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Toolkit
OPERATIONS MANAGER
Level 5



end-point assessment and so much more

INTRODUCTION

DSW have been appointed to conduct end-point assessment for this apprenticeship. This toolkit has been created to help the apprentice, training provider and the employer to understand what is needed to successfully complete end-point assessment (EPA) for this standard.

All approved end-point assessment organisations must carry out EPA in line with the assessment plan published by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). The assessment plan details the assessment methods used, the criteria to be assessed and the environment in which the assessments must take place.

The requirements and content of this toolkit come directly from the Operations Manager assessment plan with additional clarification provided by the external quality assurer (EQA) for this apprenticeship standard. Published assessment plans are available on the IfATE website: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/>

Typical job titles of those undertaking this apprenticeship include area manager, department manager, general manager, operations manager, regional manager and specialist manager.

The standard aligns with recognition by:

- The Chartered Management Institute for Member, as well as Chartered Manager status where they can evidence 3+ years management experience
- Institute of Leadership for Member.



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GATEWAY

Apprentices must be on-programme for a minimum of 12 months before they come through gateway and enter the EPA phase of the apprenticeship. The apprentice, employer and training provider must agree that the apprentice is demonstrating competence against the standard's knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) and the associated grading descriptors.

Once an apprentice is ready for gateway, the training provider must submit the following to DSW's epaPRO portal for approval:

- Gateway declaration
- Proof of Level 2 English and maths
- Portfolio of evidence with completed referencing table.

If any of these requirements are not met, gateway will not be approved.



EPA OVERVIEW

The Operations Manager EPA consists of two assessment methods:

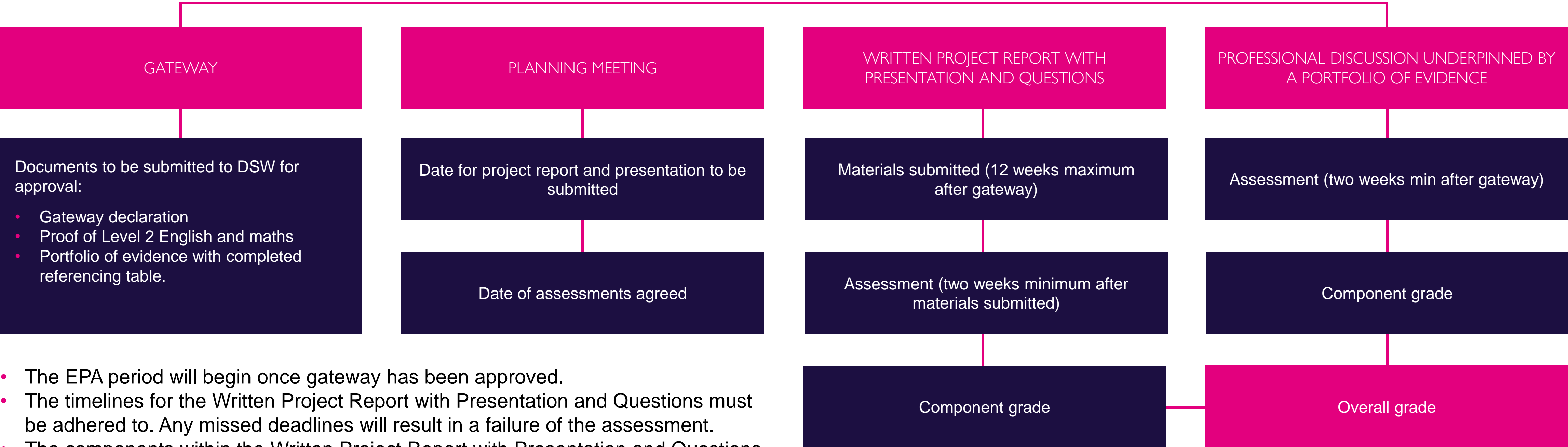
- Written Project Report with Presentation and Questions
- Professional Discussion underpinned by a Portfolio of Evidence.

The standard is made up of 32 grading descriptors. There are 22 pass descriptors which all apprentices must meet. There are 10 distinction descriptors which apprentices aiming for an overall grade of distinction must also meet.



