



NOCN COVID-19

End Point Assessment Update

05/01/2021

If any of the following are a concern to providers, employers or End Point Assessors, please contact NOCN's assessment team on 0300 999 1177 Option 1 or endpointassessment@nocn.org.uk

Please Communicate with NOCN EPA, ASAP if planned Assessments are affect by closures of Colleges/HEI/Training Centres

COVID-19 EPA Disruption

**Inconsideration of the
National lockdown: Stay at Home Guidance
Monday 4th January 2021**

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/949536/NationalLockdownGuidance.pdf

EPA - Disruption to Assessment Delivery

- NOCN will ensure that a pragmatic risk based response to **limitations on EPA delivery** is taken during the recently announced national lockdown, 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 **has 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 to work**”.

Please Communicate with NOCN EPA, ASAP if planned Assessments are affect by closures

EPA - Disruption to Assessment Delivery

- If an End Point Assessment is booked and **location access restrictions are subsequently enforced**, then individual actions to postpone the EPA will be implemented by NOCN EPA Deployment. This includes;
 - So termed “College Circuit Breakers”
 - Regional Time-limited Lockdowns (Circuit Breakers)
 - Very High Alert Levels / Tiers –
 - Travel bans/Access limitations
 - Full National, International or local lockdowns
 - Full close down of the College/HEI/Training Provider outside of Full National Lockdowns
- 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 reserves the right to reschedule the planned End Point Assessment** for the earliest available date, pending earlier contingencies either in place or not.

EPA - Disruption to Assessment Delivery

- If no replacement assessor can be confirmed for the date and time required for the EPA, **then NOCN reserves the right** to 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,
 - National, international or local lockdowns
 - 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 ASAP** and with the ESFA, postponing the End Point Assessment and places the apprentice on a break in learning until any imposed restrictions are lifted.

EPA Disruption – COVID-19 Contingencies

If a booked End Point Assessment cannot go ahead as planned for any of the following reasons;

- So termed “College Circuit Breakers”
 - Regional Time-limited Lockdowns (Circuit Breakers)
 - Very High Alert Levels / Tiers –
 - Travel bans/Access limitations
 - Full National, International or local lockdowns
 - Full close down of the College/HEI/Training Provider outside of Full National Lockdowns
- A suitable attempt to make and arrangements for a change of date or location if practical.
 - If no such arrangements can be made for the Face-to-Face delivery of Assessments, NOCN will postpone the delivery of these assessments and the apprentice should default on the Governments advice on Breaks in Learning (12-Week Rule).

EPA - Disruption to Assessment Location (College based EPAs)

- If an EPA is planned to take place on a **college premises**, but is cancelled due to either any of the following;
 - *So termed “College Circuit Breakers”*
 - *Travel bans/Access limitations*
 - *Full close down of the College/HEI/Training Provider*
 - *Full National Lockdowns*
- The following options are to be considered;
 - Is the college workshop, laboratory or realistic working environment available as a **stand alone entity** to the college and could be used for EPA.
 - If the college location is not available then the EPA can be delivered on a 1 to 1 basis on the **site of the employer** with the End Point Assessor conducting the assessment there.
 - If permitted by the IfATE and ESFA, **a dispensation can be used** to replace the practical assessment with a remote assessment.
 - The final option is to place the apprentice on the **12 week “in gateway” break in learning** until safe to access an assessment location.

EPA Disruption – Apprentices already in Gateway

- Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment and cannot be assessed due to assessor illness or COVID-19 related measures are allowed to have a break in learning as per ESFA rules with an extension of up to 12 weeks.
- The maximum break in learning is 12 weeks. There could be a few shorter breaks if necessary due to assessor illness or COVID-19 related measures but **they cannot exceed** 12 weeks.

Q - Can breaks in learning be longer if employers close for longer than the maximum break in learning allowance (pre- or post-gateway)?

Where the closure is longer than four weeks (on-programme) or 12 weeks (EPA) NOCN will speak to the EQAP in the first instance. The EQAP will look at this individually so as to not disadvantage the apprentice.

