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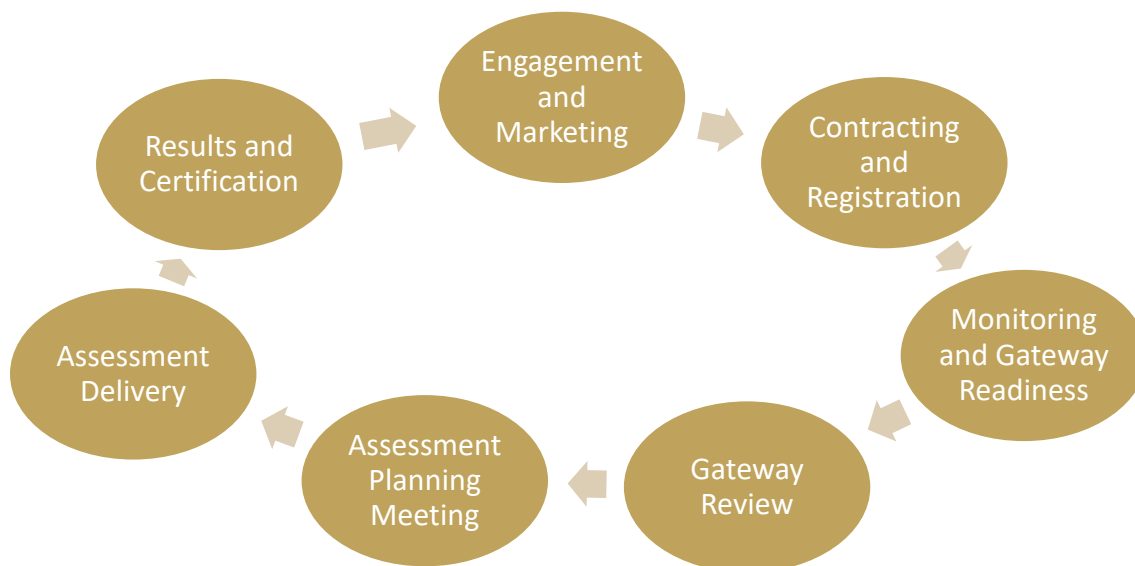
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Overview

This document provides the details of the administrative processes for our end-point assessment service. The assessment plan for each apprenticeship standard provides a guide for an EPAO in respect of how the endpoint assessment should be administered. Professional Assessment Limited (PAL) in its applications to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for EPAO status, details how the assessment will be administered, this includes updates for assessment plans and standards that have been subject to a revision.

In respect of the regulatory body (Ofqual) PAL submits applications for the widening of our offer (this involves adding to our Ofqual list of qualifications, apprenticeship standards we are already approved for on the ESFA/EPAO register). PAL, as identified in our business plan reviews its portfolio of standards on a regular basis and identifies new standards it wishes to add to its portfolio, and this results in an expansion of our offer and the need to apply to Ofqual initially for approval and then make a submission to the ESFA.

The following diagram details the overarching approach to assessment administration, for specific standards, we follow these principles and adapt where necessary to comply with the assessment plan.



Engagement and Marketing

All parties should refer to the latest ESFA Funding Rules regarding EPAO engagement¹. The rules note that dialogue with the desired EPAO must commence at least six months before the planned end date of the apprenticeship. To reflect this ruling the training provider acting on behalf of the employer, or where the employer retains their right to make the EPAO selection must both select and negotiate the price with the EPAO of their choice at least six months before the apprentice reaches their gateway review².

Market Research (Business Operations Director and team)

- Weekly review of the ESFA apprenticeship service portal for pipeline information <https://assessors.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/>
- Monthly analysis of ESFA data releases for any additional information on apprentice volumes and providers (this is due to a time lag between data releases and it appearing in the apprenticeship service portal) <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-apprenticeships>
- Monthly check of the ESFA Register of End-point Assessment Organisations <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-of-end-point-assessment-organisations> and the find an EPAO service <https://find-epao.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/> (to retain an oversight of competitors)
- Feedback from employers, apprentices, and providers to enable continuous improvements to our engagement and marketing tools
- Provider Pipeline and discussions with Providers and Employers indicating business activities
- epaPRO registered apprentices to look at referral patterns
- The PAL Board will also review such data and information as part of PAL's business planning reviews and budgetary forecasts.

Roles and Responsibilities

Relationships (Business Operations and team)

- Build on, and maintain ongoing relationships with employers and providers to facilitate pipeline planning
- Develop new business through sales activities, attracting new clients
- Develop new business through sales activities, with existing clients
- Maintenance and updating of prospects and new enquiries
- Maintenance and updating of clients/partners requirements

Additionally, the Director of Audit and Compliance, Managing team Director, and Qualifications Director, engage with relevant stakeholders, prospective and current clients, to maintain positive working relationships
Marketing Communications (Business Operations team and Resource Development)

The Business Operations team and Resource Development team are responsible for the maintenance, to include content compilation, maintenance, accuracy, and compliance of all external facing communications, to include information posted as social media posts, information on the PAL website and Padlets³. Additionally, the teams are responsible for ensuring that various agencies PAL engages and interfaces with, have accurate and current information about PAL as a business and to check registers and search functions such as find an EPAO, have the correct details.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules> -please note as of the 1st of August 2023, the new rule permits the Training Provider to select the EPAO, unless the Employer has an express wish to make the decision of which EPAO to engage

² Note PAL is aware there are circumstances where the six month ruling may be difficult to facilitate, as an employer and or training provider may wish to move quickly if transferring from one EPAO to another.

