

## Operational Firefighter End-Point Assessment Frequently Asked Questions

**1. Are the representative bodies (e.g. FBU, FOA, RFU) on board and supportive of the firefighter apprenticeship process?**

As an End-Point Assessment Organisation offering the Operational Firefighter EPA, we cannot comment on the views of other organisations. However, the Fire Brigade Union, Fire Officers Association, and National Operational Guidance Programme were all members of the Trailblazer Group and therefore involved in the development of the EPA.

**2. Does this apprenticeship carry the risk of no employment upon completion of the apprenticeship?**

Decisions about employment following completion of the apprenticeship lie with the individual Fire and Rescue Services who have taken on the apprentice.

**3. What level of information do you provide to customers if an apprentice has failed?**

All the criteria in the assessment plan are referenced so customers will be advised which criteria the apprentice has failed on and given a brief summary of why they have failed where appropriate. We would then expect apprentices to have some additional learning and coaching before they re-sit the relevant assessment component.

**4. How do you plan to ensure your Independent Assessors and Lead Assessors keep their occupational competence up to date and how do you check this to ensure that they are aware of any recent developments in the sector?**

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) is checked when Lead Independent Assessors and Independent Assessors are recruited. We then check formally on annual basis as agreements are reviewed and ask them to provide us with evidence of their CPD during the past 12 months. If we do not feel this is sufficient, we will take steps to support them in meeting the requirements.

**5. Have you consulted with, or developed any of our assessment materials with, the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) and if not, why not?**

No, we have not worked with the IFE directly. The IFE were on the Trailblazer Group, which we have engaged with, and successful apprentices will be eligible for professional registration with the Institution of Fire Engineers (IFE) at Technician (TIFireE) level as per the assessment plan.

**6. What experience does your EPA team have in the apprenticeship arena and with End-Point Assessment?**

Our EPA team are experienced in the Awarding Organisation, qualification and assessment arena. As a regulated Awarding Organisation, we keep up to date with developments in the specialist sectors we work in, such as Fire and Rescue, and also those in the education space. End-Point Assessment (EPA) is a new development for the apprenticeship world and through our work on EPA and in collaboration with other organisations such as the Trailblazer Group and the IfATE, we have quickly built up our expertise. We are part of the Workforce Development Trust, which includes Skills for Justice, who also have expertise in apprenticeship framework development and support employers with apprenticeship and EPA delivery. Our team includes staff who are highly experienced with apprenticeships/EPA, and occupationally competent firefighters who work as Independent Assessors and on assessment development.

**7. For those Fire and Rescue Services that have LPG facilities as opposed to 'live' fire, do you consider LPG to be live fire?**

Most of the scenarios that make up the practical observation component of the EPA do not use live fire. There is one scenario that uses live fire, but this makes use of an ISO container which is unlikely to use LPG. We will look at feedback from the assessments and our customers and will consider this for future assessment development.

**8. If the host Fire and Rescue Service wants to use the live fire scenario as part of the practical observation, how do you propose that your Independent Assessors will be able to assess the apprentices e.g. will they be in BA and following apprentices around in a smoke filled environment?**

The live fire scenario has been designed using an ISO container facility. The Independent Assessor will position themselves so they can stand in a place of safety outside the container from where they can observe the apprentice's actions within the container.

**9. Your Employer/Training Provider Guidance document states that in the scenarios that make up the practical observation there can be 'up to 6 apprentices per appliance.' Will you also require an Officer in Charge and a driver?**

The scenario facilitator (e.g. a member of the Fire and Rescue Service/ employer's training team) will be the Officer in Charge. Most scenarios will have the appliance in position so will not require a driver and not all apprentices will be drivers. If one is required, the Fire and Rescue Service will need to provide it.

**10. What is the maximum number of apprentices that you will accept on one EPA?**

The number of apprentices will depend on the resources the Fire and Rescue Service/employer has available and on assessor availability.

**11. Over how many days do you envisage the EPA taking?**

We expect the EPA will be carried out over 3 days.

**12. Will all 3 elements of the EPA be conducted on the same EPA day(s) or will the knowledge test and/or the professional discussion be conducted separate to the practical observation day(s)?**

The knowledge test has to be taken first. The practical observation takes 6 hours, therefore 1 day, and we anticipate that the professional discussion will take place the following day.

As the practical observation lasts 6 six hours, it would be impractical and unfair to expect apprentices to also take the knowledge test on the same day. We therefore expect the EPA will be delivered over 3 days. This could be on 3 consecutive days, or the knowledge test could be taken earlier. We anticipate that the professional discussion will be conducted the day after the observation; the same assessor needs to carry out both the apprentice's observation and professional discussion so logistically it is better that the assessments are scheduled to follow on. The timelines in the assessment plan support this as the test has to be taken within 1 month of Gateway, the observation within 10 weeks and the discussion within 12 weeks.

**13. Is there guidance detailing what the Independent Assessors should be assessing individuals against, to ensure they all work to the same level?**

Independent Assessors assess the apprentice's knowledge, skills and behaviour against the standard using the prescribed assessment methods. They are provided with assessment documentation/templates and mark and grade the assessments according to the criteria prescribed in the assessment plan. Independent Assessors also participate in training and standardisation events to promote consistency across marking and grading.

**14. Can you clarify when the risk assessments for the practical observation will be required by?**

These will be required on the day of the practical observation. The Independent Assessor will ask to see the risk assessment as part of their own checks before the assessments take place.

**15. Will we be provided with a list of potential hazards related to the scenario (which is especially important if they include unusual hazards)? If not, will you accept a reasonably generic risk assessment which includes the Independent Assessor being present?**

The resources list you will be given after Gateway will give an indication of the type of scenarios chosen for your cohort; a generic risk assessment that you would normally use for training activities on the different scenarios (Road Traffic Collisions, Breathing Apparatus and Drills) will be suitable.

**16. Does every candidate have to pass the knowledge test component before being able to move to the next component? If so, do any resits have to be arranged prior to the planned practical observation?**

Although the knowledge test is taken first, the results are only made available to the apprentice/employer/training provider at the end of the EPA and all assessments have been completed, which is when the final overall grade is confirmed. If an apprentice fails the knowledge test, a resit will then be arranged. No resits will therefore need to be arranged before the practical observation.

**17. At what point do we discuss any reasonable adjustments for candidates with additional learning needs? We have a few candidates with dyslexic statements who will need additional time in the written assessment but also may need the Independent Assessor to speak slower and more directly in the professional discussion.**

You will need to let us know at the Gateway stage of any reasonable adjustments that your candidates may have. There is a section on the Gateway form for you to include details.

**18. How are SFJ Awards setting out their timetable of EPA Independent Assessor availability? Do we give you dates on which we want the assessments to take place or do you provide a calendar of availability?**

You book assessments through the calendar on our online booking system.

**19. If SFJ Awards provides two Independent Assessors for an EPA, will the price charged per apprentice cover both IA costs?**

Yes, there will be no additional cost where two Independent Assessors are provided.

**20. How do we go about formalising any agreements with SFJ Awards for undertaking the EPA?**

Organisations should contact SFJ Awards at [epa@sfjawards.com](mailto:epa@sfjawards.com); we will then issue a formal agreement and arrange for you to access our online booking system and resources.

**21. Does the price per apprentice cover all SFJ costs, or are there to be any extras?**

The employer/training provider provides the assessment site, the physical resources and trained staff to facilitate the practical observation, so these are the only anticipated additional costs to yourselves.