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## Guidance

# Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Guidance

Updated 1 April 2026

## Applies to England

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## Introduction

This document sets out guidance that applies to all Apprenticeship Assessments, and which comes into effect on 1 April 2026.

This guidance supports both the [General Conditions of Recognition](#) and the [Apprenticeship Assessment 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 apprenticeship assessment 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 apprenticeship assessments, and the Apprenticeship Assessment 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.

## Guidance on Condition AA3 (Compliance with Assessment Plans)

Under Condition AA3.1, an awarding organisation must seek to comply with all requirements set out in an Assessment Plan.

Awarding organisations must interpret the Assessment Plan in accordance with the

General Conditions and any Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions we have set and have regard to any associated guidance that we have published.

## **Meeting or going beyond the requirements of Assessment Plans**

An Assessment Plan may set out at a high-level only the requirements for the Apprenticeship Assessment.

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 Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions and guidance.

The General Conditions set requirements that relate to the need to ensure the Validity and Reliability of assessments, with which an awarding organisation must comply when designing its Apprenticeship Assessment, in particular:

- Condition D1 (Fitness for purpose of qualifications)
- Condition E4 (Ensuring an assessment is fit for purpose and can be delivered)
- Condition G1 (Setting the assessment)
- Condition H1 (Marking the assessment)
- Condition H2 (Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny where an assessment is marked by a Centre)

An awarding organisation must also comply with the Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions and requirements, in particular:

- Condition AA5 (Setting the assessment)
- Condition AA5 (Synoptic assessment)
- Condition AA5 (Marking the assessment)
- Condition AA6 (General Purposes)
- Condition AA8 (Standard setting)

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

Ofqual expects that it will be possible for an awarding organisation to develop a valid Apprenticeship Assessment against the requirements of the Assessment Plan and that this should not conflict with the requirements of the General Conditions or the Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions.

However, it is possible that some challenges with developing a valid Apprenticeship Assessment may only become apparent during the design, development and delivery of the Apprenticeship Assessment by an awarding organisation.

Under Condition AA3.1, if there is a conflict between the requirements of the Assessment Plan and the requirements of the General Conditions or Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions, an awarding organisation must comply with the requirements of the General Conditions and Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions.

## **Other relevant requirements and guidance**

In addition to meeting the requirements of the Assessment Plan, General Conditions and Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions, and having regard to Ofqual's guidance, awarding organisations must also follow any other relevant requirements and consider any other guidance which applies to an Occupational Standard or an Assessment Plan (except where such requirements or guidance conflicts with requirements or guidance in Ofqual's framework, the Occupational Standard or the Assessment Plan). Such requirements or guidance could include, but are not limited to:

- additional requirements or frameworks published by Skills England or equivalent body
- approaches agreed with employer, 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 requirements while also meeting the requirements of the General Conditions, Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions and the Assessment Plan.

## **Changes to Occupational Standards and Assessment Plans**

Apprenticeships may be reviewed from time to time which could lead to an Occupational Standard, or the associated Assessment Plan, being revised.

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

Where an awarding organisation decides to amend an Apprenticeship Assessment, it is possible that it may already have Learners registered who are intending to take that Apprenticeship Assessment. In such instances, it will be necessary to consider at what point Learners may 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 appropriate 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 Skills England in relation to the point at which Learners should transition from one version of the Apprenticeship Assessment to the other
- any guidance or requirements agreed with other relevant organisations, such as regulators, or industry or sector bodies
- the nature of the changes, for example whether the changes are such that Learners being assessed against 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 knowledge and skills 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, an awarding organisation must ensure that in delivering the Apprenticeship Assessment it continues to meet the requirements of the General Conditions and Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions.

Where an Assessment Plan is updated, an awarding organisation must also consider whether the Apprenticeship Assessment listed on the [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) remains appropriate, or whether the change is such that a new Apprenticeship Assessment 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 Apprenticeship Assessment to the Register
- whether the change has arisen as a result of a change to the Occupational Standard, in which case the title of the apprenticeship assessment 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 Apprenticeship Assessment 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 Apprenticeship Assessment being withdrawn.

It should also provide clear information to Users about the withdrawal of the apprenticeship assessment. In line with our guidance for Condition D6, this could include relevant dates for the withdrawal of the apprenticeship assessment, and information about alternative assessments that Learners may take instead (for example the new version of the Apprenticeship Assessment which has replaced the one being withdrawn).

If there is a period of time where there are 2 versions of the Apprenticeship Assessment on the Register, an awarding organisation must ensure that titles of the 2 versions of the Apprenticeship Assessment on the Register are clear to Users.

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

## **Assessment design - Guidance on Condition AA5 (Assessment) and Condition AA7 (Content)**

### **Setting the assessment**

Condition G1.1 (Setting the assessment) requires an awarding organisation to ensure that the content of an assessment is fit for purpose, appropriate for the method of assessment chosen, and consistent with the specification for that qualification. Condition G1.3 requires an awarding organisation to produce a document that sets out clear and unambiguous criteria against which Learners' levels of attainment will be differentiated.

