



Retail manager apprenticeship Assessment plan

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1. Introduction

This document sets out the requirements and process for independent end assessment of the retail manager apprenticeship standard approved by the Government (Department for Education (DfE)). All apprenticeship standards must include independent assessment to check the apprentice's overall performance against the standard. It is designed for employers, apprentices, education and training providers and assessment organisations.

Independent end assessment occurs when the employer is satisfied that the apprentice is working consistently at or above the level set out in the retail manager apprenticeship standard. The assessment period for the retail manager standard can commence at any point once the apprentice is competent after the twelve-month minimum period of learning and development.

2. Apprentice's readiness for independent end assessment

i. Achieving full competence

The period of learning, development and continuous assessment is managed by the employer, in most cases with the service of an education or training provider. Although learning, development and on-programme assessment is flexible and the process is not prescribed, the following is the recommended baseline expectation for an apprentice to achieve full competence in line with the standard:

Throughout the period of learning and development, and at least every two months, the apprentice should meet with the on-programme assessor to record their progress against the standard using the on-programme progression template (freely available at People1st.co.uk). At these reviews, evidence should be discussed and recorded by the apprentice. Once the apprentice is deemed competent the relevant section(s) of the standard should be signed off by the on-programme assessor and employer.

The maintenance of an on-programme record is important to support the apprentice, on-programme assessor and employer in monitoring the progress of learning and development and to determine when the apprentice has achieved full competence in their job role and is ready for independent end assessment. The on-programme assessment log is NOT a portfolio of evidence, but a record of what the apprentice can do following periods of training, development and assessment. A minimum of six meetings and completed records are recommended, to show ongoing competence across the entire standard, over a minimum of a twelve-month period prior to the starting the independent end assessment.

Further guidance and support on planning and managing a retail manager apprentice's training and development journey is available from the Retail Apprenticeship Board via People1st.co.uk.

ii. Readiness for end assessment

The independent end-point assessment is synoptic, which means it takes an overview of the apprentices' competence. The end-point assessment should only commence once the employer is confident that the apprentice has developed all the knowledge, skills and behaviours defined in the apprenticeship standard. The independent end-point assessment ensures that all apprentices consistently achieve the industry set professional standard for a retail manager.

All apprentices must complete the required amount of off-the-job training specified by the apprenticeship funding rules. The apprentice must have achieved English and maths qualifications in line with the apprenticeship funding rules.

The apprentice's employer must confirm that they think their apprentice is working at or above the occupational standard. The apprentice will then enter the gateway. The employer may take advice from the apprentice's training provider(s), but the employer must make the decision.

When the EPA is arranged with the EPAO the apprentice must submit the following supporting material within 14 days of the EPA being arranged: two-page synopsis of their business project. To ensure the project allows the apprentice to meet the KSBs mapped to this assessment method to the highest available grade, the EPAO should sign-off the project's title and scope at the gateway to confirm it is suitable. A brief project summary must be submitted to the EPAO in the form of a two-page synopsis. The EPAO must confirm the business project is suitable within 7 days of agreeing the EPA schedule This needs to show that the project will provide the opportunity

for the apprentice to cover the KSBs mapped to this assessment method. (see Annex C for details).

The independent end-point assessor will agree a plan and schedule for each assessment activity with the apprentice and employer representative to ensure all components can be completed within a four-month end-point assessment window. It should be noted that the on-programme assessor is not involved in this planning activity as this forms the next step of the apprenticeship journey, moving from the on-programme phase to the end-point assessment

iii. Order and timings of the end assessment

The written exam must be the first assessment component, followed by the retail business project and finally the professional discussion.

3. Summary of independent end assessment process

The apprentice will be assessed to the apprenticeship standard using three complementary assessment methods. The assessment is synoptic, i.e. takes a view of the overall performance of the apprentice in their job. The assessment activities will be completed in the following order:

Written:

2 hour written exam with a combination of short and extended answer questions, some incorporating scenarios

Externally set and marked by the assessment organisation

Undertaken either on the employer's premises or off site

Full details located in Annex B

Retail business project:

A project requiring the apprentice to look at a strategic challenge, opportunity or idea within their retail environment. This must look both internally at the organisation and externally to the local and wider retail markets and include financial implications. As a guide the manager will research and recommend strategies for up to three years including research, proposals and recommendations, including an implementation plan.

Full details located in Annex C

Professional discussion:

1 hour structured meeting

Led by the independent end assessor, involving the apprentice and employer (e.g. line manager)

Focusing on how they have performed during the apprenticeship and their overall achievement of the knowledge, skills and behaviours in the standard.

Full details located in Annex D

Completion:

Independent end assessor confirms that each assessment element has been completed

The grade is determined by the independent end assessor on the overall performance of the apprentice in each assessment activity:

Pass / Distinction / Fail

4. Reliability, validity and consistency

Independent end assessment is a culmination of a learning and development journey resulting in external confirmation of an apprentice meeting the industry defined standard. The assessments are conducted by an independent end assessor approved and appointed by an assessment organisation, which is quality assured to ensure consistent, reliable and valid judgements.