Q - If an apprentice has already completed one component of the EPA, for example a knowledge test, but then cannot progress to the next stage, observation - how long can the break be between each part?

Some EPA elements may have been completed but it is not possible to complete the remainder before the break in learning is required. A break in learning can be applied at any point **but cannot last longer than 12 weeks**.

EPA Disruption – COVID-19 Contingencies

If an apprentice has an End Point Assessment booked and this is cancelled due to COVID-19;

- **Diagnosis,**
 - **Self-isolation,**
 - **Family isolation,**
 - **Travel restrictions or**
 - **Provider/Employer closure,**
- The End Point Assessment will **be postponed or cancelled** depending on the nature of the situation.
 - NOCN will need this **submitting via email**, to ensure a sufficient audit trail for the individual apprentice.
 - If an apprentice **cannot attend** a previously confirmed location for the remote assessment, such as a professional discussion. Then the remote EPA will take place in an agreed location such as the apprentice's home, following the **previous guidance** and that of the IfATE and the appointed External Quality Assurance organisation for that particular EPA.

EPA Disruption – COVID-19 Contingencies

- If the application of a Gateway extension or End Point Assessment contingencies were to cause hardship to the apprentice, NOCN may choose to apply the following professional discretions in order to conduct assessments:
 - The requirement for assessment methods to be completed in a set order can be relaxed to allow flexibility in delivery, where this is deemed reasonable and feasible
 - The suggested or presented location for the apprentice to undertake a remote assessment would disadvantage that apprentice during the assessment

Information: apprenticeship service - new apprentice record status

The apprenticeship service has introduced an additional **“Completed” status** to support employers and providers manage their apprentice records.

Employers and provider are able to view and filter their apprentice’s by record, status and download the detail of their apprentice records from the ‘Manage your Apprenticeship’ section of the account.

Each apprentice record will have one of the following statuses:

- **waiting to start**
- **live**
- **paused**
- **stopped**
- **completed**

An apprentice record shows a “Completed” status when the training provider has updated their ILR return to confirm **all training and assessment** has taken place.

The Completion Payment Month displayed on the record indicates when the 20% Completion Payment has been processed. This does not necessarily represent the date the apprentice completed the apprenticeship.

EPA Disruption – Options for Assessment Delivery

- If the availability of a suitable location, a qualified assessor and practical materials **can be in place within a workplace, provider location or other suggested location** (within the travel /social contact restrictions), NOCN will work pragmatically with the Training Provider to deliver the on-location assessment after all risk evaluations have been completed.
- All arrangements would need to be communicated to NOCN in advance before commitment to the EPA going ahead.
- Assessment methods **must be used** as per the assessment plan if the original assessment methods are followed. There cannot be a selection of part amended process and part original delivery, unless published on the IfATE website.
- The way in which the stated assessment methods are conducted may be amended if **approved by the EQAP**. Authority to change an assessment method remains with IfATE.

EPA Disruption – Alternative measures (Remote Assessment)

- Remote End Point Assessments **may take place in alternative locations**, including an apprentice's home if this is deemed to be the **safest and most pragmatic** way of proceeding through EPA, these methods include;
 - Professional Discussions, Interviews, Presentations, Panel interviews, O&A's
 - Knowledge tests,
 - Multi-choice questions,
 - Case studies,
 - Written response examinations, **will be invigilated on a remote basis**.
- There will be an appointed, qualified NOCN Remote Invigilator, who will be following a set script, including the following;
 - Checking of the location of the examination,
 - The identification of the apprentice
 - The surrounding area of the apprentice.
- The requirement for the apprentice to have **suitable technology**, including a laptop with audio and video functionality is a **pre-requisite** of Proxy/remote invigilation

EPA Disruption – Alternative measures (Remote Assessment)

- All Remote Examinations/EPAs will follow a defined Invigilator Script, which will include the following checks
 - All Examinations will be video and audio recorded
 - Confirmations from both the NOCN Invigilator and Apprentice
 - Name
 - Date
 - Time
 - And show their Photo ID

There are a number of things that will cause the exam to end:

- Someone else present in the room (unless pre agreed)
- Looking for a long period of time away from the screen
- Opening extra browsers
- Stopping sharing of the screen, audio or video
- Any other activity which may be cause for concern, could also result in the exam being brought to an end.

