



EQA consultation response

1.1. FOREWORD

End-point assessment is fundamental to recent reforms of apprenticeships, providing a complete, independent assessment that shows an apprentice is competent in the occupation that they have been trained in. It is essential that this assessment is high-quality, providing a relevant and reliable test of occupation, and has credibility with employers and other stakeholders.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) has a statutory responsibility to ensure that evaluations are made on the quality of these end-point assessments. This is a responsibility that we discharge via our oversight of the external quality assurance (EQA) regime. EQA has been delivered by a wide range of organisations, including professional and employer-led bodies, the Institute itself and the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual), to a framework which the Institute published last summer. This regime has provided effective oversight of the quality of end-point assessment and I would like to thank all those who have contributed to making it work over the last few years including existing EQA providers.

This year, from 27 February to 21 May, we ran a consultation on a proposal to simplify and strengthen the EQA system. This proposed moving from a system where EQA is delivered by a number of organisations, to one where all EQA is delivered by Ofqual or, for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships, the Office for Students (OfS). We believed that moving to this system could simplify the system for end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) and other stakeholders and strengthen it by placing responsibility for EQA delivery with two established organisations with regulatory powers.

We received over 200 responses to the consultation from a range of different stakeholders. The views expressed were diverse, considered and nuanced. We would like to thank all those organisations and individuals who took the time to respond to the consultation and contributed their views on our proposed changes and how we can most effectively implement them. Our consultation ran through a period of unprecedented change and uncertainty far beyond the scope of EQA when many other priorities necessarily required the attention of organisations and individuals, and I am pleased that we still achieved a good level of engagement to the consultation against this backdrop.

The majority of respondents recognised the benefits of the proposed system and supported this as the way forwards for EQA. We therefore intend to proceed with the proposal outlined in the consultation. We believe this will lead to a stronger system for quality assuring end-point assessment.

In moving forward with the consultation proposal, we also want to ensure that we maintain, and strengthen, the aspects of the current EQA system that respondents to the consultation believe are worth keeping. Foremost amongst these is the employer voice, which respondents cite as being central to ensuring that apprenticeships, and end-point assessment, retain relevance and credibility with employers. The Institute will create a directory of employer organisations on which Ofqual and the OfS can draw expertise in undertaking EQA to support this.

End-point assessment is still a new form of assessment, similar but different to many other qualifications and in some ways unique to apprenticeships in England. It requires a sophisticated and effective system of quality assurance. I believe that in bringing together the regulatory approach of Ofqual and the Office for Students, with the Institute's EQA framework; and in bringing together the assessment expertise of the education regulators with the occupational expertise of employers, we will create a fit-for-purpose EQA regime

which drives quality into end-point assessment delivery.

The responses to the consultation and the continuing engagement with EQA providers, EPAOs, employers and other stakeholders has refined, and continues to refine, our approach to EQA. We intend to continue to work closely with all parties over the next two years to ensure an orderly transition to the new approach.

By

Jennifer Coupland

Chief Executive, Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education

2. Executive summary

The Institute launched a consultation on 27 February 2020 proposing a simplified and improved delivery mechanism for external quality assurance (EQA) of apprenticeship end-point assessment.

The consultation set out proposals for a simplified and strengthened system of EQA of apprenticeship end-point assessment, inviting responses from stakeholders on how the system would be best delivered.

The consultation was originally scheduled to run for 6 weeks until 9 April. In light of the COVID-19 outbreak, this was extended by 6 weeks and the consultation closed on 21 May. The written consultation received 204 responses. In addition to the written consultation, the Institute also ran several events with key stakeholder groups. Necessarily some of the later events were hosted virtually.

Responses were received from a wide range of organisations including EPAOs, employers, EQA providers, training providers and representative bodies.

Having carefully considered and fully taken into account all the responses, we intend to proceed with the proposal outlined in the consultation document. There are important areas of the original proposal that we have refined and strengthened as a result of the consultation.

This document summarises what respondents to the consultation told us, how those responses informed our decision and sets out how we intend to take forward proposals to simplify the current delivery of EQA.

What we heard

Responses to the consultation included both endorsement of the proposal, as well as concerns and suggestions for further strengthening it. The majority of respondents supported the proposal with most of those also providing views on how it could be improved.

Supporting responses highlighted the relative simplicity of the proposed system, ease of doing business within it and the idea that the proposal will increase confidence in the apprenticeship system. For EPAOs, but also to a lesser extent for employers and training providers, having a single organisation responsible for the delivery of EQA across the vast majority of apprenticeships would provide clarity and be easier to interact with. Respondents also noted that a single EQA provider across all apprenticeships except integrated degrees could improve consistency and remove the risk, present in the current system, that different EQA providers would come to different judgements and provide different advice to EPAOs. This, and the ability of Ofqual and the OfS to use regulatory levers to enforce action where issues are found, were seen as key reasons why the proposed approach would strengthen and increase confidence in the apprenticeship end-point assessment system.

Respondents also took the opportunity to raise any concerns about particular details of the proposal. The most significant concern was that proposed changes would diminish the employer-led nature of apprenticeship reform since the Richard Review. Other concerns included whether Ofqual's regulation might place unnecessary burden on small or niche providers, or those who only wish to offer end-point assessment; that it might not focus on or meet the needs of employers or that it is inappropriate for universities.

Responses highlighted aspects of the current EQA system that respondents feel are working well, and which should be preserved or strengthened if we move forwards with the consultation proposal. Of primary concern was the desire to maintain the essential role of

employers. Likewise, EPAOs were keen that the way current EQA providers have brought EPAOs together and encouraged a community of practice and learning around a particular apprenticeship standard or sector is translated into the new system. Finally, respondents were keen that the current system's focus on supporting EPAOs and the responsiveness to feedback of some existing EQA providers should be preserved in the new system.

Responses from Higher Education (HE) representatives were consistent in their request for a simpler system to apply to their sector nuances. We heard and understood the benefit of simplicity for this sector. We are committed to delivering a simple and effective EQA system that works for all apprenticeships and we will continue to look for optimisation opportunities in this area, with this feedback in mind.

Our response

Quality remains central to the government's reform of apprenticeships. The Institute has a statutory duty to secure that evaluations of the quality of apprenticeship assessments, in relation to end-point assessment plans published under the Apprenticeships, Skills and Children and Learning Act 2009, are carried out. EQA is the process by which this is delivered. The Institute will continue to assure the quality of the oversight of assessment. This consultation highlighted both the opportunity and the risks within this proposal and has helped inform, shape and progress our thinking.

Quality apprenticeships can change lives. When delivered to meet the needs of both the employer and the apprentice, they offer opportunity to people of all ages, a tangible boost to individual businesses and the chance to make a profound difference to the economy and productivity of this country.

We are pleased so many respondents agreed with the proposition set out, welcoming the benefits that simplification and consistency would bring. The Institute values the voice of employers and we heard the feedback that employers need to be assured and able to play a role in ensuring end-point assessments are fit for purpose. We have reflected on that and are continuing to seek ways of amplifying the voices of employers within our EQA system and the Institute's work.

We continue to welcome your ongoing engagement and support as we move forwards, and this latest feedback helps inform and shape our next steps to reform the EQA with both opportunity and risk in mind. We will continue to listen carefully to the views of all stakeholders.

2.1.1. Next steps

We will proceed with the proposal set out in the consultation to move to a simplified and strengthened EQA system, where EQA is undertaken by two bodies in the vast majority of cases, both of whom possess regulatory powers. In delivering this work, they will be supported by employer organisations from a new directory of professional and employer-led bodies (the employer directory) overseen by the Institute.

