



**Institute for Apprenticeships
& Technical Education**

EQA Manual

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Purpose

This manual contains guidance to support the External Quality Assurance (EQA) Framework. The EQA Framework itself is set out in a separate document.

This manual sets out the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's (the Institute) guidance for all involved in managing the EQA process. It is intended to provide a consistent, fair approach for all to follow and covers:

- end-to-end process for using the EQA Framework
- information and guidance the Institute's Assessment and Quality Assurance team need to understand and manage the EQA Framework
- information and guidance EQA providers need to understand and use the EQA Framework
- additional information and tools

How to use this document

This manual provides operational rules and guidance for internal Institute staff and EQA providers. This document is part of a toolkit and will evolve over time. As partners begin to use the manual to complete EQA assessments, there will be operational points of clarification and refinement. EQA providers are invited to suggest improvements to the manual, including suggesting new tools and templates that could help others. In addition to these incremental changes, the document will be formally reviewed on an annual basis.

This is version 1.0 issued on the 1 July 2019.

Introduction

The Institute has established an evidence-led, continuously improving EQA service that drives-up the quality of end-point assessments (EPAs). It ensures a consistent and fair experience for apprentices and employers, and a focus on the occupational competence of all those who complete their apprenticeships. To help us to achieve our collective vision, we have a set of principles that underpin our policies, practices, behaviours and actions in respect of quality assurance. At the centre of these principles is achieving the right outcome for apprentices and employers:

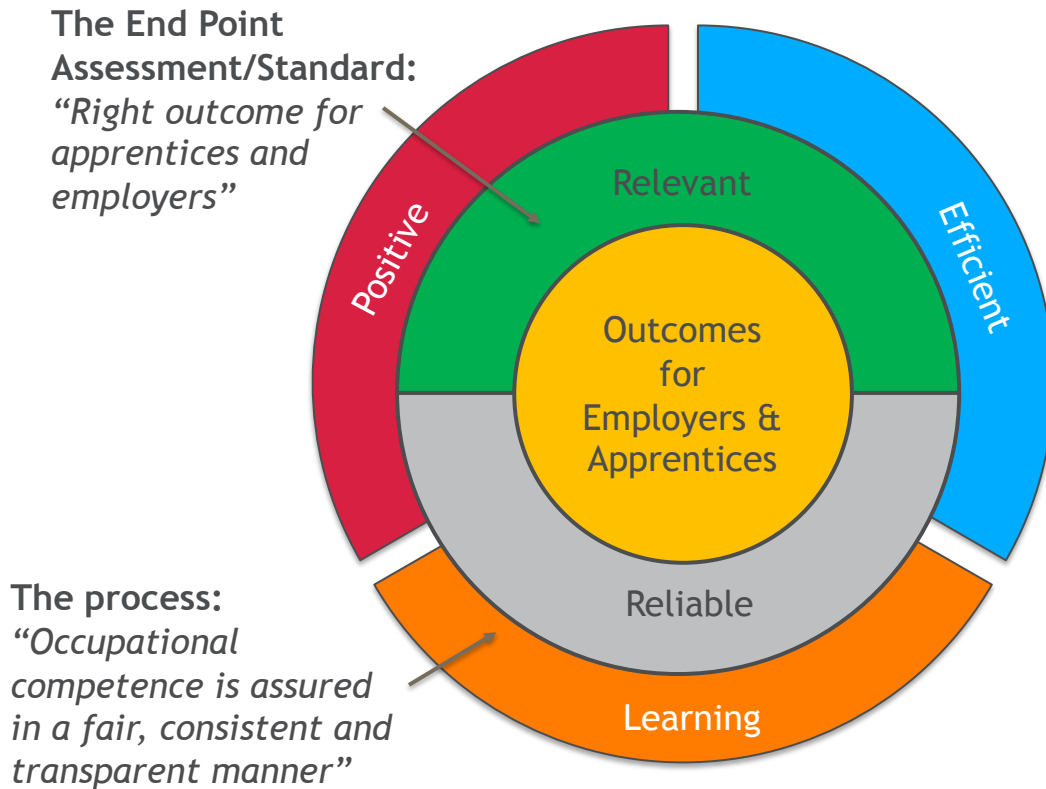


Figure 1 - Our principles

EQA Principles		
Delivery of EPA is:	Relevant	The EPA genuinely measures occupational competence, is current and achievement of the apprenticeship is a reliable predictor of success in the occupation
	Reliable	The EPA produces the same results (i.e. the right grades and results) irrespective of context, cohort, timing or the organisations involved
Quality assurance of EPA is:	Efficient	The system is high-quality, easy to use and facilitates the entry of new employers and EPAOs. To ensure that the right aspects of quality are measured, the right activity is undertaken by the right people, at the right time, and enabled by the right digital systems
	Positive	EPA is trusted and respected by employers and apprentices to deliver the right outcomes. The experience is open, transparent and accessible
	Learning	Continuous improvement is embedded in all areas of the EQA Framework to ensure a proactive approach to quality

These principles are underpinned by ways of working that EQA providers and the Institute will adhere to.

Ways of working within the EQA Framework

Principle	Ways of working
Relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • occupational competence is the focus of all end-point assessments and quality assurance activity • a proactive mind-set is encouraged to ensure a high quality of delivery • Information about best practice and risks and issues is shared and used to improve quality of end-point assessments (EPAs) • feedback loops are closed to ensure improvements are made to EPA plans and practice in a timely manner
Reliable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all EQA providers follow the EQA Framework • expectations of individuals in the EQA Framework are clear, fair and comparable • all EQA providers must use a risk-based approach, with elements of random sampling to assess the capability of their EPAOs and the quality of assessments • information is recorded in the system in the same way using the same language • ensuring all EPAs are delivered consistently across Standards is a priority • all apprentices are assessed fairly with an equal chance of success • EPA plans are unambiguous and interpreted in the same way
Efficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • roles and responsibilities in the EQA Framework are set out clearly and everyone takes accountability for actions and commits to delivering on them in the agreed timeframes • everyone in the EQA Framework communicates openly and honestly about risks and issues • important decisions are made at the right level, by the person / group with information and experience in a timely manner to ensure a continued flow in operations and reduce bottlenecks • mistakes are acknowledged and remedies are prompt, appropriate and proportionate. Lessons are learnt • data is inputted to the digital system in a timely manner • procedures are clearly communicated, well understood with as few steps as necessary to enable timely achievement of outcomes • the issue resolution is carried out in accordance with the procedures and guidance, having clear governance arrangements in place which set out roles and responsibilities
Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect the roles and responsibilities of the key players in the EQA Framework • engagement is regular and proactive • each organisation within the EQA Framework is managed against clear key performance indicators (KPIs) and there is a supportive attitude to help all perform at their best • a culture of collaboration and information sharing is the 'norm' • simple procedures are accessible and transparent, foster trust and respect and ensure that apprentices and employers are at the heart of the process • ensure complainants are treated impartially and listened to and issues are dealt with promptly and sensitively • complaints are investigated thoroughly, independently and fairly to establish the facts of the case. Decisions are proportionate, appropriate and fair
Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuous improvement is embedded in the culture and all learning is shared across the whole assessment system • feedback and action plans are used as an opportunity to raise quality • all feedback and the lessons learnt from complaints are recorded and used as a learning opportunity to improve the overall quality assurance system • the EQA Framework is reviewed regularly to ensure it continues to evolve • issues are raised and managed in a timely manner • a learning culture is encouraged and best practice is shared to drive up the quality at all stages

Background

What is External Quality Assurance?

Quality is central to the government’s reform of apprenticeships. The Institute has a statutory duty to secure that evaluations are carried out of the quality of apprenticeship assessments provided by persons in relation to end-point assessment plans published under section A2 of the Enterprise Act 2016. The process to deliver this is External Quality Assurance (EQA).

EQA is designed to ensure that apprenticeship EPA is meeting employers’ needs, including consistency and validity of delivery, process and outcomes as specified in the published Apprenticeship Standard and EPA plan.

Every apprentice who completes their Apprenticeship Standard will undertake a holistic independent EPA to confirm that they have achieved competence in the occupation they have trained for.

The nature of end-point assessment for each Apprenticeship Standard is set out in an EPA plan, developed by employers and approved by the Institute. This assessment is then delivered by an independent end-point assessment organisation (EPAO).

The EQA Framework covers the various stages of quality, and this manual focuses on stages 3-8 below, which involve EQA providers.

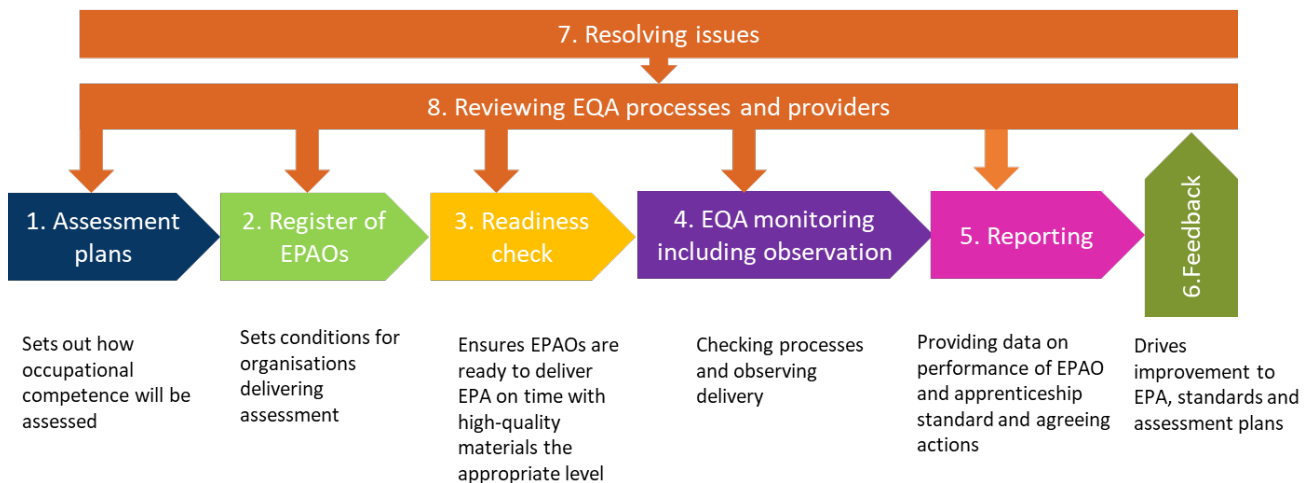


Figure - 2 EQA 8-step framework

External Quality Assurance Manual

Our EQA system has been set out in a set of three documents:

1. the **EQA Vision document** sets out why EQA is important and the Institute’s approach to delivering it
2. the **EQA Framework document** sets out what EQA covers, and what EQA providers will be looking at to gain assurance that EPAOs are delivering consistently
3. the **EQA Manual** provides the end-to-end process for using the EQA Framework, and detailed information and guidance required for the Institute and EQA providers

Readiness Checks

Purpose

Readiness checks are undertaken in two stages. The first stage is managed by the Education & Skills Funding Agency (the Agency) and focuses on operational readiness, ensuring that the organisation has suitable processes and systems in place to deliver apprenticeship EPA and to assess the specific Standards that have been agreed. The Agency will work with each EPAO to ensure that they have the capacity and capability to deliver EPA. At the end of this stage the Agency will review progress and provide a rating indicating whether or not the EPAO will be ready to deliver assessments and a report of any further action needed. At this point, the Agency hands over responsibility for readiness checks to the Institute. The report and evidence is passed to the relevant EQA provider(s) who will confirm readiness to deliver assessment for the specific Standard(s). Before an EPAO can deliver EPA, the EQA provider checks that it is ready and able to ensure timely delivery of assessments where apprentices are due to complete. These checks ensure that appropriate and high-quality assessment materials are reliable, robust and meet the requirements set out in the EPA plan are in place, with systems, processes and appropriate personnel.

The frequency and focus of EQA activities will be managed according to an assessment of risk using standard criteria to assess each EPAO and standard. All information will be recorded on the Institute’s digital system to ensure transparency and information sharing across EQA providers and with the Institute.