Condition AA5.1 requires an awarding organisation to set all assessments. In doing so, an awarding organisation should specify, at least:

- the evidence to be generated by the Learner

- the assessment outcomes and the knowledge and skills covered through the assessment
- whether the assessment must be completed in a specified amount of time
- the nature of any support that can be provided to Learners
- any other specified conditions under which the assessment must be completed
- any requirements relating to the submission of evidence

## Assessment structure and synoptic assessment

Condition AA5.1 requires an awarding organisation to design each Apprenticeship Assessment to include synoptic assessment and to be able to justify its approach to synoptic assessment.

Purpose A states that an Apprenticeship Assessment should be designed to enable:

“...the Learner to acquire the knowledge and skills specified in the Occupational Standard, so that they can demonstrate occupational competence, at the appropriate level, in different but comparable contexts to those in which the knowledge and skills were acquired (for example, with a different employer)”

Purpose B states that an Apprenticeship Assessment should be designed to provide:

“.. employers with reliable evidence of a Learner’s attainment against the relevant knowledge and skills so that they can have confidence that the Learner has reached the expected performance standard and use the evidence to make employment decisions”

An assessment will not meet the definition of synoptic assessment in the requirements published under Condition AA5.1 if:

a) it requires Learners to demonstrate only a narrow or superficial range of knowledge or skills that would not constitute occupational competence, and/or

b) it assesses individual knowledge and skills in isolation rather than in an integrated way that reflects the breadth and depth of the Occupational Standard

The scope of the synoptic assessment should be sufficient to enable the demonstration of the Learner's competence in line with the requirements in the Occupational Standard, the Assessment Plan and the General Purposes. It should therefore form a substantial proportion of the assessment. This means that approximately half of each Apprenticeship Assessment should be synoptic. While some variation is likely to be appropriate in a range of circumstances, a proportion significantly less than half should be regarded as exceptional.

An awarding organisation is required to explain and justify its approach to synoptic assessment in its assessment strategy. In particular, there should be a convincing rationale for a significantly lower or higher proportion of synoptic assessment.

An awarding organisation may describe the proportion of synoptic assessment in a variety of ways, for example, individually or in combination:

a) as a proportion of the total marks allocated to the overall assessment

b) as a proportion of the total number of assessments

c) as a proportion of the total number of assessment outcomes set out in the relevant Assessment Plan

d) as a proportion of the total number of the relevant knowledge and skills statements in the Occupational Standard

## **Timing of synoptic assessment**

We have not set rules to specify at what point in the apprenticeship training programme the Learner should attempt the synoptic assessment. There is a risk that Centres enter Learners before they have acquired the knowledge and skills set out in the Occupational Standard. This is likely to have a negative impact on results and overall outcomes. For example, Learners may not pass the synoptic assessment and may not therefore complete their apprenticeship in a timely way.

The following indicate approaches through which an awarding organisation may demonstrate that it is managing this risk in line with Condition A6.2:

a) making clear in any specimen assessment materials and/or in the qualification

specification, the Level of Demand of the synoptic assessment

b) issuing guidance to Centres to help them to decide whether a Learner has acquired the appropriate range of knowledge and skills set out in the Occupational Standard so that they are ready to take the synoptic assessment

c) monitoring when Centres are entering their Learners for the synoptic assessment and reflecting on any evidence about the impact on results or number of attempts to pass the synoptic assessment

## Assessment methods

Condition E4.2 requires an awarding organisation when designing an assessment to ensure that the assessment:

(a) is fit for purpose,

(b) can be delivered efficiently,

(c) allows Centres to develop cost effective arrangements for its delivery, using only the resources which would be reasonably expected to be required or which are provided by the awarding organisation,

(d) permits Reasonable Adjustments to be made, while minimising the need for them,

(e) allows each Learner to generate evidence which can be Authenticated,

(f) allows each specified level of attainment detailed in the specification to be reached by a Learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding, and

(g) allows Assessors to be able to differentiate accurately and consistently between a range of attainments by Learners.

The following indicate approaches that may assist an awarding organisation to meet these requirements.

