EQA SERVICE FOR DIGITAL APPRENTICESHIPS

EQA MONITORING

WHAT IS EQA MONITORING?

Our EQA Monitoring work is the second of two work streams carried out as the External Quality Assurance Organisation for a range of Rail, Logistics and Digital Apprenticeship Standards. As a work stream it builds on our Readiness Check and aims to ensure that the actual delivery of end-point assessment provides a relevant, reliable and independent assessment of occupational competence.

The objectives of our EQA Monitoring work are to:

- Monitor the implementation of the policies and practice evidenced as part of our Readiness Check in live operational delivery
- Scrutinise the methods used to train and standardise assessors
- Scrutinise the EPAO's IQA processes used to ensure end-point assessor decisions are occupationally valid, comparable and consistent, and to
- Review how the EPAO evaluates these processes, learns from them and continuously improves.

Our EQA Monitoring work is evidence based.

Judgements made are based on each EPAO's ability to produce sufficient evidence against the EQA Monitoring requirements that have been prescribed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, as shown in this document.

Against five principles of assurance, we examine the extent to which you are meeting the minimum standard prescribed by the IfATE, ask you to reflect on where improvements can be made within your organisation and to work with us to ensure your assessment strategies are consistently producing fair, reliable and comparable assessment judgements.

These principles of assurance address five areas, against which end-point assessment delivery is to be judged:

1. Relevant
2. Reliable
3. Efficient
4. Positive
5. Learning

You must undergo a EQA Monitoring for **every standard** against which you are actively delivering End Point Assessment Services.

CONDUCTING EQA MONITORING

We carry out EPAO EQA Monitoring work by observing EPAO quality control and assurance processes and practice in action. This includes reviewing assessment instrument development, observing standardisation training, reviewing assessment decisions, observing moderation events where assessment judgements and grading decisions are scrutinised.

We start the process by reviewing our Readiness work, using the EQA Monitoring work to see how this is being applied in practice. We will agree sampling strategy with you and develop a plan of monitoring activities based on your risk rating and delivery plan. In the first instance, we will use the risk rating from the readiness check to create your initial sampling strategy, however the ongoing frequency and depth of monitoring activity is determined by both your ongoing risk rating at an organisational level and the risk level(s) for the standards that you offer. Among other things, we will consider the design and effectiveness of your internal quality assurance strategy, the volume of apprentices that you have coming through, any actions outstanding and any broader areas of concern highlighted.
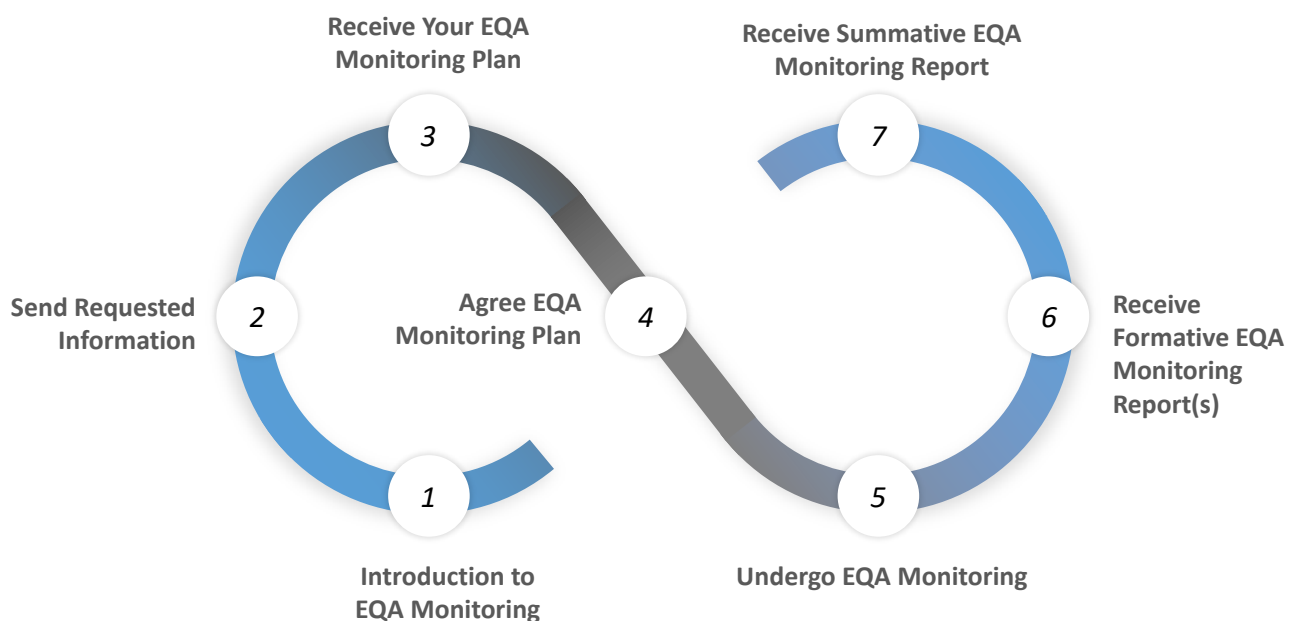
NSAR commits to work with you to ensure you are fully aware of upcoming EQA activities and expectations. Reasonable notice will usually be given for monitoring visits, although visits may be made with less or no notice where there are specific concerns. Where evidence is requested for remote review, you will be given 5 days to provide any required evidence. During a readiness or monitoring visit, we may also request further evidence at random.

