

GUIDANCE

End-Point Assessment (EPA) Flexibilities

Guide to the data submission process

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ofqual

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Introduction

In order to fulfil our regulatory and accreditation functions as set out in the [Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#), we require awarding organisations to provide assessment delivery data for regulated qualifications.

Ofqual requires this information on the flexibilities and temporary discretions used to deliver apprenticeship end-point assessments (EPAs) through the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic for the purposes of performing its functions. Specifically, the purpose for collecting the information is:

- to obtain a greater understanding of the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the delivery of EPAs
- to be able to ensure that EPAs are fair, consistent and robust across different apprenticeship standards and between different assessment organisations.

As an External Quality Assurance (EQA) provider, we are responsible for ensuring that EPA results are reliable and accurate measures of the knowledge, skills and behaviours of apprentices. We therefore monitor the delivery of EPAs by drawing on a number of sources of information.

When will data be collected?

Data will be collected according to the vocational and technical qualifications [reporting schedule](#) which is agreed and maintained by Ofqual's data services team.

What data will be collected?

Data on flexibilities and temporary discretions used to deliver apprenticeship EPAs through the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes flexibilities and temporary discretions used for

- 1) assessment components of the EPA and
- 2) the EPA as a whole.

Note that the data is to be provided using two separate data collection templates specified below.

The data should cover the period from 1 March 2021 until 28 February 2022. The data should be provided for all EPAs where Ofqual is the regulator as of 1 January 2022, including those no longer available to new apprentices.

File format

The files must be CSV format and the first row must be headers as displayed in the 'Name' column of the tables below. The subsequent rows must have the values of the data to be reported which must match the format and validation rules below.

Changes

Please note some changes have been introduced to the templates for collecting data on flexibility options and temporary discretions used for EPAs. They are:

- the list of assessment methods used in field 9 of Template 1 has been modified (Annex A)
- the list of COVID-19 flexibility options applicable to individual components used in field 10 of Template 1 has been updated (Annex B)
- the list of COVID-19 flexibility options applicable to the EPA as a whole used in field 7 of Template 2 has been updated (Annex C).

General completion guidelines

In order to capture the different levels at which flexibilities to assessments were introduced, the following key terms are used in the templates:

- EPA – the overall qualification
- Component – an individual assessment that contributes towards the EPA, such as an observation, practical demonstration, test, project, presentation, professional discussion, etc.

The terms used in the templates and particularly in the 'Name' column mainly follow those that are used elsewhere in Ofqual's regulatory framework. Where a generic term is used in the templates, it should be read as referring to the relevant term in the context of EPAs. For example, 'awarding organisations' will be end-point assessment organisations and a 'qualification' will be an EPA.

The information required should be returned in CSV format via the Data Portal only. Two files containing data are required (one for each template).

The first row in each file must be headers as displayed in the 'Name' column of the data collection templates provided in the tables below. The subsequent rows must have the values of the data to be reported which must match the format rules listed in the templates.

Where multiple flexibility options have been used within individual assessment components or the overall EPA, a new line of data should be used for each flexibility option that has been used.

Values for each field are compulsory. Some fields permit a value of -2 to indicate where the field is not applicable or not available for the row of data in question. Where a value of -2 is not permitted it is mandatory to provide a valid value for the field.