Responses to the consultation provided a range of support and concern, with many ideas for improvement. As such we are proposing to refine and strengthen the proposal set out in the consultation in the following ways:

- All EQA system partners will share intelligence, working together to establish ways of integrating our diverse expertise and best practice across apprenticeship standards, to ensure strong end-point assessment quality assurance can be continued.

- We heard the concerns raised around the suitability of the Ofqual recognition process for smaller organisations or those that only wish to deliver end-point assessment of apprenticeships. Ofqual will actively engage with EPAOs to help them understand the requirements for recognition.
- We recognise that for some apprenticeships where access to the profession is already regulated by a statutory regulator there could be limited benefit, and some unnecessary complexity, in also requiring Ofqual or OfS regulation of the end-point assessment. In these circumstances the quality of the end-point assessment will be evaluated instead by the existing statutory regulator. We anticipate that this will be the case in a very small number of apprenticeship standards. It is anticipated that these regulators will adopt the same quality assurance framework as Ofqual and OfS.
- Finally, we hear your feedback regarding the proposed transition timetable, especially as EPAOs, employers and other parties continue to respond to the effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. We will work alongside Ofqual and OfS with all stakeholders, especially EPAOs and existing EQA providers, to ensure that they have the support they need to make the transition work for all parties.

Informed by our ongoing implementation planning, we have set out a roadmap below, on what happens next. We will continue to keep this under review and closely monitor the impacts of COVID-19 continuing to offer an agile and responsive service, as we move to transition to a simplified EQA system.

Autumn 2020

- We will work with Ofqual, OfS, Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and current EQA providers to develop the transition plans.
- We will engage with trailblazers and existing EQA providers to outline the change for them regarding the employer directory.
- We will engage further with EPAOs, to ensure a well-managed and orderly transition.
- Ofqual will commence phased recognition of EPAOs and Awarding Organisation (AO) recognition expansions.
- First batch of EQA activity ownership transfers from the Institute to Ofqual.
- Finalise alignment between EQA framework and all EQA providers (e.g. Ofqual and OfS).

Winter 2020

- Review progress and adjust plan and approach as required.
- We will publish further guidance on the employer directory.
- Alignment of ESFA register of end-point assessment organisations and Ofqual recognition processes.
- Phased recognition of EPAOs / AOs and transition of apprenticeship standards to Ofqual for EQA will both continue.

Spring 2021

- Phased recognition of EPAOs / AOs and transition of apprenticeship standards to Ofqual for EQA will both continue.
- Publish detailed Ofqual and OfS transition plans for year 2, built with the input and support of current EQA providers.
- Employer directory functioning.
- Phased EPAO recognition plans for year 2 confirmed.

Summer 2021

- All apprenticeship standards where the Institute was delivering EQA should be transferred to Ofqual.
- Review of year 1 transition – lessons learnt; adaptations made.
- Year 2 transition begins.
- Phased recognition of EPAOs / AOs and transition of tranches of apprenticeship standards.

Autumn/winter 2021

- Phased recognition of EPAOs / AOs and transition of tranches of apprenticeship standards.

Spring/summer 2022

- Phased recognition of EPAOs / AOs and transition of tranches of apprenticeship standards.
- Transition complete and all apprenticeship standards EQA'ed by Ofqual/OfS/other regulators.

2.2. THE CONTEXT FOR REFORM

Every end-point assessment provides an independent assessment of the apprentice at the end of their programme to confirm that they have attained occupational competence. It is essential that end-point assessment is of a high quality across apprenticeships, providing both relevant and reliable tests of competence.

- Relevant: the end-point assessment is current and genuinely measures occupational competence. Achievement of the apprenticeship is a dependable predictor of success in the occupation.
- Reliable: The end-point assessment produces consistent outcomes irrespective of context, cohort, timing or the organisations involved.

The Institute has overall statutory responsibility for the EQA of apprenticeship end-point assessment.

At present, this EQA is delivered by a range of organisations:

- the Institute itself (through a contracted delivery partner)
- a range of professional and employer bodies
- Ofqual
- the OfS, through its regulation of degrees where the apprenticeship is an integrated degree apprenticeship

The EQA provider for each apprenticeship standard is chosen by the trailblazer group when they develop the occupational standard and end-point assessment plan. All EQA providers report to the Institute and deliver EQA in line with a framework published by the Institute.

In recent months EQA providers have worked collaboratively and at pace to support the introduction of flexibilities in assessment to allow end-point assessment to continue during COVID-19 lockdown. Their support has been recognised for both positivity and pragmatism.

The current EQA system has provided an effective evaluation of the quality of end-point assessment, in line with the Institute's framework. EQA providers have been important players in sharing good practice around end-point assessment within the sectors they operate in, and where they have identified poor practice, have worked with EPAOs to remedy it.

However, it is also complicated and burdensome, especially for larger EPAOs who have to interact with more than one EQA provider, in a small number of cases as many as eight, depending on the mix of apprenticeship standards they are recognised to deliver. Over the last year, stakeholders have raised concerns that the current approach is complicated and represents a risk to the quality system assuring all apprenticeships.

In order to respond to these concerns and to simplify and strengthen the EQA system, we consulted on a proposal to move to a model of EQA whereby all EQA is delivered by Ofqual or, for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships, OfS.

2.3. SIMPLIFYING THE EQA SYSTEM

In the first section of the consultation, we set out the broad proposal to move to a system in which all EQA is provided by Ofqual, except for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships where the role would fall to OfS. We sought views on this proposition and the impact it would have on respondents' organisations.

71% of respondents confirmed the proposed changes would impact their organisation.

Respondents were broadly supportive of the proposal. Many felt that it would be simpler for EPAOs to operate in as they would only need to interact with (in most cases) one EQA provider. Respondents also felt that the proposal would increase the consistency of EQA activity thus increasing confidence in the apprenticeship system.

Conversely, respondents also raised some concerns with the proposal. These were primarily around the suitability of the Ofqual recognition process for smaller organisations or those organisations only delivering end-point assessment. It was felt that this could have ramifications for the size and structure of the EPAO market if some organisations were unable or unwilling to continue operating in it. Some Higher Education Institution (HEI) respondents suggested that OfS, as the Higher Education regulator, should provide EQA for all end-point assessment delivered by a HEI.

Ofqual's recognition process sets a consistent bar for all organisations that wish to deliver qualifications regulated by Ofqual (including end-point assessments). Ofqual will continue to actively engage with and support EPAOs, collectively and individually, to help them understand the requirements of recognition. Ofqual's approach to recognition is flexible. This means that it can recognise EPAOs where its Criteria for Recognition are met, with special conditions of recognition for areas of potential risk. Examples of where special conditions might be needed:

- requiring an EPAO to accommodate Ofqual undertaking a monitoring visit prior to an end-point assessment first being awarded
- where an EPAO has strong sector expertise in the occupational standard and experience of practical assessment, but limited experience of developing test materials and managing conflicts of interest

Once recognised, Ofqual ensures that organisations get an appropriately targeted induction into regulation, so that all future requirements are clear. There may be a very small number of apprenticeship standards where a statutory regulator already has a role regulating the delivery of end-point assessment. In these instances, it would not be appropriate for Ofqual or the OfS to additionally regulate. These apprenticeship standards would sit outside the Ofqual/OfS EQA system but remain within the Institute's overall assurance regime. This is discussed in more detail in the next section.

