



Introduction for Quest Stretch Facility Management and Active Communities September 2016

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Introduction to Quest Stretch

Quest Stretch is a response to the desire to provide additional challenges in Quest to enable facilities, organisations and teams to better demonstrate their impact on local communities and local priority outcomes. Additionally, it allows facilities, organisations and teams to demonstrate their contribution to the current national agenda for sports and leisure as well as being confident that excellent service has been embedded in their organisation.

Facilities and teams currently scoring Excellent can choose to go for Quest Stretch when they come up for renewal. For both Quest for Facilities and Active Communities there are two stages to Quest Stretch. A facility or a team have to pass stage one before they can move onto stage two, the validation day. If a facility or a team do not pass stage one, they can go through Day 2 of a Plus assessment at no additional cost. Both stage 1 and stage 2 are conducted in the first year, with no assessment in year 2.

The cost of Quest Stretch for both Quest for Facilities and Active Communities is £1950 plus VAT. The registration lasts 2 years.

Timelines

- Facility/ Teams Renewal month – Stage 1 completed.
- Following month – Preparation day (Optional) / Active Communities to have partnership survey (part of the process).
- Following month (2 months after Stage 1) – Stage 2/ Validation Day completed.

Stage 1 – Quest for Facilities

An Unannounced Quest 2016 Entry Assessment (and a Mystery Visit) will take place in the month the facility is due their registration. The Quest 2016 core modules are as follows

- Operations 1 Cleaning and Housekeeping.
- Operations 2 Maintenance and Equipment.
- Operations 3 Environment.
- Operations 4 Health and Safety Declaration.
- People 1 Customer Experience.
- People 2 Team and Skills Development.
- Purpose 5 Planning to Improve.
- Purpose 6 Community Outcomes .



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The facility can provide up to 3 dates in the given month that the Assessor cannot visit. During the Unannounced Entry Assessment, the facility must achieve all three points below to proceed onto the Validation day

1. Pass the Health and Safety module.
2. Score Excellent in at least 4 other modules.
3. Achieve an overall banding of Excellent.

If the facility fails the Health and Safety module, they have 5 days to get the necessary paperwork directly to the Assessor to enable them to pass. If the facility does need to supply the paperwork post assessment the work must have been conducted before the assessment. If the work has not been completed, then the facility cannot progress to the validation day.

The Unannounced Entry Assessment can take place any day of the week. When the Assessor arrives, they will agree the schedule for the day with the team in the opening meeting. The Mystery Visit will be used by the Assessor to help guide some questioning.

Staff that are invited to be involved in the assessment are the Centre Manager and any staff based on site for more than one day a week. Remote staff, such as Regional Managers, would not be invited to join in the day.

The facility will be given a provisional banding by the Assessor within 3 days of the assessment, this will be confirmed by the Quest office once the report has been quality checked. If a facility does not achieve Excellent on the Unannounced Entry Assessment, they can then choose to undergo the second day of a Plus assessment to allow the facility to retain its accreditation free of charge. This would be organised through the office and the second day must take place within 2 months of the Unannounced Entry Assessment.

Stage 1 – Active Communities

All teams wishing to go for Active Communities Stretch will have a Quest 2016 Active Communities Entry Assessment. The core modules are as follows

- People 3 People and Skill Development.
- Delivery 2 Partnership and Collaboration.
- Delivery 3 Quality Assurance.
- Delivery 4 Insight and Marketing.
- Delivery 5 Increasing Participation and Reducing Inactivity.
- Purpose 8 Continuous Improvement.
- Purpose 9 Active Community Outcomes.

This assessment will take place within the teams' due month and the team will be given a two week notice period before the assessment to allow time for timetabling and planning. The team must achieve Excellent overall in this Entry Assessment. The team can provide up to 3 dates in the given month that the Assessor cannot visit.

The team will be given a provisional banding by the Assessor within 3 days of the assessment, this will be confirmed by the Quest office once the report has been quality checked. If a team fails to achieve Excellent, they can then choose to undergo the second day of a Plus assessment to allow the team to



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retain its accreditation free of charge. This would be organised through the Quest office and the second day must take place within 2 months of the Assessment.

The month following the Quest 2016 Active Communities Entry Assessment the team will be sent a partnership survey by the Quest office for them to distribute to their partner database. There needs to be a minimum of 25 valid email addresses of partners. The survey will be live online for 2 weeks and it is recommended that a reminder invite email is sent after 1 week. When the survey finishes the team will be sent a link to use to view their full report.

