ISTQB Glossary Rules and Recommendations

Version 1.5

International Software Testing Qualifications Board

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Revision History

Version	Date	Remarks
1.0	February 12, 2018	First published version
1.1	December 30, 2018	Several rules added
1.2	May 13th, 2021	Glossary Working Group Workflow divided into two parts: a workflow for High and Medium Severity Change Requests, and a workflow for Low Severity Change Requests Rules revised based on change requests; Front page and page headers and footers aligned with the Syllabus template.
1.3	May 11, 2022	New section “3 Glossary terms” Rules rearranged in the logical order. Added ISO/IEC/IEEE 29119-11 Guidelines on the testing of AI-based systems to the list of standards GD1 updated to add domain-specific terms. GD13 modified: Exceptions are allowed if justified. GD20 moved to GT1 GD21 moved to GT2 and changed – now allows terms to begin with abbreviations GT2 revised. GR2: updated to reflect the latest standards. SR9 modified: robustness removed. SR14 added.
1.4	December 3, 2025	Reworded the principles as statements of rules and recommendations. All rules in Chapters 1 to 5 revised. Obligation (rule or recommendation) added to all requirements.
1.5	June 29, 2026	GD21: Add a rule to not allow compound terms into the Glossary.

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Acknowledgements

This document was formally released by the Glossary Working Group (GWG).

0.1 Purpose of this Document

The main objective of this document is to provide the standards and procedures for achieving consistency in the approach taken to define terms in the ISTQB Glossary of Terms Used in Software Testing (“Glossary”).

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1 Chapters 2 'Glossary Scope

' and 3 'Glossary Definitions' also serve as a guideline for any appendix of domain-specific terms in the Syllabi.

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2 Glossary Scope

ID	Requirement	Obligation
GS1	The Glossary contains definitions for all keywords identified by the ISTQB syllabi.	Rule
GS2	The Glossary may contain any software testing and software quality terms that are used in at least one syllabus.	Rule
GS3	The Glossary may also include terms that are needed by other Glossary definitions but are not defined in any other standard.	Rule
GS4	It is the responsibility of the Syllabus authors to decide which terms to identify as keywords. The keywords must comply with the criteria stated in the latest version of the Checklist for Syllabus Reviews and the Glossary Rules and Recommendations.	Rule
GS5	Synonyms to existing terms may be included in the Glossary if they are commonly used in software testing. A synonym does not have its own definition and must be unique within the Glossary.	Recommendation
GS6	Domain-specific non-testing terms are out of scope for the Glossary. The Glossary Wording Group (GWG) consults with the Syllabus task forces in writing proper definitions for domain-specific terms according to the Glossary Rules and Recommendations.	Rule
GS7	It is the responsibility of the GWG to determine the definitions of the terms in the Glossary.	Rule

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3 Glossary Definitions

ID	Requirement	Obligation
GD1	All Glossary definitions must use the Genus-differentia approach, namely: A **genus–differentia** definition is comprised of two parts: **A genus** (or family): An existing definition that serves as a portion of the new definition; all definitions with the same genus are considered members of that genus. **The differentia**: The portion of the definition that is not provided by the genus. It contains the necessary and sufficient conditions for members of the genus to be counted as belonging to the term.	Rule
GD2	If the definition of Glossary term A contains Glossary term B, then the definition of Glossary term A must not repeat the definition of Glossary term B within it. For example, the definitions of terms 'xyz coverage' shall not include parts of the definition of coverage like 'The percentage to which'. They shall simply begin with 'The coverage of abc'.	Rule
GD3	Definitions must not use synonyms.	Rule
GD4	If two Glossary terms have the same meaning, then one must be removed from the Glossary and made a synonym of the remaining term.	Rule
GD5	The genus must be preceded by a (definite or indefinite) article in the definition.	Rule
GD6	The name of the term must not be used in the definition.	Rule
GD7	Circular references are not allowed: The definition of a term A may not contain names of other terms B that refer either directly or indirectly to A in their definitions.	Rule
GD8	Definitions must state what the term means, and not what the term does not mean. Exceptions must be justified and approved by the GWG.	Rule
GD9	All definitions must be clear and written in a concise manner.	Rule
GD10	Definitions are limited to one sentence.	Rule
GD11	Examples are excluded from definitions to make the definitions shorter.	Rule

