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Contents

Section 1

Overview

The end-point assessment in this specification relates to the HR Support Apprenticeship ST0239 version AP01. The apprenticeship is at Level 3 and is for apprentices who are responsible handling day to day queries and providing human resources advice ranging from recruitment through to retirement.

HR apprentices in this role are typically either working in a medium to large organisation as part of the HR function delivering front line support to managers and employees, or as an HR manager in a small organisation.

Their work is likely to include:

- Handling day to day queries and providing HR advice.
- Working on a range of HR processes, ranging from transactional to relatively complex, from recruitment through to retirement.
- Using HR systems to keep records.
- Providing relevant HR information to the business.
- Working with the business on HR changes.
- Typically, be taking ownership for providing advice to managers on a wide range of HR issues using company policy and current law.
- Giving guidance that is compliant and where errors could expose the organisation to employment tribunals or legal risk.

In a larger organisation they may also have responsibility for managing a small team. This aspect is outside the scope of this apprenticeship and will need to be covered separately by the employer. It does not form part of the end-point assessment.

The typical duration for this apprenticeship is 18 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.

Standard Title	HR Support Technician
Level	3
Standard and Version (AP) Number	ST0239 version AP01
LARS Number	191
Qualification Number	tbc
External Quality Assurance Provider	Ofqual
Duration of End-Point Assessment	4 months
Date the Assessment Plan is scheduled for review	This standard should be reviewed within 3 years of its approval date
Mandatory Qualifications within the Standard	English and maths Level 2
End-Point Assessment Methods	The EPA is designed to test the apprentice throughout the entire standard. The assessment methods used to achieve this are as follows: ➢ Consultative project ➢ Professional discussion

Introduction

This handbook contains the relevant information and guidance required of apprentices to achieve the end-point assessment for the HR Support Apprenticeship ST0239 version AP01 and should be used in conjunction with the HR Support ST0239/AP01 Padlet[1] – 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.

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[1] 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 an HR consultant or partner role, either within core HR, or diversify into one of the specialist areas of HR.

Successful apprentices may be eligible to apply for Associate membership of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) or any other professional body that recognises this apprenticeship within its membership criteria (membership is subject to the professional bodies own membership requirements).

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 prior to end-point assessment 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 if you do not know which English or maths qualifications are accepted. Evidence of qualifications must be in the form of a certificate.

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 or 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 (month 1-18) 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 formal performance management process and regular 1:1s to discuss progress in the apprenticeship, provide feedback and guide development.
➢ The training provider can support this (if required) by ensuring that the requirements of the apprenticeship are reflected in the performance management process and filling any gaps through their work with the apprentice.
➢ The training provider can also support the apprentice on understanding the learning journey, providing advice and guidance on learning strategies and tools that will support the apprentice's preferred learning style and improve their learning agility.
➢ Regular check points between the line manager and training provider (aligned with the performance management process) to ensure that the apprentice is on track and agree how any issues will be addressed.
➢ Apprentices should be strongly encouraged to create a learning record that contains examples of their learning and areas for development/action points as they go through the apprenticeship.

➢ 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 our Special Considerations and Reasonable Adjustments policy.

Section 2

How is end-point assessment delivered?

The apprentice will be assessed to the apprenticeship standard using two 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:

➢ Consultative project.
➢ Professional discussion.

The consultative project will be assessed **before** the professional discussion. The result of the consultative project assessment does not need to be known before starting the professional discussion assessment.

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.

The following chart sets out the sequences of the Gateway review and end-point assessment.

Apprentice/Employer/Training Provider		PAL
Apprentice registered with PAL prior to the Gateway review.	→	▪ ESFA advised of EPAO. ▪ EPAPro log-in credentials provided. ▪ Access to a range of assessment guidance materials available.
Gateway review held between the training provider, employer, and apprentice to confirm assessment readiness. ▪ Evidence of English and maths requirements having been achieved.	→	▪ Declaration received that the apprentice is ready for assessment. ▪ Gateway evidence received. ▪ PAL approves or rejects the Gateway evidence. If rejected, the training provider to resubmit as required.
PAL contacts employer and apprentice. PAL undertakes assessment planning meeting with apprentice and employer and the assessment schedule is agreed.	→	▪ Assessment planning completed. Dates will be agreed for both methods of assessment to meet with the HR Support Assessment Plan and to allow for reasonable resit or retake activities within the required window, wherever possible.
Apprentice undertakes the consultative project. ▪ The 3000 word (+/- 10%) project is started after Gateway and submitted to PAL a maximum of 3 months from Gateway.	→	▪ Consultative project assessment completed. ▪ Assessment graded.

