

GUIDANCE

# End-Point Assessment Qualification Level Guidance

April 2023

**ofqual**

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# Introduction

This document is part of a suite of documents which outlines our guidance for awarding organisations offering End-Point Assessments (EPAs). Where we have not proposed updates to guidance currently in place, the existing guidance will continue to apply.

This document sets out guidance which applies to all EPAs, and which came into effect at 00.01am on 27 July 2018.

This guidance supports both the [General Conditions of Recognition](#) and the [EPA Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements](#).

This document constitutes guidance for the purposes of section 153 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (the '2009 Act').

An awarding organisation has a legal obligation under the 2009 Act to have regard to this guidance in relation to each EPA that it makes available or proposes to make available.

An awarding organisation should use the guidance to help it understand how to comply with the General Conditions of Recognition, as they apply to EPAs, and the EPA Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements.

An awarding organisation must also have regard to the [Guidance to the General Conditions of Recognition](#), which applies to all qualifications. However, in the event of any inconsistency between that guidance and the guidance contained in this document, an awarding organisation must have regard to the guidance in this document.

## Revisions to this document

This document was republished on 26 April 2023 to introduce new or amended guidance following consultation. The following sections of the guidance have been amended:

- Note on terminology
- Guidance on Condition C2 (Arrangements with Centres)
- Guidance on Condition E3 (Publication of a qualification specification)
- Guidance on Condition H1 (Marking the assessment)

The following sections of the guidance are new:

- Guidance on Condition EPA1 (Compliance with Assessment Plans) (replacing and expanding upon the original 'Guidance on Condition D1 Fitness for purpose of qualifications, Condition E4 Ensuring an assessment is fit for purpose and can be delivered, and Condition G1 Setting the assessment')
- Guidance on Condition C1 (Arrangements with third parties)

## Terminology

### A note on terminology

The terms used in the EPA Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements follow those that are used elsewhere in Ofqual's regulatory framework. While some of these terms may be associated with qualifications which are different to EPAs, the concepts they cover also apply to EPAs. As such, we use the same terminology in the EPA Qualification Level Conditions as in the General Conditions of Recognition to ensure consistent understanding and application of our Conditions.

Where a generic term is used in the EPA Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements, and in this accompanying guidance, it should be read as referring to the relevant term in the context of EPAs. For example, 'awarding organisations' will be end-point assessment organisations, a 'qualification' will be an EPA, and 'results' will be the summary of results published by an end-point assessment organisation. We provide the most relevant examples of such terms below.

### Awarding Organisations

Where the term awarding organisation is used, this should be read as referring to an end-point assessment organisation (EPAO).

### Qualification

Where the term qualification is used, this should be read as referring to an end-point assessment (EPA).

### Results

Where our Conditions, requirements and Guidance refer to results, these should be read as references to the result of the EPA, not the apprenticeship.

# Technical evaluation

Technical evaluation is a form of review carried out by Ofqual to monitor the extent to which the EPA is likely to meet the requirements of the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions. A key focus of technical evaluation is to look in detail at whether the EPA developed by an awarding organisation complies with the relevant Assessment Plan. We focus our scrutiny particularly on areas that have the potential to undermine assessment Validity, which includes the clarity and sufficiency of assessment tasks and their associated assessment criteria. Technical evaluation can be carried out before EPAs begin being delivered, or once an awarding organisation has started delivering them.

## Defined terms

While most words and phrases we use take their ordinary meaning (as required by General Conditions J1.1 to J1.7), some terms are capitalised, which means they have a defined meaning within our regulatory framework. These definitions can be found in Condition J1.8, with any definitions that relate to the EPA Qualification Level Conditions provided under EPA6. Where these terms are used in either the General Conditions or EPA Qualification Level Conditions, they must be interpreted in line with the definition we provide.

## Learner

We define a Learner in the General Conditions as a person who is registered to take a qualification and to be assessed as part of that qualification. Where the term Learner is used, this should be read as referring to an apprentice.

## Moderation

We define Moderation in our General Conditions as:

A particular form of Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny through which the marking of assessments by Centres is monitored to make sure it meets required standards and through which adjustments to a Centre's marking are made, where required, to ensure that results are based on the required standard. Moderation takes place before final results are issued under Condition H6.1.

Moderation, as defined, only applies where an assessment is marked by a Centre. We describe in our guidance for Condition C2 – Arrangements with Centres, that in most cases, and unless explicitly permitted within the Assessment Plan, it will be awarding organisations and not Centres who are marking assessments, therefore in such instances, Ofqual’s requirements in relation to Moderation will not apply.