EPA TIMELINE

Typical 5-month duration



- The EPA period will begin once gateway has been approved.
- The timelines for the Written Project Report with Presentation and Questions must be adhered to. Any missed deadlines will result in a failure of the assessment.
- The components within the Written Project Report with Presentation and Questions assessment method must be taken in the order as shown above.
- The assessments can take place in any order or concurrently. There is no need to pass one assessment before progressing to the other.
- The assessments may take place on the same day or on different days.

PLANNING MEETING

Following gateway approval, DSW's independent end-point assessor (IEPA) will contact the training provider to introduce themselves and arrange a planning meeting. Apprentices and employers are permitted to join the planning meeting if they request to do so.

This meeting will be used to agree the dates and times for the assessments and submission of materials.

The assessments will be conducted virtually via the online video conferencing platform Microsoft Teams. Others, such as Webex or Zoom can be used if preferred.

Face-to-face assessments can be accommodated should the apprentice prefer. This should be discussed with the training provider and agreed with DSW. Additional costs will apply.

The IEPA will record the agreed submission and assessment dates in epaPRO once the planning meeting is complete.

CONDITIONS FOR ASSESSMENT

All assessments must be taken under examination conditions. It is essential that apprentices familiarise themselves with the Conditions for Live Assessment. The document sets out the mandatory requirements to ensure a secure and appropriate assessment environment, including apprentice ID requirements, panning of rooms and appropriate use of technology.

Failure to comply with the conditions for live assessment may result in delayed, cancelled or failed assessments.



AMPLIFICATION AND MAPPING

This document outlines what the apprentice will be assessed against in each assessment method.

During the on-programme period, the apprentice will cover the knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) of the apprenticeship standard. The apprentice is not assessed against the KSBs; these have been used to create the pass and distinction descriptors.

The apprentice's competence will be assessed against the pass (P) and distinction (D) descriptors during end-point assessment.

Amplifications are written to expand on the pass and distinction descriptors. This simplifies and clarifies any complex, vague and/or ambiguous areas. Where examples have been listed, these are designed to provide guidance to the apprentice. The list is not exhaustive, and the apprentice may use alternative examples that are relevant to their role.



WRITTEN PROJECT REPORT WITH PRESENTATION AND QUESTIONS



The project involves the apprentice completing a significant and defined piece of work that has a real business application and benefit. The written project report must meet the needs of the employer's business and be relevant to the apprentice's occupation and apprenticeship.

The apprentice has a maximum of 12 weeks in which to develop and submit their written report, presentation materials and referencing table to DSW.

The 12-week period commences as soon as gateway has been approved. Starting the work ahead of this will invalidate the assessment.



PROJECT REPORT

The report must include at least:

- an executive summary
- an introduction
- the scope and business need of the project (including key performance indicators, aims and objectives)
- research and analysis outcomes
- project outcomes - did it deliver the benefits included? Was it completed to time and cost?
- discussion of findings
- recommendations and conclusions
- references - from external resources.

Apprentices can add their own headings and subheadings in addition to the above.

Reports must be between 3,600 and 4,400 words

The apprentice cannot amend the report after submission.

Reports under the minimum word count will be assessed as submitted. Reports over the maximum will be assessed up to 4,400 words, with anything over being disregarded.

The apprentice may work as part of a team which could include technical internal or external support. However, the project report must be the apprentice's own work and will be reflective of their own role and contribution.

Further information can be found in the [Project and Presentation Guidance document](#) and [DSW Project Requirements](#).

PRESENTATION MATERIALS

The presentation will provide an overview of the apprentice's project. All presentations must include:

- an analysis of the internal and external factors that impacted the choice of project.
- a critical evaluation of the project activity justifying the reason for the project.
- detail of the impact the project has had since it was completed.

The above points are directly mapped to the KSB themes and related grading descriptors assigned to this assessment method. The apprentice may use whichever medium they choose for their presentation, but the materials must be submitted electronically.

The project materials must be uploaded to epaPRO. The apprentice must not alter the project report or presentation materials in any way once submitted. Doing so may result in cancelled or failed assessments.

