External Examining of Apprenticeships Guidance for Departments and Partners

### Introduction

This guidance provides information about apprenticeships, integrated and non-integrated End-Point Assessment modules (EPA) and the information required by external examiners to effectively review these programmes at the University of Essex (or one if it’s registered Partners).

This guidance should be used in conjunction with the guidance on the University’s External Examining [webpages](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/academic-standards-and-quality/external-examiner-roles-and-responsibilities) and all Examiners are encouraged to engage in the webinar training provided by Quality and Academic Development.

#### About Apprenticeships

Apprentices are full time, paid employees of a business who combine work with a programme of study which is often delivered under a blended/hybrid learning model with content being made available to apprentices through our virtual learning environment. The delivery method for each programme of study will vary with some programmes including face to face online or in person sessions which could be one day a week or blocks of study days (for example 5 weeks each year). Apprentices spend a minimum of 20% of their contracted hours in study or training with the apprenticeship provider (called ‘off-the-job' learning). They are also required to apply their learning and engage in wider opportunities through ‘on-the-job' learning.

These programmes of study are built from an occupational standard. Occupational standards are designed by employer groups and must be ratified by Government. The occupational standards provide a list of duties and knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) which someone who is occupationally competent would be able to perform. These are the building blocks of any apprenticeship

All apprenticeships have an EPA. This is the final assessment of the apprenticeship which tests both academic learning and workplace competence and determines whether the apprentice is occupationally competent. Each EPA has a plan (EPA plan) which is designed alongside the specific occupational standard using the same employer group (quite often with input from training providers such as HEIs). At the time of producing this guidance EPAs can take two forms: integrated or non-integrated.

If an EPA is integrated it will be delivered by the University, known as the End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO). The EPA could be credit bearing, form part of the degree qualification or be the Exam Board and registration with the Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB). External examiners may have oversight of the apprenticeship, and/or the academic award (degree) associated to the apprenticeship, and this may or may not include remit over the EPA module. In some cases, an external examiner may be recruited solely for the EPA module. Please note this is applicable to External Examiners for apprenticeships with an integrated EPA at Partner institutions.

If an EPA is non-integrated an organisation external to the University is responsible for assessing the apprenticeship certification, and the degree is completed in full before progressing to the EPA. External examiners will not play a direct role in the EPA process for non-integrated standards but will have oversight of the academic award (degree) associated to the apprenticeship only.

#### Current apprenticeships at the University of Essex and Partners

Information about apprenticeships delivered by the University of Essex can be found on the Apprenticeships [webpages](https://www.essex.ac.uk/apprenticeships).

Apprenticeships are offered in the following academic Schools within the Faculty of Science and Health, in line with the relevant apprenticeship standards. The list below links to webinars on each programme, as well as the accompanying apprenticeship standard.

#### School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering

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| Apprenticeship title | Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) Standard |
| [Embedded Electronic Systems Design & Development Engineer](https://www.essex.ac.uk/apprenticeships/computer-science-and-electronic-engineering-apprenticeships) | EESD&DE [Apprenticeship standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/embedded-electronic-systems-design-and-development-engineer-degree/) |

