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MODERNIZING PHARMACEUTICAL VALIDATION: INTEGRATING CSA, AI, AND LIFECYCLE MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

Author

Shyam Subhash Kawarkhe

Affiliation

Department of Master of Business Administration, Dr. D.Y. Patil College of Engineering Pune, Maharashtra, India
Email: shyamkawarkhe95@gmail.com
Mobile: +91-9518322531

ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the critical role of validation in the pharmaceutical and life sciences industries, emphasising its importance in ensuring product quality, patient safety, and regulatory compliance. It outlines the various types of validation, including process, equipment, cleaning, computer system, and analytical method validation, detailing their objectives and documentation requirements. The study highlights regulatory guidelines from global authorities such as the FDA, EMA, and WHO, underscoring the necessity of thorough validation practices at every stage of drug manufacturing and healthcare product development.

The paper discusses Computer System Validation (CSV) and its growing significance in the digital age, with a focus on data integrity, security, and compliance with 21 CFR Part 11. It also examines risk management strategies and Good Documentation Practices (GDP) as essential components for maintaining robust validation frameworks.

Real-world industry case studies are referenced to illustrate the practical applications and benefits of validation processes, demonstrating how systematic validation reduces operational risks, improves product reliability, and enhances regulatory preparedness. The paper concludes by emphasising the future importance of continuous process verification and the integration of advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation into validation practices, to meet evolving regulatory expectations and industry challenges.

Keywords: Analysis, Validation, Computer System Validation (CSV), Pharmaceutical Industry, Regulatory Compliance, Data Integrity, Good Documentation Practices (GDP), AI in Validation, Testing Methodology, Regulatory Compliance

INTRODUCTION

Pharmaceutical process validation is a fundamental aspect of current Good Manufacturing Practices (cGMPs) and plays a vital role in ensuring product quality and regulatory compliance. It was first introduced by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the 1970s to enhance the quality of pharmaceuticals and has since become a regulatory requirement under Quality System (QS) regulations. The primary objective of process validation is to provide documented evidence that a specific process will consistently produce a product that meets its predetermined specifications and quality attributes. This is achieved by ensuring the process operates within established parameters through a lifecycle approach involving design, qualification, and continued process verification.

Validation ensures quality assurance not only through in-process and finished product testing but also through effective control of manufacturing processes. As modern drug formulations become increasingly complex, end-product testing alone may no longer be sufficient to guarantee product quality due to limitations in sensitivity and scope. Therefore, validation focuses on the entire process — from raw material selection and equipment calibration to in-process monitoring and documentation

— ensuring the safety, identity, strength, purity, and efficacy of pharmaceutical products. The pharmaceutical industry is driven to validate its processes not only to assure product quality but also to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and comply with government regulations. Hence, process validation serves as a strategic quality assurance tool that aligns product design, manufacturing, and quality control to meet both patient and regulatory expectations.

In the pharmaceutical industry, validation means ensuring that a process, method, or system consistently performs as intended. It is essentially a means of double-checking that every step in the production of a medicine functions correctly, ensuring that the final product is safe, effective, and of high quality. Validation helps manufacturers demonstrate that their processes are under control and consistently produce reliable results.

The concept of validation originated in the 1970s when the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) observed inconsistencies in how some medicines were produced. To address this issue, the agency introduced the concept of validation to improve manufacturing consistency and quality. Today, it is a core component of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and is rigorously followed by pharmaceutical companies worldwide.

