Leadership and Governance in High-Risk Systems Course

23 – 27 August 2027
Vienna

AGILE LEADERS
Training Center

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Overview

Leadership and Governance in High-Risk Systems Course is a one-week advanced programme for leaders accountable for operations in which control failure can cause severe harm to people, the environment, assets, services, or public trust. Participants examine how boards, executives, risk owners, operational leaders, assurance functions, and frontline experts share responsibility for system safety. The course connects decision rights, risk appetite, critical-control governance, operational assurance, culture, escalation, weak signals, incident learning, contractor interfaces, resilience, and executive oversight.

Each participant develops a High-Risk Governance and Assurance Blueprint for a selected operation. The blueprint defines governance forums, accountabilities, reserved decisions, critical controls, information flows, assurance layers, escalation triggers, leading indicators, learning routines, and improvement priorities. Agile Leaders Training Center presents safety leadership as a disciplined system of choices, evidence, challenge, and learning rather than a set of slogans or isolated compliance activities.

Who Should Attend

- Board members, governors, trustees, and executives overseeing high-consequence operations
- Business-unit and operational leaders accountable for major operational risks
- Safety, risk, resilience, quality, security, and compliance leaders
- Engineering, asset-integrity, maintenance, and technical-authority professionals
- Internal audit and assurance teams reviewing critical-control effectiveness
- Incident, emergency, and business-continuity leaders
- Contractor-management and supply-chain leaders working across organisational boundaries

The course assumes participants already hold leadership, governance, risk, assurance, or technical responsibility. It does not provide legal advice, regulatory approval, or a substitute for sector-specific competence and engineering judgement.

Relevant High-Risk Environments

- Energy, chemicals, process industries, mining, utilities, and major infrastructure
- Aviation, maritime, rail, logistics, and transport control systems
- Healthcare, laboratories, pharmaceuticals, and other safety-critical services
- Nuclear, defence, security, emergency response, and public protection
- Digital infrastructure, data centres, cyber-physical systems, and essential services
- Construction, complex projects, and contractor-intensive operations

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Learning Objectives

- Define governance accountabilities and decision rights for high-risk systems
- Translate risk appetite into operational boundaries and critical-control expectations
- Design governance forums that integrate technical, human, and organisational evidence
- Distinguish management monitoring, specialist assurance, independent assurance, and regulatory oversight
- Use leading and lagging indicators to detect control degradation and emerging risk
- Create escalation paths that protect challenge, transparency, and timely intervention
- Strengthen safety culture through leadership behaviour, resource choices, and learning routines
- Govern contractors, interfaces, change, emergencies, and recovery across system boundaries

Practical Work Product

Participants build a High-Risk Governance and Assurance Blueprint containing:

- System boundary and consequence profile
- Accountability and reserved-decision matrix
- Critical-control ownership map
- Governance forum and information architecture
- Three-layer assurance plan
- Weak-signal and escalation protocol
- Leading-indicator dashboard
- Learning and corrective-action cycle
- Ninety-day leadership improvement roadmap

Day 1: System Risk and Governance Architecture

- High-risk systems as interactions between technology, people, organisations, contractors, and external conditions
- System boundaries, hazardous scenarios, consequence profiles, and uncertainty
- Board, executive, risk-owner, technical-authority, assurance, and frontline responsibilities
- Reserved decisions, delegations, authorities, and stop-work expectations
- Risk appetite, operational boundaries, and the governance of exceptions

Workshop: map the selected high-risk system, its governance actors, decision rights, and accountability gaps.

Day 2: Critical Controls and Operational Assurance

- From hazard and risk analysis to critical controls and performance standards
- Control ownership, verification, impairment management, and temporary compensating measures
- Management monitoring, specialist review, internal assurance, and independent challenge
- Evidence quality, sampling, assurance coverage, and closure of findings
- Contractor, supplier, and joint-operation interfaces that can weaken control effectiveness

Workshop: build a critical-control map and assurance plan that identifies owners, evidence, frequency, thresholds, and escalation routes.

Day 3: Leadership, Culture, and Decision Quality

- Visible leadership behaviours and the signals created by resource, schedule, and production decisions
- Psychological safety, speaking up, disciplined dissent, and protection of technical challenge
- Normalisation of deviance, goal conflict, local adaptation, and gradual control erosion
- Decision framing under uncertainty, competing objectives, and time pressure
- Governance of competence, staffing, fatigue, workload, and organisational change

Workshop: analyse an executive decision scenario and redesign the information, challenge, authority, and documentation needed for a safer decision.

Day 4: Weak Signals, Escalation, and Resilience

- Weak signals from maintenance, defects, overrides, near misses, complaints, audit findings, and workforce concerns
- Leading and lagging indicators, thresholds, trend interpretation, and dashboard limitations
- Escalation triggers, communication routes, cross-functional coordination, and executive intervention
- Preparedness for abnormal operations, emergencies, degraded modes, and cascading failures
- Resilience capacities to anticipate, monitor, respond, recover, and adapt

Workshop: design a weak-signal dashboard and escalation protocol for a deteriorating control scenario.

Day 5: Learning, Review, and Executive Action

- Learning from incidents, near misses, successful recoveries, assurance findings, and external events
- Distinguishing immediate causes, control failures, systemic conditions, and governance contributors
- Corrective-action quality, ownership, prioritisation, verification, and prevention of recurrence
- Board and executive review packs that support challenge rather than reassurance
- Self-assessment of leadership, culture, governance, and management-system effectiveness

Capstone: present and challenge the High-Risk Governance and Assurance Blueprint through a simulated executive risk committee.

Training Methods

- High-consequence case analysis and facilitated governance mapping
- Critical-control and assurance design workshops
- Executive decision and escalation simulations
- Weak-signal, indicator, and incident-learning exercises
- Peer review of governance blueprints and leadership roadmaps

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Course Outcomes

Participants leave able to structure accountability, challenge, evidence, and intervention around the risks that matter most. They can distinguish activity from effective assurance, recognise signals of degrading control, and create governance routines that sustain learning and resilient performance without displacing the technical and regulatory expertise required in their sector.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this a general corporate governance course?

No. It concentrates on leadership decisions, critical controls, assurance, escalation, and learning in systems where failure has severe consequences.

Does the course focus on one industry?

No. It uses cross-sector principles and cases while requiring participants to apply their own technical standards, laws, and operating context.

Will the course replace technical risk assessment?

No. It governs how technical evidence is owned, challenged, escalated, and acted upon; it does not replace competent technical analysis.

What practical document will I produce?

You will complete a High-Risk Governance and Assurance Blueprint with decision rights, controls, assurance, indicators, escalation, learning, and a ninety-day improvement roadmap.