

Liz Walters
Solicitors Regulation Authority
The Cube
199 Wharfside Street
BIRMINGHAM
B1 1RN

13 June 2018

Dear Liz

Re: Recognition from the Institute for Apprenticeships – External Quality Assurance (EQA)

I am pleased to confirm that the Institute for Apprenticeships has recognised Solicitors Regulation Authority as EQA provider for the following apprenticeship standard:

ST0246 – Solicitor

Expectations of all EQA providers

Any EQA provider must ensure that it and anyone undertaking EQA activities on its behalf maintain high standards of integrity and professionalism. You will ensure that all staff involved in the delivery of EQA have the relevant experience and are fit and proper to work in an environment that may involve direct contact with personal data, children and vulnerable adults.

Any data may be collected only where it is relevant to the delivery of EQA activities. Each EQA provider is responsible for handling any data obtained during the provision of EQA services in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The Institute will provide you with certain information on the End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs) within scope of your EQA regime; this is outlined at Annex A. In addition to this you may wish to collate additional information from EPAOs, however, you should only collate information that directly relates to the EQA service you are delivering, and should not require extensive personal data on apprentices. Individual EPAOs will of course need to comply with data protection legislation in providing you with information that is additional to that outlined in Annex A.

You may be asked to hand over data and materials collected in the course of the EQA to the Institute. The copyright of any reports will be assigned to the Institute

and you will ensure that the content of the report and any data collected in the course of EQA activities shall remain confidential.

The EQA role does not confer any additional influence or entitle you to make additional arrangements with, or demands on, employers or assessment organisations. We recognise that you may be involved in other work on apprenticeships and this may be agreed separately with employers or assessment organisations, but only in instances where it does not compromise your role as an EQA provider. You are required to notify the Institute of any potential conflicts of interest immediately.

It is a condition of the Register of End Point Assessment Organisations (RoEPAO), that all EPA organisations operate within and adhere to the EQA framework set down by the appropriate EQA body (para 63). Any non-compliance may be reported to the Institute.

Requirements all EQA providers

1. For each relevant standard you will produce:
 - An annual report for each body on the RoEPAO to provide assessment for that standard. The Institute will provide a template for the report which will include as a minimum, an overall judgment on compliance, data, strengths, recommendations, assessment validity, reliability, comparability and independence, internal quality assurance and costs. The EQA provider will share the report with the EPAO and the Institute and where appropriate, will provide the basis for an action plan.
 - A report, at least once a year, on the quality of delivery and fitness-for-purpose of the Standard and Assessment Plan including a summary across all relevant EPAOs.

These reports will be shared with key stakeholders and will allow the Institute's Quality Assurance Committee to take decisions on what improvements might be required either by individual EPAOs or across the standard as a whole. The Institute may make reports or elements of them publicly available. You may be asked to share evidence, including data and materials, collected in the course of your EQA role to the Institute. The Intellectual Property and Copyright in any reports will be assigned to the Institute and you will ensure that both the content of the reports, the data collected and any insights related to individuals or industrial gained remains confidential unless agreed otherwise with the Institute.

2. You will report any serious issue such as, but not limited to, fraud, malpractice, collusion to the Institute immediately. If you are in any doubt about whether an issue is serious please speak to your contact.

Following the receipt of a report or the raising of a concern, the Institute Board or Quality Assurance Committee may decide that a review under Section A2C of the Enterprise Act, 2016 is needed.

Relationship with the Institute

Mohammed Ali will act as your main contact with the Institute. He will agree a performance review plan with you including regular meetings and reports.

The Institute will review the EQA process from time to time and we welcome your input into improvements. The Institute may withdraw permission for you to carry out EQA for one or more apprenticeship standards at any time. Similarly, you may withdraw as an EQA provider for one or more apprenticeship standards at any time, however to allow continuity of service, the Institute expects three months' notice in writing.

Charges

You have indicated that you will not charge EPAOs for the provision of EQA. Any changes to either your charges or methodology must be agreed with the Institute. EQA should be a not-for-profit service and you will be required to submit an annual financial report for EQA activities evidencing your income and expenditure. Please note that this may be subject to audit and you are advised to keep appropriate records.

Yours sincerely



Nikki Christie

Deputy Director, Assessment and Quality Assurance

ANNEX A: Data to be shared with External Quality Assurance bodies

Background

In order to exercise the Institute's functions around External Quality Assurance (EQA) of End Point Assessments, ESFA will be collecting data from End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs), mainly via the ILR but also from EPAOs directly as part of the conditions for being on the RoEPAO, and providing it to the Institute for Apprenticeships (the Institute). To streamline the information flow to bodies undertaking EQA, the Institute will make this data available to the EQA bodies directly. This will remove the need for the EQA bodies to approach the EPAOs directly for this information, which would result in additional bureaucracy, duplication of effort and wasted resource.

Nature of the data to be shared

ESFA intends to gather and share the following with the Institute. This information will be shared by the Institute with organisations undertaking EQA (as set out below):

- suitability of the assessment organisation including:
 - independence from training and other on-programme delivery
 - the single responsible officer for EPA quality
- standards for which each assessment organisation is licensed to deliver EPA
- geographical coverage of each assessment organisation
- volumes of EPAs delivered
- numbers of apprentice certificates claimed/issued
- profile of assessment organisations engaged by employers
- assessment organisations which have not been engaged
- assessment organisations offering/delivering on programme support
- trends in packaging and costs of EPA
- conversion rates from employer sign-off to EPAs undertaken to successful assessment
- use of subcontractors

Justification/purpose of sharing this data

The data is necessary for the Institute to fulfil its function to ensure all end-point assessments are quality assured, including quality assuring some itself. This would also simplify existing information flows and reduce bureaucracy in the system.

Persons (EQA bodies) with whom the data will be shared

The Institute would share with the following bodies:

- a) providers of external quality assurance for apprenticeship standards that have been (i) nominated by the trailblazer group in their assessment plan, (ii) recognised by the IfA and (iii) informed of their role in the process
- b) the nominated sub-contractor delivering EQA on behalf of the IfA
- c) Ofqual and the QAA

Security and assurance

To the extent that any information shared by the ESFA with the Institute as described above is personal data as defined under the Data Protection Act 1998 or any subsequent legislation enacted, the Institute will become a data controller of that personal data for the purposes set out above. The Institute agrees to ensure that the EQA bodies with whom it shares data as described in this Annex are required, as a minimum, to use the data solely for the purposes described here and only in accordance with the security, assurance and data protection requirements in this data sharing agreement.