Ex-post assessment template

Using the Policy Quality Framework to assess papers for the quality of analysis and advice
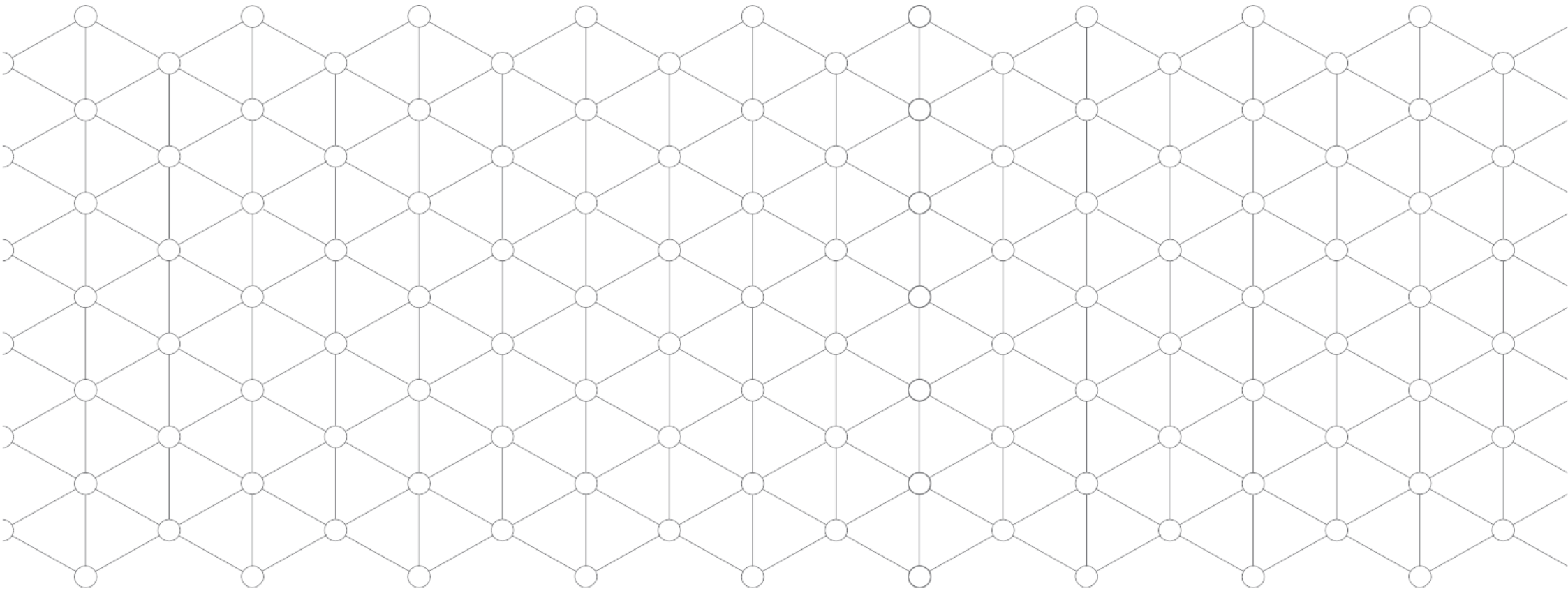
About this template

This template is for ex-post assessment of policy papers. Guidance on the assessment process (choice and number of papers, quality panels etc.) is provided in the 'Ex-post assessment – guide on panels and processes'. The template can be found on the [Policy Quality Framework webpage](#).

The assessment criteria reflect the Policy Quality Framework (PQF). The PQF sets out four quality characteristics for policy analysis and advice. Detailed criteria sit under each of these characteristics.
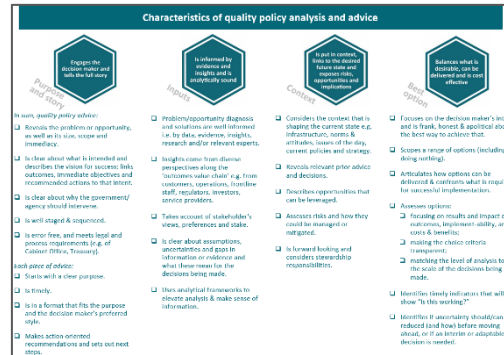
Assessing a paper

Start by thinking about how the paper performs against each of the four quality characteristics. Then for each one, reflect on the detailed criteria under each characteristic and give a star rating for each one.

Note:

- Depending on the paper, some criteria might not apply (e.g. if the paper does not discuss options, you may not need to focus on that characteristic). Although it is worth asking if any missing content is deliberate or not, as it may have been provided in previous or subsequent advice.

- Assessors may want to hear from the author about context and constraints before papers are assessed.

Rating against detailed quality criteria

The assessment sheet sets out detailed criteria under each of the four characteristics. The star ratings signal strengths of the paper and highlight areas for improvement.