Template 1. EPA Flexibilities: Component level

Name	Description	Position	Values
ReportingDate	Date the file was due to be submitted regardless of when it was actually uploaded (date provided by Ofqual).	1	The date in the following format: year (4 digits), a dash, month (2 digits), a dash, day (2 digits) Format accepted 120 ODBC canonical yyyy-mm-dd
AwardingOrganisation	Name of the awarding organisation offering the EPA (as it appears in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications)	2	1 to 100 characters accepted
AwardingOrganisationID	Unique identifier of the awarding organisation offering the EPA (as it appears in the Register of End-point Assessment Organisations)	3	A 7-character code in the following format EPAxxxx, e.g. EPA1234
StandardTitle	Title of the Standard for which the EPA is delivered (as it appears in the Apprenticeship Standard Register)	4	1 to 100 characters accepted
StandardID	Unique identifier of the Standard for which the EPA is delivered (as it appears in the Apprenticeship Standard Register)	5	A 6-character code in the following format STxxxx, e.g. ST1234
QualificationNumber	Unique identifier for the EPA as it appears in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications	6	^.{1,10}\$ -2 accepted where this value is not available
ComponentCode	Unique identifier for the component (assigned by the awarding organisation)	7	1 to 20 characters accepted -2 accepted where the code is not available

Name	Description	Position	Values
ComponentTitle	Title of the component (assigned by the awarding organisation)	8	1 to 100 characters accepted
AssessmentMethod	<p>Description of the assessment method used for the component</p> <p>If multiple assessment methods are used, please record the <i>primary</i> method here.</p> <p>The list of assessment methods is given in <i>Annex A</i> below. Please choose the most appropriate one</p>	9	Accepted values provided in <i>Annex A</i> (given below)
FlexibilityOptionAssessment	<p>Flexibility option or temporary discretions used for the assessment component as specified by IFATE Guidance.</p> <p><i>The list of flexibility options and temporary discretions applicable to individual components is given in Annex B below. Note that 'No flexibilities' is included as an option for where no flexibilities or temporary discretions were used</i></p>	10	Accepted values provided in <i>Annex B</i> (given below)
NumberOfAssessments	Number of assessments carried out when using the specified flexibility or temporary discretion	11	A numeric value greater than or equal to 0 accepted
NumberOfApprentices	Number of Apprentices assessed using the specified flexibility or temporary discretion	12	A numeric value greater than or equal to 0 accepted

- End of the template -

Template 2. EPA Flexibilities: Qualification level

Name	Description	Position	Values
ReportingDate	Date the file was due to be submitted regardless of when it was actually uploaded (date provided by Ofqual).	1	The date in the following format: year (4 digits), a dash, month (2 digits), a dash, day (2 digits) Format accepted 120 ODBC canonical yyyy-mm-dd
AwardingOrganisation	Name of the awarding organisation offering the EPA (as it appears in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications)	2	1 to 100 characters accepted
AwardingOrganisationID	Unique identifier of the awarding organisation offering the EPA (as it appears in the Register of End-point Assessment Organisations)	3	A 7-character code in the following format EPAxxxx, e.g. EPA1234
StandardTitle	Title of the Standard for which the EPA is delivered (as it appears in the Apprenticeship Standard Register)	4	1 to 100 characters accepted
StandardID	Unique identifier of the Standard for which the EPA is delivered (as it appears in the Apprenticeship Standard Register)	5	A 6-character code in the following format STxxxx, e.g. ST1234
QualificationNumber	Unique identifier for the EPA as it appears in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications	6	^.{1,10}\$ -2 accepted where this value is not available

Name	Description	Position	Values
FlexibilityOptionEPA	Flexibility option applied to the EPA as a whole as specified by IFATE Guidance <i>The list of flexibility options applicable to the EPA as a whole is given in Annex C below. Note that 'No flexibilities' is included as an option for where no flexibilities were used</i>	7	Accepted values provided in <i>Annex C</i> (given below)
NumberOfApprentices	Number of Apprentices assessed using the specified flexibility	8	A numeric value greater than or equal to 0 accepted

- End of the template -

Annex A – List of assessment methods

Please use the following list of assessment methods for entering a value for the component assessment method in field 9 of Template 1. Where terms used by an awarding organisation differ from those given below, please select the closest match possible.

