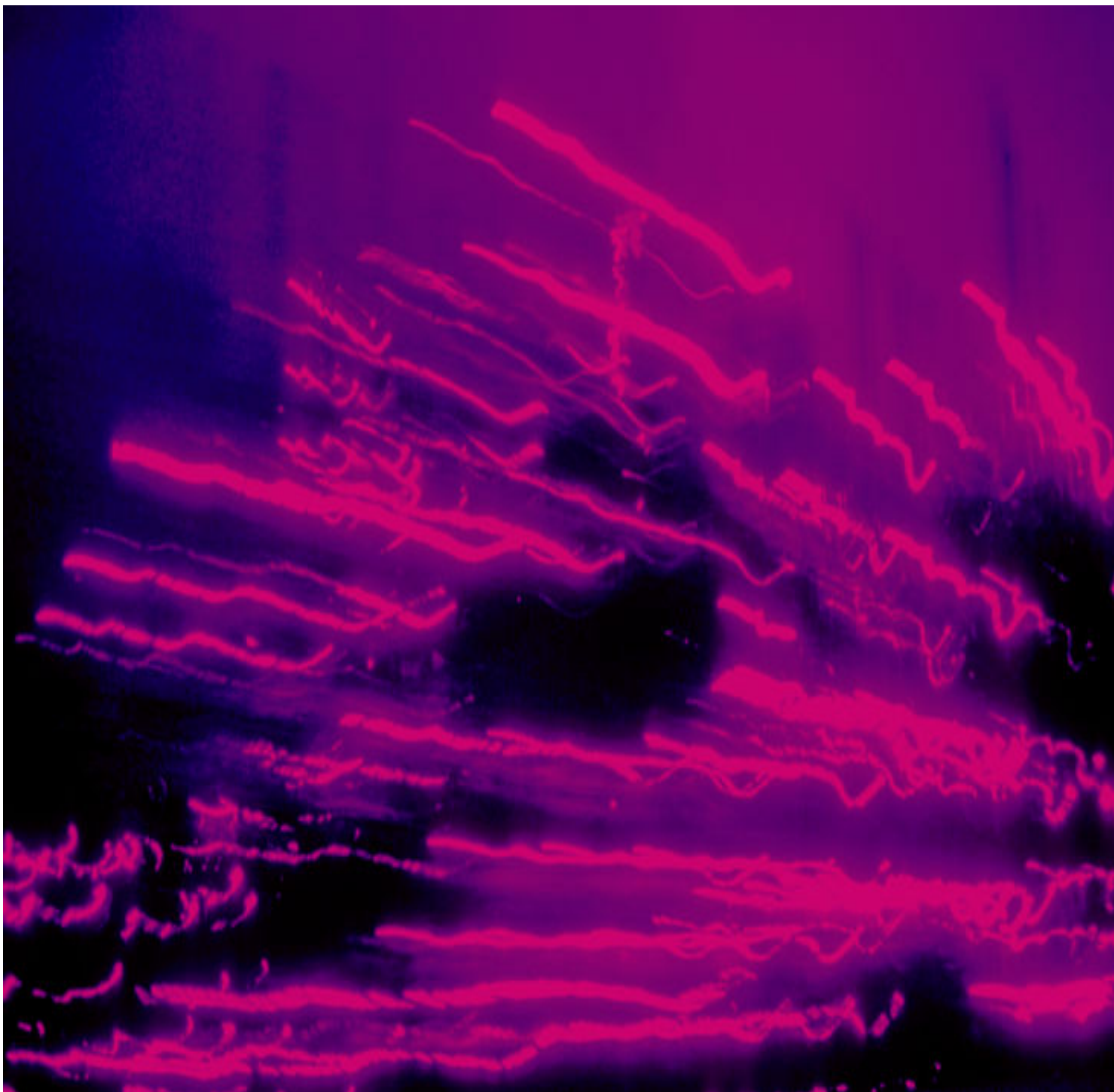


Self-assessment and Improvement Planning

A User Guide for Learning and Skills Providers



Support for Excellence





Self-assessment and Improvement Planning

A User Guide for Learning and Skills Providers

www.excellencegateway.co.uk/self-assessment-guide

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1. Introduction to the Guide

About the Guide

This is a practical user guide to help experienced and new providers carry out self-assessment and improvement planning effectively. It will help individuals and teams at all levels carry out the processes. Research into the need for the guide was carried out in early 2009. The guide was written between April and August 2009, taking account of feedback from practitioners and policy changes which affect self-assessment and improvement planning.

Self-assessment is now frequently called 'self-evaluation', a term which emphasises making valid and reliable judgements about quality, using evidence which is open and referenced in the self-assessment report. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) describes self-evaluation as:

- A critical improvement tool
- Something which all providers should do and provide evidence for
- A key feature in the inspection and regulation of providers.

It should lead to improvements or to the maintenance of exceptional standards, and be a cyclical process.

2. How you can use the Guide

This Guide, which is available as a complete Word document, is a manual with tools, checklists and web links. It is also available on line: [a user guide to self-assessment and improvement planning](#). You can work through the processes as you implement them, using the Guide for information and ideas. Self-assessment, improvement planning and the monitoring of improvements are continuous, and the Guide is, therefore, useful to you throughout the year.

Although the Guide should save you time, its main purpose is to provide you with tools to carry out self-assessment and improvement planning which can help you raise quality and improve provision for learners, customers and other stakeholders. It should also help you to be fully aware of policy requirements. Alerts will tell you about changes to policy, indicating what you need to be aware of in your self-assessment. Policy is flagged up and links given; at these links you will find more details of the policy and often some tools to help you apply them to your provision.

There are ideas, useful tools and up-to-date information for people who manage or are accountable for self-assessment and improvement planning, and for those who are putting it into practice, such as delivery teams of teachers, trainers and

assessors. Providers have told us that the most experienced of them can still have teams or individuals who are new to the concepts and processes of self-assessment.

This Guide is relevant to all types of post-16 provision. It is principally for LSC providers. However, there are tools and links which may be of use to Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) funded providers who need to check that their self-assessment meets DWP requirements.

3. Providers new to self-assessment and improvement planning

You will find advice and links to help you begin and continue effective self-assessment and improvement planning. Although you will not be inspected until you have 12 months of performance data, you should start self-assessment and improvement planning straight away.

4. Providers experienced in self-assessment and improvement planning

The Guide recognises your experience and expertise. However, there are tools which you may not have used, and information on changes which affect self-assessment and improvement planning in all organisations. You may want to start with these [policy updates](#), and then consider how the Guide can help you fine-tune what you do already.

Action: keep up-to-date with Ofsted and other guidance on self-evaluation and improvement planning; register for alerts at: [How to stay in touch and get alerts](#). The full web page addresses for useful links are given at the end in Appendix 4. The [latest CIF](#) and the [Inspection Handbook](#) for September 2009, are out now.

5. Why self-assess, plan for and monitor improvements?

The primary purpose of self-assessment and improvement planning is to improve the quality of the learning experience and the outcomes for all learners, by supporting your organisation's development needs and measuring your progress against its mission and goals. Self-assessment is a requirement of funding, and should be:

- an essential part of a continuous review and improvement process
- led by the needs of your organisation rather than external requirements, but also able to meet those requirements
- rigorous, based on reliable, valid and up-to-date evidence – you must use data as the starting point for any judgement or grading

- inclusive, with all members of the organisation contributing to the process and owning the actions for improvement, and monitoring those actions continuously
- the basis of effective and continuous action plans which, when implemented, lead to improvements or maintain exceptionally high standards; see [Improvement planning](#).

