EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE OF DIGITAL APPRENTICESHIPS

INVITATION TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL TO SUPPORT EMPLOYERS IN THE DELIVERY OF THE SERVICE

Contents

Invitation to submit proposals ................................................. 1

Annexes

  Annex One: IfA Requirements ........................................... 8
  Annex Two: Level 3 and Level 4 Digital Apprenticeships ......... 10
  Annex Three: Starts on Digital Apprenticeships .................. 12
  Annex Four: The Original Model for EQA of Digital Apprenticeships (as background information only) .................. 14
  Annex Five: The “Light-tough, Interim Model” for EQA of Digital Apprenticeships (as background information only) .... 31

1. Introduction

1.1 The employers of the Tech Partnership are looking to identify a suitable organisation to recommend to the IfA to support them in the delivery of external quality assurance (EQA) of the end-point assessment of Level 3 and Level 4 digital apprenticeships. Note that the digital degree apprenticeships will not be covered by these EQA arrangements. This service would start from 1 July 2018.

1.2 The Tech Partnership organisation is currently carrying out an “interim, light touch” EQA service until a permanent solution is found and before the Tech Partnership organisation closes later this year.

1.2 Note that the degree apprenticeships will not be covered by these EQA arrangements.

1.3 This paper sets out what the employers are looking for and the details of how to express your interest in taking on this role. It includes a number of annexes which provide more detailed background.
1.4 The IfA will need to give final approval to the proposed approach. Their criteria which will need to be satisfied are given in annex one.

1.5 Annexes Four and Five are for background information only.

1.6 If you are interested in talking on this role, your proposal should be sent to helen.west@thetechpartnership.com by midnight on 23 March 2018.

2. Background

2.1 Hundreds of employers with an interest in digital apprenticeships have been working together since 2013 to develop a suite of Digital Apprenticeships under the Government’s Trailblazer initiative.

2.2 The employers’ original vision was

- to develop a full suite of apprenticeship standards to cover all entry-level tech and digital occupations which
  - reflect current industry requirements and is future proofed to recognise the rapid pace of developments,
  - meet the needs of all employers of tech and digital professionals - including large and small organisations and whether in tech or non-tech sectors, and whether in the public, private or voluntary sector, and
  - attract many more young people, and many more employers, to recognise apprenticeships as a valuable entry into their occupation.
  - to ensure that the standards and assessment plans would ensure that apprentices, on completion, are fully competent, have transferable skills and can progress their careers, as appropriate, and that enable successful apprentices to achieve appropriate professional recognition.

2.3 The achievement of this vision requires a digital apprenticeship ecosystem that provides a coherent, holistic approach to digital apprenticeship development – based on an evidenced based approach to deliver sustainability, continuity and high levels of confidence.

2.4 These employers have been working together, with the support of the Tech Partnership, and have developed 13, IfA approved, Level 3 and Level 4 standards and assessment plans - as well as the supporting occupational briefs. Three others are in development and will also be covered by these arrangements once they are approved. All of these are listed in annex two and full details of each of these can be found at https://www.thetechpartnership.com/standards-and-quality/trailblazer-apprenticeships/new-standards-documentation/.

2.5 There are a further three Level 3 apprenticeships currently in development. (see annex two)

2.6 There were over 5,500 starts on these standards to October 2017 (see annex three) and it is anticipated that there will be over 12,000 starts per annum once these reach steady state.

2.7 There are five organisations currently registered with the ESFA to deliver end-point assessment of digital apprenticeships, with one organisation registered to assess against all the standards and others registered to assess one or more. End-point assessments are already taking place.
2.8 The employers who have been leading the work want to have an employer-led model for the EQA role. The plan had been that the Tech Partnership, working to a new Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board, would deliver the EQA service under the leadership and direction of this new employer-led Board. The Tech Partnership is named in all the Level 3 and Level 4 digital apprenticeships as the EQA body.

2.9 A model for EQA services was developed (see annex four) but before this model could be approved by the IfA, the decision was taken that the Tech Partnership would be closing in September 2018.

2.10 In order to maintain momentum, the IfA approved the Tech Partnership to deliver an “interim, light touch” model for an EQA service to run from January 2018 – June 2018, whilst alternative arrangements were developed and approved (see annex five).

3. Current Position

3.1 A Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board has been set up – with seven of the ten Board members appointed as well as an interim Chair. This Board has met three times. The Board members include representation from

- J Sainsbury’s
- Auto Trader UK
- Delta
- Wipro Limited
- CGI UK Limited
- Google
- Inspired Energy

3.2 The Tech Partnership staff have been meeting regularly over the last few months with the end-point assessment organisations to share early learning.

3.3 The “interim, light touch” model for EQA is being implemented from February.

4. Key features of the EQA model

4.1 The successor body will be required to develop a model for external quality assurance. This model will need to satisfy the IfA requirements (see annex one). Further details can be found on the IfA’s website https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/developing-apprenticeships/how-to-develop-an-apprenticeship-standard-guide-for-trailblazers/

4.2 The employers who have been involved in developing the model for the EQA of digital apprenticeships have placed particular emphasis on developing an EQA service that

- ensures consistency and comparability across the different end-point assessment organisations,
- ensures the occupational validity of end-point assessment decisions and grading,
- builds quality assurance into the design of end-point assessment, and
- provides evidence and intelligence to drive continuous improvement – of standards, assessment plans, working practices and the digital apprenticeship eco-system.

This can be summarised as follows

![Diagram]

5. **Charging**

5.1 The successor organisation will need to determine its own charges for the EQA service. These charges will need to be approved by the IfA.

5.2 It is an IfA requirement that the EQA service is run on a not-for-profit basis.

5.3 Our understanding is that the current charges, across all EQA models, range from £40 - £100 per apprentice.

6. **The requirements**

6.1 The minimum requirements that employers are looking for are:

   - the organisation must be a legal entity
   - it must be an employer-led approach, working under the leadership and direction of the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board,
   - it must cover all the Level 3 and Level 4 digital apprenticeships (see annex two),
it must be impartial with no conflicts of interest with any end-point assessment organisations or training providers, and

an approach that will comply with current and future IfA requirements (see annex one for the current requirements).