It is possible that awarding organisations may use the word ‘moderation’ to mean something different within their own organisation and that some Assessment Plans may also refer to ‘moderation’ in different ways to how it is defined in Ofqual’s Conditions. For the purposes of Ofqual’s General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions, Moderation, where applicable, must take its defined meaning.

## Guidance on Condition A4 Conflicts of interest

Condition A4.3 requires an awarding organisation to take all reasonable steps to ensure that no conflict of interest that relates to it has an Adverse Effect. We note that the requirement to take **all** reasonable steps is an intentionally high standard for awarding organisations to meet. With respect to EPAs, reasonable steps on the part of an awarding organisation are likely to include the following –

- a) Adhering to relevant requirements, and having regard to relevant guidance, set by the Institute for Apprenticeships and the Education and Skills Funding Agency on conflicts of interest in relation to EPAs. This includes any relevant requirements or guidance in an Assessment Plan or the Apprenticeship Standard on which an Assessment Plan is based.
- b) Ensuring insofar as possible that, where a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, each assessment remains fit for purpose within the meaning given to that term in Condition D1.2. In particular, each assessment should remain valid.
- c) Managing organisational conflicts of interest, as well as those at an individual level.
- d) Ensuring that processes and procedures in relation to the delivery of the apprenticeship are sufficiently separate from assessment, and that assessment processes and procedures are sufficiently separate from each other, so as to avoid any conflict of interest having an Adverse Effect.

Condition A4.5 requires an awarding organisation to take all reasonable steps to avoid any part of the assessment of a Learner being undertaken by any person who has a personal interest in the result. In many cases with respect to EPAs, an employer or training provider preparing a Learner for an assessment will have a personal interest in the result of the assessment.

There will be some situations in which the involvement of a person with a personal interest cannot be avoided, even having taken all reasonable steps. This could be where an employer is the only person who could competently or safely assess the Learner. We expect awarding organisations to have in place arrangements to identify and manage situations in which this may be the case.

In some cases the involvement of a person with a personal interest may be required by the Assessment Plan. In such cases an awarding organisation must adhere to the requirements of the Assessment Plan under Condition EPA1.1. These requirements will take precedence over Condition A4.5.

In any case where a person with a personal interest plays a role in the assessment, Condition A4.6 requires that the relevant part of the assessment must be subject to scrutiny by another person (unless the Assessment Plan states otherwise).

In addition, we will expect awarding organisations to be alive to the risks inherent in reciprocal arrangements whereby two organisations each assess Learners prepared for the assessment by the other. In line with Condition A4.5 such arrangements should be avoided where possible. Where this is not possible, an awarding organisation must take all reasonable steps to prevent any Adverse Effect that could arise from such an arrangement (as per Condition A4.3), including ensuring scrutiny by another person (as per Condition A4.6).

Finally, awarding organisations should also be alive to any financial incentive that there may be for the awarding organisation, or individual Assessors, to mark in such a way as to increase the amount of times that a Learner takes a qualification.

## **Guidance on Condition C1 – Arrangements with third parties**

Condition C1 requires that where an awarding organisation arranges for a third party to undertake, on its behalf, any part of the development, delivery or award of qualifications which the awarding organisation makes available, or proposes to make available, the awarding organisation must:

(a) ensure that the arrangements which it establishes with that third party enable the awarding organisation to develop, deliver and award qualifications in a way that complies with its Conditions of Recognition, and

(b) monitor and, where appropriate, enforce such arrangements so as to ensure that it is able to develop, deliver and award qualifications in a way that complies with its Conditions of Recognition

Some Assessment Plans include approaches where an on-programme qualification, delivered by the awarding organisation or a different organisation, is integrated into the EPA. This could, for example, be where a unit of the on-programme qualification is taken as part of the EPA, meaning the Learner completes both the qualification, and the EPA at the same time, on completion of this final unit.

Where the approach to integration is such that another organisation, is delivering part of a qualification which counts towards the EPA, on behalf of the awarding organisation, this is likely to be a third-party arrangement, as per the requirements of Condition C1, set out above. This means that the awarding organisation will need to ensure it has arrangements in place with the third party, to assure itself that the overall EPA is delivered in line with its Conditions of Recognition. This will be the case whether the third party is another Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation, or another type of organisation.

The exact nature of these arrangements will vary depending on the delivery model, but the awarding organisation must satisfy itself that any third parties involved in the delivery of parts of its EPA have the ability to do so in a way which allows the awarding organisation to meet the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions, and that it monitors the delivery to ensure this happens. The awarding organisation must make sure it sets out clearly its expectations of third parties, including through the use of contractual arrangements where appropriate, and take appropriate action where it identifies that these expectations have not been met.

