

# **Higher and Degree Apprenticeship End- Point Assessment (EPA) Policy and Procedure**

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## Summary of what this policy covers

See also the Glossary for information about definitions and abbreviations

<b>End-Point Assessment (EPA) responsibilities</b>	This policy sets out the University's approach to delivering and managing the quality of End-Point Assessments (EPAs) for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (HDAs). It ensures compliance with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Institute for Apprentices and Technical Education (IfATE). It clarifies roles and responsibilities in relation to EPAs.
<b>Applying to join the Register of End-Point Assessor Organisations (RoEPAO)</b>	Where the EPA on a Higher or Degree Apprenticeship (HDA) is integrated, the Faculty, delivering the HDA must apply to join the Register of End-Point Assessor Organisations (RoEPAO) as part of the programme approval process, and this must be at least fourteen months before the first EPA is delivered. See section 4 for further information.
<b>Choosing an Apprenticeship Assessment Organisation for University staff who are apprentices</b>	Where our staff are studying an HDA and the EPA is not integrated, the University, as the employer, is required to choose an independent third-party End-Point Assessment Organisation to deliver EPA. The policy explains how we approach this. See section 3.
<b>Supporting employers seeking an End-Point Assessor organisation</b>	Where the EPA is not integrated we provide employers with information about End-Point Assessor Organisations that are on the RoEPAO. The employer chooses the EPA Organisation. See section 4.
<b>Recruiting and maintaining records of Independent Assessors</b>	Where the EPA is integrated, the University ensures it has suitable Independent Assessors (IAs). The IAs can be permanent University staff or individuals recruited by the University specifically as an IA. As part of the HDA approval by the University, the Faculty states which of these two approaches it intends to follow. The policy explains the process for recruiting staff for an IA role. See section 6.
<b>Training and ensuring the CPD of Independent Assessors</b>	For integrated EPAs, the University is required to ensure IAs keep their occupational expertise up to date. Faculties are responsible for ensuring their IAs understand the specific requirements of the EPA and that evidence of this is logged with the IA records maintained by Quality Unit (QU). Further information can be found in section 8.
<b>Ensuring potential conflicts of interest are identified and managed</b>	EPAs must be conducted impartially with a clear separation between the teaching on the programme and those carrying out the EPA. Section 7 explains how we manage and mitigate any potential or real conflict of interest in the delivery of EPAs.
<b>Conducting EPAs and applying for Completion Certificates</b>	The University carries out EPAs ensuring adherence to internal and external quality assurance requirements. Section 10 addresses the issues that arise due to some EPAs being slightly different to the University's more traditional assessments.

## 1. Purpose

This policy sets out the University of Northampton's (University) approach to delivering and managing the quality of End-Point Assessments (EPAs) for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships (HDAs). HDAs are structured training programmes where the main learning is at level 4 or above.

EPAs are a synoptic assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that have been learnt throughout the apprenticeship. The purpose of the EPA is to make sure the apprentice meets the standard set by employers and is fully competent in the occupation.

EPAs can be integrated or non-integrated. An integrated EPA is incorporated into the University qualification. A non-integrated (or independent) EPA is a separate assessment carried out by a third-party organisation after the apprentice has completed the University qualification.

The policy ensures the University's approach to EPAs complies with Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) rules and the Institute for Apprentices and Technical Education (IfATE). It clarifies roles and responsibilities in relation to EPAs for University staff, apprentices, employers and Independent Assessors (IAs).

## 2. Scope

This policy covers the following scenarios:

- Apprentices who are employed by other organisations and are on a University of Northampton apprenticeship with a non-integrated EPA
- Apprentices who are employed by the University and are on an apprenticeship either delivered by the University or by another provider, with a non-integrated EPA
- Apprentices who are employed by the University and are on an apprenticeship either delivered by the University or by another provider, with an integrated EPA
- Apprentices who are employed by other organisations and are on a University of Northampton apprenticeship with an integrated EPA

The policy does not cover the scenario whereby a Faculty wishes to act as a third-party EPA Organisation for other institutions. The University Management Team considers the business case for any proposals for such activity on a case-by-case basis.