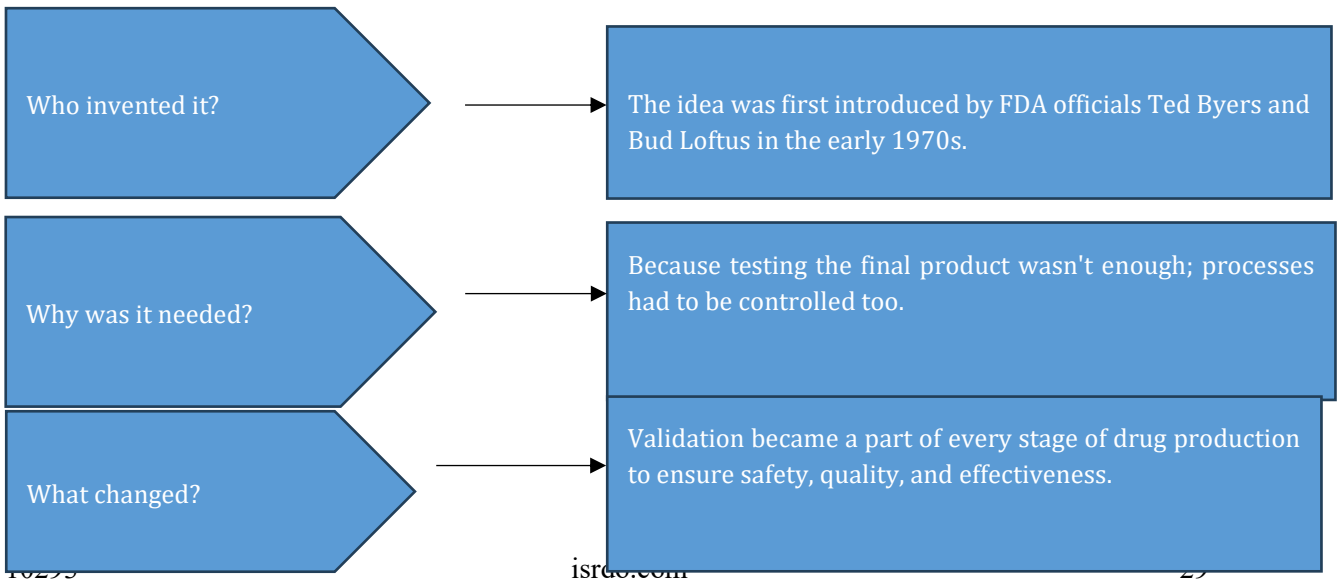
History of Validation

The concept of validation in the pharmaceutical industry was not always in place. It began in the 1970s when people realised that simply testing the final product was not enough to guarantee its safety and quality. Sometimes, even if the finished drug appeared acceptable, it might still be ineffective or unsafe due to issues within the manufacturing process. The term "validation" was first introduced by officials of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the early 1970s. A key figure behind this concept was Ted Byers, along with Bud Loftus, both FDA officials. They worked in the area of sterile manufacturing and discovered that end-product testing alone was insufficient to ensure drug safety, especially for injectable and other critical drugs. They proposed that pharmaceutical companies should: At first, validation was focused primarily on sterile drug manufacturing (such as injections). However, it soon became evident that every aspect of pharmaceutical production required validation, whether it involved:

a) Making tablets or capsules,
b) Cleaning equipment
c) Testing samples in the lab
d) Or even software systems used for record-keeping.

Now, validation is a **mandatory requirement** under **Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)**. It is recognized by all major health authorities around the world, like:

a) FDA (USA)
b) EMA (Europe)
c) WHO (World Health Organization)
d) ICH (International Council for Harmonization)



OBJECTIVE OF PROCESS VALIDATION

Process validation is a critical component of pharmaceutical manufacturing. Its primary purpose is to ensure that the production process consistently delivers products that meet predetermined quality standards. The key objectives of process validation are explained in detail below:

- **Consistency in Product Quality**
  Goal: To ensure that each product batch is manufactured consistently within predefined quality specifications. **Explanation:** By validating the process, manufacturers can be confident that every time a product is produced, it will maintain the same strength, purity, safety, and efficacy. This minimizes variability and ensures patient safety.
- **Compliance with Regulatory Requirements**
  Goal: To meet the guidelines and standards established by regulatory authorities such as the US FDA, EMA, CDSCO, WHO, and others. **Explanation:** Process validation is a mandatory requirement under Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). Proper validation helps avoid regulatory issues, product recalls, and legal actions.
- **Building Quality into the Process (Quality by Design - QbD)**
  Goal: To build quality into the process from the beginning, rather than relying solely on end-product testing. **Explanation:** Instead of just testing the final product, validation ensures that the entire process is well-designed, controlled, and monitored. This approach reduces the risk of failure and lowers costs
- **Reduction of Batch Rejections and Rework**
  Goal: To minimize deviations, batch failures, and costly reworks. **Explanation:** A validated process ensures predictable output, reducing the chances of reprocessing or discarding faulty batches. This improves efficiency and reduces waste.
- **Improved Operational Efficiency**
  Goal: To optimize the manufacturing process for reliability, reduced downtime, and maximum yield. **Explanation:** Validation identifies critical parameters and enhances control strategies, leading to smoother operations and better resource management.
- **Product Safety and Efficacy**
  Goal: To ensure that the final product is safe for consumption and performs as intended. **Explanation:** Process validation ensures that the product consistently meets its design specifications, therapeutic effects, and regulatory safety standards.
- **Documentation and Traceability**
  Goal: To maintain a detailed record of the entire process for audit, inspection, and review purposes. **Explanation:** Validation generates essential documentation such as protocols, reports, and data analyses, demonstrating that the process is under control and compliant.
- **Risk Reduction**
  Goal: To identify and control risks in the process at an early stage. **Explanation:** Using tools like Risk Assessment and FMEA (Failure Mode and Effects Analysis), validation helps in identifying potential risks and implementing controls before failures occur.
- **Support for Change Control and Continuous Improvement**
  Goal: To provide a baseline for managing changes in the process or equipment. **Explanation:** Once a process is validated, any changes must follow a proper change control procedure. This ensures that modifications do not affect product quality and supports continuous improvement initiatives.