For all assessments, an awarding organisation:

- a) designs an assessment structure that covers the knowledge and skills set out in the Occupational Standard, in line with any requirements set out in the relevant Assessment Plan
- b) has a clear rationale for the selection of assessment methods and selects assessment methods that validly assess the Learner's acquisition of the knowledge and skills mapped to the assessment – for example, by assessing technical skills through a practical demonstration, rather than through a written task
- c) has a clear rationale for its policy on re-sitting assessments
- d) takes into consideration different employment contexts when setting assessments and associated assessment criteria or mark schemes – for example, by ensuring that tasks or questions are not focused on a part of the industry that the Learner may not have experience of where an Occupational Standard covers multiple job roles
- e) provides clear guidance on task requirements and on how Assessors should implement these in relation to limitations or choices – for example:
  - 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 choose tasks relating to different areas of the Learner's occupation, or from a single occupational area
- f) having regard to Ofqual's [guidance on designing and developing accessible assessments](#)

For written assessments, an awarding organisation:

- a) ensures that questions and tasks 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 or assessment criteria rewards
- b) ensures that any contexts used are appropriate, for example are not too long or complex or may be biased in favour of some Learners
- c) ensures assessment criteria or mark schemes provide sufficient information about the range of creditworthy responses
- d) provides enough information to allow Assessors to apply the mark scheme accurately and consistently

e) for multiple choice tests, ensures that all question distractors are plausible but there is only one correct answer

For demonstrations, simulations, presentations or observations, an awarding organisation:

a) provides enough information to allow Assessors to apply the assessment criteria accurately and consistently – for example, by providing some exemplification of the assessment criteria to show what an Assessor should be looking for in practice or what a Learner might do to demonstrate the different assessment criteria for the different specified levels of attainment (grades) available

b) provides clarification of what happens should a Learner not have an opportunity to demonstrate certain assessment criteria

For interviews or professional discussions, an awarding organisation:

a) provides enough information to allow Assessors to apply the assessment criteria accurately and consistently – for example, by providing some exemplification of the assessment criteria to show what an Assessor should be looking for in practice or what a Learner might do to demonstrate the different assessment criteria for the different specified levels of attainment (grades) available

b) provides clarification of what happens should a Learner not have an opportunity to demonstrate certain assessment criteria

c) provides example questions to aid consistency between Assessors

d) clarifies the use of prompts in assessments, such as the number of prompts permitted and the type of prompt allowed

For portfolios, showcases or journals, an awarding organisation:

a) provides enough information to allow Assessors to apply the assessment criteria accurately and consistently – for example, by providing some exemplification of the assessment criteria to show what an Assessor should be looking for in practice or what a Learner might do to demonstrate the different assessment criteria for the different specified levels of attainment (grades) available

b) provides clarification of what happens should a Learner not have an opportunity to demonstrate certain assessment criteria

c) sets out clear expectations for the evidence to be produced by the Learner – for

example, the number of pieces of evidence required, types of evidence to include, the format required, whether any feedback is permitted to the Learner as the portfolio is compiled

d) has a clear and effective process for Authenticating evidence generated by a Learner

## Optional tasks or assessment methods

Condition G1.2 requires an awarding organisation to take all reasonable steps to ensure that the Level of Demand of an assessment is consistent:

(a) across all options as to tasks which may be completed by a Learner for the purposes of the assessment,

(b) with the Level of Demand of any other assessment which may be completed by a Learner as an alternative to the assessment, for the purpose of the qualification, and

(c) with the Level of Demand of previous assessments and of any specimen assessment materials which the awarding organisation has published in relation to the qualification.

Purpose A states that an Apprenticeship Assessment should be designed to enable:

“...the Learner to acquire the knowledge and skills specified in the Occupational Standard, so that they can demonstrate occupational competence, at the appropriate level, in different but comparable contexts to those in which the knowledge and skills were acquired (for example, with a different employer)”

Where an awarding organisation chooses to make available optional tasks or a choice of assessment methods, there is a risk of non-compliance with this Condition and of developing Apprenticeship Assessments that do not support the transferability of occupational competence, in line with Purpose A.

The following indicates approaches that may assist an awarding organisation to comply with Condition G1.2 and Purpose A:

- a) there is a clear rationale for any optional routes through the Apprenticeship Assessment or providing a choice of assessment methods, which also explains how, as far as possible, they are comparable in terms of the Level of Demand and the amount of knowledge and skills required to be taught and on which Learners will be assessed
- b) the Level of Demand for demonstrating the same elements of the Occupational Standard or Assessment Plan are closely matched across optional tasks or assessment methods
- c) the approach does not limit a Learner's opportunity to demonstrate occupational competence or achieve any of the specified levels of attainment
- d) as far as possible, optional tasks or assessment methods are developed when the Apprenticeship Assessment is designed, they are not developed in response to User request during the training programme, when it may be more difficult to ensure an equivalent Level of Demand.

## **Content coverage and sampling**

Condition AA7 requires an awarding organisation to ensure that each Apprenticeship Assessment which it makes available or proposes to make available assesses the knowledge and skills set out in the relevant Occupational Standard.