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ID	Requirement	Obligation
GD12	Glossary terms and definitions must follow the grammar rules listed in https://www.grammarbook.com/grammar_rules.asp	Rule
GD13	Glossary terms and definitions must follow hyphen rules listed in https://www.grammarbook.com/punctuation/hyphens.asp	Rule
GD14	The term and its definition should be singular. Exceptions must be justified and agreed upon by the GWG.	Recommendation
GD15	If possible, glossary definitions should be phrased in the active voice.	Recommendation
GD16	Brackets should only be used in definitions if they represent an option.	Recommendation
GD17	Terms that are verbs must be in the present tense. Exceptions must be justified and approved by the GWG.	Rule
GD18	Concurrent versions of the definition for a term may only exist temporarily, and only when needed for consistency with different Syllabi. In such cases, the Glossary dictates which version to use for which Syllabus. Resolution of such differences between different Syllabi must be resolved as soon as possible, with the next update of each Syllabus.	Rule
GD19	If a term is used in a Glossary definition it must have an unambiguous meaning.	Rule
GD20	All Glossary principles apply to the definitions of domain-specific terms.	Rule
GD21	A compound term consists of two or more words joined together to function as a single term. If the resulting term does not carry a new, distinct meaning that is different from the definitions of the individual parts, then the compound term is not allowed in the Glossary.	Rule

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4 Glossary Term Names

ID	Requirement	Obligation
GT1	A Glossary term is capitalized if and only if it is a proper noun, i.e., a specific, not generic, name for a particular person, place, or thing.	Rule
GT2	A Glossary term with an abbreviation must be written out and the abbreviation must be a different attribute. The name may contain an abbreviation only if it is the abbreviation of a different term and it is commonly used (e.g., GUI testing).	Rule

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5 Specific Glossary Terminology

ID	Requirement	Obligation
ST1	Terms with the word “tool” are eliminated from the Glossary. **Justification**: To avoid redundancy, any term that has already been defined that is supported by a tool does not need a second term in the Glossary followed by the word “tool”.	Rule
ST2	Glossary definitions must not use the words “effectiveness” or “efficiency”. Exceptions must be justified and approved by the GWG.	Rule
ST3	All instances of the following terms and any other terms referring to the concept of SDLC are replaced with “software development lifecycle (SDLC)” for consistency in terminology: • software life cycle • lifecycle • life cycle • the life cycle • the lifecycle • development life cycle • development lifecycle	Rule
ST4	All instances of “a document” are replaced with “documentation”. **Justification**: Content is saved not just in documents, but in files and databases, so the word “documentation” is more meaningful than “document”.	Rule
ST5	All instances of “software product” are replaced with “component or system”. **Justification**: “component or system” is the standard terminology used in defining terms in the Glossary.	Rule
ST6	In the context of testing, all instances of the verb “conduct” are replaced with “perform”. **Justification**: use consistent terminology across the Glossary instead of using two terms describing testing.	Rule
ST7	All definitions defining coverage must use the word “coverage” rather than “percentage”. **Justification**: make the wording of all definitions of terms defining coverage consistent.	Rule

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ID	Requirement	Obligation
ST8	Replace all instances of “execute” with “exercise” unless the definition is limited to executing software. **Justification**: test conditions cannot be executed, only exercised. Test cases can be exercised to determine coverage without being executed. Test cases can also be executed.	Rule
ST9	All definitions describing types of testing use the wording “in which” rather than “where” or “whereby” for consistency.	Rule
ST10	All definitions use the term “work product” rather than “artifact” or “deliverable”.	Rule
ST11	All instances of "compliance with" should be changed to "complies with" to use the active voice.	Recommendation
ST12	“Test” is used as an adjective ahead of nouns describing a work product, such as test case, and “testing” is used as a gerund after nouns in the sense of a process, such as reliability testing.	Rule
ST13	All terms describing a form of “testing” in the definition should be defined as either a test technique, a test approach, a test level, a test type, a scripting technique, or a test strategy. **Justification:** The genus should be more specific than just the word “testing”.	Recommendation

