

HSQF Quality Pathway for Service Providers - Information Sheet 8

Service Provider Self-Assessment

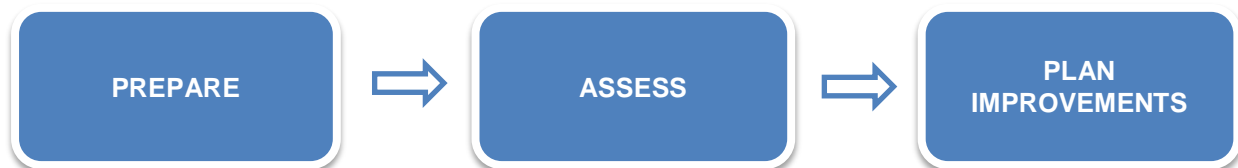
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This information sheet provides guidance on undertaking self-assessments for service providers.

'Self-assessment' refers to the process of the service provider checking its own compliance with the standards. For some service providers, the assessment is then submitted to the Department as the final step in demonstrating compliance. Service providers undergoing an independent audit will use their self-assessment results to demonstrate the extent to which they comply with the standards to their third party auditor.

Self-assessment is an essential step for service providers in determining where they are on their quality management journey and what the next development steps are to be. Self-assessment is not about finding fault or blame; rather, it provides opportunity to recognise the good work being done, share findings with staff, customers and stakeholders, and inform quality improvement plans. Self-assessment also helps service providers prepare for external audit by identifying areas that need addressing in order to comply with quality and/or industry standards.

The self-assessment process requires some planning and preparation to ensure the process has direction, leadership and resources, and that people involved understand why it is being done and what is to be achieved. The steps outlined below generally flow from one to the next, however, there may be times when it is necessary to return to a previous step or action to reconsider or repeat the step.



Prepare

Action: Set the scene

- Communicate to staff and customers about the self-assessment – the purpose, the process, and how the results will be used; the details of this information may need to vary for the audience i.e. staff and customer groups.
- Identify how and when customers may need to be involved in providing feedback and information.

Action: Allocate resources

- Assign and communicate responsibilities for the different roles and activities, including for leadership and sign-off.
- Determine how much time is needed for the self-assessment and where that time will come from. A self-assessment against quality standards can take as little as a couple of months or as long as a year, depending on factors such as the size and complexity of the service provider, how many people are involved and their skill level, and tools used to support the process.
- Commit financial resources for people, time and tools.

Action: Identify support tools

- Identify tools that can be used for completing the self-assessment. This includes templates or workbooks (such as the HSQF Self-Assessment Workbook) and on-line or electronic systems for self-assessment and reporting.

Practice tip: When to do a self-assessment

- ✓ There is no 'right' or 'wrong' time, what works for one organisation may not work for another.
- ✓ Consider internal and external factors that may help or hinder the process.
- ✓ Challenge presumptions about timing – perhaps waiting until “things settle down” means missing development opportunities.
- ✓ Consider what and when the results can be used for: strategic planning, staff work planning, project budget development, etc.
- ✓ Think about what needs to be achieved by when and work backwards from that.

- Identify methods and tools for engaging with customers and collecting information about their experience (see Customer and stakeholder feedback - Information sheet 7).
- Decide on the support tools that will enhance your organisation's ability to complete the self-assessment accurately, efficiently and with meaningful results.

Practice tip: Self-assessment support tools

- ✓ Analyse what tools will best support self-assessment and longer term quality management: paper based, electronic, and on-line?
- ✓ Consider financial costs as well savings on time and effort.
- ✓ Consider how easy the tools are to use and whether training is required.
- ✓ Identify how can the tools assist and contribute to broader planning, monitoring and reporting.
- ✓ Are auditors able to access the tools for independent audit (where relevant)?

Action: Establish coordination

- Set up teams and working groups for different functions: overall leadership, assessment of certain standards, documentation, review and sign-off.
- Establish reporting requirements - what is to be reported to who and at what stages.

Action: Schedule timeframes and activities

- Map out a plan and schedule for the self-assessment that identifies start and end dates, and timeframes for specific activities, review and sign-off.

Assess

Action: Review requirements for each standard

- Read and understand each standard, indicator and expected outcome, mandatory evidence and evidence example.
- Review the organisation's documentation, systems, practices, relationships, staff and governing body knowledge, customer and stakeholder knowledge and experience, and physical environment.

Action: Collate and rate evidence

- Document and collate the evidence for each standard and indicator.
- Rate the evidence to determine how well it meets the standards, indicators and mandatory evidence requirements.

Plan Improvement

Action: Analyse self-assessment

- Identify your organisation's strengths and areas where it does not adequately meet a standard, criteria or mandatory evidence.
- Determine the outcomes/achievements the organisation wants.

Action: Develop action plans

- Document specific improvement activities to be undertaken in order to exceed or meet the standards, indicators and mandatory evidence.
- Prioritise activities according to customer needs, risk rating, and compliance requirements.
- Assign and communicate responsibilities and time frames.

Action: Report and communicate

- Report self-assessment findings to governing body, staff, customers and stakeholders as determined.
- Communicate and celebrate strengths and achievements.
- Communicate areas for development and improvement plans.

Action: Demonstrate compliance

- Provide self-assessment reports directly to the department or to the independent third party certification body as part of the audit process, whichever is applicable.