

Improving independent end-point assessment in apprenticeship standards

Professional Dialogues

The role of the end-point assessor in
delivering apprenticeship standards

- How many assessors will be needed?
- Where will they come from?
- What skills and knowledge will they need?
- What CPD do they need and when?

Summary

1. It is estimated that between 23,000 and 42,000 assessors will ultimately be required to deliver approximately between 570,000 and 630,000 end-point assessments each year. The PDG Groups discussed the volumes of assessors that could be needed in their sector. A model was developed that predicts the potential numbers of starts and assessments, by sector, and estimates the number of assessors that could be required overall.
2. There is a core of common characteristics for an 'effective assessor'. These are set out later in this summary.
3. The range of entry points to assessment roles by potential end-point assessors varies widely across sectors with the potential for a variety of industry-based recruits and those from the learning and skills sector. Their needs differ, and so will require Continuous Professional Development (CPD) tailored to their specific starting-points and needs.
4. Immediate CPD should focus on equipping potential and existing assessors to upskill to assess against standards that are being delivered now, and on new types of assessment methods.
5. A pick and mix style suite of short CPD programmes should be available now to allow bespoke CPD for individuals in specific contexts.
6. The next phase of Future Apprenticeships for end-point assessment April 2017 to March 2018 will begin to address these short-term needs.
7. Longer-term CPD requirements are likely to focus on achieving consistency in end-point assessment and creating a workforce of well-equipped end-point assessors in every sector.

The Professional Dialogue Process

The Professional Dialogues drew together stakeholders in eight sectors to understand the challenges to be faced in creating and developing a workforce of high-quality assessors.

The eight areas covered were:

- Adult Social Care
- Construction
- Digital industries and IT
- Hospitality and Catering
- Management, Business and Administration
- Manufacturing and Engineering
- Retail, Sales and Customer Service
- Transport

More than 100 participants from 51 organisations participated in the Professional Dialogues.

A Reference Group supported the process with their guidance and comments. The Reference Group members were:

Association of Employment & Learning Providers
Association of Colleges
Cambridge Assessment
City & Guilds
Collab Group
Education and Training Foundation
Federation of Awarding Bodies
HOLEX
Learning and Work Institute
Skills Funding Agency
The Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards
University Vocational Awards Council

The process was facilitated by the Strategic Development Network.

The 'effective assessor'

Across all sectors "effective assessors" will have

For occupational competence and experience:

1. Up-to-date, relevant, deep and broad experience of working in the occupational area of the apprenticeship standard including practical and current knowledge of working practices, infrastructure, tools and technologies
2. Relevant expertise or relevant professional recognition equivalent to or higher than the level of the apprenticeship standard being assessed
3. Professional membership or equivalent and bound by a relevant code of professional conduct
4. On-going proof of CPD relevant to the occupation in the standard

For assessment competence, an effective assessor can:

5. Undertake holistic, graded assessment effectively
6. Apply assessment approaches without prejudice or bias, in a fair and honest way
7. Apply equality and diversity, access and security principles
8. Establish an appropriate environment for the assessment
9. Establish an appropriate relationship with the candidate to facilitate fair assessment

10. Focus assessment and assessment decisions on the apprentice's capability and help the apprentice to demonstrate and perform to the best of their ability
11. Assess evidence from a range of different occupational contexts
12. Assess at or above the level being assessed, except where there is employer endorsement/ statement of competency for assessors with industry experience but without formal qualifications (e.g. experienced L3 assessing L4)
13. Show a commitment to quality and professional standards
14. Obtain assessor qualifications but only if contextualised to the specific occupation/industry
15. Be able to interpret apprenticeship standards and understand what to expect in a range of possible contexts
16. Work with internal quality systems that ensure consistency, fairness and reliability of performance and evidence collection
17. Work with any apprenticeship assessment organisation and external quality assurance requirements
18. Be flexible in recognizing the variety of evidence that could be used to demonstrate competence
19. Be able to provide insightful, constructive feedback in an empathetic way

