

Results and Awards Policy -EPA

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Overview

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

PAL's role 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 EPA.

Policy Scope

This policy explains the processing of grades and results, and the principles PAL follows in determining the final grade for EPA activities. Grading parameters and pass marks are not determined by PAL for EPA, these are set by the apprenticeship standard assessment plan and PAL must conform to these requirements.

Enquires or appeals regarding the awarding of final grades should follow PAL's enquires and appeals policy

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

- Resit and Retake policy
- Malpractice and Maladministration policy
- Sanctions policy
- Confidentiality policy

- Appeals and Enquiries Policy

Who is this policy for?

PAL Independent Assessors (IAs); employers; apprentices; providers; Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs); Quality Manager; Account/Assessment Managers; Support Services team; 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 is required to comply with Ofqual conditions which means PAL must have an explicit procedure for awarding and issuing results which enshrine secure and fair practices to ensure confidentiality of assessment and provide a clear audit trail of how grades and results have been consistently and accurately awarded.

Responsibilities

Apprentices: Are responsible for ensuring all evidence they provide in respect of their apprenticeship is authentic and is reflective of their performance and they have signed a statement to that effect, and they understand the sanctions for acts of plagiarism, cheating and falsification of evidence as per PAL's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, Plagiarism, Collusion and Cheating Policy and AI guidance.

Employers: Are responsible for confirming at gateway and the assessment planning meeting the apprentice is ready for EPA and as such any evidence or performance of work submitted or assessed for EPA is the original work of the apprentice, and they understand the sanctions for acts of plagiarism, cheating and falsification of evidence, as per PAL's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Plagiarism, Collusion and Cheating Policy.

Providers and Colleges (Third Parties): Are responsible for ensuring any submission of gateway evidence or evidence required for EPA as satisfactorily been checked by their IQA practices before submission and that they understand the sanctions for acts of plagiarism, cheating and falsification of evidence that can be imposed on their learners, individual staff members or their organisation as a whole as per PAL's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and Plagiarism, Collusion and Cheating Policy.

PAL Independent Assessors (IAs): Are responsible for advising employers and apprentices at the assessment planning meeting of the requirements for authentic and learner-owned and created evidence. Assessors throughout their assessment activities must at all times ensure their assessment decisions meet the requirements of validity, authenticity, currency, sufficiency, and reliability and are compliant with the relevant assessment plan requirements and recognise where they fail to do this, they are subject to PAL's policies and sanctions.

PAL IQAs: Are responsible for quality assuring EPA activities in accordance with Ofqual's general conditions of recognition and the relevant assessment plan and ensuring IAs follow PAL protocols and policies and where this is not the case, they apply PAL's relevant policies and procedures with the support of PAL's Business Operations Director(BOD), Account/Assessment Managers and Responsible Officer, which includes the overturning of assessment decisions where applicable.

All stakeholders must understand where PAL has reasonable belief or evidence that any assessment decision is flawed or based on falsified evidence this will be notified to Ofqual as a potential or actual adverse effect.

How are results and awards issued?

Assessment reports will be uploaded to epaPRO (online platform utilised by PAL to manage EPA activities from registration to certification) by the IAs for the duration of the end-point 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 end-point assessment summary report and results are uploaded to epaPRO by the IA 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 policies. 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.

Concerned parties will be kept advised of the stage of marking and certification progress via epaPRO using their log-in credentials. The final assessment component results will not be issued prior to full completion and quality assurance taking place.

The PAL EPA Manual, Quality Assurance Manual – information for Providers and Employers, alongside the Support Services team additionally provide guidance regarding result processing.

Results will be made available in 15 working days from the final assessment taking place, 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 as per PAL' Appeals and Enquiries Policy and Procedure. In the event PAL cannot meet the stated timescales for the release of results , PAL will keep all parties involved in the required extension for time and the reasons for this.

Once the successful and non-successful completions are confirmed and processed by the PAL Quality team, the epaPRO system is updated, and the Support Services team will advise the DfE of the outcome and the overall assessment grade via the dedicated portal.

The Support Services team have the responsibility for checking the correct outcomes are communicated to the DfE. DfE are responsible for the issue of the apprenticeship certificate based on the results information provided by PAL.

