

# End-Point Assessment Manual

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## General Introduction

This is version **nine** of the End-Point Assessment (EPA) Manual.

It is each stakeholder’s (third parties) responsibility to ensure that its staff involved in the provision of the EPA service familiarise themselves with the latest version of this document.

This document will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Professional Assessment (PAL) Business Operations Director (BOD), and the latest version is available via the Padlets- PAL’s online, standard specific library of resources that Professional Assessment Ltd (PAL) share with third parties. It can also be located on the PAL website in the policies section.

**The manual contains information that was up to date at the time it was produced.**

**We do not provide printed copies of this document, unless specifically requested.**

### 1. Introduction to the Manual

This document is for any customer with apprentices enrolled on an apprenticeship wishing to use the PAL EPA service. The manual provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of those parties involved in the apprenticeship programme and specifically focuses on EPA.

Where PAL<sup>1</sup> has been selected as the preferred Assessment/Awarding Organisation (AO) for a specific apprenticeship standard, PAL requires that the apprentice is registered on epaPRO (online platform utilised by PAL to manage EPA activities from registration to certification) as soon as possible and at least 90 days prior to the planned Gateway review.

Guidance for providers and employers on working with the platform is available via epaPRO in the support materials section, under the generic tab and the guides can also be found in the epaPRO user guidance section of the apprenticeship standard Padlet.

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<sup>1</sup>PAL EPAO number is 0095

## 2. Readiness

The evaluation of the apprentice's readiness for EPA should be a tripartite agreement between the apprentice, employer, and provider, however the final decision to proceed with EPA belongs to the employer.

This manual details the processes for PAL's EPA service, including:

- Assessment.
- Results and post results (including re-sits).
- Quality Assurance.

Please note registration of apprentices and booking end-point assessments are covered in PAL's epaPRO guides.

PAL's service level contract, along with pricing and invoicing policy details terms and conditions and fees.

## 3. EPA Service

PAL provides an independent EPA service across a range of approved apprenticeship standards in accordance with the published and available apprenticeship assessment plans.

PAL is approved by the relevant agencies for specified standards they offer an EPA service for, including a qualifications regulatory body where they have acquired their approval to design and deliver each named apprenticeship standard before actively enrolling or engaging with stakeholders. For most apprenticeship standards outside of higher education, the regulator is Ofqual. This means that apprenticeship standards are subject to the same conditions as any other qualification regulated by this body.

## 4. EPA Support

PAL can be contacted via:

- Free phone number 0800 160 1899.
- Inquiry email [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk)
- Website [www.professionalassessment.co.uk](http://www.professionalassessment.co.uk) which contains useful information and links to epaPRO.
- EPA support email [epasupportservices@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:epasupportservices@professionalassessment.co.uk)
- Contracted employers and providers can also access information from the epaPRO platform.



PAL endeavours to respond to all general enquiries within three working days. If we are unable to meet these response timelines a reason will be provided as to why and we will advise when a response can be expected.

PAL offers EPA services out of office hours and on weekends, where it is deemed that is the best option for the apprentice.

## The PAL Team

Role	Responsibilities
<b>Assessment Administration and Management Team-Support Services</b>	The assessment administration and management team is responsible for assessment scheduling, processing bookings, arranging the administration of assessments, handling the release of results and certifications. They support all PAL customers from the assessment scheduling stage and until the results are processed.

Role	Responsibilities
	<p>Contact them via the <a href="mailto:epasupportservices@professionalassessment.co.uk">epasupportservices@professionalassessment.co.uk</a>, Monday-Friday from 08.30 to 17.30 except for Bank Holidays and the period between Christmas and the New Year.</p> <p>For general inquiries regarding PAL's business service offers and general information relating to PAL's activities, the <a href="mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk">info@professionalassessment.co.uk</a> email can be used.</p> <p>The free phone number is available during office hours and messages can be left out of office hours.</p>
<b>Business Operations- Contracting, Account Management, Communications</b>	<p>The business operations team is responsible for providing advice and guidance to prospective employers and providers and coordinating all client relationship activities, including contract negotiations, handling complaints, reviewing conflicts of interest, handling social media updates and co-ordinating the newsletter distribution.</p> <p>The team is led by the Business Operations Director (BOD) and includes the Assessment/Account Managers who is your personal contact with PAL.</p>
<b>Quality Team</b>	<p>The quality team, led by the Quality Manager (QM), they oversee quality assurance of independent assessment activities, and they are responsible for the checking of assessment results. This team leads on the training and development of the PAL Independent Assessors (IAs) and Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs). The team is the first line response to appeals and enquiries and they support investigations into alleged acts of malpractice, maladministration. The Quality Team approve and monitor the application of special considerations, reasonable adjustments, and accessible assessment.</p> <p>IQAs are responsible for quality assuring the administration and assessment decisions of IAs through standardisation and sampling and they authorise final results for apprenticeship certificate claims.</p>
<b>Data Protection Officer</b>	<p>The Director of Audit and Compliance is PAL's Data Protection Officer.</p>
<b>Resource Development Team</b>	<p>The resource development team is responsible for assessment design, development and compilation of assessment resources and maintenance of PAL's on-line library of resources (Padlets) and support materials.</p> <p>The team work with consultants and technical advisors to ensure assessment materials meet the requirements of employers, apprentices and providers and the relevant regulator. The team is line managed by the Qualifications Director (QD), who also undertakes the role of PAL's Responsible Officer (RO).</p>
<b>Independent Assessors (IAs)</b>	<p>The IAs are responsible for conducting assessments, from assessment planning to the reporting of assessment outcomes. They have relevant occupational and assessment experience to carry out all aspects of the apprenticeship assessment (EPA).</p>
<b>Responsible Officer and Deputy Responsible Officer</b>	<p>PAL's RO is the Qualifications Director. The role of the Responsible Officer encompasses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Any matters relating to compliance with Ofqual's Conditions of Recognition.</li> <li>➤ PAL's ability and commitment to undertake the efficient development, delivery, and award of standards (qualifications).</li> <li>➤ The standards (qualifications) that PAL deliver or propose to deliver and make available.</li> <li>➤ Any matters which may affect public confidence in apprenticeship standards and/or qualifications.</li> <li>➤ The accessibility of standards (qualifications) assessments, including compliance</li> </ul>

Role	Responsibilities
	with the Equalities Law.

A range of support materials and resources to aid assessment readiness are made available to apprentices, employers, and providers, when a current and live service level contract is in place with PAL. The Support Services team can support as to how to access such materials.

Fact sheets and specifications for each standard PAL is approved to deliver can be accessed via the website and Padlets.

Responsibilities of the provider, employer and PAL at each stage of the apprenticeship are detailed in **Appendix One**. PAL’s service level contracts also highlight responsibilities and confirm PAL’s terms and conditions for delivering end-point apprenticeship assessments.