Following an EQA Monitoring intervention, we will provide you with a report which provides detail of any areas of improvement, areas of concern and any actions associated. These reports, and the feedback provided, will be framed around the five principles mandated by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education; Relevant, Reliable, Positive, Efficient and Learning.

Your industry EQA lead will meet regularly with you to discuss your performance and drive continuous improvement. The frequency of these meetings will depend on the particular risk and level of assessment activity for each Standard.

HOW IS THE EQA MONITORING CARRIED OUT?

The following outlines the touchpoints that you will have with us as part of EQA Monitoring:

Receive Your EQA Monitoring Plan — 3

Receive Summative EQA Monitoring Report — 7

Send Requested Information — 2

Agree EQA Monitoring Plan — 4

Receive Formative EQA Monitoring Report(s) — 6

Introduction to EQA Monitoring — 1

Undergo EQA Monitoring — 5

1. Introduction to EQA Monitoring Approach

When you have successfully completed, or are nearing completion of, your Readiness Check for a standard, a member of the NSAR team will be in touch to explain the expectations for EQA Monitoring and to request the supporting information needed to develop your EQA Monitoring plan.

This may be in person, over the telephone and/or via email.

2. Send Requested Information

You can send your evidence digitally or in hard copy, as preferred.

Information requested may include:

- Your End Point Assessment Delivery plans for the next 12 months

- Forecast dates for the first assessments that you will deliver, if available and not already collected

- Details of planned standardisation and moderation events scheduled or planned.

This information enables NSAR to calculate your risk level for the standard, in accordance with the approach prescribed within the IfATE EQA Manual, and develop a risk-based EQA Monitoring strategy and sampling plan for your organisation. The EQA Monitoring plan will be based initially on the outcome(s) of your readiness check and, on an ongoing basis, based on delivery plans and risk posed.

3. Receive Your EQA Monitoring Plan

Once the requested information has been received, we will send you a EQA Monitoring plan, covering the next 12 months. This plan will address all **Aspects of the EQA Monitoring** as specified within the IfATE EQA Framework and enable a summative judgment of your operational compliance to be made and communicated with the IfATE. Your EQA Monitoring plan will include:

- Desktop and/or on-site systems review requirements (as determined by the outcomes of the readiness check) and the expectations for submitting any supporting evidence.

- Assessment observation requirements, including preliminary guidance as to when these observations may take place.

- Standardisation and moderation review requirements, as determined by the risk posed and the dates scheduled.

- Market insights activity, through which we review and collect performance data and feedback relating to the standard.

4. Agree EQA Monitoring Plan

Once you have received and reviewed your EQA Monitoring Plan, please contact your designated EQA Manager to ask any questions that you may have and, ultimately, to confirm that you understand our requirements and expectations.

5. Undergo EQA Monitoring

Once agreement and understanding has been confirmed, EQA Monitoring will commence. We will undertake monitoring in line with the agreed EQA Monitoring schedule, updating the accordingly as the your risk level changes against each area of assurance.

6. Receive Formative Reports

Following each EQA Monitoring intervention, we report back our findings to you 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.

EQA Monitoring reports will be sent to you within 15 days of a visit or review, and you will have 15 working days to respond to any factual inaccuracies within the report. Where applicable, you will also be required to submit an action plan, detailing how you intend to close down any actions raised, within this period.

