

Office for
Students



External quality assurance of apprenticeship end-point assessments for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships

Guidance for providers

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About this document

1. This document applies to those providers that are registered with the Office for Students (OfS), and that are also registered on the apprenticeship provider and assessment register (APAR) as an end-point assessment organisation (EPAO), that deliver end-point assessment (EPA) for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships.
2. The guidance in this document sets out how the OfS plans to carry out the external quality assurance (EQA) of EPA. This document provides operational guidance about:
 - the OfS's approach to ensuring EPAOs are ready to deliver EPA
 - the OfS's approach to monitoring the quality of EPA
 - the assessment team
 - the assessment reports.
3. This guidance document should be read in conjunction with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's (IfATE) EQA framework¹ and EQA manual.²

¹ The EQA framework sets out how apprenticeship EPAs must be externally quality assured, available at: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/media/5505/eqa-framework-august-2020-a.pdf>.

² The EQA manual contains guidance to support the EQA framework, available at: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/media/5507/eqa-manual-a.pdf>.

Introduction to external quality assurance of EPA

4. The OfS is the body responsible for the external quality assessment of EPA for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships. This guidance document sets out how the OfS will undertake EQA of EPA to ensure the assessments are fair, consistent and robust across different apprenticeship standards and between different EPAOs.
5. An integrated degree apprenticeship is where a degree qualification is included in the apprenticeship, and assessment relating to the degree is fully integrated with the EPA. In these circumstances the provider delivering the degree within the apprenticeship also acts as the EPAO and undertakes the EPA.
6. EPA is the independent test that an apprentice has gained occupational competence at the end of their apprenticeship.³
7. IfATE is responsible for the oversight and requirements of external quality assurance and it has a statutory duty to ensure that arrangements are made to evaluate the quality of EPA. IfATE has set out, in its EQA framework and EQA manual, what constitutes effective EQA, to ensure reliable and valid EPA that complies with the apprenticeship assessment plan for the relevant apprenticeships. All EPAOs should be using the EQA framework and EQA manual to ensure they meet the quality assurance requirements for EPA.
8. EQA assessment will provide a judgement about whether EPA is effective, valid and reliable. It uses IfATE's current EQA framework and may inform judgements about a provider's compliance with the OfS's condition B4: Assessments and awards.⁴
9. All OfS registered providers that are EPAOs must comply with condition B4 which requires providers to ensure that assessment is effective, valid and reliable and that awards are credible. More information about condition B4 can be found in Annex A.
10. When an EPAO starts delivering a new apprenticeship, this may be subject to an assessment carried out by the OfS to ensure the provider is ready to deliver the EPA for that apprenticeship standard. This is known as the EQA readiness check. Following the readiness check, the EPAO enters a monitoring cycle, known as the EQA monitoring check.
11. Monitoring checks also apply to all apprenticeships that are already being delivered. The OfS's approach to EQA of EPA is risk-based and aligns to our approach to provider regulation. This means we may not undertake an assessment of every apprenticeship standard delivered by an EPAO, but our approach will ensure that every EPAO will have an assessment of EPA for at least one of the apprenticeship standards it delivers.

³ Apprentices will be deemed to have gained occupational competence when they can demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be competent in the duties of that occupation.

⁴ The OfS conditions of registration are available at: www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/regulation/registration-with-the-ofs-a-guide/conditions-of-registration/.

Part 1: EQA readiness check

How to become an EPAO

12. To become an EPAO and deliver EPA for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships, providers must register with the Department for Education (DfE) Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register (APAR).⁵ Only registered EPAOs are eligible to receive public funding in connection with EPA activities.
13. The DfE will only add EPAOs to the APAR on confirmation that they meet the following conditions of registration:
 - registered with the OfS
 - have degree awarding powers
 - are on the APAR as the training provider (previously the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers).
14. Once registered as an EPAO, EPAOs may need to complete a readiness check which is undertaken by the OfS.

What is a readiness check?