In summary, the following controls must be adhered to:

- ✓ A formal structure to plan the end point assessment, allowing planning of internal and external quality assurance, including the use of the readiness for ***independent end assessment record*** (freely available from People1st.co.uk).
- ✓ A common approach to assessment tools and procedures for independent end assessment, which will be freely available. The common approach will help ensure that end assessment tools and procedures are consistent in meeting the requirements for fair, accurate and reliable assessment decisions, against the retail manager apprenticeship standard.
- ✓ The mandating of both technical and assessment competence and continuing professional development (CPD) for independent end assessors to ensure that they have not only the right tools, but the right qualifications, training and experience to make reliable judgements.
- ✓ An end point assessor from an independent assessment organisation, who has had no prior involvement with the apprentice, providing an objective independent view.
- ✓ The internal quality assurance of individuals conducting independent end assessments and of independent end assessment outcomes and results, by an SFA registered assessment organisation.
- ✓ Requirements for standardisation of independent end assessments across assessment organisations.
- ✓ The use of on demand tests with automated marking ensuring a consistent approach regardless of the apprentice's workplace.
- ✓ Three complementary assessment methods that provide a clear structure for synoptic assessment across the standard.

5. Roles and responsibilities

Independent end assessor

An independent end assessor must be someone who has nothing to gain from the outcome of the assessment and must not have been involved in the training or line management of the apprentice. They must be approved and appointed by the assessment organisation to undertake the independent end assessment of the apprentice.

The employer led approach to end assessment allows assessors to be sourced from the employer's workforce to assess apprentices in their own organisation as long as independence from the apprentice can be demonstrated (i.e. they must not have been involved in either the learning and development or line management of the apprentice). During independent end assessment they are acting on behalf of, and are responsible to, the assessment organisation.

To ensure consistent and reliable judgements are made, independent end assessors will be subject to rigorous quality assurance and must take part in regular standardisation activities. The mandatory criteria for independent end assessors is set out below.

a) Occupational expertise of retail manager independent end assessors

The requirements set out below relate to all retail manager independent end assessors. Independent end assessors must:

- ✓ Have excellent knowledge and understanding of the apprenticeship standard as set out in the industry set Grading Criteria (Annex E).
- ✓ Hold a recognised current workplace assessment qualification. The list of approved qualifications will be published at www.people1st.co.uk and updated as new, appropriate qualifications are released.
- ✓ Have current, relevant occupational expertise and knowledge, at the relevant level of the occupational area(s) they are assessing, which has been gained through 'hands on' experience in the industry.
- ✓ Practice standardised assessment principles set out by the assessment organisation.
- ✓ Have sufficient resources to carry out the role of independent end assessor i.e. time and budget.

b) Continuous professional development for retail manager independent end assessors

It is necessary for independent end assessors to maintain a record of evidence of their continuous professional development (CPD). This is necessary to ensure currency of skills and understanding of the occupational area(s) being assessed, and can be achieved in a variety of ways. It should be a planned process, reviewed on an annual basis, for example as part of an individual's performance review.

Independent assessors should select CPD methods that are appropriate to meeting their development needs. Within a twelve-month period, an independent end assessor will be required to demonstrate they have gained practical experience in the retail industry which develops/updates their knowledge/skills. The following provides an example of a variety of methods that can be utilised for CPD purposes, a multiple of which need to be experienced/undertaken.

Updating occupational expertise

- ✓ Internal and external work placements to gain 'hands on' experience
- ✓ Work experience and shadowing
- ✓ External visits to other organisations
- ✓ Updated and new training and qualifications
- ✓ Training sessions to update skills, techniques and methods
- ✓ Visits to educational establishments
- ✓ Trade fairs

Keeping up to date with sector developments and new legislation

- ✓ Relevant sector websites and twitter feeds
- ✓ Membership of professional bodies and trade associations
- ✓ Papers and documents on legislative change
- ✓ Seminars, conferences, workshops, membership of committees/working parties
- ✓ Staff development days

Standardising and best practice in assessment

- ✓ Regular standardisation meetings with colleagues (see requirements for standardisation below)
- ✓ Sharing best practice through internal meetings, news-letters, email circulars, social media
- ✓ Comparison of assessment and verification in other sectors

Assessment organisations

Assessment organisations are registered on the SFA Register of apprenticeship assessment organisations. Assessment organisations are responsible for ensuring assessments are conducted fairly and that assessments are valid, reliable and consistent. It is essential that assessment organisations:

- ✓ Ensure independent end assessors are competent both vocationally and in assessment
- ✓ Approve and appoint independent end assessors*
- ✓ Ensure assessments are planned, communicated and executed fairly
- ✓ Quality assures independent end assessments
 - o With planned internal quality assurance activity
 - o Including both desk based and 'live' quality assurance activity
 - o This must be performed on a risk basis, i.e. new or poorly performing assessors must have every element of every assessment quality assured, but established, high performing assessors can be quality assured on a sampling basis, with at least one assessment activity being subject to either desk based or live internal quality assurance activity

- ✓ Ensure written tests are correctly invigilated (Annex B)
- ✓ Ensure standardisation of all assessors occurs on a regular basis, including but not limited to:
 - o Review of annual adherence to CPD requirements
 - o Regular standardisation meetings – usually quarterly but required frequency to depend on internal and external quality assurance outcomes of each assessment organisation
 - o Assessment and verification training sessions
 - o Shadowing and cross checking of other assessors
- ✓ Address poor performance from assessors to ensure high standards of end assessment
- ✓ Obtain and review feedback / satisfaction results from apprentices and employers, taking appropriate actions for improvement
- ✓ Address and administer any appeals and grievances fairly and in line with the consistent approach

Employers wishing to conduct end point assessment, either in their own organisation or for other organisations, must register as an assessment organisation on the Register of Apprentice Assessment Organisations in the same way any assessment organisation is required to do. All assessment organisations are required to check the independence of the end point assessor from the apprentice, ensuring that the end point assessor has not been involved in the learning, development or line management of the apprentice. All assessment organisations are subject to external quality assurance.

