

SFJ Awards

End-Point Assessment

Service Guide

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Version Control

Version	Date of issue	Amendment(s)	Page
2	05/12/2023	Updated to include reference to APAR	4
		Booking process for resits and retakes on ACE 360	10

Introduction

The aim of this guide is to provide guidance to customers with apprentices enrolled on to an apprenticeship standard where SFJ Awards is the chosen End-Point Assessment (EPA) Service Provider.

This guide provides details of the SFJ Awards EPA Service offer which includes:

- Details of the EPA support teams.
- The registration and booking process.
- The assessment processes.
- Internal Quality Assurance
- Results and Resits
- Invoicing and Fees

This guide should be read in conjunction with the Customer Guide for the appropriate standard(s) being delivered to apprentices.

Note: In this guide when we say ‘customer’ this can include employers, employer providers and training providers.

All documents referenced in this guide can be found in the Knowledge Base section of ACE 360.

About SFJ Awards

SFJ Awards is part of the Workforce Development Trust, which includes Skills for Health, Skills for Justice and People First. SFJ Awards is an Awarding Organisation and an End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO). We are an EPAO with a difference. We use our sector specific knowledge combined with our expertise in assessment and quality assurance to provide high-quality solutions to our customers and this is reflected in our portfolio of products and services. Our staff use this unique combination to take a practical approach to delivery whilst meeting the rigour of the regulatory requirements and providing a value for money service.

Background to End-Point Assessment

Groups of employers from an occupational route who come together to develop apprenticeship standards, are part of what is known as trailblazer groups. As well as producing the standard, the trailblazer group produces an assessment plan which specifies the way in which an apprentice is to be assessed at the end of their apprenticeship. The assessment is designed to be completely independent of the delivered part of an apprenticeship and takes place after the Gateway point. This is called End-Point Assessment.

EPAOs, who conduct the assessments, are independent bodies and must be approved by Ofqual and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and once approved they are listed on the Apprenticeship Providers and Assessment Register (APAR).

Assessment plans produced by trailblazer groups describe the methods that will be used by the EPAO to make judgements about the apprentice against the KSBs described in the standard. Most assessment plans contain:

- Two or more different assessment methods.
- Information on how the apprenticeship is to be graded.
- Information about which of the KSBs are assessed in each assessment method.

EPAOs base their supporting documentation and processes on the information contained within the assessment plan.

When apprentices have met the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) within the apprenticeship standard and have been signed off by their employer provider or training provider, they are then able to go forward for End-Point Assessment (EPA). This is called Gateway.

The EPAO will ask for information to check that your apprentice is eligible to pass through Gateway to enter the final phase of their apprenticeship. Information on all aspects of Gateway, the required documentation and the ensuing End-Point Assessment is contained in this guide.

SFJ Awards EPA Service

SFJ Awards' role is to manage the End-Point Assessment process and ensure the validity, reliability, and consistency of the assessment methods specified in the apprenticeship assessment plan.

The comprehensive and complementary nature of the End-Point Assessment is designed to ensure that the apprentice is able to draw extensively from across the on-programme delivery, to integrate knowledge, understanding and skills in authentic and demanding workplace contexts, apply their skills and demonstrate the required behaviours in a variety of ways which attest to their professional competence.

EPA Documents and Guides

SFJ Awards produce a range of guides and documents to support customers using the EPA Service. All documents are relevant to each Apprenticeship Standard, and they contain all the information needed for Employers, Training Providers and Apprentices to prepare for EPA. Documents are stored on our portal, Odyssey Online, and full access is provided once a contract to deliver EPA is in place. General documentation, including policies and procedures are held in the Knowledge Base on ACE360.

Contracting

SFJ Awards issue an agreement for customers when providing an EPA Service. The agreement covers the provision and use of the SFJ Awards End-Point Assessment Service as well as the Commercial Terms and General Terms and Conditions of Business. The named person on the contract is responsible for disseminating key information to others within their organisation who will be involved in the EPA service.

Once a signed agreement is in place the onboarding process will begin.

End-Point Assessment Systems

Odyssey Online

SFJ Awards uses Odyssey Online as a secure online portal to store all documentation and supporting resources for End-Point Assessments.

Access to Odyssey Online is provided as part of the onboarding process to enable customers to access guidance documentation for EPA.

ACE360

SFJ Awards uses ACE360 to track the end-to-end process of an EPA.