Action: when thinking about self-assessment processes, consider what are the essentials for your organisation. Here is a checklist to help you review your self-assessment systems/processes; see [Reviewing organisational self-assessment systems](#).

The Guide will take you through the stages you need to follow, focusing on improvement planning and monitoring, as well as on self-assessment. It will provide useful tools and checklists as you go. From time to time it will be updated; alerts will tell you when there is a significant policy change which affects self-assessment and improvement planning.

Action: ensure that everyone in your organisation who is involved in self-assessment is aware of the tools and the policy links in this Guide.

6. Self-assessment and improvement planning – the essential requirements

What do you need to do?

- Produce an annual self-assessment report (SAR) which is the written outcome of your continuous review and improvement processes; this is the summary
- Review the SAR and improvement plan; this should take place throughout the year
- Choose and implement the improvement processes which best meet your organisation's needs
- Evaluate and seek to improve your provision continuously. It is essential, with short notice inspections, that your self-assessment report and improvement plan are up-to-date and that your quality assurance and improvement processes are carried out regularly. Inspectors are likely to require a succinct self-assessment report with a well-developed and rigorously monitored improvement plan. Continuous and regular quality assurance and improvement are also the best way to improve your organisation's performance: problems can be nipped in the bud, strengths identified and good practice transferred to other areas of work

- Consider using the learner journey as a structure for your SAR and improvement plan, whilst covering all the requirements and key questions of the latest CIF.

Self-assessment processes and the written report are primarily for your organisation. The use of the SAR by Ofsted, the LSC and other funding organisations is extremely important, and as a provider, you will need to ensure that you meet at least their minimum expectations when producing them. However, the greatest value of self-assessment and improvement planning is to enhance the performance of your organisation and help you to achieve your own goals, and in particular to raise the quality of provision for learners.

To achieve the most benefit you need to:

- Keep the self-assessment report and details of the evidence continuously up-to-date so that you can demonstrate the progress you are making
- Ensure that self-assessment is part of your organisational culture, with staff at all levels clear about self-assessment and their contribution; see [guidance on self-assessment for different levels in the organisation](#) and [encouraging participation](#)
- Ensure that all interested individuals and groups (stakeholders) are involved or consulted about the SAR
- Ensure that subcontracted provision is included in your self-assessment and improvement planning
- Carry out self-assessment in a climate of openness where frank and honest views can be expressed; see [capacity to improve](#).
- Evaluate self-assessment processes regularly to take account of [policy changes](#) and to evaluate your [capacity to improve](#)
- Ensure self-assessment includes concise details of how you engage with stakeholders and importantly, the actions taken as a result and their impact; see [involving stakeholders](#).

What must you include in the SAR?

As a minimum, the SAR must include judgements on all provision falling within the remit of Ofsted inspections and LSC funded provision. This includes work you do to meet community needs which is not LSC or government funded.

Action: follow good practice and include all provision in your SAR, whether government funded or not. Self-assessment is a process about your **whole** organisation's drive towards continuous improvement.

If your organisation works collaboratively and as the lead in consortia or partnerships, or sub-contracts provision and you are the lead provider, you are responsible for the quality of provision, quality of outcomes and overarching

self-assessment processes and judgements. These aspects must be reported in your SAR; see [partnership section](#).

Sub-contractors should carry out their role in training at least as well as the main contract holder. Quality improvement procedures and management should help ensure that they meet the requirements of the quality assurance systems of the main provider.

The LSIS good practice database identifies common strengths and areas for improvement that have been taken from recent inspection reports. They offer particularly effective practice identified in inspections and include health check questions; see the link to [Quality improvement of subcontractors](#).

In 2009 a number of providers recognised that the economic downturn affected their provision and its quality assurance; keep an eye on these sorts of changes in the environment, and adjust your SAR and QI plan if you need to.

In summary, ensure that your SAR includes:

- A concise description of your organisation, its mission, its environment, and its learner population. Here are notes on the content of the introduction; they will be valuable to new providers and quality managers who are writing their first SAR, and will provide a [checklist](#) for those with more experience.

Action: ensure you include all the key elements: about your organisation, the local and regional environment including demographics, and an overview of your provision.

- A summary of the grades you have awarded yourselves
- A description of how the self-assessment process is carried out

Action: consider writing this account as a narrative, or use a flowchart or diagram to document your processes; for an example, see this case study [Self assessment calendar of activity](#) from Eastleigh College, or the [self-assessment flowchart](#).

- A summary of improvements since the last SAR, with evidence, focusing on the outcomes of the previous year's improvement plan and giving reasons why any of your improvement targets have not been met. The SAR should provide clear evaluations and data to support these conclusions; see [making judgements section](#).
- If you choose to follow the grading which Ofsted will use from September 2009, you should include graded judgements (with supporting evidence) on:
 - a. **Overall effectiveness** – overall effectiveness is a judgement about how well you meet the reasonable needs of learners and users, and provide value for money.

- b. Your organisation's **capacity for improvement**; read more here: [capacity to improve](#)
- c. **Leadership and management** – you should include the contributory grade for equality of opportunity, which itself includes tackling unlawful discrimination, and promoting educational and social inclusion. Educational and social inclusion describes your approach to providing progression for learners, to meeting the diverse needs of learners, and to raising the participation and achievement of learners from minority and underrepresented groups. For more information see key considerations in [equality and diversity](#). You should also include your contributory grade for safeguarding

You should also make judgements on how well you ensure learners are safe, how well you manage resources to provide [value for money](#), and how well you engage with others to support and promote improvement.

As a graded Ofsted judgement, leadership and management can be limited by your grade for equality and diversity and your grade for safeguarding.

Action: review the Good Practice Database on [Equality of opportunity](#) which provides examples of good practice in equal opportunities including community cohesion, complaints, monitoring, policies and procedures.

LSIS has produced a guide to working with faith communities; see [Faith Communities Toolkit](#).

You can also find a range of useful links and documents on the LSIS diversity and equality page; see [Diversity and Equality](#).

- d. **Outcomes for learners** – how well your learners achieve, compared with benchmarks and your own targets, which should be challenging
- Judgements about the Every Child Matters indicators, and about your strengths and weaknesses in safeguarding vulnerable adults; see [Every child matters/vulnerable adults](#)

Action: review the toolkit developed on Every Child Matters ([Self-assessment toolkit for Every Child Matters](#)).

- The Framework for Excellence performance indicators; see [Framework measures section](#) and [Framework for Excellence links to the CIF](#)
- Your own key performance measures/goals (or 'balanced scorecard'). See the Chesterfield College case study in the action box

Action: consider developing your own performance indicators or balanced scorecard (some of which may use indicators similar to the Framework for Excellence), and which are fit for purpose for your organisation. There is a case study from Chesterfield College about this approach: [Chesterfield College - approaches to self-assessment](#).

- How you engage with learners, employers and communities and, most importantly, the impact of this engagement and the actions you take as a result. Include an appendix in your SAR summarising the views of learners, employers and communities. State your areas of strengths, your areas for improvement and how you intend to address these

Action: see the section in this Guide on good practice in [involving stakeholders](#) in self-assessment processes for ideas on how to engage with users.