It is the awarding organisation which is recognised to deliver the EPA that has ultimate responsibility for ensuring all aspects of its EPA meet the requirements of the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions, so it must ensure that its arrangements with third parties enable it to do this. Further guidance on arrangements with third parties has been published against General Condition C1, and awarding organisations must have regard to that guidance.



# Guidance on Condition C2 – Arrangements with Centres

A Centre is any organisation that delivers part of a qualification on behalf of an awarding organisation. A Centre could be a school or a college, but could also be an employer, training provider or any other educational institution. The key consideration is whether an organisation is delivering a part of the EPA on behalf of the awarding organisation and the role it is fulfilling, not what type of organisation it is.

Within EPA delivery, there are a number of roles that an organisation could be fulfilling, which mean that for the purposes of the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions, it is considered to be a Centre. Where this is the case, an awarding organisation must ensure that it meets the requirements of Condition C2. Where the definitions of a Centre are not met, then Condition C1 relating to third parties would still need to be considered.

Condition C2 applies only where a Centre delivers part of a qualification on behalf of an awarding organisation. Usually this will be where a Centre delivers assessments on behalf of an awarding organisation, but there could be other activities, beyond delivery of the actual assessment, which would mean another organisation is performing the function of a Centre under the General Conditions.

For example, in an EPA context, an employer or training provider that delivers or marks an assessment or part of an assessment on behalf of an awarding organisation will meet the definition of a Centre.

An organisation would be performing the role of a Centre where it delivers an assessment where no person employed or contracted by the awarding organisation is present while the assessment is being taken. In such a case the Centre would have responsibility for administering the assessment and may undertake some or all of the following tasks, as relevant –

- taking delivery of written assessment materials in advance of the assessment,
- handing out written assessment papers to Learners,
- setting up online assessments,
- delivering instructions to Learners before the assessment commences,
- maintaining the security and confidentiality of the assessment/materials,

- ensuring that the awarding organisation's rules in relation to the conditions under which the assessment is taken are adhered to, including Invigilation, and
- collecting written responses to assessment and sending to the awarding organisation.

For EPAs, there are a number of different delivery models used across Assessment Plans, where an organisation may be permitted to perform the role of a Centre. The awarding organisation would need to ensure all the necessary requirements in relation to Centres are met. We have provided examples of such arrangements below (these are not exhaustive, and in each case, the awarding organisation would need to decide whether the role being performed is that of a Centre):

- where an assessment is administered or invigilated by a training provider and sent to the awarding organisation to mark, the training provider may be fulfilling some of the functions of a Centre.
- where a training provider or employer is the only person who can safely deliver and mark an assessment (for example where this is due to health & safety or legislative requirements, and where this is allowed by the Assessment Plan), that organisation would be performing the functions of a Centre. Therefore, the awarding organisation would need to have arrangements in place relating to arrangements with Centres under Condition C2. There would also need to be arrangements in place that meet the Conditions relating to Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny or Moderation, as required by General Condition H2.

In those cases where a Centre delivers part of an EPA, by carrying out functions such as those listed above, an awarding organisation must comply with the requirements of Condition C2. This will include instances where the relevant Assessment Plan allows for Centre marking in circumstances where an employer or training provider is the only person who could competently or safely assess the Learner.

In the vast majority of cases, no part of an EPA will be delivered by a Centre as the awarding organisation will deliver the assessments itself. There may be instances where the assessment takes place or is delivered at another site. This may include:

- where an assessment takes place on an employer's premises (or training provider's premises or at a neutral venue) and the employer provides access to the venue and/or equipment for the assessment, but the employer takes no part in the delivery of the assessment.
- where an assessment is being delivered entirely remotely by the awarding organisation, where this is permitted by the Assessment Plan or frameworks published by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.
- where the awarding organisation implements remote invigilation for assessments.

In such circumstances, these other potential sites are unlikely to meet the definition of a Centre and Condition C2 will not apply.

## Guidance on Condition D3 Reviewing approach

As part of its review of an EPA under Condition D3.1, an awarding organisation should consider the functioning and performance of the qualification, including the extent to which any issues it identifies stem from the requirements of the relevant Assessment Plan.

Where the awarding organisation forms the view that an Assessment Plan gives rise to an Adverse Effect it must promptly notify Ofqual under Condition EPA3.2(k).

The Assessment Plan and apprenticeship standard on which each EPA is based will themselves be subject to periodic review by the Institute for Apprenticeships.

As part of the evidence to inform its own review, an awarding organisation should have regard to the outcomes of any review of an apprenticeship standard by the Institute, as well as any feedback from the Institute or Ofqual on the EPA itself.

However, where a review by the Institute leads to changes to an Assessment Plan, an awarding organisation should only make changes to its EPA based on that review where the new version of the assessment plan is included in Ofqual's list of Assessment Plans.

