

External Quality Assurance Service for Rail Apprenticeships:

IQA Consistency Monitoring



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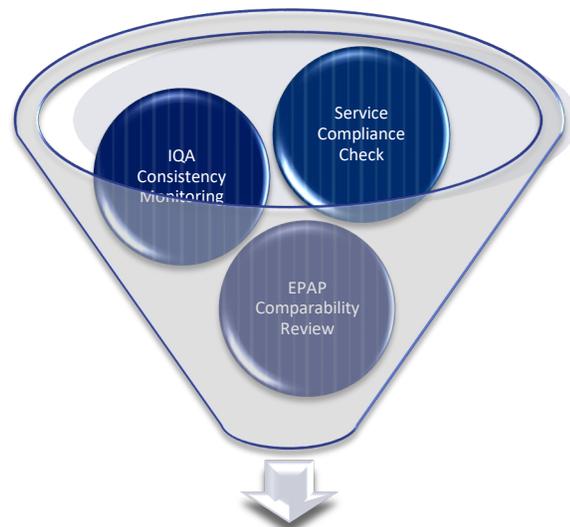
The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has recognised NSAR Limited as external quality assurance provider for the five rail apprenticeship standards.

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 Organisations' internal quality assurance (IQA) practice.

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

The objectives of our IQA Consistency Monitoring work are to:

1. Scrutinise the methods used to train and standardise assessors
2. Scrutinise the EPAO's IQA processes used to ensure end-point assessor decisions are occupationally valid, comparable and consistent, and to
3. Review how the EPAO evaluates these processes, learns from them and continuously improves.



NSAR EQA Framework

Our IQA Consistency Monitoring is evidence based. Judgements made are based on each EPAO's ability to produce sufficient evidence against each of the Quality Statements contained in this document. Each Quality Statement sets out a minimum expectation employers have of any EPAO 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 set out in two sections:

- 1. Assessor Training and Standardisation: communicating the expectations for the levels of training end-point assessors undertake in order to assess fairly and reliably.**
- 2. Moderation: communicating the expectations for how each EPAO handles the apprentice outputs from the end-point assessment process to ensure grades awarded are valid.**

The IQA Consistency work also reviews whether specific apprenticeship assessment plans create particular challenges for assessment training, standardisation and/or moderation. We use this insight to inform our work with EPAOs when looking at EPAO comparability, and feed this insight back into the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and employer groups responsible for the standard.

Conducting the IQA Consistency Review

We carry out IQA consistency monitoring by observing IQA activity in action within EPAOs. This includes observing standardisation training, reviewing assessment decisions and observing moderation events where assessment judgements and grading decisions are scrutinised.

Observation of practice is carried out by our occupational experts and assessment experts. They review the occupational relevance and authenticity of assessment work being scrutinised and the quality and consistency of the assessment decisions being made.

Assessor Training and Standardisation

We start the process by reviewing our Systems Compliance work. This provides us information on the processes used for assessor recruitment, induction and training; for the support and guidance given to assessors; for how assessor performance is assessed and managed, and for how on-going competence is maintained. We then look to the IQA Consistency Monitoring work to see how this is being applied in practice.

We observe training and standardisation events, as well as other mechanisms used by EPAOs to ensure the quality and consistency of assessor decisions.

Our key focus is establishing how EPAOs deal with the challenges related to establishing and reinforcing assessor and assessor team consistency when delivering end-point assessment.

Moderation

Our IQA Consistency Monitoring of moderation involves observing how understanding of the apprenticeship standard and assessment plan, through assessment methods, are applied and how the quality of apprentice work is agreed, maintained and curated within the EPAO.

We review how EPAOs ensure assessment judgements are dependable allowing the EPAO to have confidence in the results of their end-point assessment. How disagreement in assessment judgements is managed and resolved is also a focus as is the border-line checking processes and the level of reliability in dealing with grade differentiation at the grade boundaries, e.g. 'almost a Pass' etc.

Outcomes of IQA Consistency Monitoring

We report back our findings to the EPAO in the form of a confidential report, offering what we hope is constructive feedback on any areas where evidence of performance against quality standards is of concern.

Key conclusions are reported to the Rail Apprenticeship Quality Board and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

A: Assessor Training and Standardisation

IQA processes for training and standardisation ensure all assessors are capable of making consistent and reliable assessment decisions. This means:

- 1 Responsibility for assessor training and standardisation is clear, actively managed and evaluated.**
- 2 Assessor training is mandatory for each apprenticeship standard with participation monitored.**
- 3 Risks related to conflicts of interest are actively monitored and enforced.**
- 4 Assessor performance, including their assessment decisions, is monitored and reviewed and corrective action is taken, whenever required.**
- 5 Assessors have access to senior or more experienced colleague/s to confirm or clarify understanding.**
- 6 Training includes the role of the apprenticeship standard, assessment plan and occupational brief, as well as the key requirements and considerations in end-point, high-stakes assessment.**
- 7 Assessor standardisation training addresses how to:**
 - Implement the relevant assessment methods or instruments, while mitigating the main risks to the reliability and consistency when making assessment judgements using these instruments, including minimising bias**
 - Apply policies for reasonable adjustments and fair assessment, effectively.**
 - Recognise sufficiency of evidence at each of the grades available in each end-point assessment method or instrument implemented**
 - Fulfil the reporting and performance requirements expected of them, as well as what they must do to allow for proper scrutiny and moderation of their assessment work**
- 8 Standardisation meetings are held regularly and each assessor takes part at least every six months.**

B: Moderation

Quality assurance is significant and sufficient justifying the EPAO's confidence in the dependability of their assessment judgements. This means:

- 1 Responsibility for moderation is clear, actively managed and evaluated.
- 2 The main risks to the consistency of assessment decisions are identified and IQA processes manage these risks.
- 3 Moderation activities are planned appropriately, follow a clear methodology and the outcomes are documented and evaluated.
- 4 Action is taken when risks to validity, consistency and reliability emerge.
- 5 Assessor judgement sampling is robust and sufficient to scrutinise assessor and assessment team consistency.
- 6 Outcomes awarded are defensible with sufficiency and quality at each grade point comparable.
- 7 Management of borderline assessed work is clear and disagreements satisfactorily resolved, resulting in confident decision making when assigning the final grading decisions.
- 8 Lessons from moderation are fed back into assessors, the assessor standardisation process and are used for quality improvement.