### 5. Background to Apprenticeships

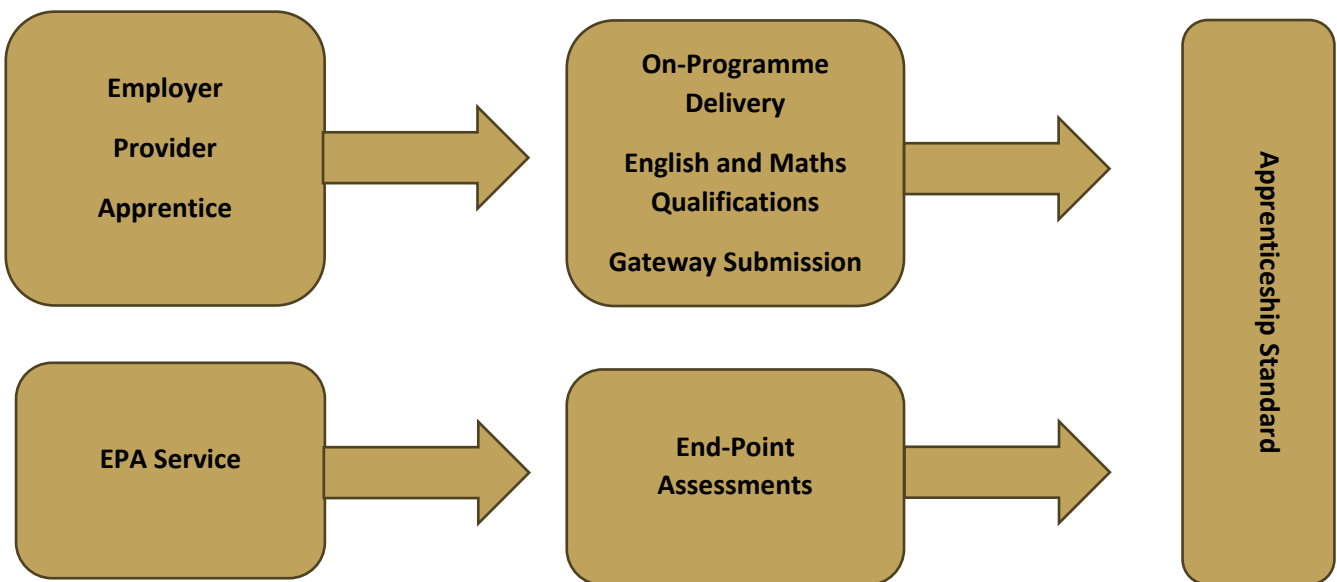
In response to government reform, Apprenticeship Standards have been designed to meet the changing needs of employers, providers and apprentices. Apprenticeship standards and programmes are subjected to regular reviews and amendments, so this manual is accurate at the time of publication, but vocational learning and assessment does undergo regular changes and innovations.<sup>2</sup>

Apprenticeship standards aim to:

- Give Employers control in designing apprenticeships.
- Increase the flexibility of delivery.
- Simplify the funding system.
- Improve the effectiveness of training.

Skills England under the direction of government departments (DfE and DWP) oversee development and delivery of apprenticeships.

#### Apprenticeship Structure



<sup>2</sup> Note this manual is for the current format of EPA, PAL will produce new guidance when the apprenticeship reforms and new plans are released and consolidated

## Providers<sup>3</sup>

A provider's role in delivering an apprenticeship is providing off-the-job knowledge-based learning and supporting the employer in the effective combination of on and off-job learning. Providers, which include Independent Training Providers and Colleges are essential to the apprenticeship programme as they invariably drive the programme content and coach the apprentice in readiness for the final phase of their apprenticeship, the end-point assessment.

The apprenticeship programme requires effective planning and partnership working between the employer and selected training provider and/or college. Providers tend to be the principal facilitator in this scenario and act as the conduit between employer and apprentice and the selected end-point assessment organisation.

### Types of Providers

Further classification of Providers in England are listed in the table below.

Types of Providers	
<b>Main providers</b>	Are organisations that deliver on-programme learning to levied and non-levied employers and contract the EPAO on behalf of their employer.
<b>Employer providers</b>	Are levied employers who deliver on-programme apprenticeship learning directly and solely to their staff.
<b>Supporting providers</b>	May only act as a 'subcontractor', which is a separate legal entity or an individual (not an employee) that has an agreement (called a subcontract) with a provider to deliver any element of the education and training ESFA fund.

## Qualifications

Currently there is no mandatory requirement for vocational based qualifications, or diplomas or professional qualifications within apprenticeships unless explicitly required, e.g., for a license to practice or as mandated qualifications. It is important to refer to individual assessment plans to determine whether a mandated qualification forms part of the apprenticeship offer.

Where qualifications are not included in the apprenticeship standard, employers and/or providers can if they wish:

- Build qualifications into their offer; this will incur registration and certification charges from the selected awarding organisation.
- Build into their offer non-accredited training options.

It is essential to read an apprenticeship standard assessment plan to understand what knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) an apprentice must demonstrate to prove competence and how the EPA will be delivered and what if any, other qualifications are required.

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<sup>3</sup> Note we use the term Providers to cover all Third Party providers to include Colleges, Independent Training Providers and Employer Providers. Providers can also be referred to as Training Organisations and can be commercial, or not-for profit organisations

## On-Programme Delivery

Before any training is delivered, the apprentice's starting point needs to be established. The provider and employer, with the apprentice, should be involved in the initial assessment process and agree on any resulting apprenticeship delivery plan.

During the delivery phase of the apprenticeship programme, the apprentice should receive regular progress reviews. The reviews are likely to include one-to-one monitoring, and the apprentice should receive developmental feedback from both their employer and provider, so they know where performance is aligned with the standard and where further improvement is needed.

The provider is responsible for the delivery of English and Maths training or checking that the apprentice has the relevant qualifications, which exempt them from taking the functional skills tests, if they are under the age of 19. Even where the apprentice has the necessary qualifications, English and Maths delivery ideally should be embedded into the on-programme offer. English and Maths exemptions issued in 2025 mean that there is no longer a requirement for apprentices over 19 to have English and Maths qualifications to enter gateway. It is a matter for the apprentice, employer and Provider to address development options for apprentices in English and Maths, where no formal qualification is required.

The provider is primarily responsible for the quality assurance of the delivery of the on-programme element of the apprenticeship programme, but employers should also contribute to this function. Employers have a responsibility to ensure apprentices have access to the right on-job training, are in a job role that allows them to aspire to the standard's requirements and provide apprentices access to the provider's training services.

Finally, the employer has a responsibility to validate EPA readiness and to work with the assigned Assessment/Awarding Organisation to ensure EPA arrangements are planned, booked, and conducted in accordance with the apprenticeship agreement they have made with the relevant provider and promised the apprentice.

Best practice regarding determining readiness includes the provider and employer making sure the apprentice has access to mock or practice assessments and has performed in these in a competent manner. It is important to note that Providers play no part in an independent assessment, however they are responsible for the continuing welfare of the apprentice and should continue to provide support and guidance as required until the programme cessation.

The Gateway review should take place at the end of the agreed training period and the provider, the apprentice and employer should determine and decide on readiness. PAL can provide guidance regarding the recording of Gateway activities, but it is not the role of PAL to determine the apprentice's readiness for assessment.

Current [Apprenticeship Funding Rules 2025 2026](#) document the requirements for English and Maths attainment for apprentices to enter EPA.

16–18-year-old apprentice must meet the existing English and maths requirements before passing through Gateway (this means achieving Level 1 or Level 2 first as per the apprenticeship standard. Proof of achievement is required to be submitted to PAL as part of the Gateway submission and PAL completes audit checks on the validity and suitability of the Maths and English evidence.

For 19+ apprentices (from Feb 2025 onwards), Level 2 maths and English are no longer mandatory for gateway or EPA but If the apprentice and employer choose to include maths/English in the training plan, the apprentice must attempt the assessments, but passing is not required for gateway or EPA. PAL requires a declaration that the Employer and apprentice have agreed that the latter does not require the completion of English and Maths to enter Gateway and that the Apprentice was 19+ years of age on the start date of their Apprenticeship – to be submitted at Gateway stage.

PAL's service level contracts and data protection and privacy policy and privacy statement provide information on data requirements in order for PAL to offer our assessment service and data protection.

## EPA Methods

Each apprenticeship standard contains details of the method of the end-point assessment (EPA) that the apprentice will need to complete such as:

- Externally marked examinations and knowledge test assessments.
- Professional discussions.
- Oral questioning.
- Interviews.
- Practical demonstrations.
- Presentations.
- Showcase portfolios.
- Work-based projects.
- Workplace observations.