³ Padlets are on-line multi-media libraries used by PAL to disseminate apprenticeship standard support and guidance information

- PAL's website <https://professionalassessment.co.uk/end-point-assessment/>
- Ensuring that all end-point assessment and contact details are correct and available on the following:
 - Find and EPAO service <https://find-epao.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/>.
 - The ESFA approved register for providers and EPAOs (APAR)⁴
- Posts on our LinkedIn page <https://www.linkedin.com/company/professionalassessment/>
- Posts on our Twitter account <https://twitter.com/ProfAssessment>

To ensure openness and transparency, the PAL website contains the following information, and the content is overseen by the PAL Business Operations Director⁵.

Overview of website content

- Apprenticeship Standards PAL is approved to deliver EPA, the information relating to each apprenticeship standard will include Standard title, code, level, maximum funding, typical duration for the apprenticeship programme, EQA provider
- EPA price/fees (Condition F1)
- How to contact PAL (email and free phone)- information replicated on Padlets
- A summary of gateway requirements
- The EPA process (a flow chart from gateway to certification) <https://professionalassessment.co.uk/assessment-process/>
- A summary of end-point assessment activities

Standard Specifications

This information is supported by fact sheets for each standard, alongside an apprenticeship standard specification Specifications per standard we end-point assess (Ofqual condition E3) – available for download from the website.

The specification provides:

- An overview and introduction to the Standard, EPA, and PAL
- The qualification objective
- Preparing and apprentice for EPA
- EPA planning and scheduling
- The language of the assessment (Condition G3)
- Reasonable adjustments and special considerations (Condition G6 and G7)
- The gateway and pre-requisites for end-point assessment, such as qualification requirements, duration, employer confirmation, requests, and confirmation of reasonable adjustments for EPA

Please note that, in relation to Ofqual condition E10, Prior Learning, PAL delivers EPA in accordance with the assessment plan for all apprentices regardless of prior learning, and as such prior learning is not recognised / does not change or impact the delivery of our end-point assessment service

- Details of the EPA methods and the knowledge, skills and behaviours that will be assessed
- Details of the conditions required for each assessment (condition G8)
- Details of the grading and marking schemes, in accordance with the associated assessment plan
- Details of who carries out the assessment
- Details of Resits and retakes
- Details of quality assurance arrangements
- Details of external quality assurance arrangements
- Details of Appeals complaints, malpractice, and maladministration
- Details of Results and certification
- The Policy Page provides access to PAL's essential policies to include:

⁴ Note registers and search engines overseen by DfE and ESFA have recently been revamped and integrated

⁵ The website is hosted and managed by Gap Creative

- Appeals and Enquiries
- Complaints
- Conflict of Interest
- Customer Service Statement
- Data Privacy and Protection
- EDI Policy
- Maladministration and Malpractice
- Special Considerations and Reasonable Adjustments
- Sanctions and Withdrawals
- EPA Manual
- Quality Assurance Manual for Employers and Providers



Marketing activities also include direct marketing to providers and employers through the attendance of conferences, events, relevant forums and round table events and awards and celebration ceremonies. Any marketing materials will be approved by the BOD and any webinar/information briefings are reviewed by the Resource Development team, to ensure suitability and are delivered by persons who are sufficiently experienced in the topic and subject matter, but who are not actively involved in assessment delivery for a specific standard or standards.

PAL produces a newsletter for those stakeholders who opt in to receive such updates and the newsletter is authored by the BOD.

In respect of presenting apprenticeship standard information and to ensure compliance with Ofqual conditions of recognition E2, we will ensure the use of the following titling protocol on official documentation, such as the results statement: EPAO name, apprenticeship level, end-point assessment, standard number, and standard name. For example: Professional Assessment, level 2 End-point assessment for STO233 Hospitality Team Member. On unofficial documents, the information will be readily available but may not be presented in that order. PAL will comply with the Ofqual conditions (B5.3) regarding the use of their logo and conditions B5.1 and B5.2 in respect of how we communicate our offer and services.

Contracting and Registration

PAL records an assessment enquiry and potential registration from the point that an employer, or a training provider contacts us. Contact by an employer or training provider can be made via a Freephone number; info@ email and via our website and the inquiries are logged on our EPA enquiry list, which is maintained by the Business Operations Director (BOD)⁶. The Business Operations Director, supported by the EPA team handle all initial enquiries and contacts, logging outcomes of enquiries and undertaking all follow-ups and meetings, briefings as required by the prospective client.

PAL's epaPRO system will be updated on agreement of contracts and client information can be accessed via this system, by named PAL personnel. The system has various levels of access rights, to ensure the right PAL personnel access only the information and data they require to perform their part of the engaged service.

PAL's BOD and or EPA managers as part of the contracting process, will in their discussions acquire information about the client, and from the information acquired determine if the client presents as a risk and in discussion with the PAL Board agree whether contracting should proceed and if it does what measures should be in place to mitigate any concerns. Checks on clients can include company information, media checks and credit checks, as well as checking reports in the public domain such as OFSTED reports or relevant and appropriate regulatory body checks.

