

# UNIVERSITY OF BUCKINGHAM

## APPRENTICESHIP END-POINT ASSESSMENT

### QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES & PROCESSES

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#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The University of Buckingham as an Apprenticeship provider and End Point Assessment Organisation, is required to deliver high quality training and an independent, objective assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the relevant Apprenticeship Standard. This is intended to ensure the integrity of Apprenticeship delivery and of the achievement of the associated Apprenticeship and any component qualifications.

The University has developed these Apprenticeship EPA QA Procedures and Processes, with respect to Higher Level and Degree Apprenticeship provision it may deliver directly, deliver via supporting provider arrangements, or for which it validates any element of a Standard, through franchise or other such arrangements, or when acting as an End-Point Assessment Organisation for integrated or collaboratively delivered Apprenticeship training.

Where such delivery arrangements exist they will be compliant with the current requirements of the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Office for Students (OfS) and Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA).

#### 2. PURPOSE

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's relevant Quality Handbooks, Admissions Policy and other guidance and policies linked to its provision of Apprenticeship Standards and End-Point Assessment.

The University's Handbooks outline its frameworks, policies, procedures and guidance for the setting and maintenance of academic standards and the quality and enhancement of student's learning opportunities. They provide key information, procedures, regulations, templates and forms for prospective and current students, and members of staff.

It is recognised that Apprenticeship End-Point Assessment is a specific activity requiring its own set of detailed procedures and processes, supported by underpinning policies. This document sets out key procedures and processes linked to the University's approach to delivering and managing effective EPA.

#### 3. APPRENTICESHIPS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES

The University's quality framework, with respect to Apprenticeships has the following key objectives, to:

1	Set Standards and student's entitlement of every stage of the student's journey
2	Consistently and accurately monitor standards
3	Identify issues and good practice
4	Swiftly develop actions to improve and share practice
5	Monitor, review, evaluate and report progress and impact of QA/QI actions

Performance management data will be reviewed and reported monthly to the ESFA via ILR data returns. The University's senior management will receive monthly performance and evaluation reports on progress against KPIs, Apprenticeship developments and any End-Point Assessment activities undertaken.

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In addition to regular QA/QI key performance indicators, the University will regularly assess the effectiveness of its Employer Engagement Strategy and operational delivery against the following measures.

### 3.1 Effectiveness Measures

1	Apprentice recruitment growth
2	Development of and implementation of new Apprenticeship Standards
3	Increased numbers of employers engaging / involved with the University
4	Improving Employer Satisfaction annual survey ratings
5	Increased Apprenticeship achievement rates at or above national rates
6	End-Point Assessment achievement rates and consistency evaluations
7	More involvement with employers in supporting industry updating of staff

Appendix 1 provides a summary chart of the University's Apprenticeships and training delivery and outcomes quality assurance and improvement evaluation processes. This includes summary processes for EPA activity. Appendix 2 Provides a summary flow-chart of the EPA process.

## 4. END POINT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

All apprentices must undertake an independent End-Point Assessment (EPA), which is a synoptic assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that have been learnt throughout the apprenticeship. The purpose of the assessment is to make sure the apprentice meets the standard set by employers and are occupationally competent.

It is taken by apprentices at the very end of the on-programme phase of training when their employer (and in some cases their training provider) is satisfied that they have met the "gateway" criteria to undertake the assessment. EPAs are graded and an apprenticeship certificate is only awarded after EPA is successfully completed.

### 4.1 Initial Recruitment & Admission to Apprenticeships

All Apprentices delivered by the University or any sub-contracted partner, must be recruited to the Apprenticeship in accordance with the Universities Admissions Policy and related Apprenticeship Recruitment requirements. As the University's Apprenticeships activity increases these requirements will become more formalised within existing Admissions Policies and Procedures. Key aspects of recruitment relate to the University's Employer Engagement Strategy and how prospective Apprentices are referred to the University's provision by Employers, or as applicable, via partners or arrangements utilising the University as an End-Point Assessment Organisation.

### 4.2 Entry Requirements / Initial Assessment / Diagnostics / Prior Learning Evidence

All Apprentices must meet the specific entry requirements of the Apprenticeship Standard and of qualifications embedded within the Apprenticeship as defined by the University. This is essential for Degree Apprenticeships to ensure candidates are of the right level, calibre or industry experience. Equally all Apprentices must have contracts of employment in line with the current ESFA Apprenticeship Rules and Guidance and Funding Guidance.