- Judgements made about how well your provision ensures the health, safety and welfare of learners, with actions taken and improvements needed. You should provide evidence to show that the safeguarding outcomes and features are promoted in all aspects of your work whether with unemployed or employed people, or with young people or adults

Action: be fully aware of the current government policies and safeguarding requirements that should be part of your self-assessment processes; see [policies](#). The [LSC Standards for Health and Safety \(2006\)](#) is a set of core standards required for learners in employment or on placements and is easily turned into a checklist to use when you self-assess. In 2009, the LSC is producing further guidance on self-assessing health and safety; see LSC's guidance on the self-assessment of health, safety and welfare.

- Actions taken to achieve further improvements in performance. Where performance is satisfactory, there should be clear evidence of plans to bring about improvement (see [Ofsted report - How Colleges Improve](#) and [Beyond Satisfactory](#)) for ideas and suggestions. Where performance is good or outstanding, there should be actions to improve or maintain it
- Where provision is inadequate, (particularly where a Notice to Improve has been issued by the LSC or where Ofsted has recommended actions), detailed plans should be provided, with an indication of milestones and monitoring procedures. You should act immediately on areas of underperformance
- An appendix which contains key performance data used to support the SAR judgements; for example: data derived from Framework for Excellence indicators, current enrolments by sector subject area, type of programme and age; information on learners' success rates and progression, including any differences between groups of learners, e.g. between learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those without, or from different ethnic groups

Action: review and evaluate sections of your self-assessment processes and report. The two checklists on [Leadership and Management](#) and [Areas of Learning](#) provide some useful questions to help you think about your processes.

Action: as well as the minimum expectations outlined above, think about other policies and what they mean for self-assessment and improvement planning; see [section on policies and frameworks updates](#). You must ensure that your SAR covers the current legislative requirements, the latest policy and regulatory requirements, as well as meeting your own business development requirements.

Action: consider other external standards and approaches your organisation may use and how these can support or align with self-assessment and improvement planning; see [external standards and approaches](#) and [section on international models](#).

7. The importance of data

Any judgement made by any individual, department or team in the self-assessment report must be backed up by data. This data has to be reliable, up-to-date and relevant to the judgement. For example, if you are making judgements about your responsiveness to community needs, you need to define what you mean by 'community', what indicators of responsiveness you are using, and how you are going to measure them. The data you use must relate to the indicators.

As well as analysing outcomes for the year, you should indicate trends, for example in learner success rates and learner and employer satisfaction.

To analyse trends, ask yourself:

- What is improving?
- Which areas are maintaining outstanding outcomes?
- What is satisfactory, and needs to aim for good and outstanding?
- What is declining, and needs urgent action to improve?

8. Making judgements using qualitative and quantitative data

Your data can be quantitative – for example, learner success rates or numbers of employers engaged, or qualitative – for example feedback from learners throughout their learner journey, from employers, and from other interested people (stakeholders) on their satisfaction with your provision and service. The checklist will help you: [sources of evidence](#).

It is important to compare the data against any available benchmarks, and to ensure that it is validated. Learner outcomes (including destinations and progression) are key sources of information for you in making judgements; so are the results of your observations of teaching, training and learning. Your processes and judgements for observation should be based on clear criteria. You

need trained observers who can stand back and take an objective view of learning – whether they are from inside or outside of your organisation.

If you subcontract provision, you have to ensure that your subcontractors have reliable data to inform their and your judgements. You may want to sample their observations or learner outcome data.

A summary of good practice in using data is here: [good practice in using data](#).

9. Determining grades

When you grade, use the scale:

- 1 – outstanding
- 2 – good
- 3 – satisfactory
- 4 – inadequate.

It is up to you, in consultation with colleagues, to decide on the grades you award yourselves. You need to review your decision before you finalise it; moderation and validation are essential.

You should balance strengths and weaknesses in your decision. Remember that strengths should be more than the expected and the ordinary (these are norms). Further guidance on balancing strengths and weaknesses is here: [Balancing strengths and weaknesses](#).

The grading structure used by Ofsted is in the [CIF](#) on page 15.

10. Impact

Think of impact as the consequences of your actions, especially your improvement actions. The changes you make will have consequences, in particular for learner outcomes, the quality of provision, and for customer and stakeholder satisfaction. Unless it is your first SAR, you should highlight the impact of previous improvement actions in the current SAR.

You should also consider the impact which the self-assessment process itself has on learners and staff. How does it enhance their involvement in strategy and their commitment to the organisation's mission, goals and key performance indicators?

Action on grading: be clear on the aspects of provision which will have limiting grades (safeguarding, and equality and diversity). These contribute to and affect other graded judgements, including overall effectiveness.

Action: balance strengths and weakness; do not confuse a strength with a norm. A norm is a feature which, if absent, would be a weakness. Norms, and strengths, change, as expectations and the bar on performance rises.

11. The language of the self-assessment report and improvement plan

If you are making judgements which do not require a grade, balance carefully the strengths and weaknesses, and ensure your text is evaluative. Evaluative language starts with a judgement, based on evidence, and then states why you have made that judgement. For examples, see [evaluative words](#).

You need to consider and decide how to balance ownership of the report and improvement plan against a consistent and succinct writing style. Ownership will be enhanced if teams and departments write their own sections, based on evidence and their own judgements. They will need training and coaching to achieve this, but it is time well invested, as they will develop skills and become involved in the report and in the actions. However, you might consider having one person who edits the entire final report, so that it is written in a consistent style and is evaluative.

The LSC and Ofsted are two of the audiences for your report. They will use it to inform decisions and discussions with you. It will be read by your board or governors (who will have a role in evaluating their own performance); guidance on this has been produced by LSIS: [Governance Self-Assessment Checklist](#).

The SAR and the improvement plan will become working documents for teams and individuals. Therefore, you should write both report and plan as succinctly as possible, making sure you cover all the relevant points which are explained in the Guide. Short sentences, good numbering of sections with headings and the use of charts and diagrams (such as graphs to show trends) will help make the report more readable.

The improvement plan should be as simple as possible, and cover all strengths and weaknesses, be continuously monitored and updated.

12. Risk

When you write your report, and your improvement plan, use evidence of risk which you have gathered elsewhere. For example, you may have identified a programme which has lower learner retention than others, using a traffic light system ('RAG' – red amber and green). The self-assessment report should identify this as evidence, take account of it in grading, and lead to actions to improve retention. For more information, see the guidance on [managing risk](#).

13. A self-assessment cycle which includes different levels and groups in the organisation

Self-assessment processes should include well-developed performance measures which are embedded at team level and/or have been developed collaboratively by the whole staff team.

The LSIS good practice database provides a very detailed self-assessment cycle ([Self assessment cycle - Rutland LEA](#)). It clearly sets out who, when and what is to be done at all stages. It shows clear communication channels and details the tasks that need to be completed and by when. The whole process is backed up by clear guidance and support for the people involved, from learners to part-time tutors.

It is good practice to involve all functions and departments in self-assessment and improvement planning. In small and larger organisations, support staff should be part of the process. Governors and boards have a key role to play, both in overseeing quality improvement strategy and in evaluating their own performance.

An example quality cycle is here: [quality cycle tool](#); and a blank version for you to use is here: [blank quality cycle tool](#).

14. Capacity to improve

Your capacity to improve is a judgement about how well you carry out your self-assessment and improvement planning, as these are your key processes to assure and raise quality. It is fundamentally about the impact of your actions, and whether they achieve the goals you set, which should be stretching.

