How ConstructQS works

User guide — construction estimating & commercial control software for the UK & Ireland

This guide explains how to operate ConstructQS: setting your rates, building whole-project estimates, using the AI QS Assistant, designing concepts, exporting CAD, and creating professional client quotes.

1. Getting started

ConstructQS runs in your web browser on desktop, tablet and mobile — there is nothing to install.

1. **Create your account** at www.constructqs.com and start your free trial.
2. **Sign in** — your projects, rates and designs are saved to your account and sync across every device you log in on.
3. **Set your region** (United Kingdom or Republic of Ireland). This sets your currency and VAT treatment — £ and 20% VAT for the UK, € and 13.5% construction VAT for Ireland.
4. **Add your company details** so your quotes and PDFs carry your business name.

2. Your rates — your business

ConstructQS comes pre-loaded with construction rates so you can price straight away — but they are only a starting point. You stay in full control of your pricing.

You can edit every rate the system uses, including:

- Labour rates
- Foreman rates
- Engineer rates
- Site manager rates
- Plant rates
- Fuel rates
- Materials
- Supplier prices
- Subcontractor prices
- Overheads
- Contingency
- Profit & margin

> **The principle:** start with ConstructQS rates, replace them with your own, and keep complete control of your price. Your saved rates are used first whenever you build an estimate or ask the AI to price something.

3. Rate books

A comprehensive UK & Ireland construction rate library is built in, covering labour, materials, plant, earthworks, concrete, drainage, structural work, finishes, M&E, external works and more.

- Browse and search rates by trade.
- Switch between **£ and €** with the currency toggle.
- Add your own custom rate items — they sit alongside the library and are used in your estimates.

4. Building an estimate

ConstructQS is built to price the **whole job**, not just a few line items. A full project build-up can include:

- Site preparation
- Earthworks
- Foundations / substructure
- Superstructure
- Labour
- Materials
- Plant
- Fuel & haulage
- Drainage
- Utilities
- M&E services
- Roads & tarmac
- Concrete hardstanding
- External works
- Landscaping
- Final groundworks finish

Every estimate follows a clear commercial build-up so you always see your position:

Direct cost → Preliminaries → Overheads → Contingency → Total cost → Profit → Selling price (net) → VAT → Gross → Margin %

5. The AI QS Assistant

The AI QS Assistant is a **supporting tool** that helps you check your price before it goes out. Use it to:

- **Check your price** before the quote leaves your business
- **Find possible omissions** in an estimate
- **Review your margin**
- **Compare rates** and supplier/subcontractor quotes
- **Analyse an estimate or a drawing**

What you can upload:

- **Drawings & plans** (PDF or image) — for the AI to review and help with take-off.
- **Site photos** — for progress, quality, defect and health-and-safety observations, captured with the camera button on site.
- **Project files** — attachments kept with the job.

You can type your question or use **voice input**. The Assistant uses your own saved rates where you have them. All AI output is clearly labelled as an estimate — you review and approve everything before it is issued. *Keep uploads work-related and language professional.*

6. Concept Project Designer

The Concept Project Designer helps with early-stage concept planning, layouts and indicative pricing. You can design:

- **Houses** — with four coordinated elevations (front, rear, left, right), floor plans, your chosen wall finish (brick, block, render, stone, timber frame and more) and roof type.
- **Housing developments** — multiple house types with unit counts, a house-type schedule and per-type elevations.
- **Infrastructure** — roads, footpaths, drainage and groundworks, with cross-sections.
- **External works** — yards, parking, landscaping and fencing.

You can then: price the design, refine the figures, export the drawings as a **CAD (DXF) file** that opens in AutoCAD and other CAD software, and download the design as an HTML or PDF pack.

> **Important:** the Project Designer produces **concept-stage** drawings and indicative pricing to help you plan and price early. It does not replace an architect, engineer or building-control drawings, and the drawings are not construction or planning drawings.

7. Pricing a project & refining the figures

From a design, tap **Price this project**. ConstructQS produces an indicative cost plan instantly from the floor areas and build rates, then adds a more detailed trade-by-trade breakdown where available.

Below the figures you can **refine the estimate** three ways:

- **Ask in plain English** — e.g. “add a double garage at £25k” or “cut prelims to 10%” — and the figures recalculate.
- **Voice** — tap the microphone and speak your change.
- **Edit directly** — type over the numbers yourself.

When you are happy, export to PDF.

8. Creating quotes & PDFs

Turn an approved estimate into a professional, branded client quote and export it as a PDF to send to your customer. You can also produce estimates, cost plans and design packs as PDF or HTML.

9. Saving & syncing

Your projects, saved rates and designs are stored to your account. Sign in on another device — your phone on site, your office desktop — and your work is there. Large files are kept in the cloud so your device never runs out of space.

10. Plans

ConstructQS has three plans. Choose the one that matches how you work:

- **Trade — £39/month + VAT.** For subcontractors and smaller construction businesses pricing their own work: build estimates, create professional quotes, use your own rates, save customers and projects, PDF export, AI estimating support and invoicing.
- **Contractor Pro — £99/month + VAT (most popular).** For contractors pricing complete projects: everything in Trade, plus whole-project estimating, regional rate books, AI QS project analysis, BoQs, project history and advanced pricing tools.
- **Commercial — £179/month + VAT.** For construction companies and commercial teams: everything in Pro, plus multiple users, tender comparison, variations, valuations, advanced reporting and priority support.

11. Tips & FAQ

Do I have to use your rates? No — they are a starting point. Replace any of them with your own; your rates take priority.

Does it work on my phone on site? Yes — ConstructQS works on mobile, tablet and desktop, and syncs across them.

Is the AI making the decisions? No. The AI helps you check and review; you approve every figure before anything is issued.

Are the design drawings construction drawings? No — they are concept-stage only. Use a qualified architect or engineer for construction and planning drawings.

How do I start? Start your free trial at www.constructqs.com. Trial length and terms are shown at sign-up.

Get started

Start your free trial at www.constructqs.com. Build the estimate, check the costs, protect the margin, create the quote.