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6 References to External Standards

ID	Requirement	Obligation
GR1	Terminology and definitions should rely as far as possible on current standards and on original publications. Any deviations from the standard definition must be justified by consistency within the Glossary.	Recommendation
GR2	If a Glossary term is defined in an international standard relevant for software testing, its name and its definition should be as close as possible to the standard, and a reference to the standard and its parts should be included.	Recommendation
GR3	The reference must make clear if the definition in the Glossary is identical to or only close to the original. A simple reference ID indicates that the exact definition of the original is used. A reference ID preceded by the word “after” indicates that the Glossary definition is slightly different from the original.	Rule
GR4	Notes and explanations in the international standard must not be used in the Glossary. Such information is in the scope of the ISTQB Syllabi.	Rule
GR5	For related domains like software engineering, quality management or risk management, using the relevant international standards is recommended but not mandatory.	Recommendation

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7 Change Procedures for Glossary Definitions

ID	Requirement	Obligation
GC1	Change requests must be documented in the change management system of the GWG.	Rule
GC2	Authorization to raise change requests for the Glossary will be provided to the GWG members and to representatives of other ISTQB working groups.	Recommendation
GC3	The GWG Chair and Vice-chair are responsible for managing the change requests according to the workflow aligned with the GWG.	Rule
GC4	A change request that impacts other ISTQB work products must identify an issue that is significant enough to initiate a change to a Glossary term. There must be significant value obtained by making the change, either changing the name or definition of a keyword, providing a correction, adding information to clarify the term from other terms, or changing the wording of the definition for overall consistency.	Rule
GC5	Any change must be aligned with all ISTQB working groups that are responsible for the work products affected.	Recommendation
GC6	If a new Syllabus introduces a keyword which is already defined in the Glossary, then the existing definition shall be used. If this needs to be updated, taking into consideration the usage of the term in the existing Syllabi, then the new Syllabus shall raise a change request which will go through the standard process for changes.	Rule
GC7	Change requests in status “Addressed” shall be implemented in the Glossary by the Chair or Vice-Chair with the following timing: • Adding new terms or changing terms upon requests by a new syllabus shall be implemented in sync with the launch of that syllabus; • Removing terms may only be implemented after the retirement of all syllabi that use the term as a keyword; Any other changes should be implemented as soon as possible after the decision has been taken by the GWG.	Recommendation
GC8	When a term’s name change is implemented, the previous name must be added as a synonym such that the users find it when searching for the old name.	Rule
GC9	Change requests always address the latest version of a term. Older versions are only kept active as long as they are used as a keyword in a syllabus.	Recommendation
GC10	There are two options to implement a term change: Either by creating a new version, or by updating the latest version. The option to be chosen depends on the impact of the change. See GC11 for the explanation.	Rule

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ID	Requirement	Obligation
GC11	Updating the latest version is the preferred option if the change does not impact the exams of any syllabus. This is the case for: • Fixing defects (e.g., spelling and grammar) in the name or the definition. • Changes to any attributes other than the name and the definition, e.g. synonyms, abbreviations, references, and see-also relationships. • A wording change in the definition without changing the meaning. In any other cases, a new version of the term must be created that implements the changes.	Rule
GC12	When a change is implemented by creating a new version, all syllabi using the term shall be re-linked to the latest version of that term unless their exams may be impacted by the change (see GC11 above for the specification of an impact).	Recommendation
GC13	A term is removed by deactivating all versions of the term in the Glossary. Inactive terms are not visible to users.	Rule