EPA will typically include two sometimes three assessment activities<sup>4</sup>, and the aggregation of the assessment activities and outcomes will determine an overall grade awarded to the apprentice. The purpose of the EPA is to establish the relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) as prescribed by the standard and respective assessment plan have been met.

**Apprentices will need to pass every assessment component to achieve an overall pass-** this is known as ‘mastery’. Assessment plans do not work on a compensatory model. Assessment plans will describe grade levels.

## 6. External EPA Documents

The following documents define what is required by the apprentice for their apprenticeship in their chosen sector/job role:

The apprenticeship standard details:

- The key requirements for the apprenticeship including required KSBs required.
- The minimum duration of the apprenticeship and any required qualifications.

The assessment plan details:

- What is required for EPA (including details of any qualifications that are required to be completed prior to the EPA, either prior to starting or during the apprenticeship).
- What will be assessed.
- How it will be assessed.
- How the overall apprenticeship will be graded.
- Who will carry out the EPA.
- IA and IQA expertise.

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<sup>4</sup> End-point assessment activities are dictated by the relevant version of the assessment plan. Assessment plans are subject to amendments and version changes. Currently newer assessment plan versions favour 2 or 3 assessment components. Earlier plans may include more assessment components. Note plans under the reforms are different and do not feature in this manual. Your PAL Assessment/Account Manager will discuss assessment requirements for the new plans.

## PAL Resources

PAL resources include:

- Factsheets available on the website and Padlets.
- EPA manual (this document) available on each apprenticeship standard Padlet and PAL website.
- EpaPRO guides for providers and employers that explain how to register apprentices, update their details, and track their assessment journey using epaPRO, available on both the Padlets and epaPRO system.
- Apprenticeship standard specifications available on each apprenticeship standard Padlet and PAL's website.
- Assessment resources to support EPA preparation available on the relevant apprenticeship standard Padlet.



Each standard has a dedicated Padlet; PAL will share the link with clients when a service level contract is in place. The Padlets are updated centrally, so the clients always have access to the most current resources and information.

## EPA Service

To access PAL's services and register apprentices on the epaPRO online platform, a signed service level contract needs to be in place. The Assessment/Account Managers can provide the details of the contracting process, service timelines and fees. PAL's assessment fees are on PAL's website.

A separate guide for accessing epaPRO is available for employers and providers, and the Support Services team can provide training on the platform's use, to include registering apprentices and accessing reports.

PAL offers an on-demand assessment service and will do its best to meet the clients' preferred dates, however late notified requests for assessment means PAL cannot always offer their customers first date choices. PAL does request that providers update readiness dates on epaPRO if the initial planned date is not going to be met and timelines are changed. PAL's EPA information sheet provides further details on the information PAL needs to effective schedule assessments for your apprentices.

## 7. Data Protection Notice

### Data Protection

Data Protection laws place obligations on those that control and process information relating to individuals. Providers must provide Apprentice Data to PAL upon registration. Such data will include personal data and may where applicable include special category or sensitive personal data. Personal and sensitive data is defined as:

- Information which refers to a living individual who can be identified from that information ('Personal Data'); and
- Information relating to a living individual's physical or mental health ('Sensitive Personal Data').

When collecting personal data or sensitive personal data, providers and employers must ensure that apprentices are aware of the data that will be collected and how it will be used.

It is the responsibility of providers and employers to ensure that the information they provide to their stakeholders regarding data protection is always accurate and compliant with any data protection laws.

Apprentice's personal data is required for the following purposes:

- To undertake administration and assessment in relation to the assessment for which the apprentice is registered.
- To request certification from the Department for Education (DfE) following the achievement or completion<sup>5</sup> of all components of end-point assessment.
- To contact apprentices directly for the purpose of assessment and quality assurance purposes, or to support them, if they are made redundant for example, but wish to have access to EPA.
- To carry out investigations into allegations of suspected malpractice, plagiarism, and cheating.
- To carry out enquiries and appeals processes.
- To inform apprentices of products or services offered by PAL that will support assessment readiness.
- To disclose to its regulators for the purpose of regulation checks and activities.
- To communicate to relevant industry bodies and regulators and to disclose to them, where so required by law, to; i) account for apprentices where there is a requirement to do so; and ii) contact an apprentice directly if there is a requirement for such bodies and the information is not readily accessible by other means.
- In relation to Sensitive Personal Data (Special Category Data), to administer requests for reasonable adjustments/access arrangements.

## Data Requirements

The provider should share the required data and information with PAL within 90 days of apprenticeship enrolment, to include an expected/estimated Gateway readiness month and year. The provider will need to complete the necessary fields in the Individual Learning Record (ILR) to include EPA selected, identification number and EPA fee.

Providers and colleges should not utilise the PAL's EPAO registration number if they have no contract with PAL, or no intention of using our services. We check registrations on a regular basis and if you are not on epaPRO we will contact you to establish your intention and ask you to update your ILR if you do not intend to use PAL.

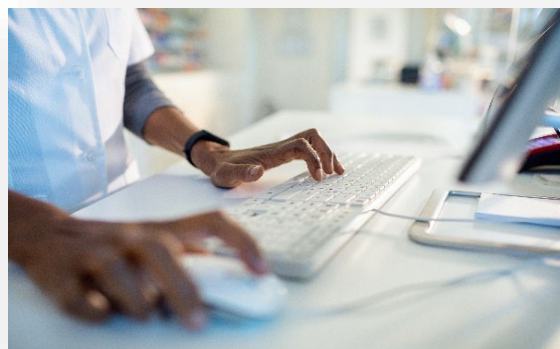
The provider is required to share the following information with PAL:

### Apprentice (Learner) data

- Learner Name (as appearing on the ILR).
- Learner Date of Birth.
- Learner Sex.
- Learning Start Date on standard.
- Learner registration date.
- Unique Learner Number (ULN), which is a 10 digit reference number that matches an apprentice to their Personal Learning Record (PLR) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### Employer data

- Employer Reference Number (ERN), given to every business that registers with HMRC as an employer.



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<sup>5</sup> Note PAL notifies DfE/Apprenticeship service of fails

- Site address and line manager name and contact details (phone and email) to schedule, plan and undertake assessments.

PAL will inform the provider of assessment results (note - the employer and apprentice are advised at the same time) on completion of all the necessary components of assessment, as detailed in the assessment plan and both the provider and PAL will submit data to the Department for Education (DfE), within the claim period timelines. Note - providers and employers, using their epaPRO log-in credentials, can establish assessment progression and results. Apprentices cannot access epaPRO and PAL notifies apprentices of their final results by email.

DfE<sup>6</sup> will check and validate the following data.

- UKPRN, which is a unique number allocated to Providers after successful UK Register of Learning Providers registration.
- ULN.
- Learner's Name.
- Learner Date of Birth.
- Learner's Sex.
- Learning Start Date.
- Standard Code (available on the relevant assessment standard plan, starting with ST).
- Achievement Outcome in the ILR.
- ERN.
- Employer name and address; town; postcode (this must be the name and address of the person nominated by the employer organisation to receive the apprenticeship certificate).

## 8. Gateway

**The Gateway review takes place when the employer, provider and apprentice deem that the apprentice:**

- **Has met the Gateway requirements for a specific standard.**
- **Has been on-programme for the required length of time before entering EPA<sup>7</sup>.**
- **Is ready to undertake the EPA.**

The employer and provider must confirm that the apprentice has met the on-programme requirements, and the apprentice is ready to undertake the EPA.

The employer and provider should hold a meeting or have some form of formal communication to agree that the apprentice has gained the required level of KSBs along with any mandatory qualifications including where appropriate English and Maths at a level set by the apprenticeship standard.

