

Designated Quality Body  
in England

# External Quality Assurance of End-Point Assessment for Integrated Higher and Degree Apprenticeships



Handbook for Providers

June 2022

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## Abbreviations

QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
DQB	Designated Quality Body (QAA's role as designated by the Secretary of State for Education, pursuant to Schedule 4 of the <i>Higher Education and Research Act 2017</i> )
IfATE	Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education
OfS	Office for Students
DfE	Department for Education
EPAO, provider(s)	End-point assessment organisation
EPA	End-point assessment
EQA	External quality assurance
RoEPAO	Register of end-point assessment organisations

## Introduction

1 End-point assessment (EPA) is a key component of higher<sup>1</sup> and degree apprenticeships in England. All apprentices undertake an EPA at the end of their apprenticeship to confirm they have achieved occupational competence.<sup>2</sup> To ensure that the EPA apprentices undertake is '*fair, consistent and robust across different apprenticeship standards and between different assessment organisations*', the [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education \(IfATE\)](#) has:

- developed an [External Quality Assurance \(EQA\) Framework](#) (and associated [Vision](#) and [Manual](#) documents)
- appointed the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) and the Office for Students (OfS) to carry out external quality assurance of end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs).<sup>3</sup>

2 The [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#) is responsible for the external quality assurance (EQA) of the EPA for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships<sup>4</sup> and, as the designated quality body in England (DQB), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has been commissioned to undertake the external quality assurance activity. This EQA process and handbook applies to providers listed on the [OfS register](#) who are offering integrated higher and degree apprenticeships. Providers may use the terminology 'apprenticeship standard' - in this handbook we mainly refer to these as 'apprenticeships'.

3 The OfS [quality and standards conditions](#) apply to all providers on the OfS register. These include *Condition B4: Assessment and awards*, and OfS has indicated that it will use the outcomes of this EQA process of the EPA in its consideration of compliance with [Condition B4](#).

4 As outlined in [IfATE's](#) EQA Framework (p21): '*EQA provides an independent, expert evaluation of the quality of EPA to make sure that it is delivering to employers' needs, is consistent with the assessment plan and is fair for apprentices*'. The purpose of this handbook is to describe how providers offering integrated higher and degree apprenticeship EPAs will undergo EQA by the DQB.

5 We may revise this handbook from time to time. The most recent version of the handbook will be available from our [website](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Higher apprenticeships can be at Level 4 and above in England ([Qualifications can Cross Boundaries - A guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland](#)).

<sup>2</sup> Apprentices are deemed to have achieved occupational competence where they can demonstrate the application of the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to be competent in the occupation's duties.

<sup>3</sup> There may be exceptions to these arrangements where 'an existing statutory regulator oversees entry to a profession' ([IfATE External quality assurance of apprenticeships](#)).

<sup>4</sup> The move towards all degree apprenticeships being integrated means IfATE has a unified definition of degree apprenticeships, adapted from the [Degree Apprenticeships Policy](#): A degree apprenticeship is where a degree qualification is included in the apprenticeship. For assessment, this means the EPA and the degree will both need to be completed, passed and awarded.

## Becoming an end-point assessment organisation for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships

6 Providers that want to be end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) for integrated higher and degree apprenticeships must apply to the Department for Education (DfE) who ensure that all EPAOs are clear about the requirements which the DfE have implemented to protect public funding and apprentice needs. Only registered EPAOs are eligible to receive public funding in connection with EPA activities.

7 The DfE will add EPAOs to the [Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations \(RoEPAO\)](#) on confirmation that they meet the conditions. More information about the [Conditions for being on the register of end-point assessment organisations](#) is available on the Government website.<sup>5</sup>

8 Once registered as an EPAO, providers will need to complete a two-stage readiness check process for each apprenticeship before they can deliver EPAs. The DfE completes the first stage. The second stage is the readiness check and approval process that the DQB undertakes, which is outlined below.

### DQB readiness checks and approval

9 The second stage readiness checks conducted by the DQB ensure that appropriate and high-quality assessment materials are in place that are reliable and robust, and meet the requirements set out in the published EPA plan, along with systems, processes and appropriate personnel. The readiness check will typically take place nine to 12 months after the organisation is added to the RoEPAO for the relevant apprenticeships, though it may need to be carried out sooner where assessments are imminent. As specified by IfATE, readiness checks should normally be completed at least eight weeks before the date of the first EPA. EPAOs should be aware of these timescales and prepare the submission in anticipation of a readiness check being conducted. For integrated degree apprenticeships, circumstances may enable readiness checks to be completed within a shorter timescale following the provider being added to the RoEPAO, and further in advance of the first EPA. In addition, where EPAOs are seeking approval for the delivery of multiple apprenticeships, these can be considered within a single, combined readiness check process. The readiness check is to confirm, in line with the [IfATE EQA Manual](#), that the provider is ready and able to ensure timely delivery of assessments where apprentices are due to complete.

10 The DQB will allocate a DQB Officer to coordinate the process and be the point of contact for the EPAO. The DQB will appoint an assessor (the DQB Assessor) to review the information and evidence submitted, and will also appoint an employer representative from IfATE's [Directory of Professional and Employer-led Bodies](#) for specialist technical input.<sup>6</sup> Details of the allocated DQB Officer, DQB Assessor and employer representative will be shared with the provider to allow the provider to draw attention to any potential conflicts of interest.

11 The DQB Officer will arrange a briefing meeting with the EPAO, to set out the readiness check process and provide guidance (for example, by signposting appropriate

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<sup>5</sup> 'In a small number of cases it may be that the EPAO for a particular standard is directly contracted by the regulator for that profession. These exceptional circumstances will be approved by IfATE on a case by case basis.' [IfATE EQA Framework](#), p12.

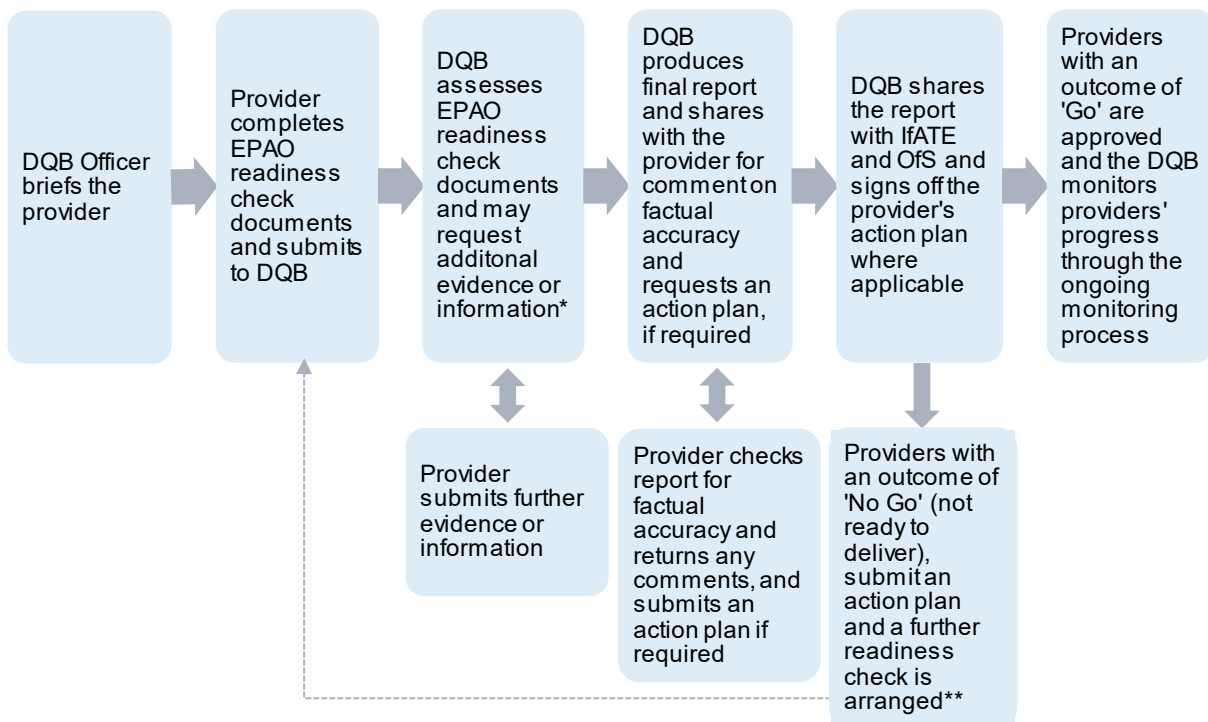
The IfATE website includes information on [Integrated EPA in non-regulated and regulated occupations](#) and on the [EPA integration in regulated apprenticeships](#).