⁶EPAPro continues to be updated with new features to support assessment planning, scheduling and assessment tracking and monitoring.

PAL acts as the assessment centre, so it is highly unusual that an employer or provider has centre status, if and where such status exists, PAL's quality team under the guidance of the BOD and QD will undertake additional checks to ensure the organisation can safely meet their centre obligations.

Contracting (managed by the BOD and EPA team)

We operate service level contracts with providers, employer providers and in certain instances employers.⁷

The Service Level Contract covers key points:

1. Goals and Objectives
2. Scope
3. Stakeholders
4. Commencement and Duration of the Service Level Contract
5. Review periods
6. Contract of Services and Accountabilities
7. Invoicing and Payment
8. Charges and conditions of payment
9. Ownership of intellectual property
10. Confidential information
11. Data Protection and Data Processing
12. Limitation of Liability
13. End-Point Assessment Insurance
14. Resolution
15. Termination
16. Non-solicitation
17. General
18. Governing law and Jurisdiction
19. Signatures

For an employer or provider that meet 'centre' criteria an additional approval agreement is part of the contracting process, and where a centre undertakes invigilation on behalf of PAL, an invigilation service level agreement is issued.

Registration (via epaPRO and supported by the EPA Team)

PAL is capable of offering apprenticeship registration on a roll-on, roll-off basis and the registrations are updated on a daily basis.

PAL encourages early registration of apprentices with us, and we reserve the right to apply a late notification charge, for registrations less than 30 days before a due gateway date. PAL also encourages dialogue around three months prior to the assigned gateway date regarding reasonable adjustments and with the concerned parties tracks the on-going requirements of the apprentice, so any final assessments provide the adjustments that are required by the apprentice, in their current role.

Our EPA team will:

- Support the client in accessing and using epaPRO - instructions and training are provided for initial engagement and as and when updates are launched.
- Unique log-in credentials are provided

⁷ Note in August 2023 the ESFA made the Training Provider the lead for selecting an EPAO, subject to an employer's agreement and PAL now contracts with the Provider and rarely uses a MoU or agreement with employers.

- Ensure the client has access to the relevant resources via our Padlets; these can be accessed via an open link and viewed across a range of media
- Support all stakeholders through the end-point assessment service
- Provide access to our epasupportservices@professionalassessment.co.uk

All PAL senior management personnel, as well as the administration team have access to the epasupport email address, as well as the info email address and we respond to requests in line with our policies.

The registration process includes the collection of apprentice information via our secure portal EPAPro. To ensure data security we use apprentice Unique Learner Numbers (ULNs), as the principal identifier and both PAL's EPA manual and service level contract, explain the data we collect and why we collect such data. PAL will verify ID and confirm the apprentice is happy to proceed with assessments, at the apprentice assessment planning meeting.

As part of the registration, we also collect details of employer and provider premises (refer to 'additional sites statement'). This enables PAL to register the locations of where assessments may take place, and to issue specifications to ensure that the premises are suitable, for example, accessibility, site safety and security. This process also enables PAL to identify assessors based on geographical location to make the best and most effective use of resources.

To ensure effective communications we aim to collect contact details of at least two people from the employer and provider, as well as apprentice contact details. This provides added protection should staff be ill or on holiday or if there are any incidents to report and respond to, thus minimising the chances of adverse effects.

Monitoring and Gateway Readiness

PAL cannot be involved in any of the on-programme elements of the apprenticeship. However, the EPA Managers actively engage with the employer and provider during this time to ensure that all parties understand end-point assessment and can effectively prepare. This will include frequent:

- Checks on any support requirements
- Checks/monitoring/review of planned apprentice gateway dates, as they may change over the course of the apprenticeship
- Plans for the future – future apprentice pipelines
- Checks on any EPA requirements as they arise, such as reasonable adjustments
- Updates for the employer and providers, this can include updates such as assessment plans revisions
- Training and support on gateway requirements and required gateway evidence

PAL also liaises with providers to gauge apprentices' progression towards all aspects of their on-programme training, to include English and Maths attainment in line with the current ESFA conditions; these discussions indicate if an apprentice is on target to meet their planned gateway review date, or whether there is a requirement to change a gateway submission date.

Practice assessment materials are made available to all parties and as an EPAO we recommend practice assessments are undertaken prior to the gateway meeting, so the outcomes of these assessments validate assessment readiness.

Gateway Review

We recognise that the level and nature of the standard and accompanying assessment plan dictates what evidence is required from the apprentice, employer, and training provider to substantiate assessment readiness.

As an EPAO we can provide a gateway review template for our clients, however if a training provider/college has devised their own recording process, and that process is fit for purpose, we will work with their documentation. Where a provider wishes to use their own documentation for recording gateway supporting evidence, PAL will ask to review the document, to see if it is fit for purpose.

As part of the gateway review, we would anticipate the apprentice's work and competency has been fully reviewed by the employer, and main provider, and the apprentice can articulate readiness and progression made to the employer and provider, putting them forward for assessment.

All gateway evidence is uploaded to EPAPro. The gateway evidence is checked by the EPA team and marked as accepted or rejected via epaPRO, if it is rejected, a reason will be provided, to the employer/provider and it is the responsibility of the provider (unless agreed otherwise) for any additional guidance to be supplied. The EPA manual and epaPRO user information provide details regarding gateway requirements, along with the apprenticeship standard Padlets, which detail any specific requirements for gateway, pertaining to named assessment plans.

