
Summary of apprenticeship assessment reform webinars / Ofqual Consultation

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Date Tue 15/07/2025 1:54 PM

 1 attachment (676 KB)

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Summary of apprenticeship assessment reform webinars

Held on 2 July 2025 for Employers, Training Providers, and the Assessment Community

Thank you for attending one or more of the apprenticeship assessment reform webinars hosted by Skills England (with colleagues from Ofqual, Department for Education (DfE) and Office for Students (OfS) in attendance) on 2 July 2025. We are grateful for your time, thoughtful questions, and active participation. Your engagement is helping shape a more streamlined, proportionate, and collaborative apprenticeship system that works better for apprentices, employers, training providers, and assessment organisations.

What was discussed?

Background and Purpose of the Reforms

The reforms are part of a wider government commitment to improving the apprenticeship system. They are based on a comprehensive 2024 review of end-point assessment (EPA) undertaken by DfE, which found that while apprenticeships continue to deliver strong outcomes, the EPA process can be overly complex, burdensome, and time-consuming.

In response, DfE introduced a new set of principles during National Apprenticeship Week 2025. These principles aim to:

- Simplify assessment plans.
- Remove unnecessary duplication.
- Improve the apprentice experience.
- Maintain rigour and employer confidence.

- Enable innovation and flexibility in assessment design.

New Assessment Plan Models

Three types of assessment plans which will take the form of:

1. Standard Low-Prescription Plan

The most common model. It provides a minimal level of prescription, allowing assessment organisations (AOs) to design their own assessment strategies and specifications. These must align with:

- The streamlined assessment plan
- Minimal level of prescription required to meet DfE assessment principles alongside generic 'rules' (e.g. Ofqual, Skills England 'general requirements')

2. Balancing employer needs with the principles. Plans with More Prescription

For safety-critical or regulated occupations, where medium or high-risk occupations are identified, additional prescription may be added (e.g. for safety, regulatory compliance, etc.)

3. Mandatory Qualification Only

Where a mandatory qualification sufficiently covers the apprenticeship outcomes, it will serve as the sole assessment method. This will be appropriate where the qualification is widely recognised and valued by employers.

Key Changes in Roles and Responsibilities

• Assessment Organisations (AOs)

Will have more autonomy to design assessments, including the choice of methods, timing, and grading approaches. They must justify their decisions and demonstrate how they meet employer needs, and the requirements set out in the streamlined assessment plan and any regulatory requirements.

• Employers

Employers will have two key opportunities to shape the assessment approach: first, by contributing to the specification of assessment requirements during the development of the assessment plan with Skills England (SE); and second, by working with Awarding

Organisations (AOs) to agree on the detailed methods for verifying that competence has been demonstrated during the programme.

In addition, employers will take on a new responsibility: verifying that apprentices have demonstrated the required behaviours during their programme. This replaces the previous requirement for AOs to assess behaviours independently.

• Training Providers

Will play a greater role in determining learner readiness and supporting central or on-programme assessment. They will also need to adapt to new delivery models and collaborate closely with AOs.

• Professional and Statutory Bodies (PSBs)

Will continue to play a role in ensuring apprenticeships align with professional recognition and registration requirements.

Assessment Plan Content

The new assessment plans will be significantly shorter and more focused. They will include:

- Assessment outcomes.
- Minimum number of assessments methods.
- Additional requirements that go beyond the common features (e.g. relating to methods, timing, etc.).
- Performance descriptors.
- Completion requirements, including any mandated qualifications.

Assessment outcomes will replace the need to assess every Knowledge Skill and Behaviour (KSBs) individually, allowing for more holistic and synoptic assessment.

Providers should continue to plan against current EPA plans until revised plans are published.

Ofqual's Regulatory Framework

Ofqual is consulting on proposals for a single regulatory framework to cover all apprenticeship assessments, including foundation apprenticeship assessments. The framework looks to:

- To embed DfE's Apprenticeship Assessment Principles in Ofqual's regulation
- To secure awarding organisations' compliance with the new apprenticeship assessment plans published by Skills England
- To specify key requirements for the design of apprenticeship assessment to ensure their validity
- To enable Ofqual to hold awarding organisations to account for the design and delivery decisions they have made

Awarding organisations, colleges and training providers, employers and apprentices are invited to complete the consultation: [Regulatory framework for apprenticeship assessment](#)

Skills England will publish a parallel framework for non-Ofqual-regulated apprenticeships. External quality assurance for these will be provided by the Office for Students (OfS) or other designated EQA bodies.

