



DSW EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS



end-point assessment and so much more

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INTRODUCTION

This document is for apprentices and outlines DSW's requirements for submitting portfolio and project evidence for end-point assessment.

Many apprenticeship assessment plans require a showcase portfolio demonstrating an apprentice's best work within a set period. Portfolios may be assessed directly or form the foundation for other assessment methods, such as interviews or professional discussions.

Some assessment plans require apprentices to complete a project within a specific timeframe. When a project is part of the end-point assessment (EPA), the main requirement is usually a project report. This may be assessed directly or be the basis for other assessment methods, such as presentations with questioning. The project report will usually have a specified word count that must be followed.

The requirements outlined in this document are mandatory for all apprentices. Not following them may result in assessment cancellation or failure.

All end-point assessments are based on knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs). These KSBs are represented by individual statements known as learning outcomes, pass descriptors or distinction descriptors. In this guide, we will refer to them as grading descriptors.

VARCS PRINCIPLES

When providing evidence for assessment, you need to ensure that it meets the **VARCS** principles: **Validity, Authenticity, Reliability, Currency, and Sufficiency**. These principles help assessors determine whether the evidence you provide is appropriate and acceptable. Here's what each one means:

VALIDITY

Your evidence must be relevant to the skills, knowledge, and behaviours being assessed. It should clearly align with the assessment criteria and demonstrate that you have met the required standards.

When submitting your portfolio or project:

- Ensure you meet all grading descriptors.
- Include only your best work.
- A single piece of evidence can cover multiple grading descriptors.

AUTHENTICITY

The evidence must be your own work. You must demonstrate that you have personally completed the work without excessive assistance or copying from others.

The signed gateway declaration confirms that the evidence submitted is yours. However, your evidence should also include context explaining what you did and how it demonstrates your competence. Witness testimonies can further strengthen your submission.

The Independent End-Point Assessor (IEPA) must be able to identify your specific contribution to each piece of evidence, particularly for group work such as projects or meetings.

Key points:

- Use “I” or “me” instead of “we” or “us.”
- Clearly demonstrate your individual role in group work.

Example – Presentation:

If submitting a presentation created and delivered with colleagues:

- Provide an annotated copy highlighting the sections you created or presented.
- Include a witness testimony or feedback from an observer, specifically noting your contribution.

Narrative accounts (such as case studies) should be written in the first person (“I” or “me”). Alternatively, you may use the third person (your name instead of “I”), but ensure the evidence clearly reflects your individual input.

RELIABILITY

Your evidence must be credible and verifiable, sourced from reliable references.

Examples of reliable evidence include:

- Performance reviews.
- Project reports.
- Customer feedback demonstrating your skills and achievements.

Key considerations:

- Ensure all evidence is clear and legible (e.g. avoid blurry screenshots).
- Highlight evidence showing sustained performance over time, particularly where grading descriptors require consistency.

CURRENCY

Evidence must reflect your skills and competence at the time of assessment.

Requirements:

- Evidence must fall within the permitted timeframe and be after the start date of your apprenticeship.
- Check the toolkit for collection period rules.
- Use recent examples to ensure clarity and accuracy in live assessments.
- All evidence should be dated, indicating when the activity was completed. Where possible, support this with records that include the original date (e.g. emails, meeting minutes). Typed dates within evidence or descriptions may also be used to indicate when the activity took place.

SUFFICIENCY

You must provide enough evidence to demonstrate competency across all required assessment areas.

Key points:

- Carefully examine the grading descriptors.
- Ensure you meet all components of each descriptor, as they may be complex and multi-part.
- Pay close attention to command verbs (e.g. 'analyse' or 'explain'). Refer to DSW's Command Verbs document for guidance.
- Where a grading descriptor includes 'and' (e.g. internal and external customers), provide evidence covering both aspects.

MAPPING

The toolkit includes a referencing table that you must use to map your evidence to each grading descriptor. You are responsible for this, but you can ask your employer or training provider for help if needed. Accurate mapping helps the IEPA find your evidence quickly.

DSW doesn't require a specific method for mapping, but following these key principles ensures clarity and accuracy:

- Label evidence clearly and make it easy to locate
- Each pass-level grading descriptor must be mapped to at least one piece of evidence
- Indicate the page number and/or paragraph when mapping written documents
- Don't map every piece of evidence to every grading descriptor
- It's helpful to add grading descriptor references to the evidence itself (e.g., at the end of a paragraph or in footnotes)

If your portfolio or project is submitted without evidence mapped to the referencing table, or with every piece of evidence mapped to every grading descriptor, your assessment will be cancelled.

