



# End-Point Assessment Handbook and Specification for Customer Service Specialist ST0071/AP02 Level 3



## Contents

Section 1	4
Overview	4
Apprenticeship standard objective	6
Progression	6
Who is Professional Assessment Ltd (PAL)?	7
What is needed prior to end-point assessment?	7
Language of assessment	8
Section 2	9
How is end-point assessment delivered?	9
Who can carry out end-point assessment?	11
Internal quality assurance requirements	11
External quality assurance requirements	12
Standardisation and moderation	12
Section 3	13
Grading	13
Preparing apprentices for end-point assessment	13
End-point assessment planning and scheduling	13
Reassessment	14
Resits and retakes	14
Reassessment requirements for each component	14
Capping	15
Booking reassessments	15
Section 4	16
Portfolio of evidence	16
How can a Customer Service Specialist prepare for and complete the portfolio?	17
What is best practice in producing the portfolio of evidence?	18
Table 1: Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours required by the Portfolio of Evidence to underpin the Professional Discussion	18
Section 5	19
Assessment methods	19
Sample Assessment Materials	19
Assessment Method 1 – Professional Discussion underpinned by a Portfolio of Evidence	19
Key facts about the professional discussion	19
What is the format of the professional discussion?	19
How can the professional discussion be undertaken?	20
How can a Customer Service Specialist apprentice prepare for the professional discussion?	20

How will the professional discussion be graded?	20
Table 2: Professional Discussion Pass and Distinction Grading Criteria	21
Assessment method 2 – Practical Observation with Questioning	22
What is the format of the observation with questions?	22
How can a Customer Service Specialist apprentice prepare for the practical observation with questions?	22
Table 3: Practical Observation with Questioning Pass and Distinction Grading Criteria	23
Assessment Method 3 – Work Based Project, supported by an Interview	24
Key facts about the work-based project and interview	24
What is the format of the work-based project?	24
What is the format of the interview?	26
How can the interview be undertaken?	27
How can a Customer Service Specialist apprentice prepare for the work-based project and interview?	27
How will the work-based project and interview be graded?	27
Table 4: Grading criteria for the Work-Based Project and Interview	28
Section 6	30
Plagiarism	30
Appeals, complaints, maladministration, and malpractice policies - centre/candidate	30
Reasonable adjustments/considerations/adaptations	31
Certification	31
Validity, Authenticity, Relevancy, Currency, and Sufficiency	31

## Section 1

### Overview

The end-point assessment in this specification relates to the Customer Service Specialist ST0071 version AP02. The apprenticeship is at Level 3 and is for apprentices who are a professional for Customer Service and who act as a referral point for dealing with more complex or technical customer requests, complaints, and queries.

The apprentice will often be an escalation point for complicated or ongoing customer problems and an expert in the organisation's products and/or services, sharing knowledge with your wider team and colleagues. They will gather and analyse data and customer information that influences change and improvements in service.

The apprentice may be working in different types of environments including contact centres, retail, webchat, service industry or any customer service point.

A Customer Service Specialist will:

- Provide a positive customer service delivery.
- Demonstrate a continuous improvement and future focussed approach to customer service delivery.
- Resolve complex issues by being able to choose from and successfully apply a wide range of approaches.
- Manage challenging and complicated situations.
- Demonstrate a cost-conscious mind-set.
- Identifying where highs and lows of the customer journey are.
- Make recommendations to enable improvement.
- Exercises proactivity and creativity when identifying solutions to customer and organisational issues.

The typical duration for this apprenticeship is 15 months but this will depend on apprentices' previous experience and their access to opportunities to gain the full range of competences. The minimum duration of training for any apprenticeship is 366 days, before entering end-point assessment.

To achieve the apprenticeship certificate, apprentices are required to successfully complete their on-programme period of learning and development and the end-point assessment. The purpose of the end-point assessment is to confirm that apprentices have met the required level of knowledge, skills and behavioural standards set by employers.

The overall apprenticeship is graded as fail, pass or distinction.

To achieve the apprenticeship certificate, apprentices are required to successfully complete the:

- On-programme period of training and development, including achieving the required Level 2 English and maths qualifications.
- End-point assessment (EPA) - all components, within the assessment window.

The certificate for the apprenticeship is awarded by the Institute for Apprentices and Technical Education (IfATE), through a process administered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

As the end-point assessment organisation, Professional Assessment Ltd (PAL) will claim for the certificate on behalf of the apprentice. Certificates are sent to the nominated employer, and it is the employer's responsibility to ensure the apprentice receives the certificate.

The standards and accompanying assessment plan can be accessed via the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#).

<b>Standard Title</b>	Customer Service Specialist
<b>Level</b>	3
<b>Standard and Version (AP) Number</b>	ST0071/AP02
<b>LARS Number</b>	278
<b>Named EQA Organisation</b>	Ofqual
<b>Duration of End-Point Assessment</b>	3 months
<b>Date the Assessment Plan is scheduled for review</b>	This standard should be reviewed within 3 years of its approval date
<b>Mandatory Qualifications within the Standard</b>	To meet the apprenticeship standards, apprentices must achieve a minimum of Level 2 English and maths
<b>End-Point Assessment Methods</b>	<p>The end-point assessment is designed to test the apprentice throughout the entire standard, the assessment methods used to achieve this are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Practical observation with questioning</li> <li>➤ Work-based project (supported by an interview)</li> <li>➤ Professional discussion (supported by portfolio evidence)</li> </ul>

## Introduction

This handbook contains the relevant information and guidance required of apprentices to achieve the end-point assessment for the Customer Service Specialist ST0071/AP02 and should be used in conjunction with the Customer Service Specialist ST0071/AP02 Padlet<sup>1</sup> End-Point Assessment Information for Apprentices, Training Providers and Employers.

*The overarching aim of the end-point assessment is to ensure that the apprentice meets the standard set out by employers of the relevant sector and that they are fully competent within their job roles. An apprentice must successfully complete all the end-point assessment components to receive the apprenticeship certificate.*

*References to third-party material made in this specification are made in good faith. PAL does not endorse, approve, or accept responsibility for the content of materials, which may be subject to change, or any opinions expressed therein. (Material may include textbooks, journals, magazines and other publications and websites.)*

*All information in this specification is correct at time of publication.*

<sup>1</sup> A Padlet is an on-line wiki-based resource, made available to all PAL clients. Resources are updated centrally, so the latest information can be accessed via the Padlet

PAL has worked in close collaboration with employers, other assessment organisations and experts from professional bodies and training providers in developing the assessment tools for this end-point assessment. We are grateful to all who have generously shared their time and expertise to help us in the development process.

The end-point assessment (EPA) is an assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours outlined in the apprenticeship standard, which have been learned throughout the apprenticeship programme. The purpose of the end-point assessment is to make sure that the apprentice meets the standard in its entirety.

All apprentices must undertake the independent end-point assessment at the end of the on-programme phase of training when their employer, and in some cases their training provider, is satisfied that they have met the 'gateway' criteria to undertake the assessment. Apprentices will not be awarded the apprenticeship certificate until they have successfully completed the end-point assessment.

The end-point assessment can be delivered only by a registered assessment organisation, which must be independent of the employer, or any party involved in the delivery of the on-programme phase of the apprenticeship. In this context, independence, means without influence or bias and the independent assessor assigned is not affiliated to the employer or any training partner involved, and notably the independent assessor has played no part in the training of the apprentice.

All assessment decisions for this standard's end-point assessment must be made by the independent assessment organisation.