## 3. Appointing a third-party End-Point Assessment Organisation (Non-integrated EPAs)

**The section applies to apprentices who are employed by other organisations and are on a University of Northampton apprenticeship with a non-integrated EPA.**

It relates to the University's obligations as the training provider. The apprentices' employers decide which EPA Organisation they wish to use. The University, as training provider, ensures that employers are informed about the possible End-Point Assessment Organisations that are on the Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations. In addition, where we have knowledge of providers and the quality of their EPA delivery, we may highlight to employers those which we consider particularly suitable.

Where possible, the choice of EPA Organisation is included in the initial contract with employers. This may not be possible at the point of agreeing the initial contract because there is no appropriate EPA organisation on the Register of End-Point Assessor Organisations. In such cases the University liaises with employers to ensure that they appoint the EPA Organisation as soon as practicable, so as not to delay the EPA being delivered to apprentices.

The Apprenticeship Manager (AM) will initiate and manage the contracting process with the EPA

organisation.

All contracts with EPA Organisations are recorded by the Apprenticeship compliance Officer. Contracts are monitored by the Degree Apprenticeship (DA) team in liaison with other relevant professional services, faculties and employers. If concerns are raised, the DA team liaises with the third-party EPA Organisation. If concerns persist, the University may terminate the contract with the EPA Organisation. In such cases, the DA team, employer and Faculty will develop and implement continuity arrangements to transfer the EPA to another organisation and to support apprentice learners.

**The section applies to apprentices who are employed by the University and are on an apprenticeship either delivered by the University or by another provider, with a non-integrated EPA.**

It relates to the University's obligations as the employer of the apprentices in relation to the EPA. The process is led and coordinated by the University's Human Resources (HR) department which acts as "the employer". HR is responsible for selecting the EPA Organisation, regardless of whether the apprenticeship is delivered by the University or by a third-party organisation. If the HDA is delivered by the University, the Faculty will lead on the contract with the EPAO on behalf of HR. If the HDA is delivered by a third-party organisation the external training provider will lead on the contract with the EPAO, however HR ensures that the DA team is informed about proposed contracts with third-party EPA organisations.

If concerns are raised about third-party EPAOs, the DA team liaises with the third-party EPA Organisation. If concerns persist, the University may terminate the contract with the EPA Organisation. In such cases, the DA team, HR (acting as the employer) and the apprenticeship provider – which may be a Faculty or another organisation – will develop and implement continuity arrangements to transfer the EPA to another organisation and to support apprentice learners.

#### **4. Applying to join the Register of End-Point Assessor Organisations (Integrated EPAs)**

This section applies to apprentices who are employed by other organisations or by the University, and are on a University of Northampton apprenticeship with an integrated EPA. Under ESFA rules, the Faculty delivering the programme must join the Register of End-Point Assessor Organisations (RoEPAO) as an End-Point Assessor Organisation.

The AM leads on applications to the RoEPAO, working with the Faculty. The AM submits the application to the RoEPAO. Applications must be drafted concurrently with programme approval documentation. The application must be made at least fourteen months before the first EPA is due to take place and entry into the RoEPAO must be approved at least nine months before the first EPA is scheduled to take place.

Applications to the RoEPAO include the following evidence:

- Mapping of the apprenticeship Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) to the University award and the delivery method, to support the learner through the apprenticeship to the EPA.
- Explanation of how the programme team, with the employers, will confirm that apprentices can enter the Gateway to EPA.
- End-Point Assessment Operational Plan (EPAOP). The EPAOP is drafted during the programme approval process and sets out details of the EPA including its delivery plan.
- Explanation of how the elements of the EPA will be assessed and graded in line with the EPA for the standard.
- Plans for how each EPA assessment will be moderated.
- Explanation of the methods that will be used by the Faculty to document and store assessments records.