Purpose A states that an Apprenticeship Assessment should be designed to enable:

“...the Learner to acquire the knowledge and skills specified in the Occupational Standard, so that they can demonstrate occupational competence, at the appropriate level, in different but comparable contexts to those in which the knowledge and skills were acquired (for example, with a different employer)”

An apprenticeship Assessment Plan may permit sampling of the knowledge and skills statements within the assessment outcomes for the Occupational Standard. An awarding organisation should have a clear rationale for its approach to content

coverage and sampling of knowledge and skills statements. When determining its approach to sampling and whether it can comply with Ofqual's General Conditions and Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions, an awarding organisation should consider the following:

- a) ensuring that there is a consistent Level of Demand between different versions of the assessments sampling different knowledge and skills statements over time
- b) ensuring that there is a comparable amount of knowledge and skills required to be taught, and on which Learners will be assessed, between different versions of the assessment sampling different knowledge and skills statements
- c) ensuring that a Learner is able to demonstrate occupational competence and achieve any of the specified levels of attainment across all assessments
- d) ensuring that the approach to sampling knowledge and skills statements is manageable for Centres and other Users, including whether Centres and Learners will or will not know in advance which knowledge and skills statements are assessed in any version of an assessment

## **Adaptation of assessments**

Condition AA5.1 permits an awarding organisation to permit its Centres to adapt certain aspects of the assessment.

Where an awarding organisation permits Centres to adapt certain aspects of the assessment, it should ensure that any adaptations do not limit the Learner's ability to demonstrate occupational competence or achieve any of the specified levels of attainment.

An awarding organisation should also consider:

- a) the measures it will put in place to support Centres in making acceptable and appropriate adaptations
- b) the monitoring it will put in place to ensure that the awarding organisation has visibility of any adaptations and their appropriateness.

# **Grading and Standard setting - Guidance on Condition AA3 (Compliance with Assessment Plans) and Condition AA8 (Standard setting)**

For the purposes of this guidance, Ofqual refers to overall schemes for specified levels of attainment as 'grading scales' and to individual specified levels of attainment within these as 'grades'.

## **Grading scales**

Condition AA3.2 requires an awarding organisation to design the assessment structure so that the Learner is able to achieve the grades specified in the Assessment Plan in line with the performance descriptor for each grade set out in the Assessment Plan.

Where this information is not provided in an Assessment Plan, when determining its grading scale, an awarding organisation should consider:

- a) the purposes of Apprenticeship Assessment in signalling occupational competence and the extent to which it is meaningful to classify Learners beyond a pass grade
- b) what any particular grade is intended to indicate in relation to coverage of the knowledge and skills statements in the Occupational Standard
- c) the degree to which there would be sufficient assessment evidence to differentiate meaningfully between different grades
- d) the degree to which Users need to differentiate effectively between Learners' attainment
- e) the degree to which the approach to describing grades, and to the number of grades, can be understood by Users
- f) the grading scales used by other awarding organisations for the same

Occupational Standard, and the benefits of taking consistent approaches to grading scales.

## Setting standards

Condition E4.2(f) requires an awarding organisation when designing an assessment to ensure that the assessment:

“allows each specified level of attainment detailed in the specification to be reached by a Learner who has attained the required level of knowledge, skills and understanding”

Condition G1.3 requires an awarding organisation to:

“produce a written document in relation to an assessment which sets out clear and unambiguous criteria against which Learners’ levels of attainment will be differentiated.”

Condition H3.1 requires an awarding organisation, before setting a specified level of attainment for a qualification which it makes available, to:

... review the specified levels of attainment set for –

- (a) the qualification previously,
- (b) similar qualifications it makes available, and
- (c) similar qualifications made available by other awarding organisations,

and must use the results of this monitoring to ensure that the specified level of attainment it sets for the qualification will promote consistency in measuring the levels of attainment of Learners over time and between similar qualifications.

The approach the awarding organisation will take to setting standards will depend on the assessment method used and on whether a numerical mark is assigned to

evidence generated by a Learner which is then used to determine a grade, or whether the assessment criteria are used directly to differentiate Learners' levels of attainment and achievement of specific grades.

### **Mark-based assessments**

We are using the term mark-based assessments to mean those in which Learners' levels of attainment are differentiated through the allocation of numerical marks, with a separate process that determines the number of numerical marks needed to achieve a specific grade.

The following indicate approaches to setting standards that may assist an awarding organisation to meet the Conditions above.

The awarding organisation:

- a) ensures the numerical mark assigned to the evidence generated by the Learner accurately reflects the level of attainment demonstrated by that Learner in the assessment
- b) ensures the pass mark which signifies the minimum acceptable level of attainment for a Pass grade and any higher grades is consistent with the performance descriptors
- c) ensures that Assessors are appropriately trained so that they consistently and accurately apply mark schemes
- d) takes steps to monitor the accuracy and consistency of Assessor judgements and determines what remedial action to take where there is inaccuracy or inconsistency is identified in the application of mark schemes
- e) selects an appropriate process to determine the pass mark which signifies the minimum acceptable level of attainment for a Pass grade and for any higher grades
- f) ensures that Assessors involved in standard setting are appropriately trained
- g) regularly reviews the performance of test items, tasks or questions given their intended difficulty, and takes appropriate action if not performing as intended
- h) sense checks pass rates against the pass marks
- i) determines how marks are combined into an overall grade, including where both mark-based and directly graded assessment methods are used

### **Directly graded assessments**

We are using the term directly graded assessments to mean those in which Learners' levels of attainment and achievement of specific grades are differentiated directly through assessment criteria.