PAL has been working closely with occupational experts, employers, and training providers in the development of end-point assessment tools to ensure that they are:

- Valid and appropriate to assess occupational competence in the relevant industry and will deliver reliable outcomes.
- Fair to all apprentices and help them to make progress in their lives.
- Manageable for apprentices and the industry and can be delivered effectively and efficiently in the vocational setting.

## Apprenticeship standard objective

The overall goal of the end-point assessment is to ensure that the apprentice has met the required level of knowledge, skills and behavioural standards set by employers and approved by the IfATE and that they are confident and competent in their role to take on responsibilities to deliver clearly defined business outcomes.

## Progression

On completion of the apprenticeship, the apprentice could progress into a more senior team leader or management role.

Completion of this apprenticeship will lead to eligibility to join the Institute of Customer Service as an Individual member at Professional level.

## Who is Professional Assessment Ltd (PAL)?

PAL provides services for training providers to include colleges and employers involved in the delivery of apprenticeships and adult learning. Our offer includes:

- End-point assessment for a wide range of apprenticeship standards. Our dedicated team offers national coverage and has built up extensive experience in administering the latest end-point assessments.
- Compliance and audit services. Our funding compliance team tailor their support to meet your specific needs; from ad-hoc advice and support to full ESFA-style audits.

The link to our website can be located by clicking [here](#).

## What is needed prior to end-point assessment?

The employer and training provider must confirm that the apprentice has met the on-programme requirements and the apprentice is ready to undertake the end-point assessment.

The employer and training provider must hold a 'Gateway' review to agree that the apprentice has gained the required level of knowledge, skills, and behaviours, along with an English and maths qualification at a level 2 as set by the apprenticeship standard.

*For those with an education, health and care plan or a legacy statement the apprenticeship's English and maths minimum requirement is Entry Level 3 and British Sign Language qualifications are an alternative to English qualifications for those whom this is their primary language.*

Please check with the EPA team via [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk) if you do not know which English or maths qualifications are accepted. Evidence of qualifications must be in the form of a certificate.

**The apprentice must also have a portfolio of evidence that will underpin the professional discussion to be submitted to PAL at least two weeks prior to the professional discussion assessment.**

To confirm the Gateway review has taken place, the employer, training provider and apprentice are required to complete a Gateway Declaration Record, an example of which is included in the Appendix of this specification. Alternatively, training providers and employers can use their documentation, with the caveat that the document must record the information as stipulated on the PAL Gateway Declaration Record.

PAL will not confirm an end-point assessment booking until the required evidence is submitted. For auditing purposes, the Gateway Declaration Record should either be signed and dated by all parties, or email/DVR confirmation provided that all parties have agreed on readiness.

The recommended approach during the on-programme assessment phase (months 1-15) to ensure that the apprentice is on track is based on the employer's performance management process with the following key elements:

- Line manager uses the normal performance management processes to monitor the progress of the apprentice, provide feedback and guide development.
- Employers and training providers should carry out joint reviews of progress at regular intervals, involving apprentices, line managers and others with a direct relationship, e.g., mentors, workplace coaches, etc. They should agree how any issues are to be resolved together.
- Training providers will offer on programme support, ensuring the requirements of the apprenticeship standard are reflected in the above processes, and by filling any gaps through their work with apprentices.
- Apprentices must develop and maintain, within a portfolio, examples of their work throughout their apprenticeship. This portfolio will be used by the apprentice to demonstrate to the employer that they are

ready for EPA. Some evidence (which has not been assessed by the independent assessor) from this portfolio will be used at a future point to support the professional discussion.

- The training provider can carry out mock end-point assessments with the apprentice.

The Gateway decision regarding readiness will be taken by the line manager (or appropriate employer) representative and apprentice with input from the training provider.

### **Language of assessment**

All components of the end-point assessment will be conducted in English.

Apprentices may be assessed in British Sign Language where it is permitted for the purpose of reasonable adjustment.

Further information on special considerations and reasonable adjustments can be found in PAL's Special Considerations and Reasonable Adjustments policy.



## Section 2

### How is end-point assessment delivered?

The apprentice will be assessed to the apprenticeship standard using **three** assessment methods. Each assessment method should directly assess the required knowledge, skills, and behaviours of the standard.

The assessment activities will be completed by the independent assessor as follows:

- Practical observation with questioning.
- Work-based project, supported by an interview.
- Professional discussion, supported by portfolio evidence.

There is no mandated assessment sequence. The result of one assessment does not need to be known before starting the next. PAL's preferred delivery method is:




1. Professional Discussion, supported by portfolio evidence.
2. Practical Observation with questioning.
3. Work-based Project and Interview.






This approach will enable the apprentice to progress through end-point assessment whilst the work-based project is underway.



The content and structure of the assessment methods is provided by PAL to ensure consistency across all apprentices. The employer, with the support of the training provider where appropriate, will work with the apprentice to agree how the apprentice goes about completing the components of the end-point assessment and will provide guidance along the way as required. The training provider will ensure that the evidence presented for end-point assessment meets the assessment plan requirements but does not have a role in the formal end-point assessment or grade decision.

Apprentices who fail one or more assessment method will be awarded an overall EPA grade of 'fail'. To gain an overall EPA 'pass' grade, apprentices must achieve a pass in all of the assessment methods. To achieve a distinction, all of the distinction criteria must be achieved, in addition to the pass criteria. All assessment methods must be passed for the end-point assessment to be passed overall.

The following chart sets out the sequences of the Gateway review and end-point assessment. The sequence of assessment methods is not mandated.

Apprentice/Employer/Training Provider		PAL
Apprentice registered with PAL prior to the Gateway review.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ESFA advised of EPAO.</li> <li>▪ EPAPro log-in credentials provided.</li> <li>▪ Access to a range of assessment guidance materials available.</li> </ul>
Gateway review held between the training provider, employer, and apprentice to confirm assessment readiness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evidence of Level 2 English and maths requirements having been achieved.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Declaration received that the apprentice is ready for assessment.</li> <li>▪ Gateway evidence received.</li> <li>▪ PAL approves or rejects the Gateway evidence. If rejected, the training provider to resubmit as required.</li> </ul>
PAL contacts employer and apprentice.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assessment planning completed. Dates will be agreed for all methods of assessment to meet with the Customer Service Specialist</li> </ul>

Apprentice/Employer/Training Provider		PAL
PAL undertakes assessment planning meeting with apprentice and employer and assessment schedule agreed.		<p>Assessment Plan and to allow for reasonable resit or retake activities within the required window, wherever possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The subject for workplace project is agreed between the apprentice, employer, and independent assessor.</li> </ul>
<p>Apprentice submits their portfolio evidence at least two weeks prior to the professional discussion assessment taking place.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 pieces of evidence.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Independent assessor reviews of the portfolio evidence and prepares agenda questions for the professional discussion.</li> </ul>
<p>Apprentice undertakes the professional discussion assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apprentice to have a copy of their portfolio evidence to refer to during the assessment. Please note the agenda will not be shared in advance.</li> <li>▪ Professional discussion assessment must last for 60 minutes (+/-10%).</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Independent assessor will have a copy of the apprentice's portfolio evidence to refer to during the assessment.</li> <li>▪ Professional discussion completed, responses to questions assessed.</li> <li>▪ Assessment graded.</li> </ul>
<p>Apprentice undertakes the practical observation with questioning assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apprentice will be given at least two weeks' notice of the observation with questioning assessment.</li> <li>▪ Observation duration is 60 minutes (+/-10% tolerance).</li> <li>▪ The observation takes place in the apprentice's workplace, in typical working conditions.</li> <li>▪ The apprentice will be observed undertaking a range of day-to-day activities.</li> <li>▪ The apprentice will be asked questions during the observation, not exceeding 15% of the total time allowed.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Independent assessor will observe the apprentice completing a range of day-to-day activities.</li> <li>▪ The independent assessor will ask open questions to clarify knowledge and understanding is being applied by the apprentice.</li> <li>▪ Observation with questioning assessment will be holistically assessed and graded.</li> </ul>
<p>Apprentice submits their work-based project for assessment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Written report of 2500 words (+/- 10%), excluding annexes.</li> <li>▪ The apprentice will base their report on a project they have carried out.</li> <li>▪ The apprentice will complete all work on their project <b>post gateway</b>, over a 2 month period.</li> <li>▪ The apprentice should provide annexes of evidence relating to their project with their report.</li> <li>▪ The apprentice must submit their report at least 2 weeks prior to the interview date.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Independent assessor will assess the written project and annexes.</li> <li>▪ Independent assessor will prepare 10 questions ready for the interview.</li> </ul>
<p>Apprentice undertakes the work-based project Interview.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The interview will last for 60 minutes (+/-10%).</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interview completed.</li> <li>▪ Holistic assessment of the responses to the questions and the written project.</li> <li>▪ Assessment graded.</li> </ul>

