Michele Phillips

The Engineering Council

Woolgate Exchange
25 Basinghall Street
London
EC2V 5HA

4 February 2020

Dear Michele

**Re: Recognition from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education – External Quality Assurance (EQA)**

I am pleased to confirm that the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) has approved the Engineering Council as the external quality assurance (EQA) provider for the apprenticeship standard(s) listed on the register of EQA providers’ page of our website. Committee members asked me to officially express their thanks to the Engineering Council for the work that has gone into the proposal and to note its quality.

**Requirements of all EQA providers**

The Institute has a statutory responsibility to ensure that evaluations are undertaken of the quality of apprenticeship end-point assessment (EPA), through EQA. In order to ensure that EQA is undertaken consistently and to a high-quality, the Institute has published an EQA framework which can be found here <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/quality/external-quality-assurance>

All EQA activities must be undertaken in-line with this framework and its five principles: relevant; reliable; efficient; positive; and learning.

Each EQA provider must ensure that it, and anyone undertaking EQA activities on its behalf, maintain high standards of integrity and professionalism. You must ensure that all staff involved in the delivery of EQA have the relevant occupational and assessment experience and are fit and proper to work in an environment that may involve direct contact with personal data, children and vulnerable adults.

Data may be collected only where it is relevant to the delivery of EQA activities. Each EQA provider is responsible for handling any data obtained during the provision of EQA services in accordance with relevant data protection legislation. The Institute will provide you with certain information on the end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) within scope of your EQA regime via the Qualitas digital system; this is outlined at Annex A. In addition to this, you may need to collect further operational information from EPAOs in order to plan your work. However, you should only collate information that directly relates to the EQA service you are delivering, and should not require any personal data on apprentices. Individual EPAOs must comply with data protection legislation in providing you with information that is additional to that outlined in Annex A.

Additionally, you may be asked to hand over data and materials collected in the course of EQA activity to the Institute. The copyright of any reports will be assigned to the Institute and you will ensure that the content of reports and any data collected in the course of EQA activities shall remain confidential.

The EQA role does not confer any additional influence or entitle you to make additional arrangements with, or demands on, employers or assessment organisations. We recognise that you may be involved in other work on apprenticeships and this may be agreed separately with employers or assessment organisations, but only in instances where it does not compromise your role as an EQA provider. You are required to notify the Institute of any potential conflicts of interest immediately.

It is a condition of the register of end-point assessment organisations (RoEPAO), that all EPA organisations operate within and adhere to the EQA framework set down by the Institute and delivered by the appropriate EQA body. Any non-compliance may be reported to the Institute.

You must adhere to the KPIs set out in Annex B and to the requirements set out in the EQA Framework, which includes measures around the timeliness and quality of EQA reports, EPAO support sessions, and EPAO queries being responded to promptly.

**Relationship with the Institute**

We will confirm which official will act as your main contact with the Institute. He or she will agree a performance review plan with you including the frequency of regular meetings and timelines for reporting as set out in Annex C.

You must submit details of all EQA activity undertaken, including written reports through the Qualitas digital system. This allows the Institute to monitor EQA activity effectively.

At this point, I also need to make you aware that the Institute has been asked by the Department for Education to to explore how the delivery of EQA could be simplified and strengthened. A consultation is due to be launched at the end of February and we encourage you to share your views and encourage your stakeholders to engage. Depending on the outcome of these discussions the requirements for EQA provision may change and in any event, the Institute reserves the right to change the requirements for EQA provision in the future. We would keep you appraised of developments and provide you with as much warning as possible should there be the potential for changes that will affect or impact on the provision of your EQA Service.

The Institute will also review the EQA process from time to time and we welcome your input into improvements. The Institute may withdraw permission for you to carry out EQA for one or more apprenticeship standards at any time. Similarly, you may withdraw as an EQA provider for one or more apprenticeship standards at any time. However, to allow continuity of service, the Institute expects three months’ notice, in writing.

**Charges**

You may charge EPAOs for the provision of EQA. You will be responsible for any contracts you may make with these organisations. Charges must not exceed those agreed by the Institute based on your proposed EQA methodology which was £59 per apprentice. Any changes to either your charges or methodology must be agreed with the Institute in advance. EQA activity should be recorded on its own accounting line, it must be a not-for-profit service and you will be required to submit an annual financial report for EQA activities evidencing your income and expenditure. Please note that this may be subject to audit and you are advised to keep appropriate records.