2.3.1. System benefits

Across all groups of respondents, four types of benefit were identified, including confirmation of those benefits already highlighted in the consultation proposal. The feedback confirmed the changes offer the potential for:

1. improved consistency for quality standards
2. a simpler system, easier to do business with
3. lower costs
4. increasing confidence in the apprenticeship quality system

System benefit 1 - Improved consistency for quality standards

A number of respondents identified improved consistency as the key benefit of the change. EPAOs and employers noted that having a single organisation providing EQA for most apprenticeship standards would increase the likelihood that the approach adopted would be consistent. This would in turn increase the quality and overall standing of the system. Some respondents highlighted that under the current system different EQA providers had adopted different approaches to aspects of EQA delivery (e.g. how and when data is collected) and that they had received inconsistent feedback on their end-point assessment practices across different

apprenticeship standards. This supports the intention within the proposed changes to increase consistency.

System benefit 2 - A simpler system, easier to do business with

Relatedly, a number of respondents noted that the proposed system would make it easier to deliver end-point assessment, and would be easier for stakeholders to understand. Organisations that are already recognised by Ofqual as awarding organisations welcomed the fact that the system would be more similar to that used in other parts of their business and that they were already familiar with Ofqual's conditions and ways of working. Equally, some of these respondents noted that EQA is a different role to regulation and suggested that Ofqual's approach would need to differ to reflect this. A number of EPAOs described the current system as burdensome because they need to comply with requests for information from multiple organisations. Hopes were expressed that the proposed system would be 'lighter touch', especially for organisations that are already regulated by Ofqual.

System benefit 3 - Lower costs

EPAOs noted that the proposed system would be cheaper for them to operate within. Two reasons were identified for this. Firstly, the proposal for government to fund EQA directly would remove the explicit cost and administrative burden for EPAOs of having to make payments to several organisations. Secondly, a number of EPAOs identified that interacting with fewer EQA providers would be simpler, realising efficiencies for them.

System benefit 4 - Increasing confidence in the apprenticeship quality system

Finally, some respondents felt that the use of established organisations with regulatory power and assessment expertise would increase confidence in the apprenticeship system. There was a general assumption that education regulators could be trusted to oversee the review of quality assessment and to ensure compliance with their established conditions. Some respondents also noted that Ofqual as an independent government organisation would be a credible quality assurer of end-point assessment and free from conflict of interest.

2.3.2. System concerns

Respondents also identified six types of concern about plans for the proposed EQA system:

1. Loss of employer voice.
2. The EPAO market.
3. The Ofqual regulatory regime.
4. Appropriateness of reform for HEIs.
5. Appropriateness of the proposal for apprenticeship standards overseen by an existing statutory regulator.
6. Introducing instability into the still-maturing end-point assessment market (particularly following the COVID-19 outbreak).

System concern 1 - Loss of employer voice

A number of respondents raised concerns that the proposal would lead to diminution of the employer voice within apprenticeship assessment, and the apprenticeship system more broadly. Some respondents felt that this represented a move away from

the reforms proposed in the Richard Review. Many respondents gave their suggestions for how the employer voice could be re-emphasised and the new EQA system could give an opportunity for it to be stronger and woven throughout the apprenticeship system. Such proposals would enable the Institute to oversee a system that brought the best aspects of educational regulation together with the occupational expertise and deep sectorial insight of employers.

The consultation outlined a proposed approach for accessing the expertise of employers in the delivery of EQA (section 2). Further detail on how this will operate is set out in the section about the role of professional and employer-led bodies, which we believe will address related respondent concerns.

System concern 2 - The EPAO market

A number of respondents raised concerns about the impact the proposal would have on both the number and type of organisations delivering EPA. A number of employers as well as EPAOs who are not currently regulated by Ofqual raised concerns about the requirement for all organisations to be Ofqual recognised. Some indicated they considered this to be a burdensome requirement which meant that they would have to leave the end-point assessment market. Some respondents expressed a broader concern that end-point assessment delivery would become concentrated in the hand of a smaller number of larger organisations who lacked industry/sector specialism or the ability to confer onto apprentices, credibility with employers in certain sectors.

System concern 3 - The Ofqual regulatory regime

A number of respondents raised concerns about Ofqual being the only EQA provider for a large number of apprenticeship standards. These concerns fell into three main categories:

- That the process and criteria for an organisation becoming Ofqual-recognised are perceived to be unduly onerous and are considered not to be suitable for smaller organisations or those who seek purely to deliver apprenticeship end-point assessment.
- That, while Ofqual is currently an EQA provider, when it comes to providing EQA for the whole market, some of Ofqual's regulatory approach could be considered unsuitable. For example, several respondents noted that existing EQA providers with whom they work provide continuous improvement, through a collaborative and supportive approach. It was felt that it would not be appropriate for Ofqual, as the regulator, to do this.
- That where the current EQA provider is a statutory regulator controlling entry to a profession, it would not be appropriate for Ofqual or the OfS to have a role regulating the end-point assessment. This would apply to a small number of apprenticeship standards.

Proceeding with the proposal outlined in the consultation will require nearly all organisations wishing to deliver end-point assessment outside of integrated higher and degree apprenticeships to be recognised by Ofqual.

The exceptions would be those wishing to deliver integrated higher and degree apprenticeships, which will need to be recognised by the OfS, and those delivering end-point assessment on apprenticeship standards where a statutory regulator oversees the assessment, in which cases the EPAO will need to be accredited by that regulator.

Whilst a number of EPAOs are already recognised by Ofqual, under the new arrangements this will become a requirement. We therefore anticipate that a significant number of organisations will also want to apply for Ofqual recognition, in order to deliver, or continue delivering, end-point assessment.

The recognition process is the process by which Ofqual ensures organisations have the right resource, capacity and capability to design, develop and deliver quality end-point assessments. It is important that this is a consistent process for all applicants across all of Ofqual's regulatory activity.

In order to ensure that this process works for all organisations, irrespective of scale or type, who wish to apply for Ofqual recognition, Ofqual will evaluate all applications for recognition:

- Against the same criteria of recognition. Where those criteria are met, Ofqual has the flexibility to use special conditions of recognition for individual EPAOs to manage areas of potential risk.
- Using information and intelligence from the relevant existing EQA providers and professional bodies, as well as from ESFA, to supplement the evidence submitted by applicants. This will ensure that we build on successful end-point assessment delivery to date and that end-point assessments are delivered by organisations that are proven to have the sector and assessment expertise, capacity and capability.
- Seeking to gather evidence from end-point assessment delivery to inform an EPAO's recognition application. Where possible, this may include observing end-point assessments and meeting with members of the EPAO's team.

Additionally, Ofqual will:

- Provide a clear point of contact for each organisation seeking to apply for Ofqual recognition. This will facilitate applicants' understanding of the process of applying for recognition, so that they can submit evidence that demonstrates they have the assessment and occupational expertise, systems and processes are in place.
- Clarify their expectations of an EPAO. Ofqual will provide a range of additional information, resources and briefings that will clarify the process and requirements of applying for recognition and deepen understanding of how both Ofqual and the EPAO will operate, in line with the EQA Framework.

The Institute recognises that for a small number of apprenticeship standards an existing organisation has a statutory responsibility to regulate access to a profession, including via apprenticeship end-point assessment. In such instances, the role of evaluating the quality of that end-point assessment will fall to that statutory regulator rather than Ofqual or the OfS.

System concern 4 - Appropriateness of reform for HEIs

Most HEI respondents welcomed the proposal for the OfS to provide EQA for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships. They felt that OfS had the relevant expertise to provide an appropriate EQA service. However, a number expressed a view that the remit of the OfS for EQA should be extended from the proposal in the consultation to include non-integrated degree apprenticeships and in some cases other apprenticeships delivered by HEIs at levels 4-7. Reasons cited for this change request included the expertise of OfS and avoidance of additional burden of having

two regulators, in a system that has simplicity as its key focus.

