

Public Relations and Communications Assistant Apprenticeship Standard, Level 4 End Point Assessment Plan

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Introduction & Overview

This document sets out the requirements for end point assessment (EPA) for the public relations and communications assistant apprenticeship standard, level 4. It is written for end point assessment organisations (EPAOs) who need to know how EPA for this apprenticeship must operate. It will also be of interest to public relations and communications assistant apprentices, their employers and training providers.

Full time apprentices will typically spend 12-18 months on-programme working towards the apprenticeship standard, with a minimum of 20% off-the-job training.

The EPA should only start once the employer is satisfied that the apprentice is consistently working at or above the level set out in the standard, the pre-requisite gateway requirements for EPA have been met and that they can be evidenced to an EPA organisation. As a gateway requirement, the employer and independent assessor must agree a work-based project that the apprentice will complete during the EPA period.

The work-based project will be the basis for the project report, presentation and questioning component of the EPA. In addition, apprentices without English and mathematics at level 2 must achieve level 2 prior to taking their EPA.

The EPA must be completed within a maximum 14-week period, after the apprentice has met the EPA gateway requirements.

EPA must be conducted by an organisation approved to offer services against this standard, as selected by the employer, from the Education & Skills Funding Agency's (ESFAs) Register of End Point Assessment Organisations (RoEPAO).

The EPA consists of 2 distinct assessment methods:

- knowledge test
- project report, presentation and questioning

Performance in the EPA will determine the apprenticeship grade of fail, pass or distinction.

On-programme (typically 12-18 months)	End Point Assessment Gateway	End Point Assessment (maximum 14 weeks)	Professional Recognition (optional)
Training to develop the occupation standard's knowledge, skills and behaviours	English/maths Level 2 Agreement of work-based project	Project report, presentation & questioning Knowledge test	Membership of the Public Relations & Communications Association (PRCA)
Working towards English and maths Level 2 (if required)	Employer satisfied apprentice is consistently working at or above the level of the standard	Graded fail, pass or distinction	

Diagram 1. Typical Public Relations and Communications Assistant Apprenticeship Summary

End Point Assessment Gateway

The EPA should only start once the employer is satisfied that the apprentice is consistently working at or above the level set out in the standard, the pre-requisite gateway requirements for EPA have been met and that they can be evidenced to an EPA organisation. Employers may wish to take advice from their apprentice's training provider(s).

Gateway requirements:

- English and mathematics at level 2
- Agreement by the apprentice's employer and the EPAO, of a work-based project, to be completed by the apprentice during the EPA period. The work-based project will be the basis for the project report, presentation and questioning assessment method. The agreed work-based project start date will mark the start of the apprentice's 14-week EPA period.

Work project requirements:

- Reflects the typical duties and responsibilities of a public relations and communications assistant, as such the apprentice is expected to be working under supervision.
- Includes the apprentice producing and distributing written and non-written content.
- Involves working with internal colleagues and external clients.
- Requires use of IT software and social media.
- Must be 'real' work completed for the apprentice's employer i.e. simulated projects are not allowable.

- Can be completed over a 6-8-week period after the EPA gateway.
- Can be completed as part of and alongside the apprentice's normal work duties/responsibilities.
- Provides the opportunity for the apprentice to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) being assessed by the project report, presentation and questioning assessment method, as shown in annex 1.
- The project objective will be to increase awareness and interest in or on behalf of a client. Example projects may include:
 - leading on the social media associated with a client's campaign
 - planning and execution of an event
 - creating stories/narrative to successfully engage media
 - developing public relations (PR) tactics and strategies for repositioning a client in the minds of the public

End Point Assessment Methods, Timescales & Location

The EPA consists of 2 distinct assessment methods:

- knowledge test
- project report, presentation and questioning

The EPA must be completed within a maximum period of 14-weeks, after the apprentice has met the EPA gateway requirements. The agreed work-based project start date will mark the start of the apprentice's 14-week EPA period.

The assessment methods can be completed in any particular order, allowing EPAOs flexibility in scheduling and cost-effective allocation of resources.