Apprentice/Employer/Training Provider		PAL
Apprentice undertakes the professional discussion assessment. ▪ Professional discussion assessment must last for 60-75 minutes.	→	▪ The professional discussion should take place within 2 weeks of the consultative project being assessed. ▪ Professional discussion completed, responses to questions assessed. ▪ Assessment graded.
	↓	▪ Overall grading undertaken – IA confirms to PAL grades for all assessment elements and overall grade using grade descriptors as detailed in the assessment plan. ▪ IQA undertaken. ▪ Assessment outcome provided within the assessment window timeframe.
Employer informed of the outcome of end-point assessment via email from epasupportservices@professionalassessment.co.uk Apprentice and training provider are copied into the communication.	←	▪ 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. ▪ Assessment decision data collated and used to inform standardisations processes and quality assurance. ▪ Assessment outcome provided to the training provider and apprenticeship service. ▪ Certificate requested where a pass or higher grade for all aspects of end-point assessment are achieved. ▪ Data provided to the regulator as necessary.

Who can carry out end-point assessment?

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

➢ Have a minimum 5 years' experience working in HR, plus familiarity with the role covered by the apprenticeship.
➢ Have current CPD activity that shows they are up to date with current developments in the sector.
➢ Have technical and management expertise to ensure they can assess all areas of the standard.
➢ Attend induction training.
➢ Attend a minimum of 2 standardisation events annually.
➢ Have, maintain and be able to evidence up-to-date knowledge and expertise of the subject matter.
➢ Have sufficient resources to carry out the role of independent assessor i.e., time and budget.

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.

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. 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 HR Support Apprenticeship 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 traditional meetings or via hangouts.

IQAs may accompany or 'remote in' with independent assessors carrying out end-point assessment 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.

Section 3

Grading

All end-point assessment methods must be passed for the end-point assessment to be passed overall. Apprentices who fail one or more assessment method will be awarded an overall end-point assessment fail grade.

Apprentices must achieve at least a pass in both the end-point assessment methods to get an overall pass.

To achieve a distinction, apprentices should:

➢ Consistently exceed the standards set for the role (both what is delivered and how it is delivered).
➢ Be able to perform well in difficult situations or when under pressure.
➢ Be seen as a role model by others.
➢ Be able to work upwards as well as with peers.

The independent assessor will make the decision on the grade to be awarded to the apprentice based on their scoring of the two components of the end-point assessment, with a 50:50 weighting of the scores.

The following table shows the combination of assessment method grades to determine the overall grade:

Grade	Consultative Project	Professional Discussion
Distinction (85 to 100 marks)	Distinction	Distinction
Pass (60 to 84 marks)	Pass	Pass
Fail (59 marks or less)	The apprentice has not achieved a minimum of a pass in both methods	

The table below outlines the scoring criteria that will be applied by PAL for each assessment method, based on the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for each assessment method as set out in Appendix 1 of the Assessment Plan. For further information about how the scores are applied to individual methods of assessment, please refer to Tables 2 and 4 in Section 4 of this handbook.

Assessment Method	Fail Criteria Score of 59 marks or less	Pass Criteria Score of 60 to 84 marks	Distinction Criteria Score of 85 to 100 marks
Consultative Project	The apprentice fails to provide evidence to meet all knowledge, skills, and behaviour requirements.	The apprentice provides evidence of the required knowledge and skills with particular emphasis on: ▪ Understanding and application of HR legislation, policies, and procedures relevant to their role. ▪ Developing a clear understanding the business situation through appropriate questioning and active listening. ▪ Providing HR advice and guidance that are	In addition to the pass criteria, the apprentice provides evidence of: ▪ Demonstrating insight into the issues facing the business. ▪ Meeting challenging customer needs and delivering appropriate HR advice/guidance. ▪ Taking personal initiative to consistently exceed required standards and targets.

