

External Quality Assurance Service for Rail Apprenticeships: EPAO Comparability Review



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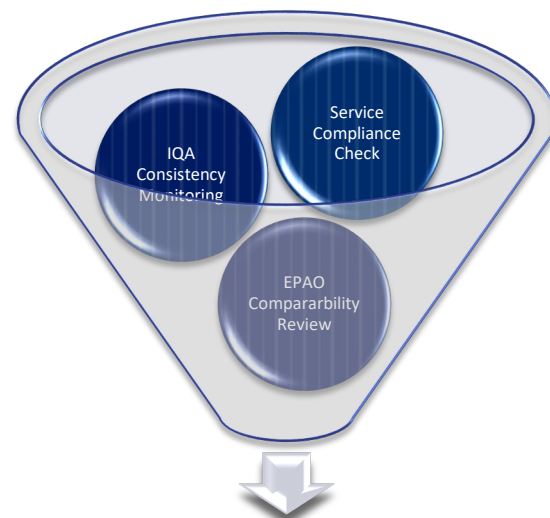
The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has recognised NSAR Limited as the external quality assurance provider for five rail apprenticeship standards.

We implement an employer-led model for external quality assurance directed by the Rail Apprenticeship Quality Board and this document sets out our approach to external quality assurance (EQA) of End-Point Assessment Organisation assessment outcome comparability.

Our EPAO Comparability Review is the third component making up the NSAR framework for EQA. It works in unison with our Service Compliance Check and our IQA Consistency Monitoring.

The objectives of the EPAO Comparability Review are to:

1. Establish the extent to which each EPAOs assessment tools and methodologies are comparable and occupationally valid
2. Establish the extent to which each EPAO's assessment decisions are comparable
3. Create an opportunity for EPAOs to look across the end-point assessment marketplace for each apprenticeship standard to review their own assessment judgements and practice in relation to their peers
4. Facilitate a community of shared understanding about how the application of apprenticeships standards, through the assessment plans, should be applied to create quality assessments and assessment decisions.



NSAR EQA Framework

Comparability Review Methodology

The key focus of our work is how apprenticeship standards are applied, through the lens of the assessment plan requirements, to apprentice work across the different EPAOs. This is preferred over the simple cross-comparison of apprentice work.

The Comparability Review methodology will involve expert judgement scrutinising representative samples of assessor work, calibration (involving some peer assessing) and conferencing (involving professional discussion about assessment decisions with EPAO assessor peers). Work will be done in workshops involving all relevant EPAOs.

We are supported in this work by occupational specialists helping us draw conclusions about the occupational validity of the apprentice evidence being reviewed.

EPAO Requirements

EPAOs are asked to provide a representative sample of work across grades and assessors, and sample sizes are discussed to ensure each EPAO gains maximum benefit from participation in the cross-comparability work.

EPAOs provide:

- Access to assessment tools and supporting guidance.
- A summary of all the assessment results against that standard (fail, pass, merit and distinction)
- An anonymised and representative sample of assessments undertaken and assessment decisions, with supporting records, across grades and assessors. We will agree sample sizes in advance.

Outcomes of Comparability Review

We report the findings of our comparability work to the Rail Apprenticeship Quality Board and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. We also produce a report for each individual EPAO. This is a confidential report documenting our findings and sharing our thoughts on how the EPAO relates to its peers when looking at quality of assessor judgements.

Where required, we produce additional guidance for EPAOs to ensure the shared understanding and, where relevant, issues involving the need for clarification will be feedback to the relevant Trailblazer group.

Quality Statements

Each apprenticeship standard is subject to a Comparability Review whenever there is more than one EPAO offering end-point assessment services for that standard.

Our EPAO Comparability Review is evidence based. Judgements are made based on the EPAOs ability to produce sufficient evidence against the Quality Statements contained in this document. Each Quality Statement sets out a minimum expectation employer have of EPAOs when it comes to comparability and we use these Quality Statements as the basis of our report to the Rail Apprenticeship Quality Board and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. They are also used to inform our subsequent EQA work with each EPAO.

The Quality Statements are:

- 1 EPAOs are producing assessment instruments that are comparable in their coverage of the standards and occupational brief as defined by the apprenticeship assessment plan.
- 2 EPAOs have a shared understanding of sufficiency of evidence at Pass for each of the assessment plan's assessment components and share the same understanding of how each covers the apprenticeship standard and any related occupational brief.
- 3 EPAOs are producing assessment instruments that are comparable with other EPAOs in the marketplace in how they address the requirements of the assessment plan and the occupational brief.
- 4 Assessment of target apprentice performance in response to end-point assessment tasks is comparable across EPAOs.
- 5 Fair Assessment and Reasonable Adjustment practice across EPAOs is comparable and has a positive impact on end-point assessment.