

UX QUALITY BAR

RELEASE READINESS CHECKLIST · V1.1

TEN AREAS
TO CHECK BEFORE YOU SHIP

ONE CLEAR RULE
FOR WHEN A RELEASE IS BLOCKED

A ONE-PAGE SCORECARD
FOR THE RELEASE DECISION

IO

Speed needs a quality
bar.

IS IT THE RIGHT PROBLEM, AND DOES THE FLOW HOLD?

O1

FOUNDATION

PROBLEM & USER CLARITY

- ☐ Primary user is clearly defined
- ☐ User goal is explicit and singular
- ☐ Problem statement is written (not implied)
- ☐ Evidence exists: research, data, usability, tickets
- ☐ Success is defined in user terms (not business only)

FAIL IF

“We think users will like it” is the rationale.

O2

STRUCTURE

EXPERIENCE LOGIC & FLOW

- ☐ Happy path is complete end-to-end
- ☐ All entry points are covered
- ☐ Back navigation is clear and predictable
- ☐ No dead ends or circular flows
- ☐ Decision points are intentional and explained

FAIL IF

You can't narrate the flow without opening Figma.

O3

CONTENT

INFORMATION ARCHITECTURE & CONTENT

- ☐ Labels are clear and in user-language
- ☐ No internal jargon or feature names
- ☐ Information is ordered by user priority
- ☐ Sections and hierarchy are obvious
- ☐ Empty states explain what and why

FAIL IF

A first-time user needs explanation.

O4

WHERE GOOD UX BREAKS

STATES & EDGE CASES

- ☐ Loading states are designed
- ☐ Empty states are designed
- ☐ Error states are designed
- ☐ Success states are designed
- ☐ System interruptions are considered
- ☐ First-time vs returning user states differ if needed

FAIL IF

“We'll handle this later.”

CAN EVERYONE USE IT, AND DOES IT LOOK LIKE ONE PRODUCT?

05

ACCESSIBILITY & INCLUSIVE USE

ACCESSIBILITY

- ☐ Colour contrast meets WCAG AA
- ☐ Focus order is logical, visible, and tested
- ☐ Keyboard navigation works end-to-end
- ☐ Alt text exists on all meaningful images and icons
- ☐ Dynamic content changes are announced (ARIA live regions)
- ☐ Error messages are clear, specific, and actionable
- ☐ Touch targets meet accessibility and platform guidance
- ☐ Text resizes to 200% without loss of content or function

FAIL IF

Accessibility is “planned post-launch”.

06

DESIGN SYSTEM

VISUAL CONSISTENCY

- ☐ Design system components used correctly
- ☐ Variants are intentional (not hacked)
- ☐ Spacing and alignment are consistent
- ☐ Visual hierarchy supports the task
- ☐ No unnecessary novelty

FAIL IF

Custom UI exists without justification.

07

SIMPLICITY

COGNITIVE LOAD

- ☐ Unnecessary steps removed
- ☐ No duplicated decisions
- ☐ Progressive disclosure used where needed
- ☐ Default choices are sensible
- ☐ User is never asked to remember information

FAIL IF

The design relies on user effort to compensate.

DOES IT WORK EVERYWHERE, AND WHO OWNS IT AFTER LAUNCH?

08

PLATFORM

RESPONSIVENESS & PLATFORM BEHAVIOUR

- ☐ Works across target breakpoints
- ☐ Platform conventions are respected
- ☐ Touch / click behaviour is correct
- ☐ Text reflows correctly
- ☐ No critical content is hidden

FAIL IF

“It probably works on mobile.”

09

CONFIDENCE

VALIDATION

- ☐ Design reviewed by peers
- ☐ Usability feedback incorporated or consciously rejected
- ☐ Risks are documented
- ☐ Trade-offs are explicit
- ☐ Designer can defend decisions with evidence

FAIL IF

Important decisions can't be explained beyond personal preference.

10

SHARED OWNERSHIP

LAUNCH READINESS & MEASUREMENT

- ☐ Product, Design and Engineering understand the remaining experience risks
- ☐ Accepted risks have an owner and a documented rationale
- ☐ Required analytics events are instrumented and testable before release
- ☐ Baseline exists where before/after comparison is needed
- ☐ Success metrics and signals are defined in user terms
- ☐ Post-launch review has a named owner and a date

FAIL IF

No one clearly owns quality – or the metric – after launch.

A RELEASE IS BLOCKED IF ANY CRITICAL ISSUE APPLIES

O1 Any critical section fails

O2 Critical states or recovery paths are missing

O3 Critical accessibility requirements are unmet

O4 Ownership is unclear

OPERATING MODEL · HOW TO ENFORCE THIS

O1 Attach to design review, handoff, and PR/FAQ doc.

O2 Make it visible: Confluence, FigJam, Jira template.

O3 Empower designers to say: **“This does not pass the UX quality bar yet.”** If they can’t say this safely, the operating model is broken.

DESIGN LEADERSHIP · THE HARDER TRUTH

“Most UX quality problems aren’t skill problems. They’re permission problems.”

A checklist only works if people are allowed to act on it. The designer knew the error state was missing. They knew the flow had a dead end. They knew accessibility hadn’t been checked, and the release still went out.

That’s why quality can’t be solved by telling designers to care more. The operating model needs to make quality repeatable – and trade-offs need to be visible and owned, not quietly absorbed.

Critical failures block release. Everything else requires an explicit, owned trade-off.

RELEASE DECISION SCORECARD

PRODUCT / FEATURE

DATE

REVIEWER

AREA	PASS	RISK	FAIL
01 Problem & User Clarity	☐	☐	☐
02 Experience Logic & Flow	☐	☐	☐
03 Information Architecture & Content	☐	☐	☐
04 States & Edge Cases	☐	☐	☐
05 Accessibility & Inclusive Use	☐	☐	☐
06 Visual Consistency & Design System	☐	☐	☐
07 Cognitive Load & Simplicity	☐	☐	☐
08 Responsiveness & Platform Behaviour	☐	☐	☐
09 Validation & Confidence	☐	☐	☐
10 Launch Readiness & Measurement	☐	☐	☐

MINOR ISSUE
PASS · TRACK IT

Polish or lower-impact usability issue. Can reasonably follow release with a committed follow-up owner.

MAJOR ISSUE
RISK · FIX OR ACCEPT

Materially damages comprehension, efficiency or confidence – but does not prevent completion. Requires an explicit decision and named owner.

CRITICAL ISSUE
FAIL · BLOCK RELEASE

Prevents task completion, creates compliance or accessibility risk, or causes loss of trust, data or money. Release should not proceed.

DECISION

☐

SHIP

☐

SHIP WITH RISK

☐

FAIL

RISK OWNER

REVIEW DATE

FOLLOW-UP / OUTSTANDING ITEMS

Using this with your team? I'd love to hear what worked, what didn't, and what you'd change. [Continue the conversation on LinkedIn →](#)

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