## Guidance on Condition E2 Requirements on qualification titling

For the purposes of compliance with Condition E2.1 –

- a) the level of the qualification included in the qualification title should be the level of the relevant apprenticeship standard as approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships,
- b) the qualification type should be 'EPA', and

- c) the concise indication of qualification content should replicate the title of the relevant apprenticeship standard.

For example:

[AO name] Level 2 End-point assessment for ST0072 Customer Service Practitioner  
[endorsements if applicable]

# Guidance on Condition E3 – Publication of a qualification specification

## Content of the specification

Condition E3.1 requires an awarding organisation to publish a specification for an EPA. The specification is a document which provides information to Users about the EPA. Condition E3.2 sets out minimum requirements which the specification must include.

Many items which Condition E3.2 requires to be included in the specification may also be found in the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and Assessment Plan for an EPA. We will expect an awarding organisation to extract any relevant information from the Apprenticeship Standard and Assessment Plan and include it within its specification. For example, it is likely that an Apprenticeship Standard will contain the relevant information in relation to the following:

- any prior requirements and/or qualifications that a Learner must have, or state that these are for individual employers to decide (Condition E3.2(c) and (e)),
- the required knowledge, skills and understanding (Condition E3.2(f)), and
- the qualification level (Condition 3.2(m)).

In addition, the relevant Assessment Plan will contain information in relation to methods of assessment (Condition E3.2(g)) and specified levels of attainment (Condition E3.2(j)).

The Assessment Plan sets out the approach that must be followed by all awarding organisations offering EPAs for a particular Apprenticeship Standard. It may not include all the information, or the level of detail we would require an awarding organisation to provide about its approach to a user of the EPA in its specification. For example, there may be parts of an Assessment Plan which are less prescriptive than others, and awarding organisations may vary in the approaches taken, reflecting their own organisational design decisions. Therefore, it is important that the specification provides

any additional detail Users might need about the awarding organisation's own approach, as well as information about those areas where the awarding organisation is following closely the approach set out in the Assessment Plan.

Where the Assessment Plan does not include all of the information set out in Condition E3.2, and where this is relevant to the EPA, the awarding organisation will need to provide this information itself, in its specification. Even where an awarding organisation is required to follow the Assessment Plan without any discretion about its own approach, it is not sufficient to simply provide information as to where the Apprenticeship Standard and Assessment Plan can be located, although an awarding organisation may additionally provide that information if it wishes.

Some of the information set out in Condition E3.2 may not however be applicable for all EPAs. The way the Condition is worded explains which of the requirements under Condition E3.2 are required in all cases, and which are required only where they are relevant to the qualification being delivered.

Of the items set out in Condition E3.2, those which use the word 'any' need only be included in the specification where that item is relevant to the EPA.

For example, where a qualification does not have any optional routes, an awarding organisation will not need to include these in its specification under Conditions E3.2(d) and (i).

Of the items set out in Condition E3.2, those which do not contain the word 'any' are mandatory in all cases. Where this information is not included in the Apprenticeship Standard or Assessment Plan, we will expect an awarding organisation to supplement the information which it draws from these documents in its specification.

Where we have disapplied a Condition, this should be reflected in the specification. For example, as Conditions E7 and E8 have been disapplied in respect of EPAs, in no case will a specification set out information with respect to Total Qualification Time (Conditions E3.2(k) and (l)).

## Publication of the specification

Condition J1.7 states that where an awarding organisation is required to publish a document it must be published in a way which is –

- a) clear to its intended audience,
- b) accurate, and
- c) reasonably accessible (including by way of publication, if available, on the awarding organisation's website).

We will expect an awarding organisation to publish its specification on its website. Our default position is that this should be in an area of the website which is available to all Users and potential Users of the qualification (i.e. not in a restricted section of the website). However, we accept that there may be circumstances in which it is appropriate to restrict access to the specification, or elements of it. This could be, for example, where certain elements of the specification are commercially sensitive or where the nature of the qualification is such that the specification should not be available to the general public. In such cases we would expect as much of the specification as possible to be publicly accessible, with only those elements which it is appropriate to restrict being housed on a secure section of the website.

We note that in order to meet the requirements of Condition E3, a specification published in accordance with Condition J1.7 need only contain the information set out in Condition E3.2. Where an awarding organisation chooses to go beyond that information it will be free to decide for itself how to make that additional information available. We will expect an awarding organisation to be able to justify its approach to publication if asked to do so.

## **Guidance on Condition EPA1 – Compliance with Assessment Plans**

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education approves Assessment Plans. Awarding organisations must comply with all requirements set out by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in an Assessment Plan.