Why is Validation Needed

The primary goal of validation is to build quality into the process, not just test for it at the end.

- **Assurance of Product Quality**

Validation ensures that the manufacturing process consistently produces products that meet all quality specifications, such as strength, purity, safety, and effectiveness. By validating each step, companies can guarantee that every batch of medicine is identical to the last. Example: If a tablet is supposed to contain 500 mg of a drug, validation ensures that each tablet contains exactly that amount — no more, no less.

- **Patient Safety**
  Patients rely on medicines to treat serious health conditions. If a drug is not manufactured properly, it can cause harm instead of providing relief. Validation helps minimize the risk of errors, contamination, or inconsistent results that could negatively impact patient health. Example: In sterile drug manufacturing, validation ensures that no contamination can cause infections in patients.
- **Regulatory Compliance**
  Regulatory agencies like the FDA, EMA, and WHO require pharmaceutical companies to validate their processes as part of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). Without proper validation, a company can face audits, warning letters, product recalls, or even production shutdowns. Example: The FDA may reject a new drug application or halt production if the company fails to provide adequate validation documentation.
- **Cost Reduction and Efficiency**
  Validated processes are stable and predictable. They reduce the likelihood of batch failures, rework, and product recalls, saving both time and money. Rather than fixing problems after they occur, validation helps prevent them from happening in the first place. *Example:* A company that validates its cleaning process can prevent cross-contamination and avoid wasting entire batches of products.
- **Consistency and Reproducibility**
  Validation ensures that the same results are achieved every time under consistent conditions. This is particularly important when producing large volumes of medicines, especially for international distribution. *Example:* A validated capsule-filling machine should consistently produce capsules of the same weight and composition in every batch
- **Supports Continuous Improvement**
  Validation helps identify weak points in a process and provides opportunities for improvement. It promotes a "Quality by Design" mindset, where quality is built into the process from the beginning, not merely verified at the end.

Responsible Authorities in the Pharmaceutical Industry

Pharmaceutical companies are regulated by national governments and international agencies to ensure the safety, quality, and effectiveness of medicines. These authorities establish regulations and conduct inspections to ensure compliance with Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP)

- **US FDA (Food and Drug Administration) – United States**
  Role: Regulates drug approval, manufacturing, labelling, and marketing in the U.S.

  Sets standards for validation, GMP, and quality assurance.
  Known for 21 CFR Part 210 & 211 (for drugs) and Part 11 (for electronic records).
  Globally respected; many companies follow FDA guidelines even outside the U.S.
- **EMA (European Medicines Agency) – Europe**
  Role: Responsible for the evaluation and approval of medicines across the European Union. Works under EU GMP guidelines. Collaborates with national authorities of EU countries for inspections and approvals.
- **WHO (World Health Organization) – Global**
  Provides international guidelines for Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Distribution Practices (GDP), and validation. WHO GMP is often followed in developing countries or for UN procurement. Also responsible for the prequalification of medicines for global supply.
- **CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organization) – India**
  National regulatory authority in India under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

Approves new drugs, clinical trials, and ensures pharmaceutical companies follow Indian GMP (Schedule M). Headed by the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI).

- **MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency) – United Kingdom**
  Ensures medicines and medical devices meet UK safety, quality, and performance standards. Handles licensing, GMP inspections, and adverse drug reaction monitoring.
- **PMDA (Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency) – Japan**
  Oversees drug regulation and approval in Japan. Works with the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW). Ensures proper process validation and GMP standards in the Japanese pharma industry.
- **NMPA (National Medical Products Administration) – China**
  Formerly CFDA (China Food and Drug Administration). Regulates drugs, vaccines, and medical devices in China. Responsible for quality control, clinical trials, and pharmacovigilance.
- **ICH (International Council for Harmonization of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use)**
  Develops international guidelines for drug development, validation, quality, and safety.
  Key guidelines included, ICH Q8 (Pharmaceutical Development), ICH Q9 (Quality Risk Management) and ICH Q10 (Pharmaceutical Quality System)

Preparations Before Starting Process Validation

Several important checks and preparations must be completed before actual process validation can begin in a pharmaceutical company. These steps ensure that everything is properly set up so the validation process proceeds smoothly and product quality is maintained. Review of Product Development and Master Formula: A person from the Process Development, Testing Methods and Plant Readiness, Batch Records Preparation, Pre-Validation of Facility and Equipment, Material Approval, Equipment Calibration and Maintenance, SOPs and Training, Final Document Approvals and Team Training.