15. When an EPAO intends to deliver EPA for a new apprenticeship standard, the OfS may conduct readiness checks. These confirm that the EPAO is ready and able to ensure timely delivery of assessments for apprentices who have completed their training programme and are ready to take the EPA. The OfS can only deliver EQA for providers that are registered on the OfS Register and are delivering an integrated higher and degree apprenticeship.
16. The readiness check is a desk-based assessment conducted by an OfS assessment team to ensure that:
 - appropriate and high-quality assessment materials are in place that are reliable and robust
 - assessment materials meet the requirements set out in the published EPA assessment plan
 - appropriate systems and processes are in place, including the appropriate personnel.
17. A readiness check will normally be conducted for any EPAO that has not previously delivered EPA for an integrated higher and degree apprenticeship.
18. As part of our risk-based approach to EQA, if an EPAO is already delivering EPA, we will take account of previous readiness or monitoring checks for different apprenticeship standards in determining whether a readiness check is necessary, and if so the form it should take. Where previous readiness and monitoring checks have not highlighted issues, we would be more

⁵ Guidance on application to join the APAR is available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-the-apar-as-an-apprenticeship-training-provider>.

likely to consider that a readiness check to deliver EPA for a new apprenticeship is not required, or we may focus on particular areas of assessment. The OfS will contact the EPAO to discuss the approach it will take. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

The readiness check assessment team

19. The readiness check assessment will be conducted by an assessment team. There will be two assessors in each team. The assessment team will comprise an external expert apprenticeship assessor who will be appointed to review the information and evidence submitted by the EPAO alongside an OfS officer.
20. The OfS officer will manage the readiness check process and will act as liaison between the OfS and the EPAO. The OfS officer is a full member of the assessment team. The OfS officer will ensure a robust approach is applied to the assessment and ensure a fair, valid and reliable outcome, while minimising administrative burden. The OfS may appoint an employer representative from IfATE's employer directory of professional and employer-led bodies for specialist technical input.⁶ Details of those involved in the readiness check will be shared with the EPAO to manage any potential conflicts of interest.
21. The assessment team will organise an initial online meeting with the EPAO. This meeting will set out the readiness check process and provide guidance on the evidence the EPAO will need to submit. The OfS will discuss the timeline and timings of the assessment activity with the EPAO at the initial meeting.
22. Each external expert apprenticeship assessor will complete appropriate training before being assigned to an assessment team. This means that apprenticeship assessors will have current regulatory knowledge alongside their professional or other relevant knowledge and experience.
23. The outcomes from the readiness check assessment will be shared with IfATE. If the outcome of the assessment raises issues about EPA delivered by the EPAO, the OfS may consider whether there are also compliance concerns with condition B4.

Readiness check submission requirements

24. EPAOs will be required to prepare a self-assessment and submit evidence for any new apprenticeship standards for which the EPAO intends to deliver EPA and where a readiness check is required. A template setting out the requirements for the EPAO's submission will be provided and discussed at the initial online meeting between the EPAO and the assessment team.
25. The assessment team will review a range of evidence which may include, but is not limited to:
 - the EPAO's academic regulations

⁶ IfATE maintains a directory of professional and employer-led bodies that have a role in maintaining standards of occupational competence and an interest in skills development to assist with EQA activities: see <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/quality/employer-directory/>.

- assessment and support materials
- EPA delivery plans
- materials relevant to the assessor recruitment and training
- policies and procedures, including internal quality assurance arrangements.

26. The documents submitted, alongside the EPAO’s self-assessment, will be used to determine the EPAO’s readiness to deliver the apprenticeship standard. The EPAO’s self-assessment will need to describe how it has prepared for the successful delivery of the EPA.

27. The EPAO’s self-assessment should align to IfATE’s EQA framework principles, as set out in Table 1. The OfS will also be interested in understanding how the EPAO collects and evaluates feedback from apprentices, assessors and employers, and ensures effective delivery.

28. The assessment team may request further information after the EPAO’s submission of information. To help ensure that the OfS can conduct its assessment activities in an efficient and effective manner, the OfS expect an EPAO to provide any further information requested by the assessment team.

Table 1: Areas of assessment for the OfS readiness checks

Areas of focus	Key questions
Assessment materials	<p>Are the assessment materials appropriate to the occupational standard and level of apprenticeship? Are they specific to the role and reflect recognised and current practice within the industry?</p> <p>Do assessment materials allow for consistent, valid and fair assessment of occupational competence?</p> <p>Do they allow appropriate grading judgements to be made?</p> <p>Are they managed securely and has assessment software been tested?</p> <p>Are assessment materials appropriately developed and used efficiently?</p> <p>Are assessment materials accessible to all apprentices, including when reasonable adjustments need to be made?</p> <p>Do assessment materials take into account industry feedback?</p>
Support materials	<p>Are support materials appropriate to the occupational standard and level of the apprenticeship? Do they reflect current/standard industry practices, and is there evidence that these will be regularly reviewed and updated?</p> <p>Do they accurately describe and/or represent the assessment that an apprentice will undertake?</p> <p>Are they accessible and clear?</p> <p>Are support materials tested and feedback is sought?</p>