Assessment method	Description and examples
Observation	<p>An observation involves an independent assessor observing an apprentice undertaking a task or series of tasks in the workplace as part of their normal duties.</p> <p>For example <i>practical observation, simulated observation, recorded role play, etc.</i></p>
Practical assessment	<p>A practical assessment involves an independent assessor observing an apprentice undertaking a set task or a series of set tasks in a simulated environment.</p> <p>For example <i>skills test, practical assessment test, task-based challenge, etc.</i></p>
Multiple-choice question test	<p>A multiple-choice test consists of a series of questions in which apprentices are asked to select the correct answer(s).</p>
Written test	<p>A written test consists of a series of questions which apprentices are required to answer using short or long answer responses.</p> <p>For example <i>extended-answer test.</i></p>
Professional discussion	<p>A professional discussion is a two-way discussion between an independent assessor and an apprentice.</p>

	For example <i>structured discussion</i> .
Interview	<p>An interview consists of an independent assessor asking an apprentice a series of questions.</p> <p>For example <i>interview, question and answer session, VIVA, etc.</i></p>
Presentation	<p>A presentation involves an apprentice presenting to an independent assessor on a particular topic. It will be followed by a questioning session from the independent assessor.</p> <p>For example <i>presentation, personal statement, showcase, etc.</i></p>
Project	<p>This assessment method involves the apprentice completing a significant and defined piece of work after the gateway. This could involve a written essay or producing an item (an 'apprentice piece/artefact').</p> <p>For example, <i>assignment project, practical project, etc.</i></p>
Portfolio / logbook	<p>A portfolio is a collection of pieces of evidence, gathered together on-programme, that is used as the underpinning basis of an end-point assessment method.</p> <p>A logbook is a record of achievement created over the course of the on-programme element of the apprenticeship and can be used as the underpinning basis of an end-point assessment method.</p>

Annex B – List of COVID-19 flexibility options and temporary discretions used to deliver individual component assessments

Please use the following list of COVID-19 flexibility options and temporary discretions for entering values in field 10 of Template 1. Where terms used by an awarding organisation differ from those given below, please select the closest match possible.

COVID-19 flexibility options	Description and Examples
No flexibilities	This option is applicable to assessment components where no flexibilities were used. The apprentice took the assessment in the manner outlined in the assessment plan.
Alternative venue	This option is applicable to assessment components where the assessment physically took place in an alternative venue, including an apprentice's home.
Alternative EPA panel members	This option is applicable to assessment components (e.g. interviews, discussions) where someone in addition to the independent assessor was specified to sit on a panel but due to COVID-19 related circumstances they could not be present.
Remote delivery of the assessment	This option is applicable to assessment components where face-to-face assessment was normally undertaken, but due to COVID-19 related circumstances it was delivered remotely, using a video recording, web cam or via online video communication.
Simulated environment	This option is applicable to assessment components where simulated environments were used for practical assessments.
Electronic delivery	This option is applicable to assessment components where exams/test were conducted

COVID-19 flexibility options	Description and Examples
	<p>online instead of on paper (where originally specified as paper based only)</p> <p>Please note this flexibility does not relate specifically to remote delivery or change of venue.</p>
Other temporary discretions	As published by the IfATE for this standard.

Annex C – List of COVID-19 flexibilities used to deliver EPA as a whole

Please use the following list of COVID-19 flexibility options for entering values in field 7 of Template 2. Where terms used by an awarding organisation differ from those given below, please select the closest match possible.

COVID-19 flexibility options	Description
No flexibilities	No flexibility was used for the EPA.
Pause after gateway	The EPA was rescheduled by allowing pauses between assessments during the EPA period, i.e. after gateway.
Different order	Assessments within the EPA were delivered in a different order to that specified in the assessment plan.
Remote gateway sign-off	Gateway sign-off was done remotely, with the agreement of the apprentice, employer and training provider.
Extended EPA period	A time limit by which the EPA must be completed after gateway was extended compared to that specified in the EPA plan.
Replacement of functional skills qualifications	Other suitable evidence of achievements was used in replacement of functional skills qualifications.

Contacts

For all queries relating to the data collection process, amendments to data previously provided, or for general guidance, please contact:

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