

Making the transition to PQASSO 3rd edition: guidance for organisations transferring from 2nd edition

CES launched PQASSO 3rd edition on 25 June 2008. This document answers many of the questions that you, as a 2nd edition user, may have about the 3rd edition. In particular, it provides information on the differences between the two editions, and guidance on *when* and *how* you may want to transfer to the 3rd edition.

This guidance answers the following questions:

1. Why did CES develop PQASSO 3rd edition?
2. How was PQASSO 3rd edition developed?
3. What are the differences between PQASSO 2nd and 3rd editions?
4. How do I transfer from using PQASSO 2nd edition to PQASSO 3rd edition?
5. Will the training I received in implementing PQASSO still be valid?
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9. Will PQASSO mentors be able to train or support me in PQASSO 3rd edition?

1. Why did CES develop PQASSO 3rd edition?

The 2nd edition of PQASSO was launched in 2000. Since this time, the voluntary and community sector in the UK has experienced some of its fastest and most significant changes ever. For example, these are some of the changes:

- the sector has taken on an unprecedented role in delivering public services
- the sector is increasingly concerned with performance and accountability issues, including how it measures the differences it makes to people's lives
- the sector has had to respond to international concerns over climate change by introducing more sophisticated environmental sustainability practices
- more voluntary and community organisations now work in partnership with each other, and with public and private sector organisations and agencies.

Consistent with good practice, we have updated PQASSO to reflect these changes. Only by doing this could PQASSO continue to fully meet the diverse needs of the voluntary and community sector and its users.

2. How was PQASSO 3rd edition developed?

Work on PQASSO 3rd edition began in early 2007 with research into how the voluntary and community sector policy environment had changed since PQASSO 2nd edition was launched in 2000. At the same time CES conducted the largest and most comprehensive piece of research into PQASSO usage ever undertaken. The research included surveys, focus groups and interviews with PQASSO users, PQASSO mentors, other voluntary and community organisations, government agencies, regulators and funders. Following an analysis of this valuable data, CES revised the PQASSO 2nd edition standards and indicators to better reflect the sector's current needs. This early draft was subjected to detailed consultation with PQASSO mentors and specialist readers. We then carried out a comprehensive edit, technical review and redesign of the text, retaining PQASSO's essential features, but making it even more user-friendly.

3. What are the differences between PQASSO 2nd and 3rd editions?

PQASSO 2nd edition has been the most popular quality system in the voluntary and community sector. We have not changed anything in the 2nd edition unless it would bring real benefit. Overall, PQASSO 3rd edition is not radically different from its predecessor, and users will be reassured to find much that is familiar. However, many of the quality areas have been strengthened. Sometimes the number of indicators for each level has increased to reflect the growing complexity of the sector, but PQASSO 3rd edition remains straightforward and simple to use.

Technical changes

We have introduced a number of thematic and technical changes. Here is a summary of them:

- There is a sharper focus on the importance of outcomes. This is best demonstrated in quality area 12, *Results*, which is now more detailed and has been split into four sections – user results, people results, organisational results and community results. For an explanation of these changes see pages 16 and 17 of PQASSO 3rd edition.
- Quality area 11, *Monitoring and evaluation*, has been developed to correspond to the new elements within the *Results* quality area.
- The new quality area 3, *Management and leadership*, expands on the previous *Management* quality area to reinforce organisational leadership, which has become increasingly recognised as an important element in organisational quality.
- Quality area 9 in PQASSO 2nd edition, *Managing activities*, has disappeared as an identifiable quality area, and its different elements have been incorporated within other quality areas in PQASSO 3rd edition.
- There is more emphasis on how voluntary and community organisations communicate and promote their services and/or messages. This is best demonstrated by the introduction of the new quality area 9, *Communications and promotion*. Some of the elements of this new quality area were previously in quality area 10, *Networking and partnership* in PQASSO 2nd edition.