This includes the:

- Registration of apprentices
- Uploading Gateway evidence
- Scheduling assessments
- Uploading assessment feedback and grading
- Internal quality assurance
- Provision of Results and Feedback
- Automatic certification link

Access to ACE360 is provided as part of the onboarding process and full training will be given.

To access SFJ Awards EPA systems, customers will be required to complete an *EPA Customer User Information Form* this will ask for a Super Admin to be nominated. They will then be sent a link to ACE360. This will be to organise an introductory session by ACE360 to the system, the Super Admin will then be given full permission to the systems and can then set up any additional user accounts.

Rogo

Some apprenticeship standards require a knowledge and skills test to be completed as part of the EPA. Online tests are delivered using our online platform Rogo.

The EPA team will give you further information on this during the onboarding process.

In some circumstances it may not be possible for a customer to use Rogo. This may be due to firewall restrictions for example. In these circumstances the EPA team will discuss alternative options.

Planning EPA

Registration

To assist us with planning we request that all Customers must register an apprentice with us on ACE 360 as soon as or possible **and** at least six months before an apprentice's planned end date.

The information required on registration ensures that we know when your apprentices are going to be approaching gateway and which standard they are working towards, as it includes start dates and planned end dates. This early planning means that we can book in support sessions and manage any required venues and set up for EPA well in advance.

EPA Booking Process

The EPA co-ordination team support Customers through the end-to-end process of EPA. During the onboarding process SFJ Awards ensures that Customers have contact details for the team who will support the booking of EPAs.

The process of bookings for the standard will be communicated during the onboarding session and any changes to this process will be sent out in good time. The assessments may be booked directly onto ACE360 by using the booking tool. We use this tool to assign the assessors and confirm the date and time of the assessment. Some standards are not able to use this tool due to the complexity of the assessment and the booking would therefore be confirmed by using a booking form that will be sent out to all parties once it is completed.

The minimum time from provisional booking to EPA is 60 days. In some instances, the EPA dates may need to be booked well in advance, for example, where a site is required for a practical assessment.

Please note that all bookings remain provisional until gateway evidence has been checked and accepted by SFJ Awards and the booking is confirmed on ACE360, or a booking form signed by the customer has been returned.

The Gateway Process

Apprentice Gateway evidence should be submitted on ACE360 at least **10** working days prior to any provisionally booked End-Point Assessment.

Please note that the booking will not be confirmed until all gateway evidence has been checked and accepted on ACE 360 by SFJ Awards. Submitted gateway evidence will be checked within three working days of upload and approved or rejected with changes as required if appropriate.

Gateway evidence includes:

- Completion of a Gateway Declaration Form which is signed by all parties.
- Evidence of maths and English completions or exemption evidence if applicable
- Any required Gateway evidence, such as portfolio evidence, qualification achievement evidence.

Conflicts of Interest

The independence of End-Point Assessment is central to Government's apprenticeship reform. Conflicts of interest are viewed as integral to the reputation and integrity of apprenticeships. Typically, concerns rest around the independence of the person employed by the EPAO to undertake the End-Point Assessment. Employers have a responsibility to identify, manage and mitigate conflicts of interest that could adversely affect the apprentice.

Please inform us immediately if you identify any conflict of interest that might call the independence of the assessment into question or any other issue that might impact on the integrity of the apprenticeship.

Reasonable Adjustments

Reasonable adjustments are changes that can be requested of the EPAO to ensure that an apprentice with identified learning needs or a disability are not substantially disadvantaged whilst taking their EPA. This should be in comparison to other apprentices undertaking the same EPA without adjustments.

SFJ Awards should be notified regarding any reasonable adjustments as soon as possible. Any identified reasonable adjustment needs should be requested via ACE360 and also at the time of Gateway completion.

Any reasonable adjustment requests must have been approved by SFJ Awards prior to commencement of the End-Point Assessment. Reasonable adjustments cannot be agreed on the day of the End-Point Assessment.

Special considerations are also in place in the unexpected eventuality of an injury, illness or other event that is beyond anyone's control happening when the EPA is taking place.

For more information, please refer to the *SFJ Awards Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration Policy*.

The Assessment Process

The order of component assessments for EPA will be dependent on any requirements specified in the assessment plan, and on the requirements of the employer and apprentice. Full details of each assessment are contained in the Customer Guide and Apprentice Guide for each individual standard, and supported by documents, templates, sample materials and information sessions.