Providers and employers should use epaPRO to check the accuracy and currency of information supplied by them and processed by PAL, notifications for extra information from PAL, and assessment progress and results. The standards and assessment plans PAL are approved to deliver have no allowance for prior learning, as such PAL does not recognise prior learning and that is our policy.

Subject to the gateway review presenting valid evidence and all relevant parties confirming assessment readiness, PAL will progress to the next stage of assessment, the assessment planning meeting.

Gateway Requirements

- Completed gateway review form - should be signed/electronic signatures and dated by all parties, or email confirmation supplied, provided that all parties have agreed on readiness.
- Minimum programme duration met- as stated in the assessment plan- minimum duration is 12 months, assessment plans may offer a longer timescale as guidance
- ID confirmation
- Evidence of attainment for English and Maths in line with the ESFA/DfE requirements.
- PAL provides timely updates regarding any changes to assessment plans, assessment requirements or gateway readiness, or English and Maths requirements for all key stakeholders which can be found on standard specific Padlets. All evidence submitted should be valid and endorsed as acceptable equivalents by the ESFA.
- For those standards requiring RFQ qualification attainment or industry recognised certification, certificated evidence must be submitted at this stage⁸.
- Some assessment plans require evidence such as portfolio/projects to be submitted at the gateway stage, providers, employers, and apprentices should ensure they have checked regarding such requirements. PAL provides specific gateway guidance, via the Apprentice Standard Padlets

⁸ Note as of July 2023 IfATE have deemed a mandated qualification can be integrated into an assessment plan, as agreed by the relevant TB group, and approved by the appropriate agencies. An element of the mandated qualification will be assessed in EPA and as such will not be certificated until the EPA is completed. Some assessment plans may still require additional qualifications to be achieved prior to gateway and functional skills or equivalents at this time are still required to progress through gateway.

English and Maths

For English and Math attainment⁹ PAL requires valid and auditable evidence, typically proof of certification that demonstrates the attainment is in line with ESFA requirements, such evidence must be uploaded to epaPRO. If and where flexibilities or alternative arrangements are in place for English and maths proof of completion and evidence in accordance with the Funding rules should be provided.

PAL will follow the most current guidance regarding proof of English and Maths requirements and where policy changes occur, PAL will brief clients of what such changes mean and what changes to attainment proof if any are required. At all times PAL will only seek the required information as we do not wish to place an unnecessary burden on providers, employers, and apprentices.

If a certificate is not available, we will accept validated results (PLR) from an awarding organisation, to allow us to proceed to assessment planning. PAL will confer with the relevant regulator regarding the acceptance of validated results still for certification requests. We expect a certificate to be available.

If an apprentice has lost a certificate, we will ask them to acquire a replacement certificate from the awarding organisation/ examination body. In the case of GCSEs and A 'levels we will direct apprentices to <https://www.gov.uk/replacement-exam-certificate>.

Assessor Allocation

An assessor is assigned to an apprentice, once the gateway evidence is validated (all assessors have DBS clearance and proof of ID) and will be selected on their expertise and background.

- All assessors will have been trained by PAL prior to the delivery of the assessment
- In addition to occupational and assessment acumen and where applicable, location, assignment of the assessor will review the assessor's risk rating and confirm conflict of interest status.
- Conflict of interest checks of those involved in any aspect of EPA delivery will be undertaken in line with our policy and pertinent EPA and Ofqual's General Conditions and the ESFA, EPAO conditions for being on their approved register, and any conflicts of interest will be recorded and noted and investigated where required.
- Our conflict-of-interest policy details our approach and procedures in relation to maintaining and monitoring an independent assessment regime.

Assessment Scheduling and Assessment Planning

Assessment planning has two distinct functions:

1. To agree dates and times for the assessment
2. To discuss and confirm specific assessment arrangements and activities and any bespoke arrangements such as reasonable adjustments

Assessment scheduling and planning meetings are conducted via phone/ webinar unless PAL receives a specific request to conduct such meetings face-to face.

PAL works with providers and employers to determine the most effective scheduling of the assessment activities, in order to ensure that all assessment components can be completed within the assessment window stipulated in the assessment plan, allowing for possible resits and retakes where required. A PAL member of staff, post a satisfactory gateway submission, will contact the relevant parties to set assessment dates and these discussions are confirmed and tracked via epaPRO.

⁹ Note where any temporary arrangements/flexibilities are in place PAL will comply with such arrangements

The assessment sequencing is governed by the assessment plan requirements and PAL's specification for the specific apprenticeship standard, which is aligned to the assessment plan. Where there are no sequencing requirements, PAL will agree the most productive and beneficial assessment sequencing for all involved parties. It should be noted for on-site assessments, where possible PAL expects to undertake at least two assessment components, to make effective use of time and resources and keep any disruption to work rotas and shift planning to a minimum.

PAL suggests the apprentice and employer should allow up to 15 minutes for the scheduling meeting and up to 30 minutes for the assessment planning meeting, these times are estimates and PAL will extend such times if required, as these interactions are essential to delivering a positive assessment experience.