Types of Validation

Process validation can be classified into **four main types**, depending on when and how it is done in the product life cycle. Each type has its purpose and use case.

Prospective Validation

Definition: This is the **planned validation** that is done **before** the new product is commercially manufactured.

Explanation in simple terms: In this type, we test and verify that the manufacturing process will work as expected **before** starting full production. It's like doing trial runs and studying the results to make sure everything will go smoothly during actual production.

When it is used: For new products, When launching a new process and Before releasing the product to the market

Goal: To confirm that the process can consistently produce a product that meets quality standards.

Concurrent Validation

Definition: Validation is done **while the product is being manufactured and distributed**, but under **strict observation**. **Explanation in simple terms:** Here, the validation is performed during actual production, and the products from these batches may be sold **only if they meet all quality standards**. The data collected from these batches helps in validating the process.

When it is used: When there is urgent demand for the product, for limited or small batches and if time does not allow for prospective validation

Goal: To collect real-time data during production and confirm that the process is under control.

Retrospective Validation Definition:

Definition: Validation is based on **reviewing past production data** from previously made batches. **Explanation in simple terms:** Instead of doing new trials, we look back at the records and test results of past manufactured products. If those records show consistent quality, it proves the process is valid.

When it is used: For established products, particularly when a large amount of historical data is available. **Goal:** To use existing production and testing data to confirm the process is consistent and reliable

Revalidation

Definition: Revalidation is **repeating** the validation process to ensure the process remains in a state of control. **Explanation in simple terms:** It's like a health check-up for the manufacturing process. Even if it worked well before, we need to re-check after any changes, or at regular time intervals, to confirm that everything is still working properly.

Sr. No	Type	When it's Done	Purpose
1	Prospective	Before commercial production	To confirm the process works as expected
2	Concurrent	During actual production	To validate and produce at the same time
3	Retrospective	Using past production data	To prove consistency based on history
4	Revalidation	After changes or at set intervals	To ensure continued process control and reliability

In short of Types of Validation and Definitions

a. **Prospective Validation**: Conducted before the process is released for routine use.
b. **Concurrent Validation:** Performed during actual production of products.
c. **Retrospective Validation:** Based on historical data from past production batches.
d. **Revalidation**: Reassessment to confirm that changes do not affect process performance.
e. **Cleaning Validation:** Ensures residues are effectively removed to avoid cross-contamination.
f. **Analytical Method Validation:** Confirms the reliability and accuracy of analytical procedures.
g. **Computer System Validation (CSV):** Ensures that software and systems perform as intended.

8. System Life Cycle Phases in SDLC with Key Deliverables

The life cycle is typically divided into four major phases: **Concept**, **Project**, **Operation**, and **Maintenance**. Each phase involves specific activities and produces a defined set of deliverables to ensure traceability, regulatory compliance, and fitness for the intended use.

- **Concept Phase**

Objective: This initial phase identifies the need for a computerized system and determines its feasibility. It involves preliminary risk assessments and an evaluation of potential solutions, including commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) systems or custom-developed software. Determine the system belong which GAMP Category**.**

This phase lays the foundation. Regulatory bodies expect documented justification for system selection and early identification of risks.

Sr.No	**Key Activities in Concept Phase**	**Key Deliverables in Concept Phase**
1	Business needs identification	Business Requirements Specification (BRS)

2	Define user requirements	User Requirements Specification (URS)
3	Perform a Feasibility assessment	Feasibility Study / Concept Paper
4	Risk identification	Risk Assessment (Preliminary)
5	Select Vendor evaluation (if applicable) or develop an in-house approach.	Vendor Assessment Report (if applicable)
6	Initiation Document	Project Charter

- **Project Phase**

Objective: During this phase, the system is designed, developed or configured, and subjected to rigorous validation activities. The objective is to ensure that the system is built in accordance with specifications and complies with regulatory expectations. To design, build, configure, and validate the system. This phase ensures the system meets intended use, is compliant, and is tested according to validation protocols.

Key Activities	**Key Deliverables:**
a. System design (functional & technical). b. System development or configuration. c. Test planning and execution d. Documentation of all validation deliverables and training e. Qualification (IQ, OQ, PQ).	a. Validation Plan b. Functional Requirements Specification (FRS) c. Design Specification / Design Qualification (DQ) d. Configuration Specification (for COTS systems) e. Traceability Matrix f. Test Summary Reports g. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) h. Training Records i. Validation Summary Report

- **Operation Phase**

Objective: Once validated, the system enters the **operational environment**, where it is used in a controlled production setting. This phase focuses on routine operation, ongoing monitoring, and maintaining compliance to ensure consistent performance over time.