- Evidence that any existing staff who will be designated as Independent Assessors (IAs) have the occupational competence, experience and assessment expertise for the relevant standard.
- Commitment from the Faculty that existing staff designated as IAs will not be involved in the delivery of the programme.
- Draft Job Descriptions and Person Specifications for IAs that will be recruited specifically for the role.
- Information about how IAs will be adequately briefed and trained.
- Confirmation that the Faculty will comply with the external quality assurance arrangements set out in the assessment plan for the standard and in accordance with the external quality assurance option for EPA; this will be (as applicable) QAA, Ofqual, professional body, employer-led or Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE).

In order to ensure oversight across University EPA activity the DA team maintains records for six years (or longer if required by the University's Data Retention Schedule) of:

- University applications to join the RoEPAO to deliver integrated EPAs.
- Schedules of annual reconfirmation to the RoEPAO of our EPA provision.

Note: proposed changes to End-Point Assessment Operational Plan (EPAOP) are treated as a minor change of approval in line with academic programme approval policy.

## **5. The role of the Independent Assessor (Integrated EPAs)**

The functions of an Independent Assessor (IA) vary depending on the EPA but include:

- Carrying out the EPA as set out in the EPA plan for the programme. This involves ensuring national comparability of academic standards, that the assessment processes are reliable, fair and transparent, and operate in line with:
  - University regulations, policies and procedures.
  - UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
  - Characteristic Statement for Apprenticeships.
  - Education and Skills Funding Agency rules.
  - Relevant Apprenticeship Standard and End-Point Assessment Plan.
  - Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body requirements (where applicable).
- Participating in annual assessment training and assessment standardization events.
- Annually submitting evidence of CPD records to QU within the agreed timescale.
- Annually reviewing their conflicts of interest declaration within the agreed timescale.
- Completing reports within University timescales.

The University appoints as IAs those who demonstrate appropriate evidence of the following:

- Knowledge and understanding of UK sector agreed reference points for the maintenance of academic standards and assurance and enhancement of quality.
- Competence and experience in the fields covered by apprenticeship.
- Relevant academic and/or professional qualifications to at least the level of the qualification being examined, and/or extensive practitioner experience, where appropriate.
- Competence and experience relating to designing and operating a variety of assessment tasks appropriate to the subject and operating assessment procedures.
- Sufficient standing, credibility and breadth of experience within the discipline to be able to command the respect of academic and, where appropriate, professional peers.
- Familiarity with the EPA performance expected of apprentices to achieve the award being assessed.
- Fluency in English.
- Meeting applicable criteria set by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, where applicable.

- Awareness of current developments in the design and delivery of relevant assessments.

## **6. Recruiting and maintaining records of Independent Assessors (Integrated EPAs)**

Where the EPA is integrated, the University ensures it has suitable Independent Assessors who meet the requirements described in section 5. IAs can either be permanent University staff or individuals recruited by the Faculty specifically for an IA role.

For every Integrated EPA the total number of IAs must be enough to cover the number of EPAs expected. Case-by-case basis advice is provided by QU.

DA maintains records for six years (or longer, if required by the University's Data Retention Schedule) of:

- The approved assessments for integrated EPAs on apprenticeships delivered by University.
- Independent Assessors (both permanent University Staff and staff recruited specifically for the role).

### **Faculty appointing existing full-time, fractional or hourly-paid staff to be IAs**

- Faculty and DA log the details of existing full-time, fractional or hourly-paid staff who will act as IAs
- The IA must not engage with any aspect of the programme (including teaching, assessment verification, marking, moderation) apart from conducting the EPA.

### **Recruiting temporary staff specifically for the Independent Assessor role**

AM coordinates the process for recruiting temporary staff specifically for the IA role, working closely with the Faculty to ensure the IA has appropriate knowledge and skills. Once IAs are recruited, the Faculty is responsible for paying IA fees and expenses.

A checklist is used to ensure that IAs have appropriate academic and, where relevant, other professional expertise, and that potential conflicts of interest are identified and resolved prior to appointment. The checklist covers the criteria for appointment set out in section 5.

IA roles will typically last for no more than three months after the date of EPA. Extensions may be granted where apprentice resits are required. The Faculty reviews the work of IAs upon completion of each programme EPA.