At the same time, Ofqual also has Conditions and requirements that apply to awarding organisations. Awarding organisations must meet the requirements of an Assessment Plan and meet the requirements of Ofqual's General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions. Awarding organisations are required under Condition EPA1.1 to comply with any requirements, and have regard to any guidance, contained in a relevant Assessment Plan. In doing so, they must interpret the Assessment Plan in accordance with any requirements we set and have regard to any guidance we have published. The General Conditions also set requirements which relate to the need to ensure the Validity of assessments, in particular Conditions D1 (Fitness for purpose of qualifications), E4 (Ensuring an assessment is fit for purpose and can be delivered) and G1 (Setting the assessment). Awarding organisations should balance the requirements of the General Conditions with the obligation in Condition EPA1.1(a) to adhere to the requirements set out in the relevant Assessment Plan.

The Assessment Plan explains which assessment methods will be used, and how they will be deployed to assess the Learner. The Assessment Plan sets out how the knowledge, skills and behaviours will be assessed. Awarding organisations should use the Assessment Plan to develop their assessment.

Assessment Plans typically set out:

- assessment methods and any requirements associated with these
- any assessment delivery considerations
- roles and responsibilities, quality assurance requirements and arrangements
- gateway requirements
- grading requirements and criteria
- requirements for reasonable adjustments
- any requirements relating to resits or retakes

In reading and understanding Assessment Plans, it is important to consider how the Assessment Plan is written:

1. Some Assessment Plans set absolute requirements, stating that an awarding organisation must, or must not do something. In such instances these requirements must be met.
2. In some cases, it may be necessary or appropriate for an awarding organisation to go beyond what is set out in the Assessment Plan. Where this is the case, it must be done in line with the requirements of the Assessment Plan and meet the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions.
3. In other instances, Assessment Plans may allow flexibility. In such instances an awarding organisation may determine these aspects of their approach, within what is allowed for by the Assessment Plan. In doing so they must ensure the approach they put in place meets the requirements of the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions.

## Meeting or going beyond the requirements of Assessment Plans

An Assessment Plan may not cover everything that an awarding organisation needs to do to deliver an assessment in line with Ofqual's General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions.

In some instances, an awarding organisation must go beyond what is set out in the Assessment Plan to ensure it also meets the requirements of the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions. For example, many Assessment Plans set out grading criteria which must be used for grading the EPA. They may not however set out the precise arrangements for awarding organisations to ensure that these criteria are understood by Assessors and applied accurately and consistently, which is a requirement in Condition H1. An awarding organisation would need to consider whether following the Assessment Plan is sufficient to ensure this, or whether it is necessary to provide additional guidance for Assessors to make sure they understand these requirements. In producing this additional guidance, they would need to ensure that they meet the relevant General Conditions, for example ensuring under Condition H1 that criteria are understood by Assessors and accurately and consistently applied. By doing so, an awarding organisation would be meeting the requirements of the Assessment Plan by following the grading criteria set out, while also going beyond this and meeting Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition, by providing additional guidance to make sure Assessors understand and can apply the grading criteria consistently.

There may be cases in which the Assessment Plan allows scope for an awarding organisation to take decisions when seeking to design an assessment which is fit for purpose. The Assessment Plan may set out at a high-level the requirements of the EPA, but awarding organisations may be expected to go beyond what is in the Assessment Plan and take some design decisions themselves. They must do this within the scope of what the Assessment Plan allows, and in line with the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions. They must, for example, ensure that any design decisions are taken in such a way as to meet the requirements of Conditions D1 (Fitness for purpose of qualifications), E4 (Ensuring an assessment is fit for purpose and can be delivered) and G1 (Setting the assessment).

It will be for an awarding organisation to determine whether to take additional steps beyond those set out in the Assessment Plan, and what these are, in order to ensure it meets both the requirements set out in the Assessment Plan, and the requirements of the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions.



# Conflicts between the Assessment Plan and Ofqual's General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions

Under Condition EPA 1.1, Ofqual specify the latest version of the Assessment Plan that has been approved and published by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, and which awarding organisations must follow. This means we expect that it would be possible for an awarding organisation to develop a valid EPA against the requirements of the Assessment Plan and that this should not conflict with the requirements of the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions. However, it is possible that some challenges with developing a valid EPA may only become apparent during the design, development and delivery of the EPA by the awarding organisation.

Under Condition EPA1.1(a), (read together with Condition EPA6.3) we have specified a version of an Assessment Plan with which an awarding organisation must comply under Condition EPA1.1. If there is a conflict between the requirements of the Assessment Plan and the requirements of the General Conditions or EPA Qualification Level Conditions, an awarding organisation must comply with the Assessment Plan. However, in doing so it should seek to ensure that it meets the requirements of the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions to the greatest extent that it can.

