



# End Point Assessment (EPA) Policy

<b>Audience</b>	<b>STAFF</b>
<b>Requirement</b>	<b>EXTRA</b>
<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>MD Business Plus</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Delegation</b>	<b>SLT</b>
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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Since the apprenticeship reforms of 2017, which were more widely observed in 2019, apprenticeship standards were developed to strengthen the landscape of apprenticeship provision and improve the work force throughout the UK.

Apprenticeship standards comprise of three stages:

- On Programme
- Gateway
- End Point Assessment

### **On Programme**

The On Programme element of the apprenticeship standard is where the delivery and training aspect takes place. The apprentice can expect to be coached and where appropriate assessed on the skills, knowledge and behaviours outlined in the standard, as well as be exposed to assessment methods that relate to their End Point Assessment (EPA). The On Programme element must be delivered by technical experts who have experience and, in most cases, qualifications relating to the apprentice's standard. In some standards qualifications are required to support the skills, knowledge and behaviours of the standard, but are not designed to replace the standard, they are to complement and enhance the standard in line with employer expectations within that industry.

### **Gateway**

The Gateway is the portal between the On Programme and EPA stage where the employer, provider and apprentice agree that the skills, knowledge and behaviour of the standard has been met, and the Gateway requirements are ready to be submitted to the End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO). At this stage it is agreed the apprentice has met all requirements of EPA criteria and is ready to pass through the Gateway and progress to EPA. This ensures the EPA can be booked and arrangements communicated to the employer and apprentice.

### **End Point Assessment**

End Point Assessment has been a mandatory element of all apprenticeship standards from their creation. EPA is the name given to a series of tests and assessments that an apprentice must take to prove their ability to do the job they have been training for. These assessments take place at the end of an apprenticeship following the on-programme delivery stage. EPA must be conducted and managed by an independent organisation, who has had no input on the delivery of the apprenticeship standard. Each standard has a unique EPA plan which has been quality assured and approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships.

## **2.0 Aims**

The aim of this policy and its related procedure is to:

- Ensure all staff receive accurate and useful information about EPA requirements, both in line with the Education and skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding rules, whilst working to standardise processes across the College.
- Ensure compliance with EPAOs are communicated across the full staff team enhancing an understanding of these requirements, outlining clear expectations and responsibilities at each stage.
- Provide a level of standardisation throughout the EPA stage of the apprenticeship for both the learner and employer.

### **3.0 SCOPE**

- All apprenticeship standards offered by the college and its partners, including delivery and support staff and sub-contractors.

### **4.0 PRINCIPLES**

- In line with ESFA funding requirements, all starts on apprenticeship standards must be associated with an EPAO on the Individual Learner Record (ILR). Where association is not made, funding will not be generated for this start. Where an EPAO is not available, funding will be granted, up until an EPAO has been approved.
- Association with EPAOs must be led by the apprentice's employer. Guidance can be given by the College if requested, but the overall decision lays with employer.
- Once the EPAO has been decided, and fees outlined to the employer, this information must be detailed within the Training Plan between the College and the employer.
- The service and offer will vary dependant on the EPAO and standard, therefore all association with EPAOs (End Point Assessment Organisation) must be contracted, and a service level agreement between the College and the EPAO to outline requirements and responsibilities of each party. Once this agreement has been signed, the EPAO service will commence, and support available where required.
- All On Programme and Gateway material will be shared with the delivery teams as appropriate to the standard and in line with the EPAO's requirements and policy.
- The EPA manager will support the delivery team with any queries in the EPA process and details of the plan that may be unclear. They will be the main contact of all EPAOs and will manage this relationship accordingly to maintain the service level agreement and contract that is in place.

### **5.0 Standard Timeline**

As outlined in the introduction of this policy, there are three stages of all apprenticeship standards. The on-programme stage is the funded element of the standard and is where all of the learning and development takes place. Regardless of whether the apprenticeship is funded by the employer, ESFA, or a combination of the two, the On-Programme element is contained within the start date and expected end date.

