



ASSOCIATION
OF COLLEGES

Apprenticeship End Point Assessment Activity for Colleges

February 2025



Background

- End Point Assessment (EPA) was introduced to ensure that the assessment of the apprentice is both independent and impartial.
- EPAs are carried out by an end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) chosen by the apprentice's employer or training provider.
- An apprenticeship cannot be successfully completed until all elements of the EPA have been achieved.
- EPA activity cannot be scheduled until the practical period has been completed and the apprentice, employer and training provider have agreed that all of the knowledge, skills and behaviours have been achieved.

Funding

- 20% of the apprenticeship funding is retained by the Department for Education (DfE) until all the components of EPA have been completed.
- Apprenticeship funding rules in the 2024/25 academic year state “we expect the cost of the end-point assessment will not usually exceed 20% of the funding band maximum”.

Methodology

Three data sources were used to complete the research:

- The Individual Learner Record (ILR) data, for the previous three years, submitted by 170 colleges.
- A survey shared with all Association of Colleges (AoC) member colleges in November and December 2024. A total of 83 colleges responded.
- Ofqual data for achievement of EPA from March 2023- February 2024.

Summary 1/2

- **Cost:** The cost to colleges for EPA has been consistent at 13% of apprenticeship income for the past three academic years. The true cost is likely to be a higher percentage than this due to the cost of resits and the additional physical resource required.
- **Timeliness:** Too many apprentices experience delays in achieving their apprenticeship due to the availability of the EPA. 94% of colleges completing the survey identified that the availability of an end point assessor contributed to this delay. This is despite teachers/trainers leaving colleges to work as independent end point assessors.

Summary 2/2

- **Administration:** Colleges need to contract with a wide variety of EPAO due to the breadth of their apprenticeship provision. 45% of colleges who responded identified that they were engaging with 11 or more EPAO and the degree of their satisfaction/dissatisfaction focussed on the effectiveness of these processes and procedures.
- **Comparison:** There have been some minimal fluctuations in the cost of EPA compared to both sector and level. The most marked increase in the cost of EPA has been for Level 7 apprenticeships (in 2021/22 13.5% rising to 19% in 2023/24) which also attract the higher maximum funding band.

Findings from Individual Learner Record (ILR) data

Cost of EPA compared to income

Comparison of expenditure over three years

Academic Year	Total Price (on programme and completion payments)	EPA Cost	% EPA Cost
2023/24	£261,392,070	£34,275,227	13.1
2022/23	£311,926,334	£41,152,211	13.2
2021/22	£220,213,245	£28,754,459	13.1

- The figures identify that there has been no real change in the percentage of cost/income despite potential efficiencies of delivery processes.
- The figures relate to the first attempt at EPA, therefore, any additional attempts will increase the percentage of income payable for EPA.
- The figures do not include the additional associated costs of EPA i.e. opening the college site at weekends to complete the EPA activity.

Ofqual data on first time pass rates

March 2023 to February 2024

Level	First time pass rate
7	95.7%
6	95.7%
5	91.6%
4	86.8%
3	89.1%
2	89.5%

- 89.7% of all apprentices pass their EPA at the first attempt.
- The majority of apprentices who do not pass at the first attempt complete further EPA activity to gain their apprenticeship, which further increases the cost of EPA to the college.

These figures represent general FE colleges (incl tertiary), other public funded, private sector public funded, schools, sixth form college and specialist colleges first time pass rate.

Integrated degree apprenticeships are not included in the figures as they are regulated by OfS.

Cost of EPA by apprenticeship level

Cost of EPA as a percentage of income

Level	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
2	13.2%	13.8%	13.3%
3	12.8%	12.8%	12.7%
4	14.7%	13.8%	13.7%
5	14.7%	15.4%	15.0%
6	13.2%	12.0%	12.1%
7	19.0%	18.1%	13.5%

Comparison by level: RCU data

- EPA for Level 7 apprenticeships has consistently increased as a percentage of income and is the highest cost by level for EPA. Level 7 apprenticeships tend to be more expensive relative to other apprenticeships i.e. average funding bands Level 7 over £18,000, Level 3 £9,000 and Level 2 £5,500.
- EPA for other levels have remained at a similar percentage of cost/income over the three-year period.