## Other relevant requirements and guidance

In addition to meeting the requirements of the Assessment Plan, General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions, and having regard to Ofqual's guidance, awarding organisations must also follow any other relevant requirements and have regard to any guidance which applies to an Apprenticeship Standard or an Assessment Plan. Such requirements or guidance could include, but are not limited to:

- dispensations agreed with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
- additional requirements or frameworks published by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
- approaches agreed with Ofqual in relation to how aspects of Assessment Plans should be implemented

- approaches agreed with sector or representative bodies to ensure consistency of delivery for aspects of Assessment Plans

Where there are such additional requirements or guidance, an awarding organisation will need to consider the status of such requirements, and how it can meet these, while also meeting the requirements of the Assessment Plan and the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions.

An awarding organisation should also consider the extent to which it is appropriate to develop consistent approaches with other awarding organisations offering the EPA.

## Guidance on making design decisions to meet Assessment Plans, the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions

As set out above, many Assessment Plans allow scope for an awarding organisation to take design decisions in relation to implementing the approach set out. We provide guidance below on developing assessments under Assessment Plans in such instances.

### Grading criteria

In developing grading criteria for an EPA, the following indicate approaches which may meet the requirement of an Assessment Plan, the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions:

- where necessary, the awarding organisation has provided additional exemplification of grading criteria or performance requirements
- the awarding organisation has taken steps to ensure that grading criteria are understood by Assessors and can be accurately and consistently applied (for example where subjective terms are used in the Assessment Plan)
- where the grading criteria in an Assessment Plan do not support accurate and consistent application, the awarding organisation has provided additional guidance to Assessors to mitigate this risk

- the awarding organisation sets clear criteria for all grades covered by the assessment so that it is clear how all grades can be achieved
- the awarding organisation has ensured that its grading criteria match the knowledge, skills and behaviours they are intended to indicate
- the awarding organisation has ensured a relevant level of competence is included. The level of competence should not be reduced to below the occupational competence standard, as indicated by the relevant standard

## Assessment methods

In developing assessments for an EPA, awarding organisations must ensure the assessment methods are in line with the Conditions and meet the requirements set out by the Assessment Plan covering the setting and delivery of assessments (Conditions G1 to G9). The following indicate approaches which may meet the requirement of an Assessment Plan and the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions.

For all assessments, the awarding organisation:

- takes into consideration different employment contexts when setting tests and writing mark schemes, for example by ensuring that questions or tasks are not focused on a part of the industry that the Learner may not have experience of where a standard covers multiple job roles
- provides clear parameters for assessments, including where these are not specified in the Assessment Plan, for example assessment durations, assessment conditions, evidence requirements, arrangements for producing and submitting evidence
- provides clear guidance on task requirements and on how Assessors should implement these, for example:
  - how the Assessor should identify and select scenarios for the scenario test assessment method
  - whether extra time should be allowed if the assessment is not completed in the allocated time
  - how the Assessor chooses which practical tasks to assess the Learner on. For example, being clear about whether an Assessor should be choosing tasks relating to different areas of the Learner's occupation, or from a single occupational area

For written assessments, the awarding organisation:

- provides enough information to allow Assessors to apply the mark scheme accurately and consistently
- ensures mark schemes provide sufficient information about the range of credit worthy responses

- for multiple choice assessments, ensures that the number of correct answers corresponds with the acceptable responses in the mark scheme
- ensures questions are free from ambiguity and are accessible to Learners, for example, through use of appropriate language, and by ensuring the question elicits what the mark scheme rewards

For observation assessments, the awarding organisation:

- includes some exemplification of the grading criteria to show what an Assessor should be looking for in practice
- provides examples, appropriate for the intended audience, of what a Learner might do to demonstrate the different grade criteria
- provides clarification of what happens should a Learner not have an opportunity to demonstrate certain criteria

For presentations, interviews or professional discussions, the awarding organisation:

- provides example questions to aid consistency
- clarifies the use of prompts in assessments, such as the number of prompts permitted and the type of prompt allowed

For portfolios, projects, showcases or journals, the awarding organisation:

- sets out the expectations for portfolios, for example the number of pieces of evidence required, types of evidence to include, the format required
- has a clear and effective process for Authenticating evidence.

## Guidance on transitioning between versions of Assessment Plans

Under Condition EPA 1.1, an awarding organisation must comply with any requirements, and have regard to any guidance, contained in the relevant Assessment Plan. The relevant Assessment Plan is the version of an apprenticeship assessment plan, published by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education under section A2(1) of the Act, which is specified in a list published by Ofqual which may be revised from time to time. Awarding organisations are responsible for ensuring they are following the version of the plan on the list we have published.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education keeps apprenticeships under review, and from time to time this could lead to an Apprenticeship Standard, or the associated Assessment Plan being revised or adjusted, and a new version of the Assessment Plan being published. Where this happens, we will update our [List of Assessment Plans](#) to include the new version.