Where assessments are directly graded, the following indicate approaches to setting standards that may assist an awarding organisation to meet the Conditions above:

The awarding organisation:

- a) ensures that the characteristics of the grades follow clearly from Occupational Standard and performance descriptors in the Assessment Plan
- b) sets clear assessment criteria for all grades covered by the assessment so that it is clear how all grades can be achieved
- c) ensures that its assessment criteria match the knowledge and skills they are intended to target
- d) ensures that its assessment criteria match the performance descriptors they are intended to reflect
- e) where necessary, provides additional exemplification of assessment criteria or performance descriptors
- f) takes steps to ensure that assessment criteria are understood by Assessors and can be accurately and consistently applied
- g) takes steps to monitor the accuracy and consistency of Assessor judgements and to determine what remedial action to take where there is inaccuracy or inconsistency is identified
- h) determines how individual grades are combined into an overall grade, including where both mark-based and directly graded assessment methods are used

## **Marking approach - Guidance on Condition AA5 (Assessment)**

The requirements issued under Condition AA5.1 require an awarding organisation to mark a proportion of the assessments in an Apprenticeship Assessment.

In this context 'marking' refers not only to assigning a numerical mark to evidence generated by a Learner in an assessment but to any application of assessment criteria to differentiate Learners' levels of attainment in line with Condition G1.3, for example, a Pass or Distinction grade.

## **Marking approach**

The requirements issued under Condition AA5.1 require an awarding organisation to mark a proportion of the assessments in an Apprenticeship Assessment, in line with any requirements set out in the Assessment Plan. An awarding organisation must explain and justify its marking approach and the proportion of marking by the awarding organisation.

In line with Purpose A and Purpose B, awarding organisations must design Apprenticeship Assessments, so that Users have confidence that Learners have acquired the relevant knowledge and skills and have demonstrated them to the standard of performance expected by employers.

This is likely to be achieved by the awarding organisation having direct oversight of the marking of a substantial proportion of the assessment. This means that approximately half of each Apprenticeship Assessment should be marked by the awarding organisation. While some variation is likely to be appropriate in a range of circumstances, a proportion significantly less than half should be regarded as exceptional.

An awarding organisation is required to explain and justify its marking approach in its assessment strategy. In particular, there should be a convincing rationale for a lower proportion of marking by the awarding organisation.

When determining the proportion of an assessment that will be marked by an awarding organisation and that by a Centre, the awarding organisation should balance:

- a) the validity of assessment, in terms of measuring appropriately the relevant knowledge and skills in the Occupational Standard
- b) the manageability of the assessment
- c) any threats to the reliability and integrity of the assessment

An awarding organisation should also consider the following factors:

- a) the nature of the knowledge and skills being assessed and who may be best placed to assess them
- b) the nature of the assessment evidence, including whether the evidence generated by Learners is likely to arise naturally (not planned) and/or be ephemeral in nature
- c) the timing of the assessment, including whether the assessment is repeated on multiple occasions and/or over an extended period of time
- d) the nature of the occupation, including whether the presence of an awarding organisation Assessor would not be possible due to issues of sensitivity and/or confidentiality
- e) the capability, capacity and risk profile of its Centres
- f) any external pressures on Centre behaviour, increasing the risk of malpractice

Where appropriate, an awarding organisation should also consider:

- a) any guidance issued by a sector body or employer group on the marking approach for an Occupational Standard
- b) the approach to marking used by other awarding organisations for the same Occupational Standard

An awarding organisation may describe the proportion of assessment that it will mark in a variety of ways, for example, individually or in combination:

- a) as a proportion of the total marks allocated to the overall assessment
- b) as a proportion of the total number of assessments
- c) as a proportion of the total number of assessment outcomes set out in the relevant Assessment Plan
- d) as a proportion of the total number of the relevant knowledge and skills statements in the Occupational Standard

## **Assessors**

In relation to each qualification that it makes available, Condition H1 requires an awarding organisation to ensure as far as possible that:

the criteria against which Learners' performance will be differentiated are –

- (a) understood by Assessors and accurately applied, and
- (b) applied consistently by Assessors, regardless of the identity of the Assessor, Learner or Centre.

The following indicate approaches that may assist an awarding organisation to meet this requirement:

The awarding organisation:

- a) has arrangements in place to train Assessors, whether they are working in Centres or employed by the awarding organisation to carry out the role of Assessor
- b) has arrangements in place to standardise and monitor marking
- c) where an assessment may be marked either by the awarding organisation or by the Centre, ensures that the assessment criteria are applied accurately and consistently regardless of whether the Assessor is from the awarding organisation or the Centre
- d) is able to identify any issues in the application of assessment criteria by Assessors and to correct those issues to ensure accurate and consistent application, including the identification and mitigation (as appropriate) of any Conflicts of Interest.