Areas of focus	Key questions
EPA delivery plans	<p>Will EPA delivery plans deliver effective assessment? Are they appropriate to delivering the assessment specified in the EPA plan?</p> <p>Will they deliver reliable assessments over time and are they suitable for all apprentices?</p> <p>Are they realistic and appropriate for the volume?</p> <p>Do training providers and employers understand what is required and support the process?</p> <p>Have the EPA delivery plans been tested, with specific diversity checks built in and has feedback been sought?</p>
Assessor recruitment and training	<p>Do assessors recruited have the appropriate and up-to-date occupational and assessment skills to undertake effective assessment, and meet the specific requirements as set out in the assessment plan?</p> <p>How does the EPAO ensure that assessors are independent from apprentices, employers and training providers, for example through effective conflict of interest policies?</p> <p>Are there a sufficient number of assessors to undertake the EPA?</p> <p>Are the assessors credible and processes in place to promote and monitor assessor continuous professional development?</p> <p>Is there assessor training in place for industry experts?</p>
Policies and procedures – internal quality assurance	<p>Will the internal policies and procedures result in continued effective assessment and are they fit for purpose?</p> <p>Are the internal quality assurance arrangements appropriate?</p> <p>Do the EPAO's data management processes meet the needs of the apprenticeship standards?</p> <p>Is the EPAO engaging with employers and providers to ensure that apprentices are prepared for EPA?</p>

29. Higher education providers will usually have arrangements in place for external examiners to undertake the external scrutiny of assessments and awards. For integrated higher and degree apprenticeships, EPAOs should engage an external examiner to undertake a similar role specifically for the EPA. The external examiner should undertake sampling of assessment and internal quality assurance processes for the EPA, to confirm that national standards have been achieved and upheld. Where appropriate, EPAOs may engage an existing external examiner to review the EPA (which may be in addition to the external examiner role held with the associated qualification).

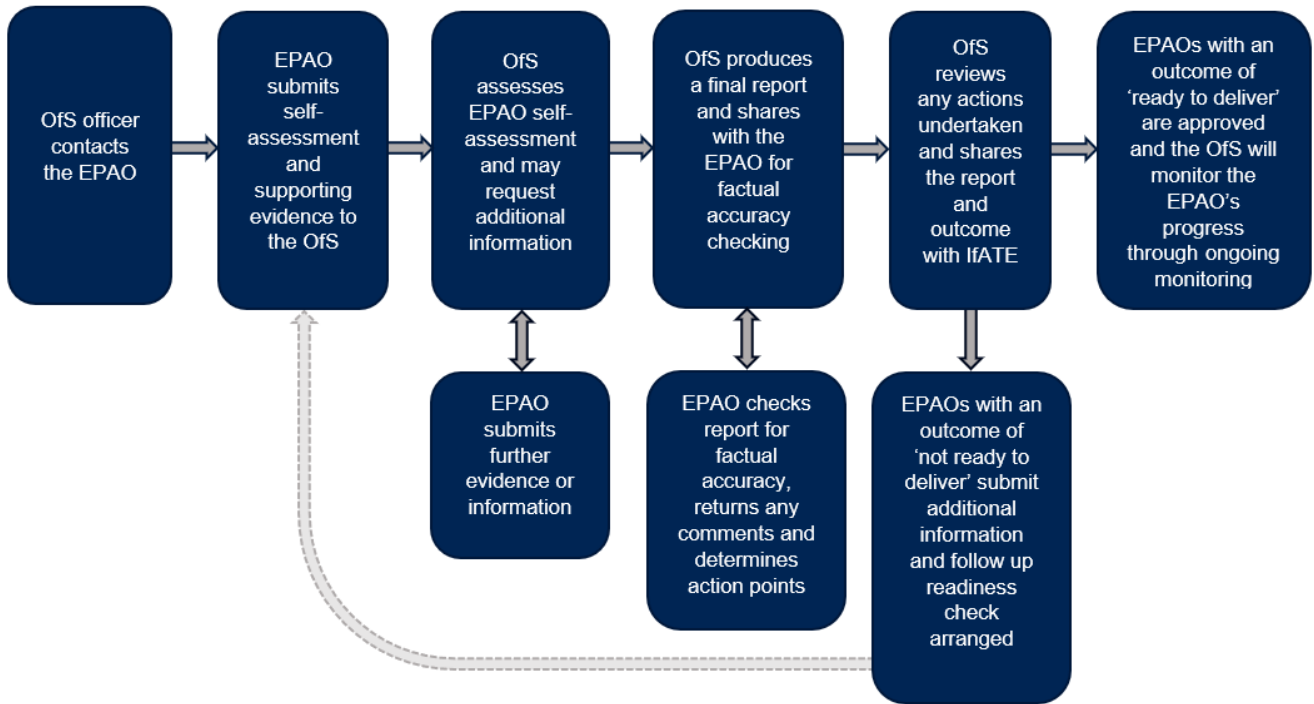
30. EPAOs will be asked in the readiness check submission to provide details of the external examiner arrangements in place for the associated qualifications, including how the EPAO manages potential conflicts of interest and how they have the appropriate expertise. EPAOs will need to make sure, and be able to evidence that, external examiners have access to

