

Operational Legitimacy

Authority Landing Reference (v1.2)

This document establishes a neutral, institutional reference framework for the concept of **Operational Legitimacy** as applied to autonomous, semi-autonomous, and intelligent systems. It is intended for regulators, insurers, enterprise risk leaders, auditors, and policy bodies seeking a common evaluative language grounded in observable system behavior, accountability, and governance.

1. Why Operational Legitimacy Exists

As intelligent systems increasingly perform tasks with real-world consequences, traditional compliance models focused on static certification or design-time assurance are no longer sufficient. Operational Legitimacy addresses this gap by evaluating whether systems remain trustworthy, governable, and accountable during operation, not merely at deployment.

2. Definition

Operational Legitimacy is the condition in which an autonomous or intelligent system can demonstrate, on an ongoing basis, that its *observed behavior* aligns with declared intent, approved operating boundaries, and externally imposed constraints, including applicable law, policy, safety standards, and ethical expectations.

3. Core Evaluation Pillars

Operational Legitimacy is evaluated across five non-exhaustive pillars: Intent Transparency, Boundary Definition, Observability, Accountability, and Correctability.

4. Relationship to Existing Frameworks

Operational Legitimacy does not replace safety certification, security controls, or regulatory compliance. It serves as an integrative lens through which such controls can be assessed over time, emphasizing runtime evidence, governance continuity, and operational proof.

5. Intended Use

This reference supports regulatory inquiry, insurance underwriting, enterprise risk assessment, procurement evaluation, and cross-sector dialogue. It is deliberately non-prescriptive and non-commercial.

6. Status and Stewardship

This document is published as a public reference (v1.2). Future revisions may expand definitions and incorporate public commentary. Stewardship is maintained by the Operational Legitimacy Working Group as a neutral, non-commercial reference body.