

FIELD INSTRUMENT 0 · PUBLIC RELEASE



The Threshold Test

Five questions to ask before a technology becomes too important to control

READER FIELD EDITION · NO REGISTRATION REQUIRED

THE HUMAN THRESHOLD SERIES · NATHAN BROOKS

EDENROOT PRESS

FIELD NOTE

The dangerous question is rarely “Does it work?”

It is “What happens when it works well enough that we stop choosing without it?”



BRIEFING

This is a simplified reader field instrument inspired by the Commission's Threshold Assessment Framework. It is not a formal determination and the five questions are not a scorecard to be totalled. Read them together. The combinations matter more than the arithmetic.

Choose one technology, system, policy, or platform. It can be fictional or real. Work through all five questions before deciding whether ordinary oversight is still enough.

SYSTEM / TECHNOLOGY UNDER REVIEW

What is it supposed to do, in one plain-language sentence?

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Do not ask only whether the system is accurate.

Accuracy can coexist with dependency, opacity, or concentrated harm.

Do not ask only whether a human is “in the loop.”

Ask whether that human is still making a meaningful decision.

Do not treat documentation as oversight.

A risk can be perfectly documented and still go unmanaged.

Do not assume withdrawal restores the old world.

A load-bearing technology can make removal a second catastrophe.

RULE OF THE FILE

If a system began to fail, would this change make the failure harder to see?



A · AUTONOMY

Who is actually deciding?

- ☐ Does the system take consequential action, or shape consequential action, without a named human deciding each instance?
- ☐ If a human can override it, how often do they? Is that override rate falling even though system behaviour has not changed?
- ☐ Does accepting the recommendation require less effort than refusing it?

FIELD JUDGMENT: LOW CONCERN / WATCH / HIGH CONCERN

B · REVERSIBILITY

If it were withdrawn today, what could not be undone?

- ☐ Has an institution restructured itself around the technology?
- ☐ Would switching it off cause a new crisis rather than restore the previous state?
- ☐ Are there irreversible edits, dependencies, contracts, infrastructure, or training-data effects?

FIELD JUDGMENT: LOW CONCERN / WATCH / HIGH CONCERN

C · SCOPE

Who is inside the system's domain, including people who never chose to enter it?

- ☐ Who does the system serve directly?
- ☐ Who is affected indirectly by decisions made from its outputs?
- ☐ Is the affected population materially larger than the population the operator reports?

FIELD JUDGMENT: LOW CONCERN / WATCH / HIGH CONCERN



D · OPACITY

Can a competent outsider state what the system is optimising, and verify it?

- ☐ Can someone explain the objective in plain language, not just show source code or a model card?
- ☐ Who chose the objective, and when was it last reviewed by someone with authority to change it?
- ☐ Is the review process as visible as the technical documentation?

FIELD JUDGMENT: LOW CONCERN / WATCH / HIGH CONCERN

E · DEPENDENCY

Has the system become the thing institutions use to decide, including decisions about the system itself?

- ☐ Does the organisation use the system to decide budgets, staffing, priorities, audit resources, or governance?
- ☐ Would oversight materially weaken without the system being overseen?
- ☐ Does the system influence the resources, scheduling, or information by which it is examined?

FIELD JUDGMENT: LOW CONCERN / WATCH / HIGH CONCERN

IMMEDIATE THRESHOLD FLAGS

- Override rates fall while the system itself has not changed.
- Withdrawal is itself dangerous because the system has become load-bearing.
- The affected population is larger than the population being measured.
- The objective is public but nobody can name the last meaningful review.
- The system advises on its own governance or influences the resources used to audit it.



YOUR DETERMINATION

The Commission's formal Framework uses five intervention tiers. This reader edition does not reproduce the Commission's full scoring process. Use the tiers below as a way to force a decision about what kind of oversight the system now requires.

☐

TIER I · MONITORED

Ordinary regulation still appears adequate. Keep a watching brief and set a review date.

☐

TIER II · NOTIFIED

Material changes to objective, scope, or authority should trigger notice before implementation.

☐

TIER III · CONDITIONED

Continued operation may be reasonable, but only with explicit conditions and independent audit.

☐

TIER IV · SUSPENDED

Expansion should stop. Existing operation may need to continue where withdrawal would cause greater harm.

☐

TIER V · SEVERED

The system's authority must be structurally removed where the loop cannot be broken by conditions because the system shapes the conditions.

SIGN-OFF NOTE

Write the strongest argument for proceeding.

Then write the strongest argument for stopping, conditioning, or severing it.

ICET

COMMISSION

Your assessment is complete.

The Commission has more files than it releases publicly.

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- Commissioner Vera Lindqvist - Personnel File
- The Threshold Assessment Framework
- Would You Have Signed Off?
- The Halcyon Incident - ICET Case File
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