In response to concerns raised about operating under two regulators, Ofqual and OfS will work together to ensure joint and co-ordinated EQA activity and minimise additional burden for this sector.

System concern 5 – Appropriateness of the proposal for apprenticeship standards overseen by an existing statutory regulator

A small number of respondents noted that in their sector it would be inappropriate or impossible for Ofqual or the OfS to oversee the end-point assessment. This was in cases where successful completion of the end-point assessment is linked to licence to practice in an occupation where entry is controlled by a statutory regulator, for example the Solicitors Regulation Authority.

The Institute understands that for a small number of apprenticeship standards an existing organisation has a statutory responsibility to regulate access to a profession, including via apprenticeship end-point assessment, and that in these instances requiring Ofqual or OfS regulation on top of the existing regulation would add burden for little tangible benefit. We are proposing that in such instances the role of evaluating the quality of that end-point assessment will fall to that statutory regulator rather than Ofqual or the OfS. This will increase the number of EQA providers slightly from the two proposed in the consultation. However, we do not think this represents a substantial risk to simplification as the additional regulators would need to be involved in any case. This proposal streamlines regulation for this small number of apprenticeship standards.

In addition, there are a very small number of cases where, as a result of their status in licensing that occupation, a specific organisation is named in the assessment plan as the only organisation that can offer end-point assessment on a particular apprenticeship standard. We will consider whether the risks to end-point assessment delivery are very low where delivered by a single body who have aligned the end-point assessment to their existing standard. In these cases, the Institute may not require EQA from Ofqual or the OfS but would work with the appropriate trailblazer group to ensure periodic, light-touch evaluation of the ongoing quality of end-point assessment is conducted.

System concern 6 - Introducing instability into the still-maturing end-point assessment market

The changes proposed in the consultation, although seemingly simple, have significant ramifications for how emerging and often sector-specific EPAOs would need to do their business. There was concern at the potential for more changes to recently set up ways of working and were unsure if they could recoup any resulting losses. The requirements of the education regulators were somewhat unknown to these organisations and had not been something they had expected to have to engage with when they took the decision to offer end-point assessments for apprenticeships. More broadly some respondents felt that making a significant change at a relatively early stage in the rollout of end-point assessment would project a wider message of instability.

A number of EPAOs reported that their experience of the existing system of EQA had been positive, particularly in recent months as this system matured and especially in

the way EQA providers had supported EPAOs in developing flexible approaches to delivering end-point assessment during the COVID-19 outbreak. As such, they did not accept the rationale for change outlined in the consultation proposal, instead feeling that the changes would create instability particularly at a time when the sector has been responding to the impact of COVID-19.

There were many comments offering ideas about what additional support would help and to strengthen the proposed plans, including:

- transition related comments
- market specific requests
- points regarding the ongoing working relationship

There were also some direct concerns and requests made of the Institute, all of which inform our next steps.

2.3.3. Equality Act 2010

Whilst the majority of respondents could see no related impact from these changes for individuals with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, there were some notes of care requested.

E.g. a hope that innovative and constructive reasonable adjustments would not diminish. This came with a mitigating suggestion that sufficient knowledge of 'reasonable workplace adjustments' are part of this system.

All comments were helpful and inform our transition planning; helping us avoid any unintended detrimental impact.

2.4. THE ROLE OF PROFESSIONAL AND EMPLOYER-LED BODIES

The second section of the consultation set out proposals for employer bodies to work with Ofqual and the OfS in their delivery of EQA. It introduces the new directory of professional and employer-led bodies (the employer directory) in more detail. All changes in this area are being introduced to ensure each end-point assessment delivered is both technically sound and also occupationally relevant.

The employer voice remains crucial to ensuring quality in our apprenticeship system. Consultation responses reiterated this and reminded us of both the opportunities and risks to that within the changes we are proposing. Alongside the work of trailblazers and route panels, the successful design and introduction of this new employer directory supports this intent.

During our engagement sessions, the EQA providers we spoke to felt most proud of their engagement and relationships with employers, and this was cited in written consultation feedback as a strength by both employers and EPAOs. Several existing EQA providers felt that they were the best placed body to evaluate the occupational relevance of end-point assessment, but not to deliver regulation of the technical detail of assessment. These organisations feel that taking on a role providing occupational insight to established education regulators will make better use of their expertise.

We must acknowledge that in no insignificant part, exemplar EQA providers have played a valuable role in keeping that voice connected into their sector's EQA processes, concerns and successes. The benefit of the employer directory would be that it provides expert, occupational-specific information and advice to complement that of the regulators.

There was a thread of feedback about the potential for employers to have significant input across the apprenticeship end-to-end life cycle – from concept design to post-completion evaluation. Some respondents felt that this new role envisaged for employer bodies, would give them more flexibility to utilise their expertise in the evaluation of the quality of the assessment. We intend using this alongside other employer touch points across the system to mitigate any risk of diminishing employer voice.

In this section of the response, we set out how we intend to develop and maintain a directory of employer bodies to provide an occupational perspective to EQA. Trailblazers will nominate organisations to fulfil this role and the Institute will ask them to set out which of a range of functions they can provide to support Ofqual's or OfS's work.

As laid out previously in system concern 5, we recognise that for a small number of apprenticeship standards, the relevant body is a statutory regulator with specific powers to regulate the end-point assessment as a route into the profession. In these instances, it would add complexity for no tangible benefit to have an additional layer of regulation on the end-point assessment from Ofqual or the OfS. These apprenticeship standards would therefore sit outside the proposed Ofqual/OfS EQA structure, but within the Institute's overall end-point assessment quality assurance regime. All quality assurance will continue to align with the Institute's EQA Framework.

2.4.1. Your feedback

The majority of respondents (67%) agreed with the list of proposed organisation types to be included in the employer directory.

- There was overwhelming support for keeping an employer voice to ensure relevance. The majority also agreed that the proposed changes would allow greater flexibility in how EQAs utilise sector expertise.
- There was a slight drop-in support about the proposed criteria for accessing any directory of expertise.
- There was a further slight drop-in support that the proposed approach effectively and sufficiently utilises the expertise of professional bodies to assure professional competence.
- There was a high level of response either offering improvements or seeking further clarity on how the new system will work in practice, which suggests early transition activity will need to offer improved clarity about how this will function in practice.
- There was hope that our EQA systems can continue to be quality led rather than unintentionally becoming more about compliance.

The themes of concern:

- Some are rooted in a worry that the employer voice will be diluted, or complicated, by creating an additional layer within the system.
- There is currently confusion about how this will work practically and a strong desire for more information on how the system will function, how conflicts of interest will be managed and what funding will be available to support the EQA process.

Respondents felt strongly that the combined expertise of educational regulators, and employer representatives who understand the nature of the industry, would add real value to the process.

The intention to bring education and business together, to ensure that the educational regulators were supported by industry experts, was welcomed. This integration was felt essential to ensure that apprenticeship standards remained valid, fit for purpose and meet employer and sector needs.

It was felt that, where provided, employer input to date has had a direct impact and benefit on assessment of competence. Respondents felt this had been useful in influencing EQA activity to help identify and quantify key risks and take actions to mitigate the effects of these. Respondents felt that it had also been helpful for employers to have the insight and data from EQA activity and to use this to influence their thinking on future apprenticeship developments.

2.4.2. A new directory of professional and employer-led bodies

We understand from your responses the need to bring an employer perspective to supplement and enhance the EQA process by providing specific occupational perspective.

To ensure that the appropriate employer voice is included in the system, the Institute will populate a directory of professional and employer-led bodies (the employer directory). The EQA body, Ofqual or OfS, will draw on current sector expertise from this employer directory in support of their EQA work. Ofqual and OfS may utilise the employer directory in different ways.