Cost of EPA by sector (1/2)

Comparison by sector:

- Slight increase over three years for construction and the built environment and creative and design.
- Decrease for agriculture, environmental and animal care and care services.

Percentage of cost/income over three years

Sector	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Agriculture, environmental and animal care	16.2%	16.4%	17.7%
Business and administration	15.2%	15.4%	15.6%
Care services	16.0%	15.9%	16.6%
Catering and hospitality	17.2%	18.1%	17.8%
Construction and the built environment	11.4%	11.2%	10.9%
Creative and design	15.8%	14.7%	14.3%
Digital	12.0%	11.9%	12.1%
Education and early years	13.7%	13.6%	13.6%

Cost of EPA by sector (2/2)

Comparison by sector:

- Slight increase over three years for health and science and protective services.
- Decrease for hair and beauty and transport and logistics.

Percentage of cost/income over three years

Sector	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22
Engineering and manufacturing	13.6%	13.5%	13.3%
Hair and beauty	9.7%	10.5%	10.2%
Health and science	14.6%	14.8%	13.8%
Legal, finance and accounting	10.4%	11.0%	10.9%
Protective services	15.2%	15.0%	13.1%
Sales, marketing and procurement	14.8%	15.1%	15.0%
Transport and logistics	14.1%	15.1%	15.1%

EPA activity at 20% or above in 2023/24 (1/5)

Standard (number of achievers in 2023/24)	Level	EPA cost compared to the total cost of the apprenticeship
Cleaning hygiene operative (20)	2	20.0%
Commercial catering equipment technician (10)	3	20.0%
Community fire safety advisor (<10)	3	20.0%
General farm worker (180)	2	20.0%
Marine electrician (10)	3	20.0%
Materials science technologist (<10)	6	20.0%
Passenger transport operative (320)	2	20.0%

EPA activity at 20% or above in 2023/24 (2/5)

Standard (number of achievers in 2023/24)	Level	EPA cost compared to the total cost of the apprenticeship
Prosthetic and orthotic technician (<10)	3	20.0%
Sporting excellence professional (870)	3	20.0%
Train driver (1000)	3	20.0%
Fenestration fabricator (20)	2	20.1%
Floorlayer (230)	2	20.1%
Housing and property management assistant (100)	2	20.1%
Junior management consultant (70)	4	20.1%

EPA activity at 20% or above in 2023/24 (3/5)

Standard (number of achievers in 2023/24)	Level	EPA cost compared to the total cost of the apprenticeship
Livestock unit technician (70)	3	20.1%
Town planning assistant (10)	4	20.1%
Advanced clinical practitioner (810)	7	20.2%
Electrical, electronic product service and installation engineer (20)	3	20.2%
Geospatial survey technician (30)	3	20.2%
Junior estate agent (120)	2	20.2%
Keeper and aquarist (50)	3	20.2%

EPA activity at 20% or above in 2023/24 (4/5)

Standard (number of achievers in 2023/24)	Level	EPA cost compared to the total cost of the apprenticeship
Science manufacturing process operative (80)	2	20.2%
Signage technician (30)	3	20.2%
Peer worker (<10)	3	20.3%
Hearing aid dispenser (90)	5	20.4%
Retailer (1050)	2	20.4%
Personal trainer (260)	3	20.7%
Mastic asphalter (<10)	2	20.9%

EPA activity at 20% or above in 2023/24 (5/5)

Standard (number of achievers in 2023/24)	Level	EPA cost compared to the total cost of the apprenticeship
Hospitality supervisor (990)	3	21.1%
Countryside worker (60)	2	21.2%
Creative industries production manager (10)	7	21.4%
Hospitality team member (1100)	2	22.0%
Land referencer (<10)	4	23.0%
Academic professional (250)	7	23.7%

EPA activity at 20% or above (academic year 2023/24)

The previous five slides indicate those apprenticeship standards (by level) where the EPA activity was at 20% or above.