Apprentice/Employer/Training Provider		PAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The apprentice will be asked 10 questions.</li> <li>▪ The questions will focus on the written project and any supporting annexes.</li> </ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Overall grading undertaken – independent assessor confirms to PAL grades for all assessment elements and overall grade using grade descriptors as detailed in the assessment plan. IQA undertaken.</li> <li>▪ Assessment outcome provided within the assessment window timeframe.</li> </ul>
<p>Employer informed of the outcome of end-point assessment via email from <a href="mailto:epasupportservices@professionalassessment.co.uk">epasupportservices@professionalassessment.co.uk</a> Apprentice and training provider are copied into the communication.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assessment reports will record decisions and grades. If a resit or retake is required, it is important that the relevant parties refer to the EPA summary record.</li> <li>▪ Assessment decision data collated and used to inform standardisations processes and quality assurance.</li> <li>▪ Assessment outcome provided to the training provider and apprenticeship service.</li> <li>▪ Certificate requested where a pass or higher grade for all aspects of end-point assessment are achieved.</li> <li>▪ Data provided to the regulator as necessary.</li> </ul>

## Who can carry out end-point assessment?

Independent assessors/the end-point assessment organisation for this standard is required to:

- Understanding of the customer service sector and of the role covered by the apprenticeship.
- Have current occupational competence of 2 years or more.
- Have no direct relationship with the apprentice, employer, or training provider.
- Hold or working towards a qualification to undertaken assessment and verification activity (i.e., PGCE, Cert Ed or Assessor/Verifier qualifications) and/or have significant knowledge and expertise in providing consistent and appropriate judgements of an apprentice’s skill and ability.

All independent assessors that meet the above criteria are trained and approved by PAL to ensure that they are capable carrying out end-point assessments in a fair and consistent manner to make reliable judgments.

PAL requires all end-point assessment staff to hold a recognised assessment qualification.

PAL will be responsible for all aspects of the end-point assessment for this standard and will review the evidence against the standard to ensure that the grading criteria have been met for each method of assessment.

## Internal quality assurance requirements

PAL requires all quality assurance staff to hold a recognised internal quality assurance qualification. IQA staff are subject to the requirements of an independent assessor as outlined above and must show competence in subject specialist areas to be approved in internal quality assurance. Quality assurers are monitored to undertake continuous professional development, to ensure the currency of their industry specific knowledge and practice.

PAL implements validation and quality assurance policies and processes to ensure that all assessments are robust, fully align with the independent end-point assessment requirements, and are assessed consistently, reliably, and fairly by all independent assessors.

Policies can be shared upon request, please contact [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk). Essential policies are also available via our website.

In accordance with these policies PAL will:

- Develop and maintain a set of assessment tools, to be used by all independent assessors when carrying out assessments.
- Ensure independent assessors for the standard meet with the assessment plan competency requirements.
- Train and develop all independent assessors to ensure reliable and consistent assessment of the standard.
- Apply robust quality assurance and verification processes to assessments, e.g., the use of standard formats, moderation, and standardisation of marking and assessment decisions.
- Apply and follow the appeals and disputes policy and procedure in response to any legitimate appeal or dispute.
- Hold standardisation and moderation activities of assessment process.
- Communicate with third parties any concerns or issues that may impact on assessment activities or outcomes.

## External quality assurance requirements

External quality assurance for the Customer Service Specialist is undertaken by Ofqual.

## Standardisation and moderation

All independent assessors are required to attend standardisation and moderation activities, to ensure the consistency of the assessment approach and to ensure assessment grading is aligned to the relevant assessment plan requirements. Standardisation activities are carried out on an on-going basis such meetings can be in the format of face to face meetings or remotely via webinars.

IQAs may accompany or 'remote in' with independent assessors carrying out EPA to ensure that it is being administered safely, securely and in line with PAL guidance.

For further information on quality assurance, standardisation and moderation please see our policies, or contact our quality team via [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk).

## Section 3

### Grading

The apprenticeship includes fail, pass and distinction grades which are awarded at the end-point assessment. The final grade is based on the overall performance in the Practical Observation, Work Based Project, and Professional Discussion.

All end-point assessment methods must be passed for the end-point assessment to be passed overall.

To achieve a pass, the apprentice must meet all of the pass criteria in all methods.

To achieve a distinction, the apprentice must meet all of the distinction criteria in all methods of assessment in addition to the pass criteria.

### Preparing apprentices for end-point assessment

To ensure that apprentices develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that underpin occupational competence, it is recommended that they follow a structured programme of training and development. The period of training and development must meet the ESFA requirements for off-the-job training, away from the day-to-day job. Please refer to ESFA guidance and funding rules regarding the definition of what training interventions are permissible under the ruling and responsibilities for recording and evidencing off-job training activities.

To prepare apprentices effectively, it is recommended that employers and/or training providers should:

- Have a good understanding of the apprenticeship standard and the structure and format of the end-point assessment.
- Plan and implement a learning and development programme based on the apprenticeship standard, with regular reviews of progress and readiness, to ensure apprentices develop the required knowledge, skills, and behaviours.
- Use formative assessments and mock assessments to help prepare apprentices for the end-point assessment.

It is recommended, that the on-programme assessment includes:

- Regular performance reviews between the apprentice and a senior manager.
- Opportunities given and evidence generated to cover all assessment criteria.
- Feedback from line manager/employer.

### End-point assessment planning and scheduling

Employers and/or training providers must have an agreement in place to conduct end-point assessments with PAL. We regularly check the ESFA portal to review pipeline business and ensure that training providers who wish to work with us, are attached to us, as EPAO for the relevant standard(s).

Apprentices must be registered and booked on to their end-point assessment in sufficient time to allow adequate planning and scheduling of the assessments. PAL encourages communication with all parties, in respect of apprenticeship progress and status and our accounts team will periodically communicate directly with other stakeholders, to seek clarification and updates regarding apprentices' assessment readiness.

Once the employer or training provider has confirmed a gateway date, PAL will arrange a planning meeting on receipt and validation of the gateway evidence.

The planning meeting is attended by the employer, apprentice, and PAL. The purpose of the planning meeting is to share information with PAL, to support the assessment process and to agree a plan for the upcoming assessment activities for the apprentices. The independent assessor/PAL representative will agree a plan and schedule for each assessment activity to ensure that all assessment components can be completed within the end-point assessment time. The meeting can be conducted remotely using appropriate technology.

The end-point assessment will be conducted over a period of **3 months** at the end of the apprenticeship. Assessments cannot take place if the apprentice has not served the minimum time in training and we require employers and training providers to check this requirement has been met, before submitting gateway evidence.

