

**Assessor Handbook**

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**About Accelerate People Ltd**

Accelerate People Ltd is listed on the Register of Apprentice Assessment Organisations (RoAAO) as an approved licensee of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) that has been assessed as suitable to conduct End-point Assessment (EPA) of apprentices. This is a new company on the register established to support across HR and Digital Standards.

**Contact Details**

The Apprenticeship Support Team will assist you with enquires

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Overview

This document acts as a guide for Independent End-point Assessors (IA’s) appointed by Accelerate People Ltd to conduct EPA’s. It is intended to provide IA’s with comprehensive information to equip them with the knowledge to carry out the role as an IA in a professional manner. This Handbook outlines Accelerate People Ltd commitment to maintaining high quality standards by ensuring clear guidance is in place for all aspects of EPA.

The following parties are involved in EPA’s:

* + - Apprentice – the person taking the apprenticeship
    - Employer – the organisation employing the apprentice
    - Training provider – the organisation contracted by the employer as the lead provider who **must** be on the RoATP
    - End-point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) – an organisation registered on the RoAAO and contracted by an employer or training provider to conduct End-point Assessment
    - Independent End-point Assessor (IA’s) – individuals contracted by EPAO

and trained to conduct EPA’s in accordance with published Apprenticeship Assessment Plans

The EPA is a mandatory requirement for all apprentices to complete to demonstrate full achievement of the Apprenticeship Standard. EPA is carried out by EPAOs on the RoAAO. Each Apprenticeship Assessment Plan sets out the requirements for EPA which must be completed by a registered EPAO. On completion of the EPA all apprentices will be awarded a grade (Fail/Pass/Merit/Distinction) subject to the Assessment Plans guidance.

The IA Role

As an IA, you will be representing Accelerate People Ltd. As an EPAO we expect total professionalism at all times, leading by example the IA is required to:

* + - Review all submitted evidence
    - Ensure all knowledge certificates / qualifications are in line with the Assessment Plan and Standard
    - Plan the strategy for interview / professional discussion
    - Undertake the interview / professional discussion (remotely via video conferencing, or face to face when requested)
    - Determine an overall grade (Fail, Pass, Merit, Distinction) by assessing the apprentice’s competence against the outcomes of the Standard and the Assessment Plan
    - Be consistent, fair and robust in all judgements
    - Maintain an objective, unbiased and fully independent position
    - Refrain from offering advice or recommendations
    - Report and seek advice on any technical problems or administration problems with Accelerate People Ltd
    - Attend update meetings and maintain up to date CPD
    - Comply with Accelerate People Ltd Confidentiality Policy
    - Provide a high quality of customer service to stakeholders.
    - Commit to a minimum of 10 EPAs per year

EPA activity may involve exposure to confidential or commercially sensitive data that forms part of the candidate’s evidence. Any confidential information, materials or data seen should **not** be disclosed to anyone and treated in accordance with Accelerate People Ltd Confidentiality Policy.

Materials contained within portfolios are used for the purpose of EPA only. Where any materials are downloaded to desktops for the purpose of the assessment, they should be deleted and destroyed once the EPA has been completed.

IA’s Knowledge and Skills

* + - Must be able to demonstrate the relevant professional experience with up to date knowledge on working practices within the industry of the Apprenticeship Standard being assessed
    - Be competent in following and applying the processes, policies and regulatory requirements
    - Must have an in-depth knowledge of any qualification, units and grading criteria required
    - Must have access to, and be engaging with, CPD activities, as well as, keeping up to date with industry changes

Any conflicts of interest must be declared to enable true independence to be demonstrated.

Training and Updating

The initial and ongoing training of the IA is fundamental to maintaining high levels of quality.

Induction and initial training of IA’s takes place immediately following recruitment. Further training then takes place on an annual basis, in the form of updates/standardisation meetings. The purpose of the initial training is to equip the IA with the necessary knowledge and skills to enable them to professionally conduct EPAs in line with Accelerate People Ltd EPA policies and processes. It also equips them with an understanding of the relevant Assessment Plans and requirements associated with the Standards they will assess.

The update/standardisation sessions are intended to reinforce the understanding of standards and to ensure consistency of assessments by all IA’s. This includes the practice of reviewing apprentice evidence, preparing and conducting the interview, reaching decisions and moderating the decisions of others. These sessions enable specific issues to be addressed and for best practice to be shared.

Initial Training

All new IA’s must attend an initial 2-day training session. This will cover:

* + - The main features of the Standard
    - An overview of any certification / qualifications within the Standard
    - The assessment and grading process
    - Carrying out assessment activity
    - All moderation activities
    - Appeals process
    - Operational procedures and completing assessment reports

Independent Assessors EPA Allocation

The allocation of EPA to the IA’s take place once the initial induction and mentoring have been completed.