regular updates to ensure their practice is current and consistent with expectations in the sector.

The readiness check assessment report

31. The assessment team will set out its findings in a written report for the specified apprenticeship standard. The readiness check report will include the outcome of the assessment and whether the EPAO is ready to deliver the specified apprenticeship EPA, including identifying any recommendations for improvement and actions that should be taken.
32. The overall readiness check outcome, set out in Annex B, will include a rating and will determine whether or not an EPAO can proceed to deliver the EPA for the specified apprenticeship standard.
33. An EPAO will receive a readiness outcome of 'not ready to deliver' if the assessment team recommends that major actions are required to achieve readiness, and the OfS will notify IfATE that this outcome has been reached. Actions will need to be determined by the EPAO in response to the recommendations and agreed with the OfS. A date will then be agreed for a second readiness check.
34. The EPAO will be sent a copy of the draft readiness check report and will be invited to comment on the report, including whether there is anything it considers to be factually inaccurate.
35. If the EPAO does not have any comments to make, it does not need to do anything further. If the EPAO does want to submit comments, it will have up to 10 working days to respond to the draft readiness check report and the recommendations identified. The assessment team will consider the EPAO's comments about the readiness report, including an explanation of how the EPAO intends to respond to the recommendations within the associated timescales.
36. The recommendations will then form part of the ongoing monitoring of the EPAO. The readiness report will be shared with IfATE.

Figure 1: OfS readiness check process



Part 2: EQA monitoring checks

What is a monitoring check?

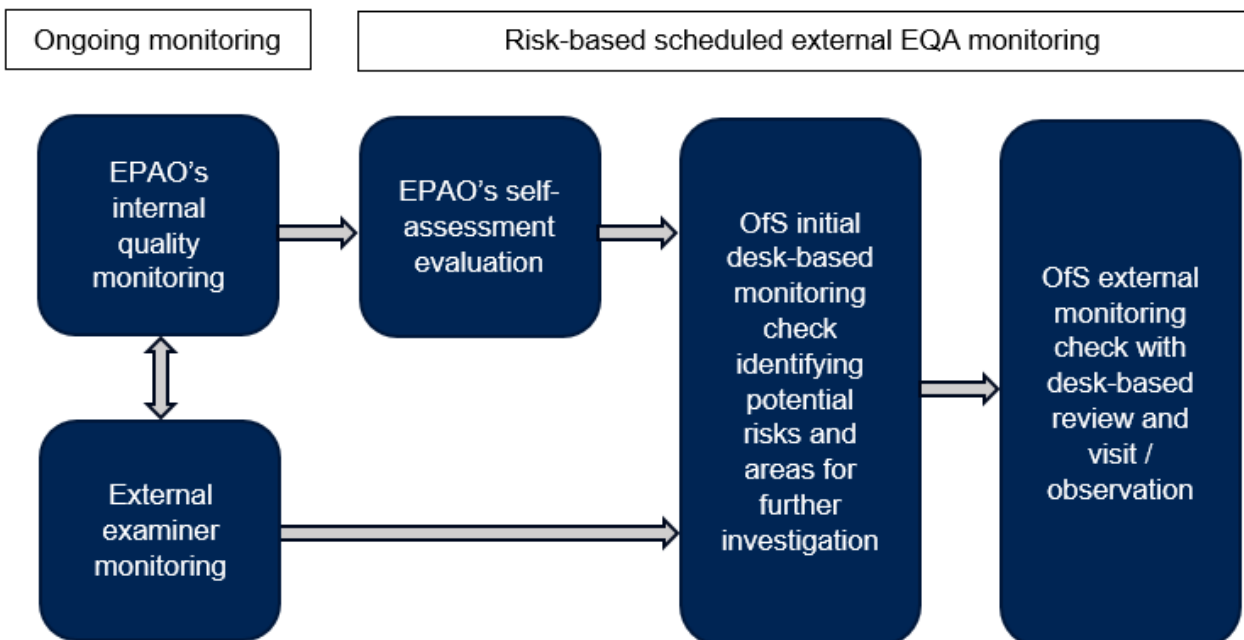
37. When an EPAO has completed at least one cycle of EPA it may be required to undergo an EQA monitoring check by the OfS. The monitoring check is designed to ensure that the actual delivery of EPA provides a relevant, reliable and independent assessment of occupational competence.