## Reassessment

PAL's Resit and Retake policy will apply in the event of reassessments, and we will discuss arrangements for such activities with all concerned parties.

Reassessments do incur a charge. All fees are detailed in PAL's pricing policy and outlined in the contracting process.

Reassessments wherever possible will be carried out by the original independent assessor, but if this is not possible PAL reserves the right to assign a different independent assessor.

## Resits and retakes

Apprentices who fail one or more assessment methods will be offered the opportunity to take a resit or a retake. Further development must be provided prior to a resit. A retake requires the apprentice to undertake further learning and therefore they would need to go through the Gateway process again.

Apprentices are able to resit/retake any individual assessment component where a pass has not been achieved.

If a retake/resit is required, apprentices should complete retake/resits within 12 months. There is no limit to the number of resits/retakes within the 12 months.

Apprentices should have a supportive action plan to prepare for a resit or a retake. The apprentice's employer will need to agree with PAL that either a resit or retake is an appropriate course of action.

Resits and retakes are **not** offered to apprentices wishing to move from pass to a higher grade.

## Reassessment requirements for each component

If the apprentice fails the **practical observation** with questioning: a further observation will be carried out supported with further questioning.

If the apprentice fails the **work based project**, they will be asked to rework their project taking account of feedback from the independent assessor. Apprentices will have 1 month to rework their submission. The apprentice will be able to submit previous evidence along with the new additional evidence

If the apprentice fails the **professional discussion**, underpinned by a portfolio of evidence: a further, different professional discussion will be carried out. The apprentice cannot add to their portfolio during this period.

## **Capping**

Where any assessment method has to be resat or retaken, the apprentice will be awarded a maximum end-point assessment grade of pass, unless PAL determines there are exceptional circumstances requiring a resit or retake.

## **Booking reassessments**

The timescale for any reassessment will be agreed on a case-by-case basis, with PAL. As part of that agreement, any reassessments must not provide an apprentice with an unfair advantage over others.

## Section 4

### Portfolio of evidence

A completed portfolio of evidence is required to be submitted to PAL at least two weeks prior to the professional discussion assessment.

The portfolio **is not directly assessed** as part of end-point assessment, it provides a structure for the professional discussion.

The independent assessor will review the portfolio evidence and use it to identify areas for the professional discussion, and it is the **professional discussion** that will assess the apprentice's understanding and learning.

The portfolio should be produced during the on-programme period of the apprenticeship, showcasing competence by the apprentice having first learned and applied the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the standard.

It is of paramount importance that all the work submitted in the portfolio has been generated by the apprentice or relates directly to the named apprentice. The independent assessor will undertake authenticity checks regarding portfolio evidence as part of the professional discussion assessment.

The apprentice should refer to their portfolio evidence during the professional discussion assessment. To ensure that all evidence is accessible during the assessment PAL would recommend that audio and/or video recordings are supported by a written summary/list of bullet points to which the apprentice can easily refer.

### What is the format of the underpinning portfolio?

The portfolio of evidence must contain between 10-15 pieces of evidence in total, a qualitative as opposed to quantitative approach is suggested.

The portfolio of evidence must evidence all the knowledge, skills and behaviours mapped to the professional discussion method of assessment (see Table 1). **At least one piece of evidence must relate to each of the criteria;** each piece of evidence can be referenced against more than one knowledge, skills, or behavioural requirement for a more holistic approach.

PAL has provided a mapping and employer validation statement record which can be accessed from the Customer Service Specialist ST0071/AP02 Padlet. Alternatively, training providers can use their own version, however **it is a requirement that a mapping document and employer validation statement is submitted with the completed portfolio.**



## How can a Customer Service Specialist prepare for and complete the portfolio?

The employer and training provider will assist the apprentice in producing their portfolio to ensure that it covers all standards outlined in the assessment plan for professional discussion method of assessment.

Please refer to Table 1 for the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to be assessed by the professional discussion and evidenced in the portfolio.

### The portfolio **must** contain:

- A mapping document which clearly shows how the evidence is mapped against the relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours that will be assessed by the professional discussion.
- A statement to confirm that the evidence provided is valid and attributable to the apprentice from the employer.
- A minimum of 10 and a maximum of 15 pieces of evidence.

Please note - PAL will not accept a portfolio submitted without a completed mapping document and an employer statement of validity.

It is not required that the apprentice has evidence in all the described formats below, but the portfolio **may** also contain the following items as evidence:

- Written statements by the apprentice (not reflective, but based on actual events which have taken place, or work products).
- Observations.
- Witness statements.
- Performance reviews between the apprentice and their line manager.
- Professional discussions between the apprentice and their training provider that relate to work undertaken by the apprentice throughout their programme (maximum duration of 20 minutes per discussion).
- Workplace documentation/records with clear annotation, for example workplace policies/procedures, records.
- Customer feedback such as letters or emails.
- Written or audio questions and answers.
- Personal development plan.

The professional discussion points will be constructed by the independent assessor to include all pass criteria, while allowing the opportunity for the apprentice to evidence the distinction criteria, either naturally in their responses or using further questions.

The apprentice and independent assessor must be able to refer to the portfolio during the professional discussion assessment and therefore evidence should be user-friendly and quick to reference.

## What is best practice in producing the portfolio of evidence?

Ensure that the evidence within the portfolio provides coverage against all the standards as outlined in the assessment plan for the professional discussion assessment method (see Table 1). Employers, training providers and apprentices can utilise this guidance to support in documenting and referencing the evidence against all standards required.

The evidence provided within the portfolio **must** be validated by the employer to confirm the authenticity and validity.

A range of evidence, methods and consistency over time is encouraged to show competence. All evidence provided within the portfolio should comply with usual assessment practices, such as:

- Valid Authentic Current Sufficient Reliable (VACSR) confirmed including signatures and dates as appropriate.
- Have detailed annotation to describe the evidence. Audio files should be referred to clearly within evidence to show where supporting recordings are located and within recordings the evidence number being discussed should be clearly confirmed. Individual video files should be limited to a 10 minute duration and audio files limited to a 20 minute duration.
- Be referenced to the specific criteria being claimed.
- All evidence recordings and files to be clearly named as appropriate to evidence type/number.

Evidence should comply with data protection and GDPR. Ideally, the portfolio evidence should be presented electronically.

**Table 1: Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours required by the Portfolio of Evidence to underpin the Professional Discussion**

Theme and KSB	Criteria
<b>Business Knowledge and Understanding</b> (Knowledge)	Understand the impact your service provision has on the wider organisation and the value it adds.
	Understand a range of leadership styles and apply them successfully in a customer service environment.
<b>Customer Journey</b> (Knowledge)	Understand the reasons why customer issues and complex situations sometimes need referral or escalation for specialist attention.
	Understand commercial factors and authority limits for delivering the required customer experience.
<b>Knowing Your Customers and Their Needs/Customer Insight</b> (Knowledge)	Know your internal and external customers and how their behaviour may require different approaches from you.
	Understand what drives loyalty, retention, and satisfaction and how they impact on your organisation.
<b>Customer Service Culture and Environmental Awareness</b>	Understand how to find and use industry best practice to enhance own knowledge.
<b>Providing a Positive Customer Experience</b> (Skills)	Demonstrate a cost-conscious mind-set when meeting customer and the business needs.
<b>Develop Self</b> (Behaviours)	Proactively keep your service, industry and best practice knowledge and skills up-to-date.
	Consider personal goals related to service and take action towards achieving them.
<b>Ownership/Responsibility</b> (Behaviours)	Make realistic promises and deliver on them.
<b>Team Working</b> (Behaviours)	Share knowledge and experience with others to support colleague development.