The figures in brackets indicate the number of achievers in 2023/24, for the most part, these apprenticeships could be considered as “niche” provision. For the majority of these standards, only one or two EPAOs are available to provide the service.

As a comparison, higher numbers of apprenticeship achievements were:

- Early Years Educator Level 3 (7200)
- Business Administrator Level 3 (7000)
- Team Leader Level 3 (6850)
- Carpentry and Joinery Level 2 (3530)
- Data Analyst Level 4 (2550)

Changes to the costs of EPA

Comparing the original EPA price to the last recorded 2023/24

Comparison from original entry	Apprenticeships	%
Smaller	1,018	31%
Same	683	21%
Larger	1,547	48%
Total Number of Apprenticeships with Multiple Assessment Prices Recorded	3,248	100%

Changes to the ILR:

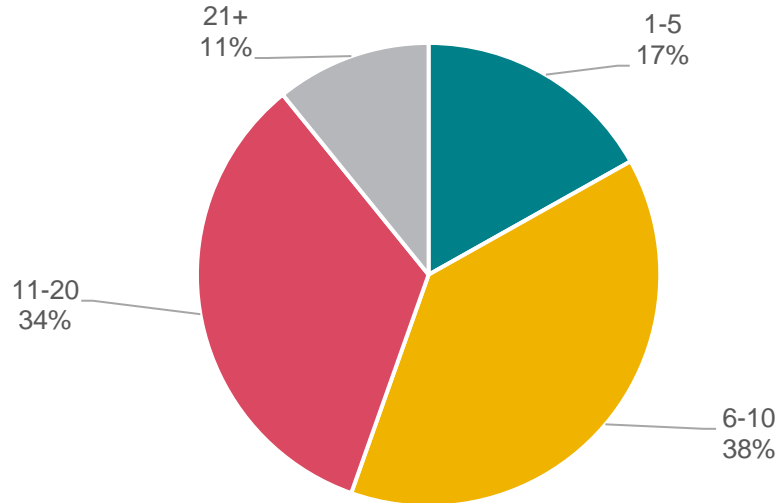
- The cost of the EPA is calculated at the start of the apprenticeship and the value recorded in the ILR (Individual Learner Record).
- The minimum duration of the apprenticeship is 12 months, colleges can amend the record when the actual EPA activity is booked at the end of the practical period. - min and length duration.
- 48% of respondents reported a higher cost of EPA than when the apprentice commenced the apprenticeship.
- Under current audit rules, where the actual EPA cost is more than the original value included in the ILR a renegotiation of price is required.

Findings from the AoC End Point Assessment Survey 2024

Engagement with EPAO

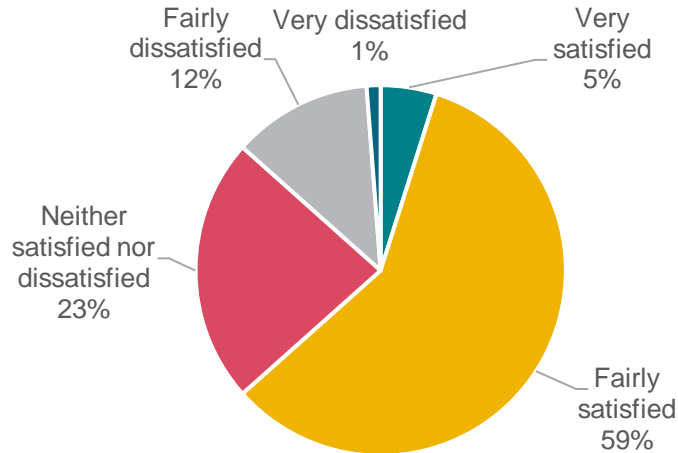
- Each EPAO has their own processes and procedures that colleges need to adhere to.
- Every apprenticeship standard has its own evidence requirements which need to be uploaded to the EPAO.
- 34% of colleges are working with 11-20 EPAO and 11% are working with 21 or more, which creates additional administration burden.