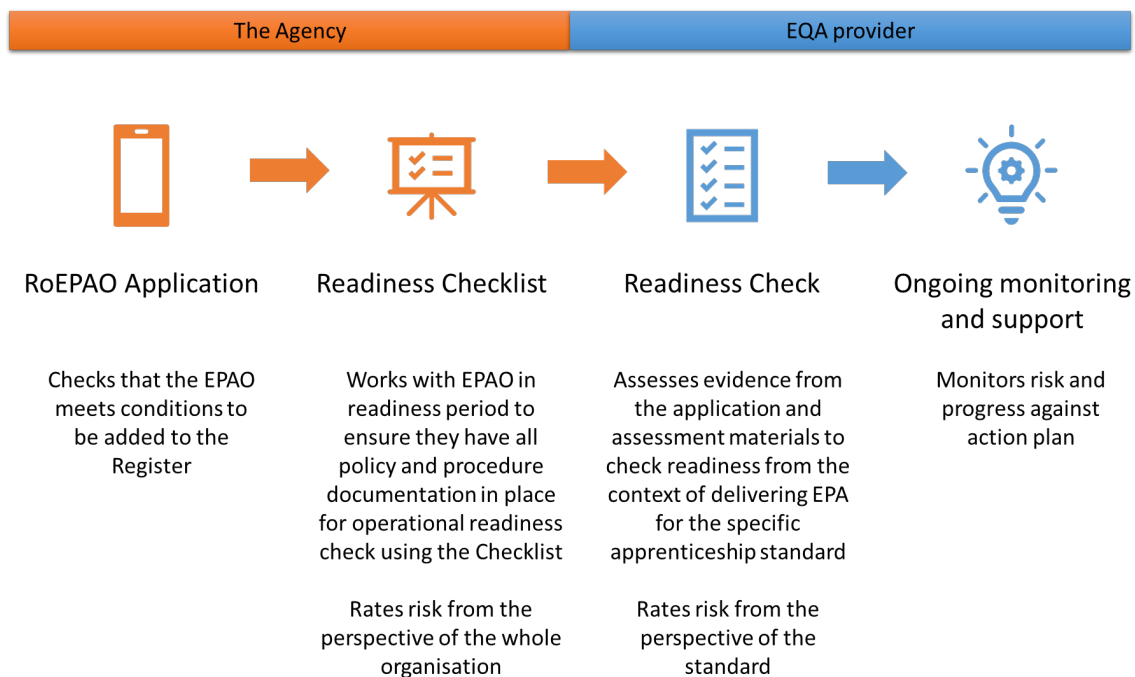


Figure 3 - The Agency and the Institute accountability for EPAO readiness

Process

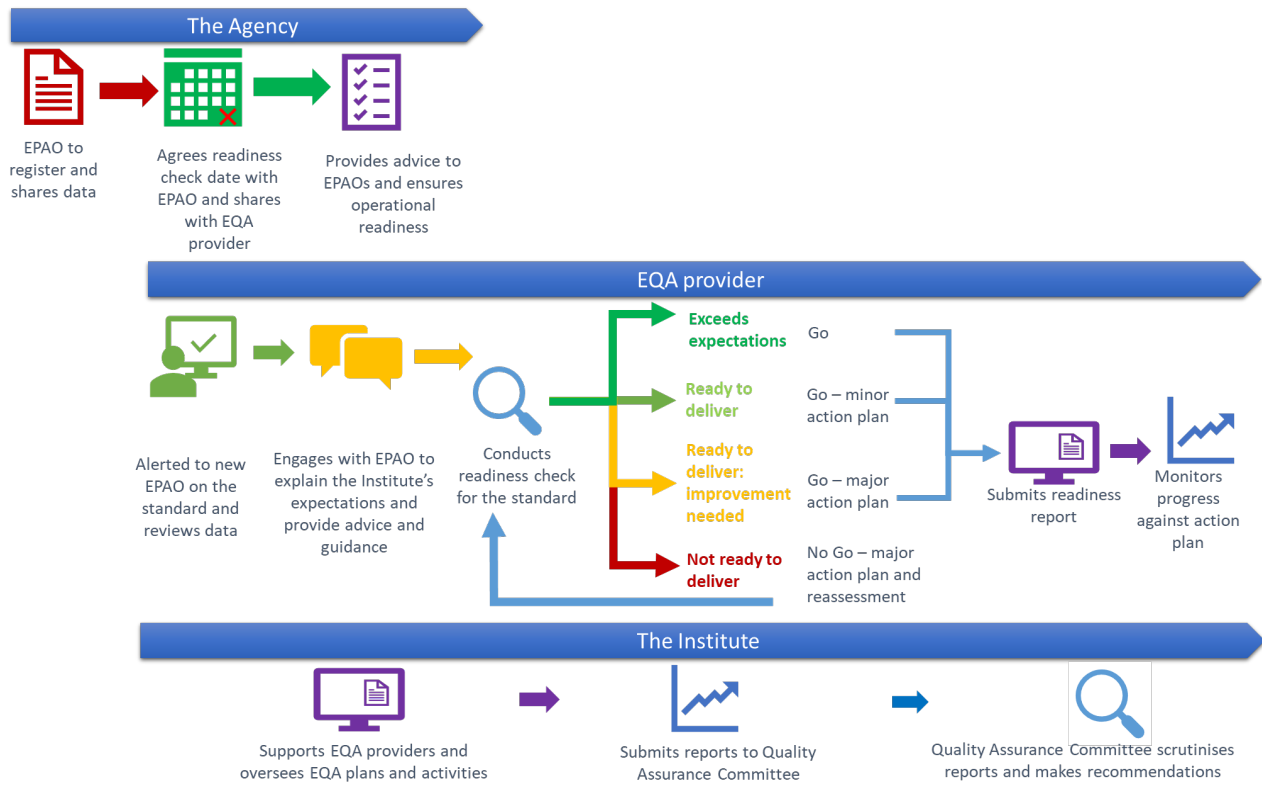


Figure 4 - EPAO Readiness process

Ways of working

Activity	Description of activity/process and key ways of working
The Agency adds EPAO to the RoEPAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Agency adds the EPAO to the Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations (RoEPAO) on confirmation that they meet the Conditions the Agency shares the RoEPAO application documentation and data with the Institute on the EQA digital system the digital system alerts the EQAP of a new EPAO registered against the Standard
The Agency works with the EPAO to prepare for readiness check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Agency works with EPAO to ensure all documentation and materials in place for the first stage of the readiness check, using the Readiness Checklist Conditions. the Agency confirms the planned readiness date with the EPAO and informs the EQA provider. The readiness check will typically take place 9 to 12 months after the organisation is added to the RoEPAO for the relevant standard(s). The readiness check may need to be carried out sooner where assessments are imminent any subsequent changes to the readiness check date are shared with the EQA provider The Agency assesses operational readiness (i.e. capacity and capability of the organisation to deliver EPA) which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how they manage their data covering current and future apprentices with their current number of assessors detailed plans for delivery of the assessment how the EPA will confirm occupational competence the Agency rates the EPAO on risk likelihood (see Table 1) based on their assessment of the organisational readiness and develops this into a report to upload into the digital system (details of the Agency process will be included once developed) where the Agency decides that the EPAO meets its readiness criteria, it hands over to the relevant EQA provider for stage 2 of the readiness check If the EPAO has not made sufficient progress, a grade of 4 will be given. The Agency will then agree next steps with the EPAO and their register entry changed accordingly. Depending on the reasons for the grading this may mean agreeing a new date for delivering EPA, suspension, or withdrawal from the register.
EQA provider sets expectation of the activity and performance standards required of an EPAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the EQA provider arranges an initial meeting (this can be done either person or remotely) with the EPAO to establish a relationship and clarify the roles, activities and target impact of all the key players and how they fit together. The EQA provider and EPAO will discuss a timetable for the check, taking into account where evidence is likely to arise, expected assessment dates and when materials are likely to be ready where needed, the EQA provider may provide guidance to EPAOs on the design, development and implementation of methods of assessment to ensure consistency of interpretation across EPAOs. However, responsibility for developing EPA plans rests with the EPAO the EQA provider should record all contact with EPAOs in the EQA digital system to allow the Quality Manager (QM) oversight of activity
EQA provider reviews data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the EQA provider prioritises readiness check of Standards where apprentices are due to complete, prioritising those due within the next 12 months. They should also consider expected demand and geographic coverage the EQA provider should check the outcomes from the Agency's operational readiness assessment to ensure that outstanding actions have been addressed the EQA provider should review readiness checks completed by other EQA providers on other Apprenticeship Standards on the system to understand any previous issues with the EPAO and view actions and outcomes from other EQA provider readiness checks this may inform risk ratings, areas of focus for the readiness check and ongoing monitoring

EQA provider assesses current level of readiness and risk

- the EQA provider undertakes the readiness check. This should be completed at least 8 - 12 weeks before the date of the first EPA.
- the readiness check will focus on the following five lines of enquiry:
 - assessment materials
 - support materials
 - EPA delivery plans
 - assessor recruitment and training
 - policies and procedures including internal quality assurance
- the EQA provider will provide a rating on a four-point scale to the EPAO for each area line of enquiry, a description of which is provided in Table 1 below. See "Appendix 4 – Four-point scale of readiness" on page 60 for more detailed description of the judgement of lines of enquiry on the four-point scale.

Table 1 – Readiness ratings and descriptions

Category	Description	Outcome
1. Exceeds expectations	EPAO meets all requirements of readiness to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard without further action	Go Progress monitored as required
2. Ready to deliver	EPAO is ready to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard, subject to minor issues addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Go Action plan agreed and monitored through delivery
3. Ready to deliver – improvement needed	EPAO is ready to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard, subject to major issues addressed within the action plan and monitored closely on an ongoing basis	Go Action plan agreed and monitored through delivery
4. Not ready to deliver	EPAO is not ready to deliver EPA. Major actions are required to achieve readiness.	No Go Action plan agreed and new readiness review date set Or the Institute contacted to discuss next steps, which may include referring the EPAO back to the Agency

- the EQA provider shares outcome of the readiness check and the impact in terms of the EPAO's ability to carry out EPAs
- the readiness rating will contribute to the EPAO's risk rating, which will, along with other factors, determine the frequency and intensity of the ongoing monitoring they will receive (see "Appendix 6 – Risk Calculator" on page 65 for detail about risk calculation)
- if the EPAO is assessed as not ready to deliver EPA, a date is set to reassess readiness and the EQA provider supports them in achieving their improvement plan, ready for the reassessment. The Agency should also be informed that a 'No Go' conclusion has been reached.
- in exceptional circumstances, if the EPAO is deemed as unlikely to be able to deliver EPA, the EQA provider must contact the Quality Manager immediately to discuss next steps which may include referring the EPAO back to the Agency to consider actions such as considering suspension or removal from the RoEPAO. The Agency should be involved in these conversations from an early point to ensure thinking and decision making is aligned

<p>EPAO owns and implements improvement action plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the EQA provider works with the EPAO to develop an action plan that responds to the outcomes of the readiness check • the EQA provider uploads the action plan to the EQA digital system to enable visibility of plan and progress by all key players • the dates in the action plan should be aligned to ensure readiness before the first assessment is due
<p>EQA Provider submits readiness report to the Institute</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the EQA provider submits readiness report to the Institute using the digital system including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • overall 'Go/No Go' status • overall risk rating (see "Appendix 6 – Risk Calculator" on page 65 for detail about risk calculation) • implications for monitoring • risk ratings for functional areas • issue category • mitigating actions • action owner • agreed target date for review • should the EQA provider be unable to access the digital system (e.g. IT security requirements), a word document version will be available to download and enter at a later date or email to the Quality Manager as a last resort
<p>EQA Provider monitors progress against actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the EPAO is assessed as ready to deliver EPA, actions are reviewed as part of ongoing monitoring of EPAO performance

Lines of Enquiry – EQA provider readiness check

Below are the key areas of focus for the initial Readiness Check and ongoing EQA. EQA providers are required to review these areas to report to the Institute

Table 2 - Lines of enquiry for the EQA provider readiness check

	Lines of enquiry				
	Relevant	Reliable	Efficient	Positive	Learning
Assessment materials	<p>Are materials appropriate to the standard and level of the apprenticeship?</p> <p>Are they specific to the role and reflecting recognised and current practice within the industry?</p>	<p>Will materials allow for consistent, valid and fair assessment of occupational competence?</p> <p>Will they allow appropriate grading judgements to be made?</p> <p>How is the security of materials managed?</p>	<p>Are assessment materials being developed and used efficiently?</p>	<p>Are materials accessible to all apprentices including those for whom reasonable adjustments will be made?</p>	<p>Pilots/trials with people already employed in these roles?</p> <p>Systematic and genuine industry feedback</p>
Support materials	<p>Are materials appropriate to the standard and level of the apprenticeship?</p> <p>Do they reflect current/standard industry practices?</p> <p>Are they regularly updated?</p> <p>Would employers recognise their relevance?</p>		<p>Are materials available digitally and at no extra charge?</p>	<p>Are they clear and accessible?</p>	<p>Who have materials been tested with?</p> <p>What feedback loops are built in?</p>
EPA delivery plans	<p>Are they appropriate to delivering the assessment specified in the EPA plan?</p>	<p>Will they produce reliable results over place and time and for all apprentices regardless of their specific characteristics? Are they suitable for all apprentices?</p>	<p>Are the plans realistic and appropriate for delivering the likely volume?</p>	<p>Have they thought about accessibility in their planning</p>	<p>Which groups has that been tested with?</p> <p>Are their specific diversity checks built in as standard?</p> <p>What is the feedback loops?</p>
Assessor recruitment and training	<p>Do the assessors recruited have the appropriate and up to date occupational and assessment skills, and meet any specific requirements as set out in the EPA plan?</p>	<p>Does the EPAO have appropriate conflict of interest policies, applied across all standards, in place to ensure that assessors will be independent from apprentices, employers and Training Providers?</p> <p>Are these standing up to actual delivery on that specific Standard?</p>	<p>Has the EPAO recruited sufficient assessors for the likely volume of EPA to be undertaken?</p>	<p>Are the assessors credible across the industry as people fit to pass apprentices as occupationally competent?</p> <p>Will employers respect their judgement?</p> <p>Is a process in place to promote and monitor assessor CPD?</p>	<p>What is the schedule and quality of assessor training for industry experts?</p>
Policies and procedures (including IQA)		<p>Does the organisation have appropriate internal quality assurance arrangements in place?</p>	<p>Do the EPAO's data management processes meet the needs of the standard?</p>	<p>Is the EPAO engaging appropriately with employers and providers to ensure that apprentices are prepared for their EPA?</p>	<p>In there an internal learning loop</p>

Key performance indicators

KPI 1: EQA providers should complete the readiness check at the point at which the EPAO's application to the RoEPAO has indicated that they will be ready (generally within 9 to 12 months of the EPAO joining the register, or earlier where apprentices are ready for assessment)

KPI 2: The readiness check is completed at least one month before the first EPA is due

KPI 3: Readiness reports will be entered onto the digital system and shared with the EPAO within 10 days of the final readiness check being completed, and finalised on the digital system within 25 days. The EQA provider must notify the Institute of any major concerns at once

Roles and responsibilities

Activity	Institute role	EQA provider role	EPAO role	Agency role
The Agency adds EPAO to the RoEPAO	Stores EPAO documentation and data in system	Engages with EPAO as necessary to ensure required quality and consistency to pass Readiness Check	Works with the Agency to ensure documentation and materials are prepared for Readiness Check Updates the Agency on preparations for readiness against agreed plan Confirms date of readiness with the Agency	Accountable for checking documentation and materials are prepared for readiness check Ensures EPAO is on track to be prepared for readiness check against agreed delivery plan Maintains RoEPAO Provides RoEPAO application documentation and data to the institute's system, including any updates on readiness timelines
Identifying a new EPAO in the system	Liaises with the Agency to ensure data is as accurate and up to date as possible Provides and manages a system that enables visibility of information	Reviews EPAOs against the Apprenticeship Standard on a regular basis Prioritises Apprenticeship Standards and EPAOs where apprentices are due to complete within the next 12 months Engages with the EPAO as early as possible to build relationship	Engages with the EQA provider as early as possible to build relationship	
EQA provider reviews previous readiness checks if available	Provides and manages a system that enables visibility of information Provides guidance and support on the use of former readiness information to inform further Readiness Checks by and EQA Provider	Reviews previous readiness and risk information against an EPAO if available Makes a judgement as to the depth of Readiness Check required for the Apprenticeship Standard Shares proposed action and justification openly with EPAO		

Activity	Institute role	EQA provider role	EPAO role	Agency role
EQA provider explains expectation of the activity and performance standards required of an EPAO	<p>Sets expectations and performance standards for EQA providers and EPAOs</p> <p>Provides guidance and materials to support engagement</p> <p>Gathers insights around best practice and lessons learnt to share fairly across the sector</p>	<p>Engages in open and transparent dialogue with key stakeholders within the EPAO to build relationships</p> <p>Explains expectations around roles and responsibilities, activities and target impact of all the key players and how they fit together, as set out by the Institute</p> <p>Agrees level of support and engagement provided before Readiness Check</p> <p>Sets a Readiness Check date within the nine-month deadline and sets out the documentation and any other requirements</p>	<p>Engages in open and transparent dialogue with key stakeholders within the EQA provider to build relationships</p> <p>Seeks understanding and clarification on expectations, roles and responsibilities, activities and target impact of all key players and makes commitment the ways of working</p> <p>Ensures all questions are asked within a timely fashion to ensure preparedness for the Readiness Check</p> <p>Agrees readiness date with the nine-month deadline and prepares documentation and other requirements</p>	
EQA provider assesses current level of readiness	<p>Provides guidance on the areas of readiness that require assessment</p>	<p>Assesses readiness and assigns risk level</p> <p>Makes judgement on level of monitoring required as result of risk assessment</p>	<p>Provides all documentations and requirements for the Readiness Check</p> <p>Works with EQA provider to develop and agree improvement action plan</p>	
EPAO owns and implements improvement action plan	<p>Monitors progress on action plan</p> <p>Provides support and challenge to EQA provider where necessary</p>	<p>Discusses areas of improvement with EPAO and implications for ongoing monitoring</p> <p>Works with EPAO to agree improvement actions</p> <p>Monitors and supports EPAO to deliver action plan</p>	<p>Works with EPAO to identify and agree improvement actions</p> <p>Delivers action plan</p>	
EQA provider submits readiness report to the Institute	<p>Provides system with which to document outcomes</p> <p>Provides support and challenge to EQA provider where necessary</p> <p>Uploads reports to the system if the EQA provider cannot do this themselves</p> <p>Reviews and escalates actions and recommendations to the Quality Assurance Committee and the Agency where necessary</p>	<p>Informs the EPAO of the draft readiness report that will be submitted to the Institute via the digital system and gives them opportunity to comment</p> <p>Submits report to the Institute using the digital system in a timely fashion</p>	<p>Reads and provides feedback on the draft information that will be shared with the Institute in a timely fashion</p>	<p>Updates RoEPAO confirming when EPAOs are ready to deliver.</p> <p>Agrees action where the EPAO is deemed 'Not ready to deliver'. This may include further actions and checks or suspension/removal from the RoEPAO</p>
EQA provider monitors progress against actions	<p>Provides system with which to document and track progress</p> <p>Provides support and challenge to EQA provider where necessary</p> <p>Reviews and escalates actions and recommendations where necessary</p>	<p>Monitors and supports EPAO to deliver against action plan during ongoing monitoring</p> <p>Tracks progress against actions using digital system</p> <p>Makes recommendation for action to the Institute where necessary</p>	<p>Delivers action plan</p> <p>Remains accessible and transparent to facilitate ongoing monitoring of progress</p> <p>Communicates issues and challenges to EQA provider</p>	

EQA Monitoring including observation

Purpose

Ongoing monitoring of end-point assessments by EQA providers ensures employers and apprentices can be confident in the EPA process. Our quality assurance system tests that all EPAOs are conducting high-quality end-point assessments that deliver relevant, consistent and comparable results, using assessment methodology that is fit-for-purpose and ensures the occupational competence of all apprentices passing their EPA.