- Quality area 8, *Managing resources*, now has greater coverage of environmental and sustainability issues.
- The role of voluntary and community organisations in public service delivery has been given increased attention. This is reflected across a number of the quality areas.
- The ‘voice’ function of the sector, ie, campaigning and advocacy, has also been given increased attention. This is mainly found in quality area 9, *Communications and promotion*.
- Quality area 10, *Working with others*, now provides improved coverage of good practice in partnership working.
- What was known as ‘suggested evidence’ in PQASSO 2nd edition is now being called ‘sources of evidence’. This is because the sources of evidence reflect the possible or likely location of evidence, and will need to be explored to see whether the evidence does exist to demonstrate that the indicator has been met, and to what extent. For example, a *‘supervision timetable and action points’* or *‘memos with instructions’* are documents (or sources) where evidence may be found that *‘staff and volunteers get enough individual support and supervision to carry out their work effectively’* (see quality area 5, level 1).

Design changes

We have made a number of changes and developments to improve the user-friendliness of PQASSO 3rd edition.

- The new design is clean and well spaced to make sure PQASSO remains easy to use. We now have only one level of achievement per page, which reflects how people use PQASSO.
- The new introduction clearly outlines the process for implementing PQASSO, as well as providing information on other services and support available. We have also included a new section on frequently asked questions.
- We have numbered the indicators and sources of evidence for easy reference.
- Model templates help users plan an initial self-assessment, record evidence and action plan, and are now grouped together in a single section.
- There is a much more detailed and comprehensive glossary.

Text changes

As well as developing quality areas, we have also improved the way some standards, criteria and indicators are expressed. However, much will be familiar to 2nd edition users, and small text changes are unlikely to affect how well you are meeting the indicators and standards.

4. How do I transfer from using PQASSO 2nd edition to PQASSO 3rd edition?

PQASSO 2nd edition will remain a valid quality assurance system, and you are welcome to continue using it. However, you should consider that the 2nd edition is now eight years old and doesn’t reflect the major changes and developments that have happened in the voluntary and community sector since 2000. PQASSO 3rd edition does reflect these changes and developments, and will therefore ultimately

be of more benefit to your organisation and your users. So we would recommend that you plan *when* and *how* you will transfer to PQASSO 3rd edition.

When transferring to PQASSO 3rd edition we advise that your organisation carries out evidence-based self-assessments against the standards and indicators in all the quality areas of the new edition. PQASSO 2nd edition users will know that repeating self-assessments against quality areas is important because it ensures that your organisation remains 'fully met' against all the standards and indicators, even when things change over time. So, carrying out self-assessments against the updated standards and indicators in 3rd edition can fit into your cycle of re-assessment. Because so much of PQASSO 2nd edition is carried into the 3rd edition, your existing level of performance should transfer easily. However, for the new and substantially revised indicators, you may need a further cycle of action planning and improvement.

Every organisation has its own approach to implementing PQASSO, and your organisation should decide on an approach to transferring to 3rd edition which best fits the way that you currently work. Here are suggestions for alternative ways to begin self-assessing against the 3rd edition standards and indicators.

- Finish self-assessing against *all* the 2nd edition standards and indicators at your present level before moving on to self-assessing against the 3rd edition standards and indicators. Start the new round of self-assessments at the same level of PQASSO you have just completed in 2nd edition.
- Finish self-assessing against the 2nd edition quality area you are currently working on, and then begin self-assessing against a new quality area in PQASSO 3rd edition that you have not yet worked on. For example, if you were working through PQASSO in numerical order from quality area 1 to quality area 12, you might finish self-assessing against quality area 4 in the 2nd edition, then begin self-assessing against quality area 5 in the 3rd edition. When you have completed quality areas 5 to 12 in 3rd edition, you can return to quality area 1 in 3rd edition to complete the cycle.
- Stop using 2nd edition altogether and begin afresh with PQASSO 3rd edition.

Here are a number of things to consider when deciding *when* and *how* your organisation will transfer to PQASSO 3rd edition.

- There is a danger that staff and volunteers may feel de-motivated by the prospect of implementing a 'new PQASSO', especially after all their hard work on the 'old PQASSO'. Remind them that any progress made in PQASSO 2nd edition will automatically count towards PQASSO 3rd edition when they start self-assessing, so they will not be starting again from the beginning. It is also worth reminding them why your organisation is implementing PQASSO, ie, to improve the way you run the organisation and the quality of your services. PQASSO 3rd edition will do this even more efficiently and effectively than its predecessor.
- Think carefully about what resources you might need to manage the transition effectively and efficiently. Build this into your overall plan for PQASSO implementation.
- Remember that PQASSO is about improving your organisation, not about racing to complete all 12 quality areas! Research shows that organisations

that take their time implementing PQASSO usually gain the most benefit from it. The same principle applies to transferring to PQASSO 3rd edition, so manage the process gradually over time.