Question- What number of Ofqual regulated End Point Assessment Organisations (EPAO) have you worked with for End-Point Assessments during the last year?



Satisfaction levels

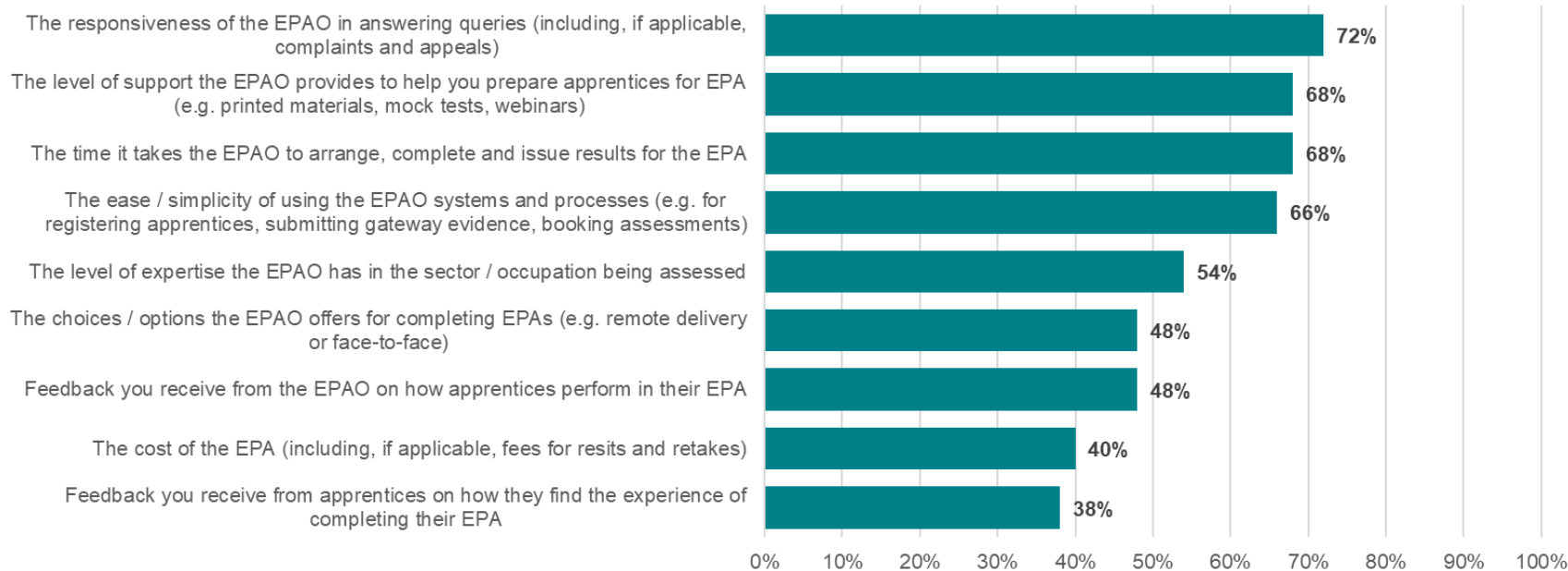
Question-How satisfied are you with the service you have received overall from the EPAO that you have been working with?



- Only 5% of colleges are very satisfied with the service received from EPAO.
- 13% of colleges are dissatisfied with the service provided.