This ensures a consistent and fair experience for apprentices and employers. EQA should also be positive, driving continuous improvement of the Apprenticeship Standard, the EPA plan and the EPAO through regular feedback and support.

The process

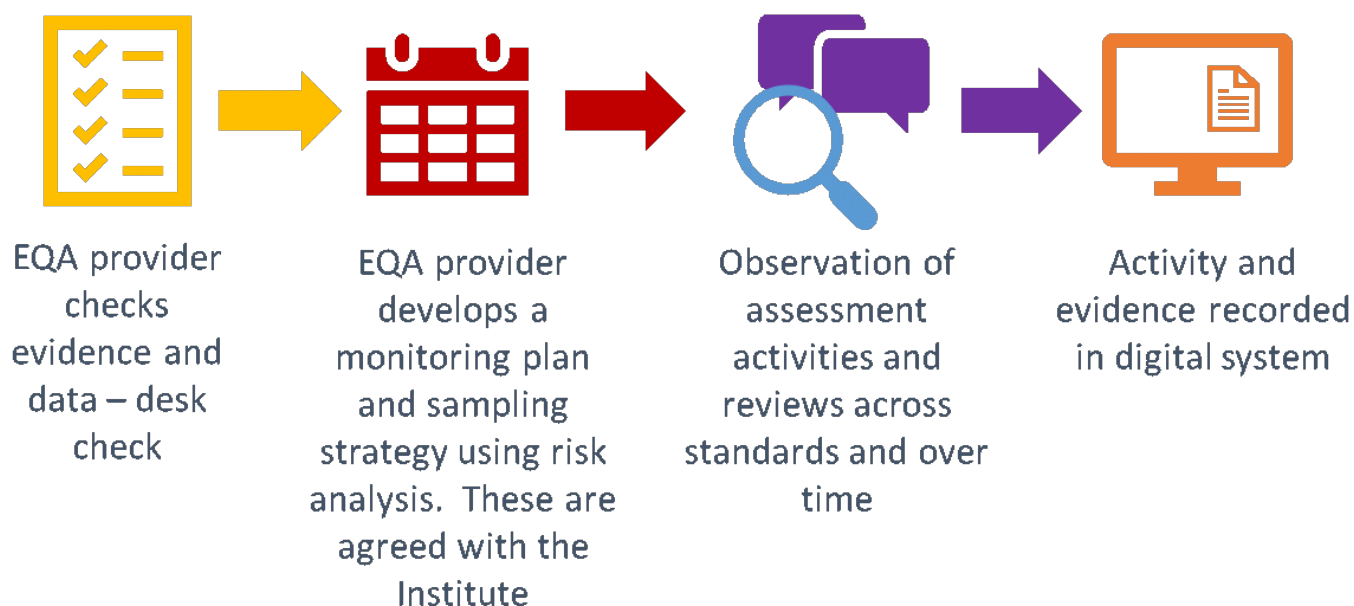


Figure 5 - EQA monitoring process

Ways of working

Activity	Description of activity/process
Employer/Training Provider registers the apprentice with the EPAO chosen by the employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the employer or Training Provider registers an apprentice with an EPAO and sets an expected EPA date. This should happen as early as possible, but should happen at least six months before the estimated EPA date (in time this will be done via the digital apprenticeship service) • they are responsible for informing the Agency of any changes to the expected gateway/start of EPA date as soon as possible to ensure that the EPAO can prepare appropriately • the Agency supports and challenges employers/Training Providers to ensure that estimated EPA dates are as accurate as possible • the Institute and the Agency work together to ensure that accurate data is in the system to enable forecasting and planning
EQA provider/ EPAO engagement to explain the Institute's expectations of the activity and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the EQA provider arranges an initial discussion with the EPAO to set expectations around activity for both parties and performance standards required and agree the regularity and channel of catch-ups. This engagement will generally begin as the final stage of the readiness process, or shortly afterwards • the EQA provider logs information about engagement plans in the system to enable the Quality Manager to monitor the relationship and have sight of the scale of current and projected activity • the Quality Manager agrees plans for EQA activities and reporting with the EQA provider
EQA provider requests regular updates from the EPAO on planned EPA activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at the outset of EQA activities, the EQA provider requests the EPAO's plan to deliver EPA including their forecast of the dates of the first assessments that they will deliver, if available, if details have not already been provided at the readiness check. Any updates to this would be requested from the EPAO on a monthly basis

<p>EQA Provider develops risk-based sampling strategy and plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the EQA provider will agree its sampling strategy with the Quality Manager and develop a plan of EQA activities based on the EPAO’s risk rating and delivery plan (which will be used to schedule visits and observations) • in the first instance, the EQA provider will use the risk rating from the readiness check to create their initial sampling strategy • the EQA provider uploads this in the digital system and the plan is updated regularly to include updates from EPAOs • the frequency and depth of monitoring activity is determined by the risk rating of the EPAO and standard, the EPAO’s internal quality assurance strategy, the volume of apprentices, with an additional element of random sampling of EPAO activity • EQA provider informs EPAO of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • when they intend to undertake an initial desk review of the EPAO’s processes and procedures; what documents they will require in order to do that; and what format these documents will need to be submitted in. The EQA provider will be able to access documents previously collected by the Agency or other EQA providers via the digital system • when they intend to undertake observation of assessment. This will normally be determined by the EQA selecting a number of apprentices from the Agency’s ILR data. See “Table 4 - Aspects of the EPA to be assured, where they are set out, and how they will be assured” on page 19 for a description of aspects to be assured during EQA observation • reasonable notice will usually be given for an observation visit by an EQA provider, although visits may be made with less or no notice where there are specific concerns • EPAOs will be given 5 days to provide any required evidence for a desk review • during a site visit, the EQA provider may also request further evidence at random • EQA provider uploads this information into the system to allow visibility for the Quality Manager
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<p>Ongoing cycle of monitoring and support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the EQA provider delivers monitoring schedule and ongoing support and challenge to the EPAO to facilitate continuous improvement. This will cover the activity outlined in sections 4-6 of the EQA Framework document where areas for improvement are identified, the EQA provider assesses each area that is externally quality assured against the risk categories and grading as outlined below, and agrees an action plan with the EPAO, including delivery dates. The EQA provider inputs this information into the digital system <p>Table 3 – Grading and descriptions for EQA provider monitoring</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Category</th> <th>Description</th> <th>Outcome</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Outstanding</td> <td>EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, without further action required</td> <td>No actions required, minimal EQA required</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Good</td> <td>EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with some minor actions addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis</td> <td>Minor action required for improvement, EQA required to check progress</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Requires Improvement</td> <td>EPAO requires improvement to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with major actions to addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis</td> <td>Improvement required, increase EQA activity required to monitor improvement</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Inadequate</td> <td>EPAO is not delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning. Major actions are required to remedy this.</td> <td>Major improvement required, refer to the Institute to decide if a breach has occurred or action is required</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> updates are made to the monitoring schedule if required and updated in the digital system the Quality Manager and the EQA provider continue to meet regularly to discuss performance and monitoring of EPAOs. The frequency of meetings will depend on the particular risk and level of assessment activity for each Standard EQA providers also arrange forums/workshops with EPAOs on their Apprenticeship Standard(s) at least annually to discuss performance of the EPA plan and emerging issues related to the delivery of EPA and to ensure comparability between EPAOs in the case of emerging issues or frequent non-compliances, the EQA provider and the Quality Manager may escalate issues to the Head of Quality Assurance, or take issues to the EPA Risk Monitoring Forum (see p 33) to discuss with peers and understand the extent of the issues and explore solutions 	Category	Description	Outcome	Outstanding	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, without further action required	No actions required, minimal EQA required	Good	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with some minor actions addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Minor action required for improvement, EQA required to check progress	Requires Improvement	EPAO requires improvement to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with major actions to addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Improvement required, increase EQA activity required to monitor improvement	Inadequate	EPAO is not delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning. Major actions are required to remedy this.	Major improvement required, refer to the Institute to decide if a breach has occurred or action is required
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Requires Improvement	EPAO requires improvement to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with major actions to addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Improvement required, increase EQA activity required to monitor improvement														
Inadequate	EPAO is not delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning. Major actions are required to remedy this.	Major improvement required, refer to the Institute to decide if a breach has occurred or action is required														
<p>Activity recorded in the system for monitoring and reporting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the EQA provider must record details about EPAO contact, monitoring activities, outcomes and action plans in the system for the Assessment and Quality Assurance team 															
<p>Quality performance checks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is good practice to review the quality of the EPAO periodically, including organisational level policies and procedures. See EQA Provider Readiness Process. 															

What does good EQA monitoring look like?

EQA activity should be delivered to a consistent standard regardless of which EQA provider is responsible for monitoring that Apprenticeship Standard.

Table 4 - Aspects of the EPA to be assured, where they are set out, and how they will be assured

Aspect of EPA to be assured	Where will this usually be set out?			How will this usually be assessed?		Longitudinal Evaluation
	EPA plan	Conditions of RoEPAO	Operational evidence	Desk review	Visits / observations	
Relevant						
individual assessment instruments/methods are fit-for-purpose	✓			✓	✓	✓
assessment is delivered in line with the published EPA plan	✓	✓			✓	
assessment team includes expertise in quality assurance, assessment and occupational competent	✓			✓	✓	
assessors' knowledge is up-to-date	✓			✓	✓	✓
Reliable						
assessment is carried out independently in practice	✓	✓		✓	✓	
assessments are operating effectively and achieving the desired outcomes			✓	✓	✓	✓
grading is applied accurately and consistently	✓			✓	✓	✓
assessment is reliable and comparable across different EPAOs, employers, places, times and assessors		✓			✓	✓
Efficient						
sufficient assessors are available		✓		✓	✓	
accurate records are kept and data is held securely with appropriate protocols in place		✓		✓	✓	
retakes, resits, appeals and complaints handling are operated effectively	✓	✓		✓	✓	
timeliness of assessment windows			✓	✓		✓
booking and management of assessment			✓	✓		
marking/remote assessment	✓				✓	
resources for assessment			✓	✓	✓	
evidence gathering and record keeping			✓		✓	
confidentiality			✓		✓	
certification application process including its timeliness and checking any requirements		✓	✓		✓	
employers are choosing EPAOs		✓		✓	✓	✓
Positive						
access to assessment is fair, and decisions on reasonable adjustments are made fairly and consistently	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
issue of results and feedback		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Aspect of EPA to be assured	Where will this usually be set out?			How will this usually be assessed?		Longitudinal Evaluation
	EPA plan	Conditions of RoEPAO	Operational evidence	Desk review	Visits / observations	
information provided and fees charged are clear and transparent		✓		✓		
all requirements of the standard in terms of achievement of gateways and mandatory qualifications and requirements are achieved prior to sign-off and the employer makes the final decision on the readiness of the apprentice for EPA	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Learning						
each EPAO has arrangements to collect and action feedback from apprentices and employers		✓		✓		
internal quality assurance processes carried out by the EPAOs is effective and rigorous	✓			✓	✓	

Desk-based reviews

EQA providers will undertake a programme of desk-based reviews for each apprenticeship standard, looking at information from each EPAO delivering the Standard. The frequency and focus of EQA activities will be based on an evaluation of risk and random sampling and will be shared with the Institute through the digital system and agreed with Institute officials. The EQA provider will be able to access some documentation from the Agency, or other EQA providers through the Institute's digital system, but it will need to request various documentation from EPAOs, which may include:

- policy documents (application to the specific standard)
- assessment materials – including signing off any major changes
- support materials
- strategy for internal quality assurance
- details of planning for the EPA service
- data on EPA including, registrations, pass rates and distribution of grades
- CVs, qualifications, performance reports and CPD records for assessors
- feedback from stakeholders, including apprentices, training providers and employers on the relevance and reliability of Assessments delivered
- records of IQA activities, including standardisation and moderation
- conflicts of interest records

Desk reviewers will need expertise in quality assurance and delivering assessment.

Visits and observations

The intensity and frequency of the above activity will be informed by the EQA provider's understanding of the risk presented by each EPAO on each Standard, but for all EPAOs on each Standard, each EQA provider should undertake at least one observation visit annually to the EPAO to observe, as many as possible of the bulleted activities and as many as it takes to get the assurance required.:

- assessment being delivered: this is particularly important with a practical assessments
- standardisation activities
- moderation activities

If an EPAO is responsible for multiple standards, the EQA provider should discuss with their Quality Manager the best approach for observing standardisation and moderation meetings to avoid duplication of work, and to minimise disruption to the EPAO.

Before an EQA provider conducts a monitoring visit, they will usually have notified the EPAO and sent a plan in advance which sets out what they would like to see and do. However, this can change due to discoveries on the day.