#### School of Health and Social Care

| Apprenticeship title | IfATE Standard |
| --- | --- |
| [Assistant Practitioner](https://panopto.essex.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=1480a5c6-dab8-4ce8-b8a4-ae5a00ed87d4) | Assistant Practitioner (Health) [Apprenticeship standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/healthcare-assistant-practitioner/) |
| [Nursing Associate](https://panopto.essex.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=23ed05f1-ed18-4713-8044-b0dd00b713d0) | Nursing Associate (NMC 2018) [Apprenticeship standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/nursing-associate-nmc-2018/) |
| [Occupational Therapy](https://panopto.essex.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=8788233f-06ce-40fe-b543-ae5900a28cc3) | Occupational Therapist [Apprenticeship standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/occupational-therapist-integrated-degree/) |
| [Speech and Language Therapy](https://panopto.essex.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=134a854c-9da7-4825-a735-b12b0126fe0c) | Speech and Language Therapist [Apprenticeship standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/speech-and-language-therapist-integrated-degree/) |
| [Registered Nurse](https://panopto.essex.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=ff5bd440-a4db-4056-9371-ae5900a90952) | Registered Nurse Degree (NMC 2018) [Apprenticeship standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/registered-nurse-degree-nmc-2018/) |
| [Advanced Clinical Practitioner](https://panopto.essex.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=d624b8cb-b3b8-4485-9a37-af7101377cb2) | Advanced Clinical Practitioner (Integrated Degree) [Apprenticeship standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/advanced-clinical-practitioner-integrated-degree-v1-0) |
| [Senior Leader (Health and Social Care)](https://panopto.essex.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=81ce314b-722c-4d30-9b8b-affe0093c8eb) | [Senior Leader Apprenticeship standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/senior-leader-v1-2) |
| [Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner](https://www.essex.ac.uk/apprenticeships/health-and-social-care-apprenticeships) | Psychological Wellbeing Practitioner [Apprenticeship Standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/psychological-wellbeing-practitioner-v1-2) |
| *Apprenticeships run by Essex Partnership University NHS Foundation Trust (EPUT)* | *Assistant Practitioner*  *Clinical Associate in Psychology* |

#### The School of Sport, Rehabilitation and Exercise Sciences

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| Apprenticeship title | IfATE Standard |
| [Physiotherapy Degree Apprenticeship](https://panopto.essex.ac.uk/Panopto/Pages/Viewer.aspx?id=d203ed62-cd5d-40e8-ab03-af73008a1c11&start=0) | Physiotherapist [Apprenticeship standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/physiotherapist-integrated-degree/) |

#### External Examining for Apprenticeships

The activity an external examiner undertakes for a degree apprenticeship is aligned to the University’s standard [roles and responsibilities](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/academic-standards-and-quality/external-examiner-roles-and-responsibilities) of academic award or module external examiners (for internal and partner courses). There are some nuances to consider when examining apprenticeships however, and departments will be responsible for providing the key information examiners require to carry out the role. This will require taking the nuance of apprenticeship provision into consideration. For example, the dual nature of the programme requirements, and considering this in evaluation and feedback activities.

This [guidance](https://www.essex.ac.uk/-/media/documents/directories/academic-section/academic-standards-and-quality/guidance-for-external-examiners-on-apprenticeships.docx) is provided to external examiners of apprenticeship awards and EPA modules. Guidance for departments is mapped accordingly below.

**Integration of the apprenticeship knowledge, skills and behaviours into the programme and modules**

* Departments should share the curriculum mapping documents outlining not only the inclusion of the degree learning outcomes (LOs) but also the apprenticeship KSBs with examiners. In some programmes, the LOs and KSBs are designed to be the same.
* Students should be given appropriate, equivalent learning opportunities, and should achieve comparable outcomes across apprenticeship and equivalent non-apprenticeship provision. External Examiners may have any questions about this.

**Verification of Assessments (not EPA Module)**

* Departments should provide examiners with documentation or information to make clear how assessments will largely be designed in line with academic awards for the stage of study. Documentation outlining links to relevant KSBs for the apprenticeship should be made available. Additionally, some assessments may require integration of workplace context or activities to support a project or coursework, as such information may need to be provided to examiners regarding this.
* External examiners will be required to verify assessments as usual but appreciate some activities may be adapted for part-time students based in the workplace. Also, assessed pieces or specific grading criteria may include aspects such as providing evidence of learning both ‘off-the-job' and ‘on-the-job' and this is to be encouraged if degree LOs are also being addressed. There may also be cases where apprentices map the KSBs from the relevant apprenticeship standard to their learning as part of the assessment. Please discuss these areas with external examiners responsible for apprenticeship provision, and encourage them to provide feedback in their annual report. Examiners may also wish to comment on final outcomes with respect to the apprenticeship award as part of this.
* The nature of the assessments may ask for evidence of development of KSBs or readiness for starting their EPA, or discussion and debate around theory and practice and where apprentices evidence their learning from the workplace and underpin this with the relevant theories. There may be some difference in the feedback provided by assessors. Departments should ensure external examiners receive documentation to demonstrate the above as required. Externals may wish to comment about the quality of this feedback to the learner as well as the summative grade assigned.