* Where independent end assessors are sourced from the employer's workforce they must be able to demonstrate independence from the apprentice and will act under the remit of the assessment organisation during the period of the assessment.

Assessment organisations will be subject to external quality assurance in order to deliver national consistency across the retail sector which is overseen by the Retail Apprenticeship Board and managed by People 1st.

6. External quality assurance (EQA) of the end point assessment for the retail manager apprenticeship standard

All assessment organisations listed on the Register of Apprentice Assessment Organisations (RoAAO) must follow the external quality assurance process in this plan. The external quality assurance will be overseen by a Retail Apprenticeship Board and conducted and managed by People 1st on a nonprofit making basis. Supporting information on the external quality assurance can be found at www.people1st.co.uk.

Retail Apprenticeship Board

Membership to the Board is via a fair and open public nomination and selection process, with input from key industry, education and training organisations. Membership is open to all types and sizes of businesses, including representation from SMEs and organisations that are new to the apprenticeship process. When a vacancy arises, retail employers are invited to apply for a seat on the board, demonstrating support from at least two industry and/or education and training organisations. Nominees will be judged on their experience, knowledge, qualifications and commitment to ensuring that apprentices consistently achieve the apprenticeship standard. Where a nominee does not immediately secure a place on the board, they will be retained on a list of prospective members for future vacancies.

A Board of 15 members:

- Represent the views of their business and industry networks
- Are subject to re-election after a period of 2 years (requiring the support of two organisations). Re-election is not automatic in order to give opportunities for other employers to be part of the board
- Work openly, challenge, innovate and drive the industry's apprenticeship commitment to quality
- Contribute their specific experience and expertise
- Actively communicate and engage other employers and partners to achieve high quality apprenticeships

The Board also includes a nominated representative from a private training provider, a college and an assessment organisation, whose membership runs for a period of one year before re-election. In relation to quality the responsibilities of the Board include:

- A full knowledge and understanding of the:
 - o content the retail manager assessment plans
 - o external quality assurance arrangements and methodology
 - o infrastructure and processes used to manage and operate the external quality assurance
- Agreeing measures to benchmark external quality assurance results set by People 1st
- Overseeing external quality assurance results based on the provision of quarterly reports provided by People 1st and agreeing corrective action as necessary
- Working collaboratively with training providers and assessment organisations, to identify and address matters relating to the external quality assurance process and results

- Reviewing evaluation results to ensure that the retail manager apprenticeship remains fit for purpose and advising on matters of maintenance which may impact on external quality assurance
- Reviewing and addressing complaints against retail manager apprenticeship and external quality assurance results

Process for initiating external quality assurance

Once an employer is confident that an apprentice has consistently reached full competence against the knowledge, skills and behaviours in the apprenticeship standard they will contact an independent end assessment organisation. In order to start the external quality assurance process, the assessment organisation will notify People 1st online at www.people1st.co.uk.

External quality assurance visits will be completed regularly on each assessment organisation, and may include more than one visit/activity where an assessment organisation operates in more than one region, or uses multiple assessment centres. External quality assurance will comprise a range of activities, examples of which are detailed below and will include onsite visits to assessment organisations.

External quality assurance activities

External quality assurance will focus on four defined areas to ensure compliance, including: consistency of assessment materials, competence and performance of staff, the internal quality assurance checks and the overall planning and reporting of the apprenticeship end point assessment process.

- **Ensuring consistency of assessment materials**
 - Design of the assessment materials
 - Consistent application and internal quality assurance of assessment materials during end point assessments
- **Competence of staff – EQA activity will check**
 - Vocational competence of assessment and internal verification staff
 - That assessment and internal quality assurance staff have been trained on end point assessment for the retail manager standard
 - That Continuous Professional Development of both vocational and assessment competence is occurring to the prescribed standard
- **Internal quality assurance – EQA activity will check**
 - Independent Assessment Organisations have implemented internal quality assurance procedures as set out in the assessment plan
- **Reporting and management of information – EQA activity will check**
 - Timely and accurate registration of the apprentice and notification of results
 - Accuracy of internal data against registrations in the People 1st system
 - Full, accurate and legible records

Sampling size and frequency

An assessment organisation's sample size will vary due to a number of considerations. Each assessment 'centre' (i.e. if an assessment organisation provides remote centres or operates multiple teams of assessors) will be sampled regularly. The baseline sample for the first external quality assurance visit will be 10%. At the end of each EQA visit the assessment organisation's

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performance will be graded (e.g. excellent, adequate, poor) and future EQA activity levels will be planned accordingly. Assessment organisations receiving excellent EQA results can expect future samples to be less than 10% and assessment organisations receiving poor EQA results can expect increased frequency of activity and size of EQA sample. At each EQA visit the sample required will include:

- Apprentices who are currently in the assessment window and those who have completed their end point assessment since the previous full external quality assurance visit
- Assessment centres conducting end point assessments on multiple linked standards (i.e. retailer, retail team leader and retail manager) may have external quality assurance activity combined for efficiency.