Once the apprentice has completed all areas of the standard, they are deemed Gateway ready. This is where all evidence is uploaded to the EPAO portal (each EPAO has an assigned portal for Gateway management) and the funding for the programme is frozen. The minimum requirement for On Programme learning is 1 year and 1 week (372 days). Before this point, apprentices are unable to pass through to Gateway. Once the Gateway criteria has been satisfied, all apprentices will follow their EPA plan and are assessed by their EPAO's independent assessor.

## On-Programme Delivery

Completion of Standard Skills, Knowledge and Behaviour

Completion of accredited qualification where required

Completion of Functional Skills where required

## Gateway

Delivery team, employer and apprentice complete Gateway declaration

All required evidence and results are passed to the EPA manager for portal upload

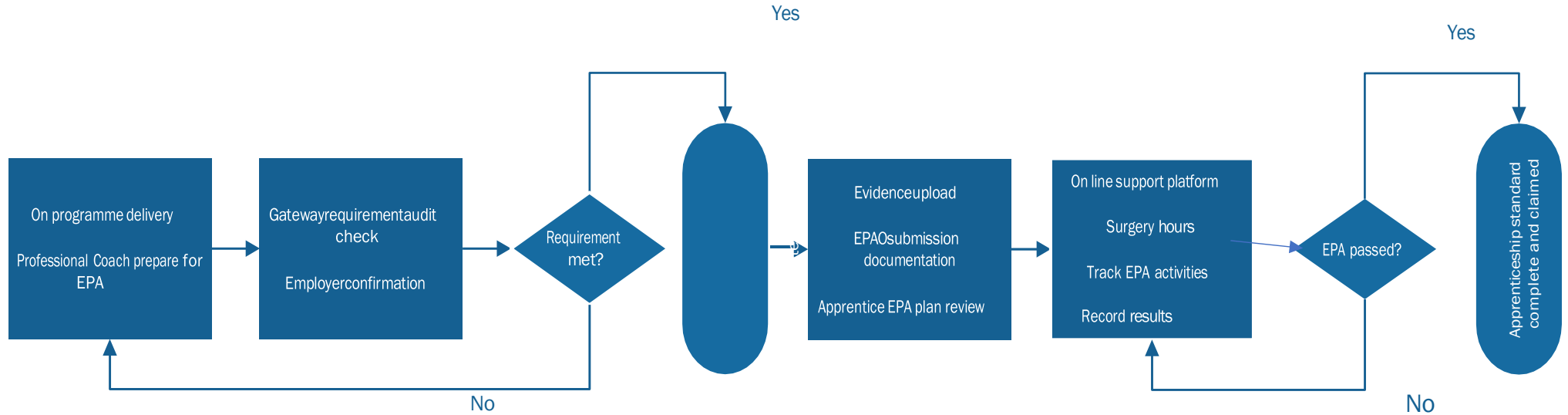
EPA manager and EPAO negotiate EPA arrangements with employer and apprentice (up to 3 months)

## End Point Assessment

EPAO conducts the required assessments as outlined by the Standards EPA plan.

## 6.0 Gateway Process

To ensure that all apprentices are prepared and have proven competency to enter EPA, a Clear Gateway process has been outlined and detailed below.



Once all requirements for Gateway have been met the EPA Manger has responsibility for the apprentice as they progress through the EPA stage.

## **6.1 Gateway Portals**

Each EPAO has its own portal, into which the EPA Manager must insert apprentices so as to upload Gateway evidence and apprenticeship declarations. The EPA manager maintains all EPAO portals and follows the EPA process for each organisation. As each EPAO has its own platform and process, the lead in times, result turn around and booking process is individual to that EPAO. This can make it difficult to advise apprentices and employers of what to expect. Completion of all EPA Activity, including re-sits where required can take up to 90 days.