## Section 5

### Assessment methods

All end-point assessments should take place within the apprentice's usual working hours and will be planned by the PAL representative with the apprentice and line manager at the planning meeting to comply with the assessment plan and business requirements.

Assessment decisions will not be communicated by the independent assessor straight away, they will document and record their assessment decisions. These decisions are then shared for internal quality assurance checks prior to being communicated to the apprentice, employer, and training provider. Employers can access a record of assessment by accessing EPAPro. User guides are available for training providers and employers that detail how reports can be viewed.

### Sample Assessment Materials

For this standard, PAL provides:

- A mock practical observation assessment record and sample questions.
- A mock work-based project assessment record with sample interview questions.
- A mock professional discussion record with sample questions.

All sample materials can be accessed from the Customer Service Specialist ST0071/AP02 Padlet.

## Assessment Method 1 – Professional Discussion underpinned by a Portfolio of Evidence

### Key facts about the professional discussion

The professional discussion is a meaningful, in-depth, and two-way dialogue designed to draw out the best of the apprentice's competence for the grading descriptors assigned to this method of assessment (see Table 2). The agenda points will act as a base for the apprentice to make detailed and proactive contributions to confirm their competence. It will allow the apprentice to evidence both the knowledge gained and its application through skills and behaviours. The discussion will allow the independent assessor to thoroughly test understanding through open and follow up (clarification) questions.

The independent assessor will review the portfolio evidence in advance of the professional discussion assessment.

Please refer to section 4 of this specification for detailed guidance about the portfolio evidence. The portfolio evidence is NOT directly assessed but is used by the independent assessor as a basis for the agenda questions.

The professional discussion assessment duration is **60 minutes** (+/-10%).

### What is the format of the professional discussion?

The independent assessor will select open ended, competency-based questions from the PAL professional discussion question bank, which draw out the best of the apprentice's competence and excellence. Further questions may be asked for clarification purposes and to allow the apprentice the opportunity to cover the grading descriptors mapped to this method of assessment.

The apprentice and independent assessor will both have access to their own copies of the apprentice's portfolio of evidence throughout the discussion and both can refer to it as needed.

The agenda is not shared with the apprentice, employer, or training provider in advance of the assessment.

### **How can the professional discussion be undertaken?**

The professional discussion can be conducted using a range of media, as appropriate for the apprentice, either via online video conferencing or face to face. Remote assessment is the preferred option.

It is the responsibility of the apprentice, employer, training provider and PAL to ensure accessibility where required.

The professional discussion must be undertaken in a controlled environment (a quiet area, free from distractions and influence) and the apprentice will be assessed on a one-to-one basis to the independent assessor.

Where the assessment is conducted using technology, fair assessment conditions must be maintained. Acceptable means of remote assessment include video conferencing/video calling and must include a two-way visual and audio link. The video call will be recorded and submitted by the independent assessor for internal quality assurance.

Where the assessment is completed face to face, the independent assessor should complete a digital recording<sup>2</sup> of the professional discussion.

### **How can a Customer Service Specialist apprentice prepare for the professional discussion?**

- Practice undertaking professional discussions with their training provider, employer, and line manager.
- Practice discussions which cover a range of topics and areas of the standard, ensuring that they can provide full answers and specific examples of tasks/situations they have been involved in.
- Practice reflecting and analysing performance to determine successes and areas for development.
- Review terminology in the assessment plan and consider how this links to their role.
- Practice professional discussions mock agendas with their training provider building up to 60 minutes to support completing them within the given timescale.

### **How will the professional discussion be graded?**

To achieve a pass, the apprentice must achieve ALL of the pass descriptors for this method of assessment through their professional discussion responses.

To achieve a distinction, the apprentice must achieve ALL of the distinction descriptors for this method of assessment through their professional discussion responses.

Please refer to Table 2 for the pass and distinction descriptors for this method of assessment.

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<sup>2</sup> Note in exceptional cases, PAL may allow an apprentice to be exempt from a digitally recorded professional discussion; a written record would still be required. Any exemption would need to be agreed at the assessment planning meeting and be subject to PAL's special considerations and reasonable adjustment policy

**Table 2: Professional Discussion Pass and Distinction Grading Criteria**

<b>Pass Descriptors</b>
Ability to describe their role in meeting their organisation’s customer service standards and its impact upon other departments.
Evidence of how they identify the different types of leadership styles that work best in their customer environment.
Demonstrates when they have balanced the meeting of their customer and their organisation’s needs while showing they have considered cost implications.
Demonstrate sharing own knowledge and experience with others, to support colleague development.
Understanding of why customer issues and complex situations sometimes need referral or escalation for specialist attention within their organisation.
Ability to adhere to their organisation’s service level agreement and demonstrates an awareness of the limit of their authority when providing customer service.
Evidences knowledge of how their internal and external customers’ expectations can differ and how they would adapt their approach to meet those expectations.
Demonstrates responsibility and ownership in resolving customer issues, by getting the right people involved and delivering on promises, to the satisfaction of the customer and their organisation.
Demonstrates factors used to drive and improve loyalty, retention and satisfaction of customers and the impact they have on the organisation.
Evidences knowledge of where different sources of information on industry best practice can be found and used to improve personal and professional development.
Provides evidence to demonstrate how they have achieved learning and development goals, identified in an agreed personal development plan, in relation to their knowledge and skills of customer service, in the industry and best practice.
<b>Distinction Descriptors</b>
Evidences when they have assessed the impact of sharing their own knowledge on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Their development.</li> <li>b. Colleague development.</li> </ul>
Evidences when they have analysed the importance of their professional image and its relationship with the organisation’s brand.
Demonstrates how they evaluate, and review improvements made to their own customer service to ensure a future-focused approach.

## Assessment method 2 – Practical Observation with Questioning

### Key facts about the practical observation with questioning

The apprentice will be observed undertaking a range of day-to-day workplace activities to allow them to demonstrate the full range of their knowledge, skills and behaviours required.

The practical observation will last for **1 hour** (+/- 10% tolerance either way) and must take place in the apprentice's workplace.

The apprentice will be asked questions by the independent assessor during the observation, to clarify knowledge and understanding is being applied. The questioning should not exceed 15% of the total observation time allowed (a maximum of 10 minutes).

The independent assessor will ask the apprentice open questions must be open questions and they may ask supplementary questions as required to seek further clarification. Supplementary questions will be devised by the independent assessor as required.

The apprentice must be given a minimum of 2 weeks' notice of the practical observation.

The practical observation must:

- Reflect typical working conditions.
- Allow the apprentice to demonstrate all aspects of the standard being assessed.
- Take a synoptic approach to assessment the overall competence.
- Be carried out on a one-to-one basis.

### What is the format of the observation with questions?

The independent assessor will plan the practical observation in conjunction with the apprentice and their employer, taking account of workplace considerations. This would typically include timing, the right environment, and enough space for the apprentice to be able to do their job.

The independent assessor will observe the apprentice undertaking a range of day-to-day workplace activities.

During the practical observation the apprentice should have the opportunity, if required, to move from one area/function of the business to another in order to best demonstrate how they have applied their KSBs in a realistic work environment to achieve genuine and demanding work objectives.

### How can a Customer Service Specialist apprentice prepare for the practical observation with questions?

- Read the guidance documents and ask questions if the information provided is not clear.
- Undertake a mock observation with your training provider and use the feedback provided.
- Be prepared for practical assessment by practising within the assessment timeframe; line managers can give support by providing useful feedback.
- Ensure that the basics are covered, such as having access to a clean uniform and check equipment and resources are available and in good working order prior to assessment.
- Remember fundamental customer service principles such as being friendly and courteous.
- Be prepared to answer questions about the tasks you are completing – what you are doing and why.
- Ensure that the practical assessment can start on time be being prepared and organised.