It is expected that EQA activity will typically occur every six months, but this frequency may be adjusted in accordance with the volume of apprentices completing end point assessment and the past performance of the assessment organisation.

Prior to an external quality assurance visit, assessment organisations will be contacted to provide and confirm relevant information regarding apprentices. From this information a sample will be selected and names of apprentices for whom evidence and activity are to be quality assured will be notified to the assessment organisation prior to the visit.

Typically, an external quality assurance visit will involve:

- Meetings between the external quality assurance personnel and apprentices, assessors and internal quality assurance staff.
- A desk review of assessment documentation, covering each assessment activity and usually covering a range of results from distinction through to fail, validating the internal quality assurance activity.
- Review of records relating to the planning of internal quality assurance and feedback from end point assessments.
- Review of records relating to the written exam administration.
- Review of records relating to appeals and grievances.
- Review of competence and CPD for assessment and internal quality assurance staff.
- Review evidence of satisfaction measures for apprentices and employers.
- External quality assurance activity will normally include an opportunity to see /review an assessment of a business project, professional discussion or conduct of an examination. All three forms of assessment will be observed over time during the course of external quality assurance visits.

Reporting and recommendations

Within 15 working days after the visit a draft report will be supplied to the independent assessment organisation, including recommendations, actions and a provisional risk grading. The assessment organisation will be given a further 15 working days to provide any feedback, as necessary, after which the final edition of the report, including final grade, will be sent to them.

Subsequent external quality assurance activity will be appropriate to the findings, recommendations and actions and may include interim EQA activity prior to the next full visit.

The EQA reports will not be made publically available, but may be shared, in whole or in part, with the employers on the Retail Apprenticeship Board to inform evaluations and improvements.

Identifying information will be removed so that board members cannot identify the assessment organisation.

7. Grading

The apprenticeship includes Pass and Distinction grades with the final grade based on the apprentice's combined performance in each of the independent end assessment activities in accordance with the table below and the detailed criteria in Annex E. The assessment activities are not 'weighted' in percentage terms as they are all important to demonstrating the apprentice's synoptic performance; however, employers have been clear that in order to achieve a distinction overall the apprentice must perform to distinction level in the retail business project as the core method of demonstrating competence, and one other assessment activity, with at least a pass in the third. The following approach to calculating the overall grade should be followed as set out in the table below:

Exam	Retail business project	Professional Discussion	Overall grade
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass	Pass	Distinction	Pass
Pass	Distinction	Pass	Pass
Distinction	Pass	Pass	Pass
Distinction	Pass	Distinction	Pass
Pass	Distinction	Distinction	Distinction
Distinction	Distinction	Pass	Distinction
Distinction	Distinction	Distinction	Distinction

In order to pass:

In the **written exam** the apprentice must achieve the correct amount of marks to pass the assessment activity. The written exam will feature a selection of short and extended answer questions, based on a representative sample of the assessment criteria in Annex E(i)

In the **retail business project** the apprentice must demonstrate competence against **all** of the assessment criteria in Annex E(ii).

In the **professional discussion** the apprentice must demonstrate competence against **all** of the assessment criteria in Annex E(iii)

In order to achieve a distinction:

In addition to demonstrating competence across all of the assessment criteria to achieve a pass, apprentices can also achieve a distinction grade by gaining the required number of marks in the **written exam** and demonstrating competence against **all** of the assessment criteria in Annexes E(ii) and E(iii) respectively. This competence can be demonstrated over the course of the **retail business project** and **professional discussion**, allowing the best use of naturally occurring evidence if available during the retail business project but allowing the apprentice the opportunity to demonstrate their competence in the professional discussion if required.

The independent end assessor will be notified of the grade for the written exam (results of which should be available within 35 days of taking the exam), and then aggregate performance to

determine the overall assessment outcome of not achieved, pass or distinction using a clearly defined, evidence-based process as prescribed by the assessment organisation.

Should an apprentice fail one assessment activity this should be retaken as soon as the apprentice is ready and when practicable for the business. Should they fail two or more activities a period of further training and development lasting between one and three months must take place before a resit. A maximum of two resits per assessment activity will be permitted. When retaking an assessment activity, the maximum grade that can be achieved for that activity is a pass.

8. Affordability

It is anticipated that the cost of the retail manager end-point assessment will be approximately 20% of the total external costs of training and assessment required for the apprenticeship and that there will be up to 1,000 apprentices completing this standard each year.

Annex A – Assessment method by element of the retail manager standard

Retail managers are responsible for delivering sales targets and a positive experience to customers that will encourage repeat custom and loyalty to the brand / business. It is a diverse role that includes leading and developing a team to achieve business objectives and work with a wide range of people, requiring excellent communication skills. Maximising income and minimising wastage are essential to the job and therefore individuals must develop a sound understanding of business and people management principles to support the achievement of the vision and objectives of the business. Retail managers champion the way for personal development, training and continuous improvement, encouraging their team to develop their own skills and abilities to enhance business performance and productivity.