Assessment Method	Fail Criteria Score of 59 marks or less	Pass Criteria Score of 60 to 84 marks	Distinction Criteria Score of 85 to 100 marks
		appropriate to the business context. ▪ Building the skills of managers in dealing with HR matters.	
Professional Discussion	The apprentice fails to provide evidence to meet all knowledge, skills, and behaviour requirements.	The apprentice provides evidence of the required skills and behaviours with particular emphasis on: ▪ Demonstrating effective working relationships with customers. ▪ Showing how they have communicated effectively, using a range of media, at all required levels of the organisation. ▪ Supporting colleagues and collaborating to achieve results. ▪ Showing how they have developed themselves in the role and kept up to date with technical HR changes.	In addition to the pass criteria, the apprentice provides evidence of: ▪ Communicating effectively with people above them in the organisation, up to senior management. ▪ Working well and delivering results when under pressure. ▪ Taking a leadership role within their team when appropriate

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 include the minimum 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, the 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 apprentice. 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 **4 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. A resit does not require further learning, whereas a retake does. Apprentices should have a supportive action plan to prepare for a resit or a retake.

An apprentice who fails one assessment method will be required to resit the failed assessment method only.

If both assessment methods are failed, then the entire end-point assessment must be repeated.

The employer and PAL agree the timescale for a resit or retake.

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 **consultative project,** they will be permitted to rework their project materials before resubmitting to PAL.

If the apprentice fails the **professional discussion** a further, different professional discussion will be carried out.

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

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 consultative project assessment record.
> ➢ A mock professional discussion record with sample questions.

All sample materials can be accessed from the HR Support STO239/AP01 Padlet.

Assessment method 1 – Consultative Project

Key facts about the consultative project

The consultative project will be a **real example of work done** by the apprentice in their role that will be **completed after the Gateway, taking a maximum of 3 months.**

The project will require the apprentice to describe how they have applied their knowledge and HR related skills to deliver the services required by their role and the assessment standard.

> The project should describe a situation where the apprentice has successfully worked with a customer (internal or external) to deliver a specific piece(s) of HR advice or provide an HR solution(s) for them.

As the project will be relevant to the actual business context and role that the apprentice is performing, it may not be possible to cover all of the knowledge and skills that are expected in the project, as listed in Table 1.

If this situation arises, then a maximum of 3 of the listed components of knowledge/skills can be assessed in the professional discussion instead. A listed component is defined as is a single knowledge or skill, for example, P14 in Table 1. This must be identified when the project is scoped at the start of end-point assessment and agreed by PAL at the EPA planning meeting.

The project will be submitted to PAL for assessment on the date agreed at the planning meeting. It will be marked before the professional discussion is carried out; however, the result is **not** shared at this point.

 The professional discussion should be carried out within 2 weeks of the project being marked.

What is the format of the project report?

The project report should be **3000 words** +/- 10%. The word count does not include appendices, references, or diagrams.

The content of the project should include:

- ➢ Project objectives.
- ➢ Scope of the work.
- ➢ Description of the situation, problem, or business need.
- ➢ Methodology used.
- ➢ Information gathered.
- ➢ Findings, conclusions, and recommendations.
- ➢ Implementation plan.

Examples of typical projects might include:

- ➢ Providing advice and/or guidance to a manager and/or team on a range of HR matters from recruitment through to retirement.
- ➢ Taking a defined role in a larger project run by more senior members of the HR team.
- ➢ Carrying out analysis of HR information and producing recommendations for action.

This is not an exhaustive list.

The apprentice must complete their project and the production of its content unaided.

The apprentice and their employer must confirm that the project output(s) is the apprentice's own work when it is submitted.

PAL will use plagiarism software to check the authenticity of work.

The knowledge, skills and behaviours mapped to this method of assessment can be found in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Mapping of Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviours for Assessment Method 1 – Consultative Project

Theme	PAL Ref	Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviours (KSBs)
Business Understanding	P14	• Understands the external market and sector within which their organisation operates, the products and services it delivers. (K)
	P15	• Understands the structure of the organisation, where their role fits in the organisation; the 'Values' by which it operates and how these apply to their role. (K)
HR Legislation and Policy	P16	• Basic understanding of HR in their sector and any unique features. (K)
	P17	• Good understanding of HR legislation and the HR Policy framework of the organisation. (K)
	P18	• Sound understanding of the HR Policies that are relevant to their role. Knows where to find expert advice. (K)
HR Function	P19	• Understands the role and focus of HR within the organisation. (K)
	P20	• Understands the HR business plan/priorities and how these apply to their role. (K)
HR Systems and Processes	P21	• Understands the systems, tools and processes used in the role, including the organisation's core HR systems. (K)
	P22	• Understands the standards that have to be met in the role. (K)
Service Delivery	P23	• Delivers excellent customer service on a range of HR queries and requirements, providing solutions, advice, and support primarily to managers. (S)