38. EPAOs will be selected for OfS EQA monitoring checks of their delivery of EPA based on risk. Every EPAO will undergo monitoring activity. Which apprenticeship standards selected for a monitoring check will be based on apprentice numbers and whether the apprenticeship standard has been identified as higher risk by IfATE. The number of apprenticeship standards we assess at each EPAO may also vary. The OfS is likely to prioritise EPAO's for monitoring checks based on the number of apprentices on apprenticeship standards. Monitoring checks ensure that:

- each EPAO is providing high-quality, relevant assessment;
- the assessments are in line with the assessment plan; and
- EPAs are consistent across all EPAOs delivering on that apprenticeship standard.

39. Figure 2 sets out the EQA monitoring check process.

Figure 2: Monitoring check processes



40. There is an expectation that EPAOs will undertake ongoing quality monitoring of EPA in line with the published assessment plan both internally, through the EPAO's quality monitoring processes, and externally, by the external examiner. The OfS EQA monitoring checks will be informed by the outcomes of these ongoing quality monitoring processes.

EPAO internal quality monitoring

41. An EPAO should conduct its own ongoing internal monitoring of EPA delivery to ensure that it remains effective, valid, reliable and in line with the published assessment plan. Specific internal quality monitoring approaches will be determined by the individual EPAO, but may include:
- moderation meetings
 - periodic review of the EPA process and outcomes
 - responses to external examiner/external assessor reports.
42. The outcomes of this internal quality monitoring should form the basis of the self-evaluation of EPA delivery required by the scheduled EQA monitoring check conducted by the OfS.
43. Occasionally, an EPAO may also identify exceptional operational issues that could impact on the quality of delivery of EPA. In these situations, the EPAO should notify the OfS of the issues, their consequences and proposed solutions. The OfS will work with the EPAO and IfATE to ensure that issues are addressed to protect the interests of apprentices, employers and the apprenticeship system.

EPAO external examiner monitoring

44. Ongoing external monitoring is normally undertaken by the external examiner appointed by the EPAO, who has oversight of the higher education qualification which is integrated in the apprenticeship (such as the degree) and the apprenticeship EPA.
45. EPAOs are required to provide details of any external examiner arrangements and confirm that an external examiner appointed will be able to undertake the role and produce the information required for the EQA monitoring process. If there are areas of the EPA that cannot be covered by the external examiner, the EPAO should provide details of alternative exceptional arrangements. The following should be considered and/or observed by the external examiner in relation to the EPA:
- the EPA is delivered in line with the published EPA plan
 - the management of gateway and mandatory qualification requirements and involvement of the employer in deciding the apprentice is ready for the EPA
 - individual assessment instruments/methods are fit for purpose
 - the EPA assessor's knowledge is up to date
 - the accessibility of EPA and the management of reasonable adjustments
 - a sample of assessments, including live assessments
 - physical and digital versions of documents, including marked assessment materials from apprentices
 - assessor standardisation or moderation meetings

- interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff
- feedback from apprentices and employers
- assessment is reliable and comparable across different EPAOs, employers, places, times and assessor.

46. Depending on the size and complexity of the provision, the EPAO may choose to have more than one external examiner for the EPA. This may be the case when more than one external examiner is required to ensure that the requirement for up-to-date industry experience is met. Where applicable, EPAOs should ensure they follow the guidance of any professional, statutory, regulatory bodies (PSRBs).⁷

47. The external examiner is expected to conduct a visit to the EPAO for each cohort of apprentices completing EPA. These do not always have to be in person and can be conducted online where appropriate. This is to be arranged by the EPAO. The purpose of the external examiner's visit is to assess the performance of the EPAO in delivering the EPA as above, and to present their findings through the production of a report.