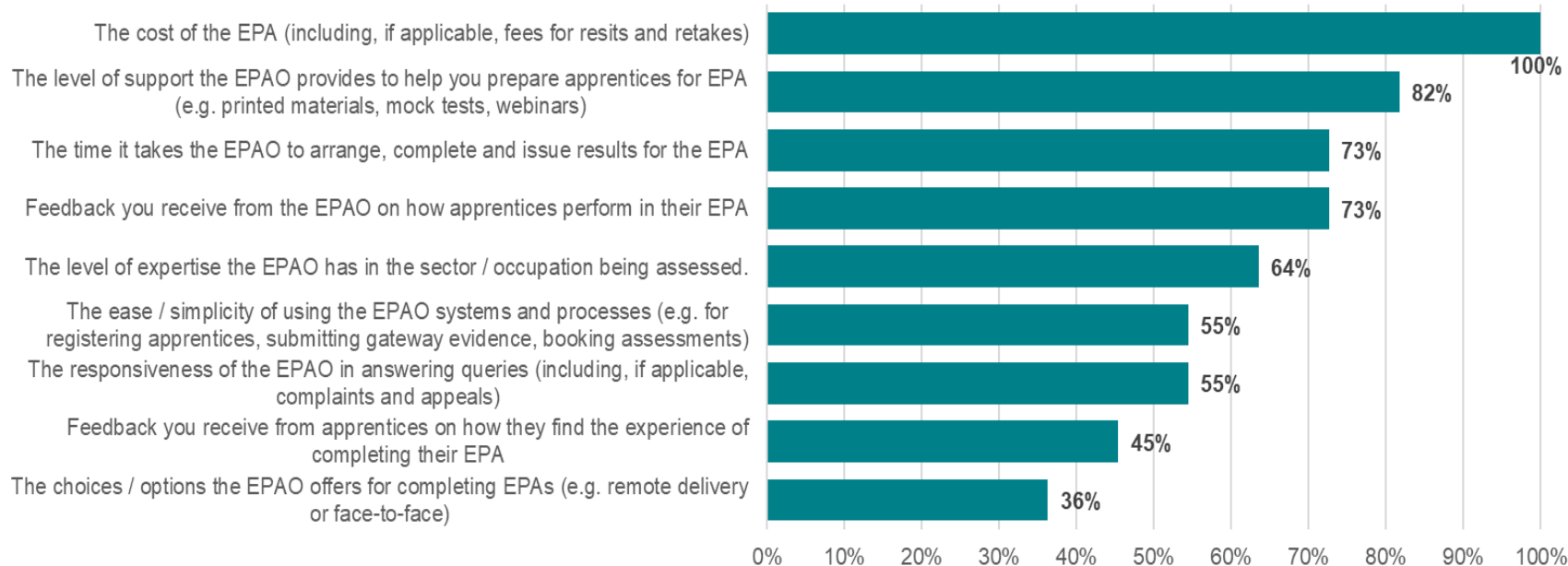
Factors affecting satisfaction

Factors most influencing satisfaction with the service received



Factors affecting dissatisfaction

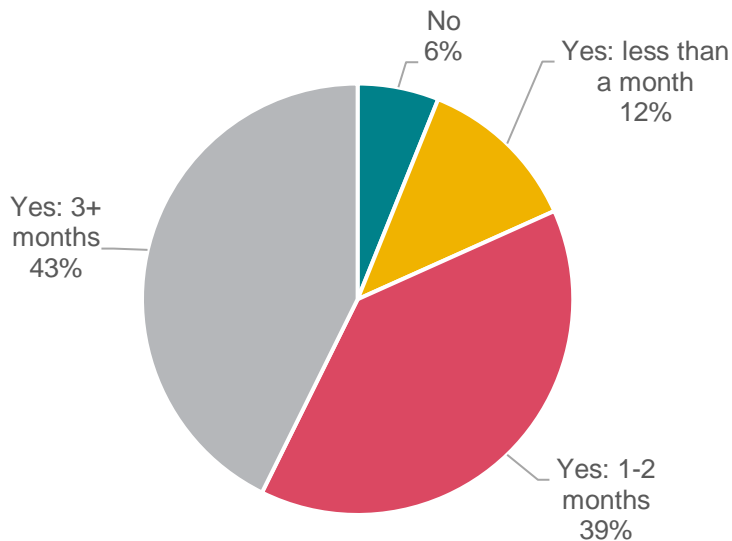
Factors most influencing dissatisfaction with the service received