Remote Assessment

SFJ Awards uses web conferencing to carry out remote assessments where appropriate. This will be discussed as part of the onboarding process.

SFJ Awards will share a link with the apprentice no later than two calendar weeks from the date of the EPA. There will also be a copy of the *SFJ Awards EPA Conducting Remote Assessments* guidance provided. This guidance sets out the requirements and responsibilities for all parties involved in the remote assessment and contains technical support information details.

It is the responsibility of the Customer to:

- a) check that firewalls and in-house systems are compatible before the EPA takes place.
- b) ensure that the apprentice is using a suitable device with video capability.
- c) check that the wi-fi connection where the Assessment is taking place has been tested before the EPA commences.

- d) ensure that the assessment location is conducive to assessment:
 - a. the location is quiet, and the Apprentice will be free from distraction.
 - b. there is no access to outside help.
 - c. signage is displayed to indicate that the rooms being used for assessment.
 - d. there are no materials displayed on the walls or elsewhere which may guide the apprentice.
 - e. If required only an authorised representative remains in the room during the EPA – this must be agreed on booking.
- e) A named EPA contact is provided on booking, who will be responsible for ensuring that arrangements are in place before the EPA begins.

The Apprentice must log into the system 10 minutes before the agreed start time.

If the Apprentice is not in attendance by the agreed start time and the EPA Co-ordination team have not been notified of non-attendance or a delay, 15 minutes after the start time the EPA will be cancelled, and a cancellation charge applied.

Remote assessments are recorded for quality assurance purposes (internal and external audits) and Apprentices will be informed of this at the start of the EPA. Apprentices must not record any part of the EPA themselves.

Standardisation and Moderation Activities

After the apprentice has completed their End-Point Assessment SFJ Awards commence a stringent and rigorous set of activities to mark and award a grade. The Independent Assessor (IA) is provided with comprehensive guidance and training in the processing of marking and grading supported by the information in each assessment plan and each standards specific grading criteria. Once the IA has completed the initial marking and grading the documentation is sent on to a second stage of review, called Standardisation and Moderation.

Standardisation is the process that EPAOs use to ensure that assessment has been administered and marked in a consistent and fair manner. It includes checks and balances to ensure that irrespective of the individual IA who has conducted the End-Point Assessment, apprentice work is assessed with a common and shared understanding and interpretation of the assessment criteria.

Moderation is a complementary and action centred process that rectifies or corrects deviations. It is a process whereby results are authenticated, proven to be reliable, validated and finally verified to ensure a true and accurate result every time.

A sign off procedure is followed before the certification stage commences.

Results, Feedback and Certification

The apprentice's results for all components of End-Point Assessment are sent directly to the SFJ Awards End-Point Assessment Quality Team for internal quality assurance. No results or feedback will be given to the apprentice, customer (employer or training provider) on the day of assessments. Component results will show as 'provisional' on ACE360 whilst quality assurance takes place.

Results and Feedback will be issued by SFJ Awards a maximum of 20 working days after the last assessment component has taken place. Providers can access the Results and Feedback Form on ACE360 which contains full feedback covering the knowledge, skills

and behaviours (KSB's) of the apprenticeship standard and shows how and why the KSB's have or have not been achieved. Results and feedback are issued in written format and all assessment documents and digital recordings are used by SFJ Awards for Internal Quality Assurance processes.

Once the apprentice has passed their apprenticeship, their grades are sent automatically via a link from ACE360 to the ESFA EPA portal and an apprenticeship certificate will be sent to the address and contact specified on the portal at registration.

Resits and Retakes

Each assessment plan sets out specific criteria for re-sits and re-takes and this is provided in our guidance documents for each standard.

If a resit/retake is required for a failed assessment component, the customer must contact the EPA co-ordination team by emailing epa@sfjawards.com to arrange a new date. This will then be updated within ACE360 by the co-ordination team.

To achieve a grade of distinction the apprentice must pass each component during the first attempt of the End-Point Assessment. If an apprentice fails one component of the End-Point Assessment and needs to re-sit/re-take it, in most cases they will only be able to achieve an overall grade of pass.

When the result notification recommends a re-take, the employer and training provider should consider a supportive action plan that responds to the weaknesses identified from the original result notification. The action plan should clearly state the nature and extent of the re-training and include the estimated time to prepare the apprentice for the re-take. The timescales and fee for a re-take must be agreed between the employer and SFJ Awards.