The IEPA cannot complete any part of the referencing table for you. If a referencing table is not submitted, your work will not be assessed, and the assessment will be cancelled.

EVIDENCE TYPES

Three main types of evidence:

- Anecdotal evidence
- Product evidence
- Performance evidence

ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE

Anecdotal evidence provides a narrative to the IEPA. It explains a specific situation, including what happened, when it happened, who was involved, and what you did.

Examples of anecdotal evidence include (but are not limited to):

- Personal statements written by you that describe an activity you were involved in
- Observations of your performance by a coach or manager

Since anecdotal evidence is subjective, it must always be supported by product, performance evidence and/or a witness testimony. While not every grading descriptor needs supporting evidence, there must be a sufficient blend to back up the anecdotal accounts.

Think of anecdotal accounts like a jigsaw puzzle. Each grading descriptor is a piece of the puzzle, helping to form the complete picture of your skills and competence. Anecdotal evidence is like describing what the finished puzzle should look like—it gives context, but it isn't a replacement for the actual pieces. You don't need a separate piece of evidence for every descriptor, but you need enough solid pieces to make the picture clear and convincing. If too many pieces are missing, the IEPA will struggle to see the full image and trust your story.

The examples below could be enough to validate the multiple grading descriptors. The supporting evidence needs to be strong enough to back up what you're saying; not every grading descriptor needs unique proof.

Portfolio Example:

You describe how you handled a workplace challenge, such as dealing with a customer query from start to finish. That one account might cover 10 grading descriptors like communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and technical skills. You don't need 10 different pieces of evidence, just a strong blend to support your story.

You could include evidence such as an email exchange with a customer and a witness testimony from your supervisor confirming how you handled the situation.

Or

You could include evidence such as an email exchange with a customer and suitably redacted screenshots from the customer database showing the progress of the issue resolution

Project Example:

You describe how you managed a project from initiation to completion, covering aspects like project planning, risk management, stakeholder communication and resource allocation. That one account might cover all project learning outcomes. You don't need a different piece of evidence for every outcome, just a strong blend to support your story.

You could include evidence like a project timeline showing key milestones and meeting minutes or a project status report demonstrating your communication with stakeholders and progress tracking.

Or

You could include evidence like a resource allocation chart and feedback from the project team confirming how you handled the distribution of tasks and managed resources effectively.

Product and/or performance evidence is not required to support knowledge grading descriptors.

Certificates can be included, however, they cannot be included as a proxy for knowledge or skills. They must be accompanied by a comprehensive example of how the learning has been applied in the workplace.

PRODUCT EVIDENCE

Product evidence is a key part of your portfolio and project. It shows that the activities in your work are real and happened within the allowed timeframe for your apprenticeship.

Examples of product evidence include (but are not limited to):

- Reports - Project reports, performance reviews, or case studies you have written that showcase your work
- Presentations - Slides or materials from presentations you've created and delivered
- Emails - Correspondence that demonstrates your involvement in projects or tasks
- Work Samples - Examples of work you produced during your apprenticeship, i.e. client proposals, meeting notes, or technical documentation

PERFORMANCE EVIDENCE

Performance evidence includes records of your performance, as defined by your employer.

Examples of performance evidence include (but are not limited to):

- KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) - Measurable results or goals that show your performance in specific areas
- Training Records - Documentation showing training or development activities you've participated in
- Appraisals or Performance Reviews - Feedback from your employer or manager about your job performance
- Client Feedback - Comments or evaluations from clients on your work

WITNESS TESTIMONIES

A witness testimony is a written or recorded statement that verifies your evidence and supports your description of the activities you were involved in. It must come from a credible witness, usually your line manager or someone in a similar role.

- Witness testimonies should not be the main source of evidence. They should support the product evidence you've provided, not replace it
- It is good practice for witness testimonies to match the events and activities in your work. For example, if you describe a complex complaint you handled, the witness could explain how they saw you perform. This adds credibility and gives the IEPA another perspective
- Witness testimonies must describe real events the witness directly observed, including dates. They should not make general statements about your performance. It's also a good idea to link testimonies to specific grading descriptors