Availability of EPA

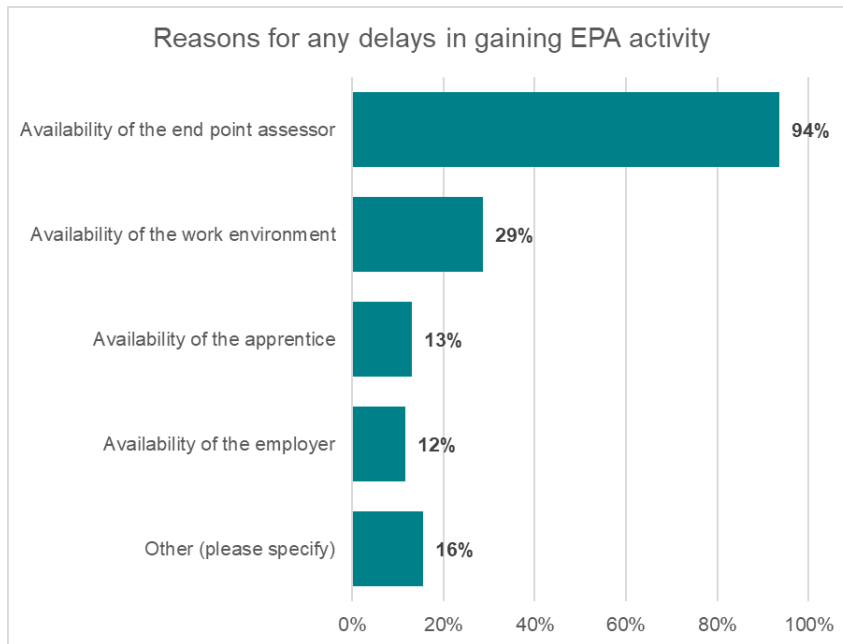
- EPA cannot be confirmed until the practical period has been completed, although colleges will notify EPAO of the timeframes for EPA being required to aid planning.
- 82% of colleges experienced delays of over 1 month.
- 43% of colleges experienced delays of three months and longer.

Question- Have you experienced any delays in gaining EPA activity once apprentices have reached gateway?



Reasons for delays

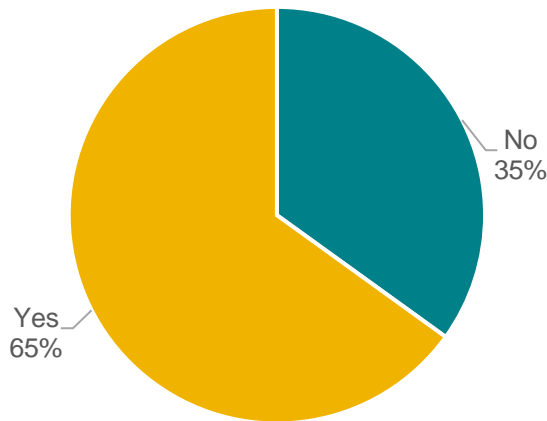
- 94% of colleges have cited the availability of end point assessors as causing the delay. This adds to the workforce issue of having a lack of trainers/tutors to deliver the apprenticeship itself.
- For many apprenticeships, some of the components need to be delivered in the workplace. 29% of colleges have identified having the available work environment as a delay to EPA. The work environment needs to reflect the required activity for the EPA.