EPAOs must ensure that the presentation and questioning elements and knowledge test are conducted in a suitable controlled environment i.e. quiet room free from distraction and influence, with the necessary equipment for each assessment method e.g. computer, power-point facilities (if required by the apprentice). It is anticipated that EPAOs will use the apprentice's employer's premises wherever possible to minimise costs. They may be conducted face-to-face or via an online platform e.g. video-conferencing. EPAOs must ensure appropriate methods to prevent misrepresentation are in place should an online option be used. For example, screen share and 360-degree camera function with an administrator/investigator when taking the knowledge test on-line.

Requirements for each assessment method detailed below.

Method 1. Knowledge Test

- Apprentices must complete a knowledge test during the EPA period.

- The knowledge test must assess apprentices against the standard's knowledge and skills as shown in annex 1.
- The knowledge test must consist of 30 multiple-choice, split evenly between scenario/knowledge based questions – 15 of each.
- Each question must present the apprentice with 4 options, from which the apprentice must select the correct answer.
- Each question answered correctly must be assigned 1 mark, any incorrect, partially completed or missing answers must be assigned 0 marks.
- Apprentices must have a maximum of 1-hour to complete the knowledge test.
- The knowledge test must be closed book i.e. the apprentice cannot refer to reference books or materials.
- Knowledge tests can be electronic or a paper-based.
- Apprentices must take the knowledge test in the presence of an EPAO administrator/invigator.
- The maximum administrator/invigator to apprentice ratio must be 1 to 10 if face-to-face; or 1 to 5 if remote.
- Knowledge tests must be marked by EPAO independent assessors or markers following a marking guide produced by the EPAO; electronic marking is permissible.
- Independent assessors must award a grade using the following grading boundaries.

Grading boundaries	Fail	Pass	Distinction
Marks	0-17	18-24	25-30

- It is recommended that EPAOs develop questions, in consultation with representative employers.
- EPAOs must ensure the knowledge test is available for apprentices within their 14-week EPA time period.
- EPAOs must develop and maintain a knowledge test question bank of sufficient size to mitigate predictability.
- Knowledge test questions must be set so that a pass will represent occupational competence in the apprentices' knowledge and understanding as set out in annex 1.
- EPAOs must ensure that apprentices have a different set of questions in the case of re-sits/re-takes.

Method 2. Project Report, Presentation and Questioning

- Apprentices must complete a project report, presentation and questioning relating to the work project completed during the EPA period; and agreed as an EPA gateway requirement.

- The project report, presentation and questioning must assess apprentices against the standard's KSBs as shown in annex 1.
- The evidence from the assessment method's 3 elements – report, presentation and questioning, must be assessed holistically against the KSBs.

Project Report Element:

- Apprentices must submit a project report to their EPAO within 10 weeks of the agreed project start date.
- The project report must be 2,500 words +/-10%, excluding annexes.
- The project report should cover the project context, the apprentice's responsibilities, action taken by the apprentice (planning and execution) and an evaluation of the outcomes.
- The report must include an annex containing a maximum of 10 pieces of evidence relating to the project. The evidence must be attributable to the apprentice, in part or in full. Evidence must be accompanied by a statement outlining the apprentice's contribution, signed by the apprentice and their employer. Example evidence may include blog content, press releases, client feedback, manager feedback, video clips. This list is not definitive and other evidence sources are permissible. The annex must include a mapping of the evidence to the KSBs assessed by this assessment method.
- The objectives of the work project and examples of approaches taken are as set out in the previous work project requirements section.

Presentation and Questioning Elements:

- EPAOs must schedule the presentation and questioning elements to take place within the final 3 weeks of the apprentice's 14-week EPA period, giving an apprentice a minimum of 2-weeks' notice of the time, date and venue.
- The presentation and questioning elements must take place on a one-to-one basis between an independent assessor and an apprentice.
- The presentation and questioning must take place consecutively.
- Prior to the presentation and questioning, the independent assessor must have reviewed the apprentice's project report and prepared questions for the questioning element. However, the questions may be modified to take account of the presentation evidence.
- Apprentices must give a presentation on an evaluation of their project i.e. what went well, lessons learnt and recommendations for future projects.
- The presentation must take 10 minutes +/- 1 minute.
- Apprentices can use presentation aides i.e. power-point, video clips, flip chart, work products, notes.
- EPAOs must ensure any reasonable presentational requirements are in place e.g. power-point facilities; apprentices must make any requirement requests at least two weeks prior to the scheduled date for the presentation and questioning.
- Following the presentation, the independent assessor must ask the apprentice 8-10 open questions; follow up questions are allowed to seek clarification.
- Questioning must be completed during a 25-minute period +/- 2 minutes.