To confirm this meeting has taken place, the employer, provider, and apprentice are required to complete a Gateway Declaration Record. PAL can provide such a Gateway Declaration document,



<sup>6</sup> Apprenticeships (19+) now come under the DWP; however, the Apprenticeship Service (DfE) are still responsible for processing claims and setting the apprenticeship funding rules

<sup>7</sup> It is the Provider and Employer's responsibility to ensure minimum on-programme duration and total off job training hours for the relevant apprenticeship standard have been met.

alternatively 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.

For 16–18-year-old apprentices at the start of their apprenticeship, PAL also needs evidence of Maths and English attainment (or equivalent qualifications). Submission of proof of 'equivalent' functional skill attainment must be valid and endorsed as acceptable equivalents by the relevant agencies.

For those standards requiring qualification attainment or industry recognised certification, certificated evidence must be submitted to PAL, as part of the Gateway submission.

It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that the EPA only takes place once the minimum duration of an apprenticeship has been met (currently the minimum programme duration is 12 months for apprenticeship starts before August 2025 and 8 months for starts after that date).

**PAL invoices the provider for resits/retake fees for all affected apprentices. It is the provider's responsibility to oversee and arrange if or how they collect these fees from their employers.**

Providers and employers are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information being supplied at the time of the Gateway submission, this will include any information to include reasonable adjustments, and assessment access arrangements that the independent assessor will need to assimilate to ensure fair and reliable assessments.

PAL completes audit and validation checks of the Gateway submission and will reject it if the requirements are not met. PAL provides justification of such rejection via epaPRO. The epaPRO guides show how employers and providers can check Gateway status. If there is missing or unsubstantiated information, PAL will advise and request the additional information.

For auditing purposes, the Gateway Declaration Record must be signed and dated by all parties, or email confirmation supplied, provided that all parties have agreed on readiness.

Note that validation of the Gateway by PAL typically starts the EPA clock (assessment timeframe allocated for the standard and noted in the assessment plan). **It is important to note EPA timeframes do vary between apprenticeship standards, so it is vital all parties know what the timeframe is before entering into EPA.**

## 9. EPA Booking and Assessment Planning

The Support Services team, supported by the Assessment/Account Managers, will assign IAs to apprentices, ensuring IAs have the requisite skills and experience. In addition to occupational and assessment acumen and where applicable, location, assignment of the IA will confirm conflict of interest status. PAL undertakes checks to confirm that any assessment is 'independent' and that the IA does not have a personal interest in the assessment outcome.

PAL works with providers on high-level scheduling and employers and apprentices on the specific assessment planning 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 to be undertaken within the assessment window wherever possible.

Assessment planning has two distinct functions - to agree dates and times for the assessment and to discuss and confirm specific assessment arrangements and activities and any bespoke arrangements such as reasonable adjustments.

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.

Where the Gateway submission has been accepted the Support Services team will contact the employer and apprentice to confirm the arrangements for the assessment planning meeting. The assessment planning with the apprentice and employer<sup>8</sup> meeting will typically be conducted via a webinar unless there has been a request which has been approved by PAL for a face-to-face meeting.

**If after three contact attempts, PAL cannot contact the employer and or apprentice, PAL will liaise with the provider for support. If contact still cannot be confirmed within three weeks of Gateway referral, PAL will refer the apprentice back to the provider and any provisional assessment dates or timelines will be subject to revisions.**

PAL suggests the apprentice and employer should allow up to 15 minutes for the scheduling meeting and up to 45 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.

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 Independent Assessor (IA) who will be undertaking their assessments.

The assessment planning aspect of the meeting will cover the confirmation of the scheduled assessment dates, location and times for assessments, overview of assessment components, sequence of assessment and assessment window, confirmation of the appeals process, complaints process and procedures for cancellations and rescheduling of assessment to include potential additional charges. Any rationales, briefs, or permissible pre-assessment activities work submitted are discussed and agreed.

## 10. Assessment

Assessments will take place at the dates, time, and work site (or via webinar technology) as agreed at the assessment planning meeting and documented in the planning form. Should the employer or apprentice need to change assessment at short notice, they are required to contact PAL as soon as possible, as cancellations could be liable for cancellation fees as detailed in PAL's service level contract with the main provider. If PAL has to cancel at short notice, a member of the Support Services team will advise concerned parties and re-schedule as quickly as possible. There may be circumstances that to facilitate a timely assessment, PAL has to substitute an IA, where this is necessary, PAL will inform all relevant parties and ensure the replacement IA is suitably qualified and meets the conflict of interest checks.

Where evidence such as projects needs to be assessed, the project must be submitted in the timeframe established in the assessment plan and/or confirmed during the planning meeting. Late submissions can delay the assessment timescales and potentially result in additional assessment charges and/or fail grade being awarded.

For a portfolio assessment, or portfolio review, the provider must grant PAL access to the apprentice's portfolio. The Support Services team will confirm access arrangements and a timescale when it is not mandated by the assessment plan. Alternatively, portfolio evidence can be shared in secure and labelled folders.

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<sup>8</sup> In some cases, employers are not able to make the planning meeting, in which case PAL will confirm with the apprentice that any arrangements made have been approved by the employer. PAL does not invite Providers to the planning meeting; this ensures that the Provider exerts no influence on the planning and end-point assessment activities.

In exceptional circumstances, (with the approval of the Support Services team), the provider may be permitted to submit the assessment evidence in hard copy. Under such circumstances, additional charges may apply.

### 10a. Externally Marked Examinations/Tests

Some standards require the apprentice to complete a test as part of the EPA process. The test can be either a multiple-choice test (MCQ), or a situational judgement (SJT). Where such an assessment is used, the assessment plan will provide some information regarding the number of questions and test duration and test format. PAL will additionally provide information on the relevant Padlet, and an overview is provided in fact sheets and in the appropriate standard specification.



PAL will also provide further information regarding test requirements, including access to sample questions, via the relevant apprenticeship standard Padlet.

It is the responsibility of the provider and/or employer to ensure the apprentice has had the opportunity to access at the very least a sample question paper, as provided by PAL.

At the assessment planning meeting, the IA will detail the type and nature of the exam/test involved, this will include where an exam/test is required, the invigilation arrangements and ensure that all the parties are aware of the test environment requirements. The IA will also check which testing method is preferred. As a default, PAL will offer an online test unless a paper-based test is requested. The IA will confirm that the selected test environment is suitable.

The invigilation policy and information PAL makes available should be accessed by all parties and it is available on PAL's website. PAL undertakes test invigilation; this may be undertaken by the IA or PAL will appoint another trained independent invigilator. Where as a result of a reasonable adjustment request approval, a prompter, scribe etc is needed, this person will be a different person from the invigilator, as selected and approved by PAL.

In **exceptional** circumstances PAL may permit a Third Party to undertake test invigilation, this is subject to additional checks, requirements for the proposed invigilator to attend training with PAL and complete a conflict of interest and confidentiality declaration and for the organisation to sign an additional agreement

It is the responsibility of the apprentice and employer to ensure they are familiar with the pass mark for the test; PAL will confirm this at the assessment planning meeting.

## 10b. On-Site Assessment

Observations of work/practice and practical demonstrations, typically take place at the work site of the apprentice, and tests and assessments such as professional discussions can also take place at these locations, subject to appropriate checks.

The assessment planning discussion will enquire as to the site suitability for assessment and is the responsibility of all concerned parties to ensure the assessment site is fit for purpose. PAL also advocates that the employer and apprentice advise colleagues and other relevant stakeholders of on-site assessments, from a health and safety perspective and to ensure that where an exam, or suitable assessment environment is required, such conditions are understood and met.



