

Learning Enhancement



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

External Assessor Handbook

2022/23

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EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE (EQA) EXTERNAL ASSESSOR HANDBOOK

1. The Role of External Assessors

- 1.1 The EQA external assessor role is required by Designated Quality Body to oversee the End Point Assessment (EPA) aspect of higher and integrated degree apprenticeships. The University of Leeds is the End Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) for a number of higher and integrated degree apprenticeships, where the EPA is fully integrated into the on-programme delivery. In these instances, the University is responsible for delivering EPA in line with the Assessment Plan for the apprenticeship Standard. The external assessor role provides external oversight of our EPA delivery and external quality assurance monitoring of our end point assessment.
- 1.2 External assessors at the University of Leeds normally also hold the role of external examiner for the mandatory qualification on the higher or degree apprenticeship. Therefore, the external assessor will often be taking on the role in addition to their external examiner responsibilities for the degree.
- 1.3 The University of Leeds External Examiner Handbook provides information on Institutional policies and procedures related to external examining, appointments and duties, and how the University considers external examiner reports. The external examiner handbook should therefore be read in conjunction with this external assessor handbook. Please see the dedicated [webpage for External Examiners](#) at the University of Leeds which includes a hyperlink to the current external examiner handbook.
- 1.4 For further details on the External Assessor role please see the dedicated [webpage for External Assessors](#) or contact the Learning Enhancement Team: LE-Apprenticeships@leeds.ac.uk

2. External Assessor activities

- 2.1 External assessors are required to comment on assessment practice and procedures for the EPA against the requirements of the specific apprenticeship Standard, through the review of documentation and visits to the University.
- 2.2 The following activities are undertaken by the external assessor, (where applicable for the standard):
 - i. review documentation relating to the EPA, including the EPA assessment instruments/materials and internal quality assurance documentation;
 - ii. review a sample of EPA assessed work, including observing live assessments (where these are delivered);
 - iii. observe assessor standardisation or moderation meetings;
 - iv. meet with Independent Assessors and other EPAO staff;
 - v. meet with apprentices and, where possible, employers;
 - vi. observe the meeting at which the final decision on the EPA is confirmed (such as the End Point Assessment and Awards Board/Examination Board);

- vii. conduct a visit to the EPAO for each cohort of apprentices completing EPA. The visit will be in-person or online, depending on what is most appropriate and practical according to the individual Assessment Plan.

2.3 The activities listed above (under 2.2) will enable the External Assessor to provide feedback and commentary on EPA delivery and, specifically, whether:

- i. the EPA is delivered in line with the published EPA assessment plan for the Standard;
- ii. any requirements of the Standard (in terms of achievement of gateways and mandatory qualifications and requirements) have been achieved prior to sign-off, with the employer making the final decision on the readiness of the apprentice for EPA;
- iii. apprentices and employers consider that they are ready for EPA and that the EPA meets their occupational needs;
- iv. the EPAO is using up-to-date resources and documents relating to the EPA of the apprenticeship Standard offered;
- v. individual assessment materials/instruments are fit for purpose, up to date and cover the requirements of the EPA assessment plan and occupational competence when applied in practice;
- vi. assessment materials are a valid measure in practice of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required of the Standard;
- vii. clear mark schemes are in place for apprentices and are used by independent assessors;
- viii. resources are adequate to support EPA delivery and internal quality assurance;
- ix. the EPA is carried out independently in practice;
- x. the EPA is operating effectively, in that apprentices understand the assessment, it is conducted on time or in line with clearly set expectations and there are sufficient assessors involved;
- xi. access to EPA is fair and decisions on reasonable adjustments, are consistent and take into account learner needs;
- xii. grading is applied accurately, consistently and fairly;
- xiii. assessed evidence is:
 - valid - evidence is relevant to the assessment criteria and appropriate assessment methods were used to obtain the evidence
 - authentic - evidence has been produced by the apprentice
 - current - evidence is relevant at the time of assessment and is up to date
 - sufficient - evidence covers all the assessment criteria
 - reliable - evidence is consistent across all apprentices, is at the required level for the qualification and delivering the right outcomes for apprentices
- xiv. independent assessors demonstrate relevant knowledge, occupational competence and understanding of the occupation and assessment criteria;

- xv. standardisation processes work effectively and facilitate assessor engagement;
- xvi. records of assessment decisions are comparable between independent assessors and provide a consistent level of feedback to apprentices;
- xvii. assessment is comparable with previous cohorts (where available) and across different EPAOs that the External Assessor is familiar with;
- xviii. information and data that forms the basis for assessment decisions and for confirming the final outcome is accurate and reliable;
- xix. matters concerning the validity and reliability of assessment, such as assessment offences and adverse circumstances affecting a cohort of apprentices, are dealt with appropriately;
- xx. the procedures and arrangements for confirming the final outcome (such as the EPA and Awards Board/Board of Examiners) are in accordance with the Standard and the EPAO procedures and requirements.

2.4 The external assessor will be provided with a schedule of EPA activities for each academic year (such as visits and observations), once these are known. The schedule of activities will also be shared with the Designated Quality Body in advance of any activity taking place.

3. External Assessor Reports

3.1 The external assessor will produce a written report on their activities and findings for submission to both the University as EPAO and the Designated Quality Body. This document will:

- i. detail the work conducted by the external assessor including observations, meetings and the sampling undertaken;
- ii. provide commentary and feedback on EPA delivery that covers the areas listed above (see paragraph 2.3);
- iii. identify areas of good practice and provide developmental advice;
- iv. identify any issues or activities within the context of the delivery of EPA that do not meet with the requirements of the Standard or pose a risk to effective EPA delivery and/or the achievement of occupational competence;
- v. comment on progress with any items for improvement previously raised with the EPAO by the external assessor.