6.2 In addition, the employers are particularly interested in:

a service that is evidence based – and is driven to achieve continuous improvement,
an approach that includes a real review of the occupational validity, reliability and consistency of assessment decisions, not just a systems audit,
a model that engages occupationally competent staff or sub-contractors,
an approach that adopts a “partnership” approach with end-point assessment organisations, the IfA and other stakeholders,
an approach that is sustainable,
an organisation that has credibility and track record with employers, training providers and end-point assessment organisations, and
an organisation that has, or will develop, an understanding of digital occupations.

7. Expressing your Interest

7.1 Your submission should include the following

Your proposal, no more than six pages long, submitted in word or pdf, covering

Your vision for the service,
Your proposed delivery model,
Your business model,
Your organisations track record and credibility, and
Confirmation, with explanation where required, that you meet the minimum requirements set out in paragraph 6.1.

Annexes can be included, but may not count to the evaluation of your proposal.
Your latest published accounts.

Please include your organisation’s name in your file names.

7.2 Your proposal should be sent to Helen West (helen.west@thetechpartnership.com). Any questions should be sent by email to the same address. Your proposal must be received by midnight on 23 March 2018.
8. Scoring

8.1 The following table shows how proposals will be scored

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Considerations</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategy and Vision</td>
<td>o vision for the EQA service &lt;br&gt; o objectives and aspirations in delivering the service &lt;br&gt; o plans to ensure it is employer-led and continues to meet the needs of all employers of digital professionals</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EQA service model</td>
<td>o ensures consistency and comparability across the different end-point assessment organisations, &lt;br&gt; o ensures the occupational validity of end-point assessment decisions and grading, &lt;br&gt; o builds quality assurance into the design of end-point assessment, &lt;br&gt; o provides evidence and intelligence to drive continuous improvement – of standards, assessment plans, working practices and the digital apprenticeship eco-system, &lt;br&gt; o that includes a real review of the occupational validity, reliability and consistency of assessment decisions, not just a systems audit, &lt;br&gt; o that adopts a “partnership” approach with end-point assessment organisations, the IfA and other stakeholders.</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business model</td>
<td>o leadership, management and resourcing &lt;br&gt; o occupational competence &lt;br&gt; o handover and implementation plans &lt;br&gt; o charging model &lt;br&gt; o sustainability</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility and Track Record</td>
<td>o credibility and track record with employers, training providers and end-point assessment organisations, and other stakeholders &lt;br&gt; o evidence of, or plans to develop, an understanding of digital occupations.</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum requirements</td>
<td>o a legal entity &lt;br&gt; o a service delivered on a not-for-profit basis, &lt;br&gt; o an employer-led approach, working under the leadership and direction of the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board, &lt;br&gt; o an EQA service covering all the Level 3 and Level 4 digital apprenticeships, &lt;br&gt; o a service that is impartial, and independent of end-point assessment organisations and training providers, and &lt;br&gt; o a proposal that will comply with current and future IfA requirements (see annex one for the current requirements).</td>
<td>Pass/Fail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.2 The Tech Partnership is administering this process on behalf of the employers and will not be involved in any decision making. An employer group will review the proposals and will make a decision on behalf of all the employers involved. These decisions will be final.

8.3 The IfA will then need to confirm that the arrangements meet their requirements.
9. Timescales

9.1 The following table shows the timescales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Closing date for Proposals</td>
<td>23 March 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employers to review responses</td>
<td>End-March/early April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer to interview shortlisted organisations</td>
<td>End April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointment made</td>
<td>Early May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IfA approval confirmed</td>
<td>June</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handover</td>
<td>July 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEX ONE

IfA Requirements: Making Proposals for External Quality Assurance of End Point Assessment

The remainder of the questions below apply to all Apprenticeship Trailblazers choosing the Employer-led or Professional Body options (including those expecting to work with Ofqual as a partner rather than operating under the Ofqual only option itself and including non-integrated Degree Apprenticeships).

1. The EQA Body
   • Is the Body or its officers or directors in any way involved in or connected to any organisation expected to deliver End Point Assessment (EPA) or training for this standard and if so what is this connection?
   • Who will be the senior nominated officer responsible?
   • Please set out the capabilities of the Body related to the delivery of EQA and the current or expected capacity to do so?
   • Please set out the Governance structure you will be operating under e.g will you be reporting into any Boards or Committees.
   • Please give details on your conflict of interest policy with regard to this work

2. Monitoring and Evaluation
   • How will the monitoring and evaluation be carried out to ensure that:
     • Internal quality assurance processes prescribed in the assessment plan are being carried out, operating effectively and achieving the desired outcomes in each registered AAO?
     • All requirements of the standard in terms of achievement of gateways, qualifications and maths and English are achieved prior to sign off by the employer for EPA?
     • Access to assessment is fair?
     • How is it intended that information be gathered on the occupation and standard over time in order to assist the Institute in ensuring apprenticeship occupations have sufficient skill and breadth and that standards are effectively written?

3. Validity, Reliability, Comparability and Independence
   • What methods do you intend to use in order to monitor and ensure that:
     • The Assessment plan is valid in practice?
     • The Assessment process is cost effective in practice?
     • There is use of a suitable range of assessment methods?
     • Assessment instruments and assessments are valid across a range of real work settings and for employers of any size and in all relevant sectors? Assessment methods should be clearly aligned to the application of specific skills, knowledge and behaviours
     • Assessment is carried out as far as is practicable synoptically and that this applies to at least one method of assessment of skills and knowledge?
• Assessments are reliable and comparable across different AAOs, employers, places, times and assessors?
• Assessment is carried out independently in practice? This means that both the organisation and the individual assessors are independent of the delivery of training or employer.
• Is it intended to co-ordinate the development of assessment instruments e.g. tests, questionnaires etc and if so how?
• Do you intend to sign-off assessment instruments developed by the individual AAOs?

4. Assessor Competence
• How will you monitor and ensure that AAOs have robust processes in place to ensure that assessors are fully occupationally competent and up to date?
• How will you monitor and ensure that the AAOs have sufficient assessors available and that their assessment competence is acceptable and meets the assessment plan requirements?

