interim updates may also be appropriate where the urgency, status, resource demands or capacity position of a workstream or strategic precommitment has substantially changed.

Appendix

Illustrative Priority Assessment Template

The template below is intended to support consistent documentation of the assessment. It is not intended to generate an overall score or replace Board judgment.

Field	Assessment	Short Rationale
Workstream		
Current Status	Current / Strategic Precommitment / New workstream	
Strategic significance	High / Medium / Low	
Urgency	High / Medium / Low	
Resource Demand	High / Medium / Low	
Level of Priority Classification	Top Priority / Other Priority	
Action Decision	Start Now / Continue / Start when Capacity Allows / Defer or Hold / Remove	
Other Considerations		