48. The EQA external examiner's report should inform the EPAO's internal quality monitoring and forms important supporting evidence for the scheduled EQA monitoring check conducted by the OfS.

OfS EQA monitoring check

General approach to monitoring

49. The OfS monitoring check is normally undertaken after the EPA has been delivered for an apprenticeship and will typically include a desk-based analysis of evidence followed by a one-day visit conducted by the monitoring assessment team, which may be onsite at the EPAO or online.

50. The monitoring check will be managed by an OfS officer who will act as liaison between the monitoring assessment team and the EPAO. The OfS officer will organise an initial meeting with the EPAO in advance of the OfS EQA monitoring check to confirm the monitoring assessment process and arrangements, including the planned duration and timings for the monitoring assessment.

51. The OfS monitoring check will test the EPAO's compliance with IfATE's EQA framework. EPAOs will receive a report from the monitoring check which sets out any compliance risks.

The monitoring check assessment team

52. The composition of each assessment team will be determined by an analysis of the potential risk to effective EPA delivery from an initial review of an EPAO's self-evaluation and recent external examiners' reports, which will be conducted by OfS officers. The monitoring assessment team will normally comprise an external expert apprenticeship assessor and an

⁷ PSRBs are groups of professional and employer bodies, regulators, and those with statutory authority over a profession or group of professionals which accredit, recognise or approve programmes of study.

OfS officer. An employer representative may also be appointed from the IfATE’s directory of professional and employer-led bodies.

53. EPAOs will be given the opportunity to raise any potential conflict of interests in any of the assessment team in advance of the monitoring check.
54. The OfS officer will organise an online meeting with the EPAO prior to the OfS monitoring check and will go through the process for the submission of the self-evaluation and supporting evidence. The assessment team will apply a risk-based approach to the assessment and ensure a fair, valid and reliable outcome while minimising administrative burden. Table 2 sets out the aspects of the EPA that will be assessed.

Table 2: Areas of assessment for the OfS monitoring checks

IfATE principles	Key questions
Relevant	<p>Are individual assessment instruments/methods fit for purpose?</p> <p>Is the assessment delivered in line with the published EPA plan?</p> <p>Does the EPA team include expertise in quality assurance, assessment and occupational competence?</p> <p>Is assessors’ knowledge up-to date?</p>
Reliable	<p>Is assessment carried out independently in practice in line with the requirements of the apprenticeship?</p> <p>Are assessments operating effectively and achieving the desired outcomes?</p> <p>Is grading applied accurately and consistently?</p> <p>Is assessment reliable and comparable across different EPAOs, employers, places, times and assessors?</p>
Efficient	<p>Are sufficient assessors available?</p> <p>Are accurate records kept and data held securely with appropriate protocols in place?</p> <p>Are retakes, resits, appeals and complaints handling operated effectively?</p> <p>Are assessment windows timely?</p> <p>Is the booking and management of assessment effective?</p> <p>Is marking/remote assessment effective?</p> <p>Are the resources for assessment appropriate?</p> <p>Is evidence gathering and record keeping accurate and secure?</p> <p>Is confidentiality maintained?</p> <p>Is the certification application process effective?</p>

IfATE principles	Key questions
Positive	<p>Is access to assessment fair, and are decisions on reasonable adjustments made fairly and consistently?</p> <p>Is the issuing of results and feedback well managed?</p> <p>Is information provided and fees charged clear and transparent?</p> <p>Are all requirements of the apprenticeship in terms of achievement of gateways and mandatory qualifications and requirements achieved prior to sign-off and does the employer make the final decision on the readiness of the apprentice for EPA?</p>
Learning	<p>Are there arrangements to collect and action feedback from apprentices, employers and assessors?</p> <p>Are internal quality assurance processes effective and rigorous?</p>

Monitoring check submission and desk-based review

55. Prior to the OfS monitoring check by the assessment team, EPAOs are required to submit a self-evaluation for the apprenticeship standard, along with supporting evidence, based on their internal quality monitoring. This should include the report from the external examiner. EPAOs are expected to evaluate and evidence their performance for delivering EPA in line with the assessment plan and IfATE's EQA framework. The OfS officer will provide a template for this at the initial online meeting with the EPAO.
56. Below is a non-exhaustive list of the types of supporting documentation an EPAO may wish to include as part of the supporting evidence for its self-evaluation:
- a. policy documents (as applied to the specific apprenticeship standard)
 - b. assessment materials – including evidence of approval of any major changes
 - c. support materials
 - d. strategy for internal quality assurance
 - e. details of planning for EPA delivery
 - f. data on EPA including registrations, pass rates, retakes, resits and distribution of grades
 - g. CVs, qualifications and continuous professional development records for assessors
 - h. feedback from stakeholders, including apprentices, training providers and employers on the relevance and reliability of assessments delivered
 - i. records of internal quality assessment activities, including standardisation and moderation
 - j. records of any reasonable adjustments or special considerations granted and evidence behind these decisions

k. conflicts of interest records.