5. Delivery of the EPA
How will you check:
• AAOs’ arrangements for feedback from apprentices and employers on end point assessment and the standard?
• AAOs and assessors remain independent from training delivery?
• Choice of AAO is clearly made by the employers?
• Employers are signing off apprentices as ready for end point assessment?
• The AAOs organisation directly employer or have appropriate contractual relationships with assessors when they deliver and make decisions concerning end point assessment?
• Information provided and fees charged are clear and transparent?
• Retakes, resits, appeals and complaints handling are operated effectively?
• Delivery of end point assessment by the AAOs is efficient and effective including:
  ▪ Booking and management of assessment?
  ▪ Marking/remote assessment?
  ▪ Resources for assessment?
  ▪ Evidence gathering?
  ▪ Issue of results and feedback?
  ▪ Confidentiality?
• Certification including its timeliness and sign off of all requirements for entry to end point assessment?

6. Costs
• Please explain the costings for the EQA service
• What fee does this result in and how do you intended to charge it?
• How will the finances be operated transparently in terms of income and expenditure? (EQA needs to be a non-profit making service)
## Published Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Standard</th>
<th>Typical Job Titles</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Typical Duration</th>
<th>Funding Band</th>
<th>Assumed starts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Software Developer</td>
<td>Web Developer&lt;br&gt;Applications Developer&lt;br&gt;Software Developer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Band 12&lt;br&gt;£18k</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Engineer</td>
<td>Network Technician&lt;br&gt;Systems Engineer&lt;br&gt;Network Administrator</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Band 12&lt;br&gt;£18k</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Intrusion Analyst</td>
<td>Secure Operations Centre Analyst&lt;br&gt;Intrusion Analyst&lt;br&gt;Network Intrusion Analyst&lt;br&gt;Incident Response Centre Analyst</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Band 12&lt;br&gt;£18k</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified Communications Trouble-shooter</td>
<td>Unified Comms Desk Engineer&lt;br&gt;Unified Comms Field Engineer&lt;br&gt;Voice Field Engineer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Band 12&lt;br&gt;£18k</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analyst</td>
<td>Data Manager&lt;br&gt;Data Modeler&lt;br&gt;Data Scientist</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Band 11&lt;br&gt;£15k</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Tester</td>
<td>Software Tester&lt;br&gt;Software Test Analyst</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Band 12&lt;br&gt;£18k</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Security Technologist</td>
<td>Cyber Operations Manager&lt;br&gt;Cyber Security Specialist&lt;br&gt;Security Administrator&lt;br&gt;Information Security Auditor</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Band 12&lt;br&gt;£18k</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS Business Analyst</td>
<td>Business Systems Analyst&lt;br&gt;IT Business Analyst</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Band 12&lt;br&gt;£18k</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Technician</td>
<td>Help Desk Technician&lt;br&gt;First Line Support&lt;br&gt;Second Line Support&lt;br&gt;Network Support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Band 11&lt;br&gt;£15k</td>
<td>2,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Marketer</td>
<td>Social Media Executive&lt;br&gt;Digital Marketing Executive&lt;br&gt;Digital Marketing Technologist&lt;br&gt;Campaign Executive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Band 10&lt;br&gt;£12k</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Technical Salesperson</td>
<td>Sales Associate&lt;br&gt;Technical Telesales&lt;br&gt;Junior Account Manager</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>Band 10&lt;br&gt;£12k</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified Communications Technician</td>
<td>Telecommunications Technician&lt;br&gt;Unified Communications Technician &amp; Support Technician</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24 months</td>
<td>Band 11&lt;br&gt;£15k</td>
<td>750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Development Technician</td>
<td>Software Technician&lt;br&gt;Software Engineers&lt;br&gt;Software Diagnostic Tester</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>Band 11&lt;br&gt;£15k</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The assumed starts are the forecast figures when the original EOI was submitted.
## Standards in Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Standard</th>
<th>Typical Job Titles</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Lead</th>
<th>Assumed starts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT Solutions Technician</td>
<td>Service Analyst, Junior Systems Analyst, Technical Services Support</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Standard approved</td>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Applications Technician</td>
<td>Digital Coach, IT Operations Technician, Digital Applications Specialist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Standard approved</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Service Technician</td>
<td>Digital Communications Operator, Contact Centre Operator, Digital Service Advisor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>EOI submitted</td>
<td>BT</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Digital Apprenticeship Starts January 2018

Years run from 1st August – 31st July.

Source DfE

**Starts on Standards**

Provisional data showing the Q1 starts in 17/18 (August, September and October 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 3 and 4 standards</th>
<th>Full year 14/15</th>
<th>Full year 15/16</th>
<th>Full year 16/17 **</th>
<th>Year to Date 17/18 (Q1)</th>
<th>Cumulative by standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Intrusion Analyst</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyber Security Technologist</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analyst</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Marketer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>340</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure Technician</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1,440</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>2,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS Business Analyst</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT Technical Salesperson</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Network Engineer</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Developer</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Development Technician</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Tester</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified Communications Technician</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>2840</td>
<td>2,240</td>
<td>5,660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree Apprenticeship standards</th>
<th>Full year 14/15</th>
<th>Full year 15/16</th>
<th>Full year 16/17 **</th>
<th>Year to Date 17/18</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSc Digital &amp; Technology Solutions Degree Apprenticeship</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>490</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>1,430</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Digital standards</th>
<th>Full year 14/15</th>
<th>Full year 15/16</th>
<th>Full year 16/17 **</th>
<th>Year to Date 17/18</th>
<th>Cumulative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All digital standards</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>3,330</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>7,090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Starts on Frameworks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frameworks</th>
<th>Full year 14/15</th>
<th>Full year 15/16</th>
<th>Full year 16/17 **</th>
<th>Year to Date 17/18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT Software, Web and Telecoms Professionals</td>
<td>11,490</td>
<td>12,070</td>
<td>9,220</td>
<td><strong>1,160</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications Specialist</td>
<td>3,650</td>
<td>3,090</td>
<td>2,460</td>
<td><strong>320</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Total starts (frameworks and standards)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full year 14/15</th>
<th>Full year 15/16</th>
<th>Full year 16/17 **</th>
<th>Year to Date 17/18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total starts</td>
<td>15,250</td>
<td>16,450</td>
<td>15,010</td>
<td><strong>4,310</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Quarterly comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Q1 16/17</th>
<th>Q1 17/18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starts on frameworks</td>
<td>3,880 (89%)</td>
<td>1,480 (34%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starts on standards</td>
<td>500 (11%)</td>
<td>2,830 66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total starts</td>
<td>4,380</td>
<td>4,310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ANNEX FOUR

THE ORIGINAL MODEL FOR EQA

DIGITAL INDUSTRIES APPRENTICESHIPS

EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SERVICE

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSALS

APRIL 2017
1. FOREWORD

The government guidance document, *The Future of Apprenticeships in England*, December 2015, gave the opportunity for employers to continue their input into apprenticeship development by allowing employer-led models for external quality assurance to arise.