## **Level of Demand**

An awarding organisation may design Apprenticeship Assessments with optional task or assessment methods.

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

prejudice.

# Guidance on Condition A4 (Conflicts of Interest) in relation to Apprenticeship Assessment

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 Apprenticeship Assessments, 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 relevant government department or agency. This includes any relevant requirements or guidance in an Assessment Plan or the Occupational 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 by Condition D1.2 (Validity, Reliability, Comparability, Manageability, and Minimising bias)
- 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 the assessment

Condition A4.5 and A4.6 require an awarding organisation to:

“...take all reasonable steps to avoid any part of the assessment of a Learner (including by way of Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny) being

undertaken by any person who has a personal interest in the result of the assessment.

“Where, having taken all such reasonable steps, an assessment by such a person cannot be avoided, the awarding organisation must make arrangements for the relevant part of the assessment to be subject to scrutiny by another person.”

In many cases with respect to Apprenticeship Assessment, an employer, college or training provider preparing a Learner for an assessment will have a personal interest in the result of the assessment.

Apprenticeship Assessments may be designed to include marking by the Centre as well as marking by an awarding organisation.

There may be some situations in which the involvement of a person with a personal interest cannot be avoided when an assessment is marked by the Centre, even having taken all reasonable steps.

This could be where an employer is the only person who could competently or safely assess the Learner or where there are a limited number of Assessors who could competently or safely assess the Learner. In some cases, the involvement of a person with a personal interest may be required by the Assessment Plan.

Where this is the case, we expect an awarding organisation to have arrangements in place to identify and manage any risks arising from this situation. When developing its scrutiny arrangements for assessments that are to be marked by a Centre, in line with Condition H2, an awarding organisation is expected to consider whether a Centre will have the capacity to ensure additional scrutiny by an independent person where a personal interest exists.

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, such as a person responsible for internal quality assurance of marking. Where this is not possible at a Centre, we expect an awarding organisation to strengthen its own scrutiny of Centre marking in line with Condition H2.

In addition, we will expect an awarding organisation to be alive to the risks inherent in reciprocal arrangements whereby 2 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).

An awarding organisation should also be alive to any financial incentive that there may be for the Assessors to inconsistently apply any marking or assessment criteria.

## **Guidance on Condition B3 (Notification to Ofqual of certain events) in relation to Apprenticeship Assessment**

Under Condition B3, 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 an awarding organisation considers that it is likely to happen and could have an Adverse Effect.

### **Issues arising during the design of Apprenticeship Assessments**

There may be occasions during the design stage of an Apprenticeship Assessment where an awarding organisation uncovers potential Adverse Effects if the Apprenticeship Assessment 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 an 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 an awarding organisation to notify Ofqual of the potential Adverse Effect that would have been caused had it chosen a different design option.

# Guidance on Condition C1 (Arrangements with third parties) in relation to Apprenticeship Assessment

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 an awarding organisation makes available, or proposes to make available, an 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

An awarding organisation must satisfy itself that any third parties involved in the delivery of parts of its Apprenticeship Assessments have the ability to do so in a way which allows the awarding organisation to meet the General Conditions and the Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions, and that it monitors the delivery to ensure this happens.

An awarding organisation must make sure it sets out clearly its expectations of third parties, including through the use of contractual arrangements where appropriate, and takes appropriate action where it identifies that these expectations have not been met.

It is the awarding organisation which is recognised to deliver the Apprenticeship Assessment that has ultimate responsibility for ensuring all aspects of its Apprenticeship Assessment meet the requirements of the General Conditions and Apprenticeship Assessment 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 for General Condition C1, and awarding organisations must have regard to that guidance.

# **Guidance on Condition C2 (Arrangements with Centres) in relation to Apprenticeship Assessment**

A Centre is any organisation that delivers part of a qualification on behalf of an awarding organisation. In the context of Apprenticeship Assessment, this could be a college, a training provider or an employer. The key consideration is whether an organisation is delivering a part of the Apprenticeship Assessment on behalf of the awarding organisation and the role it is fulfilling, not what type of organisation it is.

There are a number of roles that an organisation could be fulfilling, which mean it is considered to be a Centre for the purposes of the General Conditions and Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions.

## **Delivery of the assessment**

An organisation would be performing the role of a Centre where it delivers an assessment where no person employed or contracted by an awarding organisation is present while the assessment is being taken. This would be the case even where the organisation is not marking the assessment.

