



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Self-assessment guidance for post-16 providers

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Guidance

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Self-assessment guidance for post-16 providers

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| Audience | Further education institutions (FEIs); work-based learning (WBL) providers; local authorities funded to deliver community learning; higher education institutions providing further education funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES); Welsh for Adults Language Centres; HM Prisons delivering offender learning; and other providers if specified in their funding agreement. |
| Overview | This guidance sets out the requirements for providers funded by DfES to submit an annual self-assessment report (SAR) and quality development plan (QDP). |
| Action required | None – for information only. |
| Further information | Enquiries about this document should be directed to: Gayle Powell Further Education and Apprenticeships Division Department for Education and Skills Welsh Government Tŷ'r Afon Bedwas Road Bedwas Caerphilly CF83 8WT Tel: 01443 663717 e-mail: post16quality@wales.gsi.gov.uk |
| Additional copies | This document can be accessed from the Welsh Government's website at www.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/raisingqualityandstandards/landm/assessment/?lang=en |

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Introduction

- 1 This guidance sets out the requirements for providers funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to submit an annual self-assessment report (SAR) and quality development plan (QDP). It applies to:
 - further education institutions (FEIs);
 - work-based learning (WBL) providers;
 - local authorities funded to deliver community learning;
 - higher education institutions providing further education funded by DfES;
 - Welsh for Adults Language Centres;
 - HM Prisons delivering offender learning; and
 - other providers if specified in their funding agreement.
- 2 The guidance which builds on previous versions, will be live from **1 August 2014**, from which date all providers will be expected to incorporate the new requirements into their self-assessment.
- 3 In consultation with DfES, Estyn (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and Training in Wales) has produced [toolkits](#) that will help providers in undertaking self-assessment within the shared context of the Quality and Effectiveness Framework and the Common Inspection Framework. The toolkits complement this guidance by providing more detailed advice on how providers should evaluate themselves against the Common Inspection Framework.

Requirements for WBL providers

- 4 WBL consortia should submit a single SAR covering their membership. The SAR should reflect the full range of delivery by geographical area and sector, but must evaluate the overall effectiveness of leadership and management for the consortium as a whole. Providers will be aware that, to reflect the shape of the new provider network, Estyn inspects WBL contracts held by FEIs separately. We are therefore requesting **a separate WBL SAR from FE institutions which have direct contracts to deliver WBL.**
- 5 Providers are wholly responsible for the performance of their contract, therefore they have responsibility for the self-assessment process with **information being fed through from any sub-contractors.** The self-assessment report should clearly state if a provider sub-contracts any element of the provision and detail with whom they sub-contract and what elements of provision (including volumes) is sub-contracted. This should reflect the definitions of sub-contracting contained within the [WBL Programme Specification](#).
- 6 The SAR should outline the processes for quality assuring these sub-contracted elements and how this information is fed into the overall self-assessment process. The performance of sub-contracted elements should be clearly reported and analysed within the SAR and the process for remedial or developmental action planning between the parties should be clear.

- 7 DfES funds a number of cross-border providers which also hold contracts with the Skills Funding Agency in England. Those providers which have provision in England and Wales may be subject to joint inspections by Estyn and Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills).
- 8 Whilst we do not expect providers which deliver the majority of their provision in England to undertake self-assessment specifically to meet the requirements of DfES, the SAR must include specific references to the provision in Wales, supported by relevant statistics and other evidence. Either a QDP relating to the Welsh provision, or a guide to which elements of the national QDP are relevant to the Welsh provision, should be included.

Requirements for ACL providers

- 9 As Estyn inspects Adult Community Learning (ACL) on a geographical partnership basis, ACL partnerships are expected to prepare their SAR on this basis, reflecting the range of provision delivered by all of the partners in the locality. DfES does not require separate ACL SARs for individual partners. [Delivering Community Learning for Wales](#) sets out the Welsh Government's strategic aims for Adult Community Learning and defines the key actions for the Welsh Government and providers. Partnerships should evaluate their response to these in their self-assessments.