- Be aware that unexpected situations can occur during practical tasks. Practice working on wider skills such as keeping calm and focused. It may be useful to write a list of scenarios that could go wrong during the observation and what possible solutions there are for you to implement.

## How will the practical observation with questions be graded?

To achieve a pass, the apprentice must achieve ALL of the pass descriptors for this method of assessment through their performance in the observation and their question responses.

To achieve a distinction, the apprentice must achieve ALL of the distinction descriptors for this method of assessment through their performance in the observation and their question responses.

Please refer to Table 3 for the pass and distinction descriptors for this method of assessment.

**Table 3: Practical Observation with Questioning Pass and Distinction Grading Criteria**

Pass Descriptors
Demonstrates resolution of a range of complex customer service issues, explaining the approach used and why, demonstrating accountability throughout.
An ability to assess at least 3 different customer types and their role of emotions in order to achieve a successful outcome for them.
Demonstrates through advanced questioning, listening, and summarising, the negotiation of mutually beneficial outcomes.
Demonstrates management of challenging and complicated situations, balancing organisational needs and customer satisfaction.
An ability to assess situations and offer clear explanations, options and solutions that balance customer and organisational requirements
Ability to react appropriately to customer emotions and bring about a successful outcome for different customer types.
Evidences knowledge of how customer expectations can differ between cultures, ages, and social profiles.
Recognises when customer emotions have been affected by the level of service offered.
Demonstrates an understanding of current legislation, compliance and regulatory guidance and their impact on customer service delivery.
Demonstrates how they adapt their communication style to clearly and concisely communicate complex information to customers to support positive outcomes.
Evidences when they have maintained a positive relationship even when they are unable to deliver the customer's expected outcome.
Evidences how they recognise when customer expectations are not met and demonstrates how, using appropriate communication techniques, this could be managed to maintain a positive relationship.
Demonstrates when and how historical interactions, challenges and related information are taken into account in determining the next steps, when managing referrals and escalations.
Shows proactivity and creativity when identifying solutions to customer and organisational issues.
Demonstrates identifying, negotiating, and agreeing appropriate options with customers, making realistic commitments, and delivering on them in line with organisational policy and procedures.
Demonstrates achievement of results through effective teamwork and collaboration with colleagues at all levels.
Shows adaptability of own skills when working with internal customers.

Pass Descriptors
Demonstrates adaptability and flexibility in working towards meeting customer needs, supporting equality, diversity, and inclusion in their customer service delivery.
Evidence to show how their personal presentation made a positive impact on their organisation's brand.
Demonstrate brand advocacy, values and belief when dealing with customer requests to build trust, credibility, and satisfaction.
Demonstrates how they analyse, use, and present a range of information in order to provide customer insight.
Distinction Descriptors
Demonstrates own communication with customers that ensures the best solution to meet customer requirements and organisational needs.
Demonstrates when they provided additional solutions to customers and made recommendations based on their findings to enable improvement.

### Assessment Method 3 – Work Based Project, supported by an Interview

#### Key facts about the work-based project and interview

The work based project is a written report, produced by the apprentice on a project they have carried out.

The subject should cover a specific high-level challenge (such as a complaint or difficult situation) that the apprentice has dealt with explaining what it was, what actions (planning and execution) they took, what solutions were offered, details of any recommendations made to change a policy or process and any feedback from the customer. Details should also include the apprentice's responsibilities and results.

The **written report** must be **2500 words** (+/- 10%), excluding annexes. All work on the project will be undertaken **following the Gateway** process over a **two-month period**.

The report should contain annexes that are attributable to the apprentice and the actions they took. Example evidence could be emails, letters, meeting notes, call logs, workflow documents or feedback.

The work-based project will be supported by an interview between the apprentice and the independent assessor.

The **interview** will last for **60 minutes** (+/- 10%) and will focus on the written project and any supporting annexes.

The apprentice will be asked 10 competency-based questions in the interview.

#### What is the format of the work-based project?

The subject of the project report will **be agreed with PAL at the EPA planning meeting**, with guidance from the employer in order to allow them to comment on appropriateness for their business. PAL must make the final decision to ensure consistency.

The employer must ensure the apprentice has sufficient time and the necessary resources to plan and undertake the research and produce the written report.



The written report must be **2500 words** (+/- 10%), excluding annexes. All work on the project will be undertaken **following the Gateway process over a two-month period.**

Apprentices must submit their written report to PAL at least 2 weeks prior to an interview date. This date will be agreed at the planning meeting.

The assessment plan does not stipulate the structure of the project. PAL has provided some guidance and a project report template that the apprentice can use if they choose to. The template is available from the Customer Service Specialist ST0071/AP02 Padlet.

The project should be submitted with a mapping document. PAL's project template includes a mapping table, or the apprentice can choose to use their own format.

It is not required that the apprentice uses the following project structure, it is for guidance only:

Suggested Structure	Suggested Content	Potential Coverage of Knowledge (K) and Skills (S)
<b>Introduction</b>	Introduce your work-based project to include detail of the current situation and the 'challenge' (for example the complaint or difficult situation). It is recommended that you use the introduction to set the scene and provide any required background information, this can include any abbreviations or workplace specific language which may require explanation.	<p>Explore and interpret the customer experience to inform and influence achieving a positive result for customer satisfaction. (S)</p> <p>Understand the underpinning business processes that support you in bringing about the best outcome for customers and your organisation. (K)</p> <p>Understand your business environment and culture and the position of customer service within it. (K)</p>
<b>Objectives</b>	Provide detail of the objectives for your work-based project, what are you aiming to achieve? These should be SMART.	
<b>Research</b>	Provide detail of the research you have completed for your work-based project. This could include the methods of gathering the feedback, reasons for selection, data validation, data analysis and evaluation.	<p>Proactively gather customer feedback, through a variety of methods. Critically analyse, and evaluate the meaning, implication and facts and act upon it. (S)</p> <p>Analyse your customer types, to identify or anticipate their potential needs and expectations when providing your service. (S)</p> <p>Analyse the end-to-end service experience, seeking input from others where required supporting development of solutions. (S)</p> <p>Understand your organisation structure and what role each department needs to play in</p>

Suggested Structure	Suggested Content	Potential Coverage of Knowledge (K) and Skills (S)
		delivering Customer Service and what the consequences are should things go wrong. (K)
<b>Findings and decisions</b>	Provide a summary of your findings and decisions from your research. This could include justification of decisions based on the analysis and evaluation of the research completed.	<p>Demonstrate a continuous improvement and future focussed approach to customer service delivery including decision making and providing recommendations or advice. (S)</p> <p>Understand the principles and benefits of being able to think about the future when taking action or making service-related decisions. (K)</p> <p>Understand and critically evaluate the possible journeys of your customers, including challenges and the end-to-end experience. (K)</p>
<b>Recommendations and Conclusions.</b>	Outline your final recommendations and conclusions from your work-based project.	<p>Make recommendations based on your findings to enable improvement. (S)</p> <p>Make recommendations and implement where possible, changes in line with new and relevant legislation, regulations, and industry best practice. (S)</p> <p>Understand your organisation's current business strategy in relation to customers and make recommendation for its future. (K)</p> <p>Understand what continuous improvement means in a service environment and how your recommendations for change impact your organisation. (K)</p>

### What is the format of the interview?

The 60 minute interview (+/- 10%) will consist of 10 questions. The interview will take place between the apprentice and the independent assessor and will focus on the written project and any supporting annexes provided.