Where a suitable environment is required for such assessment activities as a practical demonstration, it is the responsibility of the provider/employer to ensure that the environment is adequately resourced and that any resources and supplies are paid for and made available to the apprentice. **The provider or employer is responsible for the purchase of any required commodities, facilities fees, where applicable and the provision of equipment and resources.** Such arrangements should be discussed at the assessment planning meeting and appropriate arrangements must be in place, prior to the independent assessment.

Observations of work performance will be planned to ensure the apprentice has the best opportunity to demonstrate a wide range of skills, as denoted in the apprenticeship standard and accompanying assessment plan. The employer should also make sure that the apprentice's colleagues are aware of the assessment, so they do not adversely affect the outcome of the assessment.

Timed assessments will be executed in the timeframe as specified in the assessment plan; it is the responsibility of the apprentice and employer to ensure they know what the time frames are. Where there is any permitted +/- time variance, this will be made clear in the supporting information PAL provides and restated at the assessment planning meeting, and prior to the commencement of an assessment.

The host of the assessment site is also responsible for ensuring:

- The site and any relevant equipment meet any pertinent requirements for the assessment such as health and safety, and technical requirements.
- A site contact is available who will be responsible for informing the independent assessor of any fire evacuation procedures and how to report any incidents which may occur in line with the site's policies and procedures.

Should such assessments need to be cancelled due to the assessment environment presenting as unsuitable on the day of the assessment, the employer may be subject to cancellation charges. **The IA has the right to cancel an assessment if they deem the location is not fit for assessment, as it prohibits the opportunity of a valid and reliable assessment for the apprentice.**

## 10c. Portfolio, Project, and Assignment

The apprentice is responsible for ensuring work produced is their own and will be validated by completing an authentication form. The provider, apprentice and employer have access to PAL's Plagiarism and Cheating policy, including the use of AI on PAL's website.

Apprentices are responsible for ensuring they present evidence in the designated format, stipulated by the assessment plan and guidance provided by PAL. PAL provide standard specifications via the relevant Padlet and the employer and provider should check prior to the Gateway review that the apprentice's evidence is valid, authentic, current, sufficient, and reliable.



Unless stated otherwise it is expected that written work will be available in electronic format and where word counts are in place, it is the responsibility of the apprentice to ensure they comply with the word count. PAL will review word counts where in place and will only assess evidence up to the permitted word count.

## 10d. Professional Discussion, Presentation and Competency-Based Interview

It is the responsibility of the employer and apprentice to check if an employer's presence is required at any of the above assessment activities. **Where employer presence is stipulated in the assessment plan, it is imperative an employer representative is available for the full assessment. Non-availability or non or partial employer attendance will result in the assessment being cancelled.**

Please note presence typically does not permit the employer to actively participate in or influence the assessment activity unless the assessment plan specifies a more active role. In most assessment plans, the use of these assessment methods does not require the presence of an employer, or any other representative and the assessment is between the IA and apprentice only.

The apprentice, with the support of their employer and provider, should know what evidence or notes they can bring to such assessments. Usually, this information is available in the assessment plan, and PAL provides guidance on the relevant Padlet. At the assessment planning meeting the IA will confirm arrangements.

Where the assessment plan specifies a standard agenda, this will be provided to the apprentice in advance of the assessment, within the timescales stipulated in the assessment plan. The IA will comply with the timeframe, as a rule, this will be within five working days of the assessment taking place.

Most assessment plans, where professional discussion is used, advocate that the apprentice only has access to a standard agenda in advance of their assessment. A standard agenda can be accessed through the relevant Padlet. Prior to the assessment, the IA will tailor the agenda to the specific apprentice and assessment plan requirements and bespoke their questions: **note - these questions will not be shared with any other party in advance of the assessment, nor will the assessor leave the questions with an apprentice or allow copying of such questions; likewise, the apprentice will not be able to retain any discussion recordings.**

PAL will adhere to the timescales afforded to such assessments, and it is the responsibility of the apprentice to make sure they know what the timelines are and the employer and provider at the Gateway review, should establish the apprentice's readiness in relation to these areas of assessment. Where the assessment plan allows some variance with the timescales allowed for such assessments, PAL will apply these. Where there is no guide provided by the assessment plan, PAL sets the time allowance. PAL-set time allowances are based on assessment instrument testing to ensure they are fair and afford the apprentice the opportunity of demonstrating the necessary

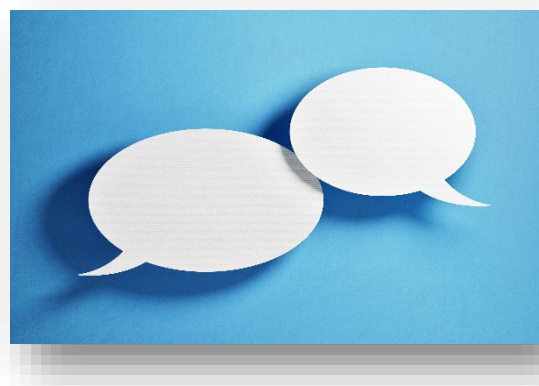
competence. Newer assessment plans permit the apprentice to end an assessment at their choosing. PAL would advise that the early termination of any assessment will reduce the likelihood of a positive outcome and we would urge all parties to work on the premise of making the best use of the designated assessment time.

Where such assessments take place at a worksite or approved location, it is the responsibility of the employer, or person in charge of the location to ensure there are suitable facilities to undertake the assessment. This will include a room set up for the purpose, where the assessment will not be interrupted. Prior to any assessment, the IA will review the arrangements and will reserve the right to delay or cancel any assessment if the arrangements are not conducive to a fair assessment.

Where webinar technology is used to conduct such assessments, it is the responsibility of the employer and apprentice to ensure they have access to the internet/appropriate software and are confident in its use. If the provider is providing the resources/equipment for remote assessment, it is their responsibility to ensure all technical resources are fit for purpose and there are no recording devices. PAL uses Microsoft Teams as our preferred platform and, if required, will provide additional instruction regarding how to access a Teams online meeting.<sup>9</sup>

Where assessment panels are required by the assessment plan, it is the employer's responsibility to:

- Make arrangements for the attendance by an employer's representative review panel if so needed (in line with the Assessment Plan).
- Ensure that any of the employer's representative has been briefed regarding any specific access arrangements and reasonable adjustments and special considerations.
- Provide the IA with the identity of the representative at the point of assessment planning, so that the IA has this information prior to the assessment.



If the assessment plan notes that the employer needs to be present at the assessment but has no 'say' in the assessment activity, it is the responsibility of the IA to ensure this is the case. Where the assessment plan allows the employer or panel members to take a more active role, PAL will want to brief the participants and check the suitability of any questions, they wish to ask. In the situation another party is involved or influence in an assessment decision, PAL will require the relevant organisation to comply with the assessment plan.

At the current time, no other party is involved in assessment marking, grading, or making assessment decisions for the apprenticeship standards PAL currently offers.

The employer or provider must inform and agree on any change in the employer representation where required with the PAL Support Services team prior to the date of the assessment, where applicable. The Support Services team will inform the relevant IA.

## **11. Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations**

Where reasonable adjustments have been requested, the IA at the assessment planning meeting will confirm such arrangements. Discussions regarding a reasonable adjustment request should be made in accordance with PAL's special considerations and reasonable adjustment policy and reasonable adjustment guidance.

A reasonable adjustment request form is available via PAL's website and can be found in the policy section. All

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<sup>9</sup> PAL will request the shut-down of any unauthorised recording devices and use or attempted use of such software will be regarded as malpractice

reasonable adjustment requests are subject to PAL's quality team's ratification.

It is the responsibility of the provider or employer, acting on behalf of the apprentice, to make such requests. PAL's special consideration and reasonable adjustment policy provides information regarding the process for making such requests.