When conducting a visit, the following guidance may be useful for EQA providers to follow to ensure a rigorous EQA visit:

- keep records of all activities
- follow the agreed monitoring visit plan but be prepared to change this depending on what is discovered, clearly justifying why the schedule was not followed, if a change was needed
- ensure that the EPAO gives access to records, samples, people and locations as requested, and do not accept alternatives unless there is reasonable justification. If substitutes are made, the EPAO should inform the EQA provider of this ahead of time
- talk to apprentices, training providers and employers, if possible, as they may have a different view of the EPA they are undertaking or the EPAO
- evaluate staff communication during and between visits: do they answer questions satisfactorily? Are they unnecessarily defensive when questioned? Do they respond to communication between visits in a timely manner?
- talk to assessors and internal quality assurers: Do they feel pressurised to pass or award distinctions to learners who are borderline? Do they have sufficient time and resources to carry out their role effectively? Is there a high turnover of staff?
- Sample additional work if concerns are identified, e.g. if assessor decisions are incorrect or inconsistent
- act professionally and remain objective, ensuring that all decisions can be clearly evidenced

Table 5 - Evidence to look for when conducting a monitoring visit

Aspect of EPA to be assured	What evidence do we look for?	Where would you find it?
Relevant		
Individual assessment instruments / methods are fit for purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment instruments/ methods follow the EPA plan • Assessment instruments/methods are up-to-date with latest knowledge on appropriate methodology • Assessment instruments/methodology are a valid measure of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required of the Standard • Assessment instruments/methods follow SMART principles (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time bound) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of an assessment taking place • Review of assessment materials • Review of guidance for assessors • Feedback from apprentices • Interviews with assessors
Assessment is delivered in-line with the published EPA plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The assessment delivered matches the EPA plan agreed with the EQA provider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison back to the assessment plan • Review of training materials • Feedback from apprentices • Interviews with assessors
Assessment team includes expertise in quality assurance, assessment and occupational competent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVs demonstrate knowledge and experience of quality assurance • CVs demonstrate knowledge and experience of delivering assessments • CVs demonstrate occupational competence, knowledge and experience in the relevant occupation • Assessor decisions clearly demonstrate relevant understanding of the occupation and assessment criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVs • Learning records • Review of marked assessment materials • Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff • Observation and records from assessor moderation and standardisation meetings
Assessors' knowledge is up-to-date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence is provided of recent CPD activity (e.g. in the past 12 months) • Assessor CVs demonstrate recent knowledge and/or experience in the relevant occupation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CVs • Learning records • Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff
Reliable		

Aspect of EPA to be assured	What evidence do we look for?	Where would you find it?
Assessment is carried out independently in practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessors used are independent of the Training Provider or training arm of the organisation Assessors used are independent of the employer Assessors can confirm the work is authentic (solely produced by the candidate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation of an assessment taking place Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff CVs Conflict of interest strategy and records
Assessments are operating effectively and achieving the desired outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are sufficient assessors for the assessment to ensure observation is appropriate The assessment starts and finishes on time or in-line with clearly set expectations Candidates understand all assessment activities fully 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation of an assessment taking place Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff Feedback from apprentices and employers Observation and records from standardisation or moderation meetings
Grading is applied accurately and consistently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidates who perform to a similar standard are given the same grade There is clear demarcation between candidates given different grades which is clearly justified 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation and records from assessor moderation and standardisation meetings Review of marked assessment materials
Assessment is reliable and comparable across different EPAOs, employers, places, times and assessors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Candidates who demonstrate a similar level of occupational competence are given the same grade, regardless of EPAO or Training Provider All candidates have an equal chance of receiving an accurate decision Assessments follow the EPA plan closely Standardisation records show that all aspects are being covered over time Samples from assessments that have not been IQA'd are comparable to those which have been Samples from current learners are comparable with those of previous learners on the same version of the Standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of marked assessment materials (IQA'd and not IQA'd over multiple time periods) compared to other EPAOs Observation and records from assessor moderation and standardisation meetings
Efficient		
Sufficient assessors are available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are enough assessors to effectively observe the number of candidates taking the assessment Allocation of candidates to assessors is fair There is a proportionate balance of assessors to internal quality assurers Assessors have appropriate caseloads and have sufficient time and resources to make appropriate decisions Assessors are inducted appropriately to deliver the EPA plan There is no evidence for unusually high or unjustifiable staff turnover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation of an assessment taking place Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff Feedback from apprentices and employers IQA records Digital systems (which allocate caseload/work) Assessor recruitment strategy
Accurate records are kept and data is held securely with appropriate protocols in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records are updated as soon as possible after information changes Data handling and management processes operate in line with GDPR principles Personal data is anonymised, where possible, using an IRL number Systems are secure and password protected and only accessible by relevant persons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check of IT systems Check of physical records Data management strategy

Aspect of EPA to be assured	What evidence do we look for?	Where would you find it?
Retakes, resits, appeals and complaints handling are operated effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complaints are taken seriously, responded to quickly and action is taken in a timely fashion All information and actions are recorded appropriately, providing a clear audit trail Assessors clearly explain the appeals, retakes and resits process to candidates When questioned, candidates clearly understand the appeals, retakes and resits process Evidence of further learning for retakes is provided and is in-line with the Agency's funding rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check of IT systems (e.g. feedback system) Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff Feedback from apprentices and employers Follow up on previous actions or recommendations Review of complaints policy Records of appeals Record of extra learning for retakes
Marking/remote assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear mark schemes are in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of marked assessment materials
Resources for assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources e.g. training/assessment spaces, equipment, computer facilities etc. meet the requirements of the EPA plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observation of an assessment taking place Review of training materials
Evidence gathering and record keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All evidence is routinely gathered, organised logically and appropriately and stored securely Assessment records are comparable between assessors and have a similar level of detail A clear audit trail can be established from record keeping practices Records are only accessible or show to those with a legitimate interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check IT systems Check physical and digital documentation Review of marked assessment materials Data management strategy/policy
Confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All candidate information is stored securely ILR numbers are used instead of names as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check IT systems Data management/data protection policy
Certification application process including its timeliness and checking any requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certificates are applied for within 20 days of apprentices' grade being confirmed Certificates are only applied for once all requirements have been met and results have been agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records (physical or digital) from the Agency certification service Copies of certificates Learner records Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff Feedback from apprentices and employers
Employers are choosing EPAOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All learners entering EPA are registered with the EPAO within the time stated by the Institute and the Agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Agency's records EPAO records
Positive		
access to assessment is fair, and decisions on reasonable adjustments are made fairly and consistently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Methods take into account learner needs All candidates have an equal chance of achieving an accurate assessment decision All activities meet the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 by embrace equality, diversity and inclusivity, representing all aspects of society Disabilities and language barriers are taken into consideration and appropriate support is provided When questioned, learners agree that there was fair access to assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasonable adjustment policies and procedures Log of reasonable adjustments and special considerations decisions made Evidence provided by the apprentice or employer to support reasonable adjustment/special consideration Observation of an assessment taking place Review of training materials Equal opportunities and accessibility policy and strategy

Aspect of EPA to be assured	What evidence do we look for?	Where would you find it?
Issue of results and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A consistent level of feedback is given to all apprentices • Apprentices' expectations are managed as to the date by which to expect results • There is a mechanism by which learners can give feedback, which is documented and acted upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of an EPA taking place • Review feedback across multiple assessors • Results and feedback process/policy
All requirements of the Standard in terms of achievement of gateways and mandatory qualifications and requirements are achieved prior to sign-off and the employer makes the final decision on the readiness of the apprentice for EPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are accurate records of requirements being met to achieve gateway and these can be verified as authentic • There is evidence of employer agreement that the apprentice is ready for EPA • When questioned, learners understand what the gateway requirements are and agree that they have been met • When questioned, learners agree that they are ready for EPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital and physical records • Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff • Feedback from apprentices and employers
Learning		
Internal quality assurance processes carried out by the EPAOs is effective and rigorous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal quality assurer clearly explained what they will be observing to assessors • Internal quality assurer gave constructive feedback that aids assessor development • Appropriate questions were asked of the assessor • Assessors are given opportunity to ask questions and clarification • Appropriate IQA records are kept including sampling plans and reports • Internal quality assurers have appropriate qualifications, knowledge and experience, and have up-to-date CPD records • There are minimal appeals or disputes against assessor decisions • Standardisation meetings occur regularly and are attended by all assessors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation of an assessment taking place that is IQA'd • Observation and records from assessor moderation and standardisation meetings • Digital and physical IQA records, sampling plans and reports • CVs and learning records • Appeals and dispute records • Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff • IQA policy and strategy

How we calculate risk

EQA should, in part, be targeted and focused on the aspects of EPA which pose the greatest risk: we expect 'riskier' EPAs to be subject to greater scrutiny and more frequent monitoring than lower-risk EPA. Risk ratings will not be published but will be shared with EPAOs, and will be stored on the Institute's digital system.

EQA is delivered on a 'per-EPAO-per-standard' basis, that is: an EPAO delivering multiple standards will be subject to EQA against all of them; and all EPAOs on a particular standard will be subject to EQA. Therefore, risk needs to be calculated at this level also.

Risk is a combination of factors inherent to the Standard and EPA plan, and specific to a particular EPAO. In order to calculate overall risk, we will combine a measure of standard level, and EPAO specific, risk.

Risk rating of the Standard

Risk rating of EPAO by Standard will be determined by:

- complexity of the assessment plan – inherent risk factors, for example:
 - the number of assessment method
 - complexity of assessment methods
 - whether the industry is safety critical
 - whether the assessment involves a licence to practice
- number of apprentices – The number of apprentices exposed to EPA can increase the risk level
- number of EPAOs:
 - standards with a large number of EPAOs pose a higher risk to consistency and comparability
 - standards with a single monopoly provider also pose additional risk

Each of these three factors will be given a score of:

- 1 (low risk)
- 2 (medium risk)
- 3 (high risk)

These will be aggregated up to give an overall standard-level risk score of between 3 and 9.

Table 6 - Standard level grading and criteria

Risk Criteria	Risk scores		
	(3) High	(2) Medium	(1) Low
Complexity of the Assessment Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of independence • safety critical • three or more assessment methods • Complexity of assessment methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no significant concerns about independence • Lack of clarity in assessment plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no significant concerns about independence • no complex assessment methods
Annual volume of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >200 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50-200 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <50
Volume of EPAOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 (monopoly) or 10 or more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • between 5 and 9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • between 2 and 4

Risk rating of the EPAO

The risk rating of the EPAO will be determined by:

- review of application to RoEPAO
- outcome of readiness review for the standard in question
- results of previous EQA activity on the standard in question
- results of EQA activity on other standards
- data on EPA performance by apprentices
- self-reporting of issues by EPAOs (in accordance with the Conditions of the RoEPAO)
- feedback (including complaints) from apprentices, employers and Training Providers
- any other intelligence

Established EPAOs subject to ongoing EQA monitoring will also receive a grade between 1 and 4 (see Annex 5). Grades 1 to 3 will again feed into the calculation of overall risk.

Any EPAO graded as Inadequate (grade 4) will automatically be assumed to be high-risk irrespective of the Standard-level risk.

Table 7 - EPAO specific grading and descriptions

Category	Description	How this is calculated	Outcome
(1) Outstanding	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, without further action required	Relevant and reliable must be Outstanding. Other areas Good	No actions required, minimal EQA required
(2) Good	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with some minor actions addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Any combination of solely Outstanding and Good grades which does not meet the threshold above All areas graded Good Up to two areas Requires Improvement and all others good. Relevant and Reliable must be good.	Minor action required for improvement, EQA required to check progress
(3) Requires Improvement	EPAO requires improvement to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with major actions to addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Either Relevant or Reliable graded Requires Improvement Three or more areas graded Requires Improvement One area Inadequate	Improvement required, increase EQA activity required to monitor improvement
(4) Inadequate	EPAO is not delivering EPA in-line with the Institute's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning. Major actions are required to remedy this.	Two or more areas graded Inadequate	Major improvement required, refer to the Institute to decide if a breach has occurred or action is required

Overall risk rating

Overall risk will be calculated by multiplying the standard-level and EPAO level risk scores to generate a single number. A high-risk (grade 3) EPAO delivering a high risk standard will clearly be high risk overall and expect more intensive monitoring from EQA.

Conversely a grade 1 EPAO delivering a low risk standard will be low risk overall. Other combinations of low, medium and high risk will generate different overall risk ratings (see matrix below).

[Appendix 6 – Risk Calculator](#) provides a calculator for EQA providers to calculate the overall risk level.

Table 8 - Overall 'per-EPAO-per-Standard' risk matrix

		Standard Risk		
		Low 1	Medium 2	High 3
EPAO risk				
Outstanding	1			
Good	2			
Requires improvement	3			
Inadequate	4			

EQA providers will record all findings from EQA on the Institute's digital system. This will allow Institute Quality Managers to take a view across all EPA provision – by both standard and EPAO.

Key Performance Indicators

- EQA reports on the readiness of EPAOs, against each standard, and the EPAOs offering that standard, to be submitted to agreed timescales
- reports to be of quality such that they can be considered by the QAC who may make recommendations for further actions
- actions/recommendations for EPAOs are followed-up within agreed timescales
- an agreed number of EPAO support sessions to be held per year
- an agreed number of EPAO forums to be held (where there is more than one EPAO delivering EPA)
- queries from EPAOs responded to within 2 working days and queries from other stakeholders responded to within 5 working days
- serious issues to be reported to the Institute immediately, should any be found in the course of EQA activity
- attend regular monthly monitoring meetings (frequency to be agreed) with the Institute and provide a monthly management information summary

Roles and responsibilities

Activity	The Institute	The Agency	EQA provider	EPAO
At least six months before the estimated end date, the employer/Training Provider registers the apprentice with their chosen EPAO (dates should be updated as they change)		Encourages employers and Training Providers to register apprentices with an EPAO at the earliest possible date	Assesses the quality of information being provided by the ESFA system, employers and Training Providers to aid EPAOs to plan their service	Engages with Training Provider to set out expectations and requirements for EPA, set out appropriate EPA date and ensure apprentices are prepared for Gateway Updates EQA provider with information about apprentices and EPA dates
EQA provider/EPAO engagement to reinforce expectation of the activity and performance standards required of an EPAO and logged in the system	Provides guidance and materials to support engagement Engages with EQA providers to set up regular meetings to discuss progress, risks and issues against the Apprenticeship Standard(s) and EPAO(s) covered		Engages in open and transparent dialogue with key stakeholders within the EPAO to build relationships Reinforces expectations around roles and responsibilities, activities and target impact of all the key players and how they fit together Agrees level of support and engagement for ongoing monitoring Ensures there is joint understanding about the frequency and depth of monitoring that is required as a result of current risk rating	Engages in open and transparent dialogue with key stakeholders within the EQA provider to build relationships Seeks understanding and clarification on expectations, roles and responsibilities, activities and target impact of all key players and makes commitment the ways of working
EPAOs plan for delivering EPA requested			Gives guidance and support to EPAOs on the design, development and implementation of methods of assessment Reviews plan and apprentice data against the system Informs Institute of any inaccuracy in data	Provides detailed plan of EPA for registered apprentices to the EQA provider
EQA provider develops ongoing risk-based monitoring schedule based on EPAO 4-point scale risk rating	Views monitoring schedules and plans in the system Checks monitoring schedules to ensure disruption to EPAOs operating on multiple standards is minimised		Develops monitoring plan and schedule, based on risk ratings, key issues, areas on interest detailing the frequency, depth and areas that will be monitored, including dates	

Activity	The Institute	The Agency	EQA provider	EPAO
Ongoing cycle of monitoring and support	<p>Meets regularly with EQA provider to discuss progress, risks and issues against the Apprenticeship Standard(s) and EPAO(s) covered</p> <p>Give guidance and support and responds to queries from EQA providers in an appropriate and timely manner</p> <p>Centrally manages system-wide trends, issues and information and disseminates across EQA providers in a timely and appropriate manner</p> <p>Facilitates EQA provider engagement (e.g. forums) to build EQA community and encourage sharing of best practice, information and issues</p>		<p>Monitoring</p> <p>Regularly checks digital system for new information about EPAs</p> <p>Undertakes risk-based monitoring in accordance with schedule, confirming that the delivery of assessment is valid, compliant, delivering consistent and comparable results that are recognised by employers as delivering the right outcomes</p> <p>Compares EPAOs across the Apprenticeship Standard to ensure reliability of methodology and outcomes and relevance of the assessment</p> <p>Develops action plans with EPAOs to improve service</p> <p>Confirms evidence and information that will be shared with the EPAO, giving them chance to comment on and agree reported information</p> <p>Updates risk ratings and action plans in digital system in a timely fashion after completing a monitoring activity, and in accordance with the agreement with the EPAO</p> <p>Where serious issues arise, reports this as soon as possible to the Institute along with a recommended course of action</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Responds to queries from EPAOs and other stakeholders as appropriate, in a timely fashion (e.g. EPA plan interpretations and clarifications; reasonable adjustments for apprentices on re-sits and re-takes)</p> <p>Shares new information in a timely fashion with all relevant EPAOs on a given Apprenticeship Standard, and also with the Institute and other EQA providers, particularly where there are system-wide implications</p> <p>Supports commercially-sensitive information and best practice sharing between EPAOs on the same Apprenticeship Standard in a collaborative forum</p>	<p>Provides accessibility to documentation and EPAs as requested by EQA provider</p> <p>Ensures EQA provider is kept up to date about EPA plans</p> <p>Delivers on improvement actions against agreed improvement plans</p> <p>Raises concerns and issues (e.g. about the EPA plan, or other EPAOs) in a timely and appropriate manner</p> <p>Shares appropriate information and best practice with EQA provider and other EPAOs, in a way that promotes collaboration but is mindful of commercial sensitivity</p>
Review readiness and risk periodically	Sets expectations for readiness cycle		Carries out readiness reviews in accordance with the Institute's requirements	Provides relevant evidence in line with the Institute's requirements

Reporting

Purpose

The Institute will use intelligence from EQA activity recorded in the digital system to understand trends and support continuous improvement. Data will provide evidence to support improvements to the delivery of EPA and reassure stakeholders that every EPAO is delivering comparable assessments according to the relevant EPA plan, and that EPA is testing that apprentices have achieved full occupational competence.