The project report must be mapped to the descriptors using the [Project Referencing Table](#). The table includes an apprentice and an employer declaration which must be completed prior to submission.

Documents to upload:

- Written project report with supporting evidence
- Presentation materials
- Completed Project Referencing Table.



PRESENTATION AND QUESTIONING: LIVE ASSESSMENT

The presentation and questions will take place at least two weeks after the project report, presentation materials and referencing table have been submitted. This allows the IEPA time to assess the report and prepare questions.

The presentation and questions will last 60 minutes (plus 10% at the IEPA's discretion to allow the apprentice to complete their last answer).

The presentation will typically last for 20 minutes, with the remaining time being used for the questions.

If the presentation extends to the point where it restricts the IEPA's time for questions, they will conclude the presentation and move the assessment on.

If the assessment exceeds the maximum time limit, anything after 66 minutes will not be assessed.

QUESTIONS

There will be a 10-minute break between the presentation and the Q&A to allow time for the IEPA to finalise the questions to be asked.

The IEPA will ask a minimum of six and a maximum of 15 questions. The questions are designed to:

- to verify that the activity was completed by the apprentice.
- to seek clarification where required.
- to assess those descriptors the apprentice did not have the opportunity to demonstrate within the report and presentation.
- to assess the level of competence against the grading descriptors.

The IEPA may ask up to two follow-up prompts for each question to clarify their understanding, or probe for evidence for the distinction grading descriptors.

Sample Questions can be found [here](#).

Once all questions have been asked and the apprentice has offered their final response, the apprentice can choose to end the assessment early. At this point the IEPA will issue the following statement:

“Thank you. I have no further questions to ask. You still have [X] amount of time remaining, is there anything else you would like to add?”

At this point, the apprentice can choose to ask to bring the assessment to a close.

Results will be available on epaPRO within five working days.



PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION UNDERPINNED BY A PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE

PORTFOLIO OF EVIDENCE

The portfolio demonstrates the apprentice's best work gathered during the on-programme stage of the apprenticeship. It must be mapped to the KSBs and grading descriptors using the *Portfolio Referencing Table*.

The portfolio must contain at least one piece of evidence mapped clearly to each KSB and pass descriptor assigned to this assessment method. The portfolio will typically contain 16 pieces of evidence. Each piece of evidence may map to more than one descriptor. In addition to the pass descriptors, the apprentice may also choose to map their evidence to the distinction descriptors.

Evidence in the portfolio may include but is not limited to:

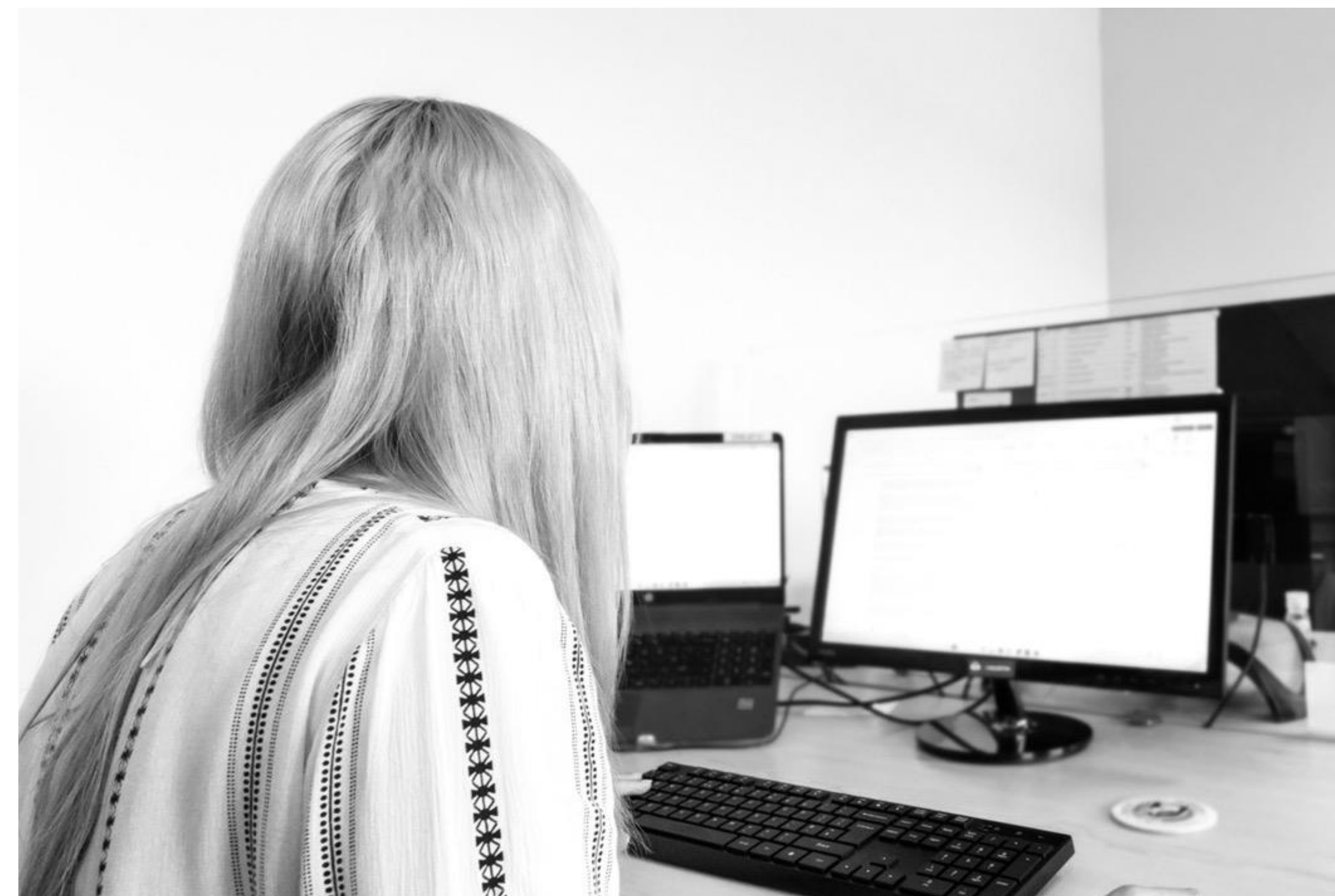
- workplace documentation and records
- workplace policies and procedures
- reports
- presentations
- witness statements
- annotated photographs
- video clips with a maximum total duration of five minutes; the apprentice must be in view and identifiable.

