

GUIDANCE NOTE

Issued: 19th 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 those digital apprenticeship end-point assessments where there is the requirement for a project to be undertaken in a controlled environment.

Most digital apprenticeship assessment plans in our EQA footprint say the following about controlled conditions for the project:

'The requirements for the 'controlled environment' will include a quiet room, away from the normal place of work, with a dedicated work-station, with access to all the required equipment and with someone responsible for the controlled environment to ensure it is their own work and to respond to any questions in a consistent way.'

NSAR is aware that the availability of appropriate sorts of controlled spaces for this assessment is becoming limited because of the current health crisis. 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 project. Where this is not an option then
2. Training providers and employers can ask EPAOs for permission to allow apprentices to take the project at home. This will be subject to the project actually being capable of being done at home. This will be an EPAO decision. This request must be applied for in advance of the start of the project and must be supported by a justification for why this is necessary.

The ability to take a project at home, only if an appropriately controlled environment is not available, is permissible as an option for 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 project at home beyond this date.

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 project, 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 project, ensuring that the project is indeed the apprentice's own and as much as is possible ensuring that the project looks to have been done properly. This will be done using the professional discussion, explaining why access to and permission for the opportunity to complete the project at home needs to be controlled by the EPAO, allowing EPAO assessors to follow this up in the professional discussion.