All assessment methods must be retaken within the specified timescale as identified in the assessment plan from the initial grading outcome being notified to the customer, otherwise the entire EPA will need to be re-sat/re-taken.

SFJ Awards may charge an additional fee for retakes and resits. Please contact EPA@sfjawards.com for further information.

Enquiries and Appeals about Results

SFJ Awards is committed to providing an excellent End-Point Assessment service. In dealing with our customers, staff at SFJ Awards endeavour to provide a service which is, courteous and quick to respond to customer needs. Nevertheless, at times, there may be situations where an apprentice considers that they might have grounds for an appeal against a decision related to End-Point Assessment.

All staff involved in the delivery of SFJ Awards apprenticeship qualifications and/or SFJ Awards End-Point Assessments, and the apprentices, must be made aware of the contents of the SFJ Awards EPA Enquiries and Appeals Policy.

There are three main stages and at each stage the process will be conducted fairly and consistently, in line with regulatory requirements.

For further details regarding enquiries and appeals, including timelines and fees, please refer to the policy document *End-Point Assessment Enquiries and Appeals Policy*.

Fees

Charging Points

SFJ Awards issues invoices to Customers at the following points:

- On registration to ACE 360 for the Registration Fee
- Following the EPA for the balance of the EPA Fee
- As required for any charge detailed in this Guide.

Fees, including resit/retake charges, are detailed in the SFJ Awards EPA Agreement.

The fee for EPA varies with each Apprenticeship Standard as some assessment methods, for example, on site observations, are more expensive to deliver than others. Prices are set once IfATE approves and publishes the assessment plan.

SFJ Awards are open to discussions around negotiating the price for EPA, based upon volume and scale.

Invoicing terms are specified in the SFJ Awards EPA Agreement.

Cancellations

It may sometimes be necessary for Customers or SFJ Awards to cancel an EPA after booking. SFJ Awards aim to keep cancellation charges to a minimum by working together with customers to ensure that the EPA dates and times are acceptable to all parties once they have been agreed.

Cancellations by the Customer

If the Customer wishes to cancel an EPA, they must inform the SFJ Awards EPA Team. If cancellation is prior to the date of the EPA this must be by email epa@sfjawards.com. If the cancellation is on the day of the EPA, the Customer must telephone the EPA Co-ordination team by telephone.

A cancellation fee will be charged in accordance with the SFJ Awards End-Point Assessment Cancellation Policy. SFJ Awards reserves the right to waive the relevant charge in exceptional circumstances.

SFJ Awards will send customers an email advising that a charge has been levied.

Cancellations by SFJ Awards

Under exceptional circumstances, it may be necessary for SFJ Awards to cancel an End-Point Assessment (EPA) for example:

- Where a booking confirmation has not been fully completed and/or where the Employer/Training Provider has not fulfilled any pre-assessment

requirements. SFJ Awards will inform the Employer/Training Provider at the earliest opportunity to discuss the cancellation and arrange an alternative date.

- Due to operational circumstances beyond SFJ Awards control it may be necessary to re-arrange the scheduled EPA date originally provided to the Employer/Training Provider. In the event that a suitable alternative assessment date cannot be provided, SFJ Awards will refund any fee that has been paid to the Employer/Training Provider does not wish to rebook an EPA.
- SFJ Awards also reserves the right to cancel the EPA in the following circumstances:
 - The required Gateway evidence is not in place.
 - The required pre-assessment evidence is not in place.
 - Authorisation of special access arrangements cannot be verified.
 - If the apprentice does not have appropriate ID.
 - If the apprentice does not attend the EPA.

Cancellations during the EPA

When SFJ Awards is notified of the possibility of a cancellation of an EPA, for example, in the event of an apprentice not attending a remote assessment, the EPA co-ordination team will decide whether the EPA will be rescheduled or cancelled and inform the customer.

Examples are listed below of when an EPA may need to be cancelled by SFJ Awards:

- Concerns over the identity of the Apprentice
- Apprentice being absent.
- Health and Safety concerns including safeguarding.
- Resources/materials (including IT access for remote assessment) not in place.
- Apprentice being unable to continue with the EPA.
- Potential malpractice being identified.

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list.