On rare occasions, a representative from an external organisation, typically the regulator, Ofqual will ask to observe an assessment or review the evidence of an apprentice, in such cases PAL will seek the permission of the apprentice and/or employer as appropriate, as it is not PAL's intention that an apprentice should feel they are placed under undue pressure due to additional scrutiny from another party.

Assessment Scheduling

The scheduling meeting will cover the booking of planning meeting and assessment dates for the apprentice (including if the assessments will be conducted on site or remotely), confirm any reasonable adjustments have been applied for the apprentice, and inform the apprentice of the assessor(s)¹⁰ who will be undertaking their assessments.

Assessment Planning

The assessment planning aspect of the meeting will cover the following topics:

- Confirmation of the scheduled assessments dates, location and times for assessments following the scheduling meeting
- Overview of assessment components, sequence of assessment and assessment window
- Location of assessments to include the use of a suitable, controlled environment
- Confirmation of who will receive feedback and when
- Confirm that the ESFA produce the final certificate which is sent to the employer
- Options if the apprentice fails any of the assessment activities
- Confirmation of the appeals process, complaints process and who the external quality assurance body is
- Procedures for cancellations and rescheduling of assessment to include potential additional charges
- Obtain consent for use of digital technology e.g., DVR for professional discussions (this should be parental consent for those under 18.) Note with webinar technology the assessments will be recorded
- Feedback surveys will be issued following assessment to the employer and apprentice
- Check of apprentice and employer details on EPAPro
- Check use of assessment support materials and resources and if not reviewed or used, the assessor will direct the apprentice to such resources to support EPA

The assessment dates will be populated on EPAPro, and PAL will send confirmation of the dates to all parties concerned. Any changes to the assessment dates agreed should be notified to PAL, as soon as possible, to avoid cancellation charges. PAL can be contacted via the Freephone number 0800 160 1899 or by e-mailing epasupportservices@professionalassessment.co.uk

¹⁰ Typically, it is one assessor but there are times where assessment can be split across two assessors, for example, one assessor may undertake a PD and the other undertake an observation. Where assessment is divided between assessors, quality assurance will confirm comparable, consistent practice

Note the scheduling and planning meetings can be delivered separately or be one combined event, the selection is based on clients requirements and assessor availability. The EPA team who are experienced in assessment can undertake scheduling meetings, where assessment planning meetings are undertaken by the assigned assessor.

This aspect of the meeting will typically take 30 minutes, giving the apprentice and employer every opportunity to ask questions about the assessment process and to afford the assessor the opportunity to check the apprentice and employer's understanding of essential policies, to include appeals and enquiries and special considerations and reasonable alterations and conflict of interest and maladministration and malpractice.

Ideally all clients will have accessed all the pertinent information in relation to the assessment, but we recognise that this is not always the case, so the planning meeting is a safety net check.

The planning meeting is based on the standard and assessment plan specifications, it is an opportunity to discuss assessment sequencing, ensure understanding of the process and check that the apprentice has understood all of the assessment requirements. If apprentices are required to bring briefs or supporting evidence to the assessment planning meeting, these will be requested by PAL and checked.

Where assessment tasks are to elicit naturally occurring evidence, such as an observation, timings of these assessments are thoroughly explored to ensure the apprentice has the optimum opportunity to demonstrate competence and achieve the highest grade available.

In addition to planning the assessment, this part of the meeting is an opportunity for the apprentice and employer to share with the assessor, organisational standards.

To help apprentices and employers prepare for the assessment planning meeting, PAL has checklists, tips and video guidance that are accessed via the Padlets.

The outcome of the meeting will be an agreed assessment plan, which will confirm location; date and timings to include submission dates for assignments, projects, and portfolios, where they form part of the independent assessment.

➤ **This is captured and maintained via EPAPro**

At the assessment planning meeting, the assessor will confirm that any rationales, briefs, or permissible pre-assessment activities work submitted, is that of the apprentice's and restate the penalties of cheating and plagiarism.

- Apprentices when presenting evidence such as projects and portfolios are required to sign an authenticity declaration.
- In the assessment planning meeting, the assessor will articulate and document and refer the apprentice to support resources (if not already accessed)

Apprentices, employers, and providers are encouraged to make use of the EPA manual and guidance available via the PAL Padlets, these resources are made available from the point of registration and are maintained and centrally updated, providing news, updates, and information, by PAL's resource and development team.

The assessor will confirm/explain with the employer and apprentice:

- Assessment readiness
- Purpose of authenticity checks
- Timings and submission for project proposals/menus/portfolios- selection of project /presentation titles (where applicable)
- ID of apprentice and the requirement for this to be available throughout the assessment process
- Arrangements for reasonable adjustments where agreed
- Access arrangements and confirmation regarding use of software and IT
- Dates of assessment to include timeframes for agenda updates (if applicable) and webinar links to be sent where remote assessment- cancellation charges
- Assessment components grading and provide an overview of what will be expected within each assessment, discussing opportunities and activities that will support the assessment and suitable test/assessment environments
- Timeframes for results and how issued- remind re appeals, conflict of interest and complaints policies and resits and retakes
- Confirm the apprentice gives consent for Professional Assessment Ltd to claim the completion certificate, if successful, from the Education Skills Funding Agency on their behalf

Arrangements will be logged on to EPAPro and noted in the assessment planning record which is then communicated with the apprentice and employer. . A template of this document is available on the standard specific Padlet, it has to be downloaded as a word document in order to view it.