Stage 2 – Validation for both Quest for Facilities and Active Communities

The Validation day is an independent review and challenge of the self-assessment and improvement planning process by examining a sample of the organisations own judgements about their current performance made against a benchmark. The review is done by interviewing managers, staff, partners, clients, and customers and reviewing some of the documentary evidence. This information is then used to challenge or confirm judgements made, so enhancing the self-assessment results and sharpening the improvement planning process.

The facility or team will be assessed against one compulsory module and one choice module from the list below.

Quest for Facilities

1. Team and Skill Development.
2. Contribution to Health & Well-being.
3. Increasing Participation and reducing Inactivity.
4. Programming for All.
5. Partnership and Collaboration.
- 6. Measuring Impacts and Outcomes (compulsory).**

Active Communities

1. Working in the Community.
2. Engaging with Disabled People.
3. Insight.
4. Leadership.
5. Contribution to Health and Wellbeing.
- 6. Increasing Participation and Reducing Inactivity (compulsory).**

Guidance for the above modules can be found in the guidance area of the website. Additionally, Active Communities should use the second tab on the AC wheel to help them prepare.

The Quest for Facilities Validation will comprise of the following –

(Please note a more precise timetable will be decided by your Validator once the Validation day has been booked in)

- Opening meeting.
- Introduction of key staff.
- Presentation of Measuring Impacts and Outcomes module.
- Presentation of choice module.
- Stake holder focus group for both modules including any individual interviews in person or over the phone.
- Meeting with Local Authority client or Lead Councillor.
- Customer/ user focus group.
- Closing meeting.



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The Quest for Active Communities Validation will comprise of the following –

(Please note a more precise timetable will be decided by your Validator once the Validation day has been booked in)

- Presentation on Increasing Participation and Reducing Inactivity and Assessment of Module with emphasis on how the inactive are engaged (applicants should refer to Module GPLUS 31-Engaging with the Inactive).
- Validation of Portfolio of Evidence provided for the 2 modules.
- Partner Survey and selected Focus Group to determine continuous improvement, innovation, leadership and quality of service provided.
- Staff Focus Group.
- Choice Module Assessment.
- Closing Meeting.

How the Validation Day works

By the time a facility or team have achieved Excellent they will already be working to a very high standard and can be proud of its recognition at this level under Quest Plus. Quest Stretch has been designed to do this and to achieve recognition as Outstanding a facility or team will need to show they are really exceptional and do in fact “stand out” from their colleagues. As a result facilities and teams will need to respond to the challenge in three ways: -

- Passing Stage 1.
- Demonstrating they are outstanding against an uplifted benchmark (module).
- By achieving the designation through a rigorous process of self-assessment and external validation.

To help you consider if you are ready; we have defined what we think an outstanding organisation might look like.

Outstanding means that the facility or team have exceeded excellence (they ‘wow’d the Validator) and demonstrates most if not all of the following traits:

- It is motivated to continually improve and aspires to be better. It is self-aware of its own strengths and weaknesses and is both open to challenge and shares its learning with others. It is confident and prepared to fail in its attempts to innovate.
- It is a mature, resilient organisation with a history of good leadership, management and achievement, it’s good practices are comprehensive, consistent, habitual and sustainable. There is a culture of empowerment embedded throughout the organisation.
- The process of aligning values, vision, mission, resources and behaviours has been in place for some time leading to a track record of achieving bottom line results whilst continually improving performance with strong evidence of impact.
- It is innovative and pioneering and has continually responded by solving problems, adapting and changing. It will have influenced partners and stakeholders in their decision making processes. It can demonstrate cutting edge processes and activities and so stands out compared to other similar organisations.
- The performance and contribution of the facility or team is measured, recognised and well known and the organisation has a reputation for what it does, having both internal apostles and external advocates.



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- Above all it is exceptional, surprising and has clear unique selling points.

The Self-Assessment and Validation Process

Mature and well managed facilities and teams aspiring to self-improve will already be open to the concepts of self-assessment and external challenge. They are immediately recognised as organisations that are confident about honestly assessing their own performance against external benchmarks and other organisations and are open to being regularly and systematically challenged by their peers as part of their commitment to continuous improvement.