Key Activities in the Operation Phase	Key Deliverables
a. The system is in routine active use. b. Monitoring for compliance and performance. c. Incident and deviation management. d. User access control and audit trail review e. Periodic review of system performance.	a. Operational SOPs b. Access Control Records c. Audit Trail Review Logs d. Incident & Deviation Reports e. Periodic Review Report f. Backup and Disaster Recovery Records g. Change Request Logs (if applicable) (Compliance monitoring is essential. Any change or deviation must go through change control and re-validation if necessary)

- **Maintenance Phase**

  Objective: To manage system updates, bug fixes, and eventual retirement, ensuring continued compliance or the maintenance phase ensures the validated state of the system is sustained throughout its lifecycle. It includes change control, patch management, revalidation when necessary, and eventual system decommissioning.

Key Activities	**Key Deliverables**
a. System updates and patches b. Change Control for software changes. c. Conduct impact analysis/assessment for upgrades. d. Revalidation (as required) e. Plan for system decommissioning and data archival	a. Change Control Forms b. Impact Assessments c. Updated Test Scripts and Revalidation Reports d. Audit Trail & Change Logs e. System Retirement Plan f. Data Migration or Archival Plan **g.** Final Decommissioning Report **h.** Maintenance ensures the validated state is preserved throughout the system's useful life**.**

Validation Master Plan (VMP)

The Validation Master Plan (VMP) is like a blueprint or master guide that outlines how validation activities will be planned, performed, and documented in a pharmaceutical facility. It provides a high-level overview of what needs to be validated (equipment, stems, processes), who is responsible, how it will be done, and in what order. Think of it like a project roadmap before starting construction, first need an approved plan showing all the steps, resources, and safety checks. That's what VMP is for: pharmaceutical validation.

9.1 **Importance of VMP?**

a. Ensures compliance with regulatory requirements (e.g., FDA, WHO, EMA).
b. Helps maintain product quality and safety.
c. Provides transparency and accountability across all departments.
d. Saves time and resources by planning validation efforts properly.

Validation Protocol

A validation protocol is a written plan that includes: Validation Protocol Format

a. Title Page
- **a.** Title of the protocol
- **b.** Protocol number
- **c.** Product/Equipment name
- **d.** Date
- **e.** Department
- **f.** Version number

b. Table of contents

c. Objective
- ***a.*** Why is this validation being performed

d. Scope
- a. What is covered and what is not (inclusions/exclusions)

e. System Description

1. **Role and Responsibilities:** Who is responsible for the different activities in the validation process Who will execute, review, and approve
2. Reference Documents/Business Process/ (SOPs supported by this application)
3. Product Description / Process Overview

4. Short description of the product and process
5. Process Flow Diagram
6. Step-by-step manufacturing process
7. Implementation Method
8. Agile, waterfall, Hybrid
9. Validation/Qualification Planning
10. Implementation Method
11. What changes (Change Control details) to New/Existing system
12. Specification (URS, FRS and DS)
13. FRA
14. Verification (Test Strategy and Planning)
15. Installation Qualification (IQ)
16. Operational Qualification (OQ)
17. Performance Qualification (PQ)
    a. Testing Approach/Method
    b. Scripted Testing,
    c. Ad-hoc Testing, Objective-Based Testing (Scenario Testing),
    d. Limited Testing / Risk-Based Testing,
    e. Unscripted / Exploratory Testing
18. Backup Recovery and Disaster Recovery testing
19. Data Archival testing
20. Deviation management /Test Defect /Change Control
21. Test summary Report
22. Traceability Matrix
23. Trainings
24. Documentation: Keeping records of all validation activities for reference and audit purposes.
25. Deployment system details
26. Hand Over to operations details
27. Acceptance Criteria: The expected outcome or pass/fail limits that must be met.
28. **Summary**: A brief recap of what was done and found during the validation
29. References, Attachments, Abbreviations, Acronyms
30. **Conclusion**: Final remarks on whether the validation was successful or not.
31. Revision History/Document History
32. Approvals

General Validation Deliverables List

Sr. No			Document Name	Description
1			Risk Assessment /Impact Assessment	Risk assessments are performed throughout the system life cycle to identify, evaluate, and mitigate potential risks. This includes both GxP Impact Assessment – Determines the system's regulatory impact. System Risk Assessment (RA) – Identifies functional, data, or operational risks and proposes mitigation strategies.
2			Validation Plan	Validation Master Plan (VMP) – High-level plan outlining the overall validation strategy for a facility or system. Validation Plan (VP) – Specific to the validated system or equipment.