With formal permission in place from the Department for Education, the Tech Partnership is creating the employer-led model for ensuring consistency and comparability in end-point assessment for a range of digital and tech apprenticeships. The outline model that has been approved is shown in Annex Three.

This proposal has been further developed in the light of the guidance in the IfA’s How To Guide for Trailblazers

---

**The Tech Partnership**

The Tech Partnership is a registered charity formed from a network of employers working to create skills for the UK’s digital economy. The Tech Partnership ambition is to deliver the skills for a million tech jobs by 2025. No one organisation can achieve this alone, which is why employers are working together as the Tech Partnership – acting for the good of the digital economy and for future generations of talent.

The Tech Partnership works in three critical areas to reach its goal:

> Inspiring new and diverse talent into digital careers through schools resources and ambassador programmes

> Raising the quality of digital skills training and education by setting training standards and developing degrees & degree apprenticeship programmes to meet employers’ needs

> Enabling employers to offer quality digital apprenticeships by providing apprenticeship advice to employers and promoting high-quality providers.

A list of the Tech Partnership Board members is given in Annex Two.

---

There are currently 14 approved digital apprenticeships, at levels 3 and 4, which are covered by these external quality assurance arrangements.
2. BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The Employers Vision

Hundreds of employers with an interest in digital apprenticeships have been collaborating over the last three years to develop a suite of Digital Apprenticeships. These employers are listed in annex one. The employers' original vision was

> to develop a full suite of apprenticeship standards to cover all entry-level tech and digital occupations – and
> which reflect current industry requirements and is future proofed to recognise the rapid pace of developments.
> which meet the needs of all employers of tech and digital professionals - including large and small organisations and whether in tech or non-tech sectors, and whether in the public, private or voluntary sector.
> which attract many more young people, and many more employers, to recognise apprenticeships as a valuable entry into their occupation

> to ensure that the standard and assessment plans would ensure that apprentices, on completion, are fully competent, have transferable skills and can progress their careers, as appropriate, and that enable successful apprentices to achieve appropriate professional recognition

The achievement of this vision requires a digital apprenticeship ecosystem that provides a coherent, holistic approach to digital apprenticeship development – based on an evidenced based approach to deliver sustainability, continuity and high levels of confidence.

Employer Commitment to Effective External Quality Assurance (EQA)

Effective EQA is a key part of this eco system and will provide significant benefits including

> confirmation that the end-point assessment complies with the employers’ intentions for end-point assessment as set out in the assessment plans
> ensuring consistency and comparability of assessments across end-point assessment organisations and over time
> protection of the integrity of the apprenticeship by ensuring that variations in end-point assessments are within acceptable tolerances
> reassurance that the market places for end-point assessment functions properly and in a way that returns value to the apprentice, the employer and Treasury.
> allowing employers (and providers) to select end-point assessment services with confidence
> a sustainable group of end-point assessment organisations – offering choice in a properly functioning market place
> collecting intelligence on how standards and assessment plans are being implemented to drive continuous improvement

For the organisations delivering end-point assessment, the EQA service provides the following benefits

> confirmation that their end-point assessment practice is compliant with the assessment plan
> reassurance that there is consistency between their practice and the practice of others
> reduced time and cost with greater clarity, consistency in interpretation and a shared understanding of tolerances
> reduced risk with greater confidence that their tools, and the tools of others, meet the requirements
> being part of a growing market that has credibility with employers
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES FOR THE EQA SERVICE

The overall aim is to safeguard the end-point assessment market place for employers and apprentices by ensuring consistency and comparability across the different end-point assessment providers.

And, as such, to safeguard the implementation of digital apprenticeship standards by assuring the quality of assessment approaches, scrutinising assessment practices, and providing feedback to drive continuous improvement.

The objectives are

**To build consistency and comparability into the design of end-point assessment**

- Assuring the consistency and comparability of the internal quality assurance processes and assessment tools used by all end-point assessment organisations in terms of compliance with the standard and the assessment plan.
- Reducing risk and failure rates by ensuring a shared understanding and assuring quality in advance of assessments taking place.
- Developing further guidance for the development and implementation of assessment tools and practices and facilitating consistent interpretation.

**To assure the consistency and comparability of the delivery of end-point assessments**

- Monitoring the delivery of end-point assessments and the application of the required internal quality assurance processes against the requirements in the standard and the assessment plan.

**To drive the continuous improvement of standards, assessment plans and end-point assessments.**

- Reporting on the delivery of end-point assessment and providing feedback and intelligence which identifies areas for further development.
4. GOVERNANCE

The external quality assurance service will be overseen by a new Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board and supported by the Tech Partnership on a non-profit basis.

The Governance of the External Quality Assurance service will be
> Independent
> Transparent
> Inclusive

In order to achieve this, responsibility for the external quality assurance service will be a formal delegated authority from the Trustees of the Tech Partnership to the new Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board.

The Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board will be responsible for developing, managing and implementing the annual delivery plan for the EQA service.

The Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board will secure staffing and other resources from the Tech Partnership as necessary to deliver their plan and to enable them to perform their role in delivering effective external quality assurance for digital apprenticeships.