EPA Disruption – Alternative measures (Remote Assessment)

Checks to complete with the apprentice:

- Is the room secure and are you likely to be disturbed?
- Have you put a “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door? If you are disturbed, then this could affect the completion of the exam/test
- Will you now spin your camera round the room 360 degrees to ensure the room is secure and you are alone
- Please show me your desk to ensure you have no materials that may help you in your exam/test including a mobile phone
- As the invigilator, I am also in an appropriate room with no noise and will be silent throughout the exam/test.
- You will share your screen with me **throughout the duration** of the exam/test.

NOCN has further specific guidance on delivering the invigilation via the Proxy/Remote method

- Following the IfATE’s guidance, NOCN **will only carry out** online test/examinations following the check and review of a location/facilities, and all instances will be recorded on NOCN CRM System for future audit requirements.

Flexibilities applied to End Point Assessments

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) along with Ofqual and other EQAPs have introduced flexibilities to ensure that apprentices have in some circumstances the option for an amended End Point Assessment Process.
- NOCN is working with External Quality Assurance providers for all apprenticeship standards to either confirm or propose **any modifications to the delivery of End Point Assessment**.
- Ensuring that at all times the apprentices receive a fair and valid End Point Assessment, while at the same time ensuring that the consistency and quality of End Point Assessment delivery is maintained.
- NOCN continues to resolve those End Point Assessments which cannot be delivered due to COVID-19 related issues.
- **Flexibilities are a choice, it is up to the apprentice if they wish to complete their EPA under the flexibilities** or pause their EPA for up to 12 weeks and attempt the EPA under normal assessment conditions.

Flexibilities applied to NOCN End Point Assessments

Standard	Flexibility Announced
ADULT CARE WORKER LEAD ADULT CARE WORKER	Flexibilities agreed to accept suitable evidence of achievement offered as a 'proxy' for certification or achievement
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR	Due to Covid-19, it has been agreed that all methods of assessment can be delivered remotely.
COMMIS CHEF	The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor. In addition the Culinary Challenge may be replaced by evidence from apprentice, training provider, witness statement and Q&A.
CUSTOMER SERVICE PRACTITIONER	The observation may be replaced with witness testimony from someone familiar with the apprentice's work. The apprentice would then be assessed through Q&A with an external assessor.
ENGINEERING DESIGN AND DRAUGHTSPERSON	Due to Covid-19, it has been agreed that all methods of assessment can be delivered remotely.
HEALTHCARE ASSISTANT PRACTITIONER	The observation assessment may be replaced with a reflective statement written by the apprentice and validated by an expert witness. This will be followed by a question and answer session of up to 30 minutes with an independent assessor.
HEALTHCARE SUPPORT WORKER	The observation assessment may be replaced with a reflective statement written by the apprentice and validated by an expert witness. This will be followed by a question and answer session of up to 30 minutes with an independent assessor

Standard	Flexibility Announced
HOSPITALITY TEAM MEMBER HOSPITALITY SUPERVISOR	The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor.
INSURANCE PRACTITIONER INSURANCE PROFESSIONAL	Due to Covid-19, it has been agreed that all methods of assessment can be delivered remotely.
LABORATORY TECHNICIAN	The employer will observe and record a factual written account of the synoptic assessment test (SAT), which will be assessed by the end-point assessment organisation. The apprentice will then undertake a 30-minute discussion on the KSBs that did not naturally occur during the observation.
MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS ENGINEERING TECHNICIAN	Due to Covid-19, it has been agreed that all methods of assessment can be delivered remotely.
Nursing Associate (NA)	With immediate effect and during the Covid-19 crisis any RN and NA apprentices who have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed a recognised apprenticeship programme leading to a nursing qualification • Been assessed as having permanently met the requirements for occupational competence and therefore Professional Registration with the NMC • Have passed through the apprenticeship gateway • Will be regarded to have met the End Point Assessment (EPA) requirements and have achieved their apprenticeship.
OPERATIONS / DEPARTMENTAL MANAGER	It has been agreed due to Covid-19, that the panel can be hosted by the independent end-point assessment only. However, every effort should be made to ensure a sector expert is a part of the panel. If the decision is to have only the independent end-point assessment then this needs to be authorised by the employer.
PRODUCTION CHEF	The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor.