They also should:

20. Have confidence in their own judgement
21. Seek advice from, collaborate and share best practice with other assessors
22. Be proactive in seeking advice, referring and in dealing with grade boundary issues in assessment
23. Conduct themselves in a professional manner in stakeholder engagement and management
24. Demonstrate strong interpersonal skills with people of all ages and backgrounds
25. Demonstrate planning, administrative and mapping skills and a clear sense of competence when working with the standard
26. Be willing and able to travel to geographically dispersed venues for assessments. This may require a current driving licence
27. Be computer literate and able to record and report information clearly and efficiently
28. Be able to conduct assessments remotely using technology
29. Have appropriate availability for frequent assessments

Current CPD priorities

Focus 1 Policy induction:

- a. Introduction to standards-based apprenticeships
- b. Understanding standards and assessment plans and an explanation of assessment principles and intentions at a theory level as well as covering the training detail associated with the end-point assessment

Focus 2 Assessment instruments:

- c. Assessing evidence in portfolios
- d. Conducting professional discussions
- e. Conducting interviews and vivas
- f. Observation-based assessment

Focus 3 Assessment practice:

- g. Grading
- h. Assessing behaviours
- i. The importance of sufficiency, context and consistency
- j. Fair assessment and bias
- k. Feeding back assessment decisions
- l. Relevant and up to date safeguarding and Prevent considerations

At three levels

Generic

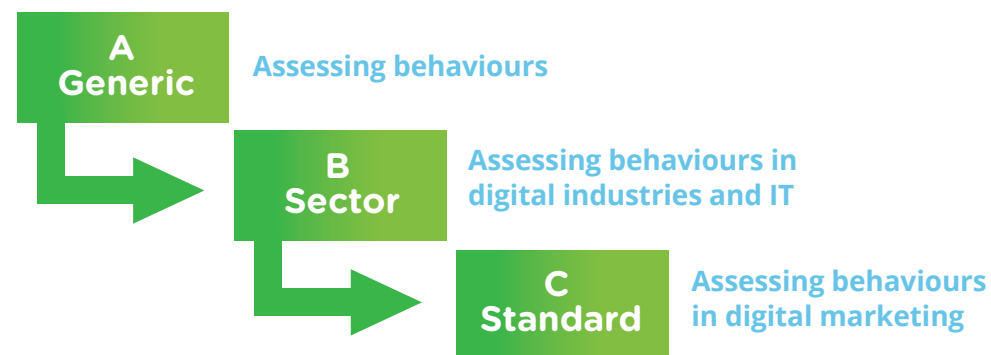
Level A Common CPD issues across all sectors

Contextualised

Level B Sector-level CPD (with requirements defined by the relevant External Quality Assurance (EQA))

Level C Standard-level (defined by the sector EQA and AAOs for that standard)

Example CPD structure for 'Assessing behaviours' sub-focus area



Longer-term CPD

The longer term development focus would be to:

- Achieve consistency in end-point assessment
- Create a workforce with sufficient assessors available in every sector

Medium-term (2017 – 2020)

The top three priorities are likely to be:

1. CPD for new assessors
2. Supporting assessors to access opportunities
3. Individual components such as feedback skills, grading and observation.

Long-term (2018 – 2023)

The top three priorities may be:

1. Extending the range and reach of CPD activities within sectors to accommodate the evolution of standards and assessment plans.
2. New assessment practice (e.g. increased use of online and virtual technologies).
3. Disseminating effective practice in end-point assessment.

Future Apprenticeships for end-point assessment April 2017 to March 2018

The second phase of the programme begins in April 2017.

Based on the findings of the professional dialogues, this phase will provide a self-managed, pick and mix approach to CPD. Whilst the programme's resources will not be sufficient to meet all immediate CPD needs, it will be able to put in place a framework by which aspiring end-point assessors can understand how they need to equip themselves and will begin to address immediate CPD needs.

For more information got to futureapprenticeships.org.uk