### **Termination of appointment of temporary staff recruited as IAs**

Where an IA wishes to terminate their contract of appointment early, a minimum of one month's notice is required. The Dean of Faculty considers the request and reports terminations to HR. A new IA must be appointed as swiftly as possible.

Where the University wishes to terminate the appointment early, for example where a programme is due to close, a minimum notice period of one month will be given to the IA.

Where a Faculty considers an IA has failed to fulfil their obligations satisfactorily this must be reported to the Dean of Faculty. The Dean will take appropriate steps to contact the IA and resolve the matter. If it is felt necessary to terminate the appointment, then this shall be formally undertaken by the Dean and reported to the Faculty Executive.

Examples of an IA failing to fulfil their obligations include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to take part in required training;
- Failure to update their records of CPD and conflicts of interest annually;
- Failure to carry out EPAs in line with expectations;
- Failure to provide the written reports by the required deadline.

Where a conflict of interest arises during the IA's employment, and where the conflict cannot be resolved satisfactorily, normal practice is that the IA resigns. However, as a last resort the University will terminate the IA's contract.

## **7. Conflicts of interest and Independent Assessors (Integrated EPAs)**

The University's [Declarations of Interest Policy](#); [Gifts and Hospitality Policy and Procedure](#) and [Anti-Bribery Fraud and Corruption Policy and Procedure](#) applies to all aspects of Higher and Degree Apprenticeships. The University makes every effort to manage and mitigate any potential or real conflict of interest in the delivery of EPAs.

All IAs are required to declare any real or potential conflicts of interest at the time of their nomination. In addition, prior to the EPA the IA will be given a list of the names of apprentices (and their employers) that they are due to assess, and the IA must declare any real or potential conflict of interest. If real or potential conflicts of interest are declared and they cannot be resolved, the DA, with advice from Faculty, will decide how they should be dealt with. In some situations, it may be appropriate to appoint a different IA. Conflicts of interest declarations are retained by DA.

In order to ensure IAs are impartial in judgement and do not personally benefit from any apprenticeship outcomes, nor have any connection to any apprentice being assessed, the University does not appoint as IAs any individuals in the following categories or circumstances:

- Anyone with a close professional, contractual or personal relationship with an apprentice on the HDA in question.
- Anyone with a close personal relationship with a member of staff involved with the HDA in question.
- Anyone required to assess colleagues who are recruited as apprentices to the HDA.
- Anyone who is, or knows they will be, in a position to influence significantly the future of apprentices on the HDA in question.
- Anyone significantly involved in recent or current substantive collaborative research activities with a member of staff closely involved in the delivery, management or assessment of the HDA in question.

## **8. Training and ensuring the CPD of Independent Assessors**

To ensure consistency of approach and in-depth understanding of the Apprenticeship Standards and EPA, all IAs are required to undertake induction training in order to support them in the assessor role.

At induction, the University ensures that all IAs are informed about relevant institutional procedures, practices and regulations, the expectations of the IA role and the apprenticeships to which they are appointed.

Ongoing training is provided jointly by Faculty's and the DA team, to ensure that all requirements are met, to ensure that all assessments conducted are valid, fair and reliable and in line with the relevant EPA plan.

All IAs are expected to attend an standardisation's event. The purpose of these events is to ensure the fair, consistent and reliable grading of all assessments. They also allow the Faculty to update the IAs on any changes to the apprenticeship or standard. Programme teams are expected to communicate with IAs during the year and provide updates as appropriate.

## **9. EPA gateway (Integrated and Non-integrated EPAs)**

This section applies to apprenticeships delivered by the University with integrated end-point assessments. The DA, with input from Faculty, as the End-Point Assessment Organisation, verifies that the apprentice has completed any prerequisites to end-point assessment, including any mandatory qualifications. The DA liaises with the employer to determine whether the apprentice has met the gateway requirements. The gateway refers to the requirements that need to be met in order for the employer to put forward their apprentice for the EPA. It ensures that all apprentices have completed the mandatory aspects of the occupational standard and that employers believe an apprentice is occupationally competent at the point they enter the gateway. The DA ensures that apprentices have appropriate learner status with the University during the gateway period and EPA. The DA team liaises with Faculties to keep the employer informed of attempts and outcomes in respect of each EPA.