Where the List of Assessment Plans is updated, an awarding organisation will need to consider what action it needs to take to ensure they remain compliant with Condition EPA1.1.

Where there has been a change to an Assessment Plan, the awarding organisation will need to consider this change, and determine whether the change will require it to amend its EPA. Having considered this, the awarding organisation will need to take any steps necessary to amend the EPA as appropriate.

Where an awarding organisation decides to amend an EPA, it is possible that it may already have Learners registered who are intending to take that EPA. In such instances, it will be necessary to consider at what point Learners should transfer from one version of the Assessment Plan to the other, while ensuring that as far as is possible, they are not advantaged or disadvantaged as a result of the awarding organisation's approach. The most effective approach for transferring Learners may differ depending on the Assessment Plan, and the extent of the changes. In determining its approach, an awarding organisation should consider:

- any guidance or requirements set by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in relation to the point at which Learners should transition from one version of the Assessment Plan to the other
- any guidance or requirements agreed with other relevant organisations, such as trailblazers, regulators, or industry or sector bodies
- the nature of the changes, for example whether the changes are such that Learners taking one version of the Assessment Plan are likely to be advantaged or disadvantaged over those taking the other version
- the extent of the changes – whether Learners prepared for assessment against one version of the Assessment Plan are likely to be advantaged or disadvantaged against those taking the other version
- whether the changes are likely to impact the extent to which Learners following a particular version of the Assessment Plan would be likely to be considered to have achieved occupational competence and meet the needs of employers
- the proximity of on-programme Learners to taking their assessment
- the time required to implement any changes, for example developing new assessment materials and allowing providers to familiarise themselves with any changes
- the need for Learners to study any new material that may have been added to the EPA as a result of the changes
- the requirements of the Learner's employer and any view they may have on the approach to take

In all cases, the awarding organisation must ensure that in delivering the EPA, it continues to meet the requirements of the General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions.

Where an Assessment Plan is updated, an awarding organisation must also consider whether the EPA listed on the [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) remains appropriate, or whether the change to the EPA is such that a new EPA should be submitted to the Register. The extent to which this is necessary will depend on the nature of any changes made, however in coming to a decision, an awarding organisation should consider:

- the nature and extent of any changes – the greater the change in the assessment, the more likely it is that an awarding organisation may decide to submit a new EPA to the Register
- whether the change has arisen as a result of a change to the Apprenticeship Standard, in which case the title of the qualification may have changed to reflect changes to the standard
- the extent to which the Users of the qualification would consider the change substantial, and the potential impacts the change may have on Users

If, having considered the factors above, an awarding organisation decides to withdraw an EPA from the Register, it should ensure that it does so in compliance with Condition D6 (Management of the withdrawal of qualifications). In particular, it should prepare, maintain and comply with a written withdrawal plan which sets out how it will take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of Learners on the version of the EPA being withdrawn. It should also provide clear information to Users about the withdrawal of the qualification. In line with our guidance for Condition D6, this could include relevant dates for the withdrawal of the qualification, and information about alternative assessments that Learners may take instead (for example the new version of the EPA which has replaced the one being withdrawn).

Where there is a period of time where 2 versions of the EPA overlap on the Register, the awarding organisation must ensure that titles of qualifications on the Register are clear to Users.

Where an awarding organisation decides it is not necessary to withdraw an EPA from the Register, it should ensure that all information on the Register remains up to date, and that the EPA continues to meet all relevant General Conditions and EPA Qualification Level Conditions.

# Guidance on Condition EPA3 Notification to Ofqual of certain events in relation to EPAs

Under Condition EPA3.1, an awarding organisation must notify Ofqual where it believes that an event has occurred or is likely to occur which could have an Adverse Effect. This means that an awarding organisation must notify Ofqual even where an event has not yet happened, so long as the awarding organisation considers that it is likely to happen.

## Issues arising during the design of EPAs

There may be occasions during the design stage of an EPA where an awarding organisation uncovers potential Adverse Effects if the EPA is designed in a certain way in accordance with the Assessment Plan.

Where a range of design options are available to an awarding organisation – all of which are capable of complying with the Assessment Plan, but some of which could lead to an Adverse Effect – we will expect the awarding organisation to choose a design option that will not lead to an Adverse Effect. Where it does so, there will be no need for the awarding organisation to notify Ofqual of the potential Adverse Effect that would have been caused had it chosen a different design option.