Theme	PAL Ref	Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviours (KSBs)
	P24	• Builds manager's expertise in HR matters, improving their ability to handle repeated situations themselves where appropriate. (S)
	P25	• Uses agreed systems and processes to deliver service to customers. (S)
	P26	• Takes the initiative to meet agreed individual and team KPIs in line with company policy, values, standards. (S)
	P27	• Plans and organises their work, often without direct supervision, to meet commitments and KPIs. (S)
Problem Solving	P28	• Uses sound questioning and active listening skills to understand requirements and establish root causes before developing HR solutions. (S)
	P29	• Takes ownership through to resolution, escalating complex situations as appropriate. (S)
Process Improvement	P30	• Identifies opportunities to improve HR performance and service, acting on them within the authority of their role. (S)
	P31	• Supports implementation of HR changes/projects with the business. (S)
Managing HR Information	P32	• Maintains required HR records as part of services delivered. (S)
	P33	• Prepares reports and management information from HR data, with interpretation as required. (S)

How will the consultative project be graded?

To achieve a pass, the apprentice must achieve all of the pass criteria in Table 1 above.

To achieve a distinction grade, the apprentice must achieve a score of 85 – 100 from the distinction criteria as illustrated in Table 2 below, in conjunction with their score from the professional discussion assessment.

Please note, the scores in the table below will be used in conjunction with a multiplier by the IA to calculate the grade.

Table 2: Consultative Project Distinction Grading Criteria

Distinction Criteria	Grading Descriptor	Score
Demonstrating insight into the issues facing the business.	The apprentice should describe at least 2 examples of issues that may affect their business. Issues could be in relation to, but are not restricted to: ➢ External market. ➢ Products and services. ➢ Organisational structure. ➢ The unique features of HR in their sector. ➢ HR systems and processes.	1
	The apprentice should explain at least 3 examples of issues that may affect their business. Issues could be in relation to, but are not restricted to: ➢ External market. ➢ Products and services. ➢ Organisational structure. ➢ The unique features of HR in their sector. ➢ HR systems and processes.	2

Distinction Criteria	Grading Descriptor	Score
	The apprentice should expand on their explanations by providing at least 1 workplace example of an issue, explaining the risk to their business and the approach taken to tackle to the issue.	3
Meeting challenging customer needs and delivering appropriate HR advice/guidance.	The apprentice should demonstrate dealing with a challenging customer need, such as a serious or highly sensitive HR issue with support from their line manager.	1
	The apprentice should demonstrate dealing with a challenging customer need, such as a serious or highly sensitive HR issue with minimal or no support from their line manager.	2
	The apprentice should demonstrate dealing with a complex and challenging customer need, such as a serious or sensitive HR issue involving multiple staff and/or departments, with minimal or no support from their line manager.	3
Taking personal initiative to consistently exceed required standards and targets	The apprentice should show how they took a creative approach to the situation covered by their project. They should explain how this helped them to exceed the standard expected of them or the target set.	1
	The apprentice should show how their creative approach allowed them to exceed expected standards and targets throughout the project.	2
	Apprentices should show how their approach supported others to exceed standards and targets.	3

How can an HR support apprentice prepare for the project?

- ➢ Agree on a suitable project title with your employer and training provider. The apprentice chooses the project with the guidance of the employer and training provider. Remember that the project must **not** be started until after Gateway.
- ➢ Produce a time plan to ensure that the submission date can be met.
- ➢ Structure their project content as described in this guidance document and to meet the knowledge and skills required for this method of 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.

Assessment Method 2 – Professional Discussion

Key facts about the professional discussion

The professional discussion will be conducted after the independent assessor has reviewed and marked the consultative project. It will focus on the skills and behaviours specified in Table 3, together with any knowledge and skills components that have not been covered in the consultative project – a maximum of 3 that were agreed by PAL at the EPA planning meeting.

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 criteria assigned to this method of assessment. The agenda points will act as a base for the apprentice to make detailed and proactive contributions to confirm their competence. The discussion will allow the independent assessor to thoroughly test understanding through open and follow up (clarification) questions.

What is the format of the professional discussion?

The professional discussion assessment duration is **60-75 minutes**.

The independent assessor will select between **13-16 open ended, competency-based questions** from the PAL professional discussion question bank, which draw out the best of the apprentice's competence and excellence. Each question should focus on a single component of knowledge, skill or behaviour as listed in Table 3.