Independent assessors must use the question bank devised by PAL as a source for questioning and are expected to use their professional judgment to tailor those questions appropriately. Independent assessors are responsible for generating suitable further questions in line with PAL's training and standardisation process. The questions relating to underpinning knowledge, skills and behaviours must be varied yet allow assessment of the relevant knowledge, skills, and behaviours.

## How can the interview be undertaken?

The interview can be conducted using a range of media, as appropriate for the apprentice, either via online video conferencing or face to face. Remote assessment is the preferred option.

It is the responsibility of the apprentice, employer, training provider and PAL to ensure accessibility where required. The interview must be undertaken in a controlled environment (a quiet area, free from distractions and influence) and the apprentice will be assessed on a one-to-one basis to the independent assessor.

Where the assessment is conducted using technology, fair assessment conditions must be maintained. Acceptable means of remote assessment include video conferencing/video calling and must include a two-way visual and audio link. The video call will be recorded and submitted by the independent assessor for internal quality assurance.

Where the assessment is completed face to face, the independent assessor should complete a digital recording<sup>3</sup> of the presentation.

## How can a Customer Service Specialist apprentice prepare for the work-based project and interview?

- Review the grading criteria for this assessment method.
- Work with their training provider and employer to identify potential projects that are suitable for the work-based project assessment. Please note – the project **cannot be started before the apprentice has passed through Gateway** and the subject of the project has been agreed by PAL.
- Ensure sufficient time to complete all work on the project, post gateway and within a two-month window.
- Complete a practice interview assessment with feedback from their training provider.
- Check that the presentation is sufficient to meet the topic and criteria for assessment.
- Proofread written work to check for errors and mistakes, as well as for a 'sense check'. Is appropriate language used? Is correct terminology used?
- Ensure that, if technology is being used to present, that it is available, and they are competent in its use.

## How will the work-based project and interview be graded?

The independent assessor will grade the work-based project and interview holistically as fail, pass or distinction using the grading criteria in Table 4.

To achieve a pass, the apprentice must achieve ALL of the pass descriptors for this method of assessment through their performance in the observation and their question responses.

To achieve a distinction, the apprentice must achieve ALL of the distinction descriptors for this method of assessment through their performance in the observation and their question responses.

Please refer to Table 4 for the pass and distinction descriptors for this method of assessment.

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<sup>3</sup> Note in exceptional cases, PAL may allow an apprentice to be exempt from a digitally recorded professional discussion; a written record would still be required. Any exemption would need to be agreed at the assessment planning meeting and be subject to PAL's special considerations and reasonable adjustment policy

**Table 4: Grading criteria for the Work-Based Project and Interview**

Pass Descriptors	Distinction Descriptors
Evidence that they understand the impact of the organisation’s mission statement and business strategy on customer service delivery and make recommendations for future improvements.	Evidence to support their research and analysis of customer service standards and mission statements of other organisations, in comparison to their own organisations, to inform their recommendations.
Ability to recommend improvement to the customer service provision, the steps required to implement this change and the benefit this change could have on the organisation and their own role.	Ability to consider the possible impact on their organisation of not considering the future in decision-making.
Demonstrates an understanding of customer journeys within their organisation and how these are managed to ensure successful outcomes.	Demonstrates how knowing their customer and their needs has a direct impact on: a. their working practices b. organisational policy/procedures.
An understanding of the underpinning business processes that support them on bringing about the best outcome for customers and their organisation.	Ability to demonstrate the importance of assessing the political, economic, social, technical, legal, and environmental factors that influence the operation of their organisation.
Provides evidence to show how they identify information which can be used by their organisation to provide customer insight and identify how this information can be analysed, used, and presented.	Ability to identify and recognise when problems reoccur and discuss these reoccurring problems with others and recommend appropriate change(s).
Ability to discuss the internal and external factors influencing their business environment and culture.	Provides evidence to show when they analyse the risks and opportunities to implementing change.
Evidences knowledge of the departmental roles/functions within their organisational structure and their influence in customer service delivery.	Evidences when they evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of feedback methods used and recommended alternative methods likely to improve results, stating reasons for choice.
Evidence of how they demonstrate the importance of effective communication among departments in providing good customer service.	Evidence to show when they have proactively gathered customer feedback, through a variety of methods and used alternative recommendations to change the customer service level agreement in order to provide an improved service.
Ability to identify potential causes of service failure and the consequences of these.	Demonstrates an ability to identify trends/recurring issues and analyse why they occurred and record possible ways of addressing them to ensure they do not reoccur.
Evidences when they made decisions and recommendations to improve their own customer service delivery.	
Demonstrates how they communicate with customers, gaining full information on their experience, and recommend improvements to customer service delivery to others.	
Evidences how they proactively seek and gather customer feedback through a variety of methods and evaluate this feedback to make recommendations on possible improvements.	
Ability to gather and analyse information about the types of customers their organisation has and explain how the	

Pass Descriptors	Distinction Descriptors
service they provide meets their potential needs and expectations.	
Evidence to show how they use the qualitative and quantitative customer experience data that their organisation gathers.	
Evidences the way in which they analyse this data to recommend continuous improvement, showing when there is input from others where required.	
Demonstrates how they take into consideration current legislation, compliance and regulatory guidance when making recommendations for change.	

## Section 6

### Fails/resits and retakes

PAL's Resit and Retake policy and pricing policy are available on request. The request can be made by contacting the account management team via email on [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk).

The apprentice, employer and training provider will be advised of the outcomes, and our policy works on the specific standard assessment plan's requirements regarding resits and retakes.

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating which applies to assignments or other types of written or recorded work completed by apprentices, where the work is meant to have been produced independently and be of their design. Plagiarism is the substantial, unacknowledged incorporation into an apprentice's work of materials derived from published or unpublished work by another person.

PAL takes all incidents of plagiarism seriously, especially those incidents which are a determined and deliberate attempt by the apprentice to gain marks for an assignment/project/report without having done a substantial portion of the work themselves. Copying of work can include work from external published sources, as well as that of other apprentices and work colleagues.

PAL's plagiarism and cheating policy can be accessed on the PAL website or by request to [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk)

### Appeals, complaints, maladministration, and malpractice policies - centre/candidate

Where apprentices are unhappy with the results of their end-point assessment, the customer (either the employer or training provider) can enquire about the results. An enquiry means that PAL will invoke its Appeals and Disputes policy and procedure. Please refer to our latest emails.

To make an appeal, please contact: [epaappeals@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:epaappeals@professionalassessment.co.uk)

To declare a conflict of interest, please contact: [declaration@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:declaration@professionalassessment.co.uk)

To report a case of malpractice or maladministration please use one of the following addresses:

- If it relates to the EPAO, please contact: [epamalpractice@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:epamalpractice@professionalassessment.co.uk)
- If it relates to the apprentice, please contact: [apprenticemalpractice@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:apprenticemalpractice@professionalassessment.co.uk)
- If it relates to the employer or training provider, please contact: [eitpmalpractice@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:eitpmalpractice@professionalassessment.co.uk)

Note - access to these emails received under these addresses is restricted to personnel involved in compliance checks.

In the event of an appeal against the grade awarded PAL will carry out a further review of the evidence to confirm or modify the grade in line with their standard procedures.

Maladministration generally refers to a system or administrative mistake or failure, which has the potential or does not affect the assessment process and as such is reportable.

Malpractice is a grave offence and where proven will result in immediate sanctions, disciplinary action and possible dismissal and notification to the regulator, notifying them of the malpractice and action taken. Malpractice is the

term applied to any intentional and planned act to alter an assessment or quality assurance decision by changing/removing/not recording accurately or augmenting information.