Transfer to alternative EPAO

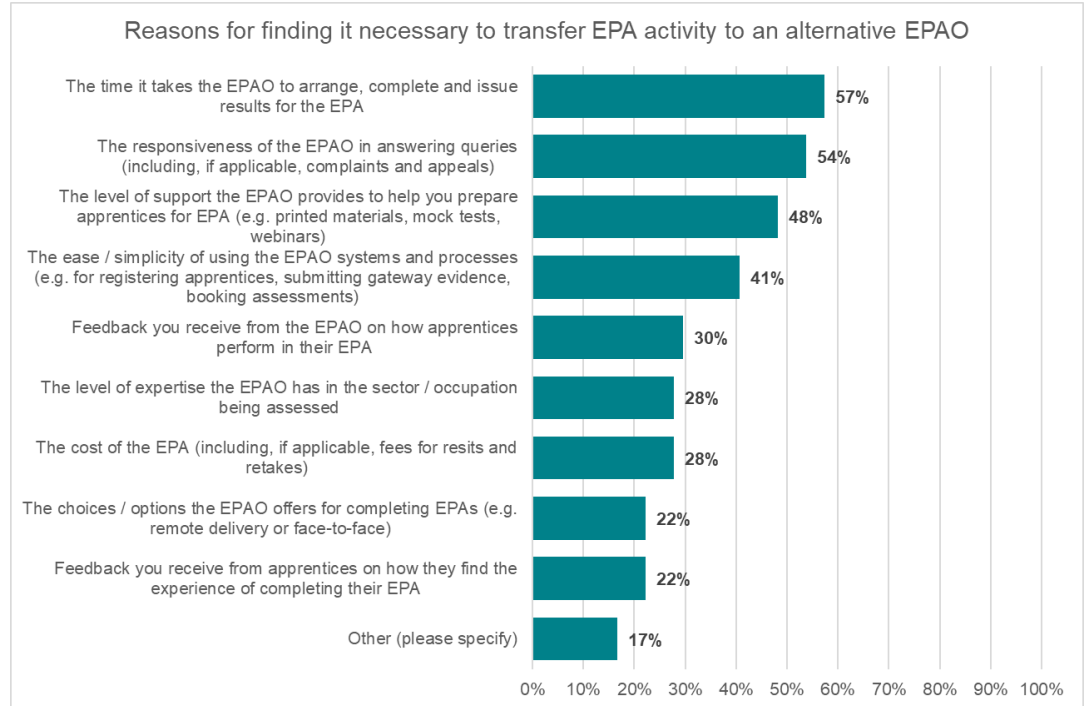
- For some niche standards there is only one EPAO that colleges can access.
- For some standards, there are multiple EPAOs available. Each EPAO will have their own systems and processes.
- Colleges will access an alternative EPAO if the service that is being offered does not meet their, the apprentice or the employer requirements
- Colleges need to identify the EPAO that will be completing the necessary activity to ensure they meet the requirements of the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework.

Question-Have you found it necessary to transfer EPA activity to an alternative EPAO?



Rationale for transfer of EPAO

- 57% of colleges changed EPAO due to the speed of gaining the feedback following the EPA. Apprentices do not know whether they have achieved until they receive this feedback. Employers are unable to offer pay increases/utilise the services of a qualified worker until they have received confirmation of success.
- 48% of colleges transferred to an alternative EPAO due to lack of support for the apprentice. Each EPAO will deliver the EPA differently. Support materials are required to ensure that the apprentice is prepared and has the opportunity to practice and complete mock assessments.



Recommendations

Recommendations

- ✓ **EPA delivery:** as trusted education providers colleges should be allowed to carry out their own EPA activity.
- ✓ **Flexibilities:** recent announcements (i.e. the introduction of shorter and foundation apprenticeships, removal of funding for Level 7 apprenticeships, flexibility in 19+ maths and English requirements and increased flexibility of EPA) need to be closely monitored to determine the impact and availability of EPA.
- ✓ **Administration:** processes need to be consistent across all EPA to prevent administrative burden, to provide greater clarity of the requirements and to improve the customer experience.
- ✓ **Assessment methods:** the components of EPA should be reviewed and streamlined to reduce delays and to prevent duplication.
- ✓ **Cost:** the cost of EPA activity should be transparent to determine best use of public funds.



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Contacts

Please contact press@aoc.co.uk for more information.