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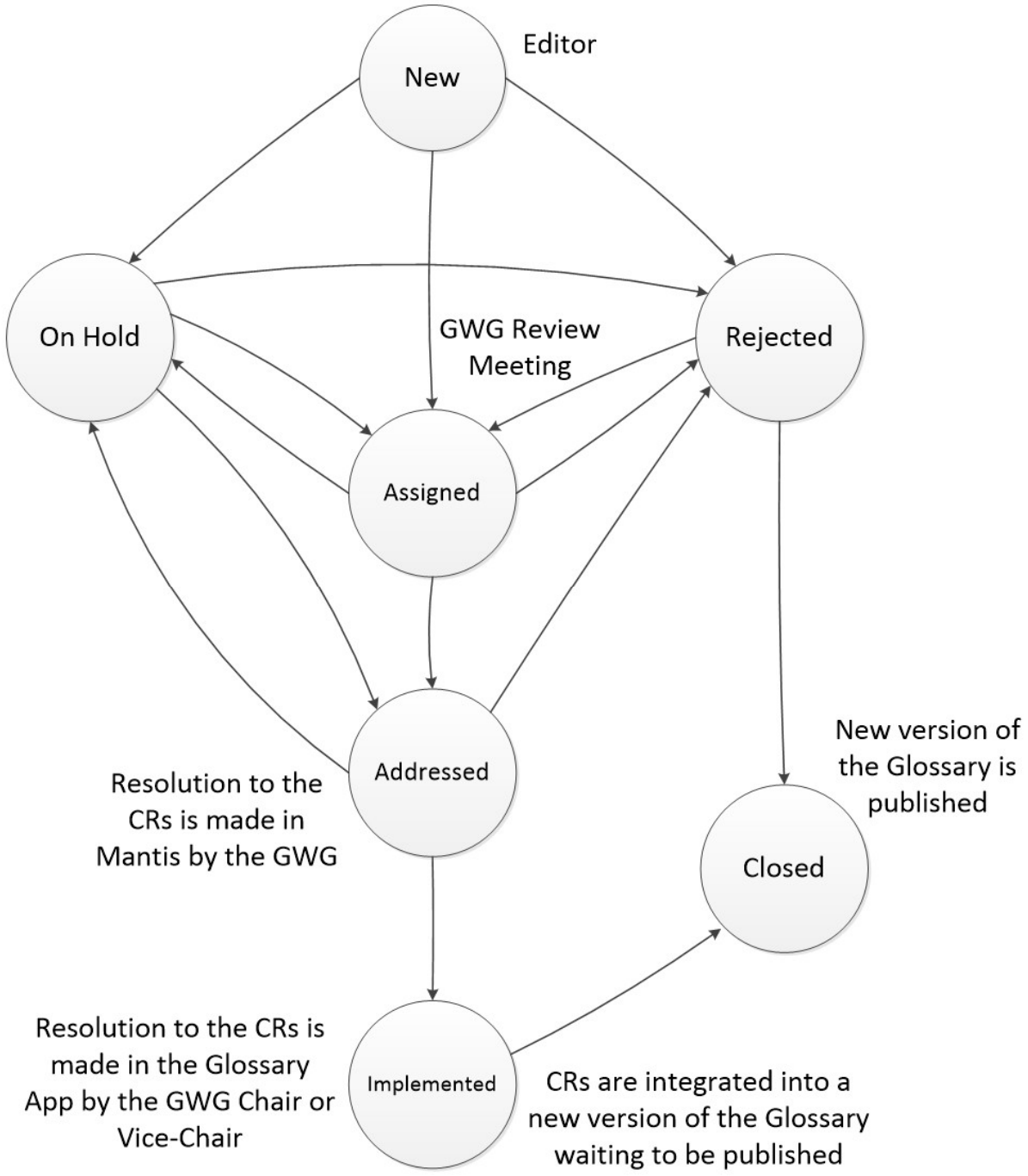
8 Glossary Working Group Workflows