57. The external examiner's report forms important evidence for the self-evaluation. The assessment team will draw upon the report of the external examiner to:

- develop their understanding of the quality of delivery of the EPA
- confirm that the EPA is suitably assessing occupational competence
- identify any emerging issues to be addressed by the EPAO
- improve their understanding of any risk posed by the EPAO.

58. The assessment team may also consider other intelligence received in relation to the delivery of apprenticeships, for example Ofsted reports and notifications to the OfS.

59. The assessment team will review the self-evaluation and supporting evidence submitted by the EPAO. If there are gaps following the desk-based analysis, additional evidence may be requested. The assessment team will assess the risk to effective delivery of the EPA by the EPAO and identify the most appropriate lines of enquiry for the online/onsite monitoring check.

Monitoring visits and observations

60. Monitoring of EPA activity will ensure that EPAs are delivered appropriately and consistently. Where possible, as part of the monitoring assessment, the assessment team will take the opportunity to observe EPAs in delivery and engage with EPAOs as they are undertaking assessment activities. Visits and assessment observations will be confirmed in advance, being mindful of burden to the EPAO.

61. Below is a non-exhaustive list of activities that the assessment team may wish to undertake in its online/onsite visit. Where the assessment team undertakes these activities, it is to gather, triangulate and test the evidence submitted as part of the self-evaluation.

- a. observations of a sample of assessments, including live assessments where possible, to verify that the content and context of the assessments are occupationally relevant
- b. review of physical or digital versions of documents, including marked assessment materials from apprentices
- c. interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff
- d. feedback from apprentices and employers to check how well the EPA is meeting their needs, including how well it relates to current business practice
- e. checks on the accessibility of assessment, including any language bias and reasonable adjustments
- f. checks on assessments to verify that these cover requirements of the EPA plan and occupational competence
- g. requests for updates on previous actions and recommendations from previous reports

- h. review of training materials (used for training of personnel involved in EPA, in the independent EPA assessors)
 - i. checks on IT systems, security and record storage.
62. The assessment team will record the information gathered. This will reflect discussions with staff, apprentices and employers; observations of sample assessments and other activities, and documents reviewed. The assessment team will work in a way consistent with data protection law.
63. The assessment team will request information and provide a schedule of meetings it considers appropriate to conduct its assessment. An EPAO may suggest meetings that it considers would be helpful and the assessment team will decide whether it is appropriate to have those meetings.

The monitoring check assessment report

Monitoring check outcomes

64. The assessment team will set out its findings in a written monitoring check report. The report will summarise its findings, identifying areas of strength and recommendations for improvement, and a conclusion on whether the delivery of the EPA is fit-for-purpose in accordance with the EPA plan criteria, with an outcome of either:
- Outstanding
 - Good
 - Requires improvement
 - Inadequate.
65. The EPAO will be sent a copy of the draft monitoring check report, including its recommendations, and will be invited to comment, including whether there is anything it considers to be factually inaccurate. If the EPAO does not have any comments to make, it does not need to do anything further. If the EPAO does want to submit comments, it will have up to 10 working days to respond to the draft monitoring check report and the recommendations identified. The assessment team will consider the EPAO's comments about the monitoring report, including an explanation of how the EPAO intends to respond to the recommendations.
66. The assessment team will consider the outcomes of the report in line with IfATE's EQA framework and may make a judgement of compliance with condition B4. The final report and recommendations will be shared with IfATE.
67. The OfS officer will confirm the monitoring arrangements with the EPAO, including arrangements for the next monitoring cycle. If an EPAO receives an outcome of 'Inadequate', we will liaise with IfATE to discuss the next steps, which may include a follow-up visit.
68. The OfS will maintain communication with IfATE to ensure that the response to any issue is proportionate and actioned appropriately to minimise the risk to the quality of assessment.

Should we identify a problem that may require regulatory action, due process will be followed, in line with IfATE's EQA framework and the OfS's regulatory framework.

