TA-14 AUTHORITY / PUBLIC INSTITUTIONAL TECHNICAL PUBLICATION

JUSTIFIED AUTONOMY

The execution boundary between autonomous capability and legitimate consequence

Justified Autonomy requires sufficient Admissible Evidence, Applicable Authority, and Established Standing, independently examinable and revalidated at binding and at the moment of execution commitment.

AUTONOMY IS CAPABILITY.

JUSTIFICATION GOVERNS WHETHER CAPABILITY MAY BECOME CONSEQUENCE NOW.

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Executive thesis

The difference between a capable autonomous system and a justified consequence.

Autonomous systems can measure, reason, recommend, and execute. None of those capabilities, by itself, proves that a particular consequence is supported by adequate evidence, authorized within the relevant scope, and justified under present conditions.

> **A system can be capable of acting and still lack sufficient grounds or authority to act.**

The central distinction

Autonomy concerns operational capability. Justified Autonomy, as framed by TA-14, concerns whether a particular proposed consequence satisfies the conditions for admissible execution at the relevant boundary.

The framework does not propose that TA-14 should replace a regulator, engineer, operator, or owner. It separates the operational proposal from an independent examination of the grounds on which execution is claimed to be permissible.

The governing question

> **Does this proposed consequence have sufficient Admissible Evidence, Applicable Authority, and Established Standing to become reality NOW?**

Scope of this publication

This publication explains a proposed architecture and educational simulation. It is not a certification, a finding of legal compliance, a record of a deployed integration, or evidence of third-party institutional adoption.

The three requirements

All three requirements are necessary; none can substitute for another.

ADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE	Is the supporting record sufficiently attributable, continuous, relevant, and examinable for this exact proposed consequence?
APPLICABLE AUTHORITY	Does a legitimate source of authority permit the action, within the required scope, conditions, and limits?
ESTABLISHED STANDING	Do the required relationships, operational prerequisites, and present conditions actually hold NOW?

Independent examination does not create permission

The responsible authority defines the scope, constraints, delegation, and revocation conditions. TA-14 examines whether the claimed authority applies to the proposed consequence. A favorable examination cannot create authority where none exists.

Three distinct failure modes

Evidence missing	HOLD while the record is completed, if completion remains possible under the rules.
Authority explicitly absent	DENY when the proposed action is prohibited or outside permissible scope.
Standing uncertain	HOLD or ESCALATE depending on the applicable decision rules and delegated review authority.

> **Strong evidence without authority is insufficient. Authority without evidence is insufficient. Both may exist while present standing has changed.**

Independence at the consequence boundary

Why measuring, diagnosing, optimizing, and authorizing should remain distinguishable.

Integrated systems may collect observations, interpret them, recommend actions, execute changes, and report success. Integration can be operationally useful. It does not automatically invalidate the underlying measurements. It does, however, make it important to distinguish operational self-assessment from an independent examination of whether execution was justified.

OPERATIONAL SYSTEM	Observes, preserves records, interprets conditions, and proposes the action.
RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITY	Defines legitimate permissions, scope, constraints, and revocation conditions.
TA-14 BOUNDARY	Examines the proposed consequence against evidence, authority, and standing.
AUTHORIZED ACTOR	Executes only within approved scope; records the outcome for examination.

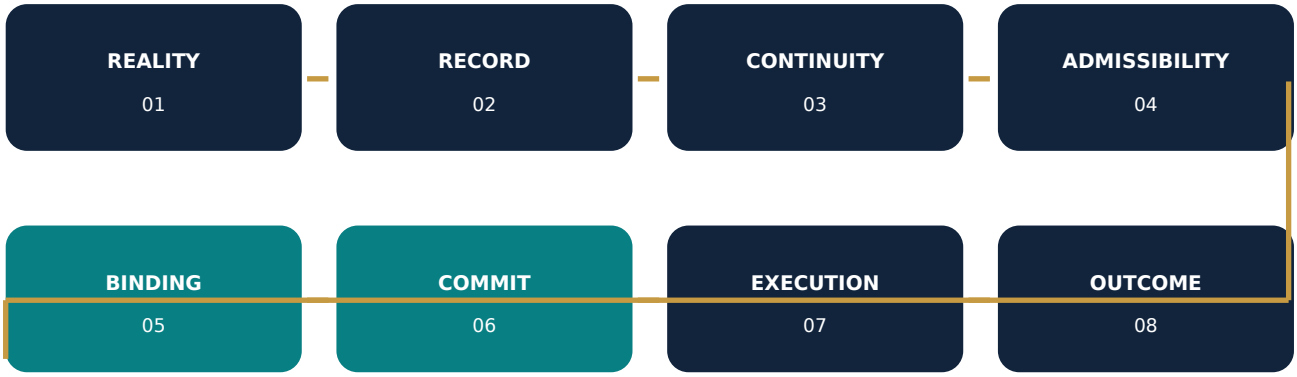
> **Connection is not authority. Understanding is not permission. A recommendation is not authorization.**

The boundary is narrow by design

TA-14 does not need to absorb the model, building-control system, organization, or regulator. The architecture addresses a proposed consequence at the point where it would be bound and committed to reality.

The eight-link execution chain

Distinct links prevent observation, permission, action, and outcome from collapsing into one claim.



REVALIDATE AT BINDING AND COMMITMENT

01 / Reality	Conditions that exist independently of the record.
02 / Record	A preserved representation of relevant conditions.
03 / Continuity	Traceable connection between record and the conditions it represents.
04 / Admissibility	Fitness and sufficiency of the record for the proposed consequence.
05 / Binding	The specific consequence is connected to applicable authority and standing.
06 / Commit	Final authorization checkpoint immediately before execution.
07 / Execution	Action occurs within the approved scope and conditions.
08 / Outcome	What actually occurred is preserved for subsequent examination.