Position of the EQA service within the Tech Partnership charitable Trust
### Summary of Roles and Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tech Partnership</strong></td>
<td>The Trustee Board will</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Trustee Board**            | > set the terms of reference for the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board  
> delegate responsibility to the Executive to carry out the process for the public appointment of Quality Assurance Board members, including the Chair.  
> agree delegated responsibilities for the assuring the consistency and comparability of end-point assessment – to maximise quality, rigour, impact and value for money.  
> safeguard the Tech Partnership strategic plan, within which these responsibilities sit  
> authorise the Executive Team to allocate and manage sufficient resources to support the annual delivery plan for the EQA service  
> remain ultimately accountable |
| **Digital Apprenticeship**   | The Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board will perform the EQA function on behalf of all employers with an interest in digital apprenticeships and will:                                                       |
| **Quality Board**            | > operate independently of Tech Partnership within their delegated responsibilities for the assurance of the consistency and comparability of end-point assessments to maximise quality, rigour, impact and value for money.  
> operate within the Charities Act  
> be accountable to the Trustee Board  
> develop and own the annual EQA delivery plan – including pricing  
> review progress against plan, including MI, quality, impact, value for money and income and expenditure – to ensure viability and sustainability of the service  
> have a Trustee sponsor  
> report, via the Chair, to the Trustee Board  
> act in a non-executive capacity  
> provide the interface with the IfA for External Quality Assurance  
> define the operational measures against which it can review the effectiveness and impact of the external moderation service  
> provide intelligence to the IfA and the Digital Apprenticeship Board |
| **Digital Apprenticeship**   | The Digital Apprenticeship Board will:                                                                                                                                                                 |
| **Board**                    | > oversee the development of high quality digital apprenticeships which meet employers’ needs for the future  
> encourage cohesion across industry, to reduce duplication and make it easier to attract young people  
> provide a strong collective voice for industry with government and the IfA |
| **Tech Partnership**         | The Tech Partnership Executive team will                                                                                                                                                              |
| **Executive**                | > coordinate the public appointment of the Quality Board members and retention, including the Chair.  
> produce the Tech Partnership annual plan which will include the agreed delivery plan for the EQA service  
> allocate and manage sufficient resources to deliver against the delivery plan  
> report activities and progress against plan to the Quality Board |

### Membership of the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board
Members of the Board will be appointed through an open, transparent and fair public recruitment and selection process. Membership will be open to all types and sizes of businesses, including representatives from SMEs.

When a vacancy arises, employers of tech and digital staff will be invited to apply for a seat on the Board. Applicants will be selected based on their experience, knowledge, and commitment to ensuring the quality, consistency and impact of apprenticeships for the benefit of the sector. Selection will also consider the overall balance and make-up of the Board, to ensure that there is broad representation across sizes and sectors of organisations. The selection of Board members will be undertaken by the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board. Until this Board is fully established (expected June 2017) selection will be by employers from the Employer Implementation Group. None of the employers involved in the selection of Board members, or the organisations they work for, will be connected to any of the applicants.

The Board will:

➢ have 10 members with each member subject to re-election after a period of two years with no Board member eligible to serve more than two terms.
➢ have a balance of members from different sectors, including the public, private and voluntary sectors, tech and non-tech companies and will include at least two representatives from SMEs
➢ have a Chair
➢ have formal, published, terms of reference
➢ commit to working openly and on behalf of the industry as a whole and to declare formally any conflicts of interest.

The Board may choose to invite others, such as training providers or assessment organisations, to attend some or all of the meeting where they want their input or expertise.

The Board will have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the content of the digital apprenticeship standards and assessment plans and of the external quality assurance arrangements and methodologies

The Board will:

➢ set and agree the key measures to benchmark external quality assurance results
➢ review the reports from the external quality assurance for each assessment organisation and for each standard and will agree corrective action as required
➢ make recommendations, to the IfA, to the Digital Apprenticeship Board, to the relevant employer group, to training providers and to assessment organisations, to share best practice and/or to highlight issues that need to be addressed in the Standard or Assessment Plan, as required

The Quality Board will meet at least quarterly.

The Quality Board will be supported by Quality Review Groups, as required.

The Quality Board will liaise with the IfA and other key government stakeholders to ensure the EQA service is built and delivered in accordance with policy intentions.
5. DELIVERY MODEL FOR THE EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SERVICE

Overview of activities against objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Assuring consistency</th>
<th>Assuring comparability</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To build consistency and comparability into the design of end-point assessment</td>
<td>Check that EPA tools and methodologies comply with the standard and assessment plan. Check that the internal quality assurance systems and processes comply with the assessment plan</td>
<td>Develop a shared interpretation of standards, occupational briefs and assessment plans across EPAs – and further develop documents to enable this. Review the comparability of methodologies and tools</td>
<td>Systems audits and site visits. Supporting the development of assessment materials and approaches Signing off assessment tools Standardisation meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To assure the consistency and comparability of the delivery of end-point assessments</td>
<td>Check the application of internal quality assurance processes. Check the consistent implementation of end-point assessments and grading. Monitor and review to ensure that EPA is delivered as specified.</td>
<td>Review the consistency of actual assessments and grading decisions across all EPAs annually and over time.</td>
<td>Sample check of end-point assessments: assessment methodologies and assessment decisions staff competence implementation of internal QA processes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To maximise learning and continuous improvement of end-point assessments, standards and assessment plans</td>
<td>Report to each EPA Report to the Quality Board, by EPA organisation Report to the IfA by organisation</td>
<td>Share and compare practice across EPAs Report to the IfA, the Apprenticeship Board and others as appropriate</td>
<td>Formal reporting to EPAs, the Quality Board and the IfA Producing an annual state of the nation report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Scope
The following diagram summarises the scope of the end-point assessment activities that will be quality assured and checked, as defined in the Assessment Plan.

**Threshold Assessment**
- on programme qualifications achieved
- english and maths achieved

**Assessment Tools**
- the tools and supporting materials, including documented criteria for each of the following: the bank of synoptic projects, the portfolio, the employer reference and the interview

**Staff capabilities**
- assessors with up to date, relevant, indepth and broad experience of working in the occupation; relevant industry experience equivalent or higher than the level of apprenticeship and/or relevant professional recognition at a level equivalent to or higher than the apprenticeship; and practical up to date knowledge of the application of current working practices, and technologies and relevant to size and sector of the organisations assessing withing

**Grading**
- induction and training on the application of grading criteria
- standardisation meetings to ensure consistency
- impartial moderation

**Internal quality assurance processes**
- robust internal verification processes
- recruitment and training of competent staff
- induction of assessors in to the standard and assessment tools
- quality assurance and quality control procedures
- appeals and complaints

**Management of the Service**
- effective leadership of the service
- effective customer service processes
- employer responsiveness
- collaboration with others
Delivery Activities

There are three stages to the delivery model:

1. Building consistency and comparability into the design of end-point assessment activities
2. Monitoring and assuring the delivery of consistency and comparability in the delivery of end-point assessment activities
3. Reporting on consistency and comparability in end-point assessment activities and outcomes and driving continuous improvement

Stage One

The External Quality Assurance Service will act as a critical friend to assessment organisations during the pre-assessment stage.