Overview of self-assessment requirements

- 10 The [Quality and Effectiveness Framework \(QEF\)](#) focuses on providers' responsibility for managing and improving the quality of their own delivery, with close involvement of their learners in the process.

Estyn Common Inspection Framework

- 11 For 2014/15, providers should carry out their self-assessments based on the [Common Inspection Framework](#):

Overall judgement on the provider's current performance

Overall judgement on the provider's prospects for improvement

Key Question 1 - How good are outcomes?

1.1 Standards

1.2 Wellbeing

Key Question 2: How good is provision?

2.1 Learning experiences

2.2 Teaching and training

2.3 Care, support and guidance

2.4 Learning environment

Key question 3 - How good are leadership and management?

3.1 Leadership

3.2 Improving quality

3.3 Partnership working

3.4 Resource management

Features of effective self-assessment

12 Self-assessment needs to be seen by providers as a tool for evaluating, monitoring and managing the quality of their provision, not as a requirement imposed by external inspectors or funding bodies. It should be a continuous process, not an annual 'snapshot'.

13 Effective self-assessment:

- focuses primarily on learners, their experiences and achievements, as the basis on which judgements are made;
- honestly identifies shortcomings and areas for development, as well as strengths;
- demonstrates a consistent approach across all areas, showing that where different teams have carried out the self-assessment, their findings have been drawn together and validated by senior management;
- involves staff, managers and governors from across the organisation;
- takes account of the views of learners, employers and other stakeholders, including partner organisations and sub-contractors where applicable;
- tracks progress from year to year in consolidating strengths and remedying weaknesses;
- draws together and evaluates evidence from a range of reliable sources and activities; and
- is fully integrated with the provider's planning cycle, so that objectives, targets and actions for each year reflect the outcomes of self-assessment.

Scope and content of provider self-assessment

14 The self-assessment report must:

- cover the previous year (funding, academic or financial);
- include a brief introduction, setting out relevant background information, a summary of the process for undertaking self-assessment and a summary including significant strengths and weaknesses identified;
- include the specific areas of focus detailed in paragraphs 15-21 below;
- be cross-referenced to an appropriate range of sources of evidence supporting each judgement;
- evaluate statistical data on learner outcomes;
- be evaluative rather than descriptive, clearly identifying both strengths and weaknesses (guidance on [using evaluative statements in self-assessment](#) can be found on our website);
- be open and honest in recognising where improvement is needed;
- identify actions which have already been undertaken, or are underway, to address weaknesses;
- refer to external inspections, assessments and reviews and show progress that has been made in addressing their recommendations.

Specific areas of focus for 2014/15 submissions

Estyn Annual Report 2012/13

15 The [Chief Inspector's Annual Report](#) for 2012/13 was published in January 2014. It is the second Annual Report since the introduction of the new Common Inspection Framework. The key issues raised were:

- Teachers do not always challenge learners to develop higher level standards of practical competence;
- too few tutors/assessors/teachers use individual learning plans to plan learning, set realistic goals and monitor progress;
- providers do not always plan a systematic approach to developing literacy and numeracy across the curriculum.
- Overall self-assessment is not robust enough to identify actions to address shortcomings;
- Many providers do not analyse learners' Welsh language needs well enough and not all providers encourage learners to undertake training and assessment in Welsh; and
- Local Market Intelligence (LMI) is not always used effectively to match programmes to employment opportunities and industry needs.

16 All providers should be evaluating how well they address these issues in their self-assessment report.

Essential skills

17 All providers should ensure that their SAR includes an evaluation of strategies for meeting learners' literacy and numeracy needs. In some cases, providers will not be delivering literacy and numeracy skills themselves, but should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of their arrangements for initial assessment and referral. This should include a quantified summary of the outcomes of initial assessments and corrective action taken where evidence suggests there are quality issues regarding essential skills provision or a provider's essential skills learner outcomes are not satisfactory.

