



End Point Assessment Policy

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University of Northumbria
End Point Assessment Policy

1. Introduction

This document sets out the policy and procedures governing apprenticeship end point assessments (EPA) delivered as part of our apprenticeship programme for employers.

We are required to deliver an independent, objective assessment of the knowledge skills and behaviour as set out in the relevant apprenticeship Standard for every apprentice. As a registered End Point Assessment Organisation, we must also meet the requirements in the Education & Skills Funding Agency 'Conditions for Organisations on The Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations'.

The aim of this policy is to ensure the University has a defined approach for managing and assuring the quality of the EPA for its Higher and Degree Apprenticeships.

2. Background

- 2.1 This policy provides detail on End Point Assessment (EPA). This policy will set out the roles and responsibilities for both integrated and non-integrated EPAs. Existing University policies and regulations govern any academic award made as part of an apprenticeship programme but proposing teams and approval panels should be cognisant of the requirements of EPA at the time of approval, including any requirements to adjust how the University would typically deliver its academic awards.
- 2.2 This policy adheres to the policy principles of the Education and Skills Funding Agency Apprenticeship (ESFA) funding rules for main providers and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) external quality assurance framework.
- 2.3 All apprenticeship standards will have an accompanying EPA. This determines if the apprentice has met the requirement of the apprenticeship standard: that is, they are able to demonstrate the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSB) and are occupationally competent.
- 2.4 Prior to being eligible for the EPA the apprentice will need to successfully meet the 'Gateway' requirements as determined by the standard. The Employer's permission is required to proceed to EPA.
- 2.5 The detail of the EPA is described in the Assessment Plan associated with the standard. The EPA may be integrated or non-integrated and this is pre-determined:

- Integrated: EPA is an integral component of the University programme. The University will normally provide all the scheduled on-programme learning and deliver the EPA.
- Non-integrated: the University delivers the programme and confirms either the University award and/or that Gateway criteria is met and the EPA is then conducted independently by an external EPAO who confirm the apprenticeship award.
- For University integrated apprenticeships delivered by QA the University acts as the degree awarding body and the EPAO. QA is the Main Provider.

3. Registration as an EPAO

- 3.1 The University is required to maintain their status on the Register of Approved Training Providers (RoATP).
- 3.2 The University must be registered on the Register of End Point Assessment Organisations (RoEPAO) for each Apprenticeship Standard where the EPA is integrated.
- 3.3 The Apprentice Team within QTE will manage applications to the RoEPAO.
- 3.4 It is recommended application to the RoEPAO takes place as early as possible after the programme approval. ESFA rules require the application must be approved at least nine months before the EPA is scheduled to take place but apprentice and employer preparation for EPA should begin early in the programme.
- 3.5 The Educational Partnership Team will be the main point of contact with ESFA regarding the delivery and outcomes of Integrated EPA.

4. Delivering End Point Assessment

4.1 Integrated EPA

- 4.1.1 The Assessment Plan will indicate that the EPA is integrated or non-integrated: In the case of integrated, the EPA is part of the academic award and is normally the final project/module.
- 4.1.2 In the delivery of integrated EPA the University will apply the following principles:
 - the University, as the EPAO, will ensure the project fulfils the requirements of the EPA for the Apprenticeship Standard and Assessment Plan and the University's normal quality standards;

- protocols demonstrating how the EPA will be delivered should be developed by the programme team including specific determination of the employer involvement where applicable.
- the independent nature of the EPA must be assured, each assessment panel must include an Independent Assessor who is professionally competent in the area and have the necessary skills, experience, occupational competence and qualifications required to facilitate the assessment (see 'Managing Conflict of Interest' below);
- if the apprenticeship includes PSRB recognition, the Assessment Plan may require that the assessment is conducted by Independent Assessor who holds a specified professional status and the programme team will need to comply with this;
- Independent assessors are approved via Department management teams with support from HR, once competency is established and any conflict of interests addressed. The Educational Partnerships team will keep a register of all End Point Assessors. Assessors will be appointed for a period of 12 months and will be reviewed annually.
- Where required, Independent Assessor training will be co-ordinated and conducted by academic Departments with input from Educational Partnerships;
- Gateway, and progression to EPA is confirmed by the Apprentice Assessment Board (AAB).
- EPA assessment events will be co-ordinated by Educational Partnerships including communication with the employer to secure sign off.
- Where interviews, presentations and professional discussions are presented to a single assessor, they should be recorded and stored for quality assurance purposes in line with University data retention policies.
- resits will be undertaken in line with University regulations except where the Assessment Plan sets out specific procedures in which case the assessment takes precedence.
- Educational Partnerships will request Apprentice certificates from IfATE and inform ESFA of EPA outcomes.