The Institute will ask trailblazers to nominate an appropriate body to provide occupational expertise and input for their apprenticeship standard. Where there is no body or the appropriate body is already the assessment body, the Institute will work to ensure current industry practice is reflected. We may also directly invite organisations to apply to the employer directory.

All organisations will go through an application process with support from the Institute. The Institute will carry out rigorous checks to ensure any criteria are met, including scrutinising any conflicts of interest such as where an organisation, its Board or its staff are involved in different parts of the technical education system. Where conflicts exist, we will ensure involvement of necessary expertise in taking steps to address them.

Employer directory composition

From our wide engagement with stakeholders and from your responses, we recognise that the employer directory will consist of organisations with varying roles within a sector.

We also recognise that the employer directory will need to accommodate organisations which are able to provide a range of different functions dependant on an organisation's existing role within a sector or profession. Flexibility is also needed in order to involve smaller organisations with limited capability to ensure all employer interests are represented.

It is our intention that the employer directory represents the diversity of organisation types which can provide occupational expertise, this may include professional bodies, employer organisations with a particular remit around skills development, livery companies or other organisations.

A note on exceptional circumstances - Where an organisation is a statutory regulator overseeing access to a profession, it will also become the sole EQA provider. Aligning regulation and quality assurance of the end-point assessment with the professional expertise in one body, means there would be no need to additionally draw on the employer directory. Similarly, where only one body is able to provide end-point assessment and this is linked to a professional title, the employer and professional expertise is delivered by the EPAO, rather than through drawing on the employer directory.

Principles for inclusion

Once an organisation has been nominated for one or more apprenticeship standards, it will need to apply to the Institute to be included on the employer directory, should it wish to be considered.

There are a diverse range of organisations with differing roles in EQA and we will build on the changes proposed in the consultation, and the expertise that organisations can provide.

An organisation will need to indicate which of the functions set out below it proposes to undertake and demonstrate that it has the capacity and capability to provide these functions. It is not anticipated that all organisations will be able to or wish to perform all of these functions, they will indicate which they intend to provide in their application.

Functions that bodies on the employer directory can provide, in support of and collaboration with the EQA provider, includes*:

1. High-level advice to the Institute's route panels on specific apprenticeship standards.
2. Scrutiny of the end-point assessment and support materials produced by the EPAO.
3. Insight and intelligence to support prioritisation and targeting of EQA activities.
4. Operational activity, to confirm from the employer perspective that quality end-point assessment continues to deliver occupational competence.
5. Support to EPAOs where specific improvement actions are identified.

6. Identify trends in end-point assessment delivery or risks that affect all organisations operating across an apprenticeship standard or group of apprenticeship standards, to inform prioritisation and targeting of EQA activities.

additionally:

7. Evaluation and dissemination of findings and reports from EQA provider, to promote apprenticeships across their sector.
8. Confirmation of alignment/mapping of apprenticeship standards to professional standards.

*further detail on what is expected as part of these functions and the types of organisations that could deliver them is at annex 3.

Remuneration

Organisations on the employer directory will have a memorandum of understanding with the Institute. At that point, there will also be consideration given to any specific training and support needs.

Going forward, EQA delivered by Ofqual and OfS will be funded centrally by the Department for Education. Although the Institute will be responsible for the employer directory, organisations in the employer directory will agree any remuneration with Ofqual or OfS directly, as required activity will be directed by these bodies.

2.5. TRANSITION TO NEW WAYS OF WORKING

The third section of the consultation sought feedback on the transition arrangements and the support that EPAOs might need during the transition period and beyond.

Our hope is that the new EQA model will be fully operational within two years. Our approach and plans have been adapted and strengthened by the feedback received. Throughout transition, our aims will be to:

- Ensure the benefits of simplification of the system are achieved as soon as possible, without compromising the quality of EQA.
- Understand and minimise any risks to the stability of the EPAO market by providing sufficient time for transition.
- Protect the interests of apprentices, ensuring that all apprentices on programme have an EPAO capable of delivering high quality end-point assessment for their apprenticeship standard.

We anticipate that HEI providers delivering integrated degree apprenticeships should experience minimal disruption to existing practice; the majority of this section relates specifically to those apprenticeship standards transitioning to Ofqual.

2.5.1. Your feedback

All groups were forthcoming with helpful feedback on how the transition could be improved. Event participants identified the opportunity to use performance data to manage issues in real-time and keep things on track. Also, to harness best practice from the exemplar EQAs to seek feedback that includes robust benchmarking data, best practice and trend data. The feedback also included flags for risks which will require mitigation as part of the consultation response.

From the formal consultation responses, 54% of respondents offered their thoughts on improvements to current transition plans.

The main themes of concern for proposed transition plans were:

- It was questioned whether the proposed changes will improve the system with respondents noting that their current EQA experience had been positive, and their industry wanted to retain the expertise in the system.
- Ofqual's capacity for the recognition process given the potential volume of new EPAOs applying within transition period.
- Ofqual's capacity to EQA the predicted volumes, during and beyond the transition period.
- Proposed timelines were considered by many respondents to be unrealistic and it was felt that EPAOs would spend the next 12 months rebuilding their business post-COVID-19.

We also asked the EPAOs if they envisaged applying for Ofqual recognition. 21% said they would, 13% were undecided and 3% said that they would not (63% didn't respond).

Ofqual Recognition – the process and team capacity

There were a number of suggestions about what support might be required or helpful in the transition period, and beyond:

- Transition decisions and plans should be communicated in advance of any change to avoid unnecessary duplication.
- Guidance and provision of resources to support EPAOs obtain Ofqual recognition.
- Niche apprenticeship standards to be carefully considered to ensure that end-point assessment can continue.
- A significant proportion of comments were regarding the recognition process, including:
 - several requests for support with the application process
 - clear guidance and support with a sufficient and clear timeline
 - webinars, meetings and working groups
 - designated support staff member in Ofqual
 - frequent and accessible information and discussions

There were a small number of concerns raised regarding the support, particularly from those that had found the process complicated, inflexible and unsuited to an EPAO (as opposed to those seeking AO status). There was also concern about adding to Ofqual's workload when it was felt that they already seemed overloaded.

An agile approach to transition planning

There was a strong feeling that flexibility in the phased approach would be required for successful transition.

It was felt that early sight of detail would be needed with more clarity needed on transition arrangements for individual apprenticeship standards. It was strongly felt that two years was a tight deadline for EPAOs, especially smaller ones without significant resources to gain Ofqual recognition. Additionally, for those who did have recognition, sufficient windows were needed for EPAOs to expand their scope.

It was suggested that collaborative, open engagement, discussion and feedback with current EQA providers and other stakeholders should continue to ensure continuity of service. Respondents also stressed the need for a clear communication plan for providers/apprentices so everyone can be kept in the loop.

2.5.2. Moving into transition

Having digested your feedback and being acutely mindful of market disruption due to the COVID-19 virus, we believe it is even more important that the transition be delivered in two distinct stages. We heard the feedback about taking the necessary time to get this right and given the 6-week extension to the consultation we can now confirm the following.

Stage one - apprenticeship standards with EQA currently delivered by the Institute

Apprenticeship standards where EQA is currently delivered by the Institute through its contract with Open Awards, will commence transfer to Ofqual from October 2020 onwards and not before.

At the time of publication, this represents a total of 282 apprenticeship standards, and these will be moved in batches to mitigate the risk of Ofqual overload and therefore system overload.

The transition process and timelines need to be shared sufficiently in advance to allow all parties to understand potential impacts and plan accordingly.