Ofsted defines capacity to improve as “the ability of a provider to continue improving standards, based on what has been accomplished so far, or to maintain exceptionally high standards”. It puts a great deal of emphasis on capacity to improve in inspection and in any review of your self-assessment. To assess your capacity to improve, you need to consider these questions:

- Do you know your weaknesses, and take the right actions to correct them?
- Do you know where you are just satisfactory? If yes, what are you doing to raise the bar on these areas?
- Do you know your strengths, and maintain them?

- Do you set and monitor stretching targets which are based on improvements and on maintaining exceptionally high standards?
- Do you have a good track record of recognising what you need to do, and doing it?

Action: review your capacity to improve; ask yourself and colleagues the questions above; include this review as part of your self-assessment and improvement planning processes.

15. Involving stakeholders in self-assessment processes

It is important that your SAR process actively involves everyone who works in or with your organisation, in order to get a balanced set of views and judgements. Inspectors will check whether and how you have done this, and how you have made use of the feedback you have collected.

The evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of your Learner Involvement Strategy should form an integral part of your self-assessment processes and report. Within the Framework for Excellence, learner responsiveness measures provide key information which should be used in self-assessment to check the effectiveness of your Learner Involvement Strategy (or User Engagement Strategy).

Learner and employer responsiveness should be part of your self-assessment processes; see [Framework measures](#). It is good practice to include additional indicators of stakeholder satisfaction such as feedback from staff.

Action: ask yourself, and those around you: do your current self-assessment processes focus sufficiently on user engagement and subsequent actions? Are your activities reflected in your self-assessment processes?

Action; ask - do you have a learner involvement policy for your organisation? Does it work in practice, and if yes, what are the outcomes for learners? If not, what will you change to ensure it does have a positive impact on the learner's experience?

The LSC's guidance, [Developing a Learner Involvement Strategy \(February 2007\)](#) provides examples, case studies and checklists on ways of involving learners.

Action: make sure staff, learners and partner organisations understand:

- The self-assessment process and their role in it, including the monitoring of improvements resulting from actions in the improvement plan
- What happens to their views, and the evidence and data they provide
- How these inform judgements and the improvement plan.

There is no single right way to achieve staff, learner and stakeholder involvement. Inspectors ask staff how they are involved in the self-assessment process and what they know about the final report. They will focus on the learner journey, and are likely to interview individual learners and groups to hear their views and their experiences. You need to carry out similar activities regularly and consistently across your provision.

Depending on your size and spread of operations, organising involvement and feedback through a self-assessment day may be easy or complex for you. The approach below, from the good practice database, has worked well for a number of providers of all sizes. The resources available can be customised by you to meet your needs. If you are a large organisation you may need to hold separate events and bring the findings together.

<p>Ofsted good practice database - involving staff in self-assessment</p>	<p>This section is about developing an approach to involve all of your staff in the self-assessment process. It provides you with electronic models of documents that will help staff to prioritise strengths and areas for improvement according to their impact on learners. The findings will be very much owned by staff and they will more clearly see their part in the self-assessment process.</p>
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Examples of good practice in involvement

There are examples of particularly effective practice in self-assessment and reporting here: [Self-assessment process and reporting](#). Suggestions include:

- All staff being aware of the main 'headline' content of the current self-assessment report, along with grades and the development plan
- Staff who are able to say "yes, I recognise us from this report"
- Linking self-assessment to quality improvement procedures so that the two cycles overlap and do not duplicate time and resources. Staff then see how what they are doing in terms of observation, gaining feedback from learners or employers, internal verification and programme review link to the production of the self-assessment report
- Having an 'inclusive' self-assessment process that engages learners, staff, employers and other interested parties
- Good communication about the process of self assessment and final report – for example, holding an annual event to bring underlying evidence together to form judgements. Some national providers hold roadshows in different geographical areas where senior managers gauge staff views

- Gathering views from those who know about the training and can contribute to its improvement, including learners, employers and training staff, as well as other agencies
- Involving staff, and others, from the start of the process, not just to comment on the finished draft report - 'bottom-up' rather than 'top-down'; this approach is fundamental in some other countries; see [section on international models](#)
- Using samples of staff, learners and employers where it is not possible to consult every individual for feedback on a particular theme
- Using a number of ways to gain learner views: surveys on key issues; focus groups; having the learner voice as a standing agenda item for groups and committees; a learner 'parliament' or forum; site or campus councils; learner members of committees and groups.
- Linking all survey questions and focus group topics to the learner's journey as well as mapping them to the CIF – one provider invites all learners to rate their course three times a year on the scale 1 to 4, using the five CIF questions as the basis for their evaluation; results are reviewed by managers and by the board and action taken to praise success and tackle areas needing improvement
- Ensuring that the outcomes of surveys are fed back to those who took the time to contribute their views.

16. Partnerships and collaboration, including subcontracting

Key factors for partnerships

If your organisation works collaboratively with, for example, consortia or partnerships, or sub-contracts provision for which you are the lead provider, you are responsible for the quality of provision, quality of outcomes and overarching self-assessment processes and judgements. These aspects must be reported in your SAR.

You should also consider reporting on how members of a consortium fulfil their responsibilities as a member of that group. Evidence for this could include attendance of their people at meetings, examples of specific (including innovative) collaboration, and in particular how working together has enhanced the experience for learners and/or employers. For example, ask: "has collaboration widened opportunities and improved outcomes, including learner destinations?"

If you are not the lead provider, it is still good practice to include such provision within your self-assessment processes and report. Ofsted will expect you to assess your contribution to the overall provision, referenced in your organisational SAR. You should measure whether partnership working leads to improved outcomes for learners and employers and include it as part of your self-assessment processes and in your SAR.

Example toolkits about effective practice in partnership working

There are a range of toolkits that can be used to help with effective partnership working and assessment:

Toolkit for 14-19 partnerships	<p>This LSC toolkit aims to describe what a good 14-19 partnership looks like, identifying resources and demonstrating how collaborative activity benefits learners. It provides a comprehensive series of checklists to support self-assessment across partnerships.</p>
Ofsted good practice database: Good partnership working - Working Links 1/2	<p>This link provides an example of how a provider has built the foundations for productive working partnerships. It also includes a checklist of questions which will help you to improve the quality of your partnership working.</p>
LG - Smarter Partnerships	<p>This toolkit gives examples of partnership working and includes several interactive questionnaires and quizzes and partnership tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ partnership health check questionnaire ▪ examples of how to review partnerships and make them more effective ▪ skills for partnership working ▪ case studies ▪ partnership tools, e.g. developing partnership agreements, ground rules for partnerships, developing partnership skills (note: links to the interactive tools are available via this link or by clicking the appropriate links below).
Developing partnership agreements	<p>This link provides a helpful guide on the main elements which you need to get right when setting up partnerships. It enables you to document what you intend to achieve, how you are going to manage and resource the partnership and how you are going to deal with potential conflicts within the partnership.</p>
Ground rules for partnerships	<p>This link provides a guide on setting the ground rules in partnerships. Ground rules can make a great difference in helping to build robust relationships and smooth partnership working. Ground rules can be built into partnership agreements as guiding principles, while mutually agreed rules for meetings and workshops can help ensure productive outcomes.</p>
Developing partnership skills	<p>Use this tool to assess your learning needs relating to partnership working.</p> <p>You can choose to look at (a) your personal or team development needs or (b) those of the partnership against the key themes for effective partnership:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Leadership: skills and knowledge for leadership in partnerships 2) Trust: skills and knowledge for cultivating trust

	<p>in partnerships</p> <p>3) Learning: skills and knowledge for promoting learning and improvement in partnerships</p> <p>4) Managing for performance: skills and knowledge for managing effective partnerships.</p>
Partner responsibilities in strategic partnerships	This tool will help you help address a common partnership problem of lack of clarity over the roles that partners need to perform, and who is responsible for what. It does not go into specific requirements in different types of partnership, in health, regeneration, etc, but concentrates on what is common across different types of strategic partnership.
Partnership responsibilities tool	This tool provides a checklist of questions on partnerships considering the partnership environment, developing a strategy and gaining commitment, identifying resources and monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the partnership.
Partnership QA framework	This framework explains how partners will assure and improve the quality of their partnership working, looking in particular at Train to Gain provision.