All final grade decisions will be recorded in epaPRO under the apprentice's name, with access limited to relevant and authorised PAL personnel and the relevant parties, which are the apprentice, employer and provider; it is important to note that all certificates are directed to the named employer unless PAL receives specific and valid instructions to change this. It is therefore essential that all stakeholders make sure PAL has current contact details on epaPRO. Incorrect information can delay not only assessments but the apprentice receiving their certificate.

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 the BOD will confirm such access arrangements and inform the relevant PAL personnel to facilitate such requests.

Certification Requests

Professional Assessment Limited issues results to the DfE who 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. For unsuccessful completions, PAL informs DfE of the grade via their portal, but there is no certificate request.

For all certification requests and notification of results 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. Please note this must be the apprentices recognised name as stated at registration and on the ILR and epaPRO. Apprentices must inform PAL of any official name changes and provide official evidence for it and will advise on evidence required to change records
- Name of the employer/address for certification purposes.
- The correct apprenticeship standard and specialism where applicable.

PAL applies for apprenticeship certificate using two portals/systems. The two portals/systems are:

- Apprenticeship Assessment Service Portal – Named individuals to include Support Services team, Assessment/Account Managers and BOD have unique login credentials to the portal.
- epaPRO.

The Support Services 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 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 DfE and associated agencies to issue certificates, and PAL 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 PAL will report such incidents to the Apprenticeship Assessment Service/DfE 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 Support Services team will review where the certificate is to be sent to.

The DfE 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

For successful completions, apprentices, employers and providers can access the results via their epaPRO account. The end-point assessment summary report can be downloaded from the system.

For unsuccessful completions, apprentices, and employers have the end-point assessment summary report emailed to them by the Support Services team.

In the event the apprentice fails their assessment PAL's Support Services team will inform the apprentice, employer and provider of the next steps and gauge typically with the Provider/College whether a period of re-training is required, or if a resit is possible within the assessment window. PAL's resit and retake policy provides further guidance regarding resits and retakes, this policy is informed by the apprenticeship assessment plan requirements.

In the situation that PAL is unable to publish results due to PAL actions¹ within our stated timescales, PAL will inform the relevant regulator of the incident 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 PAL's Appeals and Enquiries Policy and Procedures or 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 the revocation.

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 officer² will be notified, and they will report to the regulatory body. PAL expects and requires the full co-operation of involved 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

As per PAL's Sanctions Policy, PAL reserves the right to place sanctions on an employer, provider and apprentice, 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.

Sanctions can be applied at an Organisational level, departmental or site level or against an individual or applied in a combination. Taking a decision to apply such sanctions is not taken lightly with external parties.

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.

PAL's Sanctions Policy provides further information regarding PAL's approach and level of sanctions and notification to external agencies.

¹ Where a delay in certification is due to other parties to include DfE, PAL will monitor this, dependent on the delay and impact PAL reserves the right to make this an event notification to Ofqual or the relevant regulator. Where details on epaPRO have not been updated, any delays to certification are a result of third-party systems and processes, persistent occurrences will be judged as maladministration by PAL

² In the absence of the RO a member of PAL's events notification and regulation team can report to Ofqual

Data Security

Assessment/Account Managers and Support Services team are responsible for access arrangements to epaPRO and assessment evidence and reports, creating accounts and logins for new IAs and inactivating accounts for staff members that do not complete EPA activities. Such tasks are completed on a demand basis and reviewed regularly.

Any breach of data security is recorded in accordance with PAL's Data Protection and Privacy policy and Confidentiality policy. 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 nominated representative once a service level contract has been signed and received by PAL. The BOD or Assessment/Account Managers will inform the Support Services team of client details, and the Support Services 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 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 condition:

- **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 IAs using internally devised assessment materials and or stem questions from our developed question banks put these assessments into this category. PAL will not provide access to full recordings of assessments, 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, or in the support of an individual apprentice resitting or retaking an assessment.

PAL will provide apprentices with a generic professional discussion/ interview agenda to aid professional discussion preparation; no individualised professional discussion agendas will be shared with apprentices, employers or providers in advance of the professional discussion.

PAL has an Appeals and Enquiries policy and procedure in place that supports an enquiry or appeal to be made where interested and relevant parties legitimately perceive that an apprentice's assessment has not been conducted in an unfair or biased fashion. PAL is not in a position to modify, or alter the assessment requirements, to include grading and mark schemes as stipulated in an assessment plan.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed as a minimum on a yearly basis.

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.

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Next review: 31st January 2027

Person Responsible for Review: Business Operations Director

This Policy has been agreed by Linda Martin, Managing Director