This stage will involve

- facilitating a shared understanding of the standard, assessment plan and occupational brief within and between assessment organisations
- engaging with assessment organisations to agree a pre-implementation support plan to ensure proper scrutiny of assessment intentions, including
  - supporting the development/testing of assessment materials against the standard and assessment plans to ensure validity, consistency, reliability and comparability.
  - reviewing and signing off assessment materials and tools - including assuring that these are valid across a range of real work settings, and for employers of any size and sector.
- holding standardisation meetings to develop and agree a shared view of sufficiency in relation to grading of pass, merit and distinction. This will involve a combination of sharing findings, mock assessments and peer review of assessments.
- training and briefing of lead assessors
- undertaking a systems audit and site visit to ensure
  - full occupational competence of assessment and internal quality assurance staff and the appropriateness of the training and CPD of staff for the standards they are assessing against
Internal quality assurance systems, processes and reporting arrangements meet the requirements set out in the assessment plan

- the requirements for threshold assessment, including on-programme qualifications and maths and English, are satisfied before EPA takes place

- developing additional documentation, as required, to support the above

- producing a formal report for each EPA Organisation highlighting any areas where remedial action is needed. EPA Organisations will be required to provide a remedial plan, with clear timescales, setting out how they will address any such issues.

In order to support this the Quality Board will convene employer-led Quality Review Panels to provide technical advice and support.

These Review Panels will be made up of occupational specialists for the relevant standard, usually those involved in developing the original standard and assessment plan, and will be able to speak with authority and credibility to:

- support the further clarification of standard, assessment plan and occupational brief
- review assessment tools against the requirements
- attend meetings with assessment organisations
- identify areas for that need to be reviewed in standards, assessment plans and/or occupational briefs
- scrutinise assessment instruments and assessment strategy for suitability and compliance as well as for comparability across EPA Organisations.

Over time, it is likely that these Review Groups will be set up in the four broad occupational groups, to maximise consistency and learning across related standards. These areas are likely to be:

- Software and Application Development – L3 and L4, covering Software Development Technician, Software Developer and Software Tester
- IT support and Services – Level 3 and 4, covering Infrastructure Technician, Unified Communications Technician, Network Engineer and Unified Communications Troubleshooter
- Cyber Level 3, 4 – covering Cyber Security Analyst and Cyber Security Technologist
- Digital and Data Services Level 3 and 4 – covering Digital Marketer, Digital Administrator, Digital Communications Specialist, IT Technical Sales, Business Analyst and Data Analyst

**Stage Two**

EPA Organisations will keep the Tech Partnership updated on the forward pipeline of end-point assessments.
An in-depth review and check will be undertaken with a sample of completed assessments that have taken place since the previous visit. The sample size will vary and will be dependent on a number of factors, including the number of sites, the number of assessors and assessments undertaken, the number of different standards being assessed, the previous findings from external moderation and the conclusions from the systems audit. In the first year of assessment against a standard, all assessment organisations will have a higher percentage sample.

The check will include a review of all evidence for assessment decisions, including the different assessment tools - monitoring these across different assessors, locations and over time, based on a sample of assessment decisions across all grades, particularly those at the boundaries.

The external moderation will not change any individual assessment decision, but will identify issues that need to be resolved for future assessments.

The external moderation will also review:

1. the application of the internal quality assurance processes proscribed in the assessment plan are being carried out, operating effectively and achieving the desired outcomes
2. whether retakes, resits, complaints and appeals have been handled effectively
3. the learning from employer, provider and apprentice satisfaction and feedback has been applied,
4. information for providers and employers, including fees, are clear and transparent
5. whether the EPA has been undertaken by a suitably occupational competent assessor
6. whether the appropriate for gateway checks, qualifications and maths and English will be checked before EPA takes place
7. that EPA has been carried out independently, and
8. that access to assessment is fair.

Feedback from the employers will be sought to ensure that they view their apprentice as fully competent.

Stage Three
The findings from the external moderation will identify lessons learned and recommendations for

1. EPA organisations – individually and collectively
2. any requirements for additional clarification or guidance for EPA organisations, individually or collectively
3. the standard, the assessment plan and the occupational brief
4. the Quality Assurance Board

A formal report will be produced following each sample of external moderations. These reports will be supplied to the EPA organisation, setting out any areas where the service has not fully met the requirements of the standard or assessment plan and/or where inconsistencies have been identified. This will require the assessment organisation to produce and agree a remedial plan, with clear timescales, to ensure the service fully meets all the requirements. In this way the EQA service will act directly to continuously improve assessment delivery and assessment tools.

Any major concerns arising from the EQA service will be raised directly with the IfA. A report on all EQA activities, findings and actions required will be prepared for the IfA in advance of all regular review meetings. This report will also highlight any implications for the future revision of the standard, assessment plan and the occupational brief.

A summary report will be produced for the Quality Assurance Board – summarising findings by standard and by assessment organisation.
The Quality Board will also provide an annual “state of the nation” report for all interested stakeholders, including the IfA, DfE, Digital Apprenticeship Board, the employers’ groups, training providers and assessment organisation to provide intelligence on how the system is working in terms of validity, consistency, comparability, lessons learned, emerging issues and recommendations for ongoing continuous improvement.

It will also offer to provide more detailed systems and data reporting to the IfA.