## **7.0 EPA assessment**

Every standard has an End Point Assessment Plan. This plan details the methods of assessment each apprentice will go through to prove their competence in line with the industry in which they work. Common assessment methods could include the following:

- Multiple choice question exam
- Scenario based exam
- Synoptic project
- Presentation
- Interview
- Viva
- Portfolio
- Professional discussion
- Observation

## **7.1 Assessment re-sit**

All re-sits must be booked with the EPAO and in-line with their process. The cost of re-sits in most cases will be covered by the employer unless an arrangement has been put in place with the College within the negotiation stage of sign up. Re-sit results will be shared with the apprentice and in most cases with us as the provider. In these cases, the apprentice can be booked in for re-assessment without any requirement for additional training. If an apprentice fails the EPA based on competency ability to complete the assessment, the EPAO will inform the College and the apprentice will need to start the Gateway process from scratch with all assessments being re-taken.



## **8.0 Fees**

The cost of an apprenticeship is split into two sections. The first is the funding required to deliver the On Programme element of the apprenticeship. 80% of the apprenticeship cost is divided across the On Programme section in equal divisions. This leaves 20% of the full cost remaining for EPA. All EPAOs must advertise their assessment fees, as well as break down what is included within this fee. As the EPA element of the apprenticeship takes place at the end of the standard, the cost charged by the EPAO to the College is usually invoiced once the apprentice has completed their EPA. Most EPAOs will take a small deposit or registration fee to secure the apprentices place and hold their expected assessment date. This is taken at the point of registration and is non-refundable.

### **8.1 Re-sit fees**

Where an apprentice is required to re-sit any elements of their EPA the College will be charged for this process. Where possible, the cost of re-sits will be negotiated into the full price of the EPA. Where not possible, the cost of the re-sits will be the responsibility of the employer. The College will need to make this clear when agreeing the cost of the programme with the employer at sign-up ensuring there is a signed agreement in place for if re-sits are required. The College and employer can negotiate the ownership of the re-sit costs and if agreed the College can contribute or even cover the cost of the re-sit.

## **9.0 EPA resources and mock assessments**

When contracting with an EPAO it is important to have a clear picture as to what resources and assessment material they have as a part of their offer. There are some misconceptions that EPAOs are required to provide support materials to providers in order to deliver the standard. This is not a requirement of the EPAO, however there are some that will support with on-programme guidance. Most EPAOs will provide examples of assessment and mock questions for the apprentice to practice once they have passed Gateway. As a provider we can access these resources, but many EPAOs has strict rules as to when these can be shared with the apprentice. The EPA Manager will support the collection of these resources and share these with the delivery team as appropriate. As EPAOs are not able to have contact or input with the on-programme aspect of the apprenticeship, some withhold these mock assessments from the provider and share these directly with the apprentice once they have satisfied the Gateway requirements.

## **10.0 Quality**

Under the apprenticeship reform, one area that has caused some hesitation for providers is the reduction in requirement for regulated qualifications. It is important to recognise that this reduction in qualifications does not imply a reduction in quality and quality assurance. The quality of delivery will fall in line with the College Assessment policy and Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy. The Quality Cycle of the College will continue to measure the quality and compliance for the apprenticeship standards as well the IQA activity required to assure standardised practice and ensure assessment decisions are valid, authentic, fair, and consistent.

## **11.0 Employer Responsibility**

Employers have a responsibility to support their apprentice throughout their programme including the EPA element of the apprenticeship. The level of responsibility should be clearly communicated with the employer at sign up and be detailed in the Training Plan between the College and employer. Some EPA plans require input from the employer which needs to clearly be outlined so the employer is aware of their requirement from the start of the apprenticeship. As the employer is required to sign the Gateway readiness form that the apprentice is competent and ready for Gateway, it is important that they have a clear understanding of how their apprentice is progressing and any areas of improvement that they can support their apprentice with. All employers have the responsibility to ensure their apprentice has access to training and development opportunities. These activities will be tracked by The College and any areas of concern would need to be raised with the employer under the training agreement and ESFA funding requirements.

