

CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE

**Please refer to the “Capability Assessment Declaration”
document also available in downloadable form**

**Please refer to the “Capability Assessment Elements”
document also available in downloadable form**

After you have read the guidance and questions, we strongly encourage you to contact an Assessment Engineer in the Profiling Department on 01224 337533 to discuss your approach to the completion of a submission BEFORE you commence. Our experience has shown that this initial clarification is beneficial to both parties and eliminates wasted effort.

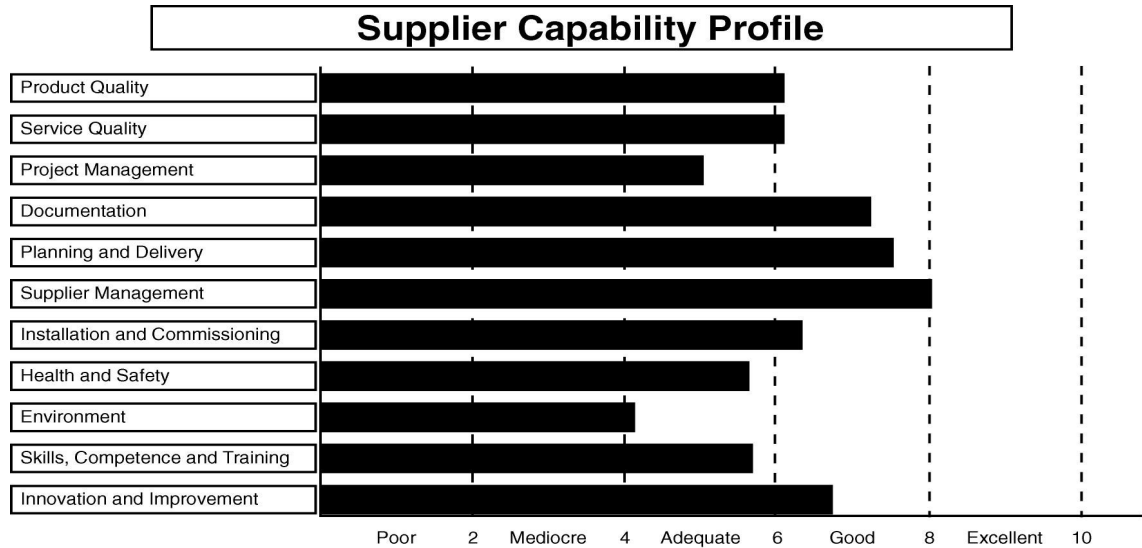
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ABOUT THE CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

1. Introduction

The **Capability Assessment** is an in-depth assessment conducted by FPAL from responses provided to a Capability Profiling Questionnaire (CPQ) and, once completed removes the need for repetitive and generic pre-qualification activity within the industry. It should be viewed as a pre-qualification of your company to **all FPAL Registered Purchasers**.

The assessment is carried out across a maximum of 11 business characteristics or elements (although not all elements may apply to a specific business) with the results being expressed as a profile display, as shown below:



‡ Used for Performance Feedback only

There is no pass, fail or overall single score as a result of the assessment. It is designed to represent your company’s capabilities and to allow your clients to decide themselves on an acceptable standard for the work being considered.

Capability assessments appraise the existence and effectiveness of controls and management systems in place supporting the business activities or products being offered by a Supplier; they **do not judge the quality, integrity or effectiveness of the individual products or services being offered.**

Completion of the CPQ by **all Registered Suppliers** will provide a cost-effective method of promoting company capabilities **to all FPAL Registered Purchasers**. If Suppliers do not complete a CPQ submission, they are requiring their clients to do their pre-qualification independently in order to include those Suppliers in a bid list.

2. How does it work?

- Suppliers are invited to complete a CPQ submission after becoming fully registered.
- Suppliers complete their CPQ submission and return it to FPAL for evaluation.
- FPAL completes an evaluation of the submission and prepares a Capability Profile. This profile is supported by a benchmark facility to help the Supplier better understand the acceptability of the FPAL scores.
- FPAL makes the evaluation results available to the Supplier for acceptance prior to release on the database.