Key to assessment method identification						
IEA	Independent End Assessment activity – identifies which assessment method will be used for that section of the standard.					
EX	Assessment will be through the written exam					
RBP	Assessment will be through the retail business project					
PD	Assessment will be through the professional discussion					
2 methods	Where two methods are identified the first is preferential; however, if assessment is not possible (for example a customer complaint is not likely to be observed) the second method may be used					
	Knowledge and Understanding (Know it)	IEA	Skills (Show it)	IEA	Behaviours (Live it)	IEA
Customer	Understand key drivers of customer journeys and how managing positive customer experiences increases sales, customer spend and loyalty, and the resulting financial impact on the business	RBP / PD	Manage the customer experience, including remotely e.g. on-line, through ensuring the team deliver to customers a positive experience that benchmarks favourably to its main competitors and meets customer service objectives	RBP / PD	Take overall accountability and responsibility for the customers' experience. Make effective decisions by balancing the needs of the customer and the business	RBP / PD
Business	Understand the vision of the business, its competitive position and own role and responsibility in the delivery of business objectives. Understand the market in which the business operates and how this impacts on the products / services it offers	RBP	Lead the team to achieve and exceed business objectives through forward planning, analysis and evaluation of own business area. Use sales and customer data to make sound and effective decisions which improve business performance	PD	Demonstrate personal responsibility for the strategic direction and objectives for own area of the business	RBP

Financial	Understand the key drivers of profitable retail performance and the relationship of forecasting to the retail calendar; know how to analyse and use information for forecasting, and how to report on financial results. Identify the impact of different types of costs on the business and understand how to make effective use of resources	EX	Manage the overall performance of the team to achieve financial targets taking into account the retail calendar year. Analyse reports to identify and determine key actions and recommendations. Produce and report on financial plans as required by the business, and identify and implement opportunities to increase profit and reduce waste	PD	Demonstrate commercial acumen and confidence to initiate change to improve the financial performance and profitability in line with business policy, objectives and procedures	RBP / PD
Leadership	Understand different leadership styles used in retail businesses and when to use them effectively to motivate and inspire the team to do their best	EX	Provide clear direction and leadership to the team, giving open and honest feedback. Apply and adapt own leadership style to different retail situations and people to achieve the desired outcome	PD	Influence, challenge and involve others, aligning personal values with those of the company to instil a high performance culture	RBP / PD
Marketing	Know the key factors influencing a marketing plan such as product launch and life cycle, pricing, discount and special offers and ways of marketing via physical and other media. Understand how own business has formed marketing plan and how own role can best utilise marketing strategies to address demand throughout the retail calendar	EX	Communicate marketing objectives to team members and drive results. Analyse and evaluate the impact of marketing activities e.g. sales and customer feedback, and report the outcomes to senior management with relevant recommendations	EX / PD	Proactively seek to understand the marketing strategy of the business, gain knowledge of local area and competition, take action, or upwardly communicate recommendations on action, to improve the implementation and drive marketing activities in area of responsibility	RBP / PD
Communications	Understand how to communicate and cascade information effectively at all levels and to a diverse audience. Know how to identify the information required for decision making, how it should be gathered and reported internally and externally	EX	Establish clear communication objectives, lead communications in a style and manner that is relevant to the target audience and achieves an effective result for the business	PD	Adapt style and method of communication to the circumstances and needs of individuals intuitively, demonstrating appropriate skills such as empathy, fairness and authority as appropriate; seek and provide feedback in a positive manner	PD
Sales and Promotion	Understand how to set sales targets that are challenging but realistic and how to lead team members to achieve sales targets, maximising opportunities and reducing potential threats to sales across the retail calendar	EX	Manage the team to achieve sales targets through regular monitoring of performance against results, identifying high and low performance products / services and taking timely action to find and implement appropriate solutions	PD	Think ahead and take positive actions to maximise opportunities for sales and effective marketing activities, make cost effective use of resources through robust processes to meet sales targets	EX

