

# Guidance to potential clients on commissioning the PSA

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 This short guide has been written to provide information for those who are thinking about commissioning advice or consultancy services from the PSA. It provides information about how we go about these projects and what is involved. Please get in touch with us to discuss any ideas or proposals that you might have and we will be happy to work with you to discuss your requirements, and to develop a scope, cost and timescale for your project.<sup>1</sup>

1.2 We welcome the opportunity to work with clients to provide commissioned advice. These projects enable us to develop our thinking on regulatory improvement, such as wider application of the principles of right-touch regulation. They enable us to explore points of regulatory process and policy that might not otherwise arise in our work, and to share learning on how regulators can most effectively protect the public in different contexts.

## 2. What kind of work can be commissioned?

2.1 We can provide advice on a range of different aspects of regulatory performance, policy and legislation. These include:

- Performance review of any or all of the four main regulatory functions of registration, fitness to practise, standards and guidance and quality assurance of higher education, and their equivalents in other sectors and countries
- Advice on regulatory reform and the effectiveness of regulatory legislation
- Review of processes and policies relating to any of the regulatory functions
- Application of right-touch regulation<sup>2</sup> principles to regulatory issues and challenges
- Advice on cost-effectiveness and efficiency
- Advice on how our *Right-touch assurance*<sup>3</sup> methodology applies to the regulation of a profession or group
- Good regulatory governance and practice.

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<sup>1</sup> This advice is intended for third parties not including UK Governments seeking advice under Section 26A of the National Health Service Reform and Regulation of Health Professions Act 2002.

<sup>2</sup> [Right-touch regulation 2025 | PSA](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Right-touch assurance | PSA](#)

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- 2.2 This list is not intended to be exhaustive and we will be happy to discuss any requirements, proposals or ideas that you may have. You can find examples of our previous commissioned work on our website at [Consultancy and expertise | PSA](#)
- 2.3 When we are commissioned to review an organisation's performance of its regulatory functions we will usually follow a similar format to our performance reviews of the statutory regulators we oversee. This involves assessing evidence of performance against our *Standards of Good Regulation*.<sup>4</sup> However, before any work gets underway, we will work with you to adapt the wording of those standards so that they are appropriate to your context and legislation.
- 2.4 Commissioned work usually results in a written report. This report will usually be published on both our website and yours when work is complete. The focus of the report will differ according to the scope of the work but will typically include the findings of our analysis and recommendations for actions and improvement.

### **3. Initial discussion**

- 3.1 We welcome approaches from potential clients at an early stage, even if you are not totally clear on the scope or focus of the work that you would like to commission. We will happily spend time meeting with you to discuss different options and approaches.
- 3.2 After initial discussions, we may ask you to present to the PSA staff who would be delivering the work, so that we can understand your needs and requirements as closely as possible. This will enable us to produce the most accurate and realistic assessment of the amount of time required to complete the work for you, and the cost.
- 3.3 Where necessary we may collaborate with another provider to ensure we have access to the relevant expertise to meet all of your requirements, where we do not have the capacity or expertise to meet a client's specific requirements fully.
- 3.4 It is extremely helpful for you to highlight to us any areas of particular controversy, difficulty or sensitivity relating to the proposed work areas. The earlier we have this conversation, the better. For example, are there areas which are the subject of legal proceedings or particular media interest? Early notice of these issues enables us to work together most effectively to navigate and find the best ways to address them, in so far as they impact on our work and findings.

### **4. How do we arrive at the quote for a project?**

- 4.1 The early discussions will usually result in one or two preferred options and we will calculate the costs based on these.
- 4.2 The quote we provide to you will be based on two elements:
  - The number of days required to complete the work to the proposed scope. This calculation will include consideration of the staff required to do the work and their different grades.
  - A supplement of 20% on the cost of the above to reflect the additional tasks necessary to progress and complete the work.

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<sup>4</sup> [Standards of Good Regulation | PSA](#) NB: A new set of Standards will be published in 2026.

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4.3 The additional tasks that contribute to the 20% supplement include:

- Internal reporting
- Communications activity, particularly around the time of publication of a final report
- Monitoring media activity about the work
- Responding to Freedom of information Act requests
- Responding to other queries and correspondence about the project.