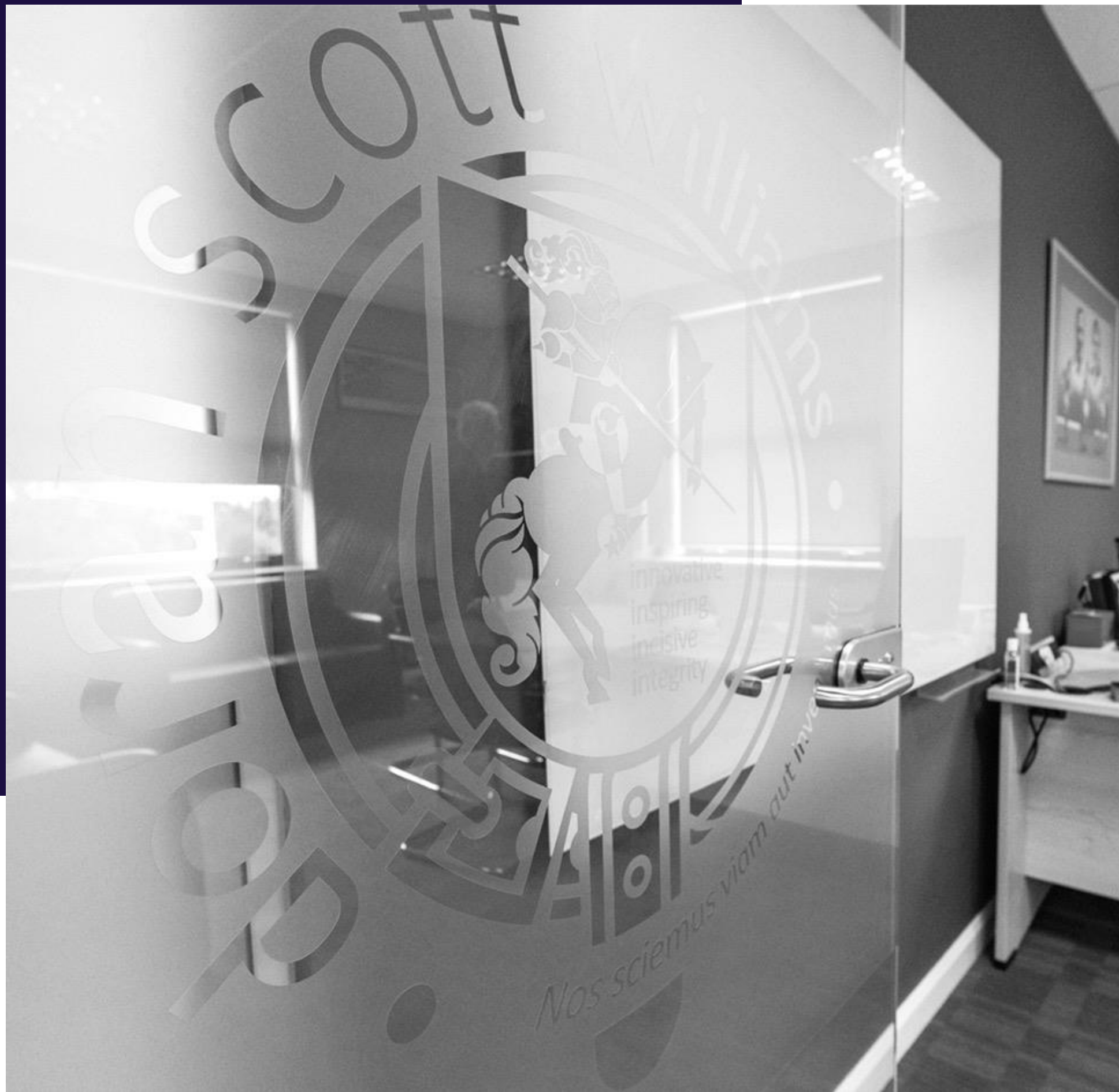
This is not a definitive list; other evidence sources can be included.

The portfolio of evidence must not include reflective accounts or any methods of self-assessment. Any employer contributions must focus on direct observation of performance (for example, witness statements) rather than opinions. The evidence provided must be valid and attributable to the apprentice; the *Portfolio Referencing Table* includes an apprentice and an employer declaration confirming this. Gateway will not be approved if this declaration is not signed.

Please refer to the *DSW Portfolio Requirements* guidance for further information.

The portfolio will be reviewed by the IEPA ahead of the professional discussion to help them prepare questions. As the portfolio is not assessed, feedback will not be provided on the portfolio of evidence before the discussion.





PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION

The professional discussion is a structured dialogue which takes place between the apprentice and the IEPA. It is designed to establish the apprentice's competence against the grading descriptors that are assigned to this assessment method.

The portfolio of evidence can be referred to by the apprentice and the IEPA during the professional discussion.

The professional discussion will last for a maximum of 60 minutes (plus 10% at the IEPA's discretion to allow the apprentice to complete their last answer).

If the discussion exceeds this time limit, anything after 66 minutes will not be assessed.

Once all discussion points have been covered and the apprentice has offered their final response, the apprentice can choose to end the assessment early. At this point the IEPA will issue the following statement:

"Thank you. I have no further questions/discussion points to ask. You still have [X] amount of time remaining, is there anything else you would like to add?"

At this point, the apprentice can choose to ask to bring the assessment to a close.

The IEPA will ask a prepare a minimum of six discussion points. Where possible these will be based on the evidence seen in the portfolio. The discussion points will be used to guide the discussion to ensure all necessary grading descriptors are covered. Each discussion point will open a free-flowing discussion and the IEPA may prompt for further information as appropriate. The apprentice may use examples from any part of the apprenticeship.

