common assessment standard

An Overview of the Common Assessment Standard for Public Sector Clients

What is the Common Assessment Standard?

- The Common Assessment Standard, developed by Build UK, is the industry-recognised standard for the pre-qualification of suppliers in the construction sector. It comprises a question set – which includes all the key questions from the standard Selection Questionnaire (SQ) and the now withdrawn PAS 91 – and corresponding assessment standards.

- The current version of the question set (Version 3.2 published on 1 July 2023) is divided into 10 sections covering all the key areas for stage 1 pre-qualification, including financial; health and safety; quality; equality, diversity and inclusion; environmental; corporate professional standing; and information management.

- The Common Assessment Standard provides a consistent, fit-for-purpose assurance of the quality and organisational capability of businesses in the construction supply chain. Suppliers are certified to the Common Assessment Standard once a year by a Recognised Assessment Body, and this is accepted by a growing list of Contractors and Clients who no longer specify a particular assessment body.

How do suppliers get the Common Assessment Standard?

- Suppliers obtain certification to the Common Assessment Standard by successfully completing an audit with one of the Recognised Assessment Bodies.

- There are two levels of certification – desktop and site-based – and suppliers choose the level that is most appropriate for their business based on a range of factors, including trade, size and the requirements of their clients. To ensure that the Common Assessment Standard is accessible to all companies regardless of size, the assessment standards are applied in a proportionate way for those that employ fewer than 10 employees and have a turnover below £1.8 million or a balance sheet total less than £1.8 million.

- Certification is valid for one year from the date of issue, provided that any 'time-critical' documents are updated when they expire. There are already over 18,500 suppliers certified to the standard.

- Each Recognised Assessment Body has its own fee structure, and details of what it costs to obtain the Common Assessment Standard are available directly from each of the Recognised Assessment Bodies.

Who are the Recognised Assessment Bodies?

- A list of Recognised Assessment Bodies can be found on the Build UK website.

- All Recognised Assessment Bodies must demonstrate on an annual basis their organisational competence, which includes evidencing the independence of their certification activities and holding ISO 9001:2015, as well as assessor competence through CPD and IRCA Lead Auditor Training.

How can a public sector client use the Common Assessment Standard?

- PPN 03/24 states that "*for works contracts, including the procurement of mixed contracts that include supplies and services, contracting authorities should use the Common Assessment Standard in place of the standard SQ template in pre-qualification of bidders*".

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- A supplier that holds certification to the Common Assessment Standard from a Recognised Assessment Body is deemed to meet the requirements for stage 1 pre-qualification. After confirming the supplier's certification, a contracting authority can focus solely on project specific questions relevant to the contract being procured, including whether the supplier meets any financial stability and insurance requirements.

- Suppliers that do **not** already hold certification to the Common Assessment Standard can get it from any of the Recognised Assessment Bodies. Alternatively, a contracting authority can ask them to complete relevant questions from the Common Assessment Standard and assess the responses themselves using the relevant assessment standards. The choice of questions used by a contracting authority will depend on the contract being procured.

Is it possible to view a supplier's pre-qualification data?

- Suppliers that have the Common Assessment Standard have been audited by a third-party organisation, meaning clients can rely on the certification.

- If specific data is required relevant to the contract being procured, then a contracting authority can request it from suppliers as part of stage 2 pre-qualification.

- A number of clients and contractors do have an arrangement in place with one or more of the Recognised Assessment Bodies to view suppliers' data gathered during the audit. Suppliers can also request that their key data is shared with the other Recognised Assessment Bodies so that it is visible to more clients and contractors. Further information about the data sharing system in place for the Common Assessment Standard can be found in our Data Sharing Overview.

How is the Common Assessment Standard kept up to date?

- The question set and assessment standards are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain fit for purpose, relevant and up to date. Version 4.0 of the Common Assessment Standard will be published in Q2 and include a new Building Safety section, ensuring it can be used to demonstrate companies have the organisational capability to fulfil their roles under the Building Safety Act.

- The process of reviewing the Common Assessment Standard is overseen by a dedicated group made up of representatives from across the industry, including public and private sector clients, contractors, suppliers and other key stakeholders. All suggested amendments are reviewed in line with agreed criteria to ensure they are relevant to stage 1 pre-qualification, capable of assessment, and supported by the industry.

- Any organisation or individual can suggest amendments to the Common Assessment Standard by completing this form.

Further Information

- Common Assessment Standard – Question Set
- Communications Tools
- Data Sharing – An Overview
- Recognised Assessment Bodies - List