Assessment Delivery

The delivery of the assessment will be unique to each assessment plan. It may encompass tests, observations, interviews, professional discussion, projects, and presentations, all of which will have been detailed in the specification and discussed at the assessment planning meeting.

In addition to the suite of resources PAL makes available to apprentices, employers, and apprentices, for each apprenticeship standard, we have an assessor/Quality Assurance Padlet, that are only accessible to PAL personnel. These are standard packs and contain assessment and quality assurance guidance, and assessment documentation, as well as access to PAL's standard specification and the assessment plan.

The Padlets are set up by individual standard and act as a one-stop shop for them, housing assessment plan, gateway requirements, standard specification and ensure each assessor has access at all times to the appropriate information and documents, to complete assigned assessments.

PAL adheres to the following principles of assessment delivery:

- Assessments are administered by the specific assessment plans requirements, and PAL specifications which includes assessment timeframes and assessment environments
- PAL's quality assurance processes and assessment guidance, to include grading and marking criteria and regulations for loss, late arrival or absence of evidence are followed
- Results and feedback are shared within agreed timescales and with due regards to the employer and apprentice confidentiality
- Essential policies are made available to apprentices, employers, and providers, to include appeals and enquiries, reasonable adjustments and special considerations and maladministration and malpractice and complaints policy
- Guidance is provided on the legitimate uses of information from assessments and wherever possible data and information used for research and evaluative purposes is kept anonymous

- Requests for reasonable adjustments and special considerations are processed in accordance with PAL's policy and equality of opportunity and access to assessment policies.

The PAL EPA manual provides further detail regarding the delivery of different assessment activities. The manual can be found in the apprenticeship standard Padlets, made available to all apprentices, employers and providers who select PAL as their EPAO, and is also on the PAL website.

Maintaining Assessment Security

Assessment security is a concern throughout the assessment administration, including the safeguarding of assessment results, so the appropriate and right stakeholders are advised of the outcomes at the right time.

To support confidentiality and to build confidence in our systems we have undertaken the following precautions and actions:

- All PAL personnel are briefed in the importance of commercial and assessment confidentiality, our job descriptions and service level agreements with associates and consultants and contracts of employment with employees detail acceptable behaviours and the importance of data and information security
- We ask apprentices to confirm they are happy for us to request their certificates
- We advise all relevant parties on when and how we will share assessment outcomes
- Any suspected or alleged breaches of confidentiality will be investigated
- Any alleged, suspected, and actual breaches of confidentiality¹¹ will be logged in PAL's governance reporting system, and the outcomes of any investigation recorded, and recommendations implemented- note such events will be reported to the appropriate regulator¹²
- Creation and maintenance of a conflict-of-interest policy and monitoring and reporting
- Creation and maintenance of confidentiality policy
- Confidentiality agreements- all PAL personnel are required to sign such agreements and these arrangements are supported by contracts of employment. Associates, Advisory group members and consultants. Technical advisors are also required to sign declarations that confirm they will support PAL's policies and procedures, with specific reference to confidentiality and conflict of interest and the Business Operation Director tracks the return and updating of such agreements
- PAL's confidentiality policy includes how confidentiality breaches can be detected and deterred

Where there are suspected or alleged breaches of confidentiality (including the sharing of assessment outcomes with third parties or competitors); the loss or theft assessment materials, exemplars or assessment products or inappropriately accessing third parties e-portfolio systems and copying, downloading information, and passing on to other clients) PAL will:

- Report the event to the relevant regulatory bodies
- Conduct a rigorous investigation, facilitated by the Responsible Officer with direct reporting to the Board. The Director of Audit and Compliance will as part of their risk register activities monitor any investigation and findings and update the risk register accordingly and advise the Board of any recommendations, they believe is appropriate to mitigate the risk and improve systems and processes to reduce the likelihood of the risk in the future
- Investigate that breach, to determine intent (mistake, incompetence or malicious)
- Inform all relevant parties and make available any reports and recommendations to those parties

¹¹ For any breaches regarding personal data information please see relevant policies.

¹² Breaches regarding personal data could result in PAL reporting to Ofqual and the ICO for example

Authenticity

Authenticity of assessment relates to apprentice's evidence being genuine and assessment decisions being a reliable assessment of the evidence presented. Apprentices and associated stakeholders are made aware of the consequence of copying and passing off other peoples' work as their own and as an EPAO PAL also monitor the replication or similarity of work emanating from a specific training provider or employer.

The cheating and plagiarism policy informs apprentices of the consequences of misrepresentation of evidence and as an EPAO we provide evidence on suitable referencing, in line with the standard and the level of the apprenticeship. Mitigation of authentication risks depend on the nature of the assessment methods used, for tests a robust process for invigilation can diminish the chances of test violation and our invigilation policy details our procedures.

For evidence such as projects and assignments, in addition to asking for authentication from the apprentice, as an EPAO we use a range of plagiarism software. Assessment plans that include professional discussions and competency-based interviews, also enable us to validate evidence originality and ownership.