4.1.3 Standardisation

As EPAO we must ensure parity of standards across assessments this is achieved by:

- IA attendance at assessor training.
- Standardisation of assessment approach and criteria prior to EPA taking place.
- Standardisation of outcomes following EPA.

- Establishment of Standardisation Group Meetings where Independent Assessors appointed to assess integrated apprenticeships End Point Assessment ensure EPA assessment is undertaken robustly, fairly and consistently in line with the relevant IfATE apprenticeship assessment plan. The meeting will be chaired by a member of University staff.

Standardisation guidance and note templates are appended in Annex A.

4.1.4 Standardisation of Assessment (prior to EPA)

- Members consider a small sample of completed portfolios in detail, where available, and discuss points of merit and weakness to establish common principles of assessment.
- Where no samples or previous work is available the assessment plan, KSBs and scenarios are discussed to develop a common understanding of standards.
- Discussions are informed by the grading criteria which is set out in the relevant apprenticeship assessment plan and should include:
 - how these principles are used to ensure comparable standards are being applied
 - what topics and questions would be raised in the professional discussion
 - what feedback would be provided to the learner
 - Notes of the discussion are recorded, shared with the group prior to EPA and kept for audit purposes.

4.1.5 Standardisation of Grading (post EPA)

- i The standardisation meeting will review and confirm that the grading criteria has been applied consistently and fairly prior to results being released.

4.2 Non-integrated EPA

- 4.2.1 When the EPA is non-integrated, the EPA is carried out by an external End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO). Normally, successful completion and ratification of the final academic award is required before the EPA can be attempted. ESFA require that the Employer determines the EPAO to be used and this should be established as early as possible. In theory, the University may be working with more than one EPAO for any one cohort of learners. All Higher Apprenticeships are non-integrated
- 4.2.2 In the delivery of non-Integrated EPA the University will apply the following principles:

- Liaison with employers and engagement of EPAOs is co-ordinated by Educational Partnerships.
- Educational Partnerships will ensure contracts for EPA delivery are signed in a timely manner and in accordance with the University's standard financial practice;
- Planning has responsibility for paying the EPAO from the fees it receives from delivering the apprenticeship training. The maximum percentage cost that can be spent on the EPA is established by the IfATE;
- Gateway requirements are clear and communicated to both learner and employers including how this will be assessed, evidenced and verified;
 - where apprentices do not have level 2 qualification in Math and English, this must be remediated before they can enter the Gateway. The EPAO will require verification of these qualifications.
- Gateway, and progression to EPA is confirmed by the Apprentice Assessment Board (AAB).
- the apprentice will have the appropriate learner status within the University during their Gateway and EPA period;
- where it is identified that the learner is not ready to proceed with EPA, establish appropriate actions in liaison with the employer so the EPA can be taken within a specified timeframe.
- Resits and retakes are defined by the IfATE as:
 - a retake requires a period of further learning before the learner can attempt the EPA again;
 - a resit does not require further learning before attempting reassessment of the EPA or the failed component of the EPA.
 - The cost of retakes will be detailed in the contract with the EPAO.
- The Assessment Plan details the requirements and rules for resits and retakes.

5. Independent Assessors

5.1 Appointment of IAs

The University is responsible for appointing Independent Assessors (IAs) to conduct EPAs on all integrated standards. IAs must have not been involved in the delivery of the apprenticeship or support of apprentices (see Conflict of Interest Below).