For non-integrated apprenticeship programmes, the DA Team in liaison with the Faculty will gather EPA gateway evidence to submit to the End Point Assessment Organisation. The DA will submit this to the EPAO as evidence that the EPA can go ahead for each individual.

## **10. Conducting End Point Assessments and applying for Completion Certificates (Integrated EPAs)**

DA maintain records for six years (or longer, if required by the University's Data Retention Schedule) of the integrated EPA for the apprenticeships that they deliver.

Verification and moderation is undertaken in line with University's Assessment and Feedback Policy.

Reassessments and re-takes are undertaken in line with the University's Academic Regulations and the Assessment and Feedback Policy except where the Apprenticeship Assessment plan sets out specific procedures, in which case the assessment plan takes precedence.

Each apprenticeship End-Point Assessment Plan stipulates the procedure to be followed where an apprentice fails the End-Point Assessment.

Apprentices are issued with a transcript of their performance in line with standard University procedures. Transcripts for apprentices completing the EPA make it clear that the document is not an Apprenticeship Certificate.

The DA as the End-Point Assessment Organisation is responsible for claiming the apprenticeship certificate from the Apprenticeship Assessment Service.

## **11. Feedback in relation to EPAs and EPA Organisations**

In order to develop the University's understanding of the experience of EPAs from a range of perspectives and use this information to improve provision of services, the DA team coordinates a confidential post-EPA survey. A version of the survey is tailored to each of the following roles:

- Apprentice learner.
- Employer.
- Independent Assessor.
- Training Provider.

The results of the survey are redacted and shared with the relevant Faculty (i.e. the training provider). If the survey highlights poor quality in EPA provision the University may use this as evidence as to why an EPA Organisation should not be used in future.

## **12. Equality and diversity**

The University ensures that apprentices with protected characteristics or learning support needs are neither advantaged nor disadvantaged in EPAs, in order that all achievements in EPAs are fair. Data in relation to the outcomes of EPAs and apprentices with protected characteristics will be monitored.

## **13. Appeals and complaints**

Apprentices who wish to appeal their EPA grade, where the University is the EPAO, can do so through the University's Appeals procedure.

If an apprentice wants to make a complaint about any element of the EPA they can do so using the University's Student complaints procedure.

If an employer wishes to make a complaint about any element of the EPA, they can do so through the complaints process outlined in their Contract with the University.

## Glossary

### **Assessment Plan**

A detailed document that accompanies each Apprenticeship Standard setting out each element of the Gateway requirements and the methods of synoptic assessment to be used in the End-Point Assessment.

### **Commitment Statement**

A statement held by the main provider, the apprentice and their employer. The commitment statement sets out how the apprentice will be supported to successful achievement of the apprenticeship. It must be signed by the apprentice, their employer and the main provider, and all three parties must retain a current signed and dated version.

### **Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)**

An executive agency, sponsored by the Department for Education, which is accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. The ESFA administers contracts for funding and the Digital Apprenticeship Service for Levy payments to Apprenticeship Providers.

### **Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE)**

An executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Education, which ensures high-quality apprenticeship standards and advises government on funding for each standard.

### **Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs)**

The elements of competence that the apprentice will gain during the apprenticeship and needs to evidence at the End-Point Assessment in order to complete the apprenticeship.

### **Main Provider**

The organisation that is delivering the training and award to meet the knowledge requirements of the Apprenticeship Standard and the majority of off-the-job learning.

### **Programme Approval and Review Panel (PARP)**

The University panel that considers the academic case approval of new programmes. PARP reports to the University's Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee.

### **Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP)**

The register of organisations eligible to receive government funding to train apprentices.

### **Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations (RoEPAO)**

The register of assessment organisations from which an employer can select an organisation to deliver the end-point assessment as part of the apprenticeship programme.