

# Results and Awards Policy

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## Overview

Award and certification is the final stage of end-point assessment and provides apprentices with proof of achievement. It can only take place once Professional Assessment Limited (PAL) quality assurance procedures have been completed. In addition to receiving a certificate as issued by the Department of Education, the apprentice's Personal Learning Record (PLR) will include the successful attainment of their apprenticeship.

The role of the EPAO is to ensure that the result of each assessment taken by the apprentice reflects the level of attainment demonstrated by them by taking into account all admissible evidence generated during end-point assessment.

## Policy Scope

This policy explains the processing of grades and results and the principles PAL follows in determining the final grade for end-point assessment activities. PAL does not award or grade any English and Maths, or mandated qualifications associated with an apprenticeship programme.

PAL's approach to quality assurance is addressed in our suite of quality assurance policies. To discuss or query the final results please refer to our appeals and enquiries policy.

This policy should be read in conjunction with PAL's:

- Resit and Retake policy.
- Malpractice and Maladministration policy.
- Sanctions policy.
- Assessment Administration and Delivery policy.

- Confidentiality policy.
- Appeals and Enquiries Policy

### *Who is this policy for?*

PAL assessors; employers; apprentices; providers; PAL Quality team; EPA Managers; Quality Manager; PAL Directors

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Establish the roles and responsibilities of the results and awards function.
- To detail how results and awards are administered.

PAL has to comply with Ofqual and APAR conditions to be an approved EPAO. The conditions from both of these bodies require PAL to have an explicit procedure for awarding and issuing results which enshrine secure and fair practices ensure confidentiality of assessment and provide a clear audit trail of how grades and results have been consistently and accurately awarded.

### *How are results and awards issued?*

Assessment reports will be uploaded to epaPRO by the assessors for the duration of the assessment (which is timetabled, to fall within the prescribed assessment timeframe as detailed in the respective assessment plan). All reports are securely held in a dedicated apprentice folder and on completion of the last element of assessment and grading, the overall summary report and results are uploaded to epaPRO by the assessor within 48 hours of the final assessment.

The reports will be accessed by the PAL quality team for quality assurance checks and confirmation of marking and grading, and accuracy of assessment reports produced, in accordance with our quality assurance policy. The quality team is responsible for ensuring the result of each assessment as undertaken by the apprentice reflects the level of attainment demonstrated by them.

Once the completions (passes, distinctions (merits where applicable) and fails) are confirmed and processed by the PAL quality assurance process the epaPRO system is updated, and the EPA team will advise the Education and Skills Funding Agency (**ESFA**) of the outcome, and the overall assessment grade via the dedicated portal.

The End-Point Assessment Lead and team (EPASS team) team have the responsibility for checking the correct outcomes are communicated to the ESFA, who are responsible for the issue of the apprenticeship certificate based on the results information provided by PAL.

Concerned parties will be kept advised of the stage of marking and certification progress via epaPRO using their log-in credentials. The PAL EPA manual and the EPASS team additionally provide guidance regarding result processing.

Unless the assessment plan stipulates otherwise (for example, a test must be passed before an apprentice can progress to other methods of assessment), component results will not be issued prior to full completion and quality assurance taking place.

All final grade decisions will be recorded in epaPRO under the apprentice name, with access limited to relevant and authorised PAL personnel and the relevant parties.

Results are released when all the assessments and records are complete and have been through PAL's quality assurance checks, PAL will not request a certificate for 15 working days post issuing the results, this provides sufficient time for interested parties to clarify, or enquire about results before formal notification to the ESFA Apprenticeship service

PAL will always endeavour to present results in the timescales agreed in our service level contracts and PAL will monitor the turnaround of results. In the event PAL cannot meet the stated timescales as indicated at the

assessment planning meeting or in issued and agreed service level contracts, PAL will keep all parties involved in the required extension for time and the reasons for this.

### **Third party access requests**

To facilitate reviews/technical evaluations/ regulatory checks, PAL will grant time-bound access to named persons of external agencies. Where administration and access rights are required by the regulator or approved agencies, PAL's Responsible Officer in conjunction with PAL's Business Operations Director will confirm such access arrangements and inform the relevant PAL personnel to facilitate such requests.

### **Certification Requests**

**Professional Assessment Limited issues results to the ESFA which will then issue the apprentice with an apprenticeship certificate, if they have been successful** and met the minimum pass requirements, as stipulated in their prescribed assessment plan.

All certification requests and notification of results and the following checks are made to ensure these are accurate:

- 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 where applicable.