**Reflective Learning Logs / Skills Portfolios**

* These are developed by each apprentice as they progress through their studies both ‘off-the-job’ and ‘on-the-job’, this activity is designed to help apprentices provide evidence of development of their KSBs and also can be used for portfolio or reflective assessment both in their main apprenticeship and as part of the EPA module. It is worth being aware and perhaps viewing examples of these logs with the relevant external examiner(s) to ensure they receive an understanding of the development of learners KSBs, and are able to see evidence of how these are mapped in their progression to completion.

**The EPA Module**

* As noted above for non-integrated programmes the EPA is conducted externally to the University and the University of Essex or partner external examiner will not be involved. Please make this clear to external examiners as relevant, particularly if the apprenticeship and/or EPA sits under their remit.
* For EPA modules that are integrated, please provide information to external examiners regarding the differences in structure of the assessments and grading criteria. As noted earlier each occupational standard has an associated EPA plan, and this is required to be adhered to for purposes of grading and overall apprenticeship award (dependent on standard usually (or part of), distinction, merit, pass, fail). For integrated degree-level apprenticeships, providers are required to develop assessments that directly meet the EPA plan, in addition to ensuring a process is in place for awarding a variable grade as credits towards the degree award. Assessment is undertaken by ‘Independent Assessors’.
* Please make clear to examiners when they are required to verify this module as usual for degree contribution purposes, but please also be mindful of the specific and important nature of this stage for the apprenticeship. The Office for Students (OfS) requires that the following should be considered and/or observed by the external examiner in relation to the EPA, and departments should facilitate this to ensure compliance:
  + The EPA is delivered in line with the published EPA plan.
  + The management of gateway and mandatory qualification requirements and involvement of the employer in deciding the apprentice is ready for the EPA.
  + Individual assessment instruments/methods are fit for purpose.
  + The EPA assessor’s knowledge is up to date.
  + The accessibility of EPA and the management of reasonable adjustments.
  + A sample of assessments, including live assessments.
  + Physical and digital versions of documents, including marked assessment materials from apprentices.
  + Assessor standardisation or moderation meetings.
  + Interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff.
  + Feedback from apprentices and employers
  + Assessment is reliable and comparable across different EPAOs, employers, places, times and assessor.
  + Visit the EPAO for each cohort of apprentices completing the EPA. These do not always have to be in person and can be conducted online where appropriate. This is to be arranged by the EPAO. The purpose of the external examiner’s visit is to assess the performance of the EPAO in delivering the EPA as above, and to present their findings through the production of a report.
* Please discuss with the Apprenticeships Hub any questions about the specific requirements when asking examiners to verify an integrated EPA module.

#### External Examiner Annual Report

* Guidance on submitting reports annually is available on the University’s external examining webpages, please refer external examiners to this:

[Report submission (University of Essex) | University of Essex](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/academic-standards-and-quality/report-submission-essex)

[Report submission (partner institutions) | University of Essex](https://www.essex.ac.uk/staff/academic-standards-and-quality/report-submission-partner-institutions)

* An external examiner’s report will inform the University’s internal quality monitoring and forms important supporting evidence for any monitoring activity and external quality assurance undertaken by the OfS.
* The following questions will need to be answered by external examiners in the annual report so it is worth discussing this with examiners as relevant ahead of the reporting cycle:

***Overall, were learners on apprenticeships achieving and progressing in line with the requirements of the apprenticeship standard (either standalone or as part of a mixed cohort)?***

***If you met with apprentices, practice educators, employers, and/or reviewed records of tripartite progress reviews, please comment on discussions regarding the development of learners’ Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours, integration of safeguarding, British Values, and PREVENT, and their experiences of the EPA. Were learners able to demonstrate knowledge and awareness of next steps?***

***[Free text box]***

If you were responsible for an EPA module, please complete the next question (or leave blank if not responsible for overseeing the EPA module):

***Is the EPA suitably assessing occupational competence? For example, did learners meet the standards as outlined in the apprenticeship standard, EPA plan, and meet the requirements of the professional, statutory, or regulatory body for completion of the EPA?***

***[Free text box]***

**Document review information**

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