

Understanding the Differences Between Procurement Practices: SSIP, PAS91, CAS and PPN 03/24

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Insight from Eleanor Eaton, [SSIP](#)

Understanding the differences between pre-qualification processes ensures your organisation complies with the correct policies and procedures.

As SSIP Chair, Eleanor Eaton explained, “We’re often asked which procurement process buyers should implement and why it’s relevant to their organisation. Understanding the difference between each is the first step in ensuring you’re going down the correct route.”

So what is the difference between these schemes?

SSIP: Focuses exclusively on health and safety compliance and offers mutual recognition among member schemes to reduce duplication. A SSIP assessment ensures a company is complying with health and safety legislation.

SSIP acts as an umbrella organisation, upholding safety principles (SSIP Core Criteria) across more than 52 separate health and safety schemes and certification bodies in the UK. This group of assessment schemes forms the SSIP Forum, the go-to place for buyers and suppliers to select the most appropriate scheme for their business.

Once a supplier is assessed and certified by an SSIP member scheme, this certification is mutually

recognised across all SSIP member schemes through an agreement called Deem to Satisfy. This means suppliers only need to complete one assessment. If a buyer requires certification with a preferred scheme, a supplier can request 'Deem to Satisfy' certification with that preferred scheme at a reduced cost and with minimal administrative effort, eliminating the need for multiple assessments. Over £10 million of savings for buyers and clients can be attributed directly to the Deem to Satisfy certificate recognition in 2023.

PAS91: In April 2023, PAS91 was formally withdrawn by the British Standards Institution (BSI). PAS91 served as an initial standard for PQQs for construction tendering. This question set continues to be relevant and is used by organisations seeking to demonstrate that they possess or have access to the governance, qualifications, references, expertise, competence, health and safety/environmental/financial and other, essential capabilities for them to be considered appropriate to undertake work and deliver services for potential buyers.

Following withdrawal of PAS91, PPN 03/24 updates the selection questionnaire and advises the use of equivalent questionnaires i.e. the Common Assessment Standard.

CAS: The Common Assessment Standard (CAS) has been created by Build UK to standardise pre-qualification questionnaires (PQQs) in the UK construction industry. The CAS provides a uniform set of questions used by multiple clients and contractors, ensuring consistency across industries. The CAS addresses multiple aspects of supplier qualifications, aimed at making the pre-qualification process more efficient and reducing the administrative burden on suppliers who previously completed different questionnaires for each client. Developed through collaboration among major industry bodies, the CAS is adopted by a number of large contractors and clients, enhancing its credibility and acceptance.

The CAS builds upon PAS91 question set with supplementary sections including Corporate Social Responsibility and Information Security & GDPR.

PPN 03/24: In March 2024, the Cabinet Office introduced Procurement Policy Note (PPN) 03/24, updating the Selection Questionnaire (SQ) and providing new statutory guidance for all contracting authorities in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for contract works above the threshold spend [£5.37m].

PPN 03/24 advises the use of the CAS question set, or equivalent, in public sector procurement, emphasising the relevance of SSIP for meeting health and safety standards within this broader context. PPN03/24 highlights the importance for individual contracting authorities to ensure the questions used are relevant and proportionate, which in turn supports recognition of the SSIP assessment standard.

SSIP remains crucial for businesses, ensuring rigorous health and safety compliance, supporting broader pre-qualification frameworks like CAS, and aligning with updated public procurement policies such as PPN 03/24.

Eleanor Eaton notes "As the PPN references, there is a need for the contracting authority to ensure that questions used in their PQQs are relevant and proportionate to the contract being procured. This adds further value to organisations holding a valid SSIP assessment, which is fundamental to confirming compliance with health and safety legislation.

For advice or to discuss if SSIP is right for your organisation, please contact: enquiries@SSIP.org.uk