5. Will the training I received in implementing PQASSO still be valid?

Yes it will. You may have received training in how to implement PQASSO from CES or a licensed PQASSO mentor. The training you received was about the process of implementing PQASSO and the skills required to interpret and self-assess against the standards and indicators. The process of implementing PQASSO 3rd edition is exactly the same as it was for PQASSO 2nd edition. Similarly, the skills required to interpret and self-assess against standards and indicators are exactly the same for the 2nd and 3rd editions. So your training remains entirely relevant. You will not need to be re-trained.

If you have a query about a specific PQASSO 3rd edition standard or indicator then please contact us and we will be happy to advise you.

6. Will CES still provide technical advice on PQASSO 2nd edition?

We will continue to provide technical advice on any queries you may have specifically in relation to PQASSO 2nd edition.

7. Is there a new PQASSO 3rd edition CD-ROM? What does this mean for 2nd edition CD-ROM users?

We have developed a brand new CD-ROM to be used alongside the PQASSO 3rd edition workpack. The new 3rd edition CD-ROM is an information management tool to help you plan and monitor your overall progress in implementing PQASSO, and to better manage the self-assessment process, record evidence and develop action plans. It also enables you to print PQASSO records in a variety of formats. The new CD-ROM also includes features to help your organisation prepare for a PQASSO Quality Mark peer review, should you want to. The 3rd edition CD-ROM is much more user-friendly than its predecessor.

The new 3rd edition CD-ROM costs £54.00 including VAT (plus postage and packing). It can be bought via the CES website. There is a discount available for 2nd edition CD-ROM users.

The 3rd edition CD-ROM is not designed to work alongside the PQASSO 2nd edition workpack and, similarly, the 2nd edition CD-ROM will not work alongside the PQASSO 3rd edition workpack. Because many of the 2nd edition standards and indicators have been updated, it will not be possible to transfer data from the 2nd edition CD-ROM to the 3rd edition CD-ROM.

8. Will PQASSO Quality Mark peer reviews be carried out against PQASSO 2nd or 3rd edition?

PQASSO Quality Mark is the new optional accreditation service for PQASSO – for more information visit www.pqassoqualitymark.org.uk. All PQASSO Quality Mark peer reviews will be against PQASSO 2nd edition until early 2009. From early 2009 organisations will get a choice as to which edition of PQASSO they are peer reviewed against. We have not yet determined any future point after which peer reviews will be restricted to 3rd edition users.

9. Will PQASSO mentors be able to train or support me in PQASSO 3rd edition?

PQASSO mentors are a nationwide network of professionals who are licensed by CES to train and support front-line organisations in implementing PQASSO – see www.ces-vol.org.uk for more information. PQASSO mentors have been fully briefed by CES in PQASSO 3rd edition, so they are able to offer support to organisations in implementing both 2nd and 3rd editions of PQASSO. However, you should be aware that different mentors offer different kinds of support depending on the needs of the organisations they normally work with. We would advise you to discuss any specific needs or requirements you may have with a PQASSO mentor before attending their training courses or support sessions. This will clarify whether they are able to meet your expectations.

What next?

We are proud to have released PQASSO 3rd edition, and pleased to have been able to incorporate the new elements that PQASSO users told us were important to them. We believe that the new edition will build on the successes of the 2nd edition, and that PQASSO will continue to be the most popular quality system in the UK voluntary and community sector. We hope that it will bring increased benefits to your organisation, and we wish you the best of luck on the exciting journey ahead of implementation!

If you have any questions about PQASSO 3rd edition that are not covered by this guidance then please contact CES on 020 7713 5722 or at enquiries@ces-vol.org.uk.

CES would like to thank the licensed PQASSO mentors who gave their advice on the information to be contained within this guidance.