Your SAR and the inspection of subcontracted provision

Here are some key pointers about how your SAR and improvement plan can prepare your organisation and its subcontracted provision for inspection. You need to take account of them when you self-assess.

Measuring and improving quality in subcontracted provision

You are responsible to funding organisations for provision which you subcontract to others. Therefore, you need to know accurately about the quality of that provision. From 2010/2011 it is the intention to have a field on the Individual Learner Record (ILR) for subcontracting; this will allow Ofsted to collect information on subcontractors.

You should be using this information *now* to judge quality. You might also require information from subcontractors about QA processes such as their observation of teaching and learning scheme, the grades awarded in it, and the actions taken to maintain and improve teaching and learning. Many providers carry out their own sampling observations of teaching and learning in subcontractors.

For self-assessment and improvement planning you might also ask:

- What is the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in our subcontractors? How can it be improved or how can excellent standards be maintained?
- How do we know that the subcontractor's scheme for observing teaching and learning is robust and leads to improvements?
- Are we absolutely sure that the data supplied by the subcontractor is accurate and up-to-date?
- How do we (and how does the subcontractor) use that data to measure and improve quality?
- What are the trends in quality improvement in the subcontracted provision? Do they vary from those in our provision which is not subcontracted? If yes, why? What do we learn from this?

Subcontracting and inspection

Ofsted inspectors will inspect at the point of delivery only.

At your inspection Ofsted will inspect provision that is directly provided by you. If you subcontract to another provider which does not have a direct contract with the LSC or the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), inspectors may also visit that provision. However, if you subcontract to another provider which is inspected in its own right, inspectors will not visit that provision during your inspection. They will, however, want to know how you assure the quality of that provision. They may want to speak with the provider.

If you act as a subcontractor for someone else, Ofsted will also visit that provision on your inspection and include it in their judgements about all your provision. In other words, inspectors will inspect the provision subcontracted to you when they inspect your other provision which is not subcontracted to you.

17. Moderating and validating your SAR

Moderating and validating your SAR judgements are essential. You need robust 'critical friend' contributions before you finalise your judgements and your grades.

You can set up internal validation, involving board members or governors. This is often a small panel which questions managers about their judgements and actions. You might also invite someone from outside your organisation to question you and your staff. This could be a manager from another provider, or a consultant.

Action: make sure you have a critical friend or friends to challenge your judgements and grades; this can be someone in a peer review and development group, a manager from another provider, or a consultant. They should ask these key questions about your report and plan:

- How open were you when you made judgements? Did you start by saying “we think we are grade...” and then seek to prove it. Or, better, did you put aside all the preconceptions and really ask yourself: “what does the evidence tell us about our performance?”
- How do you know that your judgements are valid and reliable? (i.e. where is the evidence, and how good is it?)
- How do you know that an action is likely to improve provision where there is a weakness, or maintain a strength (i.e. have you planned action and is it the right action?)

Peer review and development

Peer review and development (PRD) enables you to undertake an in-depth and more collaborative exploration of the self-assessment process. The more rigorous and transparent your self-assessment process, the more you can be confident that the self-assessment plan is accurate, the improvement plan is fit for purpose and that you have both the capacity and the will to improve. You will find PRD an important way of taking a whole organisation approach to self-assessment. This link explains how: [Understanding a whole organisation approach](#).

Put simply, the peer review and development process is one where a group of providers formally join together to review aspects of each other’s provision in order to bring about collaborative improvement. They usually start by reviewing the current improvement plan to help the host provider understand how well and how comprehensively it has been implemented.

The provider being reviewed is commonly referred to as ‘the host’ and the other providers are referred to as ‘reviewers’. The process is cyclical and is demonstrated diagrammatically in this diagram: [The PRD Cycle](#).

In order for a peer review to be rigorous and effective, a peer review group needs to undertake all the following key activities:

- Prepare for the review
- Carry out the review
- Offer professional challenge to the host provider
- Undertake feedback and reporting
- Support development planning
- Undertake monitoring and evaluation.

Detailed guidance and case studies outlining this approach are here: [Alignment to PRD Cycle](#).

Throughout the peer review and development process, the host and reviewers need to be honest and open about all aspects of the self-assessment process; however, the reviewers are not inspectors. The reviewers' task is to test out the host's quality systems and processes and make a judgement on the sufficiency, validity, objectivity and the reliability of the data and evidence the host uses for self-assessment. The reviewers also test the fitness-for-purpose of the improvement plan which has resulted from the self-assessment process. A full toolkit on peer review and development is here: [Peer Review and Development Resource Centre](#).

18. When you have completed your SAR

You need to upload your report and improvement plan to the LSC provider gateway [LSC User Gateway](#) annually, so that it is available to the LSC and to Ofsted. You will have to submit the latest report and plan to Ofsted when you are about to be inspected, so you should keep it up-to-date and consider it a live set of documents which reflect what you do all the time. You must also keep your summary details up-to-date on the Gateway: make sure you upload information about changes to contracts, subcontracting or areas of learning.

Keeping the report and plan live benefits your organisation and your learners. It is much easier to update them regularly than at longer intervals or annually. Putting the plan into action becomes part of your routine; see [improvement planning section](#).

19. Improvement planning

There is no prescribed approach to improvement planning; however, there are many examples of good practice. First and foremost, it is essential to engage the entire staff, so that the improvement plan becomes a regular agenda item and is reported on at team and staff meetings. This sets the stage for a culture of quality improvement in which all staff expect and maintain exceptionally high standards. Secondly, it is important that actions are evaluated, assessed and improved continuously and promptly to prepare you for short notice inspection.

As you self-assess and identify areas for improvement, you will measure against external regulatory key items; see [essentials section](#). Additionally, you may measure yourself against grade one organisations, internal key performance areas and 'stretch' targets for continuous improvement. You can also use the improvement plan to show how the organisation will build on its overall key strengths, maintaining them and using them to plan future provision.

Effective quality improvement plans have arrangements for monitoring progress and evaluating success. If this is done on a regular basis, no less often than fortnightly or monthly, it becomes part of the process of quality improvement rather than a hurried exercise 'just in time' for inspection. Inspection notice will reduce to no more than 20 days from September 2009, and will be possibly less.

It is recommended that all strengths and weaknesses be included in your Improvement Plan. These areas should be referenced from the self-assessment report. In your plan, you might consider at least these headings:

- a. Where you are
- b. Where you want to be
- c. How you will get there
- d. Over what time-scale.