If an issue can be satisfactorily resolved on the day, then the EPA will continue. If the EPA cannot go ahead, it will be treated as a cancellation and a charge may apply in accordance with the *SFJ Awards End-Point Assessment Cancellation Policy*.

Malpractice/Maladministration

SFJ Awards is committed to providing high-quality EPAs which are graded consistently, accurately and fairly. Incidents of malpractice or maladministration can potentially lead to apprentices being disadvantaged, can require the conducting of costly and time-consuming investigations and may cause reputational damage to the EPAO, employers and training providers. It is therefore important to prevent malpractice or maladministration from occurring. Where it is not possible to prevent this, cases of suspected or actual malpractice or maladministration must be dealt with quickly, thoroughly, and effectively.

It is the responsibility of all SFJ Awards staff, employers and training providers to be vigilant with regard to any events which may lead to malpractice or maladministration occurring, and that all those involved in End-Point Assessment point have arrangements in place to prevent and investigate instances of malpractice and maladministration. This policy comes into effect once Gateway evidence has been submitted. SFJ Awards will investigate malpractice where gateway/assessment evidence has been submitted to meet the EPA assessment requirements whether it was generated on programme within a qualification or non-qualification setting.

SFJ Awards defines *malpractice* as any activity or practice which deliberately contravenes regulatory requirements and/or which compromises or attempts to compromise the integrity of the assessment process, the validity of results or certificates, and/or damages or threatens to damage the credibility, reputation or authority of SFJ Awards and/or its officers, employees or agents and/or which threatens to undermine public confidence in apprenticeships and End-Point Assessment processes.

Use of AI in Assessments

Artificial Intelligence (AI) use refers to the use of AI tools to obtain information and content which might be used in work produced for assessments.

All involved with EPA should be aware that AI tools are evolving and there are often limitations to their use, such as producing inaccurate or inappropriate content.

AI tools must only be used when the conditions of the assessment permit the use of the internet and where the apprentice is able to demonstrate that the final submission is the product of their own independent work and independent thinking.

The misuse of AI tools in relation to assessments at any time constitutes malpractice. The malpractice sanctions available for the offences of 'making a false declaration of authenticity' and 'plagiarism' include disqualification and debarment from taking qualifications or EPA for a number of years. An apprentice's grade may also be affected if they have relied on AI to complete an assessment and, as noted above, the attainment that they have demonstrated in relation to the requirements of the qualification does not accurately reflect their own work.

Examples of AI misuse include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Copying or paraphrasing sections of AI-generated content so that the work is no longer the learner's own
- Copying or paraphrasing whole responses of AI-generated content
- Using AI to complete parts of the assessment so that the work does not reflect the learner's own work, analysis, evaluation or calculations.
- Failing to acknowledge use of AI tools when they have been used as a source of information.
- Incomplete or poor acknowledgement of AI tools
- Submitting work with intentionally incomplete or misleading references or bibliographies.

If an apprentice uses an AI tool which provides details of the sources it has used in generating content, these sources must be verified and referenced in their work in the normal way. Where an AI tool does not provide such details, learners or apprentices should ensure that they independently verify the AI-generated content – and then reference the sources they have used. Further information is available in the *JCQ AI Use in Assessments: Protecting the Integrity of Qualifications guide*.

SFJ Awards defines *maladministration* as any activity, practice or neglect which results in non-compliance with administrative requirements for the delivery of SFJ Awards' End-Point Assessment.

Please note: Serious or persistent occurrences of maladministration may be accelerated to malpractice without the need for any deliberate attempt to contravene regulations.

To ensure the continued integrity of the EPA Service and provide fairness to Customers and Apprentices, SFJ Awards will investigate all allegations or suspicions of suspected malpractice.

For full details please refer to the *SFJ Awards Malpractice and Maladministration policy*.

Feedback on our EPA Service

We are committed to continuously improve our End-Point Assessment services and welcome all feedback.

We will routinely request feedback from employers and training providers following End-Point Assessment and will provide a link to an online survey which will measure the degree to which you, and your apprentices, are satisfied with the assessment process. The survey will also ask for suggestions for improvement.

If you are unhappy with our service as your EPAO please contact us. We aim to investigate and, if possible, rectify any complaints about our services within a short time period. A copy of our *Complaints Policy and Procedure* is available on ACE 360.

Feedback can be sent to epa@sfjawards.com.

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For more information contact SFJ Awards End-Point Assessment Team



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