In such a case the Centre would have responsibility for administering the assessment and may undertake some or all of the following tasks:

- taking delivery of assessment materials in advance of the assessment
- handing out assessment materials to Learners
- setting up online assessments
- delivering instructions to Learners before the assessment commences
- maintaining the security and confidentiality of the assessment or materials
- ensuring that the awarding organisation's rules in relation to the conditions under which the assessment is taken are adhered to, including Invigilation
- implementing any Reasonable Adjustments arrangements
- collecting Learner responses to assessment and sending to the awarding organisation

- identifying and reporting malpractice to the awarding organisation

## **Marking the assessment**

An organisation would be performing the role of a Centre where it is marking any of the assessments that are part of the Apprenticeship Assessment. Therefore, the awarding organisation would need to have arrangements in place relating to arrangements with Centres under Condition C2.

Arrangements would also need to be put in place that meet Condition H2 (Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny where an assessment is marked by a Centre).

## **Circumstances which are unlikely to meet the definition of a Centre**

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 or marking of the assessment
- where an assessment is being delivered entirely remotely by the awarding organisation
- where the awarding organisation implements remote invigilation for assessments

In such circumstances, these potential sites are unlikely to meet the definition of a Centre and Condition C2 will not apply. Where the definitions of a Centre are not met, then Condition C1 relating to third parties would still need to be considered.

## **Employer Engagement - Guidance on Condition D3 (Reviewing approach) and**

# Condition E1 (Qualifications having an objective and support) in relation to Apprenticeship Assessment

An Assessment Plan may set out at a high-level only the requirements for the Apprenticeship Assessment. Where this is the case, 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 Apprenticeship Assessment Qualification Level Conditions and guidance when it designs its Apprenticeship Assessment.

Purpose B states that the Apprenticeship Assessment should be designed to provide:

“.. employers with reliable evidence of a Learner’s attainment against the relevant knowledge and skills so that they can have confidence that the Learner has reached the expected performance standard and use the evidence to make employment decisions”

Purpose C states that the Apprenticeship Assessment should be designed to build:

“the Learner’s confidence in the workplace”

Condition E1 requires the awarding organisation to ensure that each qualification that it makes or proposes to make available, has an objective and support. Condition E1.5 states that:

“For the purposes of this Condition, Users of qualifications will be deemed to support a new qualification if the prevailing view of those Users of the qualification is that the qualification would provide a benefit to Learners.”

Condition D3 also requires an awarding organisation to review its approach. Under Condition D3.1:

“an awarding organisation must keep under review, and must enhance as

necessary, its approach to the development, delivery and award of its qualifications so as to assure itself that its approach remains at all time appropriate.”

An awarding organisation must therefore take steps to ensure that the design of its Apprenticeship Assessment complies with these requirements, is relevant to the workplace and enables Learners to demonstrate the performance standard expected by employers.

The following indicate approaches through which an awarding organisation may meet these requirements:

a) when designing the Apprenticeship Assessment, seeking and analysing feedback from employers, employer groups or professional bodies who have an interest in the Apprenticeship Assessment on its fitness for purpose and manageability – this may include groups of employers convened by Skills England

b) during its review of an Apprenticeship Assessment, seeking and analysing feedback from employers, employer groups or professional bodies from the sector on the performance standard demonstrated by apprentices who completed the assessments – this may include groups of employers convened by Skills England

An awarding organisation should also seek to develop consistent approaches with other awarding organisations offering an Apprenticeship Assessment for the same Occupational Standard.

## **Guidance on Condition E2 (Requirements on qualification titling) in relation to Apprenticeship Assessment**

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 Occupational Standard as approved by Skills England

b) the qualification type should be ‘Apprenticeship Assessment’, and

c) the concise indication of qualification content should replicate the title of the

relevant Occupational Standard

For example:

[AO name] Level 2 Apprenticeship Assessment for ST0072 Customer Service Practitioner [endorsements if applicable]

[AO name] Level 2 Foundation Apprenticeship Assessment for FA002 Finishing Trades [endorsements if applicable]

# Guidance on Condition E3 (Publication of a qualification specification) in relation to Apprenticeship Assessment

## Content of a specification

Condition E3.1 requires an awarding organisation to publish a specification for a qualification before first making it available.

The specification is a document which provides information to Users about the Apprenticeship Assessment. Condition E3.2 sets out minimum requirements which the specification should include:

- (a) the qualification's objective,
- (b) any other qualification which a Learner must have completed before taking the qualification,
- (c) any prior knowledge, skills or understanding which the Learner is required to have before taking the qualification,
- (d) any units which a Learner must have completed before the qualification will be awarded and any optional routes,
- (e) any other requirements which a Learner must have satisfied before the

Learner will be assessed or before the qualification will be awarded,

(f) the knowledge, skills and understanding which will be assessed as part of the qualification (giving a clear indication of their coverage and depth),

(g) the method of any assessment and any associated requirements relating to it,

(h) the criteria against which Learners' levels of attainment will be measured (such as assessment criteria or exemplars),

(i) any specimen assessment materials,

(j) any specified levels of attainment

An awarding organisation must include all of the information set out in Condition E3.2, where this is relevant to the Apprenticeship Assessment, in its specification. The specification should provide 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 the approach set out in the Assessment Plan.