<sup>6</sup> In line with Annex 1 of the [IfATE EQA Framework](#).

materials and answering routine queries that arise during the process). The DQB Officer will explain the key roles in the process and ask for confirmation of the main contact at the EPAO who will take the role of a facilitator and be the main link between the provider and the DQB Officer. EPAOs should submit a Readiness Check document and accompanying evidence to the DQB for each apprenticeship they are intending to deliver. Further information on the provider submission is provided in the section below ([Provider submission](#)).

12 The findings from the readiness check will be shared with IfATE and the OfS. The OfS may draw on information from the findings of the readiness checks in making any judgement on compliance with [Condition B4](#).

**Figure 1: DQB readiness check and approval to start EPA for the specified Standard**



\*If the required information/evidence is not provided/does not meet the requirements or the provider is not likely to be ready to deliver the EPA, the DQB will liaise with IfATE and the OfS to discuss the next steps (which may include referral back to the DfE).

\*\* Where providers are rated as 'No Go' and 'Not ready to deliver' and the required actions are not addressed (including where a second readiness check does not result in a 'Go' outcome), the DQB will liaise with IfATE and the OfS to discuss the next steps (which may include referral back to the DfE).

## The provider submission

13 EPAOs are required to prepare and submit a Readiness Check document, along with supporting evidence to the DQB, which covers each apprenticeship for which they intend to deliver EPA. The submission of this document and associated evidence for the readiness check will be used to determine the EPAO's readiness to deliver the EPA and also informs the ongoing EQA monitoring process, which is explained in the second part of this handbook ([EQA monitoring process](#)). Using the [Readiness Check document](#) available on the DQB website, providers should describe how they have prepared for the delivery of EPA and evidence the arrangements they have in place to ensure the successful delivery of the assessment(s) for the apprenticeship(s). They will need to demonstrate this for the following functional areas, in accordance with the [IfATE - EQA Manual](#):

- assessment materials
- support materials
- EPA delivery plans
- assessor recruitment and training
- policies and procedures including internal quality assurance (IQA).

14 EPAOs are expected to submit relevant evidence to substantiate their position, in line with the guidance in the Readiness Check document.

15 EPAOs should also describe how they are preparing for the external monitoring of the EPA. For integrated higher and degree apprenticeships, providers will usually have arrangements in place for the external scrutiny of any associated higher education qualifications through external examiner(s) appointed by the provider. The focus of EQA monitoring is specifically on the EPA and, where appropriate, providers are expected to engage an external examiner to act as the EQA external assessor in reviewing the EPA (which may be in addition to the external examiner role held with the associated qualification).

16 EPAOs must have a robust selection and recruitment process that ensures:

- the external assessor recruited for EQA monitoring has the appropriate and up-to-date occupational and assessment skills
- where more than one EQA external assessor is used that an appropriate standardisation process is in place
- there is a process in place to promote and monitor EQA external assessors' continued professional development (CPD)
- the EPAO has appropriate and effective conflict of interest policies in place, applied across all apprenticeships, to ensure that the EQA external assessor will be independent from apprentices, employers, assessors and training providers (and have complete independence from the delivery or assessment of the EPA).

17 EPAOs are also expected to ensure that EQA external assessors:

- can assess the validity of EPAs in line with the published apprenticeship EPA plan
- understand the types, methods and lines of reporting to the EPAO
- are aware of their responsibilities and the processes they need to follow prior to undertaking any EPA activities.

18 The EPAO must ensure that EQA external assessors have access to regular updates to ensure their practice as an EQA external assessor is current and consistent with expectations in the sector. Maintaining and developing the expertise of EQA external

assessors is important in making them credible across the industry as fit to contribute to the quality assurance of EPA.

19 As part of the Readiness Check document, EPAOs are asked to provide details of any external examiner arrangements in place for associated higher education qualifications. For example, EPAOs will be asked to explain any external examiner arrangements for an associated degree qualification, how they manage potential conflicts of interest, and how they ensure that external examiners have appropriate expertise. EPAOs will also be asked to consider how these arrangements have been (or will be) adapted to meet the requirements of the EQA external assessor role for the EPA as outlined above.

20 EPAOs should use the [notification form](#) on the DQB website to notify the DQB of any external examiner that will be undertaking the EQA external assessor role. The notification form may be submitted to the DQB at the readiness check stage if the information is available, or as soon as details are confirmed.

21 At the readiness check stage, the DQB will review the EPAO's external examiner arrangements and the applicability of these for the EQA external assessor role. Following the readiness check stage and/or notification of the EQA external assessors, the DQB will provide briefing materials to cover the main requirements of the role. Further information relating to the role of the EQA assessor can be found in the [External assessor monitoring](#) section below.

## The assessment process and EPAO Readiness Check Report

22 The DQB assessment team will review and assess the EPAO's submission, focusing on the five functional areas through IfATE's lines of enquiry, which align with IfATE's EQA principles underpinning policies, practices, behaviours and actions (Appendices [1a](#) and [1b](#)). The DQB will also consider the proposed external examiner arrangements in relation to the requirements of the EQA external assessor role.

23 The assessment will result in an EPAO Readiness Check Report for the specified apprenticeship which will contain details linked to the functional areas and lines of enquiry, and include the following findings:

- outcomes of met/not met for questions related to IfATE's lines of enquiry (see [Appendix 1a](#))
- ratings according to a four-point scale of readiness (see [Appendix 1c](#)) of the provider's capacity and readiness to deliver the EPA for each of the functional areas
- an overall readiness rating (see [Appendix 1d](#)).

24 The overall readiness rating ([Appendix 1d](#)) will determine whether or not a provider can proceed to deliver the EPA for the specified apprenticeship standard(s), as outlined below.

### 'Go' outcomes:

- **'Exceeds expectations'** allows the provider to commence delivery of the EPA for the apprenticeship standard(s) approved.
- **'Ready to deliver'** allows the provider to commence delivery of the EPA for the apprenticeship standard(s) approved, subject to minor issues being addressed through the action planning process. Approval of these actions will be carried out by the DQB and the provider's progress against them will be monitored on an ongoing basis, through delivery.



- **'Ready to deliver: Improvements needed'** means the provider will be permitted to deliver EPA for the apprenticeship standard(s) approved, subject to major issues being addressed through the action planning process. Approval of these actions will be carried out by the DQB and the provider's progress against them will be monitored closely on an ongoing basis, through delivery.

#### **'No Go' outcome:**

- **'Not ready to deliver'** - means providers will not be permitted to deliver EPA as major actions are required to achieve readiness. In line with the [IfATE EQA Manual](#), the DQB will notify the DfE and OfS that a 'No Go' conclusion has been reached. Providers will be required to agree an action plan with the DQB for the areas identified. Approval of these actions will be carried out by the DQB and a new readiness check date will be set. The provider's progress will be monitored until they meet the requirements of the readiness check and are given a 'Go' outcome; or the DQB will contact IfATE to discuss the next steps which may include referring the EPAO back to the DfE.

25 The DQB may also make recommendations as part of the assessment outcome. These recommendations are not required to be completed before the provider delivers EPA although will be considered through future monitoring activity.

26 The DQB will share the Readiness Check Report with the EPAO, which will include any actions and recommendations. The EPAO must inform the DQB of any matters of factual accuracy within five working days of receiving the report and must submit an action plan to the DQB within 10 working days of receiving the report. The DQB will consider the EPAO's comments on factual accuracy and the action plan in response to the findings from the report. The report and the action plan will be shared by the DQB with IfATE.

27 The DQB will also make the Readiness Report available to the OfS, and this may contribute to the information gathered relating to providers listed on the OfS register who are offering integrated higher and degree apprenticeships. The OfS may also use the outcomes in its consideration of a provider's compliance with [Condition B4](#).

## **Readiness check action plans**

28 EPAOs given a 'Go' outcome following the readiness check and rated as **'Exceeds expectations'** are not required to complete an action plan to progress into the monitoring cycle.

29 EPAOs given a 'Go' outcome and rated as **'Ready to deliver'** or **'Ready to deliver: Improvements needed'**, will be required to develop an action plan, using a template provided. The plan is expected to include responses to any actions and recommendations from the Readiness Check Report and the associated timescales for completion. EPAOs are required to complete any actions given within the agreed timescales. Where EPAOs are given recommendations, these may be considered over a longer timescale and implemented as appropriate.