Process

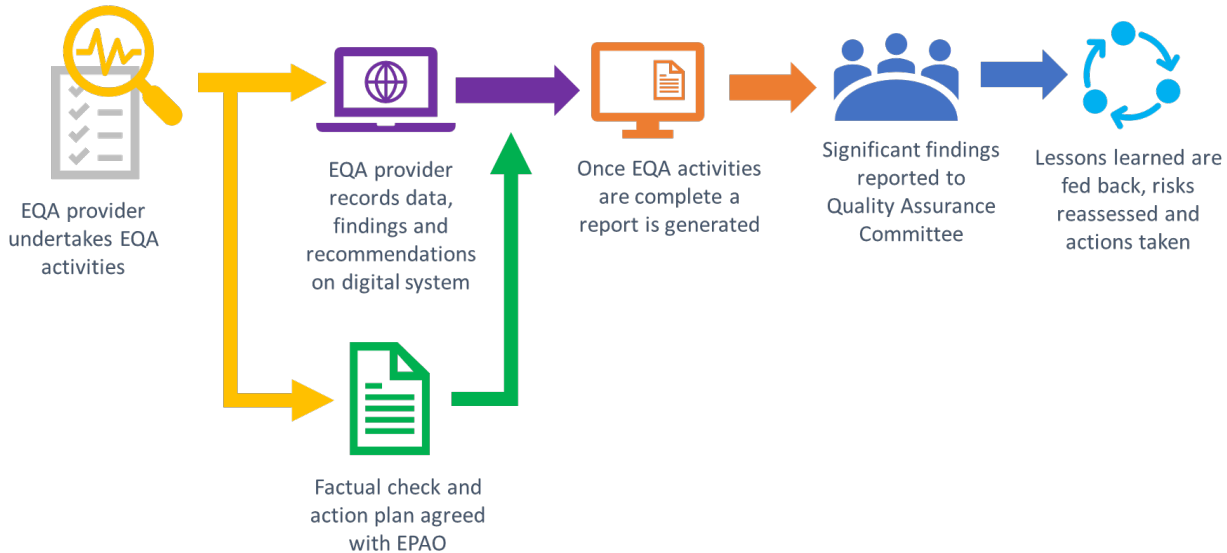


Figure 6 - EQA reporting process

Digital reporting allows for clear, consistent and standardised information about risks, actions and recommendations to be identified, communicated, actioned and followed up effectively and consistently.

EQA providers will use the digital system to record findings from EQA activities as they are undertaken. When all planned EQA activities have taken place and the findings summarised, a full report can be generated, this will be within 15 days of the visit. The EPAO must then be given 15 days to review the report for any factual inaccuracy.

From the digital system, the Institute is able to monitor and analyse data at three levels, which provides both real time detailed information and allows for trends analysis:

1. live performance monitoring – this monitors real time performance against KPIs, readiness check and assessment monitoring activity and actions identified etc. This type of performance monitoring does not require any analysis as it flags up activity needing completion
2. periodic performance monitoring – this type of monitoring is on performance such as KPIs, EQA provider and EPAO activity, issues/complaints, readiness checks passed or failed and EPAs completed over a specific period of time which can be set as required. This type requires analysis of the data over the period to review if actions for improvement needs to be considered.
3. strategic performance monitoring – this type of monitoring should be considered for aspects such as the fundamental approach to delivering assessment monitoring, the overarching quality assurance strategy, approach to performance monitoring, adapting to market changes etc. This type of performance monitoring may require deep analysis on data stretching over longer periods of time, across all Apprenticeship Standards and include trends

Annual reporting

There must be at least one full report each year for every EPAO registered to deliver assessment for a particular Standard, in addition to one overarching report for each Standard. Reports must include data including the number of apprentices assessed and the outcomes of those assessments. The EQA provider will include any examples of good and poor practice and a summary of recommendations and actions for the EPAO, and in relation to the Standard or EPA plan. The report should clearly highlight any findings that are particularly significant in terms of any risk to validity or potential learning points.

The Institute's Quality Manager will use these to develop a summary report for the QAC, who will consider risks, lessons learnt and actions. Relevant information will be shared with stakeholders to promote continuous improvement.

It is important that all parts of the EPA system learn from the findings of EQA so that:

- individual EPAOs can improve their assessment instruments, policies and practices
- EQA providers can improve their EQA processes
- the Institute can improve EPA plans

Ways of working

Activity	Description of activity/process
Uploading findings from monitoring activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQA providers upload information into the system in real time, reporting data, findings and recommendations from EQA activities • EPAOs provide factual check and agree action plan • action plans are uploaded and monitored on an ongoing basis by the EQA provider • good and poor practice identified • grading is provided for each EPAO against aspects of the EPA that have been EQA'd, and an overall risk rating calculated • where areas of high risk have been identified, the EQA provider alerts the Quality Manager
Digital system generates reports, including EQA reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both Quality Managers and EQA providers are able to generate reports via the digital system about EPAOs and Standards across a given time period • this allows them to share information to those without access to the system (e.g. EPAOs) and also conduct trends analysis, for example, understanding poor performance over time • the Quality Assurance team will also be able to generate reports about specific topics and trends over time in order to facilitate long-term planning and continuous improvement across a number of areas, for example, apprentice demographics, grades across multiple standards and risk ratings • access to reports will be determined by the Institute
QAC provides governance and oversight to reports and findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Quality Assurance team provides reports and a summary to QAC of findings • the QAC take a strategic overview of quality using the reports including risks, lessons learnt and actions produced by the Quality Assurance team to ensure that the Institute is fulfilling its statutory duties of assuring quality
Feedback into system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • risks, lessons learnt and actions are fed back into the system to drive continuous improvement

Roles and Responsibilities

Activity	The Institute	EQA Provider	EPAO
Uploading findings from monitoring	<p>Maintain the system with which to input data</p> <p>Regularly and proactively monitor EQA findings</p> <p>Provide support and guidance on live issues as required</p>	<p>Input data into the system in a timely and accurate manner</p> <p>Identify any key findings, recommendations and lessons</p> <p>Provide 4-scale grade for each EPAO</p> <p>Ensure EPAO has the opportunity for a factual check</p> <p>Work with EPAO to develop and implement action plan</p>	<p>Co-operate with EQA provider on the EQA monitoring</p> <p>Check factual elements of report</p> <p>Co-operate with EQA provider on developing and implementing an action plan</p>
System generates EQA reports	<p>Agree timetable for reporting</p> <p>Monitor progress and conduct strategic analysis of trends to feed back into the system</p>	<p>Agree timetable for reporting</p> <p>Ensure all required data is entered and generate final report</p>	
QAC provides governance and oversight to reports and findings	<p>The Quality Assurance team provides reports and a summary to QAC of findings</p> <p>The QAC ensure that the Institute is fulfilling its statutory duties of assuring the quality of apprenticeship assessment.</p>	<p>Provides content for annual report</p>	
Feedback into system	<p>Ensure risks, lessons learnt and actions are shared with stakeholders including EQA providers and EPAOs and actioned</p>	<p>See next section</p>	<p>See next section</p>

Using EQA to improve assessments

Purpose

The Institute seeks to role model continuous improvement in everything it does, including the quality assurance system it supports.

Process

Continuous improvement of the framework is focused on three key areas:

- the Apprenticeship Standards, EPA plans and supporting guidance – ensuring that learning from the experiences of applying these key documents are captured in a systematic and timely way, and any opportunities to design and implement any changes are taken full advantage of
- the role and performance of EPAOs - being clear about what the key ingredients are that enable an EPAO to succeed, with the appropriate EQA provider agreeing a 'quality and readiness plan' to enable them to achieve and sustain the optimum level of performance and impact
- the role and performance of EQA providers – being clear about what the key ingredients are that enable an EQA provider to succeed, with Institute staff agreeing a 'quality plan' to enable them to achieve and sustain the optimum level of performance and impact

In a system where EQA providers and EPAOs are operating as high-performing organisations applying fit-for-purpose Occupational Standards and EPA plans in a fair and consistent manner, there is a strong likelihood that EPAs will themselves be fair and consistent and thus Apprentices will achieve the outcome they deserve. The Institute is committed to continuously exploring ways by which each element of this quality assurance system is operating at the highest possible level of performance and that it continues to evolve, develop and share information and learnings across the apprenticeship system.

Every two months, the Institute will coordinate the EPA Risk Monitoring Forum. This meeting will bring together all EQA providers, the Institute and the Agency and be chaired by the Head of Apprenticeship Quality Assurance at the Institute. This will consider which standards and EPAOs pose the greatest risk and identify and direct avenues for future EQA activity. The agenda will be informed by findings from recent EQA activity and determined by Institute Quality Managers based on their knowledge of what different EQA providers and finding in their ongoing monitoring.

Issues from the Forum may be escalated from the group to the QAC.

Assessment Plans

Where an EPAO or other stakeholder identifies a minor issue, they should implement an appropriate solution in a timely manner. Wherever possible this should be done in advance of EPA activities occurring. The EPAO should make a record of their decision and applied alterations. These should be made available to EQA providers immediately upon request and during EQA visits.

Where the EPAO identifies an intermediate issue within an EPA Plan that means it cannot deliver effective and consistent EPA, then they should report this to the EQA provider within one week of its discovery. The EPAO should also include in this communication their suggested solution for the issue(s) identified, which would enable them to deliver effective EPA.

The EQA provider should investigate the issues identified, consult with the EPAO concerned, consult with other EPAOs working on the same Standard about these issues and consider the potential solutions that exist here.

The EQA provider should then determine a solution that can be applied and used across all EPAOs on this Standard and communicate this solution in writing to all of the relevant EPAOs within one month of receiving the initial report.

The EQA provider will also notify the Institute at the same time regarding the concerns reported and their solution. Where the EQA Provider required the EPA plan to be updated then they should specify this when communicating to the Institute.

Where the EPAO or the EQA provider believe there are major issues within an EPA plan which require significant changes such as a different assessment method, these need to be communicated to the Institute. Where the EPAO identifies a major issue first, they should report this to their EQA provider in the first instance together with suggested solutions on what would work better in practice.

The EQA provider should report these (or their own) identified concerns to the designated Quality Manager at the Institute within a one week period and share suggested solutions on what rectification is needed (e.g. different assessment method or new EPA plan). The solutions will need to be two-fold in practice so that they cover:

- how to proceed with on-programme learners that are expecting EPA
- how to ensure that future learners receive a more valid and reliable EPA

The Institute will then investigate these concerns and determine what rectification approaches should be taken. The Institute will ensure that the EQA provider receives guidance on how to proceed with on-programme apprentices within two weeks of being notified.

In terms of providing a long-term solution, the Institute will engage with the Trailblazer group and encourage the development of a new or significantly revised EPA Plan that addresses all of the concerns raised.

The Process

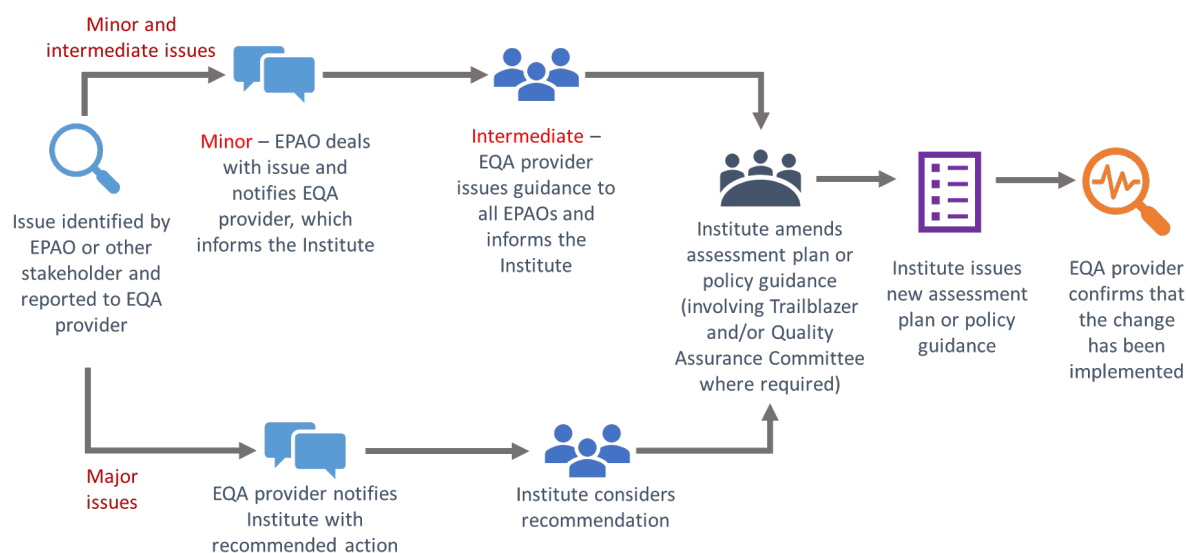


Figure 7 Assessment plan feedback and improvement process

Table 9 - EPA plan issues, decision making and communication requirements

Scale of issue	Example	Who can make the decision	Communications / audit requirements
Minor adjustments for individual learners or flexibilities as set out within the EPA plan	Reasonable adjustment/special considerations Flexibilities that will not compromise validity/independence	EPAOs	Requirement that the EPAO keep a record of their decision and reason for making it and that this and any appropriate evidence behind the decision is available to EQA at audit
Intermediate issues: Clarifications and interpretation	Interpretation of EPA plan. This could include addressing either a single minor change or multiple alterations within an assessment method to enable effective delivery. For Example, setting a duration for an assessment where this is not covered within the plan	EQA provider	EQA provider must engage with and disseminate any change to all EPAOs on the standard EQA provider must record actions and notify the Institute so that the EPA plan can be updated if required
Major issues: Fundamental changes within an assessment method to enable effective delivery	Change of assessment method, or change of grade descriptors	Institute assessment review and approvals process	EQA provider reports issues and suggested solutions within one month of it being identified The Institute will provide guidance on how to proceed with on-programme apprentices within one month of being notified A new version of the EPA plan will be developed by the Trailblazer and then published by the Institute within approximately four months The EQA provider will be informed and will be responsible for communicating with all relevant stakeholders

EPAO performance

Purpose

It is important to identify and manage any issues and incidents related to the delivery of EPA. EQA providers and the Institute will need to work quickly, fairly and robustly in order to understand and minimise any risk to the quality of apprenticeships. It may be necessary to involve other organisations such as the Agency.