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 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[2] of the presentation.

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[2] 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

How can an HR support 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 60-75 minutes to support completing them within the given timescale.

Table 3: Mapping of Skills and Behaviours for Assessment Method 2 – Professional Discussion

Theme	PAL Ref	Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviours (KSBs)
Communication and Interpersonal	P1	• Deals effectively with customers/colleagues, using sound interpersonal skills and communicating well through a range of media e.g., phone, face to face, email, internet. Adapts their style to their audience. (S)
	P2	• Builds trust and sound relationships with customers. (S)
	P3	• Handles conflict and sensitive HR situations professionally and confidentially. (S)
Teamwork	P4	• Consistently supports colleagues/collaborates within the team and HR to achieve results. (S)
	P5	• Builds/maintains strong working relationships with others in the team and across HR where necessary. (S)
Personal Development	P6	• Keeps up to date with business changes and HR legal/policy/process changes relevant to their role. (S)
	P7	• Seeks feedback and acts on it to improve their performance and overall capability. (S)
Honesty and Integrity	P8	• Truthful, sincere, and trustworthy in their actions. Shows integrity by doing the right thing. (B)
	P9	• Maintains appropriate confidentiality at all times. (B)
	P10	• Has the courage to challenge when appropriate. (B)
Flexibility	P11	• Adapts positively to changing work priorities and patterns when new tasks need to be done or requirements change. (B)
Resilience	P12	• Displays energy and enthusiasm in the way they go about their role. (B)
	P13	• Deals positively with setbacks when they occur. Stays positive under pressure. (B)

How will the professional discussion be graded?

To achieve a pass, the apprentice must achieve all of the pass criteria in Table 3 above.

To achieve a distinction grade, the apprentice must achieve a score of 85 – 100 from the distinction criteria as illustrated in Table 4 below, in conjunction with their score from the consultative project assessment.

Please note, the scores in the table below will be used in conjunction with a multiplier by the IA to calculate the grade.

Table 4: Professional Discussion Distinction Grading Criteria

Distinction Criteria	Grading Descriptor	Score
Communicating effectively with people above them in the organisation, up to senior management.	The apprentice should explain how they communicate with department or team managers other than their line manager. They should explain how they ensure that their communication is effective and support their explanations with workplace examples.	1
	The apprentice should explain how they communicate with people above them, from department or team managers other than their line manager through to senior management. They should explain how they ensure that their communication is effective and support their explanations with workplace examples.	2
	The apprentice's evidence should include formal written or verbal communication with senior management, for example, presenting an update or preparing a written report for a board meeting.	3
Working well and delivering results when under pressure.	The apprentice should explain at least 1 situation in which they have been working under pressure and how they ensured that they delivered results with some guidance from their line manager.	1
	The apprentice should explain at least 1 situation in which they have been working under pressure and how they independently managed the situation to ensure that they delivered results.	2
	The apprentice should explain at least 1 situation in which they and their team have been working under pressure. They should explain how they ensured that they delivered results, including how they supported and motivated others in the team.	3
Taking a leadership role within their team when appropriate.	The apprentice should provide evidence of emerging leadership skills, for example by leading on small tasks, or by leading with support from their line manager.	1
	The apprentice should provide evidence to show how they have taken a leadership role within their team, for example by leading on a project or task with minimal support from their line manager.	2
	The apprentice should provide evidence to show how they have taken a leadership role within their team, for example by leading on a cross team project or task.	3

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.

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

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@rofessionalassessment.co.uk

To declare a conflict of interest, please contact: 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

> If it relates to the apprentice, please contact: apprenticemalpractice@professionalassessment.co.uk

> If it relates to the employer or training provider, please contact: 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

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

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 be 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 – Gateway Declaration Record for HR Support STO239/AP01

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.[3]

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.

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

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[3] Please refer to the latest ESFA funding rules guidance.

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.

Requirement	Achieved by the apprentice	Evidence provided (e.g., PLR, certificate, statement of results)
Maths Level 2	Yes ☐ No ☐	Click or tap here to enter text.
English Level 2	Yes ☐ No ☐	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	
Name	Click or tap here to enter text.	Name	Click or tap here to enter text.
*Signature	Click or tap here to enter text.	*Signature	Click or tap here to enter text.
Date	Click or tap to enter a date.	Date	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.

Name	Click or tap here to enter text.
Signature	Click or tap here to enter text.
Date	Click or tap to enter a date.

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

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
Click or tap here to enter text.