- Suppliers review their evaluations and either accept them and allow the data to be released on the database, or seek clarification and, if necessary make a re-submission. At worst, Suppliers may suppress the results in part or in total. **ONLY AGREED AND ACCEPTED DATA IS MADE AVAILABLE TO REGISTERED PURCHASERS ON THE DATABASE.**
- FPAL releases the data to registered Purchasers following a Supplier's acceptance of the evaluation.
- The evaluation will survive for a maximum of 3 years, but should be updated by the Supplier at any time if circumstances change.

3. Why is it needed?

Our registered Purchasers use the completed Capability Profiles as one of their key filtering tools to differentiate and understand the companies they are preparing to do business with.

The Capability Assessment forms part of a standard industry approach that minimises delays when new jobs are contracted. It also eliminates the preparation, dispatch and assessment of comprehensive pre-qualification exercises every time a tender is issued by a specific registered Purchaser. It is based on the concept of creating a single industry assessment of a Supplier on a structured and agreed basis, and then sharing the result with interested parties.

For each non-completion by a Supplier of this one-time industry assessment each registered Purchaser is required to undertake its own similar assessment at an additional cost to both parties.

Registered Purchasers frequently state that they are unwilling to spend this time and cost for the purpose of pre-qualifying a Supplier for their bid lists. It is becoming mandatory that Suppliers complete and keep an up-to-date Capability Profile in order to be considered for an invitation to tender (ITT).

All registered Purchasers have access to the information registered with FPAL (unless permission is specifically withheld) and should avoid duplication the questions when making their own enquiries.

If you find that you are required to provide similar information repeatedly to our registered Purchasers, please bring this to their attention or, alternatively, provide details direct to First Point Assessment Limited who will take up the issue with the relevant registered Purchaser in an appropriate way.

Typical Supplier benefits are:

- To understand how your clients are assessing you.
- To identify the extent that appropriate controls and systems exist in your own organisation, that are relevant to the industry.
- To highlight business areas where improvement action and review may be required.
- Use the benchmarking to provide a focus and impetus for improvement actions.
- As part of an internal communication tool.
- As part of your marketing efforts.

Typical Purchaser benefits are:

- To access the information whenever they are considering placing work.
- To eliminate doing their own costly and repetitive pre-qualification exercises and only do job-specific pre-qualification.
- To use the scores in a search to highlight Suppliers' strengths and weaknesses and to identify where they may require to give additional support.
- To filter out those companies who are not suitable for a particular job.

4. What type of response is FPAL looking for?

The response is a corporate submission and should reflect your capabilities against **all** of the products and services for which your company has registered. You should only answer the elements relevant to your business.

The questionnaire is designed to cover all Supplier activities and is split into eleven elements. Some of the questions have several parts and you are advised to consider all of them. Inputs from several people from different disciplines, departments, divisions or locations are often required to provide a full submission.

Guidelines are provided at the start of each element to help you to decide if the element is applicable to your company based on the range of products/services you are offering.

Where used in the questionnaire the following meanings are implied:

- "Describe"** Response to a single question should be no longer than one page.
- "List"** Only elaborate on the content of an item listed where considered important.
- "Outline"** A few sentences (no more than 100 words in total).
- "Evidence"** Where the question requests supporting documentation by way of an extract or an example, please ensure that the document carries a reference to the question.

The following points are given to help you in the format of your submission:

- Normally the response is a formal submission presented in a binder (standard ring or lever-arch).
- Each question response should have the question number clearly indicated.
- Any appendices should be clearly marked with the question number and should be cross-referenced in the question.
- Whilst we are looking for supporting material, this will not normally include copies of complete manuals or procedures. Where confidentiality is an issue, it is acceptable to block out certain information e.g. a person's name on an accident report.
- Answer the question - do not include any non-relevant information to the question.
- Double sided printing is acceptable.
- Do not use plastic wallets unless absolutely necessary e.g. for items that cannot be punched.