PAL applies for apprenticeship certificate using two portals/systems. It does so 15 days after issuing results to allow for any appeals, enquiries to be addressed. The two portals/systems are:

- ESFA portal service – Named individuals to include the EPA Managers and Business Operations Director have unique login credentials to the portal.
- epaPRO.

The EPASS team retain a record of certification application/numbers.

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.

Consent can be granted to PAL as part of the end-point assessment planning meeting, or by submitting the PAL Apprentice Consent Form.

The apprenticeship certificate is sent to the apprentice's employer, unless there is a valid reason for sending the certificate to an alternative destination, such as a business closure, the apprentice being made redundant from the employer or has left their place of employment.

It is the responsibility of the ESFA and associated agencies to issue certificates, as an EPAO we can only provide general guidelines for certificate turnaround times and our records are of certification requests, as opposed to certificates issued.

In the case of missing or delayed certificates we will report such incidents to the Apprenticeship service and ascertain the delivery points and respond accordingly. In cases where businesses are closing or there is a real concern the apprentice may not receive their certificate, the EPA team will review where the certificate is to be sent to.

The ESFA/IfATE can introduce and endorse assessment flexibilities across a range of apprenticeship standards and discretionary assessment allowances, pertaining to named and specific apprenticeship standards. PAL regularly checks for such updates to ensure that the relevant guidance is followed and assessment and awarding of assessment is aligned to contemporary guidance.

## Results Statements

Apprentices and their have the overall result emailed to them, with the overall summary report which provides a commentary supporting grade outcome for all aspects of end-point assessment.

The provider is blind copied into the email to provide an update on results, and to ensure that the provider ILR data return is updated with the outcome/result.

Providers and employers, post the release of the result via email, will also be able to download the overall summary report from epaPRO, once the quality team have confirmed its release<sup>1</sup>. As an EPAO we are seeking to reduce the amount of email traffic and will encourage relevant parties to use epaPRO to check the progress of their apprentices through EPA. Please refer to the footnote 1

Unsuccessful apprentices will have access to feedback and employers and providers can access reports via epaPRO, and the EPA team will where requested email via epaPRO the outcomes to the relevant parties.

PAL will indicate whether a fail result indicates a resit or retake approach and advise relevant parties. The EPA team will update epaPRO noting an apprentice has gone back into a period of teaching and learning and the ESFA are notified of the fact.

The EPA team will inform the apprentice, employer and provider of the next steps and gauge whether a period of re-training is required, or if a resit is possible within the assessment window, dependant on the specific requirements of the relevant assessment plan.

In the situation that PAL is unable to publish results<sup>2</sup> within our stated timescale as detailed in our service level contracts and agreed at the assessment planning meeting, PAL will inform the relevant regulator in line with the relevant conditions.

## Revoking Results

If situations arise that call into question the validity of an awarding decision, examples of which are:

- Via an appeal or an enquiry in accordance with our Appeals Policy, or our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- An error has been made and an apprentice has incorrectly been awarded, or not awarded, a qualification (standard) achievement
- A certificate can be revoked if the result on the certificate is false because of malpractice, maladministration, or it is revealed to be inaccurate because of an appeals process

PAL will apply its relevant policies, to the situations above and the relevant governance reports will be updated accordingly for the purpose of regulatory bodies' notification and self-evaluation activities. Any results revoked will also be recorded, with reasons for any decision provided.

Where PAL determines any actions associated with the requirement to revoke a result, has the potential to cause an adverse effect, or has caused an adverse effect, PAL's responsible officer the or the deputy responsible Officer<sup>3</sup> will be notified, and they will report to the regulatory body. PAL expects and requires the full co-operation of involved

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<sup>1</sup> Please note PAL is phasing out email notifications and asking relevant stakeholders to access results via epaPRO, we will continue to provide email notification where any party has issues accessing epaPRO or requests such notification. Apprentices will continue to receive email notification

<sup>2</sup> Where this was an isolated case and all parties were advised and the delay was minimal, then PAL would not report such an incident to the regulator, however if the issue was more widespread (i.e., 10 or more apprentices and within a month and was disadvantaging the apprentice and affecting other parties businesses/activities PAL would report such an incident to the regulator

<sup>3</sup> In the absence of the RO and DRO, a member of PAL's events notification and regulation team can report to Ofqual

parties, where it is necessary to undertake an investigation to ascertain the full facts that led to need to revoke a result, in accordance with regulatory conditions.

In the situation where the initial investigation indicates others could have been affected PAL will undertake a full review and report to the relevant regulator.