**Reasonable adjustments are agreed prior to any assessments. Special considerations, where identified as valid, are applied post any assessment, subject to PAL's quality team's ratification.**

## 12. The Responsibility of the Independent Assessor

The IA should behave in accordance with the PAL job description and specific guidance and instructions as issued in the respective assessment plan. At the assessment the IA should, as a minimum, undertake the following checks:

- Check that the apprentice is ready to take the assessment.
- Check the apprentice's identification.
- Check that authorisation of any access arrangements/reasonable adjustments have been passed.

The IA undertakes the assessments in accordance with the assessment plan requirements, using PAL's assessment instruments and recording documentation. The IA should confirm assessment arrangements and proceed with the assessments, as agreed at the planning meeting.

Assessment and quality assurance arrangements and notification of results will be within the stipulated assessment timeframe, as specified in the standard assessment plan. PAL's aim is always to facilitate assessment in an efficient fashion, which avoids a protracted assessment, simultaneously we appreciate business constraints and always endeavour to meet the reasonable requests and requirements of the apprentice and employer.

The IA will not issue any assessment results or grades during or immediately post the assessment. Assessment decisions are subject to quality assurance checks.

The IA will advise the apprentice and employer of the appeals and enquiries policy and procedure at the assessment planning meeting, and the relevant policy and procedure is available on PAL's website. IAs will typically remind apprentices of policies such as PAL's Maladministration and Malpractice policy at assessments and this policy can be accessed via PAL's website, along with PAL's plagiarism and cheating policy and AI guidance.

The IA has the responsibility of:

- Checking the apprentice understands the assessment process.
- Checking the apprentice knows what is required of them.
- Ensuring the apprentice is fully aware of the assessment timings.

The apprentice equally has the responsibility to follow the agreed assessment plan, and all parties should make use of the materials and information provided by PAL, in support of EPA.

Remote assessment does provide some challenges to assessment interruption, for example for comfort breaks, as the IA has to guarantee a safe assessment environment and minimise all opportunities for an apprentice to seek or access outside help to support them in their assessment.

The IA has two options where an apprentice wishes to apply a break, firstly they can apply special considerations, and the PAL Quality Team will review and ensure the request is valid and reliable. Secondly, they can void the assessment and allow the apprentice to be re-assessed with no imposition of a limiting grade where they exist within certain assessment plans.

### 13. Cancellation of an Assessment Activity

The IA may cancel or stop the assessment for a variety of reasons, including:

- No access to required systems.
- Required resources/materials not being present at the assessment location.
- Health and safety concerns.
- Concerns over identity of the apprentice.
- Apprentice being absent; or arrival so late to render the planned assessment impossible to achieve.
- Apprentice being unable to continue with the assessment.
- Sufficiently competent panel members not being available for panel reviews (where required).
- Potential malpractice being identified.
- The IA cannot for some other reason be confident in the outcome of the assessment.

It may be that some issues, including those listed above, can be resolved on the day for the EPA to take place. If there is a change in circumstance which resolves the above issues, the IA will confirm with the Support Services<sup>10</sup> team that the assessment is still able to take place. Refusal shall not be unreasonably withheld.

**It should be noted that the IA can only assess the evidence as presented at the time of the assessment. End-point assessment is about assessing actual performance as seen on the day of the assessment, not potential performance, or previous performance that others may have a view of in respect of any competence judgement.**

Where there is a system failure, for example with an on-line testing system, PAL would organise a resit of the test, there will be no charge and no limiting grade used, (where an apprentice plan requires this).

Where an assessment plan permits an apprentice to end an assessment early, that is their prerogative. The IA will check with the apprentice they wish to do this and record the fact it is the apprentice's decision. PAL advises that where any assessment is terminated early, there is a likelihood that the apprentice will not have demonstrated competence across the required KSBs and will fail the assessment. PAL urges all apprentices to make use of the full assessment time to give themselves the best chance of a successful EPA outcome.

### 14. Results

The IA uploads all completed assessment documentation for quality assurance, to PAL's quality team via epaPRO. The IQAs will, in line with PAL's quality assurance and sampling strategy, review the assessment records, grades and decisions before the summary record and overall result and grade are released.

PAL will require apprentices to provide their consent to PAL to claim their apprenticeship certificate on their behalf to Department for Education (DfE).

PAL will request the apprenticeship certificate from the DfE for a successful EPA outcome. **Please note it is not the AO that produces and sends out the apprenticeship certificate, this is the responsibility of the DfE and their chosen agents. PAL will issue Records of Achievement, but these are not formal certificates and should not be treated as such.**

Resits or retakes where required will be discussed with the apprentice, employer, and provider. Resit and retake fees are contained in the service level contract and via our EPA team.

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<sup>10</sup> The Support Services team can liaise with PAL's Quality team, Assessment/Account Managers or BOD before confirming any recommended action, before confirming arrangements with the IA

**Results will be made available in 15 working days from the final assessment record being released**, unless alternative arrangements and timelines have been agreed. PAL allows 15 working days for the third parties to enquire or appeal an assessment grade or overall result. If no such enquiry or appeal is received in this timescale, PAL will notify the DfE of the results, as they stand.

PAL will process the successful EPA completion (fail, pass, merit<sup>11</sup> or distinction) and PAL will advise the DfE of the outcome and overall assessment grade via a dedicated portal. The epaPRO system allows certification application for successful completions as well.

The issuing of apprenticeship completion certificates can be delayed if the information in the ILR does not match those submitted by PAL's Support Services Team.

The apprenticeship certificate is sent to the employer, unless there is a valid reason for sending the certificate to an alternative destination, a valid reason could include business closure, or the apprentice being made redundant from the employer. Regarding redundancy and the taking of EPA, please refer to the latest funding rules, if you require any further clarification, please contact PAL's Support Services team.

### **Cancelling or Rescinding Results**

PAL reserves the right to cancel or rescind results if malpractice is identified and proven.

We will not withhold certification over financial matters, where an apprentice has completed their assessment, however we will hold on validating gateways or suspend assessments where a Provider has failed to pay us in accordance with our service level contract. Please refer to PAL's Sanctions and Withdrawal policies, available via our website for more information regarding the suspension or discontinuance of assessments

**PAL reserves the right to pause or discontinue any EPA activity where the provider has failed to pay PAL in accordance with the payment terms.** Where non-payment persists post a statement of account issue, PAL will advise the relevant agencies for the reasons for discontinuation, and we will also advise the apprentice and employer as to the reason the assessment has been halted or terminated.

### **15. Results Enquiry**

Where apprentices are dissatisfied with the results of their assessment, the employer, apprentice or provider can enquire about the results. The quality team can talk to an interested party through the appeals and enquiry procedure and there is a dedicated email for appeals, which is [epaappeals@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:epaappeals@professionalassessment.co.uk).

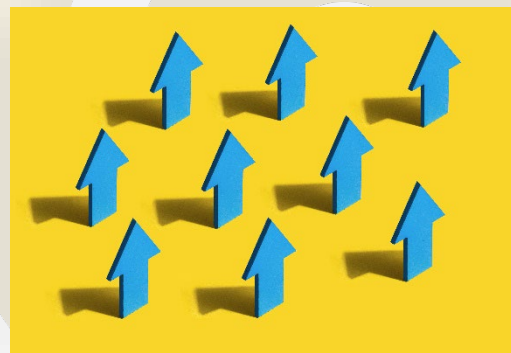
The IA discusses appeals within the planning meeting and signposts the apprentice to the policy on the PAL website.

Where an apprentice, provider or employer does not wish to appeal the assessment result but does want to complain about the EPA service, the Complaints policy is available on the website, and the party is advised to contact PAL's Support Services team or ideally speak directly with their Assessment/Account Manager.

PAL also collect feedback from customers regarding the quality of service to support continuous improvement. Feedback helps PAL to improve our services and if we have made a mistake letting us know, allows us to correct the situation as quickly as possible.