IA’s should be prepared to undertake a minimum of 10 EPAs per year. The exact number will depend on demand and assessor availability. IA’s are requested to inform the EPAO of their schedule so that bookings are made in advance and in line with IA’s availability. For new IA’s, progress will be monitored closely during, and reviewed after, the completion of first 5 EPAs.

IA’s will not be asked to undertake any EPA within their own organisation or within any organisation where they have declared a known or potential conflict of interest. Although, IA’s still have a right to refuse any allocation offered to them. Further details can be found in the Accelerate People Ltd Conflict of Interest Policy.

Accelerate People Ltd will obtain the apprentices preferred interview date and match the IA by Standard and availability. They will make initial contact to confirm the interview with the apprentice / training provider and IA. The IA should confirm the EPA interview date on receipt of information from Accelerate People Ltd. Once fully scheduled the IA will be able to access the apprentice’s evidence uploaded to the Gateway system to review and plan the structure of the interview.

Training, Advice & Ongoing support for IA’s

Accelerate People Ltd is committed to ensuring access and fair assessment is applied across a diverse range of apprentices and employers that can cater for a full range of different needs. Therefore, training in these areas is provided for all IA’s to ensure they accommodate all apprentices with their particular assessment requirements.

Care needs to be taken that the proposed assessment methods are of equal quality and rigour to those from mainstream candidates in order to demonstrate the apprentice has encountered the same experience as all other apprentices in achieving the national standard.

Update / Standardisation Meetings

Accelerate People Ltd arranges regular update meetings for the IA’s which provide an opportunity for standardisation, sharing best practice and to update IA’s about any new developments. All IA’s must attend at least 1 of these meetings, each year.

Standardisation exercises will also be undertaken as required and will include:

* + - Reviews of assessment activity evidence/decisions
    - Meetings/discussions with IA’s
    - Observed / moderated interviews

Monitored Interview

An IA may be scheduled for a monitored interview / professional discussion for training/QA purposes particularly with regard to consistency and accuracy of decisions and processes. Advance notification will be given prior to interview and feedback provided afterwards.

Quality Assurance for EPA’s

Accelerate People Ltd is committed to securing effective quality assurance of its EPA process. This is achieved through a combination of activities as follows:

* + - The monitoring of EPA practice and decisions, standardisation and moderation of IA outputs
    - Training and updating to ensure consistency
    - The complaints and appeals process
    - Seeking continuing improvement in the quality of EPA practice

EPA decisions are subject to moderation before results are confirmed to apprentices and training providers. The moderation may be carried out by a second IA who has not been involved in the original EPA. This ensures that in these cases each apprentice’s work is reviewed by two separate IA’s before a decision is announced.

Accelerate People Ltd reserve the right to make any additional investigations that may be necessary following the moderation process to verify quality, fairness and consistency.

Issues which arise from the moderation process are notified to the Lead Internal Quality Assurance (LIQA). Those regarding assessment decisions or operational procedures are collated and recorded by the LIQA. They are also notified to all IA’s and incorporated in an appropriate fashion in the periodic updating and refresher training.

On-programme

This is learning completed during the apprenticeship, through on/off-the-job training culminating in a portfolio of evidence, certification or projects, as defined by the Assessment Plan.

Gateway

On completion of all on-programme elements of the Apprenticeship Standard the apprentice will enter the Gateway. This is when the apprentice is handed over to the EPAO and the training provider prepares them for their assessment.

Apprentices must have completed all the on-programme assessment requirements for the apprenticeship before being put forward for the EPA. The employer, in consultation with the training provider should consider that the apprentice can consistently demonstrate all the KSB’s required as set out in the Standard. This should be based on a continuous review by the employer and training provider of the apprentice’s progress and performance.

The EPAO will ensure sufficient checks are in place before learners are put forward for the EPA to reduce unnecessary costs being incurred by all parties. The apprentice will typically have been on the apprenticeship programme for between 12 and 24 months (depending on the Standard) before entering the EPA.

End-point Assessment

End-point assessment is made up of different components that can include the following:

* + 1. Portfolio

The Portfolio may contain several different types of evidence from real work activity by the apprentice and should demonstrate the application of the KSB’s within the relevant Standard. The types of evidence **may** include written work / projects, performance review or workplace observations, case studies, learning record / development plan content, emails, customer comments (all are listed in the Assessment Plans).

