

GUIDANCE NOTE

Issued: 23rd March 2020
Valid Until: 31st August 2021

MAINTAINING CONTROLLED ASSESSMENT ENVIRONMENTS 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 for only the screen apprenticeship end-point assessments where there is the requirement for a workplace observation or synoptic competence activity to take place within a controlled environment.

Most screen apprenticeship assessment plans in our EQA footprint say the following about controlled conditions:

‘The activity will be conducted in a ‘controlled’ environment. The requirements for the ‘controlled’ environment will include a quiet room, away from the normal place of work, with dedicated workstation and access to all the required equipment [this could take place on the provider’s premises]. An invigilator from the Assessment Organisation will be present to ensure authenticity of the Apprentice’s work.’

Or (for ST0105 Junior Content Producer):

‘The Assessor will carry out the observation in the apprentice’s usual workplace...’.

NSAR is aware that the availability of appropriate sorts of controlled spaces for this assessment is becoming limited because of the current health crisis, and that the ‘apprentice’s usual workplace’ may no longer be within an employer’s premises. 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 or synoptic competence activity. Where this is not an option then
2. Training providers and employers can ask EPAOs for permission to allow apprentices to take the assessment remotely. This will be subject to the workplace observation or synoptic competence activity actually being capable of being done remotely. This will be an EPAO decision. This request must be applied for in advance of the start of the activity and must be supported by a justification for why this is necessary.

The ability to take a workplace observation or synoptic competence activity remotely, and only if an appropriately controlled and safe environment is not available, is permissible as an option until the 31st August 2021. The window for this dispensation will be reviewed and extended should this prove necessary. Employers and providers should not plan to have apprentices do the assessment activity at remotely beyond 31st August 2021.

This measure is only to be available to those that have asked their end-point assessment organisation for permission to do so. There will still be an expectation that the employer signs off this work as being the apprentice's own and that they work with the apprentice to replicate the conditions undertaking the workplace observation or synoptic competence activity, as much as is possible. The apprentice will have to testify that the work is their own. Where this has happened, EPAOs will be required to take a particular interest in the apprentice's performance in completing the workplace observation or synoptic competence activity, ensuring that the work is indeed the apprentice's own and has met the requirements of the assessment plan.

The EPAO may be asked to demonstrate how each of these conditions has been satisfied in the course of EQA monitoring.

This situation is continually evolving, and you should take appropriate precautions to ensure that any actions taken remain appropriate, safeguards apprentices and reflects latest Government advice. This guidance is valid until 31st August 2021 unless superseded by further guidance. Continue to check www.nsar.co.uk/eqa for further information.