Process

A serious issue is defined as one with potential for detriment to apprentices, risk of service delivery failure or reputational damage to the quality of apprenticeship assessment. The EQA provider must log all incidents in the digital system so they can be assigned to the correct organisation, escalated where needed, the action or resolution recorded and any learning fed back into the system. The EQA provider will be able to review the progress and inform the EPAO accordingly. It is important to note that some information will need to be handled in confidence.

Issues, incidents and complaints may concern a number of different types of organisation, be identified through a number of sources, and occur at any stage of the apprenticeship delivery cycle. Having a clear process allows us to deal with issues quickly and effectively and to learn from particular cases in order to continuously improve operations and develop best practice.

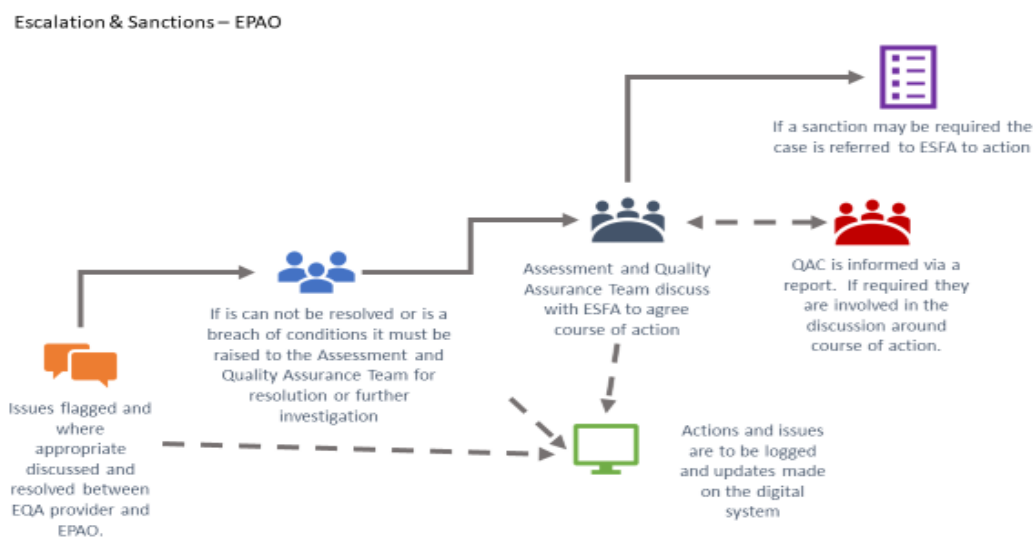


Figure 8 - Escalation process for resolving issues with EPAOs

Ways of working

Activity	Description of activity/process
Issues flagged and discussed between the EPAO and EQA provider to find a resolution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the first instance, any identified issue with EPAO should be discussed and resolved between the EQA provider and the EPAO through monitoring and action plans • the EQA provider should monitor the EPAO closely to ensure that the action plan is addressed and the issue is resolved • the EQA provider should communicate the issue and resolution to the Quality Manager • all issues, progress and resolutions must be recorded on the digital system
Issues escalated to the Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the issue remains unresolved, it must be escalated to the Quality Manager for further investigation • the Quality Manager will conduct an investigation under its statutory powers, which will desk-based investigation of the evidence as well as interviewing stakeholders as appropriate • where appropriate, the Quality Manager will liaise with the Agency and the QAC to agree the most appropriate course of action • actions carried out by the Institute may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • additional monitoring activity • formal advisory improvements in delivery of assessment • requirements to improve delivery of assessment • changes to Apprenticeship Standards, EPA plans and/or assessment instruments <p>All activity and evidence will be recorded on the digital system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where a breach of RoEPAO conditions has occurred, the Quality Manager will hand over the case to the Agency, who will own the issue and may take action as appropriate • action may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suspension or removal of the EPAO from the Apprenticeship Standard • suspension or removal of the EPAO from all Apprenticeship Standards • prevention of EPAO from reapplying to the Register • prevention of EPAO from applying to any Standard on the Register
Issues resolved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Institute will formally contact the EQA provider and any other stakeholder involved in the issue to communicate the decision including any remedial action required and associated timelines • the Institute will monitor actions to conclusion and then close the case on the digital system
Feedback into the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the issue is likely to occur in other Standards or with other EPAOs, the Quality Manager and EQA provider must raise this in the Risk Monitoring forum for further discussion and to share lessons learned

Roles and Responsibilities

Activity	Institute	EQA provider	EPAO	The Agency
<p>Issues flagged and discussed between the EPAO and EQA provider to find a resolution</p>	<p>Provide a clear, accessible process for reporting any issues</p> <p>Maintain an incident log to record and monitor all issues</p> <p>Ensure stakeholders are aware of process and can access it</p> <p>Provide guidance to stakeholders</p>	<p>Provide a clear, accessible process for reporting any issues, including a strategy for whistleblowing</p> <p>Maintain an incident log to record and monitor all issues</p> <p>Ensure stakeholders are aware of process and can access it</p> <p>Provide guidance to stakeholders</p> <p>Report incidents on the digital system</p>	<p>Escalate incidents to EQA provider</p> <p>Provide a clear, accessible process for reporting any issues</p> <p>Maintain an incident log to record and monitor all issues</p> <p>Ensure stakeholders are aware of process and can access it</p> <p>Provide guidance to stakeholders</p> <p>Take appropriate action where incident falls within remit</p>	

<p>Issues escalated to the Institute</p>	<p>Maintain an incident log on the digital system</p> <p>Conduct a rigorous, unbiased investigation of issues</p> <p>Involve the QAC and the Agency in investigations and decision making as required</p>	<p>Escalate incidents to the Institute as required</p> <p>Report incidents on the digital system</p>		<p>Liaise with the Institute around investigations and decision making</p> <p>Confirm serious breaches of conditions and take ownership of cases as required</p> <p>Take action</p>
<p>Issues resolved</p>	<p>Communicate decisions and actions to all stakeholders</p> <p>Monitor actions to completion and record on the digital system</p>	<p>Take appropriate action where incident falls within remit</p> <p>Record action on the digital system</p>	<p>Take appropriate action where incident falls within remit</p> <p>Communicate action to EQA provider</p>	<p>Communicate to all stakeholders about applied actions as required</p> <p>Feedback to the Institute about decisions</p>
<p>Feedback into the system</p>	<p>Conduct lessons learnt with all stakeholders involved in the issue</p> <p>Communicate lessons learnt to all stakeholders that may be affected</p> <p>Ensure improvements are embedded back into the system</p>	<p>Liaise with the Institute to identify lessons learnt to feed back into the system</p>	<p>Liaise with the Institute to identify lessons learnt to feed back into the system</p>	<p>Liaise with the Institute to identify lessons learnt to feed back into the system</p>

EQA provider performance

Process

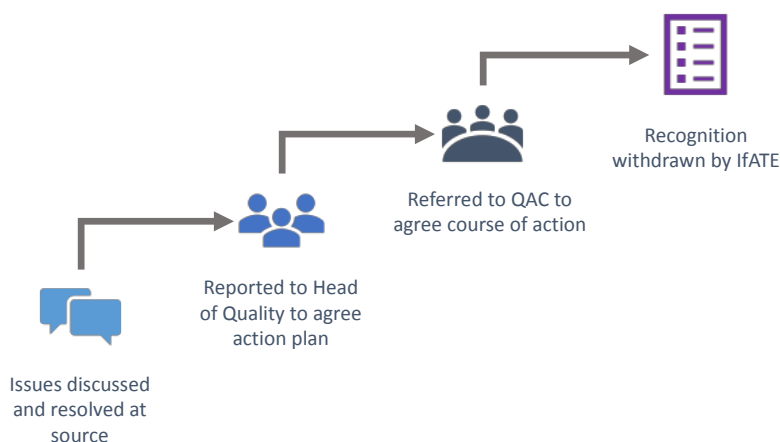


Figure 9 - Escalation process for resolving issues with EQA providers

Ways of working

Activity	Description of activity/process
Issues discussed and resolved at source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if an issue (e.g. missed deadlines or lack of engagement) is identified, in the first instance this should be resolved by meeting with the EQA provider and discussing what is happening an action plan should be developed as required and recorded on the digital system Quality Managers may use team meetings to discuss issues with EQA providers to ascertain appropriate courses of action and identify any issues occurring in multiple EQA providers that may indicate the framework needs to be revisited
Internal escalation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if the issue cannot be resolved by the Quality Manager alone, it should be escalated within the Institute to agree an action plan with the EQA provider.
Referred to QAC to agree course of action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> following the action plan period, if the issue is not rectified, the EQA provider is reported to the QAC, who will decide whether they should be given more time to rectify the issues, or whether recognition should be withdrawn and the EQA provider be informed of the decision. if the EQA provider is the Institute's own provider, the decision should be made whether to terminate the contract.
Recognition withdrawn by the Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> if recognition of an EQA provider is withdrawn, the Quality Manager will need to work with the relevant RMs to agree an alternative EQA provider (See Appendix 2 – EQA provider registration) to take over the affected Apprenticeship Standards. EPA plans and the Institute's website will also need to be updated.

Roles and Responsibilities

Activity	The Institute	EQA Provider
Issues discussed and resolved at source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hold regular meetings with EQA providers and use data from the digital system to proactively identify risks and work with the EQA provider to mitigate them openly discuss issues and give appropriate constructive challenge and support to facilitate problem solving record all issues and resolution on the digital system communicate across the Quality Assurance team to keep all informed of evolving issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage with the Institute appropriately, including committing to regular meeting and sharing information on the digital system communicate any risks before they become an issue work with the Quality Manager to identify appropriate resolution to issues and action these in a timely manner
Escalation within the Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inform the EQA provider of the escalation progress and ensure that they understand implications work with the EQA provider to resolve issues Escalation within the Institute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with the Quality Manager to identify appropriate resolution to issues and action these in a timely manner
Referred to QAC to agree course of action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a report including all evidence, attempted issue resolution, and recommendation for further action to the QAC communicate decisions from the QAC and take appropriate action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide information and input into QAC report as required act upon any decision made by the QAC
Recognition withdrawn by the Institute	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify alternative EQA providers for the standard inform any affected stakeholders as soon as possible and work with them to support EQA activity in the interim communicate decisions externally as required 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cease practice as EQA provider

Complaints

Purpose

Our approach to continuous improvement is proactive and should ensure that an issues are captured before they lead to a complaint, however, it is important that should a complaint arise, it is taken seriously, investigated fully and the appropriate lessons are learnt to feed back into the system.

Process

In the first instance, all issues should be resolved at source and only escalated if a resolution cannot be found. For example, apprentices must follow the complaints process of the EPAO, and the EPAO must follow the complaints process of the EQA provider. If a complaint needs to be escalated to the Institute, the EQA provider must inform the appropriate Quality Manager. If an issue or complaint cannot be resolved by the Quality Manager, it may be referred to the Head of Quality Assurance, escalation within the Institute and then ultimately the QAC in exceptional circumstances.

All complaint must be logged appropriately and available for audit when requested. For EQA providers, this requires logging on the digital system.

Complaints



Figure 10 – Complaints process

Ways of Working

Activity	Description of activity/process
Issue raised via EQA provider feedback mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • issues or feedback relating to Standards should be fed through to the EQA provider through their feedback channels • EPAOs also have their own feedback channels and should share any issues that they cannot resolve with the EQA provider through the appropriate channel
Issue logged on digital system by EQA provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all issues should be logged through the digital system • all actions surrounding the issue should be logged on the digital system including resolution
Issue resolved at source	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EQA providers should endeavour to resolve issues directly with the complainant • the Quality Manager may be contacted as required for support and the EQA provider should discuss progress at meetings with the Quality Manager
Issue referred to Quality Manager for investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the complaint cannot be resolved in this way, the EQA provider should refer the case to their Quality Manager • the Quality Manager will conduct an independent investigation of the complaint or issue, which may include interviewing the complainant, desk-based research or chairing discussions with the affected parties
Quality Manager decides a course of action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • courses of action are at the discretion of the Institute, but the Institute will act fairly and impartially in all cases • if an issue or complaint cannot be resolved by the Quality Manager, it may be referred to the Head of Quality Assurance, escalation within the Institute and then ultimately the QAC in exceptional circumstances
Lessons learnt are fed back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • where the EQA provider and Quality Manager identify lessons learnt that may improve the system and EQA Framework, they feed back to the other EQA providers, either through presenting at the EQA provider forum or raising the issue and resolution at the Risk Monitoring forum • the Institute will decide whether wider alterations or improvements needs to be made to the system or processes and embeds these

Roles and Responsibilities

Activity	Institute	EQA Provider	EPAO
Complaint or issue raised via EQA provider feedback mechanism	Monitors complaints via the digital system	Provides an open, transparent and accessible feedback and complaints mechanism	<p>Manages complaints and issues appropriately at source</p> <p>Ensures EQA provider is aware of all feedback and issues that the EPAO cannot resolve</p> <p>Raises any issues with the EQA provider in a timely manner</p>
Issue logged on digital system by EQA provider	Provides digital system and mechanism by which to report issues	Logs all issues on the digital system and updates issues with any further actions	
Issue resolved at source	<p>Reviews issues logged on the system with the EQA provider and offers support and guidance where required</p> <p>Discusses any issues and progress in catch-up meetings</p>	<p>Treats complainants impartially and ensures they are listened to</p> <p>Ensures that complaints are investigated thoroughly, independently and fairly to establish the facts of the case</p> <p>Recommends a resolutions that is proportionate, appropriate and fair</p> <p>Records all progress on the digital system</p>	Co-operates fully with the investigation to ensure timely and appropriate resolution
Issue referred to Quality Manager for investigation	<p>Treats complainants impartially and ensures they are listened to</p> <p>Ensures that complaints are investigated thoroughly, independently and fairly to establish the facts of the case</p> <p>Records all activity and progress on the digital system</p>	<p>Refers any complaints or issues that involve themselves to the Quality Manager</p> <p>Cooperates fully with the investigation to ensure timely and appropriate resolution</p>	Co-operates fully with the investigation to ensure timely and appropriate resolution

Activity	Institute	EQA Provider	EPAO
Quality Manager decides a course of action	<p>Ensures that decisions are proportionate, appropriate and fair</p> <p>Involves the Head of Quality Assurance and other Institute staff where appropriate</p> <p>Communicates decisions effectively to all parties</p> <p>Records outcomes and actions on the digital system</p>	Respects the outcome of the Institute investigation and delivers any required action	Respects the outcome of the Institute investigation and delivers any required action
Lessons learnt are fed back	<p>Identifies lessons learnt and ensures these are disseminated appropriately through meetings and forums</p> <p>Ensures lessons learnt are appropriately actioned and embedded back in the system</p> <p>Communicates improvements to the wider EQA community including the initial complainant</p>	<p>Supports the Institute in identifying lessons learnt and disseminating these appropriately through meetings and forums</p> <p>Works with the Institute to embed lessons learnt and improve the system</p>	

EQA framework performance

Purpose

It is essential that the EQA process remains fit-for-purpose and EQA providers are performance managed appropriately in order to drive improvement and provide assurance about the quality of assessment.