All Apprentices will undertake initial assessments or a form of diagnostic assessment to ensure that they have the current skills relevant to the level of Apprenticeship. Where such initial assessments identify shortfalls prospective Apprentices may be offered alternative provision or declined entry on current conditions. Where shortfalls can be remedied within the overall Apprenticeship, applicants may be allowed to progress to undertake the

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Apprenticeship. This will include where English & Maths updating is required to meet current national levels for entry to the Apprenticeship and where on-going updating might be required as part of a programme.

All Apprentices will be required to provide evidence of prior learning similarly to other degree programmes at the University. However, as noted the English and Maths requirements will be validated to ensure they are sufficiently current in accordance with the ESFA's Apprenticeship Rules and Guidance.

### 4.3 Programme Delivery & Off-the-Job Training

Apprentices will undertake their programme in accordance with the Apprenticeship Standard's description and will progress towards a final Assessment Plan. Both these are set by the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA). The University will ensure that its delivery of an Apprenticeship or that by its partners acting as sub-contractors complies with the applicable Standard's Brief.

Apprentices are employees and therefore delivery may take place via a combination of methods including: direct taught and practical sessions, on-the job training, distance learning, use of virtual learning material resources, potential workshop sessions, seminars, projects, away-days and residentials. Additionally, all Apprentices will be required to undertake 20% of their training hours as *off-the-job training* (OJT) separate from their employment day to day duties.

All provision is aimed to equip the Apprentice with the required competencies and be prepared for End-Point Assessment (EPA).

### 4.4 Readiness for Gateway and EPA

Before EPA all Apprentices must be ready for the *Gateway*. The *Gateway* process can identify and provide an opportunity to resolve issues around the readiness of Apprentices for EPA. Clarity for staff around expectations in terms of apprentice preparedness, will make it easier for the University and/or employer, to decide on whether the Apprentice should pass through and onto EPA. There are practical considerations to factor in, including the right prior achievements and evidence of completions, as well as those related to the apprentice performing at the right competency level.

### 4.5 Effective and Competent EPA Staff

The University will nominate effective and competent Independent End-Point Assessors (IEPAs). Employers expect IEPAs to be of a high calibre and appropriate when acting as assessors of their Apprentices. Employers invest a significant amount of time on the occupational relevance of the on-programme part of the Apprenticeship and in the employer support role. Employers expect the EPA conducted by an occupationally competent individual as well as one competent in terms of assessment practice to the relevant level.

### 4.6 Staff CPD & Industry Updating

Apprenticeship delivery staff are supported in their development in line with the University's CPD Strategy and Academic School plans. Underperformance identified through observations or other means will be supported to improve through developmental strategies. Staff interested in developing their skills will be supported to gain the necessary assessor accreditation and / or any EPA related training that they may need. This includes IEPA training in line with the University's EPA service requirements or with linked EPAOs as applicable. Staff may also undertake professional industry updating and where possible this will include employer placements or higher level CPD including work placement activity.

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### 4.7 QA & Monitoring of End-Point Assessment and Assessors

Where the University carries out EPA, the outcomes will be reviewed and signed off by the relevant board of examiners. Where applicable, it will look at the outcomes across different IEPAs. Where there might be differences between assessors, further moderation work would need to be undertaken.

Subsequently as part of annual reviews, the Board of Studies will review EPA outcomes against different population characteristics. This will only happen once cohorts are of a sufficient size to produce meaningful comparisons.

EPA staff will be subject to reviews and monitoring in accordance with the University's procedures and practice. Staff will be supported through CPD and industry updating opportunities as applicable.

### 4.8 Contracts

Underpinning the baseline of the University's commitments in terms of Apprenticeship Delivery and EPAO activity, relevant contracts, or at a minimum service level agreements, will set out its obligations to Apprentices and to employers as required. For Apprenticeship delivery commitment statements and service contracts will be in-line with the requirements of current ESFA / OfS guidance.

### 4.9 EPA Consistency Policy

The University will ensure consistency in EPA through its EPA QA activities. These are provided in a EPA Consistency QA Policy. These should be considered in conjunction with the University's wider Apprenticeship and EPA Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes and procedures.

### 4.10 EPA Conflict of Interest Policy

The University of Buckingham when acting as an apprenticeship End Point Assessment Organisation, is required to deliver an independent, objective assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the relevant Apprenticeship Standard.