Self-Assessment and self-improvement are now recognised as the 'direction of travel' in terms of public service reform and improvement in most sectors. Self-Assessment leads to increased ownership (and therefore implementation of) the improvement activity, it helps to develop continuous improvement habits and involves many people and partners in the process. External challenge remains important for ensuring that the organisation acts on accurate and incisive areas for improvement.

Validation is:

The independent review and challenge of the self-assessment and improvement planning process by examining a sample of the organisations own judgements about their current performance made against a benchmark. The review is done by interviewing managers, staff, partners, clients, and customers and reviewing some of the documentary evidence. This information is then used to challenge or confirm judgements made so enhancing the self-assessment results and sharpening the improvement planning process.

Validation is not:

- Consultancy.
- Value judgement.
- Staff performance review.
- Criticism.
- Negative.
- Because "we do it better".
- An 'audit' or 'inspection'.
- A paper-chase.
- Trophy-hunting.

As a result of the validation, the facility or team can adjust the judgements made, review strengths and areas for improvement, and revise their improvement plan without losing *ownership*; it is still their work. The facility and team gain insight into the effectiveness of their self-assessment and improvement planning process and the continuous improvement values and habits held by the them.

The Validation can also develop recognition and confidence from internal or external partners that self-assessment and improvement planning has been carried out in a comprehensive way, with an adequate degree of objectivity and transparency, and therefore that the facility and team will continue to improve.



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Planning for the Self-Assessment and Validation

Once you have successfully completed (and gained Excellent overall and in 4 out of 7 modules for Active Communities or in 5 out of 8 modules for Quest for Facilities, including Health and Safety module) you will be able to commence your self-assessment (earlier if you wish to and are confident about Stage 1).

Using the outstanding benchmark for your chosen themes and in reference to the Quest Plus benchmark you will be required to carry out a self-assessment which enables you to tell us why you believe your facility or team is outstanding in no more than 2500 words. You will need to produce a 2500-word submission for each module. Facilities and Teams who have been through this before have found this difficult to achieve in less than 1500 words.

The evidence is based around the Plan, Do, Measure, Review and Impact aims mentioned in the guidance notes, and the facility or team can use the points highlighted in the guidance notes to direct them. The submissions need to include evidence of each aim. The documents do not need to be presented in any special way but should flow like an essay.

In addition to this, the facility or team are allowed 5 one-sided A4 pages as appendices for each module. This appendix should identify the key evidence used to justify judgements when the self-assessment is carried out. In previous submissions these have been graphs or tables to basically back up any points they have made in the submissions. You can also produce a reference document listing other documents.

You will also need to supply a list of key individuals including staff and stakeholders who you think we should talk to substantiate your story. The Validator may choose to talk to them beforehand or when they visit your facility or team.

These documents will form the basis for the validation process where we will seek to confirm your assessment by testing it against the evidence you identify and the views of stakeholders and those working for you and with your facility and team.

The two self-assessment documents need to be submitted by 5pm at least 7 days before your Validation date.

Carrying out the Self-Assessment

It is important that there is a clear process for carrying out the self-assessment. Ideally it should be carried out by a cross section of people working in the facility or team along with clients, partners and where relevant elected members responsible for the services provided by your organisation where this is appropriate. ***Above all it is important to avoid the most senior management team simply sitting in a closed room assessing themselves.***

The self-assessment is about making informed and shared judgements against the criteria set out in the benchmark based on an honest and open assessment but also challenging yourself to identify the evidence that justifies your judgement. The evidence should be recorded at the time so that the Validators can see the evidence that underpins your judgement. If there are specific improvements still required in the area being assessed these should also be recorded as the basis of your improvement plan. As well as forming the basis of your submission the self- assessment can also be used to:



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- Identify areas of strength and of weakness.
- Identify, and explain, different people's and external stakeholder's interpretations of the service's current position.
- Provide a basis for discussions with managers, staff, partners, and other stakeholders about the way forward for the service.
- Set a baseline to be used for subsequent discussions about how or where the service has improved.
- Set a baseline that can be used for in-depth comparisons with other service providers to share learning.
- Provide evidence of the service's commitment to service improvement and its ability to improve.

Before commencing there should be a clear plan and process for carrying out the self-assessment with clear responsibilities and timescales. This should include:

- Fully briefing the staff and partners.
- Establishing and briefing the Self-Assessment Team.
- Establishing how the Self-Assessment will be done.
- Establishing how documentary evidence will be identified and recorded.
- Planning the number and timing of Self-Assessment sessions.
- Planning for the external validation process.