4.4 In providing a quote we draw on a rate card for staff at different grades which we update every financial year. Therefore, it will be clear to you how the quote has been reached.

4.5 The quote we provide will become the contract sum if we agree to proceed. We would only usually seek to amend the contract sum where we agree at a later stage to undertake substantive additional work that was not previously in scope.

## **5. Phases of the work**

5.1 As part of the discussion and costing of options we also work up an indicative timescale with phases of the work clearly set out. At the point of entering into the contract, this would then become the timescale that we work to. Commissions can typically take six to nine months from the start date, depending on the scope and complexity.

5.2 We would typically structure the work around three main phases:

- Initiation and familiarisation
- Analysis and assessment
- Report drafting and completion.

### **First phase**

5.3 During the initiation and familiarisation stage we would usually be performing our initial review of relevant policy and process documents and data, and identifying key points for deeper analysis.

### **Second phase**

5.4 The analysis and assessment phase would usually be the bulk of the work. It might include methodically assessing evidence of performance against Standards, analysing policy and process documents in detail, and reaching provisional findings. During this second phase we would also be undertaking any engagement work that we had agreed to include, such as with staff, stakeholder organisations, and/or the public. We will often provide the client with an interim report at the end of this phase.

### **Third phase**

5.5 The third phase usually involves the work of writing up our final conclusions into a draft report, and consulting you on this draft to ensure that we provide you with a report that is going to optimally support improvement work into the future. This phase would be complete with the submission of the final version of our report.

### **Publication**

5.6 We recognise that after the submission of a final report the client will usually need some time to consider the findings and prepare for publication. We would usually seek

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to agree a joint publication date for the report and associated communications within two months of a report being submitted as final to the client. In some circumstances we recognise that it will not be appropriate to publish our findings and this arrangement would need to be discussed and agreed from the outset.

## **6. Internal processes for ensuring PSA capacity**

- 6.1 In parallel with discussions with you about costs, options and process, we will be working internally to establish that we have the capacity to deliver the work. We will usually only have the capacity to undertake one commission at a time, and we will usually only undertake one commission within each financial year. We will advise you as discussions go forward about the realistic timing for taking on your piece of work.
- 6.2 At the point that we offer a contract we will have completed an internal assurance process so that we can give you confidence that we are in a position to deliver the contract to the scope, cost and timescale agreed.

## **7. Form of contract**

- 7.1 Our preference is to use a standard PSA contract. We will consider using other contracts if requested to do so, for example, where the client is bound by legislation in their own country which means they cannot accept our standard terms, or where the client's policy is to use their own contract.

## **8. What would you need to do to prepare for work to begin?**

- 8.1 Commissioned projects will almost always involve PSA staff reviewing the client's data as part of the work. For example, we might review case files where we are auditing the organisation's decision-making in relation to fitness to practise and equivalent processes. We would usually need the client to have set up a secure remote access arrangement. We will need to be assured that these files will be accessible to us from the outset of the contract period, and that the client has overcome any technical or information governance issues before we begin. We may need to delay the commencement of work if the data is not ready for us to use. You can be assured that we will handle your data safely and appropriately in accordance with our policies.
- 8.2 We advise that you also think about the possible effects of commissioning us and how you will manage these. For example, if we are reviewing case files, this may result in questions and correspondence from people who were involved in those cases who will have an interest in the outcome of our review. Documents and correspondence generated by the work may have to be disclosed upon request under Freedom of Information legislation. We will be happy to discuss these, and any other possible outcomes from commissioning us, before we enter into an agreement with you.
- 8.3 In the course of our discussions and before entering a contract, we will advise you on the capacity that you would need to make available to support the timely progress of work through to completion. For example, we would usually have scheduled meetings to assess progress with you throughout the project. During the third phase, you would need to have senior staff available to review and comment on drafts of the final report. We would need to know who to contact to escalate any issues that arise needing a rapid response.

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## 9. Get in touch

9.1 If you would like to discuss a potential project, please contact Douglas Bilton, Assistant Director, Intelligence and Insight at:  
**douglas.bilton@professionalstandards.org.uk**