

# External Quality Assurance Service for Digital Apprenticeships:

## Service Compliance Check



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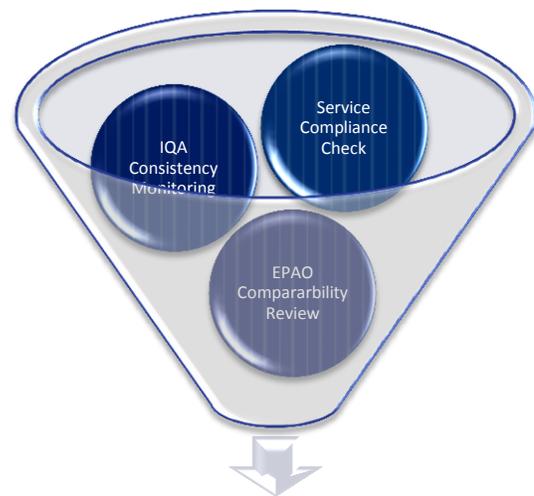
The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has recognised NSAR Limited as the external quality assurance provider for the 13 published digital apprenticeship standards.

We implement an employer-led model for external quality assurance directed by the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board.

This document sets out our approach to external quality assurance (EQA) of End-Point Assessment Organisations' implementation of apprenticeship assessment plans.

Our Service Compliance Check is one of the three components making up the NSAR framework for EQA. It works in unison with IQA Consistency Monitoring and our EPAO Comparability Review. The objectives of the Service Compliance Check are to ensure:

1. Each EPAO's assessment service is ready and able to produce fit for purpose, high-quality assessments and consistent and valid assessment decisions in line with the apprenticeship standard, the assessment plan and the occupational brief
2. All of those delivering assessments are independent and fully competent
3. Internal quality control and assurance processes comply with requirements, are fit for purpose and are actively used
4. Management and delivery arrangements for the assessment service are effective.



NSAR EQA Framework

Our Service Compliance Checking involves using a series of Quality Statements that set out employer expectations.

These Quality Statements address six areas of end-point assessment delivery:

1. Customer Service
2. The Gateway
3. Data
4. Assessor Capability and Capacity
5. Assessment Instruments
6. IQA processes

Our Service Compliance Check is completed by reviewing documented processes and systems, and by scrutinising evidence showing how these processes and systems are being applied, effectively.

Our Service Compliance Check 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 Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. They are also used to inform our subsequent EQA work with each EPAO.

## Conducting the Service Compliance Check

We start this process by assuming that each EPAO can claim these quality statements reflect their current practice or state of readiness. Thus EPAOs can self-assess against these quality statements and provide evidence to demonstrate this is indeed the case.

As evidence, EPAOs are able to use audit work done by other end-point assessment EQA organisations, Ofqual regulatory evidence and/or other work capable of being considered as valid proxies for performance/evidence. We ask that any evidence used is current or recent and that the quality statements evidenced in this way are clearly indicated. EPAOs can download the self-assessment Service Compliance Check from the NSAR website.

We look to establish, based on the evidence presented and performance seen, if there is sufficient evidence available to justify these claims.

## **Outcomes of Service Compliance Checks**

**The Systems Compliance Check generates a report feedback to the EPAO highlighting any areas where action may be necessary. This report will detail where any action may be needed to improve performance against one or more quality statement. This is a confidential communication. The report also informs our annual reporting requirements to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.**

**Any areas of malpractice or breach of assessment plan requirements are raised immediately with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.**

## Customer Service

Employers have the information they need and the end-point assessment service is delivered to employers effectively. This means:

- 1 There is a clear line of responsibility for the management of the service to customers.
- 2 Information about the end-point assessment service and the associated charges is complete, clear and accessible and how to procure the end-point assessment service is clear.
- 3 End-point assessment services are available independently of any other products and services, and the charges reflect this.
- 4 Information about the Gateway and EPA processes and requirements is clear and accessible.
- 5 The arrangements for booking end-point assessment services are clear and straightforward.
- 6 There are effective customer service processes in place to manage the customer's expectations and experience from initial enquiry through to awarding of certificate.
- 7 The following arrangements are clear, accessible and are working effectively, how to:
  - Make a complaint
  - Report concerns or malpractice regarding end-point assessment
  - Appeal or challenge an assessment decision
  - Request resits/retakes
  - Request reasonable adjustments
- 8 Customer services are delivered in a timely, efficient and effective manner and are monitored, reviewed and subject to continuous improvement.
- 9 All elements of end-point assessment are delivered in line with the time requirements set out in the assessment plan.
- 10 There are effective feedback processes in place to collect, review, and respond to feedback from employers to ensure the end-point assessment meets their needs, and employers are clear about what feedback on assessment to expect from the EPAO.