Implementation and Timelines

- Five apprenticeships are being tested to evaluate the new model.
- Skills England will begin revising assessment plans in batches from summer 2025.
- All revisions to assessment plans are expected to be completed by **August 2026**.
- Implementation will begin in **2026 and 2027**, with a lead-in period for assessment organisations and providers.
- We are currently aiming to initiate funding band reviews in **early 2026**, once a new funding model is developed.

Summary of further questions on assessment design, delivery, and oversight from the webinars

Apprenticeship assessment design continues to evolve in response to employer needs and regulatory expectations. The assessment plan will specify whether an assessment is on-programme or endpoint only when essential; otherwise, Awarding Organisations (AOs) will determine the approach, guided by the relevant frameworks and employer requirements.

Not all knowledge and skills will be assessed individually. Instead, assessment outcomes will group knowledge and skills into clusters, with sampling permitted where appropriate. Specific guidance on sampling will be provided, particularly where certain knowledge and skills must

be directly assessed.

Ofqual is proposing that there is a substantial proportion of an apprenticeship assessment is marked by the AO. If assessments are marked by providers, independence is one of several factors AOs must consider when they develop their approach to overseeing the reliability and fairness of centre marking.

In cases where apprenticeships include mandatory qualifications, additional assessment will not be necessary—provided the qualification sufficiently covers the knowledge and skills. Where this is not the case, further assessment may still be required to ensure comprehensive evaluation.

To promote consistency across different AOs for a given occupational standard, assessment plans will include assessment outcomes and performance descriptors, setting out the characteristics of a pass grade. Ofqual's regulatory framework requires AOs to justify their design decisions, and comparability and fairness will be monitored not only by Ofqual but also by other External Quality Assurance Providers (EQAPs), such as the Office for Students (OfS), depending on the apprenticeship in question. Concerns about competition among AOs based on ease or cost of assessment will also be addressed through oversight mechanisms. Where an apprenticeship is regulated by Ofqual, measures are in place to prevent such competition and uphold standards. In cases where EQA is provided by other organisations, similar expectations apply, with AOs required to meet performance standards and justify their approaches accordingly.

What's Next

- We are currently collating all questions asked across the three webinars.
- **A more detailed FAQ document** will be published jointly by Skills England, Ofqual, the Office for Students (OfS), and the Department for Education (DfE).
- There will be **further engagement opportunities**, including:
 - Additional webinars and briefings
 - Consultation events
 - Updates via the Skills England website and stakeholder networks

Skills England will also publish lists of upcoming standards due for assessment plan revision.

Thank you again for your continued support and collaboration as we work together to shape the future of apprenticeship assessment.

Regards

Skills England Apprenticeship assessment reform team

Further information on the Ofqual Consultation

Ofqual has launched a [consultation on a proposed new regulatory framework for apprenticeship assessment](#).

The new framework follows the Department for Education's publication of revised apprenticeship assessment principles in February 2025. These reforms are designed to streamline assessment processes by allowing more flexibility in design and delivery.

Under the proposals, assessment would become more proportionate to the competency being tested. The new approach would enable assessment to take place during the programme rather than exclusively at the end, with training providers able to deliver and mark certain assessment elements, subject to appropriate oversight.

This marks a significant departure from the current end-point assessment approach, where all assessment occurs at the completion of the apprenticeship after a gateway process, with independent marking by the Awarding Organisation (AO).

Key elements of the consultation include:

- setting clear national purposes for apprenticeship assessment that align with published occupational standards and streamlined assessment plans from Skills England
- giving AOs greater responsibility for assessment design, structure, delivery and marking decisions
- requiring AOs to produce and maintain assessment strategies for each apprenticeship assessment
- introducing clear transition arrangements as updated assessment plans come into effect

Maintaining validity, reliability and public confidence remains central to Ofqual's regulatory approach. The priority is to ensure that Ofqual's regulation mitigates risks as far as is reasonably possible and so maintains public and employer confidence in the results achieved by apprentices under the new arrangements.

The consultation will **close at 11.45pm on 27th August 2025**, and we hope you will be able to contribute your views.



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