Given the market, system and operational complexities, the plan will need include sufficient

agility to respond to sector volatility and to integrate lessons learnt from each stage of recognition and transition activity.

- Ofqual will begin engaging with EPAOs in August 2020, with an initial focus on those apprenticeship standards where the Institute currently provides EQA.
- The transition process will run in 6 batches, likely to align to occupational route groupings.

Stage two – all other apprenticeship standards

We also heard your recommendations to engage with current exemplar EQA providers to develop the transition plan and it remains our intention to do that. The **detailed planning for phase 2** will involve the trailblazers and current EQA providers to benefit from their expertise and knowledge and be led by Ofqual and OfS for their respective parts with the Institute's support.

Ofqual recognition process

Ofqual will recognise those EPAOs that meet its Criteria of Recognition. Organisations will need to show that they are financially sustainable, demonstrate they have capability and capacity to develop and deliver end-point assessments, and that they will meet employers' needs. Importantly, Ofqual will take into account contextualising factors, such as specialism or scale of operation, and applications will be judged in proportion to the scope of the application.

One benefit of the phased transition plan is that this will ensure that guidance and support can be targeted for EPAOs associated with the apprenticeship standards in that phase. Ofqual will actively engage, collectively and individually, with EPAOs providing them with guidance as they proceed with their recognition application. Informed by the feedback to the consultation, Ofqual is strengthening its approach to communicating and engaging with EPAOs, particularly those applying for recognition.

Consequently,

- EPAOs will be facilitated through their recognition journey
- there will be a clear point of contact for each organisation seeking to apply for recognition
- future communications will improve understanding about what is expected of an EPAO

Taking on board feedback from respondents, Ofqual are building a range of additional information, resources and briefings to clarify the process and requirements of applying for recognition, deepening understanding of what they do and how a regulated approach to EQA will operate in line with the EQA Framework. Further detail of Ofqual's developing communications and engagement, can be found in annex 4.

When an EPAO initially applies for recognition they will complete a full application, providing evidence which demonstrates their capacity, capability and processes. Once recognised, an EPAO wanting to be recognised for further apprenticeship standards will then be able to apply to expand their scope of recognition using a simplified approach. This will create some efficiencies and minimise the burden for the EPAO, with focussed consideration on those aspects which are specific to the additional apprenticeship standards being applied for.

ESFA and Ofqual will develop a single approval process to get onto their prospective registers to reduce administrative burden on application. In the short term, where EPAOs are already on the register, information will be shared by the ESFA with Ofqual. For new EPAOs not yet on the Register of end-point assessment organisations (RoEPAO), Ofqual and the ESFA are working to align and simplify their processes, so they are easier for applicants to

navigate.

Capacity and Skills

Delivering the majority of EQA is a significant additional undertaking and Ofqual will create a new field team to increase capacity. This is a critical new function, designed to provide assurance that end-point assessments are delivered appropriately and consistently.

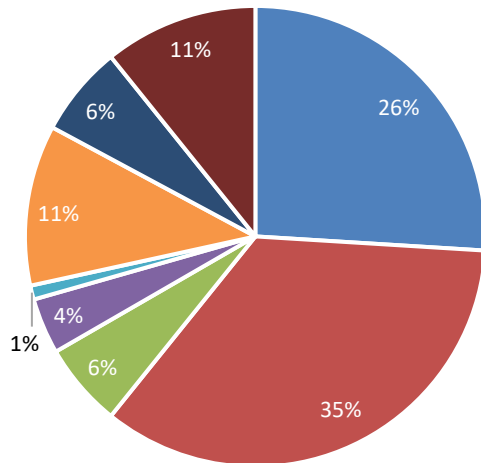
This end-point assessment quality assurance work will be informed by utilising occupational and industry expertise within the employer directory. It will also secure evidence and insights that can be used to address risks and ensure that end-point assessments are a sufficiently valid and reliable measure of occupational competence. In conjunction with Ofqual's existing teams, the field team will seek to:

- resolve identified inconsistencies in end-point assessment delivery and secure the comparability of assessments across EPAOs.
- provide insight to recognised EPAOs, and those seeking Ofqual recognition; produce thematic reports on cross cutting issues; and
- gather intelligence and evidence that will inform prioritisation and targeting of EQA activities.

The work of the team will be driven by risk, intelligence and relevant strategic priorities, and will routinely include working alongside professional body and employer representatives.

2.6. ANNEX 1 - SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND RESPONSES

The consultation generated 204 responses via the online questionnaire and email. Respondents included a range of individuals and organisations and participation in the consultation was on a self-selecting basis. A breakdown of respondents by sub-group is presented in the table below. In view of the relatively small numbers in certain groups and the self-selecting nature of the responses, we have been cautious in interpreting these results as wholly representative.



Role	Key	TOTAL
Employer		53
EPAO		71
EQAP		12
HEI		8
FE College		2
Trade / professional body		23
Training provider		13
Other		22
TOTAL		204

Proposal question	Summary findings
Question 1a: Does the proposed system impact your organisation?	71% of respondents confirmed the proposed changes will impact their organisation.
Question 1b: If yes, please exemplify any benefits or challenges you foresee in the proposal for your organisation.	<p>Four system benefit themes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. consistency of quality standards 2. a simpler system, easier to do business with 3. lower costs 4. increasing confidence in the apprenticeship system <p>Five system concern categories</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. loss of employer voice 2. EPAO market 3. Ofqual regulatory regime 4. appropriateness of the reform for HE 5. appropriateness of the proposal for apprenticeship standards overseen by an existing statutory regulator 6. introducing instability into the still-maturing end-point assessment market
Question 1c: How do you propose the Institute should manage the impact of the proposal on your organisation?	<p>The large response to this question included approximately 60 ideas that present some concern and approximately 80 that offer improvements to existing plans, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transition related requests • market specific requests • points regarding the ongoing working relationships • direct concerns regarding proposed changes • some direct requests
Question 1d: If no, please tell us more about your interest in EQA, exemplify any benefits or challenges you foresee in the proposal and your proposals to manage these impacts.	Responses given by those not directly impacted by the proposed changes echoed what was flagged by those more directly impacted but did not offer in any different themes of feedback.
Question 1e: Do you have any comments about the potential impact the proposals outlined in this consultation may have on individuals with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010?	Whilst most respondents could see no related impact from these changes for individuals with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, 17 respondents believed there may be potential impact. There were a small number of notes of caution registered, helpful to consider across transition and thereby avoid any unintended detrimental impact.
Question 2a: Do you agree with the list of organisation types that could be included in the Institute's register of professional and employer-led organisations?	<p>67% agreed, 15% disagreed and the remaining 18% either didn't know or didn't respond.</p> <p>We registered 85 comments evidencing support for the organisation types that would be included in the register:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reassurance that the appropriate skills, expertise & employer voice will remain in the system • that the proposed system will provide flexibility for Ofqual and mitigates any gaps in technical knowledge • recognition that the quality of apprenticeships that require occupational competence will be maintained <p>Also, 51 comments registering caution or concern about the proposed changes and how they could be managed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concern regarding conflicts of interest and how the register will be managed on an ongoing basis