3			User Requirements Specification (URS)	The URS defines what the system must do from the end user's perspective. It serves as the foundation for system selection, design, and testing. Regulatory compliance, data integrity needs, and business functionality must be addressed within the URS.
4			Functional Requirements Specification (FRS)	"What" the system will do from a functional perspective. Business functionality, user needs, and compliance features requirements are mentioned in the FRS document. Translates the URS into specific functional expectations. May also include design features, interfaces, alarms, etc.
5			Design Specification (DS)	"How" the system is designed or configured to meet functional and compliance needs. Describes how the system will meet the requirements (URS & FRS). System architecture, database, logic, interfaces, and control requirements are mentioned in the DS document. Often, this document describes how the system will fulfil the URS and FRS. The DS forms the basis for qualification testing and future audits.

Qualification Protocols

a. **Installation Qualification (IQ):** Installation Qualification is the step where we make sure that all machines, tools, and systems are **installed properly and safely**, just as they were designed to be. This check is done after installation or when a machine or system is changed or upgraded. Design specification requirement verified in the Installation Qualification Protocol.IQ builds **trust and confidence** that the machine is ready to go and was installed the right way before we even turn it on. What happens in this step:

Sr.No	**IQ Activity**	**Description**
1	Verify Installation Prerequisites	Check system readiness, including OS version, hardware specs, antivirus settings, and network configuration.
2	Document Application Version and Build	Record the exact version, build number, and patch level of the software being installed.
3	Confirm Installation Media & Integrity	Ensure the installer or deployment package is genuine, approved, and not corrupted (e.g., via checksum/MD5).
4	Perform Software Installation	Install the application using standard, validated procedures. Document every step with screenshots/logs.
5	Capture System Configuration Settings	Record environment variables, database names, paths, services, and registry entries where applicable.
6	Verify Dependencies	Confirm installation of all required components, such as related drivers, libraries, services, or modules necessary for proper functioning.

b. **Operational Qualification (OQ)** Operational Qualification is done to make sure that the equipment or system **works properly under different conditions**, like high or low temperature, speed, or pressure. We test the equipment to check if it performs well within all its designed limits. OQ proves that the system or equipment **functions reliably** across all its expected working conditions before using it in real production. Functional requirements are verified in the Operational Qualification Protocol.

Sr.No	**OQ Step**	**Description of What Happens**
1	Verify System Configuration	Confirm that the installed configuration matches the design specification. Document system parameters, settings, and components. Confirm that buttons, sensors, alarms, and other features work as expected.
2	Execute Functional Testing	Run predefined functional test cases to verify the software/system works as intended under normal and boundary conditions.
3	Verify Alarms and Error Handling	Test the system's ability to handle errors, exceptions, or alarms. Confirm that appropriate warnings and logs are generated.
4	Verify Security & Access Controls	Ensure only authorized users can access the system and perform specific roles/functions. Validate user management, login/logout, and password policies.
5	Verifying Access Privileges Testing	Test different user roles (e.g., Admin, QA, Operator) to ensure proper access levels. Verify that unauthorized users cannot access restricted functions or data.
6	Verifying Audit trail Report Testing	Verify that the audit trail captures all required changes/events with user IDs, timestamps, and reasons for changes (especially for 21 CFR Part 11 compliance).
7	Verifying Reports Testing	Generate system reports and compare them with expected formats and data. Ensure accuracy, completeness, correct timestamps, and user traceability.
8	Verifying Data backup and Archival Testing	Test backup mechanisms and ensure data can be restored completely in the event of failure. Validate backup processes (manual or automated) and ensure data can be restored without loss. Confirm data archival complies with retention and regulatory needs.
9	Verifying Parameters (Positive and negative testing)	Test system input fields and functions using both valid (positive) and invalid (negative) values. Ensure correct processing and appropriate error handling.

c. **Performance Qualification (PQ)**

What it means: Performance Qualification is done to ensure that the equipment/software/application/system **performs consistently and correctly** when used in actual working conditions, just like it will be used during normal manufacturing. Running real test batches to see how the machine works in the actual production environment. Checking if the machine **produces quality output every time**. Using standard methods to test if the machine meets all safety and product quality requirements. PQ assures that the equipment/Application, or software,

is **ready for routine use** and can produce safe, effective, and consistent products. It's mainly done for **critical machines** that directly impact product quality.