Process

We will continue to review processes and check with stakeholders to make sure that EQA meets their needs. This Manual provides guidance for the Institute and EQA providers, but it will be reviewed to see how well it is working and further guidance will be developed as needed.

It is essential for the Institute to gather views from stakeholders, including employers, apprentices and EPAOs, to ensure that EQA provides the information and reassurance that they need.

The Institute's Quality Managers will each work with one or more EQA providers to agree plans and monitor progress. They will use the digital system, but will also hold regular face-to-face or telephone meetings. The frequency of meetings will depend on the EQA provider's footprint, experience and other risk factors.

The Institute holds regular EQA providers forums to share issues, developments and experiences. It will continue to hold approximately three forums each year.



Figure 11 - Review cycle

Ways of working

Activity	Description of activity/process
Consult with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Institute gather views and evidence from a number of different stakeholders including employers, apprentices, EPAOs and EQA providers to support the review process
Review EQA Framework and Manual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Institute use the evidence to conduct an annual review to check how well processes work and whether updates are needed update documents, digital system and develop further guidance and support as needed and communicated digitally, through Quality Managers in their regular EQA provider meetings, stakeholder meetings, through forums etc. EQA providers ensure messaging is appropriately disseminated to all EPAOs
Evaluate performance of EQA Framework and EQA providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop benchmarks to evaluate impact of the new EQA Framework regularly review performance of each EQA provider to check performance against delivery plans, including the quality of monitoring, reporting. Check that charges, responsibilities and priorities remain appropriate Quality Managers can run reports on information in the system to inform meetings with EQA providers. Run reports on defined periods of time to understand this data will also inform a bi-annual or annual review with the Head of Quality Assurance or Deputy Director of Quality and Assessments the Institute will pull reports on strategic topics to inform developments to the quality assurance strategy, understand trends or enable forward planning based on changes in the market information from these reports may be shared with EQA providers and EPAOs in appropriate forums to drive improvements

Roles and Responsibilities

Activity	Institute	EQA Provider
Consult with stakeholders	Consult with stakeholders, including employers, apprentices, EPAOs and others to identify issues and good practice and make sure EQA continues to have a positive impact	Provide feedback on impact of EQA
Review EQA Framework and Manual	Update documents and digital system Provide additional guidance and support as necessary	
Evaluate performance of EQA Framework and EQA providers (routine, periodic and strategic reviews)	Develop measures of success, benchmark and measure against these at regular intervals to evaluate impact of the new EQA Framework Review performance of each EQA provider to check the quality of monitoring, reporting, and check that charges, responsibilities and priorities remain appropriate Run reports on defined periods of time to understand trends and shares with the EQA providers and EPAOs Run reports on defined areas of interest to understand trends and shares with the EQA providers and EPAOs	Provide feedback on performance of EQA Framework and Institute engagement

Appendices

Appendix 1 – How we work with EQA providers

Who can undertake EQA?

When devising EPA plans, trailblazer groups choose one of the following categories for the provision of EQA:

- 1. employer-led bodies** which have an interest in protecting the quality of apprenticeships within their sector(s). Arrangements here involve an employer-led body and usually include governance set up by the employers often covering a group of Apprenticeship Standards
- 2. professional bodies** which set and monitor standards for particular professions. This usually includes a specific arrangement for governance
- 3. Ofqual,**
- 4. the Institute**
- 5. Office for Students/ Quality Assurance Agency**

There are a number of different providers within categories one and two.

The Trailblazers need to nominate a specific provider that falls within one of these categories. They can select from the list of registered EPA Providers or nominate a new one.

Appendix 2 – EQA provider registration

Purpose

It is important that the best provider to deliver EQA for a particular standard is in place when EQA is needed. This will be the provider that will give employers in the sector assurance that assessment is being delivered appropriately and that apprentices who pass the assessment are genuinely occupationally competent.

In order to ensure that providers who deliver EQA meet this criterion, are free from conflicts of interest in the EPA system, can effectively deliver EQA, and are in place in a timely fashion, the Institute runs an approval process for EQA providers, signed-off by the QAC.

Process

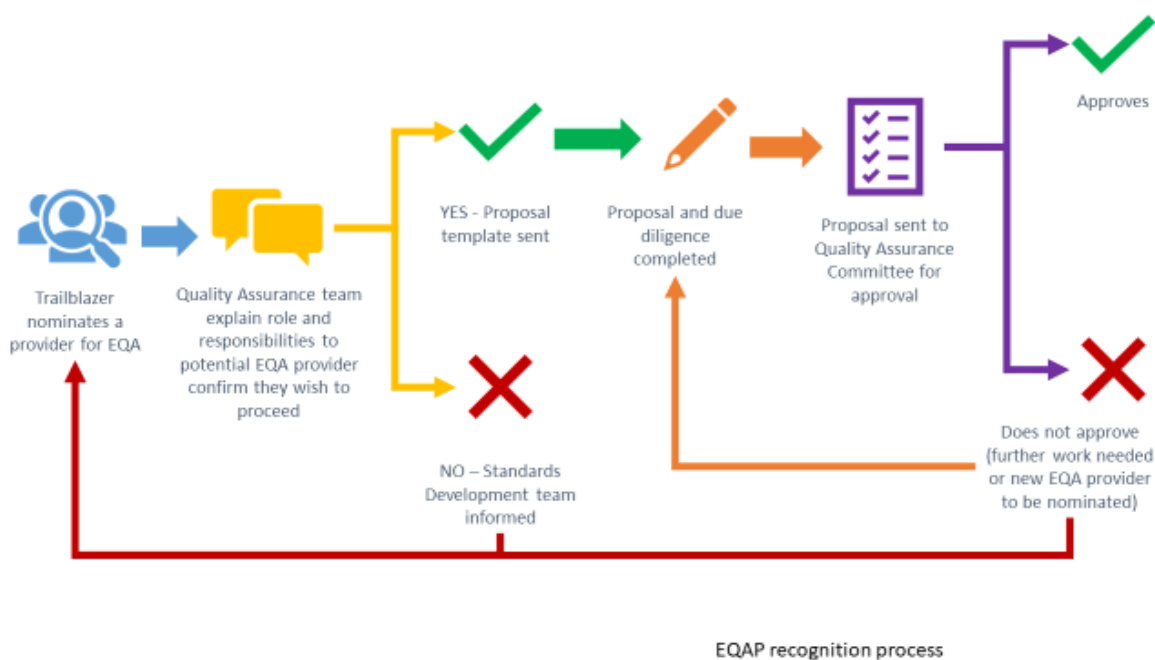


Figure 8 - EQA Provider recognition process

Ways of working Activity	Description of activity/process and key ways of working
Assessment and Quality Assurance team identifies a potential new EQA provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are two ways the Assessment and Quality Assurance team identify a new EQA provider: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The trailblazer identifies an employer-led or professional body as their EQA provider during the EPA plan development process and Standards Development team liaise with Quality Managers on this nomination 2. The Quality Manager identifies, from an EPA plan, that a new employer-led or professional body has been named and updates the system with the information • For either of these scenarios, the potential new EQA provider will be assigned by the Head of Quality Assurance to one of the Quality Managers
Initial contact with potential EQA provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within 5 working days of a Quality Manager being assigned a potential new EQA provider, they will make contact with potential EQA Provider to begin the recognition process • An initial phone call should be made to discuss what being an EQA provider entails and to gain agreement that they understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the need to report to the Institute ○ that they will not be able to act as EQA provider if they have or could be perceived to have any conflict of interest within the EPA process ○ the recognition process (including that financial due diligence checks will be undertaken) ○ whether they wish to proceed
If a potential EQA provider wishes to proceed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This should be followed-up within one working day with the Quality Manager sending the potential EQA provider a proposal template • The potential EQA provider must complete and return the template to the Institute, ideally within three months of the EPA plan being published
Due Diligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The responsible Quality Manager will request due diligence for each new EQA provider as they are identified. The purpose of these reports is to identify any conflicts of interest that could exist at organisational or personal levels and to review the financial position of each organisation • These reports will be forwarded to the relevant Quality Manager once they are received and should be considered as part of the proposal recommendation process

Ways of working Activity	Description of activity/process and key ways of working
Potential EQA provider decides not to proceed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • if the potential EQA provider decides not to proceed, the Assessment and Quality Assurance team must inform the Standards Development team immediately • the Standards Development team will need to go back to the trailblazer group to get them to nominate an alternative EQA provider • the assigned Quality Manager must own this process until a new EQA provider is named/approved for delivery • this will include working closely with the Relationship Manager to ensure progress and momentum is maintained • the Quality Manager is responsible for keeping the information held for that Apprenticeship Standard correct at all times. They will do this using the Institute’s digital system
Potential EQA provider completes proposal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Quality Manager should meet with the potential EQA provider during the time the proposal template is being completed. • once the proposal template has been received, it must to be reviewed to ensure each question has been answered, and that the answers are clear and that there are no obvious conflicts of interest • the Quality Manager may need to go back to the potential EQA provider to seek clarification. • the Quality Manager should also review the due diligence report findings at this time to ensure there are no obvious reasons why the potential EQA provider’s application cannot proceed

Ways of working Activity	Description of activity/process and key ways of working
EQA provider proposal approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all EQA provider proposals need to be approved by the QAC before they can begin any EQA activity. • prior to each QAC meeting, the Assessment and Quality Assurance team will hold a case conference meeting to review all EQA provider proposals. Each Quality Manager will need to present their proposal(s) and be prepared to answer questions. The case conference meeting will be used to decide which proposals are ready to go to the QAC and which need to go back to the EQA provider for more work. Even if approved to go forward to the QAC, you may need to seek clarification from the EQA provider on certain aspects of their proposal • once the proposal is ready to go to the QAC, the Quality Manager will need to complete a summary sheet to accompany the full proposal. Quality Managers must be prepared to present their proposal, with the reasoning behind why they think it's ready to be approved, to the QAC • Quality Managers should keep the EQA provider updated on progress at all times <p>Successful Applications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for successful applications, a recognition letter will be issued to the EQA Provider • once complete, the Quality Manager will need to arrange for a new page to be set up on the register of EQA providers on the website. This will list the contact details of the EQA provider and the Apprenticeship Standards they are currently approved to deliver, with a link to the copy of the recognition letter <p>Unsuccessful Applications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for unsuccessful applications, the Quality Manager will need to go back to the potential EQA provider and discuss why their proposal has not been approved • if the proposal needs further work, the Quality Manager should work closely with the proposed EQA provider to ensure there is clear understanding of what is required, and ensure that the proposal is resubmitted in time for the next QAC meeting • if there are major concerns, especially around due diligence, the Quality Manager will need to discuss these with the potential EQA provider to ensure that they are clear about the reasons for rejection and arrange for a rejection letter to be issued

Ways of working Activity	Description of activity/process and key ways of working
If an existing EQA Provider is selected for a new occupational area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • most EQA providers will work across defined occupational areas. If one of the EQA providers that a Quality Manager is responsible for is named as an EQA provider for an entirely different occupational area, the Quality Manager should discuss this with the Head of Quality Assurance to decide whether their application needs to be revisited and resubmitted to the QAC, or whether this area can be seen as complementing their current area of expertise and can be accepted
Record Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a named Quality Manager will be responsible for keeping the Institute's system updated with the details of new Apprenticeship Standards, as they are approved for delivery, and with EQA provider details. • if an EQA provider has any new Apprenticeship Standards added to their list, the named Quality Manager responsible for updating the list of standards and EQA providers will be notified. The named Quality Manager is then responsible for updating the list of recognised EQA providers on the Institute's website here
Performance and monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each Quality Manager is responsible for the ongoing monitoring and support of their allocated EQA providers • a Performance Matrix, is used to set minimum requirements for engagement with the EQA provider, which is based on a number of factors, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience, number of 'live' EPAOs, impact, data, quality of outputs, model used, personnel, feedback from EPAOs, willingness to engage, resources • scale - the number of Apprenticeship Standards and the number of EPAOs that the EQA provider will be dealing with • the Quality Manager is responsible for assessing their EQA Providers using the Framework, and then validating this with the Head of Quality Assurance • the position on the matrix should be reassessed regularly as the organisation matures
New EQA provider mobilisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • once an EQA provider is on the register and the risk factors have been assessed, it is important that the Quality Manager introduces them to the ways of working, establishing clarity of the roles, activities and target impact of all the key players and how they fit together. • in this meeting, the Quality Manager should also introduce them to the ongoing monitoring and support that will be provided by the Institute, including both the relationship and frequency of engagement with the individual Quality Manager and the interaction with the wider group of EQA providers in the EQA provider forums • the Quality Manager will also need to set them up on the digital system, provide a demonstration of how to use it and clarify what information the Institute expects to be input

