

Apprenticeship - End Point Assessment

NOCN expects that the majority of End Points Assessments will be affected in the light of COVID-19, and the closure of Colleges and Schools. In the main those assessments most likely to be affected are those which are face to face delivery models. Until an updated statement from the ESFA, IfATE and DfE, the following contingencies will still stand.

In these instances, NOCN will work with providers and employers to understand any restrictions in force where End Point Assessments are either planned or mid delivery.

NOCN will ensure that a pragmatic risk-based response to limitations on EPA delivery is taken, at the guidance of PHE, DfE, ESFA and IfATE.

The following actions/contingencies are to be followed;

- If an End Point Assessment is booked and there have not been any communications from either provider or employer that access limitations are in place End Point Assessment will be carried out in our Business as Usual model and deemed as necessary travel, under recent Government Guidance (16032020).
- If an End Point Assessment is booked and access restrictions are subsequently enforced, then the individual actions will be implemented on a situation by situation.
- If an assessment is booked and the appointed End Point Assessor, has tested positive or requires “self-isolation” due to symptoms of COVID-19 then NOCN will aim to ensure the assessment is carried out by a replacement End Point Assessor.
- If no replacement assessor can be confirmed for the date and time required for the EPA, then NOCN will reschedule the planned End Point Assessment for the earliest available date, pending earlier contingencies either in place or not.
- If an assessment is cancelled on either the employers or NOCN part due to COVID-19, following either a positive test or the apprentice requires “self-isolation” then assessment/cancellation fees will be waived.
- If the End Point Assessment cannot go ahead as planned for any of the following reasons;
 - Due to closure of either an employer’s site,
 - Closure of a Provider’s site,
 - Regional lockdown/travel restrictions or;
 - Illness of staff/technicians/line managers

Then NOCN recommends that the provider communicates this to the NOCN EPA Deployment team and with the ESFA, postponing the End Point Assessment and places the apprentice on a break in learning until any imposed restrictions are lifted following the Education Skills Funding Agency Guidelines (see below).

Remote End Point Assessments

In response to ongoing development with COVID-19, NOCN is implementing the following contingency actions based on up to the date guidance from Public Health England, the Department for Education, Education Skills Funding Agency and the Institute for Apprenticeship and Technical Education.

NOCN has operated using remote technology in the majority of our End Point Assessments over the last four years and has established procedures in place already for assessment of Portfolios, Projects and holding discussions.

With the restrictions and closures now in place or likely to be in place in the coming days, NOCN will be expanding this process and offering all Professional Discussions, Technical Interviews, Presentations, Q&A assessment by remote delivery using our robust Video Conferencing and Screen Sharing platform Cisco WebEx.

With the likely pending restrictions of travel and more home working, we will also enable apprentices to use Cisco's mobile application for connection to their End Point Assessor in their own home, using a [free to download App](#)

From Monday 23rd March, NOCN EPA will also make available all of our Knowledge Tests for End Point Assessment, including Multi-Choice examinations, using both our existing URL-based exam platform Calibrand and Cisco WebEx, to facilitate remote invigilation.

The live invigilation of apprentices using webcams and screen sharing will enable NOCN to ensure that the apprentice can complete some elements of their End Point Assessment.

However, many EPAs require an on-site face-to-face technical observation. In some instances this may be possible, using remote live streaming via Cisco WebEx, but for many of NOCN's standards, the deep technical and craft based requirements and industry standards may mean that these practical observations need to be postponed until further information is published by the Department for Education, Public Health England and the Education Skills Funding Agency.

NOCN's EPA Team is on hand for any questions or enquires you may have, and as part of the wider NOCN Group, have issued a major contingency plan.

All of NOCN's EPA team are working on a remote basis to ensure that we continue to offer the highest level of service. All phone lines are routed to mobile phones and NOCN's EPA data platform is linked remotely using Microsoft's CRM Dynamics Platform, ensuring that all apprentices, providers and employer information is accessible on demand.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to call one of our EPA team on 0300 999 1177 , option 1 or email endpointassessment@nocn.org.uk

Recommendations from the Department of Education

In order to support the sector during any disruption which may be experienced due to Covid-19 these are the initial recommendations from the Department for Education:

1. Apprentices who are ready for assessment – i.e. who reach gateway and cannot be assessed due to assessor illness or Covid-19 related measures, will be allowed to have a break in learning. This should protect funding and completion of apprenticeships and should be reflected in the July completion rules. The normal breaks in learning process should be followed and therefore we only need notifying once a break in learning has exceeded 4 weeks. A break in learning must occur before the learner is recorded as completed. Apprentices can go on a break in learning between completing the learning activity (learning actual end date) and the assessment, but there would be no requirement to record in this in the ILR as it will not have an effect on funding.
2. Apprentices who experience gaps in training due to Covid-19 related illness in the workplace or off the job can classify this period as a break in learning. The normal breaks in learning process should be followed and therefore we only need notifying once a break in learning has exceeded 4 weeks.
3. Usually breaks in learning are only permitted where they are learner driven, however we are aware that there may be occasion where an employer who is following government advice may take action that results in an apprenticeship have to be paused. In these occasions a break in learning can be used where there will be a break of longer than 4 weeks. The normal breaks in learning process should be followed.
4. In order to maintain the integrity of high quality assessment of apprenticeships we are going to monitor the situation and will issue further advice and modifications relating to specific assessment methods if necessary.
5. We advise adhering to the current escalation process of raising EPA (end-point assessment) issues through EQAPs (external quality assurance providers) in the first instance.

There is a need for everyone (employer, provider, EPAO, Apprentice) to take a reasonable and balanced approach in these situations and to recognise that the health and wellbeing of individuals is a higher priority than performance measures.

We know that good communications between each of these parties is important to the successful delivery of EPA anyway. So, in these circumstances that communication becomes even more important.

If you have any problems or concerns, please contact NOCN's End point assessment team on 0300 999 1177 (Option 1) or endpointassessment@nocn.org.uk

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) will shortly be publishing guidance for this area in response to potential disruption from Covid-19.