7.1 High and Medium Severity Change Requests



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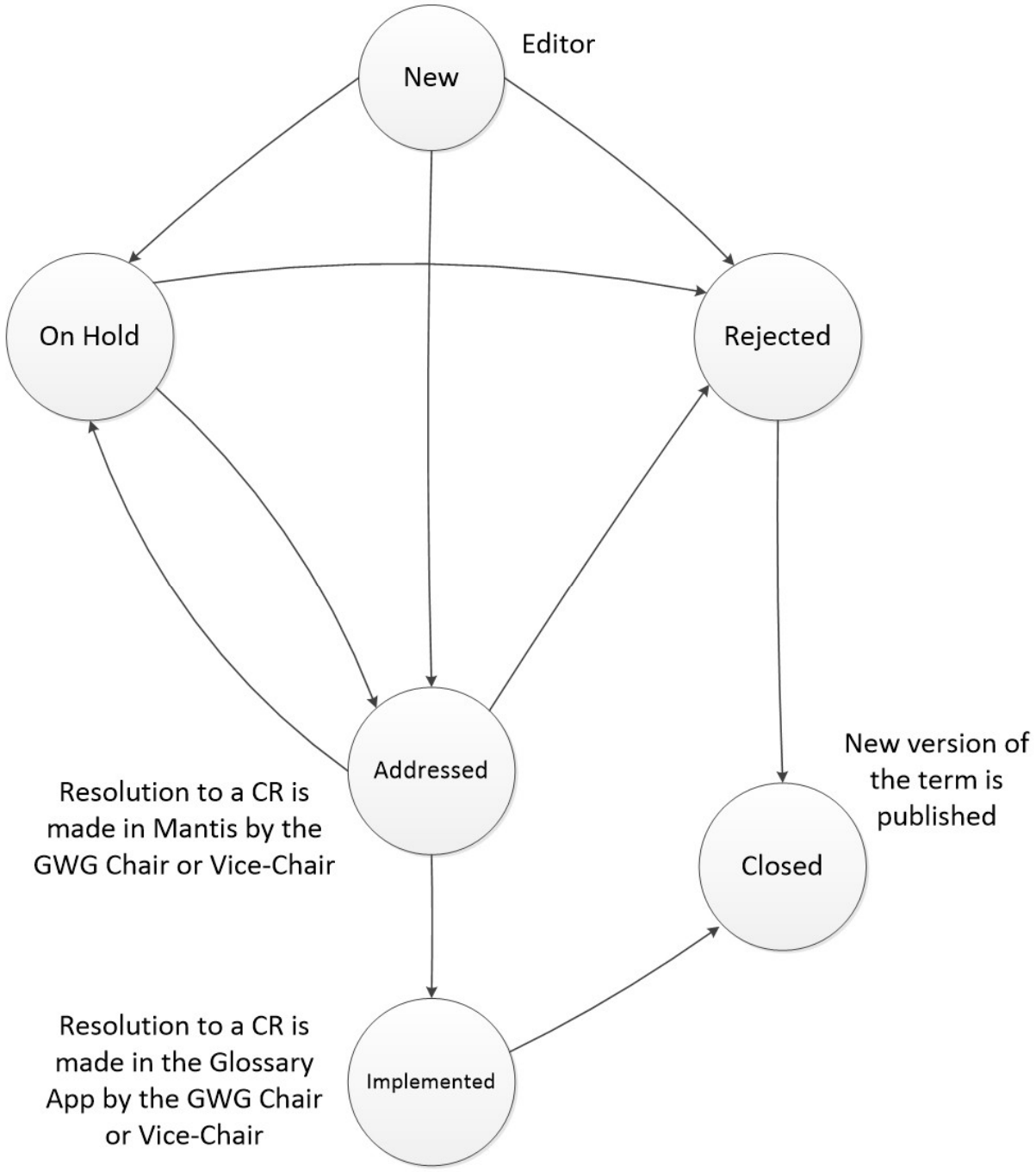
7.2 Low Severity Change Requests



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