

Writing a great Quality in Care entry: Seven steps to success

Writing a strong submission takes planning and time, and it is worth doing both if you want your entry to shine through. It must stand out from the rest as improving patient outcomes and experience.

Following these seven steps should ensure that your entry wows the judges

1. Summary

First impressions count; be clear, concise and impactful. Although this section is first on the entry form, it is often best to leave until last: distil the main points of your entry and compel the judges to read on.

2. Word count, format and layout

Stick to the stated word count for your submission. The judges read lots of entries. Make sure it is legible and keep it simple. Each entry is photocopied so don't use tints or coloured boxes. The judges are looking for stand-out programmes that have improved patient outcomes not creative layouts!

3. The brief

Stick to the brief - don't be tempted to go off piste. Your entry is being judged against specific category criteria; irrelevant information won't gain you any more marks. It is essential that you explain how your initiative is different and innovative compared with others. Repeat applications must be clear as to how you have developed the service and addressed judges concerns since the last application. You must provide a copy of any previous submission(s) for this work. Results are essential, and only those included in the application will be considered - supporting materials are not part of the initial judging process. Keep a careful balance between content and data. In some cases a table might be more effective than narrative.

4. Aims and objectives

You MUST detail your aims and objectives. Your objectives must be SMARTER - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound, Evaluated and Reviewed. There are a few questions that will help you stick to this.

- Where are we now (situation)?
- Where do we want to be (objectives)?
- How are we going to get there (strategy)?
- What needs to be done and by who?
- Did we achieve our objectives?

5. Evaluation

This is vital. Do not underestimate the importance of evaluating your initiative. It is crucial and is the difference between making the finalist cut and not. It is the only way the judges can determine if your programme was successful. Your evaluation should include not just percentage increases or decreases but whole numbers, so judges can see how many patients were positively impacted by your initiative.

6. Sense check

Get a colleague who knows nothing about the initiative to read over your entry - this is the best way to ensure that your submission is clear, makes sense and that you haven't missed something that might seem obvious to you, but may not be obvious to the judges.

7. Supporting materials

Make sure that your supporting materials do just that, 'support' your entry. They should be relevant and provide further, additional information adding clarity to your submission.

- Do not attach supporting materials to your entry form
- Materials should be accompanied by a covering list, detailing each of the supporting materials and referencing where evidence can be found to support claims made in the entry.
- Judges see standard print outs. If you have professionally created materials consider posting them
- If you reference websites/online systems, please include all access codes and passwords and ensure they remain open until after the judging day.

If you have any queries or need further advice on completing or submitting your entry, please contact one of the Quality in Care team. Good luck!

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