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • differing views on the role of professional bodies in the proposed system • disagreement on the balance of organisations on the register, raising concern that it is overly in favour of professional bodies and not representative enough of diversity within a sector • feedback that the current process is working well for some sectors and that they should not have to change
<p>Question 2b: Do you agree with the Institute's proposed criteria for accessing the Institute's register of professional/employer-led organisations?</p>	<p>62% agreed, 13% disagreed and the remaining 23% either didn't know or didn't respond.</p> <p>66 comments registered support for the proposed criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • believing that the new criteria will ensure quality and consistency • confident that the process and those involved, both Ofqual and organisations supporting EQA have the appropriate experience and expertise <p>55 comments registered caution or concern about the proposed criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caution whether the proposed criteria is representative of all employers, of all sizes and take their resources into consideration • regarding conflicts of interest • that the new EQA system will add another layer for organisations to navigate <p>There were also some offers of how the criteria could be improved.</p>
<p>Question 2c: Does this approach effectively and sufficiently utilise the expertise of professional bodies to assure professional competence?</p>	<p>58% agreed, 17% disagreed and the remaining 25% either didn't know or didn't respond.</p>
<p>Question 2d: Do you have any suggestions for how this approach could be improved?</p>	<p>A number of suggestions were offered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear request for further information on what funding would be available to organisations in response to the additional time and cost required to support EQA • Concerns raised over system health, including hierarchies and ensuring ongoing consistency • Clarity requested and proposed on what the relationship between professional bodies and EQA providers should look like
<p>Question 3a: Are there aspects of the transition arrangements that could be improved?</p>	<p>45% of respondents thought the transition arrangements could be improved. 1 in 3 of these respondents went on to provide ideas for improvements.</p>
<p>Question 3b: If yes, please provide more detail.</p>	<p>Request themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for the phased approach to be appropriately pragmatic and to avoid unnecessary duplication • for the transition decisions and plans to be clear in advance of transition or exit <p>Concern themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that Ofqual will have the capacity and skills to carry out all the EQA activity during and beyond the transition period • that the proposed timescales are realistic

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the proposed changes will improve the system or are in fact needed • to the transition planning
Question 3c: [For EPAOs] Do you envisage applying for Ofqual recognition?	21% of EPAOs that responded said that they intend on applying for Ofqual recognition whilst 3% have shared intentions to exit. 76% of respondents were undecided or did not respond.
Question 3d: [For EPAOs] What support do you envisage needing in the transition period, and beyond?	<p>11 comments evidencing what support would be helpful e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support with the application process • a clear timeline • webinars, meetings, and work group with others • designated support contact <p>6 comments registering caution or voicing concern about support, most in relation to fit for purpose support being available, based on current experience working with or going through the Ofqual recognition process.</p>
Question 3e: Do you think there are any further opportunities to simplify or optimise the system that have not been covered in previous questions? If so, what?	<p>35 Ideas about further opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to improve the transition process • relating to how quality is delivered across apprenticeships • relating to ongoing working relationships <p>16 comments registering caution or voicing concern:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that the changes will result in a complex system • relating to industry / professional specific regulations and standards and the risk of adding conflict and complexity to any given sector

2.7. ANNEX 2 – LIST OF ORGANISATIONS THAT RESPONDED TO THE CONSULTATION

This annex sets out the organisations that responded to the consultation. It does not include individuals who responded in a personal capacity, responses where an organisation was not clearly identified, or organisations that requested their responses remain confidential. As such, the number of organisations listed below does not equal the total number of respondents.

2 Sisters Food Group	British Florist Association
Accelerate People Limited	British Institute of Innkeeping
Accenture Plc	British Pest Control Association
Achieve and Partners Limited	British Psychological Society
Advance HE	Chartered Banker Institute
Allianz	Chartered Institute of Credit Management
APMG International	Chartered Institute of Taxation
Assessed Education Limited	Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
Association for Consultancy and Engineering	Cilex Regulation Limited
Association of British Travel Agents	Construction Industry Training Board
Association of Chartered Certified Accountants	Council of Deans of Health
Association of Professional Sales	David Nieper Limited
Association of School and College leaders	Dianthas Ltd
Auto trailblazer group	Elite Awarding Ltd
Autoexel Ltd	Energy & Utilities Independent Assessment Service
Autoraise	Engineering Council
Babcock International Group PLC	Enginuity Group
BAE systems	Environment Agency
Balfour Beatty	ETA Awards
Barlows UK Ltd	European Metal Recycling Group
BCD Travel UK Limited	F M Conway Limited
BCS The Chartered Institute for IT	Federation of Awarding Bodies
Bespoke Professional Development and	General Physics (GP) Strategies Corporation

Training Limited

H L Hutchinson Limited

Health Education England

Health Education England

Henley Business School, University of Reading

Hidden Hearing Ltd

Highfield Awarding Body for Compliance Ltd

Innovate Awarding

Institution of Civil Engineers

Institute of School Business Leadership

Institute of Workplace and Facilities Management

Instructus

InTandem Systems Ltd

Johnson Services Group PLC

JS Consultants UK Limited

Laing O'Rourke

Lancashire Teaching Hospitals

Lantra Awards

Leeds City Council

Lift and Escalator Industry Association

London South Bank University

Lynwood School of Veterinary Nursing

Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust

Maritime Skills Alliance

Michael D Akers Management Consulting

Middlesex University London

Ministry of Defence

National Council for the Training of Journalists

National Electrotechnical Training (NET)

National Hair & Beauty Federation

National Hairdressers Federation

National Open College Network

National Skills Academy for Nuclear

NHS London Procurement Partnership

North West Skills Academy

Northern Council for Further Education

Nottingham Trent University

Occupational Awards Limited

Open Awards

Pearson

People 1st International

Professional Assessment Ltd

QinetiQ Limited

Qualifications for Industry Limited (QFI)

RG Specialist Solutions Ltd

Rolls-Royce plc

Royal Aeronautical Society

Royal College of Nursing

Royal Society of Chemistry

ScreenSkills Limited

Sellafield Ltd

SFJ Awards

Skypeople Limited

Society for the Environment

South West Councils

Mulberry Group PLC
Teach Southeast
Technical Apprenticeship Consortium
The Association of Accounting Technicians
The Association of Taxation Technicians
The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity
The Chartered Institute of Marketing
The Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers
The Church of England
The College of Policing
The Engineering Construction Industry Training Board
The Institute of the Motor Industry
The Law Society
The London Institute of Banking & Finance
The National Skills Academy for Rail
The Open University
The Royal Aeronautical Society
The Royal Geographical Society
The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
The Society of Master Saddlers (UK) Ltd
The Solicitors Regulation Authority
The UK Fashion & Textile Association
The University of Salford, Manchester
The Worshipful Company of Butchers
TJE Consulting (Staffordshire) Ltd
Training Qualifications UK
University and College Union
University of Bolton
University of Brighton
University of Lincoln
VMI. TV Limited (previously known as Videomania International Limited)
Wales & West Utilities
WBL Services Limited
Woodford Home Care & Support Services
Young Men's Christian Association

2.8. ANNEX 3 – DIRECTORY OF PROFESSIONAL AND EMPLOYER-LED BODIES FUNCTIONS

Theme	Function	Description	Notes
Engagement	High-level advice to the Institute	Bodies in the employer directory may be asked to comment on end-point assessment plans for relevant apprenticeship standards.	
EQA support during delivery	Scrutiny of the end-point assessment and support materials produced by the EPAO	As part of readiness checks Ofqual/OfS will undertake technical review of the assessment materials. Whilst Ofqual/OfS will focus on the reliability of the materials from an assessment perspective, they will draw on expertise from the employer directory to support them in ensuring that the materials provide a relevant and up-to-date assessment of occupational competence from an employer perspective.	We anticipate that most organisations on the employer directory would be able to offer this function.
	Insight and intelligence to support prioritisation and targeting of EQA activities	It is expected that employer directory bodies will provide employer-centric insights and intelligence. These may be on developments within their sector germane to the delivery of the end-point assessment e.g. changes, standard workplace practices, that may impact upon the standard, end-point assessment plan or end-point assessment materials, or insights and intelligence that will inform prioritisation and targeting of EQA activities including informing the work of Ofqual's newly developed field team.	We anticipate that most organisations on the employer directory would be able to offer this function. Evidence from these bodies will be extremely important, and considered with due weight, by Ofqual / OfS when determining prioritisation and targeting of EQA priorities.
	Operational activity, to confirm that quality end-point assessment continues to deliver occupational competence	As part of ongoing monitoring, Ofqual/OfS will review end-point assessment delivery in various ways including, but not limited to, the observation of live assessment, including in the case of Ofqual through the field team. In undertaking this work, they will draw on expertise from the employer directory to confirm that the way end-point assessment materials are being put into practice provides a relevant and up-to-date assessment of occupational	We anticipate that most organisations on the employer directory would be able to offer this function.