In the case of flawed assessment please also refer to PAL's grading and marking policy. PAL will look to correct and amend any results, where a result and grade has been affected by a flawed assessment.

### **Sanctions**

A sanction can be applied against an organisation; site; individual provider or employer personnel or an individual apprentice or in combination. Taking a decision to apply such sanctions is not taken lightly.

PAL reserves the right to place sanctions on any of the above where it is necessary to safeguard the integrity of assessment outcomes and apprenticeship standards and to protect its interests and that of the learner/apprentice and other stakeholders.

Where sanctions are applied, they must be complied with and any agreed resolutions and action plans for improvements should be addressed within the agreed timescales. Sanctions will remain in place until PAL can be assured that the issues identified have been appropriately resolved and systems and processes are in place to avoid such reoccurrences of the event or omission.

*For further information please refer to PAL's sanction policy.*

### **Data Security**

EPA Managers and the EPA Lead and EPA team are responsible for access arrangements to epaPRO and assessment evidence and reports, creating accounts and logins for new assessors and inactivating accounts for staff members that do not complete end-point assessment activities. Such tasks are completed on a demand basis and reviewed monthly.

Any breach of data security is recorded in accordance with PAL's data protection and privacy policy and confidentiality policy. PAL's Business Operations Director and Director of Audit and Compliance review our data collection and storage protocols, to ensure we only collect the data we require to discharge our services. All assessment records are kept for a period of six years, as required by the relevant regulatory bodies.

Access to epaPRO is only granted to an employer or provider once a service level contract has been signed and received by PAL. The Business Operations Director or EPA Managers will inform the EPASS team of client details and the EPASS team will provide the provider and/or employer with an epaPRO login and user guidance.

Apprentices are identified through their ULN (unique learner number) and name. The apprentice's personal data is required to undertake administration and assessment in relation to the EPA for which the apprentice is registered. When collecting personal data or sensitive personal data, providers must ensure that the information they provide regarding data protection is, at all times, accurate and compliant with any Data Protection Laws.

### **Confidentiality of Assessments Contents**

PAL treats all end-point assessments (EPAs) in the same way as 'live' exam material and as such what we will share with apprentices, employers or providers is guided by the following Ofqual conditions of recognition.

PAL draws upon Ofqual conditions- regardless of whether or not it is an Ofqual EPA standard

- **Condition G4 links to maintaining the confidentiality of assessment material and requires us to take all reasonable steps to ensure that such confidentiality is maintained. This condition includes the restriction of sharing such materials with prohibited training parties, which will include providers, employers, and apprentices**

Whilst we appreciate employers, providers and apprentices are not asking for copies of our assessment materials, such as a copy of the Multiple Choice Question Test paper an Apprentice would complete, the nature of such assessments like Professional Discussions, which include EPA Assessors using internally devised assessment materials and or stem questions from our developed question banks put these assessments into this category. We will not provide access to full recordings, even where the request is made, with the only intention of enhancing a provider or employer's training and development offer for their apprenticeship programme.

In respect of sharing assessment recordings, PAL has to consider how the sharing of such assessment recordings could therefore lead a stakeholder to build up a sufficient bank of our stem questions, which would therefore impact predictability of assessments, which in turn could result in an adverse impact on one or more Apprentices. Screen sharing an agenda outline for a professional discussion or sharing questions for the period of assessment in this fashion PAL does permit, however the assessor will ensure that the apprentice is not in a position to screenshot such questions and will request that the apprentice makes no attempt to copy or record the questions in any format.

Additionally if an apprentice was to directly request a copy of their assessment recording we would decline such a request for the same reasons above.

PAL has an appeals and enquiry policy and process in place that supports an enquiry or appeal to be where interested and relevant parties legitimately perceive that an Apprentice's assessment has not been conducted in an unfair or biased fashion.

### ***Regulatory references***

PAL is required to establish and maintain compliance with regulatory conditions and criteria. This policy relates to Ofqual General Conditions of Recognition: Arrangements with third parties C1; Arrangements with Centres C2; Compliance of qualifications with regulatory documents D5; Maintaining confidentiality of assessment materials G4; Results for a qualification H5; issuing results H6.

Condition EPA1 Compliance with Assessment Plans and gateway requirements. Condition EPA3 Notification to Ofqual of certain events in relation to EPAs.

Date created: 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018

Last review: 16<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Next review: 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024

Person Responsible for Review: Business Operations Director

This Policy has been agreed by Linda Martin, Managing Director