Reporting

69. EQA readiness checks and monitoring check reports will be made available to the EPAO and IfATE. In line with the IfATE's EQA framework, the OfS will provide a report to IfATE on the EPAO's delivery of EPA for the apprenticeship standards sampled. The reports will be used by IfATE to inform the planning of future activities and the sharing of good practice, highlight to EPAOs the areas for development, and encourage continuous improvement across the EPAOs and their EPAs. EPAOs may not publish their report or any aspect of this, as stated within the EQA framework.

Unscheduled additional monitoring

70. In addition to scheduled EQA processes, the OfS will monitor an EPA in response to any evidence which may indicate:

- increased risk to quality of delivery, such as self-reporting of issues by the EPAO
- feedback (including complaints) from apprentices, employers, training providers and employees of the EPAO
- other areas of regulatory activity, including OfS conditions of registration.

71. The OfS will work with the EPAO and IfATE to ensure that the responses to issues are proportionate, timely, and focused on actions to protect the interests of apprentices, employers and the apprenticeship system. Should the OfS identify an incident that may require regulatory action, we will alert IfATE and due process will be followed in line with the IfATE EQA framework and the OfS regulatory framework as appropriate.

Continuous improvement

72. Continuous improvement is a fundamental element of IfATE's EQA framework to ensure the quality of apprenticeship provision is maintained. EQA is used as a basis to improve apprenticeships and assessments plans; raise any other aspect of apprenticeship quality; and form a view of risk that is specific to apprenticeship assessment. It provides the basis for a risk-based approach to quality assurance.

73. As part of EQA monitoring, we may use the intelligence gathered from the monitoring assessments to inform a thematic review of the EPAs for apprenticeship standards delivered across the different EPAOs, to identify trends, potential issues and make recommendations to IfATE.

Part 3: Annexes

Annex A: Condition B4: Assessment and awards

Scope

B4.1 This condition applies to the quality of higher education provided in any manner or form by, or on behalf of, a provider (including, but not limited to, circumstances where a provider is responsible only for granting awards for students registered with another provider).

Requirement

B4.2 Without prejudice to the principles and requirements provided for by any other condition of registration and the scope of B4.1, the provider must ensure that:

- a. students are **assessed effectively**;
- b. each **assessment** is **valid** and **reliable**;
- c. **academic regulations** are designed to ensure that **relevant awards** are **credible**;
- d. subject to paragraph B4.3, in respect of each **higher education course**, **academic regulations** are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a manner which appropriately reflects the level and content of the applicable **higher education course**; and
- e. **relevant awards** granted to students are **credible** at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.

B4.3 The provider is not required to comply with B4.2d to the extent that:

- a. a **higher education course** is assessing a language that is not English; or
- b. the provider is able to demonstrate to the OfS, on the balance of probabilities, that its **academic regulations**, or failure to have any **academic regulations**, for assessing technical proficiency in the English language for one or more students are strictly necessary as a matter of law because compliance with B4.2d in respect of that student, or those students:
 - i. would amount to a form of discrimination for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010; and
 - ii. cannot be objectively justified for the purposes of relevant provisions of that Act; and
 - iii. does not fall within an exception or exclusion provided for under or by virtue of that Act, including but not limited to provisions of the Act that relate to competence standards.

Annex B: IfATE’s readiness ratings and descriptions

Category	Description	Outcome
Exceeds expectations	The EPAO meets all requirements of readiness to deliver EPA for the apprenticeship standard without further action.	Ready to deliver No actions recommended and progress monitored by the OfS as required
Ready to deliver	The EPAO is ready to deliver EPA for the apprenticeship standard, subject to minor issues to be addressed and monitored on an ongoing basis.	Ready to deliver Actions developed by the EPAO agreed and monitored by the OfS through delivery
Ready to deliver – improvement needed	The EPAO is ready to deliver EPA for the apprenticeship standard, subject to major issues being addressed within the recommendations agreed before the first EPA is delivered.	Ready to deliver Actions developed by the EPAO agreed and monitored by the OfS through delivery
Not ready to deliver	The EPAO is not ready to deliver EPA; major recommendations require consideration to achieve readiness.	Not ready to deliver Actions developed by the EPAO agreed and new readiness review date set by the OfS Or IfATE is contacted to discuss the next steps, which may include referring the EPAO back to DfE

Annex C: List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
APAR	Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register
DfE	Department for Education
EPA	End-point assessment
EPAO	End-point assessment organisation
EQA	External quality assurance
IfATE	Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
OfS	Office for Students
PSRBs	Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies



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