Ongoing monitoring and support

Readiness of EQA providers	<p>Once an EQA provider has been recognised by the QAC, they should be ready to undertake EQA within three months, or by the time the first EPAO needs a readiness check - whichever is soonest. Where there is no expected EPA in the near future, they must be ready at least three months before the first person goes through EPA.</p> <p>This will vary depending on the size of the EQA activity that the EQA provider is likely to undertake. For very small EQA providers with only one or two apprenticeship Standards, involving a small number of EPAOs, it will probably be an addition to the lead person's (or a nominated person's) day job, taking up just a few days annually. For larger EQA providers, there is likely to be a team dedicated to undertaking EQA activity. In both cases, it will be the Quality Manager's job to ensure they have processes in place to cover the activities they listed in their EQA proposal. In most cases they should be ready to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• check the readiness of EPAOs – do they have everything in place, including assessment instruments, and will they be ready to deliver by the deadline set when they registered to become an EPAO?• conduct desk reviews – do they have processes in place to request supporting documentation from the EPAOs?• conduct site visits – have they been able to obtain dates of when EPA is likely to happen? If not, do they have plans to get those dates? How often are they planning to conduct site visits?• attend moderation/standardisation events – do they have dates for these? How often do they plan to attend?• EPAO meetings/forums – do they have plans to get all of their EPAOs together to talk about relevant EPA plans? How often do they plan to do this? What mechanisms do they have in place for ensuring any advice given to one EPAO is shared with others (when appropriate)?• reporting – are they aware of the reporting requirements (via the digital system)? Do they know that they will be required to complete a readiness report for each EPAO? Furthermore, are they aware that a report for each EPAO will need to be completed annually, once desk reviews and observations have taken place? Do they know that they will be expected to produce an annual report against the standard (comparing performance of the different EPAOs and reviewing the suitability of the EPA plan)?
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<p>Ongoing monitoring and support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • following the initial meeting with the EQA provider, the Quality Manager will agree a timetable of future meetings with each EQA provider (based on the performance matrix, see Quality Manager guide) • monthly meetings will ideally be face-to-face, but if this is not possible, aim for every other meeting to be face-to-face. The reporting template (to be developed) should be used at each meeting, with a summary recorded on the digital system • every meeting should cover a review of: Readiness checks; Desk reviews; Observation visits; Reports received against reports expected; Risks and issues; New standards (if appropriate); Resources (if appropriate), Other activities (such as EPAO forums) • depending on where on the performance matrix each EQA provider sits, the Quality Manager may need to factor-in additional attendance at review meetings by the Head of Quality Assurance and the Deputy Director • the digital system will allow the Quality Manager to have oversight of the EQA Provider's activity on a live and ongoing basis • Quality Managers will also be able to pull reports from the system for specific time periods across a number of fields, e.g. EQA events, actions, live risks and issues, reports due, engagements, as required • such reports should form the basis of the ongoing monitoring and support of EQA providers, for example, if you notice a pattern emerging in late delivery of actions or similar risk areas across EPAOs • where an issue is critical or high risk, ensure that this is escalated to the Head of Quality Assurance and keep the EQA provider informed of progress and decisions • where cross-cutting issues emerge, you may wish to discuss these across the Quality Manager group to understand how widespread these might be. The EQA provider forum is another mechanism to resolve cross-cutting issues in a collaborative and inclusive way • EQA provider forum meetings are usually held at least three times a year. These allow all EQA providers to get together and are a good arena for discussing known issues and risks, as well as sharing good practice. One Quality Manager (as agreed by the Head of Quality Assurance) will have responsibility for arranging these meetings
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<p>Reports received</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each Quality Manager will need to agree a timetable of when reports should come in from their EQA providers. Initially these dates may be difficult to confirm whilst they wait for EPAs to be booked, but once the Standard is up and running, it should be easier for them to predict which EPAOs they will be reviewing and when. They should put these reporting dates into the digital system • as and when reports are received by the Institute, they should be reviewed by the Quality Manager to ensure they are fit-for-purpose. Any problems should be addressed with the EQA provider as and when they are identified • reports will be RAG rated by the EQA providers
<p>Reporting to QAC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a dashboard should be produced for each QAC meeting to provide a picture of activity that has taken place. This could include the number of live standards, EPAOs, Red rated reports, Amber rated reports, and Green rated reports • review the performance matrix for EQA providers monthly and submit to each QAC meeting • at each QAC meeting, provide a report on how the high risk EQA providers are performing • report on one of the low risk EQA providers at each QAC so that they get a clear picture of performance across the spectrum
<p>Issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in the event that EQA providers find a serious issue, malpractice or non-compliance, they must report this to the Institute immediately. A serious issue is one where there is the potential for detriment to apprentices, risk of service delivery failure or reputational damage to the Institute. If there is any doubt as to whether it requires formal reporting, the EQA Provider must seek guidance from their Quality Manager. A serious issue is likely to trigger a formal review as required in our statutory duties • where minor issues are identified within EPA plans, these should be dealt with using the process set out in 'Feedback into the System' section of the manual

Appendix 3 – Lines of Enquiry for the Readiness Check

	Lines of enquiry				
	Relevant	Reliable	Efficient	Positive	Learning
Assessment materials	<p>Are materials appropriate to the standard and level of the apprenticeship?</p> <p>Are they specific to the role and reflecting recognised and current practice within the industry?</p>	<p>Will materials allow for consistent, valid and fair Assessment of occupational competence?</p> <p>Will they allow appropriate grading judgements to be made?</p> <p>How is the security of materials managed?</p> <p>Has any assessment software been thoroughly tested?</p>	<p>Are Assessment materials being developed and used efficiently?</p>	<p>Are materials accessible to all apprentices including those for whom reasonable adjustments will be made?</p>	<p>Pilots/trials with people already employed in these roles?</p> <p>Systematic and genuine industry feedback</p>
Support materials	<p>Are materials appropriate to the Standard and level of the apprenticeship?</p> <p>Do they reflect current/standard industry practices?</p> <p>Are they regularly updated?</p> <p>Would employers recognise their relevance?</p>	<p>Do materials accurately describe and/or represent the assessment that an apprentice will undertake?</p>	<p>Are materials available digitally and at no extra charge?</p>	<p>Are they clear and accessible?</p>	<p>Who have materials been tested with?</p> <p>What feedback processes are built in?</p>

	Lines of enquiry				
	Relevant	Reliable	Efficient	Positive	Learning
EPA delivery plans	Are they appropriate to delivering the Assessment specified in the EPA plan?	Will they produce reliable results over venue and time and for all apprentices regardless of their specific characteristics? Are they suitable for all apprentices?	Are the plans realistic and appropriate for delivering the likely volume?	Do training providers and employers understand what is required and support the process?	Which groups and what criteria have they been tested with? Are their specific diversity checks build in as standard? What is the feedback process?
Assessor recruitment and training	Do the assessors recruited have the appropriate and up-to-date occupational and Assessment skills, and meet any specific requirements as set out in the Assessment Plan?	Does the EPAO have appropriate conflict of interest policies, and are they applied across all Standards, to ensure that assessors will be independent from apprentices, employers and Training Providers? Are these standing up to actual delivery on that specific Standard?	Has the EPAO recruited sufficient assessors for the likely volume of EPAs to be undertaken?	Are the assessors credible across the industry as people fit to pass apprentices as occupationally competent? Will employers respect their judgement? Is a process in place to promote and monitor assessor CPD?	What is the schedule and quality of assessor training for industry experts?
Policies and procedures IQA – Internal Quality Assurance	Are the IQA policy and procedures fit for purpose?	Does the organisation have appropriate internal quality assurance arrangements in place?	Do the EPAO's data management processes meet the needs of the Standard?	Is the EPAO engaging appropriately with employers and providers to ensure that apprentices are prepared for their EPA?	Has the EPAO responded to the EQA provider recommendations?

Appendix 4 – Four-point scale of readiness

Four-point scale of readiness – EQA provider readiness check	4. Not ready to deliver	3. Ready to deliver: Improvement needed	2. Ready to deliver	1. Exceeds expectations
Assessment materials	Materials do not meet the needs of the Assessment Plan in terms of content or level	Most materials are in place and pitched at the right level, covering the right content for the standard with clear plans to develop remaining content	All materials in place and pitched at the right level and covering the right content for the standard	Clear plans in place to review, including plans to utilise evidence from Assessment and feedback from employers and apprentices
Support materials	<p>Insufficient material</p> <p>Material not accessible to all users</p> <p>Support arrangements could give unfair advantage to certain apprentices</p>	Generic EPA information available but more work needed to meet the specific needs of the standard	<p>Clear and accessible material pitched at the right level</p> <p>Material clearly differentiates for different audiences (e.g. employer, apprentice, training provider)</p> <p>Range of different material (e.g. templates or timeline setting out the apprentice journey)</p>	Exceptionally clear and innovative materials clearly tailored to the needs of the standard and test occupational competence in a genuine and innovative way
EPA delivery plans	No plans in place for effective delivery	<p>Plans in place for delivery but engagement with employers has not yet taken place</p> <p>Plans may be generic with insufficient occupational detail</p>	<p>Robust plans in place to deliver occupation-specific EPA</p> <p>Effective and regular communication with employers</p> <p>Contingency plans in place</p>	<p>EPAO has stress-tested plans and has robust contingency arrangements in place</p> <p>Very strong links with employers</p>

Assessor recruitment	<p>Insufficient assessors recruited and no clear plans to recruit to full capacity</p> <p>No evidence of appropriate occupational expertise</p>	<p>Some assessors in place and clear plans to recruit to full capacity</p> <p>Assessors have satisfactory occupational and assessment expertise</p> <p>Training and standardisation booked in</p>	<p>Sufficient assessors in place to meet immediate demand and geographic coverage</p> <p>Assessors have good occupational and assessment expertise</p> <p>Training and standardisation undertaken</p>	<p>Assessors have excellent occupational and Assessment expertise</p> <p>Future proofing built into assessor recruitment plans</p> <p>Contingency plans in place</p>
Policies and procedures (including IQA)	<p>Policies not in place</p> <p>Intend to use approach which has been proven to be ineffective in other EPA work</p>	<p>Workable policies in place but may be generic and need further adaptation to meet the needs of the standard</p>	<p>Workable policies in place which clearly meet the specific needs of the Standard</p> <p>Reasonable review dates in place</p> <p>Clear ownership at right levels within the organisation including management</p>	<p>Policies and procedures make use of good practice in other areas, including EPA on other Standards where appropriate</p>

Appendix 5 – Four-point scale for monitoring

	4. Inadequate	3. Requires improvement	2. Good	1. Outstanding
Relevant	<p>Assessments do not validly assess the occupational competence as set out in the assessment plan</p> <p>Assessments are not delivered in line with the assessment plan</p> <p>Assessors lack the occupational or assessment expertise</p> <p>Policies and procedures are generic and not applied to the particular needs of the standard</p>	<p>Assessment materials validly assess occupational competence, with some elements requiring improvement</p> <p>Assessments are delivered in line with the assessment plan, but some elements require improvement</p> <p>Assessors possess adequate occupational and assessment expertise, but it may be limited or not kept up-to-date</p>	<p>Assessment materials validly assess occupational competence</p> <p>Assessors possess up-to-date knowledge of occupational and Assessment practice. EPAO has robust system in place to manage CPD and training</p> <p>All activity (including application of non-Assessment specific policies) tailored to the needs of the standard in question</p>	<p>Assessment materials validly assess occupational competence and have been rigorously tested by occupational experts and reviewed as appropriate</p> <p>CPD and training exceeds usual expectations, including a proactive approach to learning and improvement</p>
Reliable	<p>Assessment is not undertaken independently of employer or training provider</p> <p>Standardisation and moderation processes do not ensure quality and consistency</p> <p>Significant differences in the consistency of delivery or grading across different groups of apprentices</p>	<p>Assessment is independent of employer and training provider</p> <p>Standardisation and moderation are run effectively, but some elements require improvement</p> <p>Assessment is delivered comparably across different parts of the country or employers</p>	<p>Effective standardisation and moderation processes in place</p> <p>Steps are in place to ensure that all Assessment is delivered comparably and in line with EQA provider guidelines</p>	<p>Excellent Assessment practice observed throughout delivery that ensures Assessment is comparable across the Standard and over time</p> <p>A proactive approach is taken to ensure comparability with other EPAOs for the same Standard, where appropriate, or with similar standards</p>

	4. Inadequate	3. Requires improvement	2. Good	1. Outstanding
Efficient	<p>EPAO fails to make adequate assessors available for the assessment required</p> <p>Administrative processes are ineffective or inefficient in a way which compromises apprentice or employer experience</p>	<p>Functional systems and processes are in place but could be improved</p>	<p>Efficient systems in place for allocating assessors and robust business continuity arrangements</p> <p>Procedures understood at all appropriate levels within the organisation with accountability and responsibility at the right level</p>	<p>A proactive approach includes forecasting and continuous improvement</p>
Positive	<p>There are risks to the security of Assessment materials</p> <p>Apprentices requiring reasonable adjustments are not appropriately provided for</p> <p>Support materials and other information (including on fees) are not available, or are inaccurate or inappropriate</p> <p>Feedback from employers and apprentices indicates a generally poor level of service</p>	<p>EPAO effectively checks that gateway requirements are met but this is not always consistent</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments and special considerations are mostly administered fairly and effectively, and appropriately recorded</p> <p>Support materials are adequate but may not be standard specific or updated frequently</p> <p>Feedback indicates a reasonable level of satisfaction from employers and apprentices with the way the EPA was conducted</p>	<p>EPAO consistently and effectively checks that gateway requirements are met</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments and special considerations are always administered fairly, effectively, and are appropriately recorded</p> <p>All processes to support assessment delivery are effective</p> <p>Support materials are comprehensive and helpful</p> <p>Feedback indicates a mostly high level of satisfaction from employers and apprentices with the way the EPA was conducted</p>	<p>Every effort made to ensure that apprentices and employers receive a positive experience of EPA</p> <p>Feedback indicates a consistently high level of satisfaction from employers and apprentices with the way the EPA was conducted</p> <p>A wide range of support is offered to employers and apprentices</p>

	4. Inadequate	3. Requires improvement	2. Good	1. Outstanding
Learning	<p>No or limited efforts made to obtain feedback from apprentices, employers or training providers</p> <p>Continue to apply procedures and processes which have been demonstrated to be ineffective</p>	<p>Some effort made to obtain and act on feedback from employers, apprentices and training providers but may be ad hoc or unfocused</p>	<p>Robust systems in place to obtain and act on feedback from employers, apprentices and training providers</p> <p>Improvements made to assessment practice from review of internal quality assurance processes</p>	<p>Continuous improvement embedded into culture of the organisation at all levels</p> <p>Feedback sought from employers and apprentices is routinely used to improve assessment delivery</p>

Table 11 – Grading aggregation

Category	Description	How this is calculated	Outcome
(1) Outstanding	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, without further action required	<p>Relevant and reliable must be Outstanding.</p> <p>Other areas Good</p>	No actions required, minimal EQA required
(2) Good	EPAO is delivering EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with some minor actions addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	<p>Any combination of solely Outstanding and Good grades which does not meet the threshold above</p> <p>All areas graded Good</p> <p>Up to two areas Requires Improvement and all others good. Relevant and Reliable must be good.</p>	Minor action required for improvement, EQA required to check progress
(3) Requires Improvement	EPAO requires improvement to deliver EPA for this Apprenticeship Standard in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with major actions to addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	<p>Either Relevant or Reliable graded Requires Improvement</p> <p>Three or more areas graded Requires Improvement</p> <p>One area Inadequate</p>	Improvement required, increase EQA activity required to monitor improvement
(4) Inadequate	EPAO is not delivering EPA in-line with the Institute’s principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning. Major actions are required to remedy this.	Two or more areas graded Inadequate	Major improvement required, refer to the Institute to decide if a breach has occurred or action is required

Appendix 6 – Risk Calculator

Table 12 - Standard level grading and criteria

Risk Criteria	Risk scores		
	(3) High	(2) Medium	(1) Low
Complexity of the Assessment Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of independence Safety critical Three or more assessment methods Complexity of assessment methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant concerns about independence Lack of clarity in assessment plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No significant concerns about independence no complex assessment methods
Annual volume of learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> >200 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50-200 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <50
Volume of EPAOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 (monopoly) or 10 or more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 5 and 9 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2 and 4

Table 13 - Overall 'per-EPAO-per-Standard' risk matrix

EPAO risk		Standard Risk		
		Low 1	Medium 2	High 3
Outstanding	1	Green		Yellow
Good	2	Green	Yellow	Red
Requires improvement	3	Yellow	Red	
Inadequate	4	Red		

Table 14 - Risk calculator

Conversion raw standard risk to 3-point scale	Aggregate standard level risk score	Overall standard level risk score
	3	LOW
	4	LOW
	5	MED
	6	MED
	7	HIGH
	8	HIGH
	9	HIGH



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