Action: how do you review and improve your action planning? Ask:

- Do we get our judgements right?
- Do we identify the right actions?
- Do we get to the root causes of weaknesses?
- Do we resource actions adequately?
- Do we follow through, complete actions, recognise what went well, and praise those responsible?

Approaches to improvement planning

When planning for improvement, you may benefit from using techniques to identify the root cause of the problem, manage the improvements as a project and continuously assess and evaluate the actions. If you are focused on outcomes using continuous evaluation, you will be ready for inspection at any time.

Root Cause Analysis

Root cause analysis can be used by all providers. It is an approach which gets you to the cause of the problem **not** the symptom.

An area for improvement which requires root cause analysis is one that recurs with the greatest frequency and consumes the greatest resource to resolve. Once an area for improvement is identified, finding the cause of a problem can speed the improvement process and ensure the right issues are addressed. This will prevent you spending time on problem areas that are the result of other problems and will focus you on those that will provide the most improvement and positive change. Changing two or three areas which cause the most problems may improve the entire organisation.

As you identify the strengths for further development and areas for improvement you will need to assess the gaps. Use these steps:

1. Where you are now and what do you want to accomplish? What are the related targets, outcomes and success criteria?
2. What is your timeline for the improvement? What are the milestones and completion dates? Once the completion date is set, the tasks can be broken down into fortnightly or monthly chunks; this makes action monitoring and reporting easier than tackling a large project.
3. Who is responsible for implementation? What resources are necessary for success? If the action is dependent on previous actions you will want to take this into consideration as you assign resources.
4. How will you monitor, evaluate and report progress? This can be done in a simple Red, Amber, Green (RAG) status report; see [sample status report tool](#). As the staff accountable at each level reports upwards, the improvement plan stays on track and becomes part of the daily process.

Here are two examples for Every Child Matters: firstly, 'Outcomes for Children'. You may have an action for improvements in 'Staying Safe'. This could require specific changes in the organisational environment or in classroom practice. The people accountable for this improvement action (for example, head of department, teacher) would implement the safe process and report regularly on how it is carried out. The process would become embedded as it is monitored and reported. Status could be reported in scheduled team or staff meetings.

Secondly, an example for 'Staying Safe' which relates to adult learners, including employed ones: you are a provider with solely adult learners, and you have introduced a new policy to prevent bullying and harassment. However, you have not monitored it. A manager is given responsibility for monitoring the policy and its effectiveness, and reporting to the chief executive and board at regular intervals.

5. What lessons have you learned as a result of your actions for improvement?
This is essential information to avoid the same problems in the future.
6. What have you learnt about your processes for improvement planning? How can you improve them, or make sure that they stay effective?

You may want to consider using a project management approach for larger improvement action projects; it will help you to keep your complex plans on track.

Project management

If your actions are complex, a project management approach could make them more manageable and speed the solution. Writing a statement of work, identifying appropriate resources and a project team, monitoring and reporting status can ensure a complicated improvement action is progressing according to plan and is kept on track. It also provides lessons learned for future actions. A basic project management approach can be used for managing and monitoring a variety of actions.

There are other specialist tools such as Becta's Generator, which helps you to plan for improvements in your use of technology for learners; see [GENERATOR Technology Improvement Leadership Tool](#).

Continuous evaluation

Ofsted inspectors at inspection or monitoring visits are likely to take a keen interest in the progress of quality improvement plans, especially if they have any indication that a specific subject sector area or activity is underperforming.

Successful improvement planning is outcome-focused. As you identify the cause of the problem and plan and manage the improvement actions, you can continuously evaluate your performance against what you have achieved and are achieving. Use a cyclical process of observing the action, evaluating the consequences of the action and making adjustments to do this. As you focus on outcomes throughout this process, you apply what you are learning from your actions immediately instead of months or even a year later. As you plan your action, you plan the evaluation. You can also link the actions to staff performance through appraisals, or through setting and agreeing goals with them for improvements in their performance. Doing this will link self-assessment and improvement planning to your performance management processes for staff.

An example: the continuous evaluation of learner induction

The scenario

You have above average numbers of early leavers from some of your programmes. You have interviewed leavers and those who are still on programme, and identified that your induction process is the main cause of learners' leaving the programme. You have defined the problem and have developed an improved induction process.

The response

Rather than waiting months to determine the success of the new programme, you evaluate the induction straight after it finishes and again three months later. This approach provides you with immediate information you can use to continue your induction programme if it is successful, or to make the changes which your evaluation will have identified. Engaging the learners in the evaluation and in further improvements can contribute further to success. This approach is a simple cycle of observe, evaluate and adjust. If embedded in the system and used by the entire staff, it becomes part of the organisational culture resulting in continuous improvement and readiness for inspection.

Additional benefits and transferring the knowledge and skills

The staff who have planned and implemented the changes to induction can have this recognised in their appraisals or reviews of performance. They can tell others in the organisation about them. They can train others and transfer their knowledge and skills. If they have the skills, they can coach others to help them implement a successful learner induction programme in their areas.

Action: ask yourself about continuous evaluation:

- How sure are you that your improvement action relates to the weakness or will maintain the strength? (How does **this** action lead to **that** outcome?)
- Have you planned improvements, *involving* those who have to implement them?
- Can those responsible for making them happen do so? Do they have the skill and resources? How motivated are they on a scale of 1 to 10? (anything less than 8 out of 10 is not enough!)
- Have you decided on the evaluation criteria as you plan? How clear and measurable are they?
- How will you evaluate the actions? Will you do it soon after they take place?
- How can you involve the people who implement the actions in the evaluation?
- How ready are you to accept the results of the evaluation? And to make further changes to your plan?

20. Specialised tools and techniques

This section has been developed so that it offers you straightforward tools to help you with some of the tougher challenges of self-assessment and improvement planning. The tools will be valuable to experienced and new providers. Here they are:

- Key considerations in [equality and diversity](#) – an overview of key issues: see the section on safeguarding for more ideas
- [Encouraging participation](#) in self-assessment and improvement planning – for briefing teams and individuals, including those whose participation in the processes you want to enhance
- [Self-assessment for support staff](#) – some ideas for measuring performance and linking their work to the learners’ experience and the CIF
- [Managing risk](#) in self-assessment and improvement planning

21. Changes in self-assessment and improvement planning for 2009 – an overview including Ofsted, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), the Framework for Excellence, and the Machinery of Government

Ofsted

Ofsted has published revised information on its approach to inspection in the [Inspection Handbook](#). Its key points are:

1. There is a significant and continuing focus on your [capacity to improve](#)
2. Rigour is critical. This means:
 - Using national and local benchmarks and other comparative data
 - Internally and externally validating judgements and grades
 - Systematic use of learner and employer satisfaction data
 - Setting of challenging targets for improvement
 - Effective internal observation of teaching, training and learning; activities which are observed should include coaching, assessment, feedback and reviews of learning, where possible
 - Basing judgements about the quality of teaching, training and assessment on the Lifelong Learning UK [professional standards](#) for teachers, tutors and trainers in the lifelong learning sectors
 - Having regular access to and making effective use of robust and accessible management information
 - Rigorous performance management of the organisation and of individuals and teams
 - Close involvement of staff and of boards or governors in the self-assessment process
 - Coverage of all functional areas
 - The honesty to confront weaknesses as well as maintain and where possible improve further on strengths
 - The will to focus on, confront and improve areas which are satisfactory only
 - Ensuring weaknesses from the last self-assessment and/or inspection have been tackled and measurable improvements made.