Product and service	Keep up to date knowledge of product ranges, brand development, promotions, current and future trends. Understand how to analyse, interpret and share information and brief relevant stakeholders on products and services	RBP / PD	Analyse and interpret product / service sales information and use it to make recommendations for future planning e.g. of staff and resources, ideas for new initiatives. Research and demonstrate new products / services or initiatives to the team	RBP / PD	Take ownership of the service offer, keeping self and team up to date with brand developments. Passionately take pride in new products and services actively promoting these with colleagues and customers	PD
Brand reputation	Understand the importance of upholding brand reputation, how brand reputation can become compromised and the impact on the business, and how threats can be managed. Identify the impact of social media on the industry and how it is used in own organisation	EX	Ensure the team carry out activities in line with business and brand values that actively market the business, support competitiveness and help meet business objectives. Identify possible risks to brand reputation and take action to prevent or minimise their impact	PD	Champion the brand and work closely with team and management to ensure brand reputation is upheld at all times	PD
Merchandising	Understand key features of merchandising and how these link with the business' merchandising plan to achieve sales targets. Know the particular requirements of related activities such as seasonal peaks and troughs over the retail calendar year	EX	Ensure effective merchandising set up, monitoring and maintenance in own area of business. Measure the impact of merchandising on sales and report the outcome to colleagues and senior managers, providing recommendations for improvements, and implementing changes within own remit	EX	Adapt merchandising principles to own environment, store configuration, local needs and sales patterns	PD
Stock	Understand how to manage an effective stock control system; recognise the financial implications to the business and own responsibility to manage stock to meet sales targets, marketing activities and business objectives	EX	Monitor the stock management system to minimise the cost of damage to stock and the loss of stock to the business. Ensure audit compliance and react quickly to results to maintain business standards and stock requirements	PD	Take ownership of stock management systems to meet current and projected business needs	PD
Technology	Understand the technology requirements of the business and how to manage them to achieve effective and efficient retail operations and service; identify commonly used and emerging technology in the retail industry and identify its current and potential impact on the business	RBP	Ensure technology is sourced, located, available, maintained and secured in line with business needs; oversee the use of technology in line with business policy, identify and make recommendations for improvement	RBP	Drive efficiency in the implementation and use of new opportunities in technology for retail that will provide benefits to the business	PD
Developing self and others	Identify a variety of ways to inspire and motivate team members, how to positively influence their approach to work and how to pass on knowledge and experience. Understand the importance of, and process for, ensuring team members' and own development	EX / PD	Work with team members to maximise their potential and achieve organisation's objectives. Implement effective and accurate training on products, services and legislation governing sales, such as age restricted products, trading standards and weights and measures	PD	Help team members balance work and life priorities, realise their potential and see the benefits of self- development and improvement. Demonstrate commitment to self-improvement, championing a culture of continual development and progression	PD

Team Performance	Know how to recruit, retain & develop the right people for the right roles. Know the key theories of performance management and how to apply them to retail teams using own organisation's tools and protocols to support them	EX	Recruit the right people into the right job, monitor team performance and recognise excellence, effectively manage performance that is below standard	PD	Orchestrate effective team dynamics, build effective relationships that select the right person for the right task, recognise individual styles and preferences	PD
Legal and governance	Understand environmental, legislative, corporate, data protection and social responsibilities relating to retail businesses	EX	Manage and continuously review adherence to legislation and regulations / policies for due diligence; handle audits and regulatory authorities such as the Environmental Health Officer appropriately	EX	Be accountable, advocate and adhere to the importance of working legally in the best interests of all people	PD
Diversity	Understand how local demographics impact on business, customers, staff and products and how this impacts the business policies on diversity and equal opportunities	RBP	Implement business policy on diversity, ensuring team are aware of and know how to work effectively with colleagues customers and other stakeholders from wide range of backgrounds and cultures	RBP	Instil values which embrace the benefits of working in a culturally diverse environment	RBP

Annex B: Written exam

Key facts:

- ✓ 2 hour written exam
- ✓ Scenario based questions
- ✓ Externally set and marked
- ✓ Undertaken either on the employer's premises or off site

The assessment will be an objective written exam incorporating both short and extended questions. The exams will be marked by the assessment organisation (not by the end point assessor to ensure further independence) ensuring validity and reliability and which allows for consistent, efficient and timely allocation of marks / grades. The question banks will cover the knowledge and skills identified on the standard (Annex A). Some questions will require the apprentice to consider a course of action or solution to a situation / problem based on a 'real-life' workplace activity in line with the identified requirements of the standard. The questions will be scenario based requiring the apprentice to demonstrate reasoning and joined up thinking, demonstrating synoptic performance against the key elements of the standard. The 2 hour exam will include questions covering a representative sample of the grading criteria identified in Annex E.

Apprentices will complete their exams away from the day to day pressures of work and in a 'controlled' environment, which may be on or off the employers' premises.

Assessment Organisations

The assessment organisation will identify a suitable person to invigilate the written exam. As this exam is externally set and marked it may be invigilated by the on-programme assessor, alternatively it may, but does not have to be, the assessor assessing the retail business project and professional discussion. Exams will be invigilated in line with the requirements set out by the assessment organisation.

Exam specifications will be available from People1st.co.uk and all assessment organisations must comply with the common approach contained therein.

Questions will be written using the language, tone and style expected for the level of standard. Apprentices taking the exams will be given a proportional sample of these questions which reflect general coverage of the standards to demonstrate competence within the given time constraints. Exam specifications will include a clear rationale for pass and distinction levels.

The definition of a 'controlled environment' will be clearly defined and explained by the assessment organisations prior to scheduling the exam and will include environmental requirements such as lighting, space, privacy and the requirements for an invigilator to follow a best practice process.

Annex C: Retail business project

The retail business project tests the application of the knowledge, skills and behaviours in the standard as identified in Annex A. It ensures the apprentice understands today's industry and what the consumer wants in a retail business. It is designed to assess apprentices in a consistent way, irrespective of their particular workplace and their role within their company, and must therefore be presented outside of day-to-day work pressures.

High-level descriptors of an example project are given below:

Retail manager

This could be a project to prepare a two year strategy for a department in a large retail manager, or an entire operation for a smaller organisation. It must look at opportunities and challenges, could incorporate new ideas and must lead to a coherent plan which would be appropriate for the business, match the organisation's objectives, identify measurable improvements and make recommendations for implementation. The project should not focus on an immediate problem, opportunity or idea but look from a strategic, medium term perspective.

