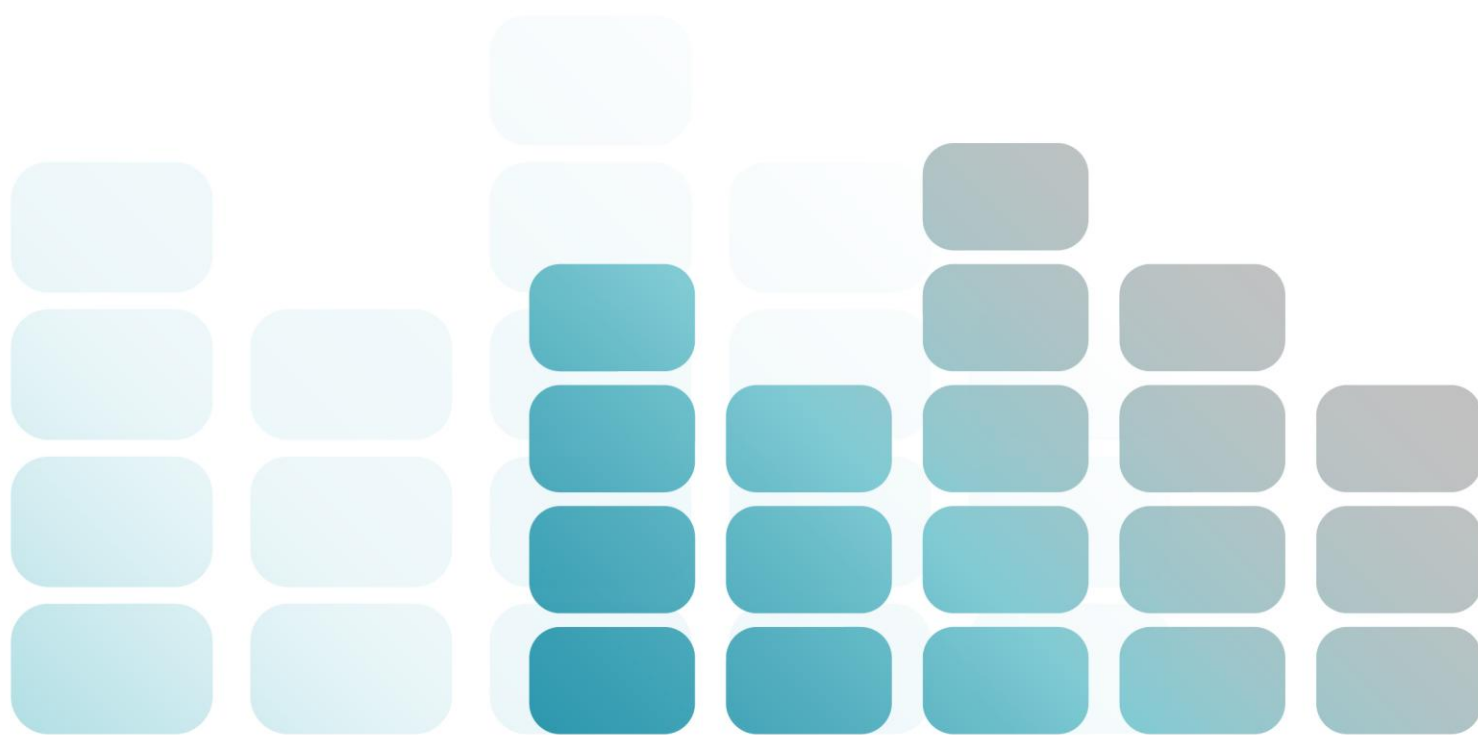


Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service

Annual Audit Plan 2024/25



Prepared for Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service
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Introduction

Purpose of the Annual Audit Plan

1. The purpose of this Annual Audit Plan is to provide an overview of the planned scope and timing of the 2024/25 audit of Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service ('SCTS') annual report and accounts. It outlines the audit work planned to meet the audit requirements set out in [auditing standards](#) and the [Code of Audit Practice](#), including supplementary guidance.

