

Practitioner Overview

Social and Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (PQA)

September 2022



Practitioner Overview and Tool: Social and Emotional Learning Program Quality Assessment (PQA)

Tool overview	
What it measures	<p>The PQA tool is standard of practice and a tool to measure performance against that standard. It is used to measure the quality of staff's delivery practices in terms of the environment they create. The aspects it looks at are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe Space - Creating Safe Spaces • Supportive Environment - Emotion Coaching, Scaffolding Learning, Fostering Growth Mindset • Interactive Environment - Fostering Teamwork, Promoting Responsibility and Leadership, and Cultivating Empathy • Engaging Environment - Furthering Learning, Supporting Youth Interests, and Supporting Plans and Goals
Who does the measuring	<p>It can be used as a self-assessment tool where staff in a youth organisation form a self-assessment team that observes one another's practices during provision, takes notes about the observed behaviours, and provides a score on each of the PQA items. After each of the participating staff have been observed and scored, the self-assessment team discusses the scores to identify areas in which they are doing well and areas in which there is room for improvement. The self-assessment team should include the site manager and at least two delivery staff. The assessment can also be done by a trained external assessor to evaluate the programme.</p>
When to use the tool	<p>The PQA process can be done at any time during the course of provision. For example, it can be completed once, in the middle of a programme, to understand how well staff are implementing best practices. It could also be completed twice: once at the beginning of a programme, to inform improvement goals and training priorities, and then at the end of a programme to assess improvements in the quality of delivery practices. The timing and whether it is done internally or by an external assessor should be determined by the goals of the organisation.</p> <p>It is best used for group-based provision, where a single rater can observe staff interacting with several young people for at least 30 minutes of continuous time. It can be used for sessions with young people ages 5 and up, but it was designed for older groups (ages 10 and up) who are in the process of developing their full range of socio-emotional skills. The PQA scoring process should take about 90 minutes to complete.</p>
Method	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Preparation and familiarisation – Introduce the tool to the team, practice observations and taking notes to build confidence and schedule your observations and scoring meeting. 2) Observations - Observe at least 2-3 sessions for blocks of at least 20minutes, in order to collect enough evidence for your scoring meeting. Don't worry about doing it perfectly or choosing the ideal session to observe. Keep your observation notes quite 'free' and objective – don't try to apply your evidence to the tool whilst you're doing observations. Do not take the PQA tool into observations with you as this can lead to information overload –instead, you can use a summary of each section or questions to jog your memory. There is an excel template you can use to record your notes once you've completed your observations. This will help you to start aligning 	

observation evidence with the tool in preparation for the scoring meeting and share it with the wider team. We've developed some specific guidance for observing [online provision](#) and [detached provision](#).

- 3) **Holding a team-based scoring meeting** - Schedule one-two hours for your team-based scoring meeting, where your team (those involved in observations and others, if appropriate) discuss the evidence you've collected and agree on a set of scores. You can watch our scoring meeting 'how-to' video [here](#). Populate and circulate the excel template ahead of the meeting, so that all team members have access to the supporting evidence. Remember you can use 'X' for practices that were not able to be scored in the provision you observed and 'NS' for any practices that you decided in advance not to score.
- 4) **Input your data on Scores Reporter** - Once you've agreed on your scores, you'll need to input them into Scores Reporter on the portal. You can copy & paste the evidence from the excel template directly into Scores Reporter. You'll need to put 'X' or 'NS' in the domains you haven't scored in order to complete the entry –then you can run a report, which gives you an overview of your scores.
- 5) **Improvement planning** - Now you're ready to develop an improvement plan and implement changes to your delivery based on the areas of improvement you've identified and prioritised. You can create an improvement plan in Scores Reporter. We also offer Planning with Data training, where we'll work with you to explore your data –what it means and how you can use it to create an improvement plan.

Scoring

The mean score for responses in each of the 4 different aspects (Safe Space, Supportive Environment, Interactive Environment, Engaging Environment) should be calculated to create a single score for that aspect ranging from 1 to 5.

Analysis

Scores from the SEL PQA can be entered into the Weikart Centre's Scores Reporter portal. After calculating the four PQA mean scores, this information can be used to inform decisions about future training decisions or provision planning (e.g. organisations with especially low scores in any one area may decide to provide youth workers with training opportunities, or other professional development activities, focused on that). Finding evidence of improved PQA scores can indicate professional development activities appear to be effective.