Sr No	**PQ Activity Step**	**What Happens During the Step**
1	Develop PQ Protocol	Prepare the PQ protocol including real-world scenarios, test scripts, acceptance criteria, and user requirements. It focuses on verifying performance in a live environment.
2	Simulate Real-Time Production Environment	Run the system using actual operational data or simulated data under production-like conditions. Ensure it performs consistently and accurately.
3	Execute End-to-End Workflows	Test complete workflows from start to finish (e.g., data entry → processing → reporting). Verify that the system supports business processes without failure.
4	Test System Performance & Load	Perform stress and performance tests to confirm system handles peak load, multiple users, and high data volumes efficiently without crashing or lagging.
5	Verify Data Accuracy and Integrity	Check that data input, processing, output, and storage maintain integrity, without loss, duplication, or unauthorized modification.
6	Review Reports and Outputs	Evaluate generated reports for correctness, format, completeness, and compliance with regulatory standards.
7	Confirm User Training & SOP Availability	Ensure that actual users are trained, SOPs are followed, and the system is usable in a compliant and efficient manner.
8	Capture and Resolve Deviations	Document any discrepancies found during PQ execution. Investigate, correct, and re-test as needed. Ensure root cause analysis is done for failures.
9	Final Review and Approval	QA reviews all evidence, test results, screenshots, and logs. Upon approval, the system is considered validated and ready for production use.
10	Test Scripts / Test Cases:	Detailed steps and expected results for IQ, OQ, and PQ. Includes: Test Execution Records, Deviations / Discrepancy Logs
11	Change Control Documents	Any changes during validation must be documented, justified, and approved.
12	Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):	SOPs must be developed and trained for validated systems/processes
13	Training Records:	Evidence that relevant personnel have been trained on the validated system or process.
13	Deviation Reports / Non-conformance Reports:	Document any failures or deviations during validation testing. Includes investigation and corrective actions.
14	Traceability Matrix (RTM):	Ensures all requirements are covered in testing and documentation. Links URS → FRS → DS → Testing (IQ/OQ/PQ).
15	Final Validation Summary Report	Summary of all activities and outcomes. Confirms whether the system/process is validated and ready for production use.

Testing Methodology in Computerized System Validation (CSV)

The following methodologies are widely adopted in the validation of GXP-critical computerised systems:

- **Scripted Testing: Definition**: Pre-approved test scripts with detailed steps, inputs, and expected outcomes.
  a. **Use When**: High-risk, complex, GxP-critical systems.
  b. **Documents Used**: IQ, OQ, PQ Protocols.
  c. **Key Features**: Step-by-step execution, Requires prior approvals and Traceable to requirements (via RTM)
  d. **Example**: Executing a predefined OQ test to verify that audit trail functionality works as intended in a LIMS system.
- **Ad-hoc Testing**
  a. **Definition**: Informal, unstructured testing without predefined scripts.
  b. **Use When**: Low-risk components, exploratory phase, or during investigations.
  c. **Key Features**: No formal documentation, Performed based on the tester's experience and not always acceptable for GxP-relevant systems
  d. **Example**: Exploring a new UI screen in a non-GxP application to understand its behaviour.
- **Objective-Based Testing (Scenario Testing)**

  Definition: Objective-based testing focuses on testing against high-level goals or the intended use of the system, rather than specific, granular requirements. It is particularly suitable for **Performance Qualification (PQ)** and **User Acceptance Testing (UAT) phases.** High-level testing focused on business or user scenarios instead of detailed steps.

  Objective-based testing is a high-level validation approach wherein testing is designed to verify whether the computerized system meets its intended use in a real-time or simulated production environment. Rather than focusing on granular functional requirements, this method evaluates overall system behavior and user interactions within business workflows.

  a. **Use When**: Medium-risk systems or to validate user workflows.
  b. **Key Features**: Validates critical business processes, requires pass/fail criteria, Scenarios derived from URS or FRS, Focuses on verifying that the system supports the intended operational workflow. when regulatory focus is on system performance under production-like conditions, often used when formal and detailed test scripts are not practical
  c. **Example**: Testing the end-to-end workflow for sample tracking in a lab system.
- **Limited Testing / Risk-Based Testing**
  f. **Definition**: Testing focused only on critical or high-risk functionality.
  g. **Use When**: Low/medium-risk systems or vendor-qualified systems (like GAMP Category 3 or 4).
  h. **Key Features**: Saves time and resources, and focuses on functionality that impacts product quality or data integrity
  i. **Example**: Only validating the electronic signature feature in a vendor-supplied off-the-shelf software.
- **Unscripted / Exploratory Testing**
  a. **Definition**: Performed by experienced testers exploring the system without predefined steps.
  b. **Use When**: Early testing phases, or post-deployment investigations.
  c. **Key Features**: May be documented with session notes and helps find hidden issues
  d. **Example**: Testing error messages or unexpected user paths.