18 Providers should refer to section 1.1.4 of Estyn's [Common Inspection Framework](#).

Welsh-medium learning

19 The [Welsh-medium Education Strategy](#) was published in April 2010 with an accompanying implementation programme. All providers are required to show how they contribute to the post-16 targets of the Strategy and how they are addressing the key objectives for the post-16 sector. The target for increasing Welsh-medium and bilingual learning activities for 16-19 year old learners in Schools and FE learning by 2015 is 18% and 7% respectively.

- 20 Work-based learning providers are also required to give due consideration to increasing their Welsh-medium and bilingual provision and the sector target for Welsh-medium and bilingual learning activities in 2015 is 2.5%.
- 21 Providers should refer to section 1.1.5 and 2.1.3 of Estyn's [Common Inspection Framework](#) and take note of the recommendations in Estyn's Annual Report for 2012/13 in respect of improving and increasing the delivery of Welsh-medium and Welsh-language learning.

Quality development plans

22 Providers should take action to address all of the weaknesses identified in the self-assessment. The QDP should identify priorities for improvement and give a clear indication of how the provider intends to improve quality and raise standards year-on-year.

23 The QDP can be presented as a summary document with cross-references to more detailed action plans, but it must clearly show how the most significant issues identified via self-assessment will be addressed. In terms of prioritisation, if resource implications prevent all of the shortcomings from being addressed, the QDP should show how resources have been prioritised to deal with the most important issues.

24 The QDP should include a brief introduction, setting out:

- a summary of the process for developing the plan, including involvement of staff, managers and governors;
- clear identification of the priorities to be addressed over the next year; and
- a summary of how progress and outcomes will be monitored and reported to managers, governors and stakeholders.

Features of effective quality development plans

25 Quality development plans must:

- be cross-referenced to strengths and weaknesses in the SAR;
- indicate priorities for action;
- identify specific actions to be taken to address weaknesses and build on strengths;
- include measurable targets and performance indicators wherever possible;
- identify timescales for completion and, where actions are long-term, interim review dates;
- identify resources required to undertake actions;
- identify where external expertise is needed to undertake actions;
- identify staff responsible for undertaking each action;
- identify a manager (or managers) who will take responsibility for reviewing progress against the QDP and measuring the resulting improvements; and
- include cross-references to Estyn inspection reports, strategic/business/service delivery plans and more detailed action plans for specific departments or areas of activity.

26 Effective self-assessment should be an integral part of all providers' quality systems including monitoring progress towards the QDP. Although there is no longer a requirement for providers to routinely submit quarterly QDP updates to DfES, we expect providers to continue to regularly monitor progress in implementing the QDP. We may ask to see these updates to ensure that we have current and relevant information on providers' progress. DfES also expect

providers to ensure that actions being taken in response to Estyn inspections are integrated into their QDP cycles.

Timing and arrangements for submissions

27 DfES recognises the importance of each provider developing its own quality and planning systems which reflect its size, organisational structure and particular needs. The date should reflect your provider's own quality cycle and should take account of factors including:

- scheduled meetings, including governing body, senior management team and any other groups which will consider and sign off the SAR;
- the availability of performance data and benchmarks which will feed into the SAR;
- the availability of other evidence such as course reviews, learner and employer surveys; and
- staff time to complete and write up the self-assessment, including annual leave arrangements.

28 **Any changes to submission dates will only be considered in exceptional circumstances**, and will need to be agreed by DfES, via the relevant central mailbox: askwbl@wales.gsi.gov.uk for all WBL providers or post16quality@wales.gsi.gov.uk for all other providers.

29 Providers are requested to submit their self-assessment report and quality development plan via e-mail to askwbl@wales.gsi.gov.uk for all WBL providers or post16quality@wales.gsi.gov.uk for all other providers.