If you believe an individual question in any of the elements is not relevant, please indicate as "N/A" (not applicable) and provide a brief explanation of why you consider it so.

5. Do I get credit for external system certification?

Yes. The FPAL Capability Assessment process is based on two inputs:

- A documented submission.
- Management system verification by an accredited body.

To accomplish this, Suppliers submit a response to the CPQ (Capability Profile Questionnaire) comprising:

- Written answers to specific questions.
- Documentary evidence to support the written responses (as guided by the CPQ), and
- Evidence of external management system verification in the form of certification from nationally accredited bodies.

Certification schemes are:

- ISO9001 and ISO14001 where the certification body is accredited by the appropriate national body (UKAS in the case of UK bodies),
- OHSAS18001 - any mutually recognised competent body,
- IIP (Investors in People) - UK only,
- Sector Skills Council (SSC), Industry Training Board (ITB) - UK only.

Responses are scored on three levels, with maxima of 6, 8 or 10:

- Answers that may be verified as part of a nationally recognised certification scheme (ISO 9001 and ISO 14001) score a maximum of 6 (non-certified or non-accredited certification) or 8 (accredited certification); in practice, submissions supported by accredited certificates do not need answers to these questions – described as “exemptions” in the various elements.
- Responses that are not subject to surveillance visits through one of the aforementioned national certification schemes, and for which documentary evidence alone is not considered sufficient to award scores in the “excellent” band, score a maximum of 8. Note: certification to the non-accredited schemes (currently OHSAS18001, IIP and NTO) will be used to support appropriate responses and may, where indicated in the questionnaire, be submitted in lieu of a full written response.
- Responses whereby supporting documentation is considered capable of providing adequate verification are capable of scoring 10.

The certificate must cover the entire range of product/service categories and appropriate locations for which you have registered, for you to have exemption from responding to particular questions as indicated in the appropriate element of the questionnaire. Where your certification or approval does not cover all sites or product/service categories listed in your registration data, you **must** answer the questions for those products/services or sites which are not covered.

In the case of Safety Management System certification, provision of a copy of your certificate with your submission will be taken into account when evaluating your submission but, at this time, there are no exemptions from answering any of the questions.

6. When can a Capability Profile be updated?

A Supplier can update the profile at any time by undertaking a full or partial re-assessment following significant changes to practices, systems or controls.

Suppliers are responsible for ensuring their profile is representative of their capabilities at all times.

The profile is considered valid for a maximum of 3 years since initial release or last full update. FPAL will remove the profile from the database after this period and add a comment that the profile has “expired”.

7. How do the weightings work?

A nominal weighting assigned to each question so that the total weighting for each element is 10. The maximum weighted score for any element is designed to be around 8.5.

In the event that individual questions are accepted by FPAL as not applicable, the process ensures that the weightings associated with such questions are appropriately redistributed, thus ensuring a profile score relevant to the scope of work for which you have registered.

Whilst some improvement related questions within individual elements may be 0 (zero) weighted, you should note that the scores allocated to such questions count as part of the assessment of other elements e.g. 'Innovation and Improvement' element 11. Additionally some questions contribute to their own element as well as to others.

8. How are the responses assessed?

The evaluation is based on the submission provided and uses formally established evaluation criteria developed and agreed by industry workgroups.

9. What if I am not happy with my profile?

If efforts to reach agreement with Assessment Engineers are unsuccessful, you have the opportunity to suppress individual elements and/or add free text comments that registered Purchasers can see to help understand why agreement was not reached. You are strongly encouraged to consider release with annotated comments rather than total suppression, which could generate misunderstandings by registered Purchasers on the reasons for suppression.

If you have further difficulties in understanding or accepting your assessment, you should write to the Operations Manager, FPAL, or, in extreme cases, the Chief Executive.

