



Self-assessment toolkit

Getting started

1. The first thing you need to do is decide which area of FOI practice you will assess. This may be driven by a regular or programmed review, a suggestion from the Scottish Information Commissioner, or simply a recurring issue that comes up at review or appeal.
2. See [Self-assessment toolkit web page](#) for a full list of the modules and resources.
3. To carry out a self-assessment you will need the following documents:
 - (i) **Guide: how to carry out a self-assessment.** This detailed guide explains the principles underpinning self-assessment of good FOI practice, and how to carry out an assessment. This guide applies to **all** the modules.
 - (ii) The relevant module's **Standards and Assessment Criteria** document. This sets out the standards and criteria against which you will carry out the assessment and evaluate achievement. This document is **specific** to the practice area being assessed.
 - (iii) The relevant module's **Assessment Questions and Evidence Grid** document. This contains a grid in which you can record your findings, sources of evidence and evaluation against each of the assessment questions. The questions are grouped by characteristic and you must answer them all. This document is **specific** to the practice area being assessed. As it is a working document you may wish to customise it to your authority's style and add your own logo.
 - (iv) The **Summary of Findings template.** This document contains a template format for you to summarise the main findings of the assessment and your evaluation of your authority's performance, both against each of the characteristics of good practice, and overall. This template can be used for **all** the modules. As it is a working document you may wish to customise it to your authority's style and add your own logo.
 - (v) The **Improvement Action Plan template.** This document contains a template action plan. This template can be used for **all** the modules. As it is a working document you may wish to customise it to your authority's style and add your own logo.
4. Before you start your self-assessment it is recommended you read the **Guide: How to carry out an FOI self-assessment** and set up your self-assessment documents. Even if you have carried out a self-assessment before, we recommend you re-read the Guide as we update and improve the toolkit in light of experience and user-feedback.

5. It is good practice to create a plan (or timetable) setting out milestones for the self-assessment e.g., start and finish dates; date for completion of evidence-gathering and evaluation; date for completion of summary of findings and action plan; reporting to managers. Milestones will vary from authority to authority, dependent on your internal reporting arrangements and who is leading or driving the self-assessment.

Methodology

6. The self-assessment methodology is very straightforward. Once you have decided which area of FOI practice you are assessing:
 - (i) You familiarise yourself with the guide **How to carry out an FOI self-assessment** and set up your module documentation.
 - (ii) You familiarise yourself with the **Standards and Assessment Criteria** document for the module.
 - (iii) You answer a series of questions about your organisation's approach, gathering supporting evidence as you go. You record the responses in the **Assessment Questions and Evidence Grid** document.
 - (iv) You then review your responses to identify good practice and areas for improvement, reflecting on the *characteristics of good practice* set out in the module **Standards and Assessment Criteria** document.
 - (v) You summarise your findings in the **Summary of Findings** document and assess performance against the *Effectiveness performance matrix* in the module's **Standards and Assessment Criteria** document. This will give you a rating, ranging from excellent to unsatisfactory, for each good practice characteristic and a snapshot of how your authority is doing. It also enables you to give your authority an overall rating.
 - (vi) You decide whether improvement is required and, if so, the standard you wish to achieve and the actions you need to take. These are summarised in your **Improvement Action Plan**.
 - (vii) You then deliver your action plan and monitor whether it has achieved the desired change.
7. If you have questions or would like to talk through any aspect of your self-assessment we are here to help; our details are below.

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