Appointed auditor and independence

2. Michael Oliphant, of Audit Scotland, has been appointed by the Auditor General for Scotland as external auditor of SCTS for the period from 2022/23 until 2026/27. The 2024/25 financial year is therefore the third of the five-year audit appointment.

3. The appointed auditor and audit team are independent of SCTS in accordance with relevant ethical requirements, including the Financial Reporting Council's Ethical Standard. This standard imposes stringent rules to ensure the independence and objectivity of auditors. Audit Scotland has robust arrangements in place to ensure compliance with ethical standards. The arrangements are overseen by the Executive Director of Innovation and Quality, who serves as Audit Scotland's Ethics Partner.

4. The Ethical Standard requires auditors to communicate any relationships that may affect the independence and objectivity of the audit team. There are no such relationships pertaining to the audit of SCTS to communicate.

Audit scope and responsibilities

Scope of the audit

5. The audit is performed in accordance with the Code of Audit Practice, including supplementary guidance, International Standards on Auditing (UK), and relevant legislation. These set out the requirements for the scope of the audit which includes:

- An audit of the financial statements and an opinion on whether they give a true and fair view and are free from material misstatement, including the regularity of income and expenditure.
- An opinion on statutory other information published with the financial statements in the annual report and accounts, the Performance Report, and the Governance Statement, and an opinion on the audited part of the Remuneration and Staff Report.
- Conclusions on the arrangements in relation to the wider scope areas: Financial Management, Financial Sustainability, Vision, Leadership, and Governance, and Use of Resources to Improve Outcomes.
- Reporting on the arrangements for securing Best Value.
- Provision of an Annual Audit Report setting out significant matters identified from the audit of the annual report and accounts and the wider scope areas specified in the Code of Audit Practice.

Responsibilities

6. The Code of Audit Practice sets out the respective responsibilities of SCTS and the auditor. A summary of the key responsibilities is outlined below.

Auditor's responsibilities

7. The responsibilities of auditors in the public sector are established in the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. These include providing an independent opinion on the financial statements and other information reported within the annual report and accounts, and concluding on SCTS' arrangements in place for the wider scope areas.

Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service's responsibilities

8. SCTS has primary responsibility for ensuring proper financial stewardship of public funds, compliance with relevant legislation and

establishing effective arrangements for governance, propriety and regularity that enables it to successfully deliver its objectives. The features of proper financial stewardship include:

- Establishing arrangements to ensure the proper conduct of its affairs.
- Preparation of an annual report and accounts, comprising financial statements and other information that gives a true and fair view.
- Establishing arrangements for the prevention and detection of fraud, error and irregularities, and bribery and corruption.
- Implementing arrangements to ensure its financial position is soundly based.
- Making arrangements to secure Best Value.
- Establishing an internal audit function.

Audit of the annual report and accounts

Introduction

9. The audit of the annual report and accounts is driven by materiality and the risks of material misstatement in the financial statements, with greater attention being given to the significant risks of material misstatement. This chapter outlines materiality, the significant risks of material misstatement that have been identified, and the impact these have on the planned audit procedures.

Materiality

10. The concept of materiality is applied by auditors in planning and performing an audit, and in evaluating the effect of any uncorrected misstatements on the financial statements or other information reported in the annual report and accounts.

11. Broadly, the concept of materiality is to determine whether matters identified during the audit could reasonably be expected to influence the decisions of users of the financial statements. Auditors set a monetary threshold when determining materiality, although some issues may be considered material by their nature. Therefore, materiality is ultimately a matter of the auditor's professional judgement.