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<sup>11</sup>Many assessment plans do not have a merit grade

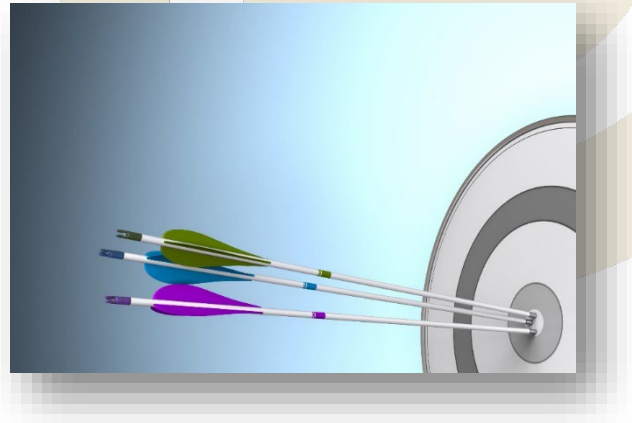


## 16. Resits and Retakes

Information regarding resits and retakes can be found in the Resit and Retake policy. If anyone is uncertain as to PAL's approach regarding this, in the first instance they should contact PAL's EPA Support Services team via the [epasupportservices](mailto:epasupportservices) email.

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

In the majority of cases, PAL will charge a resit or retake fee to the provider. Please refer to the Pricing policy or service level contract (if a provider). PAL will not charge a resit or retake fee, if the reasons for such an event is the fault of PAL, i.e., the IA or PAL provided incorrect information that affected the apprentice's ability to complete the assessment, or where proven maladministration or malpractice is committed by a PAL representative.



In some cases, the resit or retake will limit the grade the apprentice can achieve. Where a limiting grade is applied it is noted in the relevant assessment plan and also noted in PAL's Resit and Retake policy.

**Please note in no circumstances can an apprentice resit or retake an aspect of assessment to achieve a higher grade if they have passed, and the assessment process was valid.**

## 17. Fees and Cancellations

PAL's fees posting includes cancellation fees. PAL will have discussed these charges during contract negotiations.

## 18. Quality Assurance

PAL understands that apprentices, employers, and providers invest time and resource in the on-programme delivery and that apprentices have shown considerable determination and worked hard to reach the EPA stage of the programme. PAL believes apprentices deserve the best opportunity to prove what they can do. It is vital that all assessments are carried out securely and correctly, and that all assessment decisions are valid and reliable.

In all assessment activities PAL will follow the instructions as issued in the relevant assessment plan. Where we believe an aspect of the assessment instruction as prescribed in the plan is unclear PAL will specify our interpretation and approach and advise all relevant stakeholders of this decision.

PAL will also inform the regulator where the assessment plan contradicts Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition or EPA qualification-level conditions, or if the guidance offered in the assessment plan, undermines valid and reliable assessment, to ensure that any recommendations PAL makes in regard to fair assessment, is in line with other significant stakeholders' expectations.

For detailed information regarding PAL's approach to design and development of assessment instruments, stakeholders can contact the development team via the [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk) email. Please make the subject of the email 'enquiry about design and development'. If more information on quality assurance and awarding of results is needed, please use the [info@professionalassessment.co.uk](mailto:info@professionalassessment.co.uk) email and mark the email 'for the attention of the PAL quality team'.

## 19. Essential Independent Assessor Requirements

IAs must demonstrate that they:

- Have no personal interest in the outcome of assessing apprentices.
- Undertake formal training and standardisation to ensure that assessment decisions are consistent and reliable.
- Comply with relevant PAL policies, procedures and protocols.
- Are subject to quality assurance checks.
- Meet continuing professional development requirements to maintain occupational competence.

PAL also require that all IAs and PAL personnel have a Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check.

### Training

All IAs are required to undertake induction training to prepare them for the role. IAs are also required to maintain their occupational competence and attend standardisation activities and training as organised by PAL.



## 20. Standardisation

All IAs are required to attend standardisation meetings to ensure the consistency of 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 webinars.

Standardisations activities for IAs are managed and co-ordinated by the Quality team.

## 21. Monitoring

IQAs may accompany or be an observer via webinar to IAs carrying out assessment to ensure that the assessment is being administered safely, securely and in line with the internal processes, procedures and protocols. The Quality team will undertake post-assessment checks to confirm that our IAs are compliant with the relevant assessment plan, regulatory conditions and PAL's protocols and code of conduct.

Assessment documentation and assessment activities may also be subject to review by relevant regulatory bodies

and in some circumstances an IA may be accompanied by a representative from a government agency or the relevant regulator. Please see section 25.

## 22. Sampling

IAs will be sampled for the administration of the various assessment methods and the related assessment decisions, based on their experience and performance and outcomes of quality assurance, and assigned risk (RAG) bandings.

IQA reporting ensures thorough and robust quality assurance is maintained to meet regulatory requirements. IQA reports also identify assessment trends and support the dissemination of best practice in assessment.

## 23. The Apprentice First

PAL will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all apprentices undertaking assessment are not disadvantaged in any way and have access to a valid (in accordance with the apprenticeship standards and accompanying assessment plan) and secure EPA. This includes ensuring that apprentices:

- Are confident that IAs and IQAs will adhere to relevant policies, codes of practice and codes of conduct.
- Have their personal data protected.
- Are kept safe, and that risk assessments are undertaken where appropriate.
- Are treated fairly and without prejudice.



## 24. External Regulation

PAL is subject to visits from the qualifications regulator to check our design, development, delivery and award of apprenticeship standards meet the test of validity, reliability, are free from bias, transparent in decision making and are consistently fair. For apprenticeship standards Ofqual is the regulator in England.

## 25. Third Party Involvement at Assessments

Third parties in this context can include members of the PAL Quality team, Management or Directors and notably representatives from external organisations such as Ofqual. Third parties also include provider or employer representatives who act as invigilators for tests or assessment. Note - PAL rarely uses third parties for this purpose.

Additionally, third parties can be seen as an employer representative or member of assessment panel, that can influence an assessment decision. Currently, even where employer representation is permitted as denoted by the assessment plan, the employer has no involvement in the assessment decision, as such PAL does not regard employer involvement here as third-party involvement.

Wherever possible the presence of additional personnel at an apprentice's assessment should only be for a defined and beneficial purpose and the apprentice and employer should provide their permission for such an activity.

## Quality Team and Regulator Presence at Assessments

There are occasions where either a member of the PAL Quality team or a representative from Ofqual may wish to observe a live assessment. Where this is the case and where possible this will be discussed with the apprentice and employer at the assessment plan meeting. If the request to observe is made after the planning date, the Support

Services team, or some cases the PAL Quality team will liaise with the apprentice and employer to check firstly if third party presence is viable, appropriate, and acceptable.

If the apprentice and employer are satisfied that the presence of another person does not present an issue regarding business commercial confidence or undermine the apprentice's confidence regarding the ensuing assessment, PAL will proceed with the assessment and third-party presence.

For retrospective third party observations or reviews of assessment evidence, PAL will advise the apprentice of the undertaking and seek their permission<sup>12</sup>. Granted permissions or refusals will be noted as an additional note in either the assessment planning document, or in the notes section of epaPRO.



Any third party attending an assessment (this can include a member of the PAL Quality team or a representative from the regulator or other recognised agency or organisation) will provide the following:

- The name(s) of the third party (parties) and PAL will confirm with the representative there are no conflicts of interest with the assessor, apprentice, or employer.
- Assurances that they understand that no recording can be made of any aspect of the assessment for their own purposes, no materials can be taken from the assessment and in no way can they actively participate or influence the assessment itself or any possible or attributable results or grades, unless there is a risk to any persons involved health, safety and or well-being and this has not been managed appropriately by any other parties involved in the assessment.
- Assurances that the third party will abide by any rules and regulations associated with the assessment site and ensure their conduct is aligned to PAL's assessor protocols, and the requirements of the specific assessment plan and apprenticeship standard.