- Questions must seek to assess KSBs not evidenced through the project report and presentation and/or depth of understanding to assess performance against the distinction criteria.
- Apprentices may refer to their project report, evidence contained within the project report annex, presentation or presentation aides when answering the questions.
- EPAOs must produce sample questions as a guide for independent assessors.
- The presentation and questioning should be recorded electronically, subject to the apprentice's agreement; where permission is not given it is permissible for a note taker to be present to document evidence presented.
- Independent assessors must assess and grade the report, presentation and questioning using the grading criteria in annex 2.

Apprenticeship Grading

Independent assessors must individually grade each assessment method – fail, pass or distinction, according to the requirements set out in this plan. Restrictions on grading apply where apprentices re-sit/re-take an assessment method – see re-sit/re-take section below.

An independent assessor must combine the grades of both assessment methods to determine the EPA grade. To achieve an EPA pass, apprentices must achieve a pass or distinction in both assessment methods. To achieve an EPA distinction, apprentices must at the least, achieve a distinction in the project report, presentation and questioning assessment method. See grading combinations table below.

Where more than one independent assessor is involved, the independent assessor responsible for the assessment method completed last will be responsible for combining the grades.

Independent assessors' decisions must be subject to moderation by the EPAO – see internal quality assurance section below. Decisions must not be confirmed until after moderation.

Knowledge test grade	Project report, presentation and questioning grade	EPA grade
Fail	Fail	Fail
Pass	Fail	Fail
Fail	Pass	Fail
Distinction	Fail	Fail
Fail	Distinction	Fail
Pass	Pass	Pass
Distinction	Pass	Pass
Pass	Distinction	Distinction
Distinction	Distinction	Distinction

Re-sit and Re-take Information

Apprentices who fail one or more assessment method will be offered the opportunity to take a re-sit/re-take. Apprentices will only need to re-sit/re-take the assessment method that they fail, and not re-take the whole EPA. Re-sits/re-takes must not be offered to apprentices wishing to move from pass to distinction. A re-sit does not require further learning, whereas a re-take does.

The apprentice's employer will need to agree that a re-sit/re-take is an appropriate course of action. Apprentices should have a supportive action plan to prepare for the re-sit/re-take.

An individual re-sit/re-take must be successfully passed within 14 weeks of the apprentice successfully completing the other assessment method, otherwise the entire EPA must be re-sat/re-taken.

The maximum grade awarded to a re-sit/re-take will be pass, unless the EPAO identifies exceptional circumstances accounting for the original fail.

EPAOs must ensure that apprentices complete a different knowledge test and/or work-based project when taking a re-sit/re-take.

Professional Body Recognition

Anyone successfully completing the apprenticeship will be eligible to apply for membership of the Public Relations & Communications Association (PRCA).

End Point Assessment Organisations

Employers must choose an EPAO approved to deliver the EPA for this apprenticeship from the Education & Skills Funding Agency's (ESFAs) Register of End Point Assessment Organisations (RoEPAO).

EPAOs must appoint:

- administrators/invigilators and markers to administer/invigilate and mark the knowledge test
- independent assessors to verify the grading of the knowledge test
- independent assessors to assess and grade the project report, presentation and questioning
- quality assurance staff to undertake moderation and standardisation of EPA

Independent assessors must meet the following requirements:

- be independent of the apprentice, their employer and training provider(s) i.e. there must be no conflict of interest
- hold or be working towards an assessor qualification e.g. A1 and have had training from their EPAO in terms of good assessment practice, operating the assessment tools and grading

- have a minimum of 5-years' experience working in a public relations and communications occupation at level 5 e.g. account executive or above and have completed a minimum of 3-days continuing professional development (CPD) relevant to public relations and communications in the last year; they do not necessarily still need to be employed in a public relations and communications occupation
- undertake a minimum of 1-days' EPAO standardisation training per year

EPAO's must appoint administrators/invigilators and markers to administer/invigilate and mark the knowledge test and recorder to document to the presentation & questioning elements if required. They must have no direct connection with the apprentice, their employer or training provider i.e. there must be no conflict of interest. There are no specific qualification or experience requirements for administrators/invigilators/markers/note taker. They must be trained in the task(s) by their EPAO and operate according to their guidance.