AI-Driven Validation: Risk-Based Approach, Current Tools, and Future Perspective

In the pharmaceutical industry, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is playing a transformative role in enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of process validation through a risk-based approach. This method focuses on identifying high-risk areas that could impact product quality or patient safety and prioritizes them during validation. **ValGenesis VLMS** is one of the most prominent paperless validation systems, allowing complete lifecycle management of validation documents and automated approvals. **Kneat Gx** provides dynamic templates and automated workflows that reduce the time spent on documentation, execution, and review. **Master Control Validation Excellence Tool (VxT)** helps in automating the creation and management of validation protocols, making execution faster and audit-ready. **TrackWise Digital** by Sparta Systems and **Siemens Opcenter** integrate real-time data monitoring and predictive analytics to continuously assess process performance. Additionally, AI and machine learning tools like **Python-based models**, **Power BI**, **Tableau**, and **Spotfire** are used to visualize process trends, identify potential risks, and support data-driven decisions in real time.The **Computer Software Assurance (CSA)** approach is a **modern, risk-based validation methodology** introduced by the **U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)** to streamline and improve how computerized systems are validated in regulated industries. The FDA formally introduced the concept of CSA in **2011 during its Case for Quality initiative**, which aimed to promote better product quality by moving away from overly burdensome compliance practices. The approach was further developed and officially released as **draft guidance in September 2022** under the title: *"Computer Software Assurance for Production and Quality System Software."*

CSA is designed to address the challenges and inefficiencies of the traditional **Computer System Validation (CSV)** approach, which often focused more on documentation than actual system performance. In contrast, CSA encourages the use of **critical thinking** and **risk-based decision-making** to determine what needs to be tested, how much testing is necessary, and how testing should be documented—based on the **intended use and risk impact** of the software on **product quality, patient safety, and data integrity**. CSA applies to **non-product software** used in **manufacturing, quality systems, laboratory systems, and other Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) environments**, such as **electronic quality management systems (eQMS)**, **Laboratory Information Management Systems (LIMS)**, **Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES)**, and **cloud-based SaaS tools** used in documentation or training. By allowing **unscripted testing**, **exploratory testing**, and the use of **automation tools**, CSA provides a more agile, time-saving, and innovation-friendly way to validate software systems, especially low-risk tools that do not directly affect the product or patient. Computer System Validation (CSV) has long been a cornerstone of regulatory compliance in the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, and medical device industries. Rooted in regulatory frameworks such as **21 CFR Part 11** (issued in 1997 by the U.S. FDA), **Annex 11 (EU)**, and **GAMP 5**, the CSV process mandates that all GxP-relevant computerized systems must be validated to ensure accuracy, reliability, and consistent intended performance.

By using CSA

a. Focusing on product quality and patient safety
b. Emphasizing critical thinking and risk-based decision-making
c. Reducing unnecessary documentation
d. Encouraging unscripted (ad hoc) testing where appropriate
e. Enhancing the adoption of modern, automated, and digital systems
f. CSA aligns closely with GAMP 5 (Second Edition), which also promotes scalable, risk-based validation methods.
g. Focusing on patient safety, product quality, and data integrity
h. Encouraging **unscripted (exploratory) testing** where applicable
i. Reducing unnecessary testing and documentation for low-risk functions
j. Supporting **innovation** by enabling rapid deployment of updates and new technologies

CONCLUSION

Validation in the pharmaceutical industry is a vital and ongoing process that ensures every product manufactured meets its quality standards, is safe for patients, and is consistently effective. It is not just a regulatory requirement, but a fundamental part of Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). Through validation, manufacturers gain confidence that their processes, systems, and equipment perform reliably and reproducibly. Over the years, validation has grown from basic checks to a structured lifecycle approach that includes design, qualification, monitoring, and continuous improvement. The increasing complexity of pharmaceutical products and global regulatory expectations have made validation even more critical. In today's fast-paced industry, modern tools and digital technologies like automation, data analytics, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are being used to enhance and speed up validation activities. Additionally, risk-based approaches such as Computer Software Assurance (CSA), introduced by the FDA, encourage smart validation—focusing more on patient safety and product quality rather than excessive documentation. Looking ahead, validation will continue to evolve, combining science, innovation, and regulatory compliance to support efficient production and ensure that every medicine delivered is of the highest standard. Validation is a vital requirement in the pharmaceutical industry to ensure the manufacturing of safe, effective, and high-quality medicinal products. By following a structured lifecycle, aligned with global regulations and standards, pharmaceutical organizations can maintain product integrity and meet the expectations of both regulatory authorities and patients. Continuous improvement, documentation, and risk-based strategies should be at the core of every validation effort

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Appendices

Appendix A: Validation Deliverables Checklist
Appendix B: Timeline of Key Validation Events
Appendix C: Summary Tables for IQ, OQ, PQ
Appendix D: Sample Validation Protocol format
Appendix E: Risk Assessment Template