The evidence will be assessed against all KSB’s of the Standards. The IA will examine the evidence in the portfolio for completeness, the evidence must at least satisfy the minimum requirements for each area of the Standard, as defined in the assessment criteria.

* + 1. Employer Reference

Digital Standards only. This contains the employer’s assessment of the apprentice’s performance against the KSB’s.

* + 1. Certification / Qualifications

The completed on-programme knowledge / qualification requirements as set out in the Standard.

* + 1. Project

This is key to ensuring consistency, comparability and accuracy of the assessment decision. Depending on the Standard, this is typically a business-related project and completed after gateway. Apprentices **must** complete this away from normal working practices but can be conducted on their employer’s or training provider’s premises. The project provides evidence against selected KSB’s and completed within the duration stipulated within in the Assessment Plan.

* + 1. Structured interview / professional discussion

This is a structured discussion between the apprentice and an IA to provide an opportunity for the evidence to be explored in more detail against any of the KSB’s. This also increases accuracy and validity. The purpose of the interview is to:

* + - Clarify any questions that the assessor has about the evidence submitted in the portfolio
    - Discuss how the apprentice has progressed in their role, what they have done and their approach to work
    - Discuss the depth and breadth of KSB’s

The interview will cover:

* + - What has been submitted as evidence
    - The standard of their work within the portfolio
    - How they approached the work they submitted as evidence
    - Their approach, rationale and outcome to the final project

The interview can draw on broader experience from the workplace, but the primary focus is on the work presented in the portfolio. The interview will be undertaken by an IA (the same IA will have assessed the submitted evidence) and who will also make the grading decision. The interview will take place following the completion and assessment of the portfolio. It is only after the interview has been completed that the grading decision can be taken. The interview will be carried out remotely using video conference (which will be recorded)

but on occasions may be face to face.

Personal mobile phones **must** be switched off for the duration of the interview (unless being used as a recording device). Professionalism is essential, be encouraging, approachable and positive.

Certification

Accelerate People Ltd will claim the overarching Apprenticeship Certificate on behalf of the apprentice from the ESFA, which is then sent to the Employer.

Portfolio Assessment Approach

In reviewing the evidence, the IA should:

* + - Consider the job role of each apprentice to ensure that they have provided enough evidence of competence across the Standard
    - Identify any qualification element and the criteria covered by the qualification
    - Identify the different types of evidence submitted carefully to ensure all outcomes on the Standard have been fully covered
    - Identify any focus areas to be discussed in the interview / professional discussion

**Note: any test of the apprentice’s knowledge and understanding MUST NOT go**

**beyond what is listed in the grading criteria.**

Presentation of Evidence / Portfolios

Each item of evidence should be clearly identifiable and where possible referenced to the relevant criteria. An item of evidence may be appropriate for more than one competency and may demonstrate KSB’s in several areas.

An IA will need to be satisfied that the evidence is:

1. Sufficient

Is the evidence sufficient to cover all of the KSB outcomes listed in the Standard? Sufficient does not mean a mass of evidence, it means collecting enough evidence to demonstrate full competence as directed by the Standard and Assessment Plan.

1. Authentic

Is the evidence submitted really the apprentice’s own work and not something checked and corrected by a colleague or training provider? An apprentice must able to explain and substantiate any evidence that is included.

1. Relevant/valid

Only evidence that clearly relates to the outcomes listed in the Standard can be used. IA’s need to check evidence is relevant to the KSB’s and where other materials are submitted such as, documents, training materials and certificates that are not listed or relevant to the Standard, MUST not be considered towards the final grade.

1. Current

Current means evidence relating to certificates, that they are the up to date listed qualifications and relevant to the KSB’s listed in the Apprenticeship Standard.

1. Consistent

An IA must be convinced that the evidence is typical of the apprentices’ normal performance and is not just something specially prepared for submission. That the work is of the same level throughout the portfolio, projects and discussions.

**Note: Only evidence presented can be used. Therefore, caution should be placed on only grading what is seen DO NOT ASSUME an apprentice may be able to do a task.**

Initial Assessment

Each Standard has its own Assessor Grading Templates to provide you with a framework to conduct a desktop review of all the evidence presented by the apprentice. An IA is required to review all submitted evidence prior to the interview.

Using the Assessor Grading Template, you will explore and record all the competencies and identify any gaps that need to be covered in the interview / professional discussion.

The IA will reach an initial grading decision. **Please note that this is not the final grade.**

Please be aware that all the documentation regarding the EPA and the reports produced are subject to audit. It is, therefore, essential that you ensure that all comments recorded, both positive and negative, during the interview process and your final grading decision, are clearly explained.

