



Our guide to  
end-point  
assessment

## A guide to end-point assessment

End-point assessment (EPA) signifies one of the biggest apprenticeship reforms in recent times, and will constitute a large part of the new Trailblazer approach.

An EPA is a GCSE-style examination that offers confirmation of knowledge, skills and behaviours (known as KSBs) for a particular role once the apprenticeship training has been completed.

The change stems from the 2013 government-commissioned Richard Review into apprenticeships, which called for an end to continuous assessment – in favour of an external assessment that more accurately reflected a learner's capabilities and readiness for a particular role.

What's more, the independent nature of the assessment is designed to ensure that skills are transferable across different organisations and respected industry-wide.





### So, how does an EPA work?

When an apprentice reaches the end of their training, the employer, training provider and EPA organisation will take the joint decision to proceed with the assessment.

Key points to note include:

- an apprentice can't complete and achieve their apprenticeship without passing the end-point assessment
- the registered assessment organisation and the assessor must be independent of and separate from the training provider and the employer
- the EPA organisation must be approved on the SFA's register of apprenticeship assessment organisations
- end-point assessment is separate to any qualifications or other assessment an apprentice may undertake during training.

While the majority of assessments will be graded, it's important to note that some exemptions may apply, subject to agreement being given during the approval process. A grading system has many advantages for employers, enabling them to distinguish between pass, merit and distinction candidates whilst also motivating learners to aim high.



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## Assessment plans

The manner of conducting end-point assessments will also be developed and outlined by each Trailblazer group once the standard has been approved. In devising chosen criteria, employers will be able to decide how to test for occupational competence within their specific industry – a key milestone for apprenticeships.

The end-point assessment doesn't have to cover every aspect of the standard; instead, it's designed to be holistic – evaluating the KSBs that should be met over the duration of the apprenticeship.

While Trailblazer groups are free to select a range of methods – such as examinations, interviews, observations at work and professional assignments, for example – the assessment plan must achieve four things:

1. Explain what will be assessed – ie the skills, knowledge and behaviours listed within the standard.
2. Explain how the apprentice will be assessed, outlining the proposed methods.
3. Indicate who'll carry out the assessment and who'll make the final decision on competency and grading.
4. Propose quality assurance measures – to ensure the assessment is reliable and consistent across different locations, employers and training and assessment organisations.

During the process, Trailblazer groups are able to liaise with special Relationship Managers, who'll be assigned at the Expression of Interest (EOI) stage of the process for advice and guidance.

Once an assessment plan has been approved, it'll be published, with specialist organisations then able to offer their services. While they must remain neutral when it comes to



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providers in order to ensure freedom of choice, Trailblazer groups are permitted to mention organisations that have been instrumental in the development of these standards.

**How much does it cost?**

The cost of an end-point assessment will vary according to requirements set out by each individual Trailblazer group, in terms of the specific assessment tools, methods and estimated completion times. Generally, we expect that end-point assessment costs will be 10-20% of the overall cost of the delivery of standard.

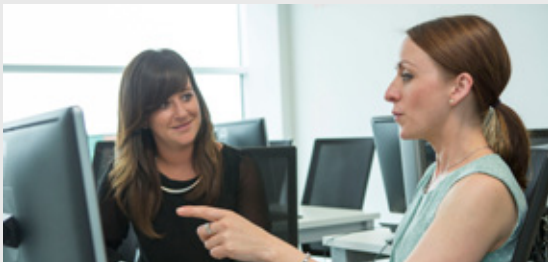
# 10-20%

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**To maintain consistency, each Trailblazer group must outline within their assessment plan how their EPA will be externally quality assured.**

There are four options to choose from:

1. Proposing an individual Trailblazer approach (in line with the required quality assurance principles).
2. Approaching professional bodies to carry out this role.
3. Asking Ofqual to oversee your external quality assurance by regulating the EPA.
4. Using the employer-led Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA), which is due to launch by April 2017, for external quality assurance of an EPA.



### **Our work with Trailblazers**

NCFE has been selected as the Awarding Organisation Partner for three Supply Chain Skill apprenticeship standards and assessment plans submitted by the Supply Chain and Logistics Trailblazer group.

As the group's chosen partner, NCFE has been able to use its experience

and expertise over the last 18 months to support the group in developing high quality standards and approaches to assessment for apprenticeships in the sector. NCFE has successfully completed the first stage of approval to appear on the Skills Funding Agency's Register for Apprentice Assessment Organisations (RoAAO).



## Maintaining impartiality

The structure of an EPA is designed to ensure that those making a decision on the competency of an apprentice have nothing to gain from the outcome.

This means that an assessment must either be conducted by an independent third party, or in a way that ensures no party involved in the management or training of the apprentice can make the sole decision on competence and passing the EPA – via a panel of experts, for example.

## What this means for training providers and employers

- Employers will need to decide if they want their training provider to source/recommend an EPAO or if they want to choose one themselves.
- Training providers will need to work with an EPAO to make sure their delivery style and content matches what's expected of learners at EPA stage.
- Training providers and EPAOs will both need to consider the cost of EPA to make sure that the money they've drawn down is sufficient for both training and assessment.
- Both training providers and employers will need to make sure their learners are prepared for EPA to avoid unnecessary re-sit costs and negative experiences for the learners.
- Employers will need to discuss arrangements for re-sit fees with the EPAO.

## Further information

To find out more about EPAs, visit: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-new-apprenticeship-end-point-assessments](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulation-of-new-apprenticeship-end-point-assessments)

The SFA Register for Apprentice Assessment Organisations can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-register-of-training-organisations](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-register-of-training-organisations)