After acceptance, IAs are appointed on a consultancy basis and invited to join a pool to be allocated work when required. Appointments are made in adherence with the following principles:

- The standard role description should be used and tailored by the Department delivering the apprenticeship according to subject specific requirements.
- Candidate selection is undertaken by the Department in accordance with the criteria on the IA Appointment form.
- An IA Appointment form is completed by the Department for suitable candidates and forwarded to Educational Partnerships.
- Educational Partnerships maintains a central pool of IAs.
- The Department meets the cost of IAs.
- The Department appoints IAs using a specific IA consultancy contract, available from HR.

6. Consistency and comparability

6.1 The University will ensure consistency in EPA in the following ways and as shown above:

- providing guidance on the EPA to learners and employers in relation to the delivery of the EPA (practical and technical activities, marking guidance for EPA activity);
- consulting with industry/technical experts and External Examiner (in the case of integrated EPA) when developing relevant work-based projects to ensure there is comparability and consistency in terms of breadth and depth of assessment across the provision where the standard is being delivered to ensure the assessment is reliable, valid and fair to all learners;
- through recruitment, preparation and on-going training of appropriate Independent Assessors;
- developing protocols to determine how the assessment process will be carried out;
- holding regular standardisation meeting to ensure consistency of assessment and marking practice;
- through recording and retention of any practical components of assessment for moderation and quality assurance processes;
- monitoring outcomes from Board of Examiners;

- using the annual monitoring and evaluation process to review outcomes and enhance practice.

7. Conflict of Interest

7.1 Scope of Conflict of Interest Policy

- This policy covers the delivery of all apprenticeship End-point Assessments undertaken as part of our Apprenticeship programme.
- The University, as the organisation accountable and responsible for EPA, and the individual assessors and invigilators that we use must be free from any conflicts of interest that could adversely affect their judgement or objectivity in administering and undertaking a robust and consistent EPA. We must ensure that none of the individuals undertaking the EPA are involved in or are responsible for any on-programme delivery, line-management or on-programme assessment of the same apprentice.
- This guidance applies to all staff, consultants and partner institutions/organisations taking part in or supporting an End-point Assessment as defined above. This includes individuals involved with any aspect of the delivery of an End-point Assessment, and also in the creation, marketing, sales, distribution, marking or any other activity connected with tests and assessments, resources or services used within the End-point Assessment.
- Explicitly included in scope for this guidance are all employees, contractors, agency, or associate staff, including assessment associates, verifiers/examiners and other support roles. This list is not exhaustive. Every individual must complete a Conflict-of-Interest form (set out at Annex A) when asked to do so, and we will assess the risk and impact based on each set of circumstances.
- Where mitigating action is needed as a result of a declaration on an Col form, this may mean that an individual will not be able to take part in a specific EPA, or they may be moved to different duties. EPA Leads will, working with the Registrar for Educational Partnerships, consider whatever action is needed to protect the objectivity and integrity of the End-point Assessment.

7.2 Definition of Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which an individual, or organisation, has competing interests or loyalties which could compromise, or appear to compromise, the outcome of an End-point Assessment if it is not properly managed. The possible scenarios where a conflict of interest may occur includes:

- The University is involved in both the EPA and the training delivery of a standard.
- An individual may be employed by the University and has links with and /or is also employed in the same organisation as the apprentice,
- When an individual has a position of authority in one organisation that conflicts with his or her interests in another organisation
- An individual involved in EPA has a prior link with the apprentice or their employer for the standard they are assessing against. For example, they may have friends or relatives working with the apprentice, or who have delivered the teaching elements of the apprenticeship.
- When an individual has interests that conflict with his or her professional position where someone works for or carries out work on our behalf,
- Where an individual working on the EPA has personal interests – paid or unpaid – in the employer organisation undergoing the EPA
- At both organisational and individual level, the official role of the individual/organisation undertaking the EPA has any other interests that may compromise their assessment decisions.
- Where an individual participating has a personal or business gain from the outcome of the assessment
- Where an individual undertaking the end-point assessment of apprentices for an organisation within which they have previously worked, trained, managed or assessed the same apprentice.