Yours sincerely



**Nikki Christie**

**Deputy Director, Assessment and Quality Assurance**

**ANNEX A: Data to be shared with External Quality Assurance providers**

**Background**

In order to exercise the Institute’s functions around External Quality Assurance (EQA) of End Point Assessments, ESFA will be collecting data from End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs), mainly via the ILR but also from EPAOs directly as part of the conditions for being on the RoEPAO, and providing it to the Institute. To streamline the information flow to EQA providers, the Institute will share this data directly to the relevant EQA provider. However, EQA providers will still need to approach the EPAOs directly to assure themselves that this data is correct, as the figures input into the ILR are often for indicative purposes only and therefore not always accurate.

**Nature of the data to be shared**

ESFA intends to gather and share the following with the Institute. This information will be shared by the Institute with organisations undertaking EQA (as set out below):

* suitability of the assessment organisation including:
	+ independence from training and other on-programme delivery
	+ the single responsible officer for EPA quality
* standards for which each assessment organisation is licensed to deliver EPA
* geographical coverage of each assessment organisation
* volumes of EPAs delivered
* numbers of apprentice certificates claimed/issued
* profile of assessment organisations engaged by employers
* assessment organisations which have not been engaged
* assessment organisations offering/delivering on programme support
* trends in packaging and costs of EPA
* conversion rates from employer sign-off to EPAs undertaken to successful assessment
* use of subcontractors

**Justification/purpose of sharing this data**

The data is necessary for the Institute to fulfil its function to ensure all end-point assessments are quality assured, including quality assuring some itself. This would also simplify existing information flows and reduce bureaucracy in the system.

**Persons (EQA providers) with whom the data will be shared**

The Institute will share with the following:

1. providers of EQA for apprenticeship standards that have been (i) nominated by the trailblazer group in their assessment plan, (ii) recognised by the Institute and (iii) informed of their role in the process
2. the nominated sub-contractor delivering EQA on behalf of the Institute
3. Ofqual and OfS/QAA

**Security and assurance**

To the extent that any information shared by the ESFA with the Institute as described above is personal data as defined under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 or any subsequent legislation enacted, the Institute will become a data controller of that personal data for the purposes set out above. The Institute agrees to ensure that the EQA providers with whom it shares data as described in this Annex are required, as a minimum, to use the data solely for the purposes described here and only in accordance with the security, assurance and data protection requirements in this data sharing agreement.

**ANNEX B – Key Performance Indicators**

It is vital that the Institute is able to manage delivery of EQA providers and ensure that they are continuing to deliver a high quality service in line with the EQA framework.

In each meeting with the Institute you will be expected to report and discuss progress on the following Key Performance Indicators:

* EQA reports on the readiness of EPAOs, to be submitted to agreed timescales.
* EQA reports against each standard, and the EPAOs offering that standard, to be submitted to agreed timescales.
* Reports to be of quality such that they can be considered by the Quality Assurance Committee who may make recommendations for further actions, and also so that elements of the reports can be published on our website.
* Actions/recommendations for EPAOs are followed-up within agreed timescales
* An agreed number of EPAO support sessions to be held per year
* An agreed number of EPAO forums to be held (where there is more than one EPAO delivering EPA)
* Queries from EPAOs responded to within 2 working days and queries from other stakeholders responded to within 5 working days
* Serious issues to be reported to the Institute immediately, should any be found in the course of EQA activity
* Attend (at least) monthly meetings with the Institute and provide a monthly management information summary

**ANNEX C – Management Activity**

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education will appoint a named official to work with and support each EQA provider.

Following recognition and approval to conduct EQA, the named official will arrange an initial face-to-face meeting with the EQA provider to agree a schedule and timetable for regular meetings. They will review your performance and plans for the future on a quarterly basis. The Head of Apprenticeship Quality will attend twice a year. You will have a formal annual review with the Institute’s Deputy Director for Quality and Assessment.

A timeline for producing reports (readiness reports; reports against EPAOs; reports against each standard) will be agreed at the outset of EQA delivery, although this may be subject to change by agreement with the Institute if end-point assessment is not delivered by EPAOs as anticipated.

Regular meetings will take place, either face-to-face or by telephone, and will focus on:

* EQA activity undertaken in the period since the last meeting
* Look ahead to upcoming activities
* Reviewing the agreed timetable of reports (this will include: readiness reports; reports on EPAOs; reports against the standard)
* Performance for the previous period against KPIs
* Risks and issues, along with any relevant mitigations
* Actions from previous meetings (if applicable)
* Resource (if applicable)