Accept-Reject Matrix Defense Checklist

What the TPO and the IRS actually scrutinise in the matrix — and how the evidence file answers it.

Checklist · Benchmarking defence preparation

The range is arithmetic; the pool is judgment. When the authority challenges the study, the challenge is almost always the pool — and the pool is the matrix: every company in it, every company out of it, and the reason for each. The matrix is examined as a method, and a method is defensible when every step is stated, every decision is reasoned, and the whole thing is reconstructable.

Part A — What the authority scrutinises

Scrutiny point	What to have ready
The rejects, one by one	The evidence that exists for that company — a reason with substance, not a label
The accepts, one by one	The reason for each kept company with a size gap, related-party revenue or an adjacent function
Consistency across companies	The distinguishing reason where the same factor is rejected in one company and accepted in another
Consistency across years	The factual change that explains any year-on-year movement in pool or reasons
The override trail	The professional's rationale for every divergence from the screen's recommendation
Reconstructability	The stated source, code, string and filters from which the pool rebuilds to the same companies

Part B — The evidence file structure

```
Study / pool +-- 00 Search design code, string, size bounds, candidate counts per stage +-- 01
Candidate list every company at every stage, with its stage outcome `-- per company +-- identity
legal name, registration/LEI, source of the data +-- financials the lines used, the period, the
source (filing/database) +-- profile evidence business description, product/revenue mix, factor
assessment +-- disposition accept / reject / flagged-resolved +-- reason the specific,
evidence-grounded rationale `-- override if the final disposition differs from the screen: who, what,
why
```

Two properties make the file work in a proceeding: every company is present (accepted, rejected or excluded for data reasons — the absence of a company is read as the absence of a decision), and every number has a source (the filing page, the database extract, the registry record).

Part C — Override discipline

- Keep-against-recommendation — the specific distinguishing fact (e.g. "the screen rejected on product-line similarity, but the segment disclosure shows the product line is 8% of revenue"), with the segment evidence attached.
- Reject-against-recommendation — the specific disqualifier the screen missed: related-party revenue in the notes, customer concentration, the risk the website description did not capture.
- No silent overrides — an override without a recorded rationale is the single most damaging line in the file; it converts a defensible method into an unexplained choice.

Part D — Rehearse the seven questions

1. Walk me through how the pool was built — code, string, size, thresholds, counts at each stage.
2. Why was company X rejected — the specific reason, the specific evidence. Practice the three weakest rejects; they will be asked.
3. Why was company Y kept — the accepts with the gaps (size, related-party, adjacent function) are the real questions.
4. Company Z was rejected this year and accepted last year — what changed, with the factual change identified.
5. What did your screening tool recommend, and where did you disagree — the override trail, company by company.
6. Show me the source for this number — the filing page, not “the database”.
7. Rebuild your pool from the stated filters — same companies? If the answer is “approximately”, the file has a problem the authority will find.