30 EPAOs will be asked to submit their action plan to the DQB for review and approval, to ensure that the plan meets the requirements and will form a suitable foundation for ongoing monitoring. When an action plan is signed off as appropriate by the DQB this signals the end of the readiness check phase. Progress against the action plan will be monitored by the DQB Officer, with input from the DQB assessor as required, in the ongoing monitoring checks (see the [Ongoing monitoring](#) section below).

31 EPAOs given a 'No Go' outcome and rated as **'Not ready to deliver'** will be asked to develop an action plan, using a template provided, to be agreed by the DQB in preparation for a further readiness check. The EPAO's progress will be monitored until the EPAO meets the requirements and is given a 'Go' outcome from the subsequent readiness check. In any cases, where EPAOs do not have a 'Go' outcome after the action planning process and additional readiness check, the DQB will liaise with IfATE and inform the OfS who will determine the next steps, which may include referring the EPAO back to the DfE.

## **Preparation for EQA monitoring**

32 The DQB Officer will arrange an initial discussion regarding the EQA monitoring process with the EPAO and this will usually take place during, or shortly after, the final stage of the readiness check process. The EPAO will be asked to provide updated information regarding the planned delivery dates for EPA if this has not already been submitted for the readiness check process. This information will be used to confirm the arrangements for the ongoing monitoring and the expected timing for the scheduled monitoring check.

33 The EPAO is required to inform the DQB Officer of any updates on these EPA delivery dates as part of the ongoing monitoring process.

## EQA monitoring process

34 IfATE's quality assurance system 'tests that all EPAOs are conducting high-quality EPAs that deliver relevant, consistent and comparable results, using assessment methodology that is fit-for-purpose and ensures the occupational competence of all apprentices passing their EPA' ([IfATE EQA Manual](#), p15). The EQA monitoring process forms the quality assurance mechanism that follows the initial readiness check.

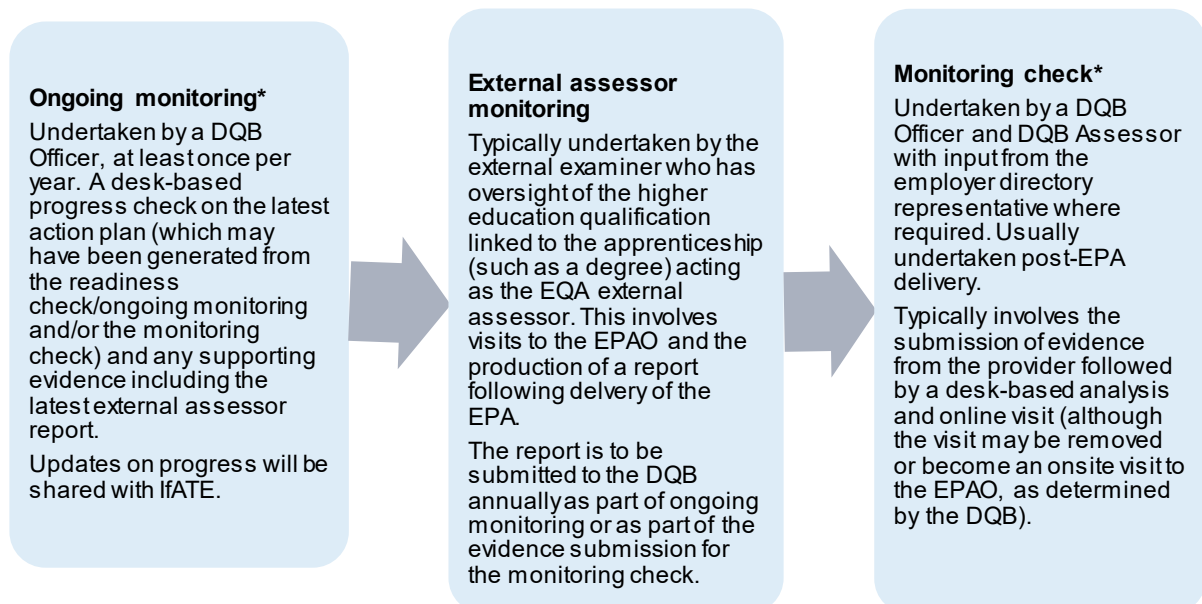
35 As part of the EQA monitoring process of each EPAO, the DQB will:

- undertake risk-based monitoring of each apprenticeship in accordance with a schedule, confirming that the delivery of the EPA is valid and compliant, delivering consistent and comparable results that are recognised by employers as delivering the right outcomes
- confirm evidence and information that will be required from the EPAO, giving them the chance to comment on and agree reported information
- identify actions and recommendations to inform the EPAO's action planning process and to improve the delivery of EPAs to apprentices.

36 EPAOs are expected to continue focusing on arrangements for the EPA after the readiness check stage is completed and conduct their own internal monitoring and continuous improvement. The schedule of EQA monitoring activities will have bespoke elements for each apprenticeship delivered by the EPAO, although will include the following elements:

- ongoing monitoring
- external assessor monitoring
- monitoring checks.

**Figure 2: Overview of the EQA monitoring process**



\* Monitoring will take place according to IfATE's risk-based approach and the DQB's professional judgement regarding each apprenticeship. For example, based on risk, the monitoring check could take place after each EPA cycle within a provider (where issues or a risk has been identified) or periodically (up to a three-yearly interval for a degree apprenticeship where low risk is identified).

Further information on each of these elements is outlined in paragraphs 45-66 below.

37 As the EQA monitoring process is risk-based and also linked to the EPA delivery plan, the schedule of monitoring activity is bespoke to each EPAO. The DQB will consider details relating to the apprenticeship, use information from the readiness check and the EPA delivery plan, and information from ongoing monitoring to determine the schedule of activity and the frequency of the elements above, for each apprenticeship delivered by the EPAO.

38 The EQA monitoring process for each apprenticeship is likely to involve a combination of desk-based reviews of action plans and evidence, onsite visits to the EPAO and/or online visits (including the observation of assessment activities) to review evidence in situ and/or obtain oral testimony from stakeholders.

## **Desk-based reviews**

39 A desk-based review of the EPA for the apprenticeship can be conducted at different points in the EQA monitoring process, but would usually form part of the ongoing monitoring and monitoring check phases (as outlined in Figure 2 above).

40 In line with [IfATE's EQA Framework](#), the EPAO is given at least five days to provide any required evidence. Requests for information from the EPAO for a desk-based review may include, among other items:

- policy documents (applied to the specific apprenticeship)
- assessment materials - including signing off of any major changes
- support materials
- strategy for internal quality assurance (IQA)
- details of planning for EPA delivery
- data on EPA including registrations, pass rates and distribution of grades
- CVs, qualifications, performance reports and CPD records for assessors
- feedback from stakeholders, including apprentices, training providers and employers on the relevance and reliability of assessments delivered
- records of IQA activities, including standardisation and moderation
- records of any reasonable adjustments or special considerations granted and evidence behind these decisions
- conflicts of interest records.

41 In addition to the evidence examples above, the EPAO will be asked to annually upload reports from EQA external assessors appointed to review the EPA. Further information on the use of external examiners to fulfil the role of EQA external assessors is provided in the [External assessor monitoring](#) section below.

42 The DQB may consider any other information it receives from the provider or a third party in relation to a provider's delivery of apprenticeships as evidence, as part of the monitoring process (for example, Ofsted reports, issues notified to the DQB or to the OfS).

## **Visits and observations of assessment activities**

43 Visits and observations can be conducted at different points in the EQA monitoring process. These would usually form part of the EQA external assessor monitoring but may also feature in the monitoring check phase (as outlined in Figure 2 above). These could be onsite visits to the provider/venue or conducted online.

44 In line with the [IfATE EQA Framework](#), evidence sought may include:

- observations of a sample of assessments, including live assessments, to verify that the content and context of the assessments are occupationally relevant
- observations of assessor standardisation or moderation meetings
- review of physical or digital versions of documents, including marked assessment materials from apprentices
- interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff
- feedback from apprentices and employers to check how well the EPA is meeting their needs, including how well it relates to current business practice
- checks on the accessibility of assessment, including any language bias and reasonable adjustments
- checks on assessments to verify that these cover requirements of the EPA plan and occupational competence
- requests for updates on previous actions and recommendations from previous reports
- review of training materials (used for training of personnel involved in EPA, including the independent EPA assessors)
- checks on IT systems, security and record storage.