As End Point Assessment delivery is multi-faceted, these reports will be formative in nature and will contribute towards a summative report that will be submitted to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education once a year.

7. Receive Summative Report

Any key conclusions drawn in relation to each aspect of the EQA Monitoring will be reported to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in the form of a summative report. Again, you will have 15 working days to respond to any factual inaccuracies within the summative report, prior to submission to the IfATE.

Summative reports on EPAO performance will be submitted annually, or when all areas within the EQA Framework have been reviewed and graded; whichever comes soonest. EQA Monitoring will aim to assess all areas within the annual cycle, however this may be sooner in low risk cases.

ASPECTS OF EQA MONITORING

The following tables outlines the aspects of End Point Assessment that we will look at assure within the scope of your EQA Monitoring plan.

PRINCIPLE		ASPECTS OF EPA TO BE ASSURED
1. RELEVANT	1	Individual assessment instruments/methods are fit for purpose
	2	Assessment is delivered in line with the published EPA plan
	3	IQA team includes expertise in quality assurance, assessment and occupational competent
	4	Assessors' knowledge is up-to-date
2. RELIABLE	5	Assessment is carried out independently in practice
	6	Assessments are operating effectively and achieving the desired outcomes
	7	Grading is applied accurately and consistently
	8	Assessment is reliable and comparable across different EPAOs, employers, places, times and assessors
3. EFFICIENT	9	Sufficient assessors are available
	10	Accurate records are kept and data is held securely with appropriate protocols in place
	11	Retakes, resits, appeals and complaints handling are operated effectively
	12	Timeliness of assessment windows
	13	Booking and management of assessment
	14	Marking/remote assessment
	15	Resources for assessment
	16	Evidence gathering and record keeping
	17	Confidentiality
	18	Certification application process including its timeliness and checking any requirements
	19	Employers are choosing EPAOs
4. POSITIVE	20	Access to assessment is fair, and decisions on reasonable adjustments are made fairly and consistently
	21	Issue of results and feedback
	22	Information provided and fees charged are clear and transparent
	23	All requirements of the standard in terms of achievement of gateways and mandatory qualifications and requirements are achieved prior to sign-off and the employer makes the final decision on the readiness of the apprentice for EPA
5. LEARNING	24	Each EPAO has arrangements to collect and action feedback from apprentices, employers and assessors
	25	Internal Quality Assurance processes carried out by the EPAOs is effective and rigorous

EQA MONITORING RATING SCALE

MONITORING AREA	4 | INADEQUATE	3 | REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	2 | GOOD	1 | OUTSTANDING
RELEVANT	Assessments do not validly assess the occupational competence as set out in the assessment plan Assessments are not delivered in line with the assessment plan Assessors lack the occupational or assessment expertise Policies and procedures are generic and not applied to the particular needs of the standard	Assessment materials validly assess occupational Competence, with some elements requiring improvement Assessments are delivered in line with the assessment plan, but some elements require improvement Assessors possess adequate occupational and assessment expertise, but it may be limited or not kept up-to-date	Assessment materials validly assess occupational competence Assessors possess up-to-date knowledge of occupational and Assessment practice. EPAO has robust system in place to manage CPD and training All activity (including application of non- Assessment specific policies) tailored to the needs of the standard in question	Assessment materials validly assess occupational competence and have been rigorously tested by occupational experts and reviewed as appropriate CPD and training exceeds usual expectations, including a proactive approach to learning and improvement
RELIABLE	Assessment is not undertaken independently of employer or training provider Standardisation and moderation processes do not ensure quality and consistency Significant differences in the consistency of delivery or grading across different groups of apprentices	Assessment is independent of employer and training provider Standardisation and moderation are run effectively, but some elements require improvement Assessment is delivered comparably across different parts of the country or employers	Effective standardisation and moderation processes in place Steps are in place to ensure that all Assessment is delivered comparably and in line with EQA provider guidelines	Excellent Assessment practice observed throughout delivery that ensures Assessment is comparable across the Standard and over time A proactive approach is taken to ensure comparability with other EPAOs for the same Standard, where appropriate, or with similar standards