Interview

The interview / professional discussion can only take place once the Synoptic Project is complete and all evidence has been checked. It is a vital part of the assessment process and allows an IA to:

1. Confirm competence of all evidence. One way to check this, is to discuss with the apprentice their approach to the tasks completed and what they have understood from the task. If their answers are satisfactory it is reasonable to infer that they will be able to repeat the competent performance.

2. Check underpinning knowledge and understanding, you, as the IA, can use appropriate questions to support your assessment decision or to demonstrate the breadth and depth of their knowledge, as long as they are in line with the Assessment Plan.

3. Confirm an apprentice is competent overall and has completed the totality of the apprenticeship.

**All interviews must be recorded and saved once completed. The identity of the apprentice must be confirmed at the start of the interview using photographic evidence.**

**Type of questions**

As an IA, you will need to think carefully about the type of questions you ask if the answers are to provide valid evidence of competence.

Use the **Initial Assessment** to identify the areas to be further examined during the interview / professional discussion. Any areas of the initial assessment where there is insufficient evidence must be further explored during the interview to support you in your final grading decision.

Questions must:

* + - be open ended to allow the apprentice to develop the answer
    - not lead the apprentice to the right answer
    - relate only to the assessment criteria being assessed
    - encourage apprentices to expand on answers which are unclear or incomplete

It is important that you should write down the questions that you intend to ask during the interview / professional discussion, on the grading template provided. This will allow you to cover all the areas identified in the initial assessment and have a permanent record of the questions you have asked.

**Remember that apprentice’s may be nervous. You may have to rephrase your questions to give the apprentice a chance to answer appropriately.**

Grading

The purpose of grading is to differentiate between those apprentices whose work demonstrates competency against the KSB’s specified in the Standard and those whose work is above this expected level of the Standard.

The IA must make a judgement of whether the apprentice has met the assessment criteria as laid down by the Assessment Plan and award a grade of Fail, Pass, Merit or Distinction. All evidence such as the portfolio, projects and the interview / professional discussion combine to demonstrate the apprentice’s performance against the Standards. This enables the IA to make an overall judgement about how well the apprentice meets or exceeds the Standard.

**The grading documents for each Standard lay out the criteria and the marking matrix to ensure consistency and comparability of all IA’s grading.**

Recording Decisions

It is important to record each EPA decision so that there is a clear record of each stage of the process.

After the assessment, a written report will be produced within 24hrs which will:

* + - Confirm whether a Fail, Pass, Merit or Distinction is appropriate as an overall grade
    - Make any other relevant comments
    - If a Fail is awarded state, the reasons/areas where gaps have been identified

Reports **must** be submitted to Accelerate People Ltd. Final outcomes are confirmed following the moderation and standardisation process.

Completing the EPA Documentation

The EPA documentation must be completed thoroughly as it will form part of the internal and external quality assurance processes. Each form requires a full response and any statements or observations made during the interview /professional discussion must be supported with evidence statements.

The documentation should be completed at the time of the EPA. The report must be submitted to Accelerate People Ltd within 24 hours of the interview taking place.

**Note:** This includes the Result Statement Action Plan needs to be completed with recommended actions to enable the apprentice to resubmit or re-sit successfully.

Complaints and Appeals

Apprentices are entitled to appeal decisions and submit any complaints they have during their experience within the EPA. These should be submitted to Accelerate People Ltd in line with the Complaints and Appeals procedures.

Any changes and developments relating to ongoing EPA practice or operational procedures which arise from the reviews or complaints are collated by the LIQA and are notified to all IA’s.

Continuous Improvement

Accelerate People Ltd is committed to a process of continuing quality improvement and encourages feedback from IA’s, employers and apprentices. IA’s play a valuable part in this by providing open and honest feedback on their experience as an assessor. Feedback from all sources is channeled through the LIQA and is used to modify and enhance the process and its arrangements in the light of all parties’ experiences.

Sampling and Moderation

To ensure fairness and consistency of EPA decisions Accelerate People Ltd will moderate all grades prior to releasing it to the apprentice and training provider.

To enable this IA’s are required to submit the completed Assessor Grading Templates to Accelerate People Ltd within 24 hours of the interview / professional discussion being completed, this will then allow the final grade to be released no later than 5 days following the interview / professional discussion.

**GRADES SHOULD NOT BE COMMUNICATED TO ANYONE OUTSIDE OF ACCELERATE PEOPLE LTD UNTIL THE FULL QUALITY PROCESS HAS BEEN COMPLETED.**

If an interview / professional discussion is selected for internal moderation, the IA will be informed prior to the interview / professional discussion starting. This moderation is on the performance of the IA and not the apprentice.