

GUIDANCE NOTE

Issued: 29th July 2020

Valid Until: 31st March 2021

MAINTAINING WORK-BASED OBSERVATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The following guidance is designed to enable end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) to take the actions described in this guidance if they deem it necessary. The scope of this guidance is limited to those EPAOs working with NSAR as their EQAO and is only those apprenticeship standards listed below:

Train Driver (Level 3) Standard ST0645

NSAR is aware that the opportunity to have an independent (EPAO) assessor to carry out the workplace observations is now severely diminished because of the current Covid-19 situation. In response to this there are two potential courses of action available:

1. Implement any break in learning that has been introduced by the ESFA in light of the current Covid-19 situation, as a way to postpone end-point assessment and as a result, the workplace observation. Where this is not an option then:
2. EPAOs can use the Covid-19 temporary discretion agreed by the IFATE to replace the practical observation (planned working observation) with an alternative assessment comprising of witness testimony provided by the employer, and a question and answer session conducted by the EPAO Independent Assessor, (IA) if each of the following conditions can be satisfied:
 - The person completing the witness testimony must be from the employer or 'employer-provider' (and not from a training provider *other than employer-provider*) and must be occupationally competent or have responsibility for the occupational competence of people working in the apprentice's role. The person completing the witness testimony should be a person who has observed the apprentice in their role, such as Driver Manager, Head of Safety Standards (or equivalent) or Head of Drivers.
 - The witness testimony supplied by the employer-representative will document the planned working criteria from the EPA plan and confirm that the apprentice-driver has been observed satisfactorily completing all elements of the planned working observation, and that relevant records are maintained on the CMS System and confirm the apprentice-driver competence.
 - The person completing the witness testimony has been trained by the EPAO in the assessment requirements of the assessment intervention (witness testimony) including training in familiarisation with the assessment criteria and assessment process.
 - Any apprentice who is recorded as not passing the witness testimony is not put forward for the question and answer session and, in these circumstances, is then delayed until Covid-19 government guidance is changed and a practical driving assessment (direct observation) can take place.
 - Witness testimony provided must be in accordance with the EPAO processes and requirements and meet with EPAO quality assurance requirements and be checked by the EPAO to ensure that it enables the EPAO to make a robust assessment judgement against each assessment plan criteria. Processes and recording mechanisms used must allow for robust EPAO scrutiny, assessment, and internal quality assurance.

- Question and Answer Session is conducted by the EPAO Independent Assessor and can be done remotely following appropriate security and quality assurance practices designed by the EPAO to authenticate and validate the apprentice and their assessment and to ensure access to fair assessment and appropriate assessment environment.
- There should be no conflict of interest risking compromising the integrity of assessment decisions about apprentice performance.
- There is an auditable record of the assessments and the assessment judgements made including records of assessment decisions made against each assessment criteria (agreed by the EPAO).
- The final decision regarding any End Point Assessment Methodology and Outcome will be made by the End-Point Assessment Organisation.

As well as guidance presented above (specifically relating to the Planned Working Observation) it is to be noted that the IFATE also has agreed a flexibility which affords the use of remote assessments for assessment methodologies where possible (with risk mitigated by using remote proctoring or invigilation systems). This allows the use of remote assessment for the Train Driver Standard ST0645 in relation to:

- Online Tests. See NSAR website Coronavirus Covid-19 Guidance page for further information on Knowledge Test Assessment Methodology (including Online and On-Demand Tests).
- Observation Degraded Work (Simulation Permitted) Remote Assessment.
- Observation Emergency Working (Simulation Permitted) Remote Assessment.
- Professional Discussion Remote Assessment.
- Questions and Answers (as part of Planned Working Observation see above) Remote Assessment.