7.3 Responsibilities under Conflict of Interest Policy

EPA Leads

- EPA leads are responsible for early identification of, and planning for Col as part of their department responsibilities and the planning for every individual EPA.
- EPA Leads are responsible for ensuring that all individuals contributing to an EPA are clear on the impact of the Policy on their roles and for full implementation of this policy.
- EPA Leads must ensure that all those in scope complete Declaration of Interest (DoI) forms prior to each EPA. Where needed the EPA Lead must implement mitigating actions, agreed with the Educational Partnerships Registrar before the EPA commences. (*See Appendix A for Declaration of Interest Form*)
- Where an EPA is to be hosted at the employer or training provider premises the EPA Lead must, as part of the planning process, review any Col risks and, where identified, set out the actions required to avoid potential conflicts of interest in the EPA Plan. This must be documented and evidence that this has been implemented must be included in the EPA record.
- Individual DoI forms must be stored with the Educational Partnerships team and available as part of internal and external audits.

- EPA leads are accountable for briefing any contractors, consultants, agencies or other workers not employed by the University and for collation of EPA DoI Forms.
- They must ensure that, where third parties are engaged to conduct EPA, only the agreed contract template is used between both organisations, or individuals and this organisation. All contracts and CoI forms must be in place before the start of the EPA.
- EPA Leads are responsible for ensuring that all new staff receive conflict of interest briefing. No individual may take part in the EPA process until this training has taken place.
- Managers and EPA Leads are responsible for escalating reports of actual or potential conflicts of interest identified by the EPA Lead, or other routes set out in this policy, to the Educational Partnerships Registrar.
- The Educational Partnerships Registrar is responsible for maintaining records of Declaration of Interest forms and making available for scrutiny and audit. They are responsible for authorising the outcome of DoI submissions and advising on appropriate mitigating actions where appropriate.

Staff Engaged in EPA activity (defined as 'in Scope' above)

- Every individual in scope as described in 7.1 above, is responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with this policy before undertaking work on an EPA.
- DoI forms should be completed and submitted to Educational Partnerships for every member of staff at least 2 weeks before the EPA activity is scheduled to take place.
- Individuals must also notify if, at any point, a conflict of interest arises which is not reflected in their COI form, or for where a CoI has not previously been registered. It is the responsibility of all staff, consultants, partner institutions and organisations to protect the independence of the apprenticeship assessment process, and both comply and support others to comply with these guidelines.
- Individuals must not begin work on any aspect of an EPA as outlined above where they have not submitted a DoI form or where a conflict of interest has been declared and authorisation has not been granted by the Educational Partnerships Registrar
- Every individual is accountable for upholding this policy, and for escalating to EPA leads or Managers, where colleagues, contractors, or other staff involved in the EPA take action, or fail to act in accordance with this policy. Any individual may raise this with the EPA Lead or with the Educational Partnerships Registrar. Individuals can also raise concerns anonymously, by

following the process set out in the Whistleblowing Policy. University Public Interest Policy and Procedure (northumbria.ac.uk)

8. Applying for Completion Certificates

- 8.1 Where the EPA is integrated, Educational Partnerships will be responsible for claiming the Apprenticeship Completion Certificate from the Apprenticeship Assessment Service.
- 8.2 Where the EPA is non- integrated, it is the responsibility of the EPAO to apply for the Apprenticeship Completion Certificate on behalf of the learner. If the learner fails to successfully complete the EPA they may still receive the relevant University award where applicable. They will not receive the Apprenticeship Completion Certificate.

9. EPA Appeals and complaints

- 9.1 When the EPA has been carried out by the University it is subject to the normal appeals and complaints procedures. If the issues cannot be resolved it may be escalated to the External Quality Assurance provider and IfATE.
- 9.2 For non-integrated EPAs the apprentice must follow the complaints process of the EPAO.