This is intended to ensure the integrity of Apprenticeship delivery and the achievement of the associated Apprenticeship award and any component qualifications. The University's EPA Conflict of Interest Policy provides details of its approach to ensure a clear collusion divide between delivery and EPA for both non and integrated EPA Apprenticeships.

The implementation of this policy is facilitated by the provision of training and/or guidance for all individuals involved in the apprenticeship EPA process, so that they are able to recognise and effectively manage any possible conflicts of interest (be they perceived or actual), that may arise. Individuals involved in EPA are responsible for ensuring that they are familiar with this policy and any associated guidance, and that they participate in any training offered.

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### 4.11 EPA Fair Access Policy

Fair Access is a principle ensuring that all learners have an equal chance of success, by putting in place appropriate reasonable adjustments. The adjustments must not advantage the candidate nor affect the integrity of an end point assessment conducted by the University of Buckingham or any of its staff or contracted independent end-point assessors delivering EPA on its behalf. The University operates an EPA Fair Access Policy accordingly.

This policy sets out principles which clarify the expectations on all parties in support of fair access procedures. All apprentices and potential apprentices should be able to enter and successfully participate in an apprenticeship programme and EPA.

### 5. COMPLAINTS & APPEALS

Where complaints relating to issues of fair access cannot be satisfactorily resolved, apprentices must be made aware of their right to appeal to the University via the applicable current arrangements outlined in its Complaints and Appeals Policy.

### 6. POLICY OWNERSHIP

This Policy is owned by: Chris Payne, Director of Academic Services

Review Date: July 2020

## Apprenticeship QA Evaluation Processes

**APPENDIX 1**

## 7. APPRENTICESHIPS / TRAINING DELIVERY AND OUTCOMES QA/QI EVALUATION PROCESS

The following processes are used to ensure and assess the quality and outcomes of the Apprenticeships delivered by the University. For End-Point Assessment additional quality assurance aspects are covered in the EPA Policies and are summarised at 5 below.

	PROCESS / STAGE	ACTIVITIES	EVALUATION RATIONALE
1	Organisational Targets	Set University (UoB) Apprenticeships KPIs & Measures, Monitoring & Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UoB undertakes rigorous QA/QI monitoring of Apprenticeships provision against annually set KPIs and measures set out in the Employer Engagement Strategy. These reflect QSR findings and Improvement Plan actions.</li> <li>In-year performance is regularly monitored and reported at senior management meetings. Areas identified as needing intervention can then be addressed and improvement strategies implemented.</li> </ul>
2	Apprentice Recruitment	Entry Criteria Employer Engagement Initial Assessment E&M Verification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All Apprenticeships offered have applicable entry criteria to ensure quality.</li> <li>The quality of apprenticeship provision is improved by careful selection and recruitment of apprentices. The process considers apprentices and employer needs.</li> <li>Apprentices undertake initial assessment as appropriate. This ensures apprentices are realistically placed on a higher or degree level Apprenticeship. Where prior learning is identified as not sufficient or diagnostic assessment reveals an insufficient capability in English and / or Maths and/or other relevant entry requirements appropriate plans to add these elements to the Apprenticeship will be made, or the applicant referred to an alternative training and skills progression route.</li> <li>Where relevant Apprentices will undertake additional E&amp;M as part of their Apprenticeship. Where an Apprentice has met the E&amp;M threshold it may still be an element of the Apprenticeship Standard's programme delivery or individual learning plan to update relevant skills appropriate to employment.</li> </ul>
3	Induction Period	Apprenticeship Induction Apprenticeship Handbook Employer Agreement Individual Learner Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apprentices undergo a period of induction to familiarise them with the programme's requirements, including the University based learning environment and off-the-job training, health and safety, equality and diversity and safeguarding and prevent aspects.</li> </ul>