Apprentices are asked to declare that any work they submit is their own work and at the assessment planning/scheduling meeting, the assigned assessor will confirm with the employer that the work, presented as the apprentice's is their own work and in the case of projects and presentations, fits and complies with the brief and terms of reference supplied for such assessments.

Security Considerations for On-Screen Tests

PAL's invigilation policy and supporting checklist provides instruction for undertaking test invigilation and is supported by appropriate training.

Testing Platform

PAL test platform allows PAL to efficiently manage, register, book, and track results for apprentices. The platform operates across any browser-enabled device and are cloud-based for increased availability and scalability. Invigilators are provided with log-in details which become live within a specified window, the benefits of using online testing in this way, is it avoids the issues of downloading tests, or the printing and sending of paper-based tests and the opportunity of other parties having access to questions for any extended period.

Remote invigilation is undertaken via real-time screen sharing and arrangements for reasonable adjustments are undertaken in accordance with PAL's policy.

Tests can be scheduled on demand and PAL personnel, typically the assigned assessor will invigilate the test. Results are available once the test is closed and uploaded. If PAL has granted centre status to any third party, the centre personnel will have completed declarations, received training and there will be a centre approval agreement in place. All invigilators are subject to training and conflict of interest checks and must comply with PAL's invigilation policy and procedures. Paper-based testing is exclusively undertaken by PAL invigilators

All test bookings are tracked by PAL, the tracking details apprentice name; standards; date; time test to be taken, booking and registration status and invigilator, so the PAL quality team can sample and organise test checks accordingly.

In developing our own tests, we use a standard approach to setting up a test specification and follow our invigilation policy and procedures

As an EPAO acting as an assessment centre providing multiple choice question test (MCQs) or situational judgement tests (SJTs), PAL has the following in place:

- Necessary equipment and software to facilitate secure testing, to include a range of anti-spyware and anti-malware programmes to maintain IT probity and prevent the unauthorised access to test materials and external communications during testing times.
- Required expertise and delivery support system, to include access to a range of test locations and the functionality to securely download and upload tests
- Appropriate policies and procedures
- Test guidance for apprentices that ensures they know they are responsible for inputting their ID and password and ensuring that the name of the test and their details are correct, this is also checked by a PAL agent
- Supervision guidance for tests (as detailed in the invigilation policy)

Dealing with Malpractice

PAL has a malpractice and maladministration policy detailing the process to:

- Minimise the risk of malpractice/maladministration
- Reporting
- Investigation
- Sanctions associated with malpractice or maladministration. This includes reporting to the regulator where there have been, or is a risk of, adverse effects.
- Additional policies, such as the plagiarism and cheating policy also provide supplementary details on malpractice and maladministration

Collation of Outcomes, and Reporting and Issuing of Results

Assessment reports, alongside the overall report with final grade recommendation, will be uploaded to epaPRO in accordance with agreed timelines for reporting decisions.

The reports will be accessed by PAL's quality team for quality assurance (internal verification) sampling. Internal quality assurance (IQA) reports are produced, in accordance with PAL's grading and marking, award and result policies and the relevant Ofqual Conditions of Recognition and EPA conditions. The Quality team will confirm results.

Once the completion (passes and fails) are processed by the PAL quality assurance processes, then the EPAPro system is updated.

The result of each assessment undertaken by the apprentice reflects the level of attainment demonstrated by them.

Apprentices are required to apply for their apprenticeship completion certificate (in accordance with the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009). The apprentice can specify that this be done, on their behalf, by a third party and therefore they must give PAL permission to apply for the certificate on their behalf.

Providers and employers will be kept advised of the stage of marking and certification progress via epaPRO using their log-in credentials. The PAL EPA manual and EPAPro guides additionally provide guidance regarding result processing.

Apprentices, Employers and Providers are advised of successful results through an automated notification email from epaPRO. For unsuccessful results requiring a resit or retake the apprentice, employer and training provider will be notified by PAL's EPA team, this supports discussions around suitable re-scheduling and clarifies if the apprentice will continue with EPA, or leave their programme, having not achieved their apprenticeship certificate.

PAL allows 15 working days before notifying the ESFA of the final assessment outcomes, this is to allow for the possibility of complaints, or appeals and enquiries against a decision that will require investigating.

All final grade decisions will be recorded in epaPRO under the apprentice name, with access limited to PAL personnel and the relevant parties. Providers and employers are encouraged to log-in to EPAPro to see outcomes of assessments.

Access to the relevant regulatory bodies will be granted for a specified time, to named people to facilitate technical evaluation, forum, or audit activities

Service level agreements with clients will ensure notification of the combined synoptic assessment results are communicated in a timely fashion and in accordance with contract negotiations. Where a delay in meeting any timelines as detailed in our policies is experienced, PAL will endeavour to keep all parties informed of the reason for the delay and an provide an estimated time for resolution.

Timelines for releasing results allow for all elements of the assessment to have been graded and for sampled IQA activities to have taken place, to ensure assessment reliability and sufficiency.

Further information is provided to PAL's stakeholders by the PAL EPA manual and epaPRO information and guidance provided by the EPA team.

Results Statements

Please refer to our results and awards policy

Achievement and Certification

PAL does not issue apprenticeship certificates. PAL notifies the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) of all results of completed end-point assessments and they issue certificates.