12. The materiality levels determined for the audit of SCTS are outlined in [Exhibit 1](#).

Exhibit 1

2024/25 Materiality levels for SCTS

Materiality	Amount
Materiality – based on an assessment of the needs of users of the financial statements and the nature of SCTS' operations, the benchmark used to determine materiality is gross expenditure based on the forecasts for 2024/25. Materiality has been set at 2% of the benchmark.	£4.89 million

Materiality	Amount
Performance materiality – this acts as a trigger point. If the aggregate of misstatements identified during the audit exceeds performance materiality, this could indicate that further audit procedures are required. Using professional judgement, performance materiality has been set at 75% of planning materiality.	£3.67 million
Reporting threshold – all misstatements greater than the reporting threshold will be reported. We have set this threshold at 5 per cent of planning materiality	£245,000

Source: Audit Scotland

Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements

13. The risk assessment process draws on the audit team's cumulative knowledge of SCTS, including the nature of its operations and its significant transaction streams, the system of internal control, governance arrangements and processes, and developments that could impact on its financial reporting.

14. Based on the risk assessment process, significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements have been identified and these are summarised in [Exhibit 2, page 8](#). These are the risks which have the greatest impact on the planned audit approach. The planned audit procedures in response to the risks are also outlined.

15. The risk assessment process is an iterative and dynamic process. The assessment of risks set out in this Annual Audit Plan and Exhibit 2 may change as more information and evidence is obtained over the course of the audit. Where such changes occur, these will be reported to SCTS and those charged with governance, where relevant.

Exhibit 2**Significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements**

Risk of material misstatement	Planned audit response
Fraud caused by management override of controls Management is in a unique position to perpetrate fraud because of management's ability to override controls that otherwise appear to be operating effectively. Although we have not identified any specific risks of management override of control at SCTS, Auditing Standards require that audits are planned to consider the risk of material misstatement caused by fraud.	The audit team will: • Evaluate the design and implementation of controls over journal entry processing. • Make inquiries of individuals involved in the financial reporting process about inappropriate or unusual activity relating to the processing of journal entries. • Test journals entries, focusing on those that are assessed as higher risk, such as those affecting revenue and expenditure recognition around the year-end. • Evaluate significant transactions outside the normal course of business. • Assess the adequacy of controls in place for identifying and disclosing related party relationships and transactions in the financial statements. • Assess changes to the methods and underlying assumptions used to prepare accounting estimates and assess these for evidence of management bias.
Shared finance system change SCTS use financial systems provided by the Scottish Government (SG), including its general ledger, as part of a shared services arrangement with the SG. The previous financial system, SEAS, was replaced by Oracle Fusion Cloud from 1 October 2024. SCTS finance staff have reported to the Audit & Risk Committee that there have been issues with the implementation of the new system, including the Purchase to Pay module not working as expected, roles and responsibilities being incorrect for a significant number of users, and issues with obtaining budgeting and financial monitoring information from the system.	The audit team will: • Evaluate the design and implementation of controls within the new system, including workaround arrangements. • Assess the adequacy of controls in place for ensuring that balances are brought forward from the old system into the new system correctly. • Review the governance arrangements in place for overseeing the implementation of the new system, and the testing carried out in advance of the implementation date. • Obtain assurances from the Scottish Government audit team regarding the adequacy of controls and processes in place for the new system.

Risk of material misstatement	Planned audit response
SCTS staff have managed to develop workaround solutions to minimise disruption to the organisation. As the general ledger is the primary source of information for the financial statements, there is an increased risk of misstatement in the annual accounts if the new system is not working as expected.	
Valuation of property, plant and equipment SCTS held £560.8 million of property, plant, and equipment (PPE) at 31 March 2024, of which £543.8 million was land and building assets. SCTS is required to value land and building assets at existing use value where an active market exists for these assets. Where there is no active market, these assets are valued on a depreciated cost replacement (DRC) basis. As a result, there is a significant degree of subjectivity in these valuations which are based on specialist assumptions. Changes in the assumptions could have a material impact on valuations. In addition, SCTS are changing their componentisation policy during 2024/25 to reduce the number of components used in the Non-current Asset Register.	The audit team will: • Evaluate the design and implementation of controls over the valuation process. • Review the information provided to the valuer and assess this for completeness and accuracy. • Evaluate the competence, capabilities, and objectivity of the valuer. • Obtain an understanding of management's involvement in the valuation process to assess if appropriate oversight has occurred. • Review the appropriateness of the key data and assumptions used in the 2024/25 valuation process, and challenge these where required. • Review management's assessment that the value in the balance sheet of assets not subject to a valuation process in 2024/25 is not materially different to current value at the year-end, and challenge this where required. • Review the revised componentisation policy for appropriateness and confirm that it has been applied correctly.