It is not sufficient to simply provide information as to where the Occupational 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 Apprenticeship Assessments. 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 Apprenticeship Assessment or expressly required under the Assessment Plan.

For example, where an Apprenticeship Assessment 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' need to be included in the specification. Where this information is not included in the Occupational Standard or Assessment Plan, we will expect an awarding organisation to supplement the information which it draws from these documents in its specification.

As Conditions E7 (Total Qualification Time), E8 (Credit) and E9 (Qualification and Component levels) have been disapplied in respect of Apprenticeship Assessment, a specification will not need to set out information with respect to Total Qualification Time, Credit or Levels (Conditions E3.2(k), (l) and (m)).

## **Including the information provided in the Occupational Standard or an Assessment Plan in a specification**

We expect an awarding organisation to extract any relevant information from the Occupational Standard and Assessment Plan to include within its specification.

It is likely that an Occupational 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 (Conditions E3.2(c) and (e))
- the required knowledge and skills (Condition E3.2(f))

In addition, the relevant Assessment Plan may contain information in relation to methods of assessment (Condition E3.2(g)) and specified levels of attainment (Condition E3.2(j)), such as the grading scale and performance descriptors.

An Assessment Plan will not however include all the information, or the level of detail we require an awarding organisation to provide about its approach to a User of the Apprenticeship Assessment in its specification.

## **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 expect an awarding organisation to publish its specification on its website, in an area of the website which is available to all Users and potential Users of the qualification (that is, 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 there are safety or security issues related to an Apprenticeship Assessment 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.

Where an awarding organisation chooses to go beyond the information required under Condition E3.2, it is free to decide for itself how to make that additional information available. We expect an awarding organisation to be able to justify its approach to publication if asked to do so.

## **Guidance on Condition H2 (Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny where an assessment is marked by a Centre) in relation to Apprenticeship Assessment**

Condition H2 applies where an assessment, or any part of an assessment, is marked by a Centre rather than by the awarding organisation.

Where marking is undertaken by the Centre, an awarding organisation must have in place clear and effective arrangements for the scrutiny of the assessment, including the ability to make any necessary adjustments to the Centre's marking.

An awarding organisation must establish and maintain a Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny (CASS) strategy for that qualification which sets out how the awarding organisation intends to secure, on an ongoing basis, compliance with Conditions H2.1 to H2.5 in respect of the assessments for that qualification.

An awarding organisation will need to satisfy itself that the risks inherent in Centre marking of Apprenticeship Assessments have been sufficiently mitigated, as well as any additional risks it has identified. These risks could include the Centre having a stake in the outcome of the assessment, and risks related to any role an employer plays in the assessment process.

The following approaches may assist an awarding organisation to meet these requirements:

- Using ongoing risk management to underpin the CASS strategy and Centre monitoring. For example, by taking account of the prior assessment experience of the Centre, the Centre's ongoing performance when marking assessments, and any differences in the outcomes between assessments marked by the Centre and by the awarding organisation.
- Having a CASS strategy that is clear about the information and criteria used to drive its Centre monitoring approach. For example, by taking into account the prior assessment experience of the Centre, the assessment methods used, and any risks associated with the Occupational Standard and Assessment Plan.
- Not permitting a Centre to request an apprenticeship completion certificate for a Learner through the awarding organisation, until all assessments have been passed, including those marked by the Centre and by the awarding organisation.
- Not permitting a Centre to request an apprenticeship completion certificate for a Learner through the awarding organisation, between external quality assurance activities, until the Centre has demonstrated it can successfully deliver and mark assessments accurately and consistently over a defined period, usually 12 months.
- Having a clear and consistent definition of what incorrect marking is, which is relevant to the assessment method used, and ensuring any issues with a Centre's marking are dealt with consistently and swiftly
- Having formal arrangements in place to ensure that incorrect Centre marking is corrected, as appropriate. Arrangements for making decisions about correcting any incorrect results reflect Ofqual's [guidance on making changes to incorrect results](#).
- Maintaining central records about where they have corrected Centre marking and results, and the rationale for those decisions, using this to inform consistent strategic decisions about its ongoing CASS approach.
- Reviewing and formally evaluating the CASS strategies, at least annually, using lessons learned to improve its approach.

# Guidance on Condition H6 (Issuing results) in relation to Apprenticeship Assessment

Condition H6.1 requires an awarding organisation to issue results for any qualification that it makes available.

For Apprenticeship Assessments, an awarding organisation may submit results to the relevant government department or 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 Centre or 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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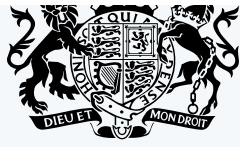
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