### Third Party Attendance and Protocols

Subject to PAL receiving the necessary assurances and confirmation from the apprentice and/or employer as detailed earlier on in this document, PAL expects the following from third parties attending an assessment or reviewing recorded assessments and supporting evidence:

- Where a third party attends a live assessment, they will introduce themselves to the apprentice and employer representative and confirm the purpose of their attendance.
- Any third party is expected to adhere to PAL's protocols and policies in accordance with good assessment practice.
- Third party representatives for live on-site assessments will ensure they arrive on time and have an appropriate form of ID and the correct PPE where required and they will observe all health, safety and security requirements as requested by the employer.
- If a third party attendee arrives late to an assessment, the assessor has the right to refuse access to the assessment if the late arrival is perceived as being a disruption. to the apprentice.
- Third parties should be present for the entirety of the assessment unless they are required to leave the assessment because of an emergency or advance warning has been given that they will only be able to attend part of the assessment.
- As part of any briefing and prior to the commencement of the assessment, the IA will confirm that the third party representative will not be involved in the assessment, nor will they be able to influence any

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<sup>12</sup>Note this applies to where the third party is from an external organisation. For PAL personnel and notably the PAL quality team it is standard practice to sample

assessment decisions or results.

- Apart from the written notes, a third party will not record any aspect of a live on-site assessment. Where a third party is attending a remote session, they will ensure post any introductions, their microphone and camera are switched off, and they will not be allowed to use any function such as the chat function, or record the meeting using AI recording software.
- Third parties if reviewing assessments and evidence retrospectively will not be allowed to take evidence away or have access to recordings outside of the duration agreed for the purpose of the review, unless the third party has the authority and remit to demand such access.
- If at any time the IA and/or apprentice feels the third party representative is having an adverse effect on the apprentice's ability to concentrate or undertake the assessment, or they pose a risk to safety the third party representative will be asked to leave the assessment.
- If the third party wishes to ask the apprentice, or employer any questions, they will seek permission from the persons concerned and only ask these at the conclusion of the assessment.
- Any points of clarification or questions to the assessor will be made after the assessment and after the apprentice/employer has left the meeting or assessment location.



## Appendix One - Roles and Responsibilities

Stage	Employer Responsibilities	Provider Responsibilities	EPAO Responsibilities
Pre-Gateway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure each apprentice can meet the requirements of the assessment plan</li> <li>➤ Guarantee that apprentices are given the correct off the job training provision to achieve their apprenticeship</li> <li>➤ Liaise with the provider to identify and agree on suitable assessment windows as to when apprentices will be ready to be booked onto an EPA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Select PAL as the AO of choice via the apprentice's ILR</li> <li>➤ Enter a service level contract with PAL</li> <li>➤ Register the apprentice for EPA via epaPRO</li> <li>➤ Engage with PAL in account management activities</li> <li>➤ Identify, request, and seek authorisation for any reasonable adjustments arrangements which may be needed for an apprentice, in accordance with PAL's policy and guidance</li> <li>➤ Provide appropriate on-programme training/assessment to ensure each apprentice meets the required level of their apprenticeship</li> <li>➤ Advise each apprentice of the EPA process (registration to results) and actively share PAL's EPA support materials with the apprentice and the employer via Padlets</li> <li>➤ Liaise with the employer to identify and agree on suitable dates as to when apprentices will be ready to be booked onto EPA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Enters a Service Level Contract with the provider for EPA services</li> <li>➤ Pro-actively engages in account management activities with the provider</li> <li>➤ Provide access to relevant apprenticeship standard support materials via Padlets</li> <li>➤ Ensure epaPRO accounts are set up and made available to all relevant users</li> </ul>
Gateway and Assessment Scheduling and Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work alongside the provider to ensure the timely sign off at Gateway of the apprentice's competence and readiness for EPA</li> <li>➤ Assist with Gateway evidence as required or requested by PAL's specification, and assessment plan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Work with the employer to ensure the timely sign off at Gateway of the apprentice's competence and readiness for EPA</li> <li>➤ Submit Gateway evidence to PAL where the minimum duration of an apprenticeship has been met and the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide information and any required documents to facilitate Gateway submissions</li> <li>➤ Check Gateway evidence submitted as part of the Gateway process is sufficient and valid</li> <li>➤ Assign IA</li> </ul>



Stage	Employer Responsibilities	Provider Responsibilities	EPAO Responsibilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure apprentices are given sufficient time to complete any Gateway evidence requirements leading up to the EPA</li> <li>➤ Make provisions for optimum dates for EPA and possible alternatives in readiness for assessment planning and scheduling discussions</li> <li>➤ Confirm apprentice's readiness for EPA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ apprentice is registered as being in-training</li> <li>➤ Provide required Gateway evidence for Maths and English guaranteeing these are original and sufficient where applicable</li> <li>➤ Ensure the provision of any other Gateway evidence deemed by the assessment plan as part of the Gateway process</li> <li>➤ Provide additional details to PAL to progress to facilitate assessment scheduling</li> <li>➤ Make any requests for reasonable adjustments, if required and not already done so and provide the necessary evidence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Confirm apprentice's ID</li> <li>➤ Arrange time and date for assessment planning appointment</li> <li>➤ Complete assessment planning with employer and apprentice, confirming all EPA arrangements and assessment conditions in accordance with the assessment plan and PAL's apprenticeship standard specification</li> </ul>
EPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensure the apprentice is available for the EPA</li> <li>➤ Advise PAL of any changes regarding agreed dates and timings for EPA</li> <li>➤ Ensure appropriate environment is booked and made available for the apprentices to carry out required activities for their EPA, if at the employer's own premises, including Health &amp; Safety requirements</li> <li>➤ Ensure employer representation for assessments such as professional discussions and presentations are in place, where the assessment plan dictates the presence but not the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Upload any additional evidence in support of the EPA and in accordance with the timelines specified in the assessment plan and confirmed in assessment planning discussion</li> <li>➤ Liaise with the employer to ensure that EPA arrangements are satisfactory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Attend sites to carry out face to face assessments</li> <li>➤ Undertake remote assessments and invigilation in line with PAL's protocols</li> <li>➤ Check venue to meet health &amp; safety requirements (for face-to-face assessments)</li> <li>➤ Check webinar/virtual environment suitable and free from disruptions and distractions (for remote assessments)</li> <li>➤ Assess assessment evidence</li> </ul>



Stage	Employer Responsibilities	Provider Responsibilities	EPAO Responsibilities
	<p>involvement of an employer/line manager</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Ensure that any equipment and technology required is available and in full working order for EPA</li></ul>		
Post-EPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Issue apprenticeship certificate to the apprentice as the certificate is sent to the designated employer address</li><li>➤ Work with the provider, if applicable, to action any feedback on areas, where the apprentices have not achieved a pass grade and may require further support for their reassessment</li><li>➤ Support the apprentice and AO for the failed assessment to be resat/rebooked</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Update the ILR with achievements</li><li>➤ Support the apprentice as required if resits or retakes are required</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Complete assessment activities and grade overall EPA</li><li>➤ Quality assure the assessment activities</li><li>➤ Process results via epaPRO</li><li>➤ Claim apprenticeship certificate from the DfE for successful completions and inform them of unsuccessful ones</li></ul>

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Last Review: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Next Review: 12<sup>th</sup> January 2027

Persons Responsible for review: Business Operations Director, EPA Managers and Quality Manager

This manual has been agreed by Linda Martin, Managing Director on behalf of the PAL Board