## Ongoing monitoring

45 Ongoing monitoring is coordinated and conducted by the DQB Officer and is usually a desk-based process that occurs at least once a year. To ensure continuity in the process, where possible, the DQB Officer for the readiness check will continue to be involved in the ongoing monitoring of action plans and will consult with the DQB assessor as required. Where it is possible for the main contact at the provider to continue acting as the facilitator for the ongoing monitoring process, this would also aid continuity.

46 EPAOs are expected to have completed any actions from the readiness check before apprentices complete their EPA. For EPAOs that have already completed a readiness check and subsequent monitoring check, a DQB Officer will lead the ongoing monitoring of actions and recommendations resulting from the most recent monitoring activity. Where actions and recommendations have previously been identified, the DQB may request further supporting evidence to ensure that progress is being made in line with the action plan and undertake a desk-based analysis.

47 In addition to any information related to the action plan, the DQB Officer should also receive information from the EPAO regarding the recruitment and appointment of external examiners to undertake the EQA external assessor role, using the [notification form](#) available from the DQB website, and the dates for the EQA external assessor's visits to the provider. The DQB Officer should also routinely receive the EQA external assessor's report relating to the EPA (where this is not submitted as part of a scheduled monitoring check).

48 The DQB will report to IfATE on the progress being made on actions and recommendations, and any changes to the risk-rating or schedule of monitoring activity arising from ongoing monitoring. In some cases, the desk-based analysis may lead to an online or onsite visit being required as part of ongoing monitoring or a change to the timing and/or frequency of the scheduled monitoring check(s).

## External assessor monitoring

49 External assessor monitoring is normally undertaken by the external examiner appointed by the EPAO to the integrated higher or degree apprenticeship, who has oversight

of the higher education qualification linked to the apprenticeship (such as a degree) acting in the dual role of EQA external assessor for the apprenticeship EPA.

50 As part of the readiness check process, EPAOs are required to provide details of any external examiner arrangements they have in place for a higher education qualification associated with the apprenticeship, and to review the requirements for EQA external assessors to confirm to the DQB that the external examiner appointed will be able to undertake the EQA external assessor role and produce the information required for the EQA monitoring process. EQA assessors will usually be involved in activities that are similar to those undertaken in an external examiner role - for example, in relation to the integrated degree programme, although there are additional requirements specific to the delivery and assessment of the EPA which should be undertaken and reported on. EPAOs will have been asked, at the readiness check stage to indicate which activities an external examiner could take on when appointed to the EQA external assessor role. Part 2 of the Readiness Check document includes the following list of elements to be assessed/observed in relation to the EPA:

- the EPA plan and how this is delivered in practice
- the management of gateway and mandatory qualification requirements and involvement of the employer in deciding the apprentice is ready for the EPA
- the assessment instruments/methods
- the EPA assessor's knowledge
- the accessibility of EPA and the management of reasonable adjustments
- a sample of assessments, including live assessments
- physical or digital versions of documents, including marked assessment materials from apprentices
- assessor standardisation or moderation meetings
- interviews with assessors and other EPAO staff
- feedback from apprentices and employers
- the reliability and comparability of EPA.

51 If there are elements that cannot be covered by the external examiner acting as the EQA external assessor, the EPAO will be asked to address this through the action plan or the DQB will work with the EPAO in establishing alternative exceptional arrangements.

52 EPAOs are asked to submit the EQA external assessor [notification form](#) as part of the readiness check information, or as soon as an external examiner is appointed. Depending on the size and complexity of the provision, the EPAO may choose to have more than one EQA external assessor for the EPA. This may also be the case where more than one EQA assessor is required to ensure that the requirement for up-to-date industry experience of EQA assessors is met. Where applicable, EPAOs should ensure they follow the guidance of any professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

53 The EQA external assessor is expected to conduct a visit to the EPAO for each cohort of apprentices completing EPA. Therefore, where providers are delivering a three-year degree apprenticeship, there would be a minimum requirement for an EQA assessor visit once every three years. The purpose of the visit will usually be to assess the performance of the EPAO in delivering the apprenticeship EPA, but visits may also be used to monitor progress against actions. Visits do not always require the EQA external assessor to attend on site and can be conducted online where appropriate. The EPAO will arrange the date(s) for the EQA assessor visit(s) and ensure that this information is shared with the allocated DQB Officer.

54 Evidence from the monitoring activity conducted by an EQA external assessor appointed by the EPAO forms part of the evidence for EQA monitoring. The report produced

by the EQA external assessor for the purposes of overseeing the EPA of the apprenticeship should be submitted to the DQB and forms part of the supporting evidence for a scheduled monitoring check. The DQB will provide briefing materials for EQA external assessors to cover the main requirements of the role, and to ensure that external assessors are aware of their responsibilities and the processes they need to follow in undertaking any EQA monitoring activities.

## Monitoring check

55 The monitoring check process is normally undertaken after the EPA has been delivered for an apprenticeship and typically includes a desk-based analysis followed by a visit, which is either conducted online or on site at the provider. The monitoring check is undertaken by a DQB Officer and DQB assessor(s) with further specialist representation, as appropriate, through an employer representative appointed from IfATE's Directory of Professional and Employer-led Bodies. EPAOs will be given the opportunity to comment on the proposed assessment team members in terms of any conflict of interests in advance of the monitoring check.

56 The DQB Officer will liaise with the EPAO in advance of the monitoring check to confirm the arrangements, including the date and process for the submission of information.

57 As part of the monitoring check, providers are required to submit a self-assessment for the apprenticeship, along with supporting evidence (including the report from the EQA external assessor(s)). An [EPAO Self-Assessment for the Monitoring Check](#) form is available on the DQB website, and EPAOs will be expected to evaluate and evidence their performance for delivering EPA in line with IfATE's principles. Where appropriate, EPAOs should use the documentation submitted for the readiness checks as the starting point for this process and include any subsequent action plans, as part of a commitment to engaging in a cycle of review and continuous improvement. Where EPAOs have been delivering EPA and previously completed a cycle of monitoring activity, the outcomes of this should be considered within the self-assessment, in addition to other evidence and analysis.

58 The specific stages of the EQA monitoring check process are detailed in [Figure 3](#) below. The DQB assessment team will review the self-evaluation and evidence submitted by the EPAO (including the EQA external assessor report) in order to assess and report on the performance of the EPAO in the delivery of the EPA using:

- the list of aspects of EPA to be assessed ([Appendix 2a](#))
- the EPA plan criteria ([Appendix 2b](#)).

59 The DQB will use the report of the EQA external assessor, as part of the larger evidence base for the desk-based analysis to monitor and evaluate the actual delivery of EPA to:

- confirm the suitability of the conduct of assessments with regard to occupational competence
- identify emerging issues to be addressed by the EPAO
- take a view on the quality of delivery
- improve understanding of the risks posed by the EPAO.

60 The DQB assessment team will normally arrange an online visit following the desk-based analysis and may request additional evidence if there are any identified gaps in the evidence or areas for further exploration. Depending on any risks identified through ongoing monitoring or through the submission for the monitoring check, the visit could be amended to an onsite engagement, or removed.

61 The monitoring check will result in a report for the specified apprenticeship which will include details of the findings, the data provided by the EPAO in its submission, and a graded outcome using the four-point scale for monitoring (in [Appendix 2c](#) and [Appendix 2d](#)) of either:

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires Improvement
- Inadequate.

62 The DQB will also report on whether the delivery of the EPA plan is fit-for-purpose (in accordance with the EPA plan criteria ([Appendix 2b](#))).

63 The DQB will share the report with the EPAO, which will include any actions and recommendations. The EPAO must inform the DQB of any matters of factual accuracy within five working days of receiving the report and must submit an action plan to the DQB within 10 working days of receiving the report. The DQB Officer will liaise with the DQB assessment team to consider the EPAO's comments on factual accuracy and the action plan in response to the findings from the report. The report and the action plan will be shared by the DQB with IfATE.