6. WAYS OF WORKING

The External Quality Assurance Service will be managed to ensure that it is

> independent
> impartial
> open and collaborative – whilst respecting commercial sensitivities
> a trusted partner and critical friend

This will be underpinned by a service level agreement with each end-point assessment organisation, covering

> roles and responsibilities of both parties
> service delivery standards
> recording, reporting and data retention
> non-disclosure, confidentiality and IPR agreements
> data security policies and procedures
> data security
> charges and payments

Complaints and Appeals

Any employer, training provider or apprentice who wants to complain or appeal against their end-point assessment will do so to the relevant Assessment Organisation. The Assessment Organisation is responsible for investigating the complaint/appeal and resolving wherever possible. In these cases, the EQA will scrutinise the handling of the complaint and ensure the correct process has been followed.

The Quality Board will act to protect the integrity of the assessment process where this is needed – for example only in instances of malpractice or a major breach of process would an assessment decision be overturned.

Charging

The fundamental principle of the charging model is that the service is not for profit. The charges are based on

> the actual costs of delivering a comprehensive EQA service that adds value and reduces risk
> wherever appropriate consistent approaches will be taken across standards to build consistency and efficiency
Whilst this service is being set up on a not for profit basis, there are a number of unknowns and key assumptions behind the charges and so, if a surplus were to arise, this would be used for

- Supporting the implementation, quality and impact of digital apprenticeships and/or
- Reviewing prices year on year with disclosure and consultation on annual reinvestment plans

The more we can share assumptions, then the more realistic our charges can be

The approach to charging is based on the need to minimise uncertainty and ensure a sustainability system – for all parties, including

- simplicity
- a consistent approach across standards
- £x per registration – to cover the costs of the pre assessment work
- £x per completion – to cover the costs of the post assessment work
- a payment profile (e.g. x% y%) and to reflect how assessment organisations are charging providers/employers

We will take a view over time on:

- volume discounting
- risk
- extent to which things are embedded vs new to market

**Staffing**

The senior nominated officer within the Tech Partnership who will be responsible for the EQA contract will be **XX**

The Tech Partnership will

- employ a small number of EQA delivery staff to support the Quality Board, to manage the relationships with employers, the EPA organisations and training providers, to provide the day to day interface with the IfA, to produce reports and to manage the day to day delivery of the service.
- engage suitably qualified and experienced subject matter experts to advise during stage one of the process for each new standard
- engage a number of suitably qualified and experienced external moderators, for each different standard
EXTERIOR QUALITY ASSURANCE OF END-POINT ASSESSMENT FOR THE DIGITAL INDUSTRIES TRAILBLAZER APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS

All assessment organisations listed on the Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations (RoAAO) are required to comply with assessment processes as set out in this plan and must adhere to the external quality assurance process. The external quality assurance will be overseen by a new Digital Industries Apprenticeship External Quality Assurance Board and conducted and managed by the Tech Partnership on a non-profit basis.

Digital Industries Apprenticeship External Quality Assurance Board

Membership of the Board will be via an open, transparent and fair public nomination and selection process. Membership will be open to all types and sizes of businesses, including representatives from SMEs.

When a vacancy arises, employers of tech and digital staff will be invited to apply for a seat on the Board, demonstrating support from at least two industry and/or relevant stakeholder organisations. Nominees will be selected based on their experience, knowledge, and commitment to ensuring that the quality, consistency and impact of apprenticeships for the benefit of the sector is maintained and maximised. Selection will also consider the overall balance and make-up of the Board, to ensure that there is broad representation across sizes and sectors of organisations. The selection of Board members will be undertaken by the Digital Industries Apprenticeship External Quality Assurance Board. Until this Board is fully established (expected January 2017) selection will be by employers from the Employer Implementation Group. None of the employers involved in the selection of Board members, or the organisations they work for, will have been connected to any of the applicants.

The Board will have 10 members

The Board will have a balance of members from different sectors, including the public, private and voluntary sectors, tech and non-tech companies and will include at least two representatives from SMEs.

The Board will have a chair and there will be formal, and published, terms of reference for the Board.

Each Board member will be subject to re-election after a period of two years and no Board member will be eligible to serve more than two terms.

Board members will commit to working openly and on behalf of the industry as a whole and to declare formally any conflicts of interest.

The Board may choose to invite others, such as training providers or assessment organisations, to attend some or all of the meeting where they want their input or expertise.

The Board will have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the content of the relevant digital apprenticeship standards and assessment plans and of the external quality assurance arrangements and methodologies.

The Board will
Set and agree the key measures to benchmark external quality assurance results to be used by the Tech Partnership

Review the reports from the external quality assurance for each assessment organisation and for each standard, based on the reports produced by the Tech Partnership, and will agree corrective action as required

Make recommendations, to the relevant employer group who set the standards, to training providers and to assessment organisations, to share best practice and/or to highlight issues that need to be addressed in the Standard or Assessment Plan, as required

External Quality Assurance Process

External quality assurance will focus on four activities to ensure compliance including consistency of assessment materials; competence and performance of staff; the internal quality assurance systems and processes; and the external moderation of a sample of end-point assessments.

These activities will be reviewed through two processes

Systems Audit

A systems audit will be undertaken within six months of such registration, and then on an annual basis. The systems audit will include

- Ensuring consistency of assessment tools including the design of the assessment materials, the consistent application of these tools and the internal quality assurance of assessment materials
- Competence of staff including the occupational competence of assessment and internal verification staff and the appropriateness of the training and CPD of staff for the standards they are assessing against
- Internal quality assurance systems, processes and reporting

The systems audit will be based on desk review of all relevant documentation, meetings with key staff and a site visit. A formal report will be produced following the systems audit, highlighting any areas where remedial action is needed. Assessment Organisations will be required to provide a remedial plan, with clear timescales, setting out how they will address any such issues.

External Moderation

Assessment Organisations will advise the Tech Partnership as soon as they are notified by an employer and/or training provider that an apprentice is ready to undertake end-point assessment and the external moderation of assessment decisions will be undertaken with a sample of those assessments that have been completed since the previous external moderation visit.

It is expected that external moderation will take place at least annually

The sample size will vary and will be dependent on a number of factors, including the number of sites, the number of assessors and assessments undertaken, the number of different standards being assessed, the previous findings from external moderation samples and the conclusions from the systems audit

In the first year of assessment against a standard, all assessment organisations will have a higher percentage sample
A formal report will be produced following each sample of external moderations. These reports will be supplied to the assessment organisation, setting out any areas where the service has not fully met the defined requirements and/or where inconsistencies have been identified. This will require the assessment organisation to produce and agree a remedial plan, with clear timescales, to ensure the service fully meets all the requirements.
INTRODUCTION

The employer-led model for EQA for digital apprenticeship standards, supported by the Tech Partnership, has been approved in principle for all 14 of the published standards. However, the full model still needs further work before it can be fully approved and implemented.

