

# AELP End Point Assessment Survey – Headline Findings

## Background

The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) recently conducted a survey on End Point Assessment (EPA) to gain insight in the experiences of the sector in this area. The survey launched on 7 March 2023 and ran until 7 April 2023 during this time there were 80 respondents. These came from a range of provider types, sectors, and from a broad geographical area. The survey was promoted via Countdown, E-Shot and LinkedIn and AELP policy update webinars.

The outcomes of the survey will be used to shape AELP future policy position on End Point Assessment and our asks of; the Government, Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the External Quality Assurance Providers - Ofqual and Office for Students (OfS).

## Key Headlines

The survey highlighted several key areas:

- 35% of respondents indicated that they pay between 11-15% of the total negotiated price (TNP) to EPAOs with a further 25% paying between 16-20% of the TNP.
- The cost of resits/retakes beyond those included in the initial EPA cost is evenly split between Provider (43.7%) and Employer (47.5%).
- The wait for apprentices between gateway and EPA is most commonly 1-3 months (58.75%).
- Most respondents indicated that they “agree for some standards” (43.75%) EPA availability has improved.
- 76.25% of respondent’s standards have mandatory qualifications within the standard however, respondents were less clear regarding whether mandatory qualifications will affect the choice of EPA the picture was spilt between strongly agree (21.79%), agree (26.92%) and neither agree/disagree (48.72%).
- 45% of respondents either disagree or strongly disagree that apprentices value the EPA element of their apprenticeship.

- Whereas the picture is more mixed in relation to how providers think Employers perceive EPA with the majority of respondents spread between Agree (22.78%), Neither Agree/Disagree (32.91%) and Disagree (29.11%).
- Invigilation is identified as one of the most common additional costs which providers were not expecting to experience. This is particularly where End Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs) are conducting exams remotely and are insisting on providers using a paid for remote invigilator.
- Numbers of withdrawals post gateway but prior to EPA seems to vary depending on sector. The majority are due to achieving a mandatory qualification prior to EPA but some leave as they still haven't pass functional skills and as a result can't progress to EPA.

## Analysis of data

The survey used a mix of question types including ratings and free text responses. As a result, the analysis within this section is primarily focused on the free text responses, highlighting some of the common themes.

Whilst integrating the mandatory qualifications into EPA is widely seen as a positive proposal, there is a concern amongst providers that mandatory qualifications will slow down EPA and lead to more paperwork for providers in terms of evidence required for gateway by EPAOs. Similar concerns that AELP expressed in our Mandatory Qualifications Consultation response (Submission 110) earlier this year. However, the impact that this change could have on the overall apprenticeship Qualification Achievements Rates (QAR) is quite significant, possibly up to a 5% increase in providers QAR outcomes.

We asked providers to list their top three areas of priority for EPA going forward, this question received a wide range of different responses however, common themes have been identified including:

- Increased consistency across EPAOs and standards within the same EPAO.
- Consistency in use of systems and improved responsiveness of EPAOs.
- Availability of EPA slots; both location and times.
- Improved feedback provided to apprentices following EPA from EPAOs.

Respondents expressed that increased transparency of data relating to EPA is required. Providers are currently, unable to identify how their apprentices are achieving compared to others on the same standard. The availability of data would also help to identify where issues with an EPA's design exist and need to be investigated further by trailblazers, for example where there is a consistently low pass rate within an element of an EPA which may need altering for a different assessment method.

Communication was mentioned frequently as an issue however, this is a difficult issue to quantify the impact it has on EPA as EPAOs often also complain that communication with providers is an issue for them for their organisation too. Highlighting that this is likely to an area which requires mutual improvement.

## Recommendations

AELP is recommending six areas of focus relating to EPA which if improved could make a significant impact for training providers and EPAOs. We want to see improvements in the following areas:

1. **Demand and Availability:** Improving availability for apprentices to sit EPA by enabling end-point assessments started by 31 July to be recorded as complete if all elements of the EPA have been finalised ahead of R14. This would ease capacity in the system by smoothing out the artificial surge for demand caused by EPA needing to be completed by 31 July each year.
2. **Capacity:** Additional locations for apprentices to sit EPA particularly outside of major cities to enable improved coverage. In addition, more Independent Assessors are required to enable additional availability to be provided by EPAOs.
3. **Transparency:** Improved transparency data relating to EPA. Including:
  - EPA outcomes by standard.
  - EPA pass rates.
  - Cost variations.
  - EQA outcomes.

By increasing the transparency of EPA data particularly EPA pass rates this would enable DfE to use a more meaningful measure for standards within the QAR methodology. This would be a more appropriate method to show achievement for standards particularly as when an apprentice withdraws the reasons are often outside of a providers control.

4. **Product suitability:** Creation of Assessment Plans which are viable and appropriate for delivery. Improved approval and revision process which include providers and EPAOs
5. **Integrated assessment:** Including mandatory qualifications within an EPA. Ensuring more apprentices complete EPA where mandatory qualifications are present improving QAR for providers in turn supporting improvement within the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework.
6. **Funding pressures:** Increase funding bands to reflect growing pressure for both providers and EPAOs. Recognition that costs change especially over a 3–5-year programme and increased costs.

## Next steps

The following will be undertaken to further this piece of work:

- Conduct an End Point Assessment Survey with EPAOs to gain their views and complete a comparison between providers and EPAO experiences.
- Share the findings of the surveys with relevant stakeholders and departments.