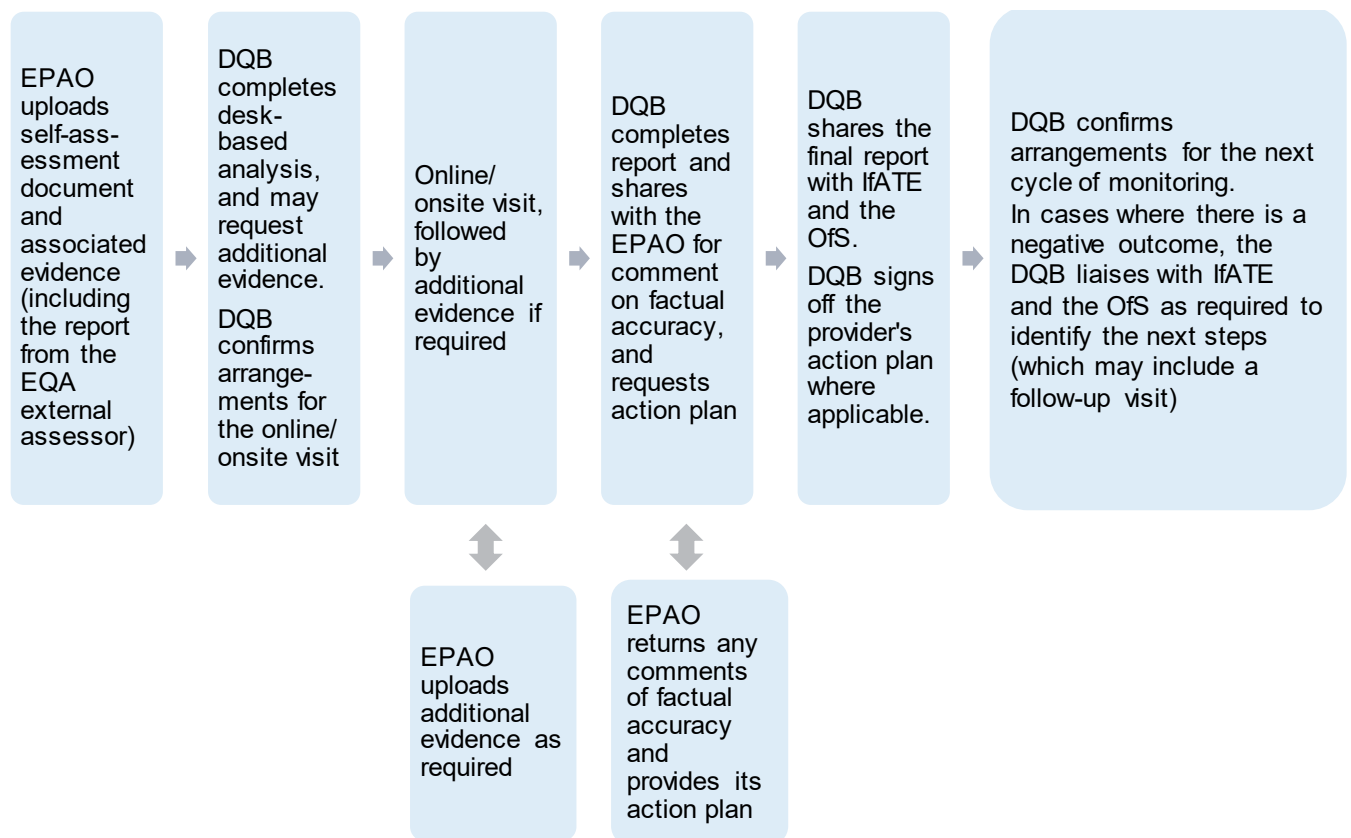
64 The DQB will also share the report with the OfS, and this may contribute to the information gathered relating to providers listed on the OfS register who are offering integrated higher and degree apprenticeships. OfS may also use the outcomes in its consideration of a provider's compliance with [Condition B4](#).

65 The DQB Officer will confirm to the EPAO when the action plan has been approved as appropriate and make arrangements for the next monitoring cycle, including the timings for the ongoing monitoring of the action plan (if an action plan has been required).

66 In cases where there is a negative outcome (an outcome of 'Inadequate'), the DQB liaises with IfATE and the OfS as required to identify the next steps (which may include a follow up visit).



**Figure 3: Stages of the monitoring check process**



## Risk-rating

67 The risk rating system is an important component of the EQA process and informs the scrutiny of EPAOs from readiness checks through to monitoring. The DQB will consider the risk factors linked to the Standard as well as those linked to the EPAO's delivery of the EPA for the apprenticeship.

68 After an EQA monitoring check, EPAOs will receive a grade between 1 and 4 in line with the four-point scale for monitoring and the associated EPAO specific grading and descriptions (see Appendix 2). An overall risk rating for the apprenticeship will be calculated by multiplying the Standard level risk score (calculated by the DQB) and the score from the EQA monitoring check to generate a single number.

69 For example, an EPAO given a 'Requires Improvement' (grade 3) outcome, delivering a high risk Standard (with a score of 3) will be given an overall per-EPAO-per-Standard score of 9. This EPAO will be deemed as high risk overall for this apprenticeship and should expect more intensive EQA monitoring. Conversely, an EPAO with an 'Outstanding' (grade 1) outcome, delivering a low risk Standard (with a score of 1) will be given an overall per-EPAO-per-Standard score of 1 and be deemed as low risk overall. Other combinations of low, medium and high risk will generate different overall risk ratings, in accordance with the Overall 'per-EPAO-per Standard' risk matrix (see [Appendix 2e](#)). Grades 1 to 3 will be used in the calculation of overall risk, but any EPAO rated as 'Inadequate' (grade 4) will automatically be assumed to be high risk irrespective of the Standard-level risk.

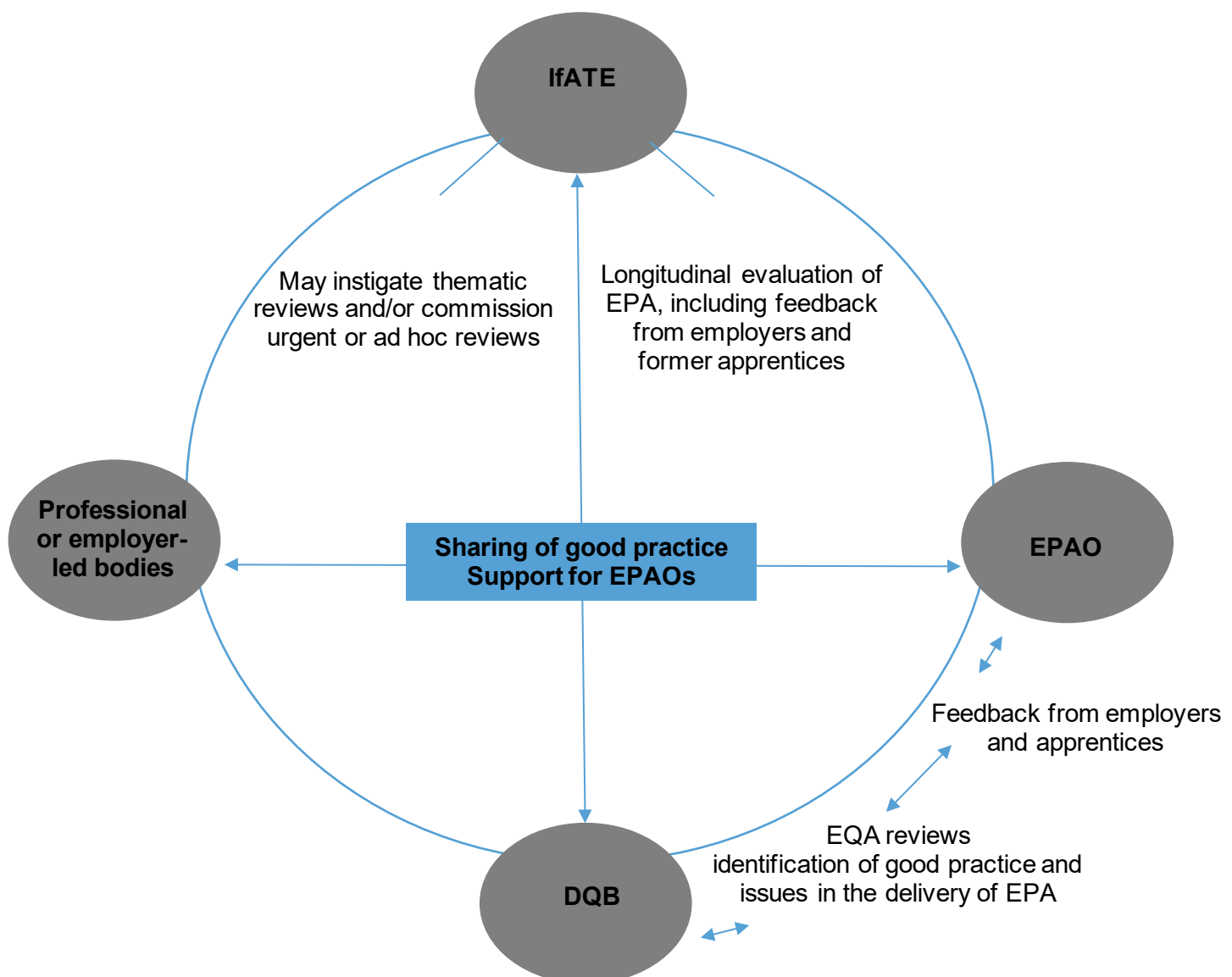
## Continuous improvement

70 A commitment to continuous improvement is a fundamental element of IfATE's EQA Framework, in line with its aim to ensure the quality of apprenticeship provision. This is reflected in step 6 of the [EQA 8-step framework](#) (p5), with EQA being used as a basis to:

- improve apprenticeships and assessment plans
- raise any other aspect of apprenticeship quality; and
- form a view of risk that is specific to apprenticeship assessment and provides the basis for a risk based approach to quality assurance.