★ or ★★ means not meeting the standard

★★★ means meeting the standard and is the default setting

★★★★ or ★★★★★ means exceeding the standard

Giving a final score

Each paper is given a final score using the scoring guide below. For further guidance, see 'Ex-post assessment – guide on panels and processes'.

Scoring guide

The score applied to each paper should be reached through a balanced consideration of the paper's overall performance against the quality characteristics and criteria that are relevant to the papers purpose.

The overall score should be a judgement, not a calculation based on the star ratings, however:

- A paper for which any relevant and important criteria is rated ★ is likely to score 6 or less overall.

- A paper for which any relevant and important criteria is rated ★★★★★ may be a candidate to score 8 or better.

1 to 3	seriously deficient in quality criteria and needs substantial reworking, potentially from scratch
4 to 5	deficient in a number of quality criteria and needs considerable improvement
6	nearly 'across the line', and with relatively minor improvements could have met the quality criteria
7	meets the quality criteria sufficiently (is of a suitable quality to send to the Minister)
8	exceeds a number of the criteria and represents good practice
9	exceeds standards on the majority of relevant criteria and can be considered best practice
10	exceeds standards on all relevant criteria and can be considered best practice

CHARACTERISTIC	**The advice engages the decision maker and tells the full story**

Comments

CRITERIA		
	The paper is error free, and meets all relevant legal and process requirements (e.g. of Cabinet Office, Treasury).	★★★★★
	The purpose of the paper is clear at the start.	★★★★★
	The paper is in a format that fits its purpose.	★★★★★
	The paper makes action-oriented recommendations and sets out next steps.	★★★★★
	The problem or opportunity is set out well. Information on size, scope and immediacy is provided for the decision maker.	★★★★★
	The policy intentions and vision for success are clearly communicated.	★★★★★
	There is a clear and logical link between the policy intent and the outcomes, immediate objectives and recommended actions.	★★★★★
	The paper is clear about why the government or agency should intervene.	★★★★★

CHARACTERISTIC	**Advice is analytically sound; analysis is informed by evidence and insights**

Comments

CRITERIA		
	Analysis takes account of stakeholder views, preferences and level of interest.	★★★★★
	There is information on assumptions, uncertainties and gaps in information or evidence, and how these impact on decision making.	★★★★★
	Analytical frameworks have been successfully used to improve analysis and make sense of information.	★★★★★
	Diagnosis of the problem, opportunity or solutions is informed by data, evidence, insights, research or relevant experts.	★★★★★
	Analysis considers insights from diverse perspectives (e.g. from customers, operations, frontline, regulators, investors, providers).	★★★★★

CHARACTERISTIC	**Analysis and advice is put in context, links to the desired future state and exposes risks, opportunities and implications**

Comments

CRITERIA	Criteria	Rating
	The context that shapes the current state has been considered (e.g. infrastructure, norms and attitudes, issues of the day, current policies and strategy).	★★★★★
	Relevant prior advice and decisions are incorporated.	★★★★★
	The paper describes the opportunities that can be leveraged.	★★★★★
	Risks have been assessed and the paper provides advice on how they could be managed or mitigated.	★★★★★
	The paper is forward looking and advice considers stewardship responsibilities.	★★★★★

CHARACTERISTIC	**Advice balances what is desirable, can be delivered and is cost effective**

Comments

CRITERIA	Criteria	Rating
	The focus is on the decision maker's policy intent. The paper is frank and apolitical about the best way to achieve that intent.	★★★★★
	The paper explores a range of options (including doing nothing).	★★★★★
	The paper articulates how options can be delivered, and confronts what is required for successful implementation.	★★★★★
	The assessment of options focuses on results and impact on outcomes, implementability, and costs & benefits…	★★★★★
	…and these and other choice criteria are transparent.	★★★★★
	The depth of options analysis matches the scale and impact of the decisions being made.	★★★★★
	Indicators that can show if the policy solution is working or not, are identified.	★★★★★
	If uncertainty is high, the paper confronts whether or not uncertainty should/can be reduced and how, before moving ahead. An interim, adaptable or staged decision is considered.	★★★★★

Notes on context	* OPTIONAL *

Comments

If this paper was part of an ongoing stream of advice, indicate which of the following were covered in written advice before or after this paper.	✓
Problem or opportunity	
Policy intent and vision for success	
Intervention logic	
Why the government should intervene	
Evidence and data	
Stakeholders views and preferences	
Different impacts on different groups	
Any stewardship considerations	
Options analysis	
Implementation	
Results, monitoring and evaluation	

Notes on constraint to quality	* OPTIONAL *

Comments

If there were any constraints that significantly affected the quality of the paper, indicate which of the below were relevant.	✓
Time	
Resources	
Experience of the author	
Subject matter knowledge	
Existing evidence base	
Stakeholders views and preferences	
Diverse perspectives on the problem and potential solutions	
Other:	