Standard	Flexibility Announced
PROPERTY MAINTENANCE OPERATIVE	Due to Covid-19, it has been agreed that post gateway there can be a pause in assessment. This can be applied before the assessment begins or between assessment methods.
RELATIONSHIP MANAGER (BANKING)	<p>The EQA provider for this standard has agreed the following temporary flexibilities for this standard until further notice and has informed the relevant end-point assessment organisations.</p> <p>Agreed due to the current Covid-19 situation every effort should be made to ensure a sector expert is a part of the panel interview. Only agreed for 12 weeks. Assessment methods can be delivered remotely</p>
RETAILER	The Observation may be replaced by evidence of practice, validated by an expert witness statement and assessed through a Q&A session with the external assessor of up to 30 minutes.
RETAIL TEAM LEADER	<p>The EQA provider for this standard has agreed the following temporary flexibilities for this standard until further notice and has informed the relevant end-point assessment organisations.</p> <p>All assessment methods can be delivered remotely with appropriate security measures implemented to ensure validity.</p>
SCIENCE INDUSTRY MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN	The employer will observe and record a factual written account of the synoptic assessment test (SAT), which will be assessed by the end-point assessment organisation. The apprentice will then undertake a 30-minute discussion on the KSBs that did not naturally occur during the observation.
SENIOR COMPLIANCE / RISK SPECIALIST	It has been agreed due to Covid-19, that the panel can be hosted by the independent end-point assessment only. However, every effort should be made to ensure a sector expert is a part of the panel. If the decision is to have only the independent end-point assessment then this needs to be authorised by the employer.
SENIOR HEALTHCARE SUPPORT WORKER	<p>The observation assessment may be replaced with a reflective statement written by the apprentice and validated by an expert witness. This will be followed by a question and answer session of up to 30 minutes with an independent assessor. Parameters for the delivery of discretion https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/covid-19-information-regarding-apprenticeships/ofqual-letter-for-epa-discretions-for-healthcare-epa/</p>

Standard	Flexibility Announced
SENIOR PRODUCTION CHEF	The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor.
TEAM LEADER / SUPERVISOR	Due to Covid-19, it has been agreed that all methods of assessment can be delivered remotely.

- The entire list of flexibilities affecting apprenticeship standards can be found on the IfATE's website;
- <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/covid-19/recent-announcements/list-of-standards-with-temporary-discretions-or-flexibilities/>
- Flexibilities are a choice, it is up to the apprentice if they wish to complete their EPA under the flexibilities or pause their EPA for up to 12 weeks and attempt the EPA under normal assessment conditions.
- Grading may be limited under flexibilities, to a PASS only.
- Please speak to NOCN's Apprenticeship Team for specific amendments and revised processes.

Further Links

Support to NOCN Customers – COVID19

<https://www.nocn.org.uk/covid19/>

NOCN EPA Contingency Document

https://www.nocn.org.uk/data/Landing_Downloads/ApprenticeshipEndPointAssessment24March.pdf

NOCN Remote Assessment Guide

https://www.nocn.org.uk/data/Service_Downloads/ContingencyplanCOVID-19-EPARemoteAssessments.pdf

NOCN WebEx App Guidance for apprentices

https://www.nocn.org.uk/data/Service_Downloads/NOCNWebexAppGuide.pdf

Training Provider Guidance for remote assessments

https://www.nocn.org.uk/data/Service_Downloads/TrainingProviderCovid19RemoteAssessmentsGuidance.pdf

NOCN Social Media

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/nocn/>

<https://twitter.com/NOCNGroup>





Wash hands

keep washing your hands regularly



Cover face

wear a face covering in enclosed spaces



Make space

stay at least 2 metres apart - or 1 metre with a face covering or other precautions