The project is identified by the apprentice and discussed first with the line manager and then the on-programme assessor at least one month prior to the readiness for independent end assessment.

When the EPA is arranged with the EPAO the apprentice must submit a two-page synopsis of the business project (If for any reason the proposal is not approved at this stage a revised proposal should be sent to the employer and independent end assessor within 7 days.)

The project will contain the following:

- ✓ Introduction and background
- ✓ Outline of challenge or opportunity
- ✓ Aims and objectives
- ✓ Identification of measurable improvements and benefits to the organisation
- ✓ Evidence of consultation and engagement of stakeholders
- ✓ Analysis of costs and commercial context
- ✓ Legislative requirements explained and adhered to
- ✓ Evidence of effective research
- ✓ Justified recommendations for implementation
- ✓ Proposed timeframes for implementation

Once the project proposal has been approved by the independent end assessor, the apprentice will be required to undertake their project, which must be presented to the independent end assessor within the four month end assessment period. The presentation will take place in a controlled environment either on or off-site. A 'controlled environment' is defined as a quiet room, away from the normal place of work with access to all the equipment the apprentice requires to deliver the presentation. The apprentice will have 30 minutes to deliver the presentation to include time for questions and answers at the end. An employer representative can be present during the presentation as an observer only and will not interact with the assessment activity.

The apprentice is required to provide supporting evidence to show that they have completed each of the underpinning activities to lead them to the recommendations presented to the independent end assessor. The presentation time is not in itself sufficient to cover the full requirements so apprentices must also supply supporting information to evidence the process undertaken, which must be with the independent end assessor no less than five working days prior to the presentation. There is no stipulated word count and the independent end assessor will mark this alongside the presentation given to provide the outcome of the assessment activity. Apprentices are free to present this information in whichever way they feel is most appropriate, for example in a business report, but must include details of how and what research was undertaken, costings and how the legal implications have been considered.

The independent end assessor will make their judgement on the delivery of the retail business project assessment using the criteria for assessment contained in Annex E(ii). The independent end assessor should note particular aspects of the retail business project delivery that they wish to discuss with the apprentice during the question and answer session at the end of the presentation, either to confirm their judgement and/or provide further information on which to base the grading decision.

The grading criteria for all assessment activities are contained in Annex E.

Annex D: Professional discussion specification

Key facts:

- ✓ 1-hour discussion between the apprentice and the independent end assessor
- ✓ Employer present to support (but not lead) the apprentice and confirm information
- ✓ Will include areas of the standard not seen in the observation plus key additional areas identified in Annex A
- ✓ Planned in advance to allow the apprentice to prepare fully for the discussion

The professional discussion is a structured discussion between the apprentice and their independent end assessor. The employer will be present at this discussion to provide further examples and support (but not lead) the apprentice. The employer does not score the discussion. The independent end assessor conducting the professional discussion should normally be the same person who assessed the retail business project. It allows the independent end assessor to ask the apprentice questions in relation to:

- ✓ The period of learning, development and continuous assessment
- ✓ Coverage of the standard
- ✓ Personal development and reflection

The apprentice will be informed of the requirements prior to the discussion at least five days in advance and may bring materials to assist them to demonstrate their competence. The discussion must be appropriately structured to draw out the best of the apprentice's energy, enthusiasm, competence and excellence.

The professional discussion will be conducted in a 'controlled environment' i.e. a quiet room, away from the normal place of work. If for any reason it is not possible for all involved to meet in the same place end assessors must ensure adequate controls are in place to maintain fair and accurate assessment. The professional discussion may be conducted using technology such as video link, as long as fair assessment conditions can be maintained. Acceptable means of remote assessment include video conferencing / video calling and must include a two way visual and audio link. A standard template, provided as part of the detailed specification available from People1st.co.uk, which can be contextualised will be used, to ensure that standards are secure but interviewers are able to focus on key areas for confirmation of performance and effective appraisal of the evidence base. This will ensure that consistent approaches are taken and that all key areas are appropriately explored. The professional discussion will be planned in advance to allow for quality assurance activity in line with sampling requirements and will cover the key elements of the standard identified in Annex A.

The professional discussion will recognise areas which have already been covered in the retail business project so as not to re-assess an area in which the apprentice has already demonstrated competence. The professional discussion will typically last one hour and will be scored by the independent assessor using the standard template. The template will record full details of all marks applied (and evidence referenced) by the assessor.