71 This emphasis on continuous improvement applies across the organisations involved in ensuring the quality of apprenticeship provision and includes feedback from key stakeholders such as employers and current/former apprentices, as shown in Figure 4. There are a range of mechanisms that can be used to gather evidence of performance and trends in EPA, and organisations will periodically join together to discuss and share good practice. For example, good practice in assessment may be shared through a DQB organised discussion forum for EPAOs and relevant professional or employer-led bodies. In some instances, the professional or employer-led bodies or IfATE may be best placed to deliver the support for EPAOs. IfATE will also facilitate the sharing of intelligence and good practice between the organisations involved in EQA, including professional and employer-led bodies.

**Figure 4: Continuous improvement in EPA**



## EPAO performance

72 Although the focus of the EQA process is on the continuous improvement of EPA, there may be occasions where issues arise - for example, if there is an issue with the assessment plan or the associated interpretation and delivery that means effective and consistent EPA cannot be delivered. In these situations, the EPAO should notify the DQB of any issues and propose a solution. The DQB will work with IfATE in ensuring that any issues are addressed and to protect the interests of apprentices, employers and the apprenticeship system.

73 The DQB will monitor the quality of EPA through the EQA process and issues may be identified through evidence informing the risk rating, such as self-reporting of issues by the EPAO in line with conditions of the RoEPAO, feedback (including complaints) from apprentices, employers, and training providers and any other relevant intelligence. Issues may also be identified through complaints from employees of the EPAO, the analysis of data, and from other areas of regulatory activity including through OfS conditions of registration where the OfS notifies the DQB of such matters.

74 As outlined in [IfATE's EQA Framework](#) (step 7 - Taking regulatory action), examples of issues which could compromise the effective delivery of EPA include:

- an EPAO being unable to deliver the assessment at the time and in the manner agreed with an employer and in accordance with the published assessment plan
- an EPAO not employing appropriately qualified or trained personnel, including for roles where occupational experience and awareness is required
- an error in the assessment materials which may compromise the relevance or reliability of the assessment
- a breach in confidentiality or in the security of the assessment materials
- an EPAO conducting an assessment in a way that may result in an apprentice not being assessed fairly or consistently in comparison to other apprentices on the same standard and in accordance with the same assessment plan
- any other risk to the independence of the assessment.

75 The DQB will maintain communication with the OfS and IfATE as required to ensure that the response to any issue is proportionate and focused on actions for a swift resolution. Should the DQB identify an incident that may require regulatory action, the DQB will alert IfATE and the OfS and due process will be followed, in line with the [IfATE EQA Framework](#) and the [OfS regulatory framework](#) as appropriate.

## EQA process

76 IfATE will keep the EQA processes set out in the EQA Framework under review and liaise with key organisations, including the DQB to ensure that processes remain relevant. IfATE will also monitor, provide guidance and hold regular meetings with the DQB to discuss and resolve any issues. This means that this handbook will be subject to periodic updates - the most recent version will always be available on the [DQB website](#).

## Complaints and representations

77 The DQB operates its EQA processes in accordance with the IfATE Framework and Manual and therefore aims to capture any issues before they lead to a complaint. In cases where complaints do arise, the initial stage is for these to be investigated and resolved at source where possible. For example, apprentices are advised to follow the processes of the EPAO, should they wish to raise a complaint.

78 The DQB monitors the quality of the EQA process through a range of formal mechanisms. The visit evidence base and reports are subject to quality assurance monitoring and moderation by the DQB. If concerns do arise then these should be raised by the EPAO with the DQB Officer or at the earliest stage to enable these to be addressed. If it is not possible to resolve a concern and the EPAO wishes to make a formal complaint, guidance on the complaints process can be accessed from the [DQB website](#). If a complaint cannot be resolved by the DQB, it will be escalated to IfATE and due process will be followed.

79 Representations relate to instances where EPAOs have received a negative outcome (a 'No Go' outcome for a readiness check or 'Inadequate' outcomes following an EQA monitoring check). Grounds for representations relate to procedural irregularity, misinterpretation of the facts and factual accuracy of report content. Guidance on the representations process can be accessed from the [DQB website](#).

## Supporting documents

The following documents link to the IfATE [Framework/Manual](#).

Appendix 1 - Readiness checks	1a	<a href="#">Lines of enquiry</a>
	1b	<a href="#">IfATE's EQA principles</a>
	1c	<a href="#">IfATE's Four-point scale of readiness - readiness descriptions</a>
	1d	<a href="#">IfATE's Four-point scale of readiness - readiness ratings</a>
Appendix 2 - EQA monitoring	2a	<a href="#">Aspects of EPA to be assessed</a>
	2b	<a href="#">EPA plan criteria</a>
	2c	<a href="#">Four-point scale for monitoring</a>
	2d	<a href="#">EPAO specific grading and descriptions</a>
	2e	<a href="#">Overall 'per-EPAO-per Standard' risk matrix</a>

## Appendix 1 - Readiness checks

1a: Lines of enquiry – for DQB readiness checks (based on Table 4 of the [IfATE Framework](#))

Functional areas	Lines of enquiry (linked to IfATE's EQA Principles)				
	Relevant	Reliable	Efficient	Positive	Learning
<b>Assessment materials</b>	<p>Are materials appropriate to the standard and level of the apprenticeship?</p> <p>Are they specific to the role and reflecting recognised and current practice within the industry?</p>	<p>Will materials allow for consistent, valid and fair assessment of occupational competence?</p> <p>Will they allow appropriate grading judgements to be made?</p> <p>How is the security of materials managed? Has any assessment software been thoroughly tested?</p>	<p>Are assessment materials being developed and used efficiently?</p>	<p>Are materials accessible to all apprentices including those for whom reasonable adjustments will be made?</p>	<p>Pilots/trials with people already employed in these roles?</p> <p>Systematic and genuine industry feedback</p>
<b>Support materials</b>	<p>Are materials appropriate to the standard and level of the apprenticeship?</p> <p>Do they reflect current/standard industry practices?</p> <p>Are they regularly updated? Would employers recognise their relevance?</p>	<p>Do materials accurately describe and/or represent the assessment that an apprentice will undertake?</p>	<p>Are materials available digitally and at no extra charge?</p>	<p>Are they clear and accessible?</p>	<p>Who have materials been tested with?</p> <p>What feedback processes are built in?</p>

Functional areas	Lines of enquiry (linked to IfATE's EQA Principles)				
	Relevant	Reliable	Efficient	Positive	Learning
<b>EPA delivery plans</b>	Are they appropriate to delivering the assessment specified in the EPA plan?	Will they produce reliable results over venue and time and for all apprentices regardless of their specific characteristics?  Are they suitable for all apprentices?	Are the plans realistic and appropriate for delivering the likely volume?	Do training providers and employers understand what is required and support the process?	Which groups and what criteria have they been tested with?  Are their specific diversity checks built in as standard?  What is the feedback process?
<b>Assessor recruitment and training</b>	Do the assessors recruited have the appropriate and up-to-date occupational and assessment skills, and meet any specific requirements as set out in the assessment plan?	Does the EPAO have appropriate conflict of interest policies, and are they applied across all standards, to ensure that assessors will be independent from apprentices, employers and training providers?  Are these standing up to actual delivery on that specific standard?	Has the EPAO recruited sufficient assessors for the likely volume of EPAs to be undertaken?	Are the assessors credible across the industry as people fit to pass apprentices as occupationally competent?  Will employers respect their judgement?  Is a process in place to promote and monitor assessor CPD?	What is the schedule and quality of assessor training for industry experts?
<b>Policies and procedures IQA (Internal Quality Assurance)</b>	Are the IQA policy and procedures fit-for-purpose?	Does the organisation have appropriate internal quality assurance arrangements in place?	Does the EPAO's data management processes meet the needs of the standard?	Is the EPAO engaging appropriately with employers and providers to ensure that apprentices are prepared for their EPA?	Has the EPAO responded to the EQA provider recommendations?