In view of the fact that the Tech Partnership is closing next September, it has been agreed that we will agree and implement a “light touch EQA service” over the next few months, whilst at the same time identifying a successor organisation who can then support the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board in the implementation of a full EQA service in future.

This work will be led by the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board, which has proposed the following model for the interim “light touch” EQA service.

The Board members believe that this model has the advantage of starting relatively small, to enable the full service to be developed, iteratively and in the light of experience, to ensure that the full EQA service will do the right thing in the right ways.

This paper sets out the proposals for such a “light touch” service. The differences between this model and the original full model is summarised in annex one.

OVERALL AIM

To undertake an initial review of how end-point assessment is working in order to identify the early learning so inform the development of the future EQA service.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives, and benefits, of implementing a “light touch EQA service are

- to maintain momentum with the end-point assessment organisations
- to build momentum and engagement of the Digital Apprenticeship Quality Board
- to instil confidence in the digital apprenticeship infrastructure
- to identify early learning from the first end-point assessments
- to address any issues of immediate concern
- to identify emerging risks
- to inform the future model for external quality assurance for digital apprenticeships
- to enable the successor body to “hit the ground running”
- to inform the standards review process, and the future development of assessment plans for digital standards

THE MODEL FOR A “LIGHT TOUCH EQA SERVICE”
The model is in four parts

Part One: for all organisations registered as end-point assessment organisations for any of the digital standards

1) Self-Assessment
Each end-point assessment organisation will be asked to sign a statement confirming that they have, or will have, all the required Internal Quality Assurance Systems and Process in place.

The purpose of this is to ensure that all end-point assessment organisations know what is required of them and what will be in scope in future external assurance visits. This will also highlight the state of readiness for the successor body to pick up on.

It will be as simple as filling in a table as illustrated below

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Assurance Requirement</th>
<th>Fully in place? Yes or No</th>
<th>If not fully in place, date by which it will be in place</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment tools have been developed in the light of the standard, the occupational brief and the assessment plan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2) Site Visit
A one day site visit will be undertaken to each of the registered end-point assessment organisations. This is currently six organisations.

The site visit is NOT a systems audit, but will be an exploratory discussion with whoever is responsible for end-point assessment services. It will explore those issues that have been identified as the highest risk, such as

- Information/support for providers and/or employers
- The assessment gateway
- The occupational competence of assessors
- Assessment tools
- Internal arrangements for ensuring consistency between assessors (such as standardisation, guidance on grading for assessors, internal moderation)

Part Two: For those organisations who have already conducted end-point assessments

3) Evidence gathering
Each end-point assessment organisation will be asked to provide

a) A breakdown of the following, by standard
   - The number of apprentices entering end-point assessment
   - The number of these getting through the assessment gateway
   - The numbers getting a fail, pass, merit or distinction – overall
   - The numbers getting a fail, pass, merit or distinction – by provider, by assessor, by assessment centre
b) A breakdown of feedback received about the service— from apprentices, training providers and employers, including from customer satisfaction surveys, complaints procedures, and appeals.

This will be followed by a 2 - 3 hour face to face meeting to explore the issues behind the figures. A comparative report of the figures produced in part a) will be produced.

4) Review of end-point assessment decisions

A sample of end-point assessments, for each standard, will be reviewed by an independent, occupationally competent, sub-contractor working alongside a member of the Tech Partnership Team. We will only look at the three standards that are generating most of the early completers – namely Software Developer, Network Engineer and Infrastructure Technician.

The Tech Partnership will select a sample of up to 14 end-point assessment for each standard. The (ideal) sample will be made up of

- One fail, from two assessors
- One borderline fail/pass, from two assessors
- One pass, from two assessors
- One borderline pass/merit, from two assessors
- One merit, from two assessors
- One borderline merit/distinction, from two assessors
- One distinction, from two assessors

The (ideal) sample will be made up of end-point assessments across different providers, locations and cohorts.

OUTPUTS

The information gathered from this will include

- A report for each end-point assessment organisation, highlighting any issues or concerns – as well as any areas of good practice, that have been identified. This report will be signed off by the Board in advance of being sent out. It can be copied to the IfA, if required

- A summary report for the Board, the IfA and the successor organisation – as well as for all the end-point assessment organisations

- Any reports required by the IfA, in their preferred format.

Any major issues will be escalated to the IfA immediately.

The reports will be produced by the Tech Partnership, and signed off by the Board before being issued.

RELATIONSHIPS

We will continue to meet with the end-point assessment organisations, on a six-weekly basis, to identify any other emerging issues and to share learning.
The Board will meet with the end-point assessment organisations, to establish a relationship

We will host a meeting of with all the end-point assessment organisations to discuss the summary report.

We will work closely with the IfA throughout this process, and will host a meeting with the IfA to share experiences and learning.

**TIMESCALES**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model approved</td>
<td>end November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design and plan the service</td>
<td>by 15 December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service starts</td>
<td>January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports produced</td>
<td>April/May</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handover to successor organisation</td>
<td>June/July</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ORIGINAL FULL EQA MODEL AND THIS LIGHT TOUCH MODEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Model</th>
<th>Light Touch Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A site-visit and full systems audit of internal QA processes, using an external QA expert systems auditor</td>
<td>A site-visit only, with self-assessment checklist of processes – undertaken by a member of Tech Partnership staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development and implementation of a full data sharing system</td>
<td>The provision of key statistics from existing records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full training of external moderators to undertake a moderation service and to produce a suite of materials for end point assessors</td>
<td>Use of external occupationally competent moderator to review a sample of end point assessments, and highlight potential issues or questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert review of end-point assessment tools</td>
<td>No review of the tools – other than that they have been developed and tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate end-point assessments for all standards where there are completers</td>
<td>Only review the three standards where there will be significant numbers of completers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-going delivery of the service</td>
<td>Service delivered for four months only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>