When you have completed your Self-Assessment on your modules please send it to your Validator at least 7 days before the Validation.

Carrying out the validation

A Validator will be identified to you well in advance to help you through the process. They will be a person with experience of managing services and with experience of the themes under review.

Look on the Validator as a critical friend and an integral part of the process rather than as an Assessor coming to mark you. Their goal is to help you achieve an accurate self-assessment and add value to the improvement plan.

During the validation they will work towards creating the right relationship with you by being:

- Interested.
- Enthusiastic about the services.
- Courteous.
- Helpful.
- Trusting.
- Calm.
- Impartial.
- Not defensive or offensive.



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Before you commence the Self-Assessment, they will contact you by phone to ensure you are setting off in the right direction. In particular, they will want to be sure you are clear about how you intend to:

- Plan the self-assessment.
- Scope the self-assessment.
- Collect and record the evidence.
- Provide what needs to be submitted.
- Meet timescales and deadlines.
- Prepare for the onsite visit.

The purpose of this first stage is to ensure the self-assessment process will be robust enough to enable the validation onsite to take place effectively and efficiently.

The second stage will take place within a few weeks of the self-assessment and take place primarily on site. The Validator will want to be sure that:

- The self-assessment has been properly carried out and a robust case has been made and evidenced.
- Objective and realistic judgements about the facility have been presented that justify the label of outstanding.
- Any further improvement priorities are appropriate and realistic.

This will involve two elements:

- Checking that the key evidence presented in the appendix supports the judgements.
- Reality checking some of the evidence and judgements with staff, partners, senior managers and if possible elected members where appropriate.

a) Evidenced-based judgements

It will not be possible to rigorously check every statement against the evidence provided in the time allocated. The person carrying out the validation will not want to see reams of files, documents and paper. When carrying out the self-assessment the evidence used to make the judgements will need to be identified and brought together in the appendix of 5 one-sided A4 pages for each module. A cross-section of checks will be made across both themes.

b) Reality checks

It will not be possible to carry out extensive reality checks. Checks will be made by meeting up to three focus groups:

- Staff focus group.
- Stakeholder focus group.
- Senior management and elected member focus group.



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c) Improvement planning

The final stage is to ensure that any further improvement priorities that have emerged from the self-assessment are appropriate and realistic.

Coming to a final judgement

It is hoped that the validation process will enable a shared conclusion to emerge. Discussions between the Validator and the facility management or team will seek to agree on any areas where the evidence or the reality checks fail to substantiate the views set out in the self-assessment.

At the end of the day the Validator will give a provisional outcome, if they are unable to do this on the day they will provide a provisional outcome within 5 days of the Validation. The Validator will then write the report and submit to the Quest office where it will be quality checked. The report will be sent to the facility or team within 28 days of the Validation, providing payment has been received.

Afterwards

Facilities or teams identified as outstanding will hold the designation for a period of two years without any further assessment providing nothing significant changes in terms of the management of the facility or team which can be construed as undermining the designation. It is hoped that facilities or teams will then become actively involved in sharing their learning with others through a variety of events and activities.

If unsuccessful, the facility or team will currently hold no score until they have Day 2 of a Quest Plus assessment to continue their Quest accreditation. They can go for stretch again after 12 months if they retain their Excellent rating.

Once the process is successfully completed we hope your story will be used as the basis of a case study from which others can learn from your journey.

Additional Stretch Training

Quest runs open training courses three times a year. Please contact the Quest team directly for dates, location and prices for the training below

1. Unannounced Day Training
Looks at how to prepare your facility and the team at your facility for the Unannounced Entry Assessment.
2. Validation Day Training
Gives information of what is a Stretch Assessment, how to write a good submission, how to prepare for the Validation day and what to expect from the Validation day

Additionally, you can pay to have your own Preparation day. We run two types of preparation day, the type you wish to go for is dependent on your needs. This is something decided between you and the Validator.

1. The day is aimed at frontline staff and people who have not been through Stretch before. It will give an overview of the Validation day and start drawing out key information. We recommend this day takes place before Stage 1.



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2. The day is aimed at managers and people who have been through Quest before. It is much more about writing the validation document. We recommend this takes place in the month in between Stage 1 and Stage 2.