## 1b: IfATE's EQA Principles

EQA Principles		
Delivery of EPA is:	<b>Relevant</b>	The EPA is current and genuinely measures occupational competence. Achievement of the apprenticeship is a dependable predictor of success in the occupation.
	<b>Reliable</b>	The EPA produces consistent outcomes irrespective of context, cohort, timing, or the organisations involved.
Quality assurance of EPA is:	<b>Efficient</b>	The process is high-quality, easy to use, cost-effective and facilitates the entry of new employers and EPAOs. To ensure that the right aspects of quality are measured, the right activity is undertaken by the right people, at the right time, and enabled by a digital system that generates actionable management information and supports a risk-based approach that is specific to apprenticeship assessment.
	<b>Positive</b>	EPA is trusted and respected by employers, apprentices and providers to deliver the right outcomes. The experience is open, transparent and accessible.
	<b>Learning</b>	Continuous improvement is embedded in all areas of the EQA framework to ensure an enduringly proactive and progressive approach to quality.



**1c: IfATE's Four-Point Scale of Readiness - readiness descriptions** (based on Appendix 4 - [IfATE's EQA Manual](#))

Functional area	4. Not ready to deliver	3. Ready to deliver: Improvement needed	2. Ready to deliver	1. Exceeds expectations
<b>Assessment materials</b>	Materials do not meet the needs of the assessment plan in terms of content or level	Most materials are in place and pitched at the right level, covering the right content for the standard with clear plans to develop remaining content	All materials in place and pitched at the right level and covering the right content for the standard	Clear plans in place to review, including plans to utilise evidence from assessment and feedback from employers and apprentices
<b>Support materials</b>	Insufficient material  Material not accessible to all users  Support arrangements could give unfair advantage to certain apprentices	Generic EPA information available but more work needed to meet the specific needs of the standard	Clear and accessible material pitched at the right level  Material clearly differentiates for different audiences (eg employer, apprentice, training provider)  Range of different material (eg templates or timeline setting out the apprentice journey)	Exceptionally clear and innovative materials clearly tailored to the needs of the Standard and test occupational competence in a genuine and innovative way
<b>EPA delivery plans</b>	No plans in place for effective delivery	Plans in place for delivery but engagement with employers has not yet taken place  Plans may be generic with insufficient occupational detail	Robust plans in place to deliver occupation-specific EPA  Effective and regular communication with employers  Contingency plans in place	EPAO has stress-tested plans and has robust contingency arrangements in place  Very strong links with employers

Functional area	4. Not ready to deliver	3. Ready to deliver: Improvement needed	2. Ready to deliver	1. Exceeds expectations
<b>Assessor recruitment</b>	<p>Insufficient assessors recruited and no clear plans to recruit to full capacity</p> <p>No evidence of appropriate occupational expertise</p>	<p>Some assessors in place and clear plans to recruit to full capacity</p> <p>Assessors have satisfactory occupational and assessment expertise</p> <p>Training and standardisation booked in</p>	<p>Sufficient assessors in place to meet immediate demand and geographic coverage</p> <p>Assessors have good occupational and assessment expertise</p> <p>Training and standardisation undertaken</p>	<p>Assessors have excellent occupational and assessment expertise</p> <p>Future proofing built into assessor recruitment plans</p> <p>Contingency plans in place</p>
<b>Policies and procedures (including IQA)</b>	<p>Policies not in place</p> <p>Intend to use approach which has been proven to be ineffective in other EPA work</p>	<p>Workable policies in place but may be generic and need further adaptation to meet the needs of the standard</p>	<p>Workable policies in place which clearly meet the specific needs of the Standard</p> <p>Reasonable review dates in place</p> <p>Clear ownership at right levels within the organisation including management</p>	<p>Policies and procedures make use of good practice in other areas, including EPA on other standards where appropriate</p>

**1d: IfATE's Four-Point Scale of Readiness - readiness ratings\*** (based on Table 1 - [IfATE's EQA Manual](#))

Category	Description	Outcome
<b>1. Exceeds expectations</b>	EPAO meets all requirements of readiness to deliver EPA for this apprenticeship Standard without further action	'Go'  Progress monitored as required
<b>2. Ready to deliver</b>	EPAO is ready to deliver EPA for this apprenticeship Standard, subject to minor issues being addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	'Go'  Action plan agreed and monitored through delivery
<b>3. Ready to deliver - improvement needed</b>	EPAO is ready to deliver EPA for this apprenticeship Standard, subject to major issues being addressed within the action plan and monitored closely on an ongoing basis	'Go'  Action plan agreed and monitored through delivery
<b>4. Not ready to deliver</b>	EPAO is not ready to deliver EPA; major actions are required to achieve readiness	'No Go'  Action plan agreed and new readiness review date set  <b>or</b>  IfATE is contacted to discuss next steps, which may include referring the EPAO back to the DfE

\*Where providers have ratings for the individual functional areas that fall into different categories, the overall readiness rating will be determined by the lowest category.

## Appendix 2 - EQA monitoring

### 2a: Aspects of EPA to be assessed (based on Table 5 of the [IfATE Framework](#))

Aspects of EPA to be assessed	Where will this usually be set out?			How will this usually be assessed?			By whom will this usually be assessed?		
	EPA plan	Conditions of RoEPAO	EPAO's policies and procedures (operational evidence)	Desk review	Visits/ observations	Longitudinal evaluation	DQB (on behalf of the OfS)		Professional/ employer-led body*
							External assessor	DQB assessor	
<b>Relevant:</b> to what extent has the EPAO ensured that:									
Individual assessment instruments/ methods are fit-for-purpose	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Assessment is delivered in line with the published EPA plan (and in line with the EPA plan criteria in Appendix 2)	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓
EPA team includes expertise in quality assurance, assessment and occupational competence	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓
Assessors' knowledge is up-to-date	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
<b>Reliable:</b> to what extent has the EPAO ensured that:									
Assessment is carried out independently in practice	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		
Assessments are operating effectively and achieving the desired outcomes			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Grading is applied accurately and consistently	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		
Assessment is reliable and comparable across different EPAOs, employers, places, times and assessors		✓			✓	✓	✓		✓

\*The professional/employer-led body heading relates to the [Directory of Professional and Employer-led Bodies](#) involved in the EQA monitoring process.

Aspects of EPA to be assessed	Where will this usually be set out?			How will this usually be assessed?			By whom will this usually be assessed?		
	EPA plan	Conditions of RoEPAO	EPAO's policies and procedures (operational evidence)	Desk review	Visits/ observations	Longitudinal evaluation	DQB (on behalf of the OfS)		Professional/ employer-led body*
							External assessor	DQB assessor	
<b>Efficient:</b> to what extent has the EPAO ensured that:									
Sufficient assessors are available		✓		✓	✓			✓	
Accurate records are kept, and data is held securely with appropriate protocols in place		✓		✓	✓			✓	
Retakes, resits, appeals and complaints handling are operated effectively	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
Timeliness of assessment windows			✓	✓		✓		✓	
Booking and management of assessment			✓	✓				✓	
Marking/remote assessment	✓				✓			✓	
Resources for assessment			✓	✓	✓			✓	
Evidence gathering and record keeping			✓		✓			✓	
Confidentiality			✓		✓			✓	
Certification application process including its timeliness and checking any requirements		✓	✓		✓			✓	
Employers are choosing EPAOs		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	

\*The professional/employer-led body heading relates to the [Directory of Professional and Employer-led Bodies](#) involved in the EQA monitoring process.