By contrast, the Assessment Plan may leave no design option available to the awarding organisation that would avoid an Adverse Effect. In such circumstances, the awarding organisation must notify Ofqual under Condition EPA3.2(k).

Under Condition EPA3.4, an awarding organisation must also notify Ofqual, at the same time, or as soon as possible afterwards, of any steps that it has taken or intends to take to prevent, correct or mitigate the Adverse Effect.

There may be circumstances in which there are no steps that an awarding organisation can itself take to prevent, correct or mitigate the Adverse Effect because, for example, it cannot change the requirements of an Assessment Plan. The Awarding Organisation must notify Ofqual under Condition EPA3.4 of any such concerns.

## **Issues arising during the review of an Assessment Plan by the Institute for Apprenticeships**

Under Condition EPA3.3, an awarding organisation must promptly notify Ofqual if a review of the Assessment Plan is proposed or initiated. At that point Ofqual will liaise with the Institute with respect to the review.

There is no requirement under Condition EPA3 for an awarding organisation to notify Ofqual of any Adverse Effect that could result from proposed changes to an Assessment Plan as part of the subsequent review by the Institute. An awarding organisation is of course free to share any such concerns with Ofqual (and is encouraged to do so) and Ofqual may ask awarding organisations for their views as part of its own consideration of proposed changes.

# **Guidance on Condition H1 – Marking the assessment**

Condition H1 applies both where an assessment is marked by an awarding organisation and where it is marked by a Centre. For most EPAs the Assessment Plan will require that assessments are marked by the awarding organisation.

For these purposes, ‘marking’ refers not only to assigning a numerical mark to evidence generated by a Learner in an assessment, but to assigning any type of signifier which serves to differentiate Learners’ levels of attainment in line with the criteria set under Condition G1.3, for example, Pass, Merit or Distinction. It should be noted that such signifiers may also serve as specified levels of attainment (i.e. overall grade for the EPA in question) for the purposes of other Conditions.

Under Condition H1.1, an awarding organisation must ensure that the marking criteria for an assessment are understood by Assessors and applied accurately and consistently. This means that an awarding organisation should have in place arrangements to train Assessors and to standardise and monitor marking.

These arrangements should ensure that an awarding organisation is able to identify any issues in the application of marking criteria by the Assessor and to correct those issues to ensure accurate and consistent application. This will include the identification and mitigation (as appropriate) of any Conflicts of Interest.

Due to the specific risks around EPAs, we expect these arrangements to be impartial and to be separate from, and independent of, marking by Assessors. For example, an awarding organisation could use an independent team within its own organisation, or an external third party.



Under Condition H1.2, where an awarding organisation reasonably concludes that there is a material inconsistency in the Level of Demand between two or more optional tasks or assessments that would be likely to prejudice a group of Learners, it must make a reasonable alteration to its marking criteria to prevent that prejudice.

Under Condition EPA1.1, an awarding organisation is required to adhere to the requirements set out in the relevant Assessment Plan for an EPA. Depending on the content of the Assessment Plan, an awarding organisation may find it difficult to alter the marking criteria. However, we will expect an awarding organisation to take all reasonable steps within the parameters of the Assessment Plan to ensure that no material inconsistency between 2 or more tasks or assessments causes prejudice to a group of apprentices.

Likewise, where the Assessment Plan itself could give rise to a potential material inconsistency, we will expect an awarding organisation to take all reasonable steps to prevent the inconsistency from arising while complying with the requirements of the Assessment Plan.

## **Guidance on Condition H2 Moderation where an assessment is marked by a Centre**

Condition H2 applies only where an assessment, or any part of an assessment, is marked by a Centre rather than by the awarding organisation. In many cases assessments for EPAs will be marked by the awarding organisation and Condition H2 will not apply. This includes where an awarding organisation sends Assessors to assess a Learner at a Centre, but the Centre itself does not undertake the marking of the assessment.

There will be limited circumstances in EPAs where marking is undertaken by a Centre, for example an employer. This could include situations where marking by the Centre is permitted or required under the Assessment Plan where, for example, an employer is the only person who could competently or safely assess the Learner. Where marking is undertaken by the Centre, an awarding organisation must have in place clear and effective arrangements for the Moderation of the assessment, including the ability to make any necessary adjustments to the Centre's marking.

# Guidance on Condition H6 Issuing results

Under Condition H6.1 an awarding organisation must issue results for all EPAs. We expect an awarding organisation to issue results to the Education and Skills Funding Agency which will then issue the Learner with an apprenticeship certificate, where appropriate, on behalf of the Secretary of State.

An awarding organisation may also issue results to a Learner. Where it does so, it should make clear that what has been issued (for example a summary of results) is neither a Learner's overall result for his or her apprenticeship, nor a certificate for that apprenticeship.



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