MONITORING AREA	4 | INADEQUATE	3 | REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	2 | GOOD	1 | OUTSTANDING
EFFICIENT	EPAO fails to make adequate assessors available for the assessment required Administrative processes are ineffective or inefficient in a way which compromises apprentice or employer experience	Functional systems and processes are in place but could be improved	Efficient systems in place for allocating assessors and robust business continuity arrangements Procedures understood at all appropriate levels within the organisation with accountability and responsibility at the right level	A proactive approach includes forecasting and continuous improvement
POSITIVE	There are risks to the security of Assessment materials Apprentices requiring reasonable adjustments are not appropriately provided for Support materials and other information (including on fees) are not available, or are inaccurate or inappropriate Feedback from employers and apprentices indicates a generally poor level of service	EPAO effectively checks that gateway requirements are met but this is not always consistent Reasonable adjustments and special considerations are mostly administered fairly and effectively, and appropriately recorded Support materials are adequate but may not be standard specific or updated frequently Feedback indicates a reasonable level of satisfaction from employers and apprentices with the way the EPA was conducted	EPAO consistently and effectively checks that gateway requirements are met Reasonable adjustments and special considerations are always administered fairly, effectively, and are appropriately recorded All processes to support assessment delivery are effective Support materials are comprehensive and helpful Feedback indicates a mostly high level of satisfaction from employers and apprentices with the way the EPA was conducted	Every effort made to ensure that apprentices and employers receive a positive experience of EPA Feedback indicates a consistently high level of satisfaction from employers and apprentices with the way the EPA was conducted A wide range of support is offered to employers and apprentices

MONITORING AREA	4 | INADEQUATE	3 | REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	2 | GOOD	1 | OUTSTANDING
LEARNING	No or limited efforts made to obtain feedback from apprentices, employers or training providers Continue to apply procedures and processes which have been demonstrated to be ineffective	Some effort made to obtain and act on feedback from employers, apprentices and training providers but may be ad hoc or unfocused	Robust systems in place to obtain and act on feedback from employers, apprentices and training providers Improvements made to assessment practice from review of internal quality assurance processes	Continuous improvement embedded into culture of the organisation at all levels Feedback sought from employers and apprentices is routinely used to improve assessment delivery

OUTCOMES OF EQA MONITORING WORK

Each EPAO will also be given a grade, on a scale of 1-4, indicating the overall quality of their assessment for each standard. In the first instance the risk rating will be determined by the grading on the four-point scale assigned at the readiness check, however your grading and risk rating will, as appropriate, be reviewed and updated following each subsequent EQA review. These grades will be used to inform the risk assessment and determine the frequency and focus of subsequent EQA activity.

Any key conclusions drawn in relation to each aspect of the EQA Monitoring will be reported to the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board and to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education using their prescribed digital system.

The Institute can share the outcomes of reviews with relevant bodies and plans to publish reports or elements of them at some point in the future. No other body is to publish elements of the report without prior written agreement from the Institute.

EQA MONITORING RISK SCALE

There are four outcomes sitting within EQA Monitoring:

OUTCOME	DESCRIPTION
1. OUTSTANDING	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, without further action required.
2. GOOD	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with some minor actions addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis
3. REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	EPAO requires improvement to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with major actions to addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis
4. INADEQUATE	EPAO is not delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning. Major actions are required to remedy this.

You can find further guidance on the outcome boundaries on the following pages.

EQA MONITORING GRADING AGGREGATION FOR SUMMATIVE REPORT

OUTCOME	DESCRIPTION	HOW IS THIS CALCULATED?	OUTCOME
1. OUTSTANDING	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, without further action required.	Relevant and reliable must be Out-standing. Other areas Good	No actions required, minimal EQA required
2. GOOD	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with some minor actions addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Any combination of solely Outstanding and Good grades which does not meet the threshold above All areas graded Good Up to two areas Requires Improvement and all others good. Relevant and Reliable must be good.	Minor action required for improvement, EQA required to check progress
3. REQUIRES IMPROVEMENT	EPAO requires improvement to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with major actions to addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Either Relevant or Reliable graded Requires Improvement Three or more areas graded Requires Improvement One area Inadequate	Improvement required, increase EQA activity required to monitor improvement
4. INADEQUATE	EPAO is not delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning. Major actions are required to remedy this.	Two or more areas graded Inadequate	Major improvement required, refer to the Institute to decide if a breach has occurred or action is required

If you have any questions, or would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact us using the contact details below:

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