3. Quality Improvement action plans must be fit-for-purpose, embedded within the routine operations of teams/departments, and lead to change and improvements (or maintaining strengths). Monitoring has to take place – this might be carried out by the team or department itself, or by a senior manager, or by a colleague from another team or department.
4. The report and the plan are descriptions of the situation at any one point in time. Self-evaluation and improvement are continuous; all parts of the organisation should review quality regularly, and plan to improve it.

The Framework for Excellence

The LSC is leading on the Framework for Excellence, an approach to measuring overall provider performance. You can read about the Framework; see [Framework for Excellence](#). This table of indicators was prepared in mid-July 2009 and contains the latest information available then:

Framework for Excellence Performance Indicators for 2008/09	
Category	Indicator
Learner and Qualification Success	Qualification Success Rates
Learner Views	Learner Views
Learner Destinations	Learner Destinations
Responsiveness to Employers	Employer Views
	Training Quality Standard
Financial Health and Management	Financial Health
	Financial Management and Control
Use of Resources	Delivery against funding allocation or contract
	Resource Efficiency (two performance measures): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LSC Funding per Successful Outcome • Provider-level Unit Cost

Some providers have restructured their self-assessment activities and begin with the Framework. A case study about Castle College's use of this approach is here: [Castle College, Nottingham - Case Study](#).

Whatever approach you use, you need to consider all the indicators in the Framework. You can use the checklist in our guidance to cross-reference the Framework to the Common Inspection Framework.

Action: make sure that your self-assessment covers all the Framework for Excellence indicators, as well as the Common Inspection Framework; see [FfE and CIF tool](#).

The Machinery of Government

The Machinery of Government is a term given to changes in the way government departments work, and in their responsibilities. The principal changes affecting the learning and skills sector are:

The LSC will be dissolved in 2010. From then, £7 billion per year will be available to local authorities for providers and sixth forms. One of the key targets will be the raising of the participation age for training and education to 18 by 2013. £4 billion per year will be directed through a new Skills Funding Agency, with Regional Advisory Boards, to provide training and skills for adults. You can read the consultation documents here: [DIUS: Further Education](#).

The Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) will support local authorities in commissioning training for 16 to 19 year olds, and will ensure regions get appropriate funding. Read the YPLA blueprint: [YPLA Blueprint](#).

For self-assessment and improvement planning, these changes mean:

- Ofsted will still be responsible for inspection
- Ofsted published the new [Inspection Handbook](#) guidance in July 2009; there is significant emphasis on continuous evaluation so that you are ready for inspection at any time, and so that self-evaluation becomes part of your culture
- If robust self-evaluation is part of your culture, and your improvement plan is effective, your capacity to improve will be clearly evidenced
- Targets, such as learner outcomes, will be agreed with or set by different bodies and agencies
- It is important to self-assess and plan for the improvement of all provision, however it is funded. Many providers already include all their work in their self-assessment report; for example, they include work which is commercial and not LSC funded.

Action: keep up-to-date with changes in responsibility for funding and quality assurance.

22. Policies and frameworks updates – what they mean for self-assessment and improvement planning

Single voice/self-regulation

Whilst providers will have more self-autonomy, and will move towards a situation of shared regulation, the views of learners, employers and other stakeholders are likely to have more impact on the nature and quality of provision. Read more about the background here [FE Self Regulation](#) and the benefits here: [Benefits](#).

The Single Voice will have a major role in developing guidance standards for provider self-assessment. It sees the Framework for Excellence indicators as the key indicator of provider achievement and improvement.

Every child matters/vulnerable adults

You can find guidance on safeguarding and examples of what Ofsted considers best practice here on [Safeguarding](#). There is also a health check here so that you can self-assess your own provision and improve practice. NIACE has guidance on developing a framework for safeguarding here: [Safer Practice, Safer Learning](#)

Common inspection framework

The Common Inspection Framework changed in July 2009. See the latest [CIF](#) to be used from September 2009.

Employer responsiveness

You need to evaluate your responsiveness to employers, covering aspects appropriate to your mission and provision. You might find it useful to consider the indicators in the Training Quality Standard which can be found on the TQS site: [Training Quality Standard](#).

Learner responsiveness

You need to consider the learner journey and how responsive you are to the needs of learners (including those with additional needs) at every stage of the journey. You can read about the impact of learner involvement strategy in this

evaluation from the LSC: [Evaluation of the Impact of Learner Involvement Strategy](#)

Qualification reform and credit success rates

All vocational qualifications in the UK are to be within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) by 2010. Ofsted and the LSC are working on how to measure success rates in terms of credits and units, not just whole qualifications. You can read more about the QCF here: [QCA information on the QCF](#). There are [animations](#) which you can use to introduce the QCF to learners, employers and staff.

Equality and diversity

Evaluating equality and diversity is essential, at both senior strategic and operational level. Teams and departments should self-assess their contribution to promoting diversity and to ensuring equality of opportunity. There is a useful toolkit for gender equality here: [gender equality a toolkit for education staff](#). The LSC is producing new guidance in 2009 on self-assessment and equality and diversity.

Social and Community Cohesion

Ofsted will inspect how effectively you promote equality, diversity and social inclusion. LSIS has published [twelve case studies](#) of effective practice which cover a range of provision.

You should focus on:

- Recognising the rising importance of locality leadership for many providers in the FE and skills system, where you are key players in the delivery of local priorities expressed in local and multi area agreements; this will require you to relate your outcomes to the priorities of local areas
- Ensuring that you meet the needs of all learners through effective promotion of equality, diversity and social inclusion
- Focusing on the progress made by different groups of learners, and using data to analyse where you have strengths and where you can improve.

Health and safety

The LSC produced a guide to self-assessment and health and safety in May 2009: [LSC H&S Guidance](#).

Well-being of learners

LSIS is producing guidance on good practice in late 2009; watch out for updates

23. How to stay in touch and get alerts

LSIS will use the LSIS monthly e-newsletter to alert you about the implications of policy for self-assessment and improvement planning, see [Registration for LSIS newsletters](#).

You can also register for LSIS policy news at [LSIS policy news](#).

24. Appendix 1: Tools, checklists and case studies

The following links will help providers strengthen their self-assessment processes and improve key elements.

Generic guidance on self-assessment

LSC: Self-assessment: Updated Guidance for the Further Education System, September 2008	This publication identifies key principles and processes that should inform self-assessment. It also links to case studies as examples of how some providers are seeking to develop their approach to self-assessment in response to policy and regulatory changes.
LSC: Quality improvement and self-assessment, May 2005	Generic guidance intended for all providers with a particular focus on both self-assessment and quality improvement planning. Highlights features of effective self-assessment and is a useful starting point for those new to self-assessment and improvement planning.
Ofsted: Learner centred self-assessment, date not given	Ofsted guidance intended to help providers move beyond 'satisfactory' performance and build better practice. The focus is on evaluating current practice and managing the self-assessment process to bring about improvement.