		<p>competence. For example, that workplace simulations provide a realistic environment and require apprentices to undertake the sort of tasks that would be undertaken at the level of the occupation; expertise from employer directory bodies may contribute here to confirm that apprentices being awarded grades above a pass are genuinely more likely to perform better in the workplace rather than only achieving a higher level of academic attainment.</p>	
<p>Post-delivery evaluation</p>	<p>Evaluation and dissemination</p>	<p>The Institute will formally take the views of employer bodies into account when conducting route reviews of apprenticeship standards and end-point assessment plans.</p> <p>We also expect that the employer directory bodies will provide feedback and insight out to employers in their sector disseminating findings from EQA providers including in the form of sector-specific reports.</p>	<p>We anticipate that most organisations on the employer directory would be able to offer this function.</p>
<p>Support to EPAOs and feedback to employers</p>	<p>Support to EPAOs where specific improvement actions are identified</p>	<p>Where EQA activity by Ofqual / OfS has identified that an end-point assessment organisation is failing to deliver a particular assessment activity, or the end-point assessment of a particular apprenticeship standard to the appropriate level, the organisation on the could provide support to the EPAO in question to help them to improve. Examples may include, supporting the improvement of end-point assessment materials so they accurately reflect sector occupational matters, signposting CPD for EPAO staff, or assist with interpretation of the end-point assessment plan.</p>	<p>We anticipate that most organisations on the employer directory would be able to offer this function.</p>

	<p>Addressing general trends in end-point assessment delivery that affect all organisations operating across an apprenticeship standard or group of apprenticeship standards</p>	<p>Ofqual / OfS may draw on employer directory bodies to work alongside them and contribute to EPAO forums, and discussion groups particularly in support of how EQA is used to improve assessment.</p> <p>Whilst formally outside the activities of the EQA Framework, and further to the function set out above we would also welcome the organisations on the directory working more broadly to create a community of learning and interest among trainers and EPAOs across that apprenticeship standard. This might include organising or participating in forums and workshops with EPAOs to develop and share best practice from an employer's perspective or working alongside Ofqual and OfS to improve best practice more broadly. In addition, we would expect organisations on the directory to engage with the relevant trailblazer groups operating in their sector, to feedback advice on development of new apprenticeship standards gained from their insight in EQA.</p>	<p>We anticipate that most organisations on the employer directory would be able to offer this function.</p>
<p>Mapping to external standards</p>	<p>Confirmation of alignment/mapping to existing professional standards</p>	<p>Whilst outside the scope of EQA, but in support of the apprenticeship programme and the development of Technical Education more broadly, in some cases the body in the employer directory may have a role overseeing alignment with an external standard. In these cases, the organisation will confirm when the end-point assessment plan is developed (or reviewed) that this alignment is maintained. They will also confirm that the manner in which the end-point assessment is being delivered on an ongoing basis allows this alignment.</p>	<p>We anticipate that this would only be possible for organisations which have a role overseeing the profession / occupation more broadly than just in apprenticeships.</p>

2.9. ANNEX 4 – OFQUAL EQA COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The communication and engagement with EPAOs aims to:

- **Increase understanding of Ofqual’s recognition process** facilitating applicants’ understanding of the process of applying for recognition, maintaining a consistent process for all applicants, so that EPAOs can submit evidence which demonstrates that they have the occupational expertise, assessment proficiency, systems and processes in place.
- **Clarify expectations of an EPAO** providing a range of additional information, resources and briefings over the coming months, that aim to clarify the process and requirements of applying for recognition, deepen understanding of what and how a regulated approach to EQA will operate in line with the EQA Framework.
- **Guide EPAOs through the transition to regulated EPA** providing clear and structured updates on the process of transition, including details of what EPAOs need to do, when and which apprenticeship standards transfer to Ofqual EQA provision

This programme of communications and engagement will commence in August 2020 and continue through the transition period.

Target audience	What we will communicate	Through
Any EPAO – on the RoEPAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the transition programme, its timeline, aims and objectives; progress updates, including on the alignment of the RoEPAO and Ofqual register; high-level information on particular aspects of the simplified arrangements for EQA, and further details of comms and engagement. 	ESFA – specific direct communications, ESFA newsletter and webinar calls
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of advice and support materials, including documents, videos and case studies, on Ofqual’s conditions, the recognition process, being regulated by Ofqual and further details on Ofqual’s approach to EQA in line with the EQA framework. You’ll also be invited to join a series of regular Ofqual webinars. • Example topics to be covered, include, how Ofqual will use additional information from other sources, including ESFA and current EQA providers; case studies from recent applicants; specific Ofqual conditions and the EQA framework; introducing Ofqual’s new VTQ field team, and, how small and sector specific organisations can be regulated EPAOs. 	Ofqual website, and direct emails to you from Ofqual

<p>An EPAO – on the RoEPAO for apprenticeship standard(s) in year 1 of transition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the timeline and staging of the transition – providing an overview of what EPAOs need to do when, in relation to each route group. <p><i>Staged commencing August 2020</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all EPAOs associated with end-point assessments in each route group, details of what they need to do, which end-point assessments and apprenticeship standards in this group, how to commence their 1:1 engagement with Ofqual and their recognition application. • Once their application has commenced, providing each EPAO with a clear point of contact, an initial 1:1 meeting and follow up prior to submission of their application. 	<p>Ofqual – direct communications, emails, briefing materials and webinars Ofqual – through our recognition gateway, email and video conference calls</p>
<p>An EPAO – on the RoEPAO for apprenticeship standard(s) in year 1 of transition and recognised by Ofqual</p>	<p><i>Staged commencing August 2020</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of what they need to do to apply to expand their scope of recognition, how and when. 	<p>Ofqual – through the Ofqual portal and associated channels, webinars</p>
<p>An EPAO – on the RoEPAO for apprenticeship standard(s) in year 2 of transition and currently not recognised by Ofqual</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Details of the timeline and staging of the transition – providing an overview of what needs to be done when, in relation to each route group. <p><i>Staged, commencing spring 2021</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For all EPAOs associated with end-point assessments in each route group, details of what they need to do, which end-point assessments and apprenticeship standards in this group, how to commence their 1:1 engagement with Ofqual and their recognition application. • Once their application has commenced, providing each EPAO with a clear point of contact, an initial 1:1 meeting and follow up prior to submission of their application. 	<p>Ofqual - direct communications and Ofqual – direct communications, emails, briefing materials and webinars Ofqual – through our recognition gateway, email and video conference calls</p>
<p>Intending to become an EPAO – but not yet on the RoEPAO</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of advice and support materials, including documents, videos and case studies, on Ofqual’s conditions, the recognition process, being regulated by Ofqual and further details on Ofqual’s approach to EQA in line with the EQA Framework. 	<p>ESFA – website and response to enquiries Ofqual – website and response to enquiries</p>



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