ANNEX A

STANDARDISATION AND END POINT ASSESSMENT (EPA) - GUIDANCE FOR STAFF

CONTEXT

An important aspect of the reform of apprenticeships is the end-point assessment (EPA). The purpose of the EPA is to test that an apprentice is fully capable of doing their job before they receive their apprenticeship certificate. It also helps to demonstrate that what an apprentice has learned, can be applied in the real world. For integrated apprenticeships the EPA is undertaken by an independent end-point assessor (IA). IAs are responsible for designing, administering, and marking assessments. It is important to ensure that apprentices are assessed consistently and fairly. For an integrated apprenticeship Northumbria are responsible for the policies, procedures, and systems for controlling the quality of our assessments. This involves ensuring that assessors are qualified and trained, that grading is applied consistently and that assessment instruments such as test questions or practical tasks are robust.

A function of Northumbria University Internal Quality assurance process is to ensure standardisation becomes a natural occurrence with all new IAs. This is achieved by compulsory attendance at assessor training/standardisation prior to any EPAs taking place. Standardisation of assessment practices and outcomes will be observed and monitored over a given period to make sure they are consistent and look for improvements to be made. The IA must ensure that:

- consistency and reliability of assessment is maintained
- records of standardisation meetings/exercises are kept
- feedback is provided to Assessor/Trainers
- problems encountered with individual learners are discussed and appropriate action taken.

We aim to ensure valid, reliable, manageable, comparable EPAs for apprentices, which have robust processes to combat bias. The success of this aim relies significantly on the competency of our IAs.

BEFORE THE EPA

Where EPA involves specific assessed elements, standardisation is an important part of the IA duties. While team meetings may be held, these will often focus on relaying information and tracking learner progress. These are clearly important elements of internal quality assurance, but it is also crucial that standardisation activities are undertaken with all team members on a regular basis, particularly where several dispersed, peripatetic, part time, contracted assessors are used.

The simplest means of completing a standardisation activity uses sample pieces of learner(s) work or evidence and asks all assessors to make an independent assessment decision for this work. It is also helpful to ask them to record what actions they would give the learner resulting from this assessment. Consideration would then be given as to how these principles are used to ensure comparable standards are being applied. This type of standardisation activity would ordinarily happen prior to EPA. In addition, it is helpful to ask IAs to record what feedback they would give the learner if they were the actual assessor of the work. This enables the University to ensure that assessors are:

- Asking the right questions
- Making accurate assessment decisions

- Providing suitably detailed and specific feedback
- Fully recording the outcome of the assessment process

In addition, the IA could organise standardisation activities which may include assessing each other's candidates, judging evidence together, working through the requirements of the standards together and agreeing on assessment decisions. The frequency and type of standardisation activity will depend on a range of considerations such as any new requirements in the qualifications, changes within the qualification delivery team, previous standardisation activities and findings, the need for continuous improvement, and the outcomes of external audits. All assessors are subject to formal observations to monitor their practice to support continuous quality improvement and safeguard assessment practice.

STANDARDISATION MEETING TO DISCUSS THE EPA

The standardisation meeting between IAs following the EPA for integrated assessments should include the following as a minimum. All meetings should be recorded; with detailed notes outlining attendees, the nature of the discussions, any decisions and follow up activity required. A copy of these notes should be shared with the Educational Partnerships team.

Review of the quality and robustness of the portfolio evidence: All the methods of assessment used within the EPA involve some form of evidence gathering. This forms part of the competency units, which show the learner has met the standards required. It demonstrates that they not only have the knowledge required to pass the apprenticeship; but they are able to apply this too. The standardisation meeting should confirm that there is comparability in the quality, level and quantity of information provided across the apprentices being assessed, and that this aligns to apprentice standard.

Grading Criteria: Each method of assessment will have their own grading criteria. The grading criteria will be set out within the assessment plan specific to the apprenticeship. It is important that **ALL** EPA assessment components must be passed for the EPA to be passed overall. The standardisation meeting will review and confirm that the grading criteria has been applied consistently and fairly. Standardisation is the process of checking that all assessors are working to the current IFATE apprenticeship assessment plan and are assessing to the same principles and standards. The requirements for each qualification should be strictly followed, and consistently met for each apprentice.

Independence of an apprentice's work: standardisation meetings should also carefully consider whether there are any issues of authenticity or integrity of an apprentice's work. The IA should be able to clearly identify that this is an independent piece of work, distinctive (including in relation to the evidenced submitted to the portfolio) from any other apprentice, and that it is all the apprentice's own work.