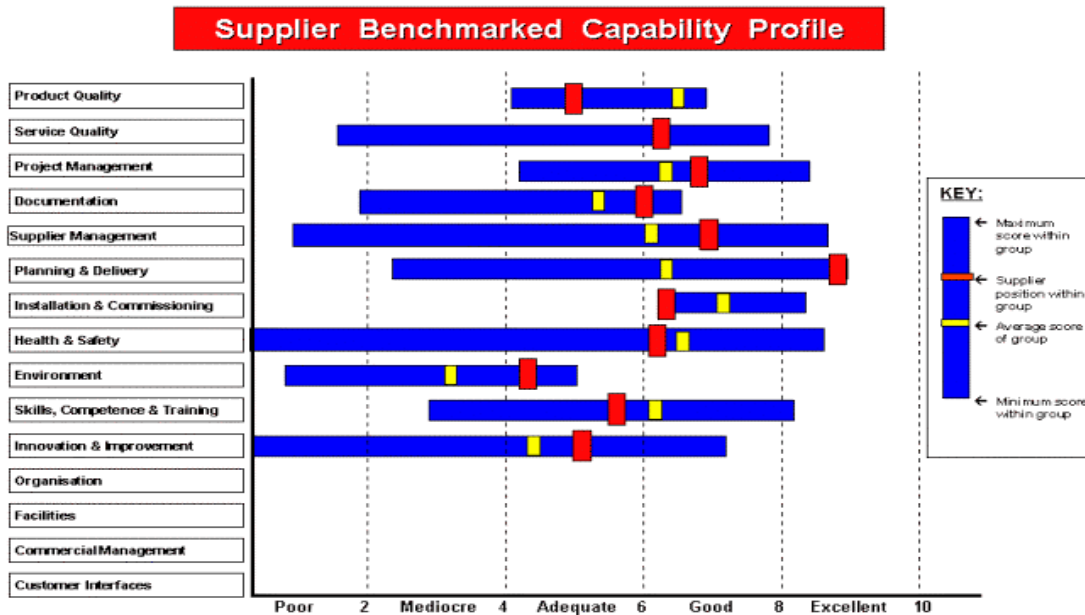
10. What Benchmarking is available?

A Supplier must have participated in either Capability Profiling or Performance Feedback, or both, for the Benchmarking options to be available for use.

Standard Benchmarking, showing the Supplier's position in relation to other Suppliers registered for a similar Product Code, is available via the database within the profiles selection box in the registration elements menu bar within Supplier Own Data option. (See illustrative graphic below).

In addition, **twice a year**, Suppliers can nominate to carry out **Selective Benchmarking**. This facility is available under the Edit Benchmark Suppliers option on the main menu. This operates with a minimum of SIX Suppliers all of which must have also participated in Capability Profiling and / or Performance Feedback to allow them to be considered for Benchmarking (these would normally be known competitors of similar products and/or services).

The specific Supplier Benchmarking facility is not available to FPAL Purchasers as part of their access to the system - it is a Supplier only feature. However, Purchasers can benchmark their own performance in a similar manner.



11. Verify

An option exists for Suppliers and Purchasers to request a **Verified Assessment** that includes an on-site verification visit e.g. Health and Safety element. This involves a re-assessment of the submission and a site visit. A verify visit results in a more detailed report being made available to the requesting Purchaser as well as a Verified Profile for the applicable elements being made available to all Purchasers.

12. Where can I get help?

Telephone: 01224 337533
E-mail: profiling@fpal.com

Copies of this document and its contents may be printed from our website www.fpal.com under the FPAL Services and Forms section.

After you have read the guidance and questions, we strongly encourage you to contact an Assessment Engineer in the Profiling Department to discuss your approach to completion of your submission BEFORE you commence. Our experience has shown that this initial clarification is beneficial to both parties and eliminates wasted effort.

13. What are the administration arrangements?

Your completed submission, including the signed declaration, should be returned to FPAL at the following address:

First Point Assessment Limited
Profiling Department
7 Burnbank Business Centre
Souterhead Road
Altens
ABERDEEN
United Kingdom
AB12 3LF

A copy of the full submission will be kept at the FPAL offices throughout the three-year validity period on the database. Approximately one month following the expiry of the profile, or the release of a new one, the submission will be confidentially destroyed.