CALYTEQ

Strategic Quality Engineering

THE BFSI RELEASE RISK CHECKLIST

25 questions every technology leader in Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance should answer before approving a production release.

If you cannot answer YES to all 25 — your release carries more risk than you know.

HOW TO USE THIS CHECKLIST

Work through all 25 questions before your next production release. Each question represents a category of risk that has caused Sev1 production incidents in BFSI environments. A NO or UNSURE answer is not a reason to delay — it is a risk to be documented, owned, and mitigated before you proceed.

YES	Evidence exists and has been reviewed
NO	Gap identified — document and mitigate before release
UNSURE	Needs investigation — treat as NO until confirmed

Produced by Anthony Adeloye — Founder & Principal Consultant, CalyTeQ. 28 years of BFSI quality engineering experience across Deutsche Bank, Commerzbank, Fujitsu, EY, Sky UK, and the Scottish Government.

1. DELIVERY & QUALITY RISK

1	**1. Have all planned test cases been executed and the results reviewed?** Incomplete test execution with no documented rationale for skipped tests is the most common governance gap in pre-release evidence packs.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
2	**2. Is the open defect profile understood — by severity, age, and business area?** Not the count — the profile. Three Sev-3 defects in the payment confirmation flow are more dangerous than twelve Sev-3 defects in the reporting module.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
3	**3. Have all Sev-1 and Sev-2 defects been resolved or formally risk-accepted with a documented owner?** Risk acceptance is legitimate. Undocumented risk acceptance is a governance failure.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
4	**4. Is the regression pass rate above your agreed threshold for this release?** Define your threshold before the release cycle — not after results come in.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
5	**5. Has test completion been formally signed off by the QA lead?** A dashboard showing green is not a sign-off. A named individual with a dated signature is.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:

2. AUTOMATION EFFECTIVENESS

6	**6. Does automated regression coverage include all critical user journeys?** Critical journeys are defined by business risk, not by what is easiest to automate. Your highest-value transaction flows must be covered.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
7	**7. Is the flaky test rate below 5%?** Above 5% means your automation is creating false confidence. Engineers start ignoring failures. That is when incidents happen.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
8	**8. Has the full automated regression suite been executed in the past 5 business days?** Stale automation results are not results. They are evidence that nobody is running the suite.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
9	**9. Are automation results stored and accessible for audit purposes?** FCA/PRA inspections can request testing evidence. If it lives only in an engineer's local environment, it does not exist for compliance purposes.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:

3. PERFORMANCE & RESILIENCE

10	**10. Have Non-Functional Requirements (NFRs) been formally defined, agreed, and documented for this system?** If performance requirements are not written down before testing, you cannot pass or fail against them. This is the most common NFR gap.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
11	**11. Has the system been tested under the agreed peak load scenario within the past 90 days?** Annual load testing tells you the system survived a test environment 12 months ago. It tells you nothing about today's production configuration.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
12	**12. Did the most recent performance test meet all agreed NFR thresholds?** A performance test that was not formally passed or failed is not a performance test. It is data collection without a conclusion.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
13	**13. Has the system been tested for resilience under degraded conditions — single node failure, network latency, third-party timeout?** Payment systems fail at peak load when an upstream service degrades. If you have not tested this scenario, you have not tested your real risk.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:

4. GOVERNANCE & REGULATORY EVIDENCE

14	**14. Is the release governance documentation complete and signed off by all required approvers?** Every approver must have signed before release — not retrospectively. Retrospective sign-off is a red flag in any FCA inspection.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
15	**15. Has the Change Advisory Board (CAB) reviewed and approved this release?** CAB approval is not a formality. It is the point at which risk is formally accepted at organisational level.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
16	**16. Is there a documented audit trail of all testing activities for this release?** The audit trail must exist independently of the delivery team who produced it. Evidence that only lives in the project's Jira board is not sufficient for regulatory purposes.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
17	**17. Have all FCA/PRA regulatory requirements applicable to this release been formally assessed and signed off?** Operational resilience requirements under PS21/3 mean that releases affecting important business services require explicit regulatory impact assessment.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
18	**18. Is the release governance evidence pack complete and available for immediate inspection?** Do not assemble the evidence pack after the auditor arrives. It should be complete before the release goes live.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:

5. RESIDUAL RISK & PRODUCTION READINESS

19	**19. Has a formal Go / Go with Conditions / No-Go release recommendation been documented?** Binary go/no-go decisions under time pressure produce bad outcomes. The Go with Conditions model allows release to proceed with explicit, owned compensating controls.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
20	**20. Is there a tested, documented rollback plan for this release?** Rollback plans that have not been tested are assumptions. In a Sev-1 at 2am, assumptions fail.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
21	**21. Is production monitoring and alerting configured to detect the specific failure modes this release introduces?** Generic alerting misses release-specific risks. Monitoring must be configured for what this release changes.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
22	**22. Is there a defined hypercare period with named on-call engineers for the 48 hours post-release?** The first 48 hours after a production release are the highest-risk window. Hypercare is not optional for significant releases.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
23	**23. Have all third-party dependencies been confirmed as available and compatible for the release window?** Payment gateway timeouts, API version mismatches, and certificate expiries cause production incidents that no amount of internal testing prevents.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
24	**24. Is the production release window aligned with low-traffic periods and away from regulatory reporting deadlines?** Releasing into peak traffic or immediately before a month-end regulatory deadline compounds risk. Timing is a risk management decision.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:
25	**25. Has the production configuration been validated — not just the test environment configuration?** The most common cause of 'but it worked in UAT' incidents is an untested production configuration. Environment parity is a prerequisite for reliable testing.	YES / NO / UNSURE	Notes / Owner:

INTERPRETING YOUR RESULTS

What your score means

25 / 25 YES	**Release Confidence: HIGH**	Strong evidence base. Document the evidence pack and proceed. Ensure monitoring is configured for this release.
20–24 YES	**Release Confidence: MODERATE**	Proceed with documented conditions. Each NO or UNSURE must have a named owner and a mitigation plan before release. Consider a Go with Conditions recommendation.
15–19 YES	**Release Confidence: LOW**	Significant gaps identified. Escalate to senior leadership with a clear risk statement. Do not release without explicit sign-off from the accountable executive.
Below 15 YES	**Release Confidence: VERY LOW — NO-GO**	The evidence base is insufficient to support this release. Stop. Document all gaps. Resolve critical items before proceeding. This is not a delay — it is risk management.

WHAT TO DO WITH GAPS

1 **Document every NO and UNSURE**
Write down what is missing, who owns it, and what the business risk is if the release proceeds without it. Undocumented gaps become disputed incidents.

2 **Assign an owner to every gap**
A risk without an owner is not being managed. Every NO must have a named individual accountable for resolution or formal acceptance.

3 **Decide: resolve, accept, or escalate**
Not every gap requires delay. Some risks are acceptable with compensating controls. Some require escalation. The decision must be made consciously, not by default.

4 **Get independent assurance on critical releases**
For high-value releases — major platform changes, regulatory deadlines, year-end processing — independent quality assurance gives leadership a risk position that the delivery team cannot provide for itself.

nditions /
nior-led.