Aspects of EPA to be assessed	Where will this usually be set out?			How will this usually be assessed?			By whom will this usually be assessed?		
	EPA plan	Conditions of RoEPAO	EPAO's policies and procedures (operational evidence)	Desk review	Visits/ observations	Longitudinal evaluation	DQB (on behalf of the OfS)		Professional/ employer-led body*
							External assessor	DQB assessor	
<b>Positive:</b> to what extent has the EPAO ensured that:									
Access to assessment is fair, and decisions on reasonable adjustments are made fairly and consistently	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		
Issue of results and feedback		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Information provided and fees charged are clear and transparent		✓		✓				✓	
All requirements of the Standard in terms of achievement of gateways and mandatory qualifications and requirements are achieved prior to sign-off and the employer makes the final decision on the readiness of the apprentice for EPA	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓		
<b>Learning:</b> to what extent has the EPAO ensured that:									
It has arrangements to collect and action feedback from apprentices, employers and assessors		✓		✓				✓	✓
Internal quality assurance processes carried out by the EPAO is effective and rigorous	✓			✓	✓			✓	✓

\*The professional/employer-led body heading relates to the [Directory of Professional and Employer-led Bodies](#) involved in the EQA monitoring process.

**2b: EPA plan criteria** (based on Table 2 of the [IfATE Framework](#))

Criteria	EPA requirements
Deliver valid and accurate judgements of occupational competence	The methods of assessment must be fit-for-purpose and appropriate to the content of the occupational profile. They must include synoptic assessment delivered using a mixture of valid methods that will lead to an integrated EPA at the end of the programme.
Produce consistent and reliable judgements	The assessment methodology and tools used must ensure that employers can have confidence that apprentices assessed in different places, at different times, by different assessors have been judged in the same way and to have therefore reached the same standard of occupational competence.
Ensure independence	The plan must ensure that the organisation delivering the assessment and the individual assessors making assessment decisions are independent of the training provider, the employer and the apprentice. For integrated Degree Apprenticeships the organisation does not have to be independent but the individual assessor should be.
Grading	<p>Apprenticeships should be graded using at least one level above pass for the EPA as a whole.</p> <p>The grading should be appropriate and applicable to assessments produced by EPAOs.</p>
Feasibility, manageability, and value for money	This should be ensured within the constraints of funding policy.
Enables EPAOs to make reasonable adjustments	Reasonable adjustments for conducting an EPA, in compliance with equality legislation, should be in place.

**2c. Four-point scale for monitoring** (based on Appendix 5 - [IfATE's EQA Manual](#))

	4. Inadequate	3. Requires Improvement	2. Good	1. Outstanding
<b>Relevant</b>	<p>Assessments do not validly assess the occupational competence as set out in the assessment plan</p> <p>Assessments are not delivered in line with the assessment plan</p> <p>Assessors lack the occupational or assessment expertise</p> <p>Policies and procedures are generic and not applied to the particular needs of the standard</p>	<p>Assessment materials validly assess occupational competence, with some elements requiring improvement</p> <p>Assessments are delivered in line with the assessment plan, but some elements require improvement</p> <p>Assessors possess adequate occupational and assessment expertise, but it may be limited or not kept up-to-date</p>	<p>Assessment materials validly assess occupational competence</p> <p>Assessors possess up-to-date knowledge of occupational and assessment practice; EPAO has robust system in place to manage CPD and training</p> <p>All activity (including application of non-assessment specific policies) tailored to the needs of the Standard in question</p>	<p>Assessment materials validly assess occupational competence and have been rigorously tested by occupational experts and reviewed as appropriate</p> <p>CPD and training exceeds usual expectations, including a proactive approach to learning and improvement</p>
<b>Reliable</b>	<p>Assessment is not undertaken independently of employer or training provider</p> <p>Standardisation and moderation processes do not ensure quality and consistency</p> <p>Significant differences in the consistency of delivery or grading across different groups of apprentices</p>	<p>Assessment is independent of employer and training provider</p> <p>Standardisation and moderation are run effectively, but some elements require improvement</p> <p>Assessment is delivered comparably across different parts of the country or employers</p>	<p>Effective standardisation and moderation processes in place</p> <p>Steps are in place to ensure that all assessment is delivered comparably and in line with EQA provider guidelines</p>	<p>Excellent assessment practice observed throughout delivery that ensures assessment is comparable across the standard and over time</p> <p>A proactive approach is taken to ensure comparability with other EPAOs for the same standard, where appropriate, or with similar standards</p>



	4. Inadequate	3. Requires Improvement	2. Good	1. Outstanding
<b>Efficient</b>	<p>EPAO fails to make adequate assessors available for the assessment required</p> <p>Administrative processes are ineffective or inefficient in a way which compromises apprentice or employer experience</p>	<p>Functional systems and processes are in place but could be improved</p>	<p>Efficient systems in place for allocating assessors and robust business continuity arrangements</p> <p>Procedures understood at all appropriate levels within the organisation with accountability and responsibility at the right level</p>	<p>A proactive approach includes forecasting and continuous improvement</p>
<b>Positive</b>	<p>There are risks to the security of assessment materials</p> <p>Apprentices requiring reasonable adjustments are not appropriately provided for</p> <p>Support materials and other information (including fees) are not available, or are inaccurate or inappropriate</p> <p>Feedback from employers and apprentices indicates a generally poor level of service</p>	<p>EPAO effectively checks that gateway requirements are met but this is not always consistent</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments and special considerations are mostly administered fairly and effectively, and appropriately recorded</p> <p>Support materials are adequate but may not be standard specific or updated frequently</p> <p>Feedback indicates a reasonable level of satisfaction from employers and apprentices with the way the EPA was conducted</p>	<p>EPAO consistently and effectively checks that gateway requirements are met</p> <p>Reasonable adjustments and special considerations are always administered fairly, effectively and are appropriately recorded</p> <p>All processes to support assessment delivery are effective</p> <p>Support materials are comprehensive and helpful</p> <p>Feedback indicates a mostly high level of satisfaction from employers and apprentices with the way the EPA was conducted</p>	<p>Every effort made to ensure that apprentices and employers receive a positive experience of EPA</p> <p>Feedback indicates a consistently high level of satisfaction from employers and apprentices with the way the EPA was conducted</p> <p>A wide range of support is offered to employers and apprentices</p>

	4. Inadequate	3.Requires Improvement	2. Good	1.Outstanding
<b>Learning</b>	<p>No or limited efforts made to obtain feedback from apprentices, employers or training providers</p> <p>Continue to apply procedures and processes which have been demonstrated to be ineffective</p>	<p>Some effort made to obtain and act on feedback from employers, apprentices and training providers but may be ad hoc or unfocused</p>	<p>Robust systems in place to obtain and act on feedback from employers, apprentices and training providers</p> <p>Improvements made to assessment practice from review of internal quality assurance processes</p>	<p>Continuous improvement embedded into culture of the organisation at all levels</p> <p>Feedback sought from employers and apprentices is routinely used to improve assessment delivery</p>

**2d: EPAO specific grading and descriptions** (based on Table 7 - [IfATE's EQA Manual](#))

Category	Description	How this is calculated	Outcome
<b>1. Outstanding</b>	EPAO is delivering EPA for this apprenticeship Standard in line with IfATE's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, without further action required	Relevant and reliable must be graded as 'Outstanding'  Other areas graded as 'Good'	No actions required, minimal EQA required
<b>2. Good</b>	EPAO is delivering EPA for this apprenticeship Standard in line with IfATE's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with some minor actions addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Any combination of solely 'Outstanding' and 'Good' grades which does not meet the threshold above  All areas graded 'Good'  Up to two areas graded 'Requires Improvement' and all others 'Good'; Relevant and Reliable must be 'Good'	Minor action required for improvement, EQA required to check progress
<b>3. Requires Improvement</b>	EPAO requires improvement to deliver EPA for this apprenticeship Standard in line with IfATE's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning, with major actions to be addressed within the action plan and monitored on an ongoing basis	Either Relevant or Reliable graded 'Requires Improvement'  Three or more areas graded 'Requires Improvement'  One area graded 'Inadequate'	Improvement required, increased EQA activity required to monitor improvement
<b>4. Inadequate</b>	EPAO is not delivering EPA in line with IfATE's principles of relevant, reliable, efficient, positive and learning; major actions are required to remedy this	Two or more areas graded 'Inadequate'	Major improvement required; refer to IfATE to decide if a breach has occurred or action is required

**2e: Overall 'per-EPAO-per Standard' risk matrix** (based on Appendix 6 - [IfATE's EQA Manual](#))

This matrix uses the scores from the outcomes of the EQA monitoring check of the apprenticeship at the EPAO (based on Appendix 2d EPAO specific grading and descriptions) and the Standard risk (calculated by the DQB).

			Standard risk		
			Low	Medium	High
			1	2	3
EPAO risk (outcome of the EQA monitoring check)	Outstanding	1			
	Good	2			
	Requires Improvement	3			
	Inadequate	4			

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