Apprenticeship QA Evaluation Processes

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The expectations and standard of apprentices in addition to key information is set out in relevant Apprentice Handbooks or the University's Quality Handbooks..</li> <li>○ The requirements of the Apprentice and Employer are set out in a pre-contracting agreement and commitment statement to ensure all parties should achieve effectively and in a timely manner.</li> </ul>
3	Apprentice Progress Tracking	Assessor Support & MIS Apprenticeship Reports Risk Register & Red Alert	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ On-programme Apprentices are monitored and tracked against their personally set targets relevant to them and the individual Apprenticeship.</li> <li>○ Employers are regularly updated and engaged on learner progress in the work place setting and in relation to off-the-job training / University or partner based learning venues.</li> <li>○ Progress is monitored using tracking software. This enables timely monitoring against expected progress points, evidence requirements, employer input and other wider aspects of the Apprenticeship.</li> <li>○ Additional MIS tracking supports the Apprenticeships Team, academic staff and assessors to track progress on English and Maths or other relevant linked professional qualifications.</li> <li>○ MIS generates reports for the Apprenticeships Team and senior management which link to the overview of progress against the KPIs and key measures in addition to updateable Improvement Plan actions.</li> <li>○ Apprentices identified as at risk in terms of failing to: track to plan, poor attendance at work or at taught sessions, not achieving E&amp;M or other skill and competency targets; not achieving linked qualifications core to the Apprenticeship; may be placed on a risk register to ensure focus is given to ensure progress. This will involve the employer as required to ensure there are no issues affecting progress and timely achievement in the workplace.</li> </ul>
4	Apprentice & Employer Feedback	Apprentice Learner Survey Employer Satisfaction Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Apprentices will be surveyed via questionnaires on a regular basis in line with the University's Quality Cycle to ensure overall programme satisfaction and identification of any issues which can be added in year to the Improvement Plan. Apprentices may provide more direct regular feedback to their assessors / academic staff as applicable.</li> <li>○ Employers are regularly surveyed to ensure satisfaction with the Apprenticeship. This includes UoB based surveys and participation in the ESFA annual Employer Satisfaction Survey or any applicable OfS Surveys.</li> </ul>



Apprenticeship QA Evaluation Processes

			Assessor workplace visits enable provision of regular feedback to the University. Issues which cannot be swiftly ameliorated are included in the Improvement Plan as SMART actions to improve.
5	Apprenticeship Completion & EPA (Including Integrated EPA)	Gateway Stage End-Point Assessment Achievement Repeat EPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Apprentices are supported in being ready for EPA by assessors and academic staff. Once all relevant unit / programme progress and competency evidence indicates readiness, Apprentices will be referred to the Gateway.</li> <li>○ Where the University acts as the EPAOs it will undertake the EPA using its IEPAs and validating achievement via LIAEPAs.</li> <li>○ EPA will be conducted in accordance with the University’s EPA Conflict of Interest Policy.</li> <li>○ Apprentices that achieve will progress to the finalisation of the claim via the ILR to the relevant funding agency and be awarded certification accordingly in accordance with the process.</li> <li>○ Those that do not achieve EPA will be supported to prepare for re-EPA as required.</li> </ul>
6	Apprenticeship Course Evaluation & Improvement of Training	Self-Assessment Improvement Plan OfS QSR Red Alert Apprenticeship Course closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The University produces a detailed annual self-assessment and is subject to OfS QSR monitoring, which includes apprenticeships evaluation. This is based on the accumulative data outlined in this procedural summary for individual learners, employers and the Apprenticeship as a whole.</li> <li>○ The University undertakes periodic self-evaluation against the OfS QSR Matrix including with respect to its Apprenticeships provision to ensure it meets higher education quality standards.</li> <li>○ Where issues are identified for improvement these will be included in the Improvement Plan, which will include specific actions for improvement. These are monitored regularly in-year against the quality cycle and progress evaluated. Further intervention is made if required.</li> <li>○ Apprenticeships which do not show improvement will be placed on red alert and subject to additional intervention strategies and support as appropriate.</li> <li>○ Where necessary an Apprenticeship that underperforms and is below expected funding agency performance thresholds and does not improve performance within a reasonable period will be closed. Employers may be consulted on this and offered alternative providers if necessary. Learners on-programme will be supported to complete until the programme cohort completes.</li> </ul>



Apprenticeship QA Evaluation Processes

7	Staff CPD	Staff Training Plans EPA and assessor training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Apprenticeship delivery staff are supported in their development in line with the University's CPD Strategy and Academic School plans.</li> <li>○ Underperformance identified through observations or other means will be supported to improve through developmental strategies.</li> <li>○ Staff interested in developing their skills will be supported to gain the necessary assessor accreditation and / or any EPA related training that they may need. This includes IEPA training in line with the University's EPA service requirements or with linked EPAOs as applicable.</li> <li>○ Staff may also undertake professional industry updating and where possible this will include employer placements or higher level CPD including work placement activity.</li> </ul>
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# UoB – EPA Process Summary Flow-Chart

## End-Point Assessment (Basic Process)