DWP, Provider Guidance, 2008	<p>The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has specific generic guidance for providers of Jobcentre Plus programmes. The guidance is designed to meet both DWP and Ofsted requirements.</p>
Welsh Assembly: Quality Handbook 2007	<p>Useful for providers who deliver in Wales and for those wishing to compare the guidance for England with that provided in Wales. Focus on effective self-assessment processes and has some suggested formats for self-assessment reports and improvement plans. Has useful guidance on how to write evaluative statements.</p>
<p>Case studies on self-assessment</p> <p>Excellence Gateway: Self-assessment and the Framework for Excellence case studies, May 2008</p>	<p>The case studies focus on how six providers currently approach the production of their annual self-assessment reports. Some show where and how Framework for Excellence is starting to be embedded within the providers' self-assessment process. One case study used the 'balanced scorecard' approach to self-assessment. Some case studies have useful guidance and checklists, particularly in relation to Learner Voice Evaluation.</p>
<p>Excellence Gateway: Ofsted, case studies on self-assessment: good practice examples</p>	<p>The case studies cover a range of work based learning providers and adult and community learning services. The case studies contain useful information on how individual providers manage their self-assessment processes to ensure quality improvement.</p>

Specific aspects of self-assessment

<p>14-19 partnerships</p> <p>LSC, From here to entitlement-a self-assessment toolkit for 14-19 partnerships, August 2008</p>	<p>This toolkit aims to describe what a good 14-19 partnership looks like and provides a comprehensive series of checklists to support self-assessment across a partnership.</p>
<p>Employer Engagement</p> <p>LSC: Employer engagement toolkit, 2005</p>	<p>Although aimed at FE colleges, the toolkit provides a comprehensive series of self-assessment checklists covering all aspects of employer engagement. The checklists help providers assess their current activity and plan for improvement.</p>
<p>World Class Skills, Developing responsive provision, 2008</p>	<p>Aimed at 14-19 Diploma consortia, but applicable to all providers. Provides a diagnostic tool for all aspects of employer engagement and allows providers to self-assess and plan for improvement.</p>
<p>Equal opportunities</p> <p>Ofsted: Good practice database</p>	<p>Provides guidance on good practice in equal opportunities including community cohesion, complaints, monitoring and policies and procedures. Each section outlines provider strengths and weaknesses and includes a self-assessment checklist and suggestions for improvement.</p>
<p>LSC: Race equality in employment standard, October 2006</p>	<p>This publication offers a simple coherent framework for embedding race equality into employment and Human Resources across an organisation. It sets out clear performance indicators to support both audit and self-assessment.</p>
<p>Every child matters</p> <p>Excellence Gateway: A self-assessment toolkit for Every Child Matters</p>	<p>Developed by Nelson and Colne College, but available to all providers. The toolkit can be downloaded via a link in this case study publication.</p>

<p>Financial management/governance</p> <p>LSC, Guidance for Colleges on the Self-Assessment of their Finance Management and Governance Framework, 2006</p>	<p>Has useful guidance on how this area impacts of self-assessment grades for Leadership and Management.</p>
<p>Health and safety</p> <p>LSC: Standards for Health and Safety, 2006</p>	<p>Sets core standards required for learners in employment or on placements. Easy to turn into a checklist to self-assess against.</p>
<p>Individual learner record/data analysis</p> <p>DIUS: Prior Attainment and Individualised Learner Record (ILR), Good Practice Guide</p>	<p>Guidance to help providers assess their current actions and identify ways to improve their data. The publication includes case studies of best practice.</p>
<p>Audit Commission, Improving information to support decision-making: standards for better quality data, 2007</p>	<p>Intended to encourage public bodies to improve the quality of the data they use in decision-making. Offers clear and concise standards based on existing best practice.</p>
<p>Learning Resources</p> <p>JISC Regional Support Centre North West: A Self-assessment Toolkit for Learning Resource Services in Further Education Colleges in England</p>	<p>This toolkit covers the requirements of the Ofsted Common Inspection Framework and 'Every Child Matters'. It consists of a series of quality indicators and key prompts to help providers self-assess.</p>
<p>Literacy, numeracy and ESOL</p> <p>Work-based learning</p> <p>Skills for life</p> <p>DCSF/DIUS: skills for life</p>	<p>This website offers guidance on both self-assessment and preparing for inspection. There are links to the framework for self-assessing Skills for Life and work-based learning.</p>

25. Appendix 2: International comparisons - some key messages from other countries' systems

Self-assessment is not unique to the UK and has the following characteristics which are common to self-assessment systems in both Europe and Australasia:

- A focus on the quality of existing provision and how to improve it

- Meeting national objectives and government targets
- Meeting the needs of the labour market
- Meeting the needs of employers and learners.

International comparisons indicate that there are there are two distinct 'models' of self-assessment that have developed outside the UK:

- A centralised model used in countries like Australia and Ireland
- A decentralised model used in countries like Sweden and Finland.

Features of the Australian centralised model

The Australian Government sets key performance measures for states and territories. States and territories then set their key aims, objectives and targets that providers have to self-assess and report against on an annual basis. The targets are not numerical.

All registered training organisations in Australia (public and private) have to achieve the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) standard and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) before they are allowed to deliver provision. Training providers audit themselves against the standards. Providers also carry out regular surveys of employers and learners in order to improve provision.

The following link will take you to the training standards: [National Training System](#).

Features of Ireland's centralised model

Further education and training in Ireland is regulated by the Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) which monitors and assures the quality of programmes and determines standards. Providers have to have their quality assurance systems approved by FETAC (including self-assessment) although FETAC does provide pro-formas to support the self-assessment process:

[Quality Assurance in Further Education and Training Self-Evaluation of Programmes and Services](#).

Features of decentralised models in Sweden and Finland

Although both countries have national objectives for education and training, there is more focus on providers self-evaluating their own provision and its

effectiveness. This means providers have to make strong links between their provision and the labour market. The chief focus of a decentralised model is full and rigorous consultation with local employers and other stakeholders.

In Finland providers are expected to pay for an external evaluation of their individual self-assessment processes and apply for an external quality award if they so wish. The Finnish government also undertakes a national evaluation of learning outcomes and an impact evaluation of major education and training initiatives.

For more information on comparisons between all the above countries please go to: [International Comparisons in Further Education](#).

26. Appendix 3: Commonly Used Improvement Standards Mapped to the Common Inspection Framework

[Mapping Standards linked to the CIF](#)

27. Appendix 4: list of useful web addresses

Web site	Web address
A user guide to self-assessment and improvement planning	www.excellencegateway.co.uk/self-assessment-guide
Alignment to PRD Cycle	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=170485
Areas of Learning Checklist	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=207680
Audit Commission, Improving information to support decision-making: standards for better quality data, 2007	http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/aboutus/strategicobjectives/dataquality/Pages/improvinginformation.aspx
Balancing strengths and weaknesses	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/239181
Castle College, Nottingham - Case Study	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/24839%20Castle%20SA%20bd3.pdf
Checklist for the introduction to the SAR	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/239160
Chesterfield College - approaches to self-assessment	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/pdf/24839%20Chesterfield%20bd3.pdf
DCSF/DIUS: skills for life	http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/readwriteplus/raisingstandards/fec2/fecollegecontext/shouldinclude
Developing a Learner Involvement Strategy (February 2007)	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/tutors/documents/nat-developinglearnerinvolvementstrategy-pu-feb2007.pdf
Developing partnership agreements	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=207683

Developing partnership skills	http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=207686
DIUS: Further Education	http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/furthereducation
DIUS: Prior Attainment and Individualised Learner Record (ILR), Good Practice Guide	http://www.dius.gov.uk/further_education/guidance_and_good_practice/prior_attainment
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