3.2 An external assessor report will be produced for each year that EPA delivery occurs. The date for submission of the report will be confirmed as part of the annual schedule of EPA activities for the external assessor (see 2.4 above).

3.3 A standard report form is provided and the external assessor will submit the report directly to the Learning Enhancement Team via email. The delivering School and Learning Enhancement Team will each provide a response to the external assessor report. The final report will be shared with the School and a copy will be provided to the DQB as part of its ongoing monitoring engagements and as part of the evidence for a scheduled Monitoring Check.

3.4 External assessors are encouraged to liaise with appropriate School staff should they have any comments on the EPA that may require immediate consideration, and they may raise

any issues of concern in advance of submission of the annual report by contacting the Learning Enhancement Team.

4. Criteria for the selection of External Assessors

4.1 The University criteria for the selection external examiners will be followed (see the external examiner handbook), and in addition, the nominee will need to demonstrate that they meet the DQB's person specification for external assessors:

- i. are independent from the apprentices, employer, assessors and training provider(s) involved, and from the delivery of EPA, with no conflicts of interest;
- ii. are impartial in judgement and wholly independent of the EPAO and its staff (including the governing body), and any relevant employers and/or partners;
- iii. are knowledgeable about, and competent in, assessing apprentice achievement in higher education at levels relevant to the subjects and awards to which their appointments relate;
- iv. have broad and current knowledge, relevant experience and occupational competence in the area of work related to their appointment;
- v. have a high degree of competence and experience in the fields covered by the EPA, and have a good understanding of degree apprenticeships;
- vi. are appropriately experienced in apprentice assessment design and delivery at the level of the award;
- vii. can assess standards in an effective manner, identify good practice and recommend enhancements to enable informed EPA development;
- viii. have experience in acting as an external quality assurer or are supported by the EPAO in undertaking their duties, for example, through training and mentoring;
- ix. have had sufficient experience in quality assurance to enable them to discharge their role effectively;
- x. can engage in open and transparent dialogue with key stakeholders within the EPAO to build relationships and provide guidance and support;
- xi. are prepared to undertake relevant training and continuing professional development;
- xii. comply with all relevant employment legislation, including safeguarding, as appropriate.

5. Fees and Expenses

5.1 Fees are paid to external assessors by the School concerned following receipt of the annual EPA report. A schedule of payments for external assessors is produced annually and run in line with the schedule of payments for external examiners. For information on the schedule of payments, please see the [webpage for External Assessors](#).

5.2 Valid expenses will be reimbursed by the School concerned which will provide the necessary claim forms. The levels of reimbursement are the same as for University staff. Valid expenses include the costs of travel to and from the University, overnight accommodation, postage and general subsistence.

6. Arrangements for Nursing apprenticeship Standards

- 6.1 The University delivers EPA for two integrated higher and degree apprenticeships where the apprentice is not required to carry out any additional assessment as part of the EPA (Nursing Associate (NMC 2018) and Registered Nurse (NMC 2010)). For these Standards the EPA starts with the examination board and finishes when the EPAO makes the required declaration to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).
- 6.2 External assessor activities on Nursing apprenticeship Standards
- 6.2.1 For the purposes of EQA monitoring on these Nursing apprenticeship Standards, External Assessors are required to comment on procedures for the EPA against the requirements of the specific apprenticeship Standard, through the review of documentation and visits to the EPAO.
- 6.2.2 The following activities should therefore be undertaken by the External Assessor on Nursing apprenticeship Standards:
- i. review documentation relating to the EPA, including, for example, the EPA delivery plan and internal quality assurance documentation;
 - ii. meet with EPAO staff involved in the delivery of the EPA;
 - iii. review documents relating to gateway approval for individual apprentices;
 - iv. observe the meeting at which the final decision on the EPA is confirmed (such as the Board of Examiners/Examination Committee/EPA Awards Board);
 - v. review the process for confirming the EPA result with the NMC.
- 6.2.3 The External Assessor is expected to conduct at least one visit to the EPAO for each cohort of apprentices completing an EPA. Visits do not always require the external assessor to attend on site and can be conducted online, where it is appropriate and practical to do so without compromising the ability of the external assessors to undertake their role.
- 6.2.4 The scheduling of activities for the External Assessor will be agreed between the EPAO and the External Assessor and details shared with the DQB in advance of the activity taking place.
- 6.2.5 The activities above (6.2.2) should enable the external assessor to provide feedback and commentary on EPA delivery and, specifically, whether:
- i. the EPA is delivered in line with the published EPA assessment plan for the Standard;
 - ii. any requirements of the Standard (in terms of achievement of gateways and mandatory qualifications and requirements) have been achieved, and that the employer and EPAO are satisfied that gateway requirements for EPA have been met prior to the start of the EPA period;
 - iii. procedures and processes are fit for purpose and cover the requirements of the EPA assessment plan when applied in practice, including independence of the EPA and timely completion;
 - iv. the procedures and arrangements for confirming the final outcome (such as the Board of Examiners) are in accordance with the Standard and the EPAO procedures and requirements, and enable valid and reliable decisions;
 - v. information and data that forms the basis for EPA decisions and for confirming the final outcome is accurate and reliable;
 - vi. resources are adequate to support EPA delivery and internal quality assurance;

- vii. the uploading of the apprentice's course and personal details to the NMC database/register, and the declaration of the apprentice's good health and character to the NMC, are dealt with appropriately.