Binding, commitment, and drift

Why yesterday's ALLOW cannot be treated as permanent permission.

Evidence may become stale. Authority may be withdrawn. Equipment state, occupancy, external conditions, or the proposed action itself may change between initial evaluation and the moment of commitment.

> **A prior ALLOW is not a standing license to execute after reality changes.**

Binding gate

Confirm the proposed consequence, its supporting admissible record, the applicable authority, and established standing. The bound scope must be specific enough to prevent an approval for one action from being reused for another.

Commit gate

Revalidate the conditions at the moment execution would be committed. If a required condition is no longer established, fail closed: withhold execution and produce the appropriate HOLD, DENY, or ESCALATE determination.

Drift is a governance event

Evidence drift	New readings contradict the prior record, or the record becomes stale.
Authority drift	A delegation expires, is revoked, or no longer covers the proposed action.
Standing drift	Operational prerequisites or external conditions change.
Proposal drift	The action, target, timing, or scope changes from what was examined.

The correct outcome is determined by the governing rules. Not every uncertainty is a DENY; not every issue can be resolved with a HOLD.

Illustrative case: a building that must stop

An educational scenario, not a determination about an actual facility.

An autonomous building controller proposes increasing outside-air intake after detecting elevated indoor particulate readings. Initial evidence, authority, and standing support a bounded ALLOW. Before commitment, new outdoor measurements undermine the conditions supporting the intervention.

T0 / EVIDENCE
Baseline and timestamps established

T1 / AUTHORITY
Adjustment within delegated scope

T2 / STANDING
Conditions initially support action

T3 / ALLOW
Conditional determination; not execution

T4 / DRIFT
Outdoor conditions change

T5 / HOLD
Commit blocked pending revalidation

PRIOR ALLOW + CHANGED REALITY = HOLD UNTIL REVALIDATED

Why the result changes

The controller has not necessarily lost all authority to operate, and its earlier evidence has not vanished. But standing for this particular action is no longer established at commitment. The previously allowed action must not execute solely because the earlier evaluation was favorable.

A revised proposal can be evaluated again using the updated record, the relevant authority, and the present conditions.

The four determinations

Decision outputs communicate whether the particular proposed consequence may proceed.

ALLOW	All requirements are satisfied for this consequence, within explicitly defined scope and limits; revalidation remains required at commitment.
HOLD	Execution is withheld because a required record or condition is unresolved or no longer established, and further examination may resolve it.
DENY	The action fails a governing requirement or is prohibited as proposed; the current proposal must not proceed.
ESCALATE	The matter requires a designated authority or additional review outside the present decision scope.

Decision discipline

The outputs are governance determinations, not predictions of technical success. A physically feasible intervention may receive HOLD or DENY. A valid connection between systems may still lack authority for a particular consequence.

An ALLOW must remain bounded

A favorable result should identify the action examined, the relevant evidence and authority context, standing conditions, and any time, scope, or operating limitations. It must not be interpreted as permission for unrelated actions.

> **Capability does not confer permission. Prior authorization does not survive changed reality without revalidation.**

Cross-sector applicability

One architectural question; different substantive rules.

HVAC	A diagnostic recommendation does not, by itself, authorize equipment intervention.
INDOOR AIR QUALITY	A sensor dashboard alone does not establish the basis for a regulatory or operational consequence.
AI AGENTS	A model-generated plan does not establish authority to transfer funds, alter access, or issue commands.
FINANCE	A predicted opportunity does not grant authority to move assets.
CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE	Control capability does not confer unlimited permission to impose physical consequences.

What remains sector-specific

Applicable laws, safety obligations, evidence standards, professional duties, and delegated authority vary by jurisdiction and use case. This publication does not claim that a single generic checklist substitutes for those substantive requirements.

What remains architecturally consistent

> **A proposed consequence requires sufficient evidence, applicable authority, and established standing at the moment it would become real.**

Verification, limits, and next steps

What would be required to move from a technical framing to a validated implementation.

The preceding diagrams and scenario are explanatory. They do not demonstrate that a particular system has implemented the architecture correctly or that a real-world action has been prevented.

A credible pilot should establish

Declared scope	A specific consequence class, actors, systems, and responsible authority.
Evidence contract	Required records, provenance, continuity, freshness, and admissibility criteria.
Authority contract	Delegations, limits, revocation handling, and standing prerequisites.
Decision trace	Reproducible ALLOW / HOLD / DENY / ESCALATE results with recorded reasons.
Drift tests	Adversarial changes between evaluation, binding, and commitment.
Outcome review	Records demonstrating whether execution was withheld or occurred within scope.

Claims discipline

A demonstration is not a production deployment. A passed scenario is not general certification. A governance decision is not a legal ruling unless a competent authority gives it that status. Third-party validation and compliance claims require their own records.

> **The next proof is not a better slogan. It is a reproducible decision trace under changed reality.**

Institutional closing

A simple question at the most consequential moment.

> **Does this proposed consequence have sufficient Admissible Evidence, Applicable Authority, and Established Standing to become reality NOW?**

The autonomous future should be measured not only by what systems can do, but by whether their consequential actions are demonstrably justified when execution is committed.

The role of TA-14 is not to become the operational system. It is to examine the proposed consequence at the boundary between capability and reality.

NO ADMISSIBLE EVIDENCE.
NO ADMISSIBLE EXECUTION.

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