Borderline Marks/ clarification. – in some cases, the standardisation meeting may be used to review the grading of an EPA where there are borderline marks, or concerns raised by an IA.

The standardisation meeting will also confirm that:

- All apprentices have undertaken an assessment that has been developed and verified
as valid and appropriate for the apprenticeship standard.
- That where an apprentice has a Disabled Students' Support Recommendation (DSSR)

and requires a reasonable adjustment, that the appropriate assessment arrangements have been made.

- That all apprentices receive clear, consistent, and timely guidance ahead of the EPA.
- That any technical extenuating circumstances that may have affected an EPA are recorded and the Educational Partnerships team notified.
- That all apprentices and employers have been given the opportunity to feedback on the EPA process.
- That all IAs have completed a detailed and timely report outlining the apprentice's performance against the KSBs in the apprentice standard for each component of the EPA.
- That all EPA information is stored appropriately (in line with the University guidance), and in line with GDPR guidance.

PRINCIPLES TO ENSURE APPROPRIATE STANDARDISATION

Departments must ensure that:

- All IAs must attend at least 2 meetings per calendar year.
- All new IAs must complete any compulsory IA training or briefings depending on the requirements of the Standard.
- All IAs must hold the 'essential' qualifications and skills as outlined in the End-point Assessor job description.
- All new IAs must shadow delivery of at least one in-person EPA.
- All IAs must be shadowed delivering an in-person EPA at least once every 6 months.
- All IAs must complete and evidence relevant CPD on an annual basis.
- IAs ability to assess in line with required standards to be reviewed by the Department annually.
- All IAs must complete a conflict-of-interest check for each EPA they undertake.

Notes of Standardisation Meetings

To support the University's internal quality assurance processes, the purpose of Standardisation Meetings is to ensure EPA assessment is undertaken robustly, fairly and consistently in line with the relevant Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) apprenticeship assessment plan and University guidance and policy.

Pre-EPA Standardisation Meeting

Apprenticeship Standard	
Meeting Time and Date:	
Chair:	
Attendees:	
Form of Assessment e.g., professional discussion, panel presentation:	
Notes of Discussion Please ensure the following are covered in the meeting and a record is made of discussions and agreed outcomes below.	
The application of grading criteria with reference to the Apprenticeship Assessment Plan and the KSBs required by the Apprenticeship Standard.	
The application of criteria to ensure comparability and consistency of grades, with examples.	
The agreement of what is considered suitably detailed and specific feedback, with examples	
Questions to be used in any element of EPA, e.g., Professional Discussion, if applicable.	



Actions to be taken and recommendations for improvements:	
Completed by (Chair):	

Please complete this template in line with the 'Standardisation Meetings Guidance' document. On completion, these notes should be forwarded to the EPA or Apprenticeship lead in your Department and a copy sent via e-mail to the Apprenticeships Educational Partnerships team, as.end.point.assessment@northumbria.ac.uk

Notes of Standardisation Meetings

To support the University's internal quality assurance processes, the purpose of Standardisation Meetings is to ensure EPA assessment is undertaken robustly, fairly and consistently in line with the relevant Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) apprenticeship assessment plan and University guidance and policy.

Post-EPA Standardisation Meeting

Apprenticeship Standard:	
Meeting Time and Date:	
Cohort (month and year this group of apprentices began their apprenticeship):	
Attendees:	
Form of assessment e.g. professional discussion, panel presentation:	
Notes of Discussion Please ensure the following are covered in the meeting and a record is made of discussions and agreed outcomes below.	
Review of the quality and robustness of the portfolio of evidence.	
The application of consistent and fair grading criteria with reference to the Apprenticeship Assessment Plan and the KSBs required by the Apprenticeship Standard.	
Individual grades, noting points of contention e.g., borderline marks, and resolution.	
The suitability of questions used in any element of EPA e.g., Professional Discussion, if applicable.	



Any other points of note as outlined in Standardisation Guidance, e.g. independence of apprentice's work, Technical Extenuating Circumstances (TEC), reasonable adjustments in place etc.	
Actions and recommendations arising:	
Completed by (Chair):	

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