Source: Audit Scotland

Key audit matters

16. The Code of Audit Practice requires public sector auditors to communicate key audit matters. These are matters that, in the auditor's professional judgement, are of most significance to the audit of the financial statements and require most attention when performing the audit.

17. In determining key audit matters, auditors consider:

- Areas of higher or significant risk of material misstatement.

- Areas where significant judgement is required, including accounting estimates that are subject to a high degree of estimation uncertainty.
- Significant events or transactions that occurred during the year.

18. The matters determined to be key audit matters will be communicated in the Annual Audit Report. [Exhibit 2](#) outlines the significant risks of material misstatement to the financial statements that have been identified, including those that have the greatest impact on the planned audit procedures and require most attention when performing the audit.

Wider scope and Best Value

Introduction

19. The Code of Audit Practice requires that public audit is planned and undertaken from a wider perspective than in the private sector. This wider scope audit broadens the audit of the annual report and accounts to include consideration of additional aspects or risks in four wider scope areas, which are summarised below:

- **Financial Management** – this means having sound budgetary processes. Factors that can impact on SCTS being able to secure sound financial management include the strength of the financial management culture, accountability, and arrangements to prevent and detect fraud, error and other irregularities, and bribery and corruption.
- **Financial Sustainability** – this means looking forward over the medium and longer term in planning the services to be delivered and how they will be delivered effectively. This is assessed by considering SCTS' medium to longer term planning for service delivery.
- **Vision, Leadership and Governance** – this means having a clear vision and strategy with set priorities. This is assessed by considering the clarity of plans in place to deliver the vision and strategy and the effectiveness of the governance arrangements to support delivery.
- **Use of Resources to Improve Outcomes** – this means using resources to meet stated outcomes and improvement objectives through effective planning and working with partners and communities. This is assessed by considering SCTS' arrangements for ensuring resources are deployed to improve strategic outcomes, meet the needs of service users, and deliver continuous improvement.

20. A conclusion on the effectiveness and appropriateness of the arrangements SCTS has in place for each of the wider scope areas will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.

Duty of Best Value

21. The [Scottish Public Finance Manual](#) (SPFM) explains that Accountable Officers have a specific responsibility to ensure that arrangements have been made to secure Best Value. [Best Value in public services: guidance for Accountable Officers](#) is issued by Scottish Ministers and sets out their duty to ensure that arrangements are in place.

22. Consideration of the arrangements SCTS has in place to secure Best Value will be carried out alongside the wider scope audit, and a conclusion on the arrangements in place will be reported in the Annual Audit Report.

23. Auditors may also carry out specific audit work covering the seven Best Value characteristics set out in the SPFM. The risks assessment process did not identify a need to carry out specific audit work on any of the characteristics. However, auditors are required to carry out a review of the 'fairness and equality' characteristic at least once during the audit appointment. This will be carried out later in the audit appointment.

Significant wider scope and Best Value risks

24. No significant risks in the wider scope areas or Best Value were identified from the risk assessment process.

Reporting arrangements, timetable and audit fee

Audit outputs

25. The outputs from the 2024/25 audit include:

- This Annual Audit Plan.
- An Independent Auditor's Report to SCTS, the Auditor General for Scotland, and the Scottish Parliament setting out opinions on the annual report and accounts.
- An Annual Audit Report to SCTS and the Auditor General for Scotland setting out significant matters identified from the audit of the annual report and accounts, conclusions from the wider scope and Best Value audit, and recommendations, where required.

26. The matters to be reported in the outputs will be discussed with SCTS for factual accuracy before they are issued. All outputs from the audit will be published on Audit Scotland's website, apart from the Independent Auditor's Report, which is included in the audited annual report and accounts.