PAL's Maladministration and Malpractice policy can be accessed on the PAL website or by request to [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk)

### Reasonable adjustments/considerations/adaptations

Where reasonable adjustments have been requested, the assessor at the assessment planning meeting will finalise any such arrangements. Discussions regarding a reasonable adjustment request should be made at registration and discussed with the EPA team.

It is the responsibility of the training provider or employer, acting on behalf of the apprentice, to make such requests.

Special considerations in respect of the assessment process will be applied, where it does not provide any fair or unfair advantage to the individual apprentice and subsequent assessment outcome and in line with PAL's policy.

PAL's Special Considerations and Reasonable Adjustment policy is in place to ensure fair access to assessment and can be accessed on the PAL website or by request to [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk)

### Certification

PAL will request the apprenticeship certificate for successful end-point assessments using the apprenticeship service portal. PAL does not certificate the apprenticeship standard; its role is to request the certificate.

PAL will provide information and reports to the relevant regulator and funding body, in line with their conditions, and as and when requested. Notification to these bodies includes successful achievements and completion. Incomplete assessments are recorded.

Certification requests are made by the EPAO, and the current process is the certificate is sent to the named employer. Employers must advise the EPAO of any specific location or person the certificate should be sent to if this information differs from the apprentice's workplace location and employer contact details provided on the EPAO's booking system.

Cancelling or rescinding results - PAL reserves the right to cancel results if malpractice is identified.

### Validity, Authenticity, Relevancy, Currency, and Sufficiency

The evidence presented must meet VARCS requirements.

- **Valid** - is the evidence appropriate to demonstrate the particular knowledge, skills and/or behaviours that it is intended to cover?
- **Authentic** - is the evidence proven to be the apprentice's own work; have any work products or witness testimonies been appropriately authenticated?
- **Relevant** - Is the evidence relevant to the particular knowledge, skills and/or behaviours that it is intended to cover and has a clear judgement?
- **Current** - does the evidence relate to the on programme element of the apprenticeship and does it demonstrate current competency?
- **Sufficient** - does the evidence match the level of the apprenticeship standard and is the relevant standard covered in full?

*PAL will require all apprentices to sign statements of authenticity etc.*

## Glossary of Terms

**EPA** – end-point assessment.

**IA** - independent assessor.

**Employer** – A representative from the employer, this is usually a direct line manager, head chef or appropriate nominate representative who has supported the apprentice during their apprenticeship.

**Gateway review** – A meeting involving the apprentice, employer and on programme trainer where the readiness for end-point assessment is determined.

**Planning meeting** – A meeting involving the apprentice, employer and end-point assessor where the end-point assessments are clarified and planned.

**PAL** – Professional Assessment Limited.

**IQA** - Internal quality assurance/assurer, the department and/or personnel who are responsible for the quality of end-point assessment internally to Professional Assessment.

**EQA** – External quality assurance/assurer, the independent external body who are responsible to regulate the quality of end-point assessment plans, standards, and administration of assessment.

**Standardisation/moderation** – Activity completed by end-point assessors to support validity and fairness in end-point assessment decisions.

**Special considerations** – Any permanent or temporary disability, specific learning needs or medical condition which may require support during end-point assessment.

**Reasonable adjustments** – Adjustments made to the assessment process in relation to special considerations, which do not provide an unfair advantage to the apprentice but are designed to reduce any disadvantages within assessment.

**Assessment plan** – The document produced by the employer group, approved by the EQA which documents the requirements of the standard and assessment methods.



## Appendix One – Example Gateway Declaration Record Customer Service Specialist ST071/AP02 Level 3

### Guidance notes

Determining the readiness of an apprentice for the independent end-point assessment phase of their programme is a very important milestone. A formal review must be held and must include all the relevant people that have responsibility and accountability for the completion of the apprenticeship: the line manager (or a senior manager, as appropriate to the business), the training provider and the apprentice.

The Gateway Declaration Record must be completed once the line manager and training provider have discussed their views on the progress the apprentice has made. The record has been designed to ensure all essential information is captured in a standardised format. If there is additional information which the line manager and/or training provider wish to add supplementary space has been provided.

Completion of this Gateway Declaration Record confirms that the employer and training provider is satisfied the apprentice has fulfilled all requirements to apply for end-point assessment.<sup>4</sup>

All evidence requested must be provided. If the Gateway requirements below are not met, the Gateway request will be rejected.

All information received will be processed as per GDPR requirements and as detailed in Professional Assessment Ltd.'s (PAL) Data Protection Policy and Data Privacy Notice.

Please ensure the apprentice's name is spelled accurately as this is how it will appear on the results statement/certificate.

<b>Apprentice Name</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.	<b>Apprentice Contact Number</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>Apprentice ULN</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.	<b>Apprentice Email Address</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>Line Manager Name</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.	<b>Line Manager Contact Number</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>Employer Organisation</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.	<b>Line Manager Email Address</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>Training Provider Name</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.	<b>Gateway Review Date</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.
<b>Start Date of Apprenticeship</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.	<b>End Date of Apprenticeship</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.
<b>Has the minimum apprenticeship duration of 12 months been met, as defined in the ESFA funding rules?</b>			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

### Section 1: Confirmation of Evidence

All requirements listed below must be uploaded to EPAPro at point of submitting the apprentice to gateway. Apprentices will not be permitted to proceed to their end-point assessment until all evidence is uploaded and approved by PAL.

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to the latest ESFA funding rules guidance.

Requirement	Achieved by the apprentice	Evidence provided (e.g., PLR, certificate, statement of results)
Maths Level 2	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.
English Level 2	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Click or tap here to enter text.

### Gateway Review Outcome

If the apprentice is ready for end-point assessment, the following declaration must be signed by all parties and the Gateway Declaration Record submitted to PAL via EPAPro.

Should the apprentice not be ready for end-point assessment a period of additional training and preparation must take place.

## Section 2: Declaration

The end-point assessment period should only start once the employer is satisfied that the apprentice is consistently working at or above the level set out in the occupational standard, that is to say they are deemed to have achieved occupational competence. In making this decision, the employer may take advice from the apprentice's training provider, but the decision must ultimately be made solely by the employer.

### Employer and Training Provider Declaration

I confirm the evidence has been reviewed and a Gateway meeting has taken place with the apprentice, employer, and training provider to confirm the apprentice's competence and readiness for end point assessment.

I confirm that the apprentice has developed, demonstrated, and achieved the required level of occupational knowledge, skills, and behaviours to satisfy the Gateway requirements in their workplace.

I confirm that the apprentice is eligible for end-point assessment by undertaking the required training in line with the specific Apprenticeship Standard's requirements, including on and off the job training and experience to meet the full breadth and depth of the Apprenticeship Standard.

Employer		Training Provider	
<b>Name</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.	<b>Name</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>*Signature</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.	<b>*Signature</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>Date</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.	<b>Date</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.

\*Supporting evidence to be submitted for electronic signatures, e.g., email confirmation, voice recording.

### Apprentice Declaration

I confirm my readiness for the end-point assessment has been discussed with my employer and training provider.

I confirm I am aware of the requirements of the end-point assessment.

I give PAL, as the end-point assessment organisation, my consent to claim the apprenticeship certificate on my behalf on successful completion of the end-point assessment.

<b>Name</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>Signature</b>	Click or tap here to enter text.
<b>Date</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.

<b>Any reasonable adjustments required? Please detail below and include any supporting evidence</b> State N/A if not applicable
Click or tap here to enter text.

<b>Please note any other pertinent information, as a result of the Gateway review, which has not been recorded elsewhere, but has a bearing on end-point assessment readiness or end-point assessment scheduling</b>
Click or tap here to enter text.