

WHERE DORA STOPS, GOVERNANCE SUBSTANCE BEGINS

The control DORA can't see

DORA tells you whether a team ships well. It does not tell you whether a control demonstrably changes what an agent does. A team can sit in DORA's top profile and still be running governance theatre. This sheet maps each DORA signal to the Cognitive Delivery Index dimension that grades the substance underneath it.

DORA 2025 SIGNAL		CDI DIMENSION	WHAT DORA CANNOT TELL YOU
DORA 2025 Deployment frequency & change lead time Throughput	→	CDI DIMENSION Capability Calibration	How fast agents ship is not whether the team can tell where an agent should and should not be trusted. Speed is visible. Calibration is not.
DORA 2025 Change fail rate & rework rate Stability	→	CDI DIMENSION Constraint Fidelity	A low fail rate tells you outcomes held. It does not tell you whether the constraint actually fired at the point of action, or whether you were simply lucky.
DORA 2025 Failed deployment recovery time Stability	→	CDI DIMENSION Supervisory Clarity	Recovery speed measures the fix. It does not measure whether a human was ever genuinely in the loop, or whether oversight was nominal.
DORA 2025 AI Capabilities: version control & transparency Foundational practice	→	CDI DIMENSION Provenance Integrity	DORA asks if practices exist. CDI asks whether the origin of a change, human or agent, is actually traceable when it matters.
DORA 2025 AI Capabilities: working in small batches Foundational practice	→	CDI DIMENSION Scope Definition	Small batches are a throughput practice. Scope Definition asks whether the boundary of what an agent was authorised to touch was ever defined and held.
DORA 2025 AI Capabilities: quality internal platform & review Foundational practice	→	CDI DIMENSION Review Substance	DORA counts whether review happens. CDI grades whether review changed the outcome, or whether the approval was a rubber stamp.

THE THEATRE GAP

Every CDI dimension is scored on five levels. The jump that matters is **Level 4 to Level 5**: from a control that is fully documented and followed, to one that **demonstrably changes behaviour at the point of action**. DORA's 2025 data shows the cost of missing it, PR review time up 441 percent and 31 percent more changes merging with no review at all. Throughput rose. Substance did not.

THE FIVE LEVELS, AND THE ONE THAT COUNTS

Documented is not the same as substantive

Read any CDI dimension against this scale. Most governance programmes stall at Level 3 or 4: the policy exists, the box is ticked. Level 5 is the only level that asks whether the control actually altered what shipped.

01 Absent No control exists.

02 Informal It happens, but only in someone's head or habit.

03 Documented It is written down. A policy exists.

↓ THE THEATRE GAP ↓

04 Complete Fully documented, consistently followed, audit trail present.

05 Substantive It demonstrably changes what the agent does at the point of action.

HOW TO USE THIS AS A PRACTITIONER

1. **Run your DORA review as normal.** Keep the metrics. They remain the best measure of delivery performance you have.
2. **For every green metric, ask the CDI question next to it.** A healthy fail rate is the prompt to check Constraint Fidelity, not the proof of it.
3. **Score each dimension Absent to Substantive.** Be honest about Level 4. A documented control that no one can show changed an outcome is theatre.
4. **Fix the point of action, not the document.** Closing the gap means enforcement where the agent acts, the endpoint, the MCP call, the invocation. Not a better policy page.

Provenance Integrity

Supervisory Clarity

Scope Definition

Review Substance

Constraint Fidelity

Capability Calibration