PAL's EPA team authorise, and are accountable for, all certification requests and notification of results, (post quality assurance checks by the quality team) and the following checks are made to ensure that information provided to the ESFA for the purpose of certification are accurate and match the ILR data:

- The name of the apprentice used on registration is the same name the apprentice declared they wish to be used on the certificate.
- Name of the employer/address for certification purposes
- The correct standard and specialism when applicable
- The ESFA will issue the apprentice with an apprenticeship certificate, where appropriate, on behalf of the Secretary of State.
- Apprentices are required to apply for their apprenticeship completion certificate (in accordance with the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009).
- The apprentice can specify that this be done, on their behalf, by a third party (PAL) and therefore they must give PAL permission to apply for a certificate on their behalf. Confirmation of apprentice consent is recorded in epaPRO.
- PAL applies for apprenticeship certificates using two portals/systems. It does so 15 days after issuing results to allow for any appeals, enquiries to be addressed, should they arise. Assessment results are transferred to the ESFA via EPAPro Application Programming interface (API) with the ESFA portal. Portal users and permissions regarding rights /activities associated with the portal are kept up to date.
- Replacement certificates

If PAL receives an enquiry regarding the certificate being incorrect, damaged, or lost during the delivery, PAL applies the enquiry process and follows the ESFA guidance on how to get a replacement certificate. PAL does not charge for this.

- Original certificate not received e.g., learner does not have access to employer's address anymore, business closure, the apprentice is no longer employed at the site, the postal service has been unable to deliver the certificate successfully
- Non accurate details on the original certificate - such as wrong spelling of the name
- Damaged certificate where information is not visible
- Inaccurate Result/appeals - the certificate can be revoked if the result is revealed to be inaccurate because of an appeals process
- Inaccurate result/input error- human error when claiming for the certificate to include grade and specialism for example

If the replacement certificate is requested because the apprentice has not received the certificate, the EPA team will check with the ESFA where the certificate was sent to, who signed for it and before any replacement certificate is formally requested the EPA team will ask the employer and apprentice to check again that the certificate is not at the location it was posted to. If the certificate cannot be located, a replacement certificate will be requested. The ESFA portal keeps records of the address requested and, on request, the ESFA helpdesk can provide delivery confirmation.

EPA Managers complete ID checks to ensure the person who requests the replacement is the apprentice themselves and prior to any such request being actioned.

Non-successful Apprentice completions

PAL notifies all parties of all results and the ESFA are advised of all outcomes to include fails.

Our data protection policy and approach to data collection means we only collect and use data that we need to facilitate the assessment and the recording of assessment outcomes. We report results in accordance with the latest ESFA guidance and in accordance with ESFA funding and performance management rules and the EPAO general conditions.

Resits and retakes

Our approach to re-sits and re-takes are guided by the assessment plan and reflected in our resit and retake policy. Our resit and retake policy is made available, and we recommend that Providers, employers, and apprentices refer to the relevant assessment plan for the specific information regarding resits and retakes for a named standard.

For non-achievers we ascertain if they wish to retake and if the decision is to re-take all parties are advised of the re-assessments. If the apprentice and employer decide not to retake the assessments, all parties are advised of the outcomes and with the ESFA we record the non-achievement.

Complaints and Appeals

PAL's complaints and appeals and enquiries procedures are available to all stakeholders, so if the employer, Provider, or apprentice dispute or disagree with the decision they have all of the information necessary to make an enquiry, appeal, or complaint.

PAL logs complaints and appeals and enquiries and the information collated is used for apprenticeship standard reviews and continuous improvement.

Feedback

The issue of results also triggers the apprentice and employer to a feedback survey that asks them about the end-point assessment experience.

Feedback regarding the end-point assessment is used to inform assessment processes and practices and, in some cases, we undertake case studies to provide more detail about assessment experiences, which we share with a wider audience; additionally, we receive and review unsolicited testimonials.

Monitoring/Review

PAL undertakes a range of monitoring and review activities, detailed in our Review and Evaluation policy.
Storage

All documents and information are used and stored in line with PAL's Data and GDPR policies. Data storage and location is detailed in the following table.

Both shared Drives and EPAPro have access rights set by PAL's super-users, ensuring access is available only to the relevant parties. PAL's data and GDPR policies are available via our website and our data privacy arrangements can also be found in the EPA Manual, available via our Padlets (on-line resources) which can be accessed via epaPRO.

Documents	One-Drive	epaPRO
Gateway document (submission); English and Maths evidence; (Organisational Summary- where required)		x
Assessment and Scheduling Planning record		x
Assessment Plan details (dates, location, and timings)		x
MCQ and nominal roll		x
Authenticity of work declaration		x
Apprentice certificate consent		x
Apprentice ID check and confirmation		x
Employer confirmation of competence and readiness statement		x
Assessment records, supporting evidence, mark sheets; recordings audio and webinar for each assessment component	x	x
Overall summary record (detailing all results and overall grade)		x
IQA report	x	x

Regulatory References

PAL is required to establish and maintain compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. This overview relates to Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition: Malpractice and maladministration A8; Representations regarding Qualifications B5; Complaints process D4; Requirements on qualification titling E2; Registration of learners G5; Completion of assessment under the required conditions G8; Delivering the assessment G9; Issuing Results H6.

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Person Responsible for review: Business Operations Director

This document has been agreed by Linda Martin, Managing Director