Sample discussion points can be found [here](#).

Results will be available on epaPRO within five working days.

GRADING

WRITTEN PROJECT REPORT WITH PRESENTATION AND QUESTIONS

To achieve a pass, the apprentice must meet all 11 pass descriptors assigned to this assessment method.

To achieve a distinction, the apprentice must meet all 11 pass descriptors, and all four distinction descriptors assigned to this assessment method.

PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION

To achieve a pass, the apprentice must meet all 11 pass descriptors assigned to this assessment method.

To achieve a distinction, the apprentice must meet all 11 pass descriptors, and all six distinction descriptors assigned to this assessment method.

OVERALL GRADING

To gain an overall EPA grade of pass, the apprentice must achieve a pass in both assessment methods.

To achieve an overall grade of distinction, the apprentice must achieve a distinction in both assessment methods.



RESITS AND RETAKES

Apprentices who fail will be offered the opportunity to take a resit or a retake. A resit does not require further learning, whereas a retake does.

The training provider, employer and apprentice will determine whether a retake is required. The timescales and content of the further learning will be defined to support the apprentice ahead of the retake taking place.

An apprentice who fails an assessment method will be required to resit or retake the failed assessment method only.

Resits and retakes are not offered to apprentices wishing to move to a higher grade.

A resit is typically taken within two months of the EPA outcome notification. The timescale for a retake depends on how much retraining is required and is typically taken within three months of the EPA outcome notification. Any resits or retakes must be taken within six months of the EPA outcome notification otherwise the entire EPA will need to be resat or retaken in full.

There is a capped grade of a pass for a resit or retake unless DSW determines that there are exceptional circumstances.



PROJECT PROPOSAL, PRESENTATION AND QUESTIONS

If the apprentice fails the assessment method, they must amend the project output in line with the IEPA’s feedback. The apprentice will be given four weeks to rework and submit the amended report and presentation materials

REASON FOR ‘FAIL’ GRADE	NEXT STEPS
Missed submission deadline	Resit of assessment method with new project required. New project, written report and presentation materials to be completed.
Descriptor/s not met after completion of the presentation and questioning	Resit of assessment method with opportunity for the apprentice to amend the original submission in-line with the IEPA’s feedback.

PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSION

If the apprentice fails the professional discussion, it can be resat or retaken. The apprentice is not permitted to amend or resubmit their portfolio of evidence. The IEPA will prepare a new set of professional discussion questions for a resit or retake.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The documents in this table have been developed specifically for the Level 5 Operations Manager standard.

DOCUMENT	DESCRIPTION
Amplification	Shows which pass and distinction descriptors will be met through each assessment method, along with additional guidance on the evidence required.
Sample Questions	Sample questions for both the Presentation with Questions and professional discussion assessments.
Project and Presentation Guidance	Further information and guidance on the development of the written report and presentation.
Portfolio Referencing Table (Word)	The apprentice must submit the Portfolio Referencing Table along with their portfolio at gateway. The Portfolio Referencing Table includes an apprentice and an employer declaration which must be completed for the submission to be accepted. Apprentices are to complete either the Word or Excel version at their preference.
Portfolio Referencing Table (Excel)	
Project Referencing Table (Word)	The project report must be mapped to the descriptors using the Project Referencing Table. The Project Referencing Table includes an apprentice and an employer declaration which must be completed for the submission to be accepted. Apprentices are to complete either the Word or Excel version at their preference.
Project Referencing Table (Excel)	
Toolkit Amendments	Details all amendments made to the Toolkit and supporting documents.

Further guidance documents which you may find helpful but are not specific to the Operations Manager standard are available to download via the links below:

- [Policies and Procedures](#)
- [Conditions for Live Assessment](#)
- [Templates](#)
 - [Witness Testimony](#)
 - [Observation Record](#)
 - [Context Statement](#)
- [Technical requirements for assessment and Zoom/Webex/Teams user guides](#)
- [DSW Portfolio Requirements](#)
- [DSW Project Requirements](#)



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