Quality assurance staff must hold or be working towards quality assurance qualifications. They must be independent of the apprentice, their employer and training provider i.e. there must be no conflict of interest.

Internal Quality Assurance

Internal quality assurance refers to the requirements that EPAO must have in place to ensure consistent (reliable) and accurate (valid) assessment decisions. EPAOs for this EPA must undertake the following:

- appoint independent assessors that meet the requirements as detailed in this plan – see independent assessor requirements above
- provide training for independent assessors in terms of good assessment practice, operating the assessment tools and grading
- have quality assurance systems and procedures that support fair, reliable and consistent assessment across organisation and over time
- operate regular standardisation events that enable assessors to attend a minimum of 1 event per year
- operate moderation of assessment activity and decisions, through examination of documentation and observation of activity, with a minimum of 15% of each independent assessors' assessments moderated

Assessment Tools and Materials

EPAOs must produce assessment tools and supporting materials for the EPA, as follows:

- Knowledge test question bank
- Sample questions for project report, presentation and questioning
- Documentation for recording assessment evidence and decisions
- Guidance for independent assessors on conducting the EPA
- Guidance for apprentices, their employers and training providers on the EPA

External Quality Assurance

External quality assurance for this apprenticeship standard will be undertaken by the Institute for Apprenticeships.

Implementation

Affordability

It is anticipated that the EPA will not represent more than 20% of the maximum funding band for this apprenticeship.

The following factors should ensure the EPA is affordable:

- Employers premises should be used for EPA venues where possible
- Remote assessment is permissible, reducing travel costs
- The work-based project is based on real work completed for the apprentice's employer, adding value to the employer

Volumes

It is anticipated that there will be 50-60 starts per year on this apprenticeship and 100 per year once established.

Annex 1 – Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours Assessed by each Assessment Method

Assessment method	Key
Knowledge test	T
Project report, presentation and questioning	P

Knowledge statement	Assessment method
1. Current affairs, the PR industry, the media and marketing	T
2. Finance processes related to PR campaigns	T
3. The principles of operational management	T
4. How and when to use IT	P
5. Planning and production processes involved in building campaigns	P
6. Public Relations and Communications objectives	T

Skills statements	Assessment method
1. Use IT effectively to support campaigns	P
2. Build effective relationships & interpersonal communications	P
3. Assist campaigns by carrying out many support tasks	P
4. Produce content (written)	P
5. Support production of non-written content	P
6. Content distribution	P
7. Evaluate results	P

Behaviour statements	Assessment method
1. Proactive; able to manage expectations	P
2. Able to work as part of a team	P
3. Enthusiastic attitude; keen to learn; share ideas and learning	P
4. Committed; punctual; reliable; takes personal responsibility	P
5. Creativity in developing ideas and overcoming challenges	P