Annex E: Grading criteria

Annex E (I) In order to pass all apprentices will demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a proportional sample of the following in the written exam, which should be referenced to the employer occupational brief for the retail manager for further detail (available at www.people1st.co.uk)	
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to apply general principles of operating commercially in a retail environment • Scope and content of a business strategy and future plans/influencing factors • Profit margin specifications and implications thereof for different products / services • Principles of budgeting and forecasting • The difference between a budget, 'actuals' and cash flow • Key financial data in a retail business, its importance and how it should be used to analyse performance and inform planning
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership styles • Theories of motivation
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online, print and in person marketing methods used in the retail industry, including the comparative benefits and limitations • Product launch / product life cycle • Principles of price based marketing (sales, discounting, special offers) • How marketing strategies link to the retail sales calendar
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The variety of methods of communication available and how to use these effectively depending on the situation and audience • Verbal / non-verbal / written, Face to face, on-line, via telephone, Brand standard / corporate image • How to establish the needs of individuals (team members and customers) • Principles of active listening • The importance of giving constructive feedback and acting on feedback received
Merchandising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key principles merchandising, including their impact on the retail calendar • How local and national trends and requirements can influence merchandising • The importance of following merchandising plans • How online and in store promotions differ and can be used as part of a coherent merchandising strategy

Stock	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principles of managing an effective stock control system • The financial and operational implications of effective / ineffective stock control • Correct storage conditions for a range of stock • The costs / benefits of manual and automated stock ordering systems • Legal requirements relating to stock control, movement and sale (e.g. age restricted, fireworks)
Developing self and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training needs analysis • The learning and development cycle • The importance of feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning styles • Training plan design
Team performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The principles and legal requirements for recruitment and selection • Factors that impact on retention of staff • The principles of an effective performance management system
Legal and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal requirements relating to managing a range of retail operations • Health and safety • Trading standards • Data protection • Corporate and social responsibility
Sales and promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of setting team and individual sales targets • Data analysis • Threats to sales targets • Principles of the retail calendar
Brand reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of brand reputation • Importance of adhering to brand standards, branding and messaging

Annex E (ii) The following competencies must form the basis for the retail business project:

Please note that although these competencies are based around assessment criteria and may appear to be a new set of competencies, they are designed to underpin the process the apprentice must go through in order to meet the standard, as identified in Annex A, for example, effective research demonstrates the apprentice's ability to understand customer profiles and needs, and other criteria reference back to understanding the organisation's strategy.

In order to pass an apprentice will:

- Give a general introduction and background to the retail business, including how this relates to the wider organisation, local and national environment
- Outline the problem, challenge or opportunity identified
- State the aims and objectives of the project
- Identify how the potential changes would lead to measurable improvements and benefits to the retail business
- Consult relevant stakeholders (e.g. customers, team members, managers) to inform the results and recommendations
- Provide a detailed analysis of costs associated with the proposed recommendations
- Identify applicable local and national legislation and ensure the proposal complies
- Provide research methodology to demonstrate a logical, coherent approach
- Make clear recommendations for implementation
- Concise validation and justification of recommendations

In order to achieve a distinction apprentices must, in addition to achieving all pass criteria:

- Give a detailed introduction and background of the retail business, wider organisations, local and national environments, including on-line considerations
- Outline the current situation which has led to the identification of a challenge or opportunity apprentices
- Provide detailed aims and objectives for the project, linking to the current situation
- Identification of measurable improvements and benefits to the organisation
- Provide evidence of wide consultation with a range of stakeholders and show how responses have been effectively evaluated and their content considered and included in the recommendation
- A thorough analysis of costs and benefits of the recommendations in the short, medium and long term
- Critically analyse the project to ensure it meets organisational and legal requirements
- Effectively design and use a research methodology using qualitative and quantitative research to its best effect
- Detailed recommendations for implementation
- Comprehensive link from the project into the medium term strategy of the retail business
- Detailed validation and justification of recommendations
- Proposed timeframes for implementation

Annex E (iii)	In order to pass all apprentices will demonstrate ALL of the following during the professional discussion:
Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The professional discussion is an opportunity for the independent end assessor and the employer to discuss the apprentice's performance across the whole standard. As such the apprentice is able to bring to the meeting any supporting evidence required to demonstrate their competence against the standard. Higher level standards incorporated in the employer occupational brief underpin specific areas of distinction level performance expected from a retail manager apprentice
In order to pass an apprentice will:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clearly articulate examples from the workplace relevant to evidencing competence across the standard Explain why it is essential to instil the importance of following procedures to staff Provide examples of how staff are managed effectively, including motivation and development of teams and individual staff members Provide an overview of how the retail operation meets the needs of the business Provide reasoned examples of how the operation operates efficiently Explain the importance of keeping up to date with current industry trends and provide examples of how this has been achieved Provide evidence to show they have been part of the budgeting and cost control in the organisation Describe how the retail operation meets legislative and regulatory needs Provide an effective evaluation of own performance, including behaviours, identifying where opportunities for improvement have been taken and results thereof evaluated Demonstrate how feedback has been sought from managers and customers and how this has been effectively dealt with
In order to achieve a distinction apprentices must, in addition to achieving all pass criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explains how effective retail management and contingency planning have been developed and implemented and how this has increased overall departmental performance Describe how recommendations for the improvement of quality, cost, value or efficiency have been made and implemented in the organisation Demonstrates staff engagement, motivation, performance management and how this has led to increased performance Demonstrate how a proactive approach to risk management has been implemented, including proactively educating and monitoring staff on health and safety and risk matters beyond the legislative minimum Provide examples of when improvement activities have been actively sought to develop own performance to raise standards in sales, promotions, team performance and customer service Provides mentorship to team members with measurable improvements to the performance of individuals and the team Proactively invite feedback from all stakeholders and use this to develop and implement measurable improvements in performance of self and team

