

# UNIVERSITY OF BUCKINGHAM

## APPRENTICESHIP END-POINT ASSESSMENT CONSISTENCY ASSURANCE STRATEGY

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. 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.
- 1.2. The University has developed this Apprenticeship End-Point Assessment Consistency QA Policy, 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 EPA Organisation for integrated or collaboratively delivered Apprenticeship training.
- 1.3. 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

- 2.1. This policy should be read in conjunction with the University's Regulations and Quality Handbooks and other guidance and policies linked to its provision of Apprenticeship Standards and End-Point Assessment. This Policy is intended to provide the basis for and to ensure consistency in, the EPA processes applied by the University both internally and in relation to practice in the sector. It will be subject to review and development as the University's Degree Apprenticeship provision increases and develops.
- 2.2. 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.
- 2.3. 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.

### 3. APPRENTICESHIP EPA MODELS

- 3.1. To ensure consistency in the University's approach to undertaking EPAs, it is necessary for staff involved to understand the different models of EPA and roles of EPAOs. EPA is carried out by a designated End Point Assessor Organisation (EPAO). For the majority of Apprenticeship Standards the EPAO should be selected by the employer and not the provider, except in cases where the Standard effectively is both delivered and assessed by a single organisation meaning the employer makes a single choice based on the specific Standard and qualifications embodied within it.

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- 3.2. Any organisation undertaking the EPAO role must be an approved organisation on the Education & Skills Funding Agency Register for Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations (RAAO).
- 3.3. All apprenticeship standards involve an EPA. This determines whether the apprentice has met the requirements of the Apprenticeship Standard. Every Apprenticeship Standard has an accompanying Assessment Plan, which sets out how the EPA should be conducted. In order to be eligible for entering the *Gateway*, the apprentice needs to have met all requirements set out in the Assessment Plan and to have the employer's permission to proceed to EPA.
- 3.4. As noted, the EPA process may be carried out in two ways, dependent on the requirements of the Apprenticeship Standard and related Assessment Plan. The most common up to Level 5 Apprenticeships is *Independent*, although there may be some exceptions. For these Apprenticeships the EPA Organisation (EPAO) is independent of the training provider. An apprentice on a Degree Apprenticeship would need to gain the academic award and pass the EPA in order to complete the apprenticeship.
- 3.5. For Level 6 and 7 Apprenticeship Standards, delivered normally by higher education institutions, the *Integrated* model is more common. This effectively makes the EPA an integral part of the academic award, but still involves a final assessment to be carried out by the HEI training provider and its integrated EPAO service.
- 3.6. For the University of Buckingham, this means that it may act as an EPAO in accordance with its EPAO Conflict of Interest Policy, when undertaking EPA of its directly delivered Apprenticeship Standards which have the defined *Integrated* EPA in the Assessment Plan. The University may also act as an EPAO where it acts in this role for another Apprenticeship provider again in line with the University's relevant EPAO Conflict of Interest Policy to ensure there is no collusion in the EPA process.
- 3.7. Where the University is not the EPAO but acts only as the provider it is responsible for paying the EPAO which delivers the EPA, from within the fee it receives for delivering the apprenticeship training, the final 20% of which is only recoverable on completion. Where the University undertakes the *Integrated* model it can only include EPA fees within the total price to the Employer in line with the IfA current bands and EPA percentage cost rates.

## 4. IMPORTANCE OF GATEWAY PREPARATION TO APPRENTICESHIP CONSISTENCY

- 4.1. Before EPA all Apprentices must be ready for the *Gateway*. The *Gateway* process can be a way to identify and resolve issues before they become problems. 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.
- 4.2. In the role of EPAO it is important for the University to 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. This is because 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 the EPA conducted by an occupationally competent

10) 10007787 UOB EPA Consistency Assurance Strategy - Sections 9 and 10 Moderation Processes individual as well as one competent in terms of assessment practice to the relevant level.

## **5. STAFF CONSISTENCY & PROFILES**

**5.1.** To ensure confidence in the consistency of the standard of assessors and staff involved in delivering Apprenticeships, the University will produce a brief biography for each assessor setting out their experience. This is to assure and give confidence to employers and any providers working with the University (and Apprentices), as to the credibility and consistency of the University's approach to EPAO activity and Apprenticeship delivery as applicable.

**5.2.** Monitoring of End Point 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 Boards 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.

## **6. UNDERPINNING CONTRACTS**

**6.1.** 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.

## **7. SUMMARY EPA CONSISTENCY QUALITY ASSURANCE EXPECTATIONS**

**7.1.** The University will ensure consistency in EPA through the following summary QA activities. These should be considered in conjunction with the University's wider Apprenticeship and EPA Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement processes and procedures.

### **7.2. EPA Quality Assurance Arrangements**

The University will work to:

- Provide EPA guidance to apprentices, employers (and training providers as applicable) in relation to the requirements of the practical activities, technical work, interview, references and marking of EPA activities;
- Ensure the IEPA (the assessor) makes consistent and reliable assessment judgements through observation of end point activity and audit of recorded interviews and assessment decisions on a sampling basis;
- Consult with representative technical experts when developing any relevant project assessment, to ensure there is consistency and comparability in the terms of breadth and depth of the assessment, to ensure the assessments are reliable, robust and valid and ensure competency accord across the Apprenticeship Standard's industry;
- Develop compensatory assessment for learners with special requirements to allow reasonable adjustments to be made while ensuring that judgements are not compromised; (see the EPA Fair Access Policy and related University Reasonable Adjustments policies);

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- Ensure that IEPAs receive training for conducting the interview and project and marking and grading;
- Undertake annual training for IEPAs in undertaking fair and impartial assessment, making judgements about performance;
- Ensure that documentation is in place and reviewed annually for EPA feedback, judgements, making reasonable adjustments and conflict of interest;
- Hold quarterly standardisation meetings to ensure consistency of application of the guidance, provide updates and share good practice;
- Carry out moderation of assessments;
- Gather feedback from employers and training providers following EPA.

Note: External Quality Assurance: External quality assurance for this apprenticeship standard will be managed by the Institute for Apprenticeships.

## 8. COMPARABILITY & CONSISTENCY OF PRACTICE

**8.1.** As detailed in the summary EPA QA Expectations section of this policy, comparability and consistency will be ensured through:

- Recruitment of suitable end point assessors who will be briefed and trained;
- A team approach to carrying out end point assessment;
- The development of protocols covering how the assessment will be administered;
- Moderation and standardisation of a sample of outcomes;
- Recording presentations, interviews and discussions for moderation and quality control purposes;
- Monitoring of outcomes by the board of examiners and the board of studies;
- Using the annual review and teaching and learning improvement processes to review outcomes and to use the learning from this to improve practice.

## 9. COMPLAINTS & APPEALS

**9.1.** Where complaints relating to issues of EPA consistency 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 Student Complaints Policy and Procedure and Academic Appeals Policy.

## 10. POLICY OWNERSHIP

**10.1.** This Strategy is owned by: Chris Payne, Director of Academic Services

Review Date: July 2020