Annex 2 – Project Report, Presentation and Questioning Grading Criteria

KSB(s)	Distinction criteria, in addition to the pass criteria the apprentice displays 7 or more of the following	Pass criteria, the apprentice displays all of the following:	Fail criteria, the apprentice displays one or more of the following:
How and when to use IT (K4, S1)	Evaluates and suggests improvement measures and the apprentice is capable of taking the lead on this area for the team	Uses a range (2 or more) of appropriate IT tools effectively in supporting PR campaigns including but not limited to Facebook/Instagram/Twitter	No or inappropriate use of IT tools in supporting PR campaigns, including but not limited to Facebook/Instagram/Twitter
Planning and production processes involved in building campaigns (K5, B4)	Provides an evaluation of the impact the required timeframes/deadlines had and can suggest improvement measures	Meets required deadlines Understands the importance of digital build and content creation timeframes, lead times and media deadlines Explains how crisis management can affect business and the importance of planning for it	Does not meet required deadlines Unable to explain the importance of crisis management and how it can affect business
Build effective relationships & interpersonal communications (S2)	Takes the initiative in developing and building relationships Provides more than 3 examples of positive relationship management and the impact it provided	Verbal, written communication and presentations skills get message across and are appropriate to audience Provides 2-3 examples of positive relationship management - internal and external	Verbal, written communication and presentations skills fail to get message across and/or are inappropriate to audience No or less than 2 examples of positive relationship management
Assist campaigns by carrying out many support tasks (S3)	Demonstrates an ability to reflect upon existing/chosen methods and suggest improvements	Demonstrates research skills, report writing, event planning and co-ordination, appropriate to the task	Lacks evidence to show skills in research, report writing or event planning and co-ordination
Produce content (written) (S4, B4)	Written work has no grammar/spelling errors Employs a wide range of grammatical techniques to increase effectiveness of written content	Written work- creative and otherwise, is generally free of grammar/spelling errors Written work e.g. press releases, feature pitches, blogs and other written content is tailored to different audiences	Written work has frequent grammatical/spelling errors
Support production of non-written content (S5)	Able to use film, video, infographics in the creation of content and tailored to the appropriate audience, with little or no supervision	Evidence of using film, video, infographics in the creation of content, tailored to the appropriate audience	Unable to provide examples or provide sufficient reason to the role undertaken in using film, video and infographics in the creation of content

	If the opportunity arises they are capable to lead on this area		
Content distribution (S6)	<p>Consistent evidence in the skills of influencing, persuasion, selling, client management and marketing techniques skills</p> <p>3 or more examples provided of successful outcomes and the impact it had</p> <p>Share their skills and develop others if the opportunity arises</p>	<p>Evidence of skills in influencing, persuasion, selling, client management and marketing techniques skills</p> <p>Provides 1-2 examples of successful pitching to media channels, use of appropriate channels to ensure effective marketing and marketing techniques such as segmentation/classification/clustering and targeting</p>	<p>No evidence provided of skills or success in content distribution</p> <p>Evidence of poor decision making</p>
Evaluate results (S7)	<p>Expertise evident in this area and can lead on it and develop colleague's skills in this area</p> <p>Consistently makes suggestions for improvements/cost savings</p>	<p>Evidence of analytical skills</p> <p>Examples provided of effective measurement and critical analysis of PR campaigns</p>	Lacks sufficient evidence of analytical skills or ability to suggest improvements
Proactive; able to manage expectations (B1)	Demonstrates initiative and ability to communicate requirements both internally and externally, provides 3 or more examples	Demonstrates initiative and ability to communicate requirements both internally and externally, provides 1-2 examples	Does not demonstrate initiative and ability to communicate requirements both internally and externally
Able to work as part of a team (B2)	Evidence that they excelled working as part of a team and lead on a given area or managed other team members; 3 or more examples provided from team members on the positive contribution of the apprentice	Demonstrates that they work well as part of a team and are responsible for their team's performance; 2 examples provided from colleagues on the positive contribution of the apprentice	Insufficient evidence that they work well in a team; no, or less than 2 examples provided from team members/colleagues
Enthusiastic attitude; keen to learn; share ideas and learning (B3)	<p>Enthusiasm and positive attitude evident; 3 plus recommendations from colleagues/external clients provided</p> <p>Examples provided of an ability to coach/mentor others</p>	Enthusiasm and positive attitude evident; 1-2 recommendations from colleagues/external clients provided	No evidence that they respond positively to feedback or learn from previous mistakes
Committed; punctual; reliable; takes personal	5 or more examples of commitment e.g. a willingness to travel and or work late to meet deadlines. Can articulate in the discussion how having pride in their	1-2 examples of commitment e.g. a willingness to travel and or work late to meet deadlines. Can articulate in the discussion how having pride in their work motivates them	No or poor evidence of a willingness to travel and or work late to meet deadlines. Unable to articulate in the discussion how having pride in their work motivates them

responsibility (B4)	work motivates them and how this impacts on the wider team		
Creativity in developing ideas and overcoming challenges (B5)	Demonstrates creativity in ideas and evidently thrives on a challenge. Reflects upon and seeks ways to improve; 3 plus examples given of how they overcame a challenge	Demonstrates creativity in ideas and overcoming challenges; 1-2 examples provided and the impact it had articulated competently	Rarely demonstrates creativity in ideas and overcoming challenges; no or poor examples provided