27. Target dates for the audit outputs are set by the Auditor General for Scotland. In setting the target dates for the audit outputs, consideration is given to the target date for approving the annual report and accounts, which is 31 August 2025 for central government agencies and non-ministerial departments.

Audit timetable

28. Achieving the timetable for production of the annual report and accounts, supported by complete and accurate working papers, is critical to delivery of the audit to agreed target dates. [Exhibit 3](#) includes a timetable for the audit, which has been agreed with management. Agreed target dates will be kept under review as the audit progresses. Any changes required, and their potential impact, will be discussed with SCTS and reported to those charged with governance, where required.

Exhibit 3

2024/25 audit timetable

Audit activity	SCTS target date	Audit team target date	Audit & Risk Committee date
Issue of Annual Audit Plan		31 March 2025	28 April 2025
Annual report and accounts:			
• Submission of unaudited annual report and accounts and all working papers to audit team	13 June 2025		
• Latest date for audit clearance meeting	9 July 2025	9 July 2025	
• Issue of draft Letter of Representation, proposed Independent Auditor's Report, and proposed Annual Audit Report		18 July 2025	28 July 2025
• Agreement of audited and unsigned annual report and accounts by those charged with governance			28 July 2025
• Signing of Independent Auditor's Report and issue of Annual Audit Report		11 August 2025	

Source: Audit Scotland

Audit fee

29. SCTS' audit fee is determined in line with Audit Scotland's fee setting arrangements. The proposed audit fee for the 2024/25 audit is £100,910.

30. In setting the audit fee, it is assumed that the SCTS has effective governance arrangements in place and the complete annual report and accounts will be provided for audit in line with the agreed timetable. The audit fee assumes there will be no significant changes to the planned scope of the audit. Where the audit cannot proceed as planned, for example, due to incomplete or inadequate working papers, the audit fee may need to be increased.

Other matters

Internal audit

31. SCTS is responsible for establishing an internal audit function as part of an effective system of internal control. Internal audit for SCTS is provided by the Scottish Government Directorate for Internal Audit and Assurance. As part of our planning process, the audit team will obtain an understanding of internal audit, including its nature, responsibilities, and activities. This review will be carried out by our Scottish Government external audit team in spring 2025. We will report any significant findings to management in our Annual Audit Report.

32. While internal audit and external audit have differing roles and responsibilities, external auditors may seek to rely on the work of internal audit where it is considered appropriate. A review of internal audit's 2024/25 audit plan was carried out to identify if there were any areas where the audit team could rely on its work. The audit team concluded it will not rely on internal audit's work. However, the audit team will review internal audit's reports and assess if there is any impact on the audit.

Audit quality

33. Audit Scotland is committed to the consistent delivery of high-quality audit. Audit quality requires ongoing attention and improvement to keep pace with external and internal changes. Details of the arrangements in place for the delivery of high-quality audits is available from the [Audit Scotland website](#).

34. The International Standards on Quality Management (ISQM) applicable to Audit Scotland for 2024/25 audits are:

- ISQM (UK) 1, which deals with an audit organisation's responsibilities to design, implement, and operate a system of quality management (SoQM) for audits. Audit Scotland's SoQM consists of a variety of components, such as: governance arrangements and culture to support audit quality, compliance with ethical requirements, ensuring Audit Scotland is dedicated to high-quality audit through engagement performance and resourcing arrangements, and ensuring there are robust quality monitoring arrangements in place. Audit Scotland carries out an annual evaluation of its SoQM and has concluded it complies with this standard.

- ISQM (UK) 2 sets out arrangements for conducting engagement quality reviews. These are performed by senior management not involved in the audit, to review significant judgements and conclusions reached by the audit team, and the appropriateness of proposed audit opinions on high-risk audits.

35. To monitor quality at an individual audit level, Audit Scotland carries out internal quality reviews on a sample of audits. Additionally, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales (ICAEW) carries out independent quality reviews on a sample of audits.

36. Audit Scotland may periodically seek the views of SCTS on the quality of audit services provided. The audit team would also welcome feedback at any time.

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