## The Gateway

Gateway requirements are being implemented in accordance with the assessment plan/s. This means:

- 1 There is a clear line of responsibility for ensuring Gateway requirements are met.
- 2 All Gateway requirements are consistently applied before end point assessment starts, ensuring:
  - English and maths have been achieved
  - On-programme qualifications have been achieved, as mandated in the standard
  - The employer has confirmed that apprentice is ready for end-point assessment
  - The employer reference has been provided and is sufficient
  - Any specific requirements in the assessment plan have been achieved
  - The apprentice has had the minimum duration for training (12 months)

## Data

Personal, performance and apprentice data and evidence is all handles, processed and stored appropriately. This means:

- 1 There is a clear line of responsibility for data handling, storage and use.
- 2 Information and records are managed, transferred and stored securely and confidentially and in line with **GDPR** and **Data Protection** legislation.
- 3 Data is used as a source of performance measurement and quality improvement, informing assessment and assessor monitoring, and quality reporting.
- 4 Records are maintained for six years.
- 5 Apprentice work is stored in a way that will allow assessment of individual assessors to be sampled and scrutinised.
- 6 Apprentice work done in response to assessment plan components is stored in a way that will allow external sampling and scrutiny for comparability purposes.

## Assessor Capability and Credibility

There is sufficient assessment capability and capacity in place to deliver the service, and there are processes in place to maintain this level of capability and capacity. This means:

- 1 There is a clear line of responsibility for assessor capacity and capability.
- 2 Processes for the recruitment and training of appropriately qualified and competent end-point assessors are effective.
- 3 Assessors have the appropriate level of *occupational competence* for the standards they are assessing. This means they have the skills as defined in the assessment plan including:
  - up to date, relevant, in-depth and broad experience of working within the occupation
  - relevant industry experience equivalent or higher than the apprenticeship standard and/or relevant professional recognition at a level equivalent to or higher than the standard
  - practical up to date knowledge of the applications of current working practices and relevant technologies as relevant to the size of the organisations and the sectors within which they are assessing
- 4 Assessors have an appropriate level of *assessor competence* for the standards they are assessing. This means:
  - Assessors are suitably trained and standardised in the use of the assessment instruments
  - Assessors meet the requirements set out in the assessment plan
  - Assessors are clear about sufficiency in achieving the pass, merit and distinction
- 5 End-point assessor capability is reviewed and maintained through:
  - Monitoring of performance
  - Standardisation and moderation
  - Ongoing CPD requirements (both in terms of occupational competence and assessor competence)
- 6 Ensuring assessor availability/capacity is aligned with likely demand.
- 7 Assessors work within a Code of Professional Practice (or equivalent) when delivering end-point assessments.

## Assessment Instruments

End-point assessment instruments are fit for purpose and perform as required by the standard and the assessment plan. This means:

- 1 **There is a clear line of responsibility for development and performance of assessment tools and instruments.**
- 2 **There is sufficient expertise and resource, including up to date occupational competence, to meet the initial and ongoing development needs of the assessment plan/s and the corresponding assessment tools and instruments.**
- 3 **Assessment instruments have been developed in line with the standard, the occupational brief and the assessment plan and have been tested or trialled, as required.**
- 4 **Assessment instruments are developed, maintained and implemented in ways that ensure their independence and security.**
- 5 **Sufficient assessment support materials and guidance have been produced for employers, providers, apprentices – and for assessors. This includes the production of:**
  - **a bank of businesses related-related projects for the synoptic project, each one testing a selection of higher order skills as represented in a typical business task appropriate for an SME, an IT business, a large corporate or a non-IT business**
  - **guidance on requirements for the summative portfolio – to test the application of the full range of knowledge and competence**
  - **guidance on the requirements for an employer reference, including a template**
  - **guidance and requirements for the interview**
  - **guidance on the application of the grading criteria**
- 6 **Assessment instruments are reviewed and improved in the light of experience and in response to changing occupational requirements.**

## Internal Quality Assurance

Internal quality control and assurance procedures are in place and operational. This means:

- 1 There is a clear line of responsibility for internal quality assurance of end-point assessment.
- 2 There are clear quality control plans for EPA assessment *instrument* development and these are being evaluated.
- 3 There is an IQA plan in place to ensure that assessment decisions are robust, consistent and comparable across assessors, across locations and over time.
- 4 Standardisation and quality assurance interventions for each apprenticeship standard assessed are clear and timetabled .
- 5 Processes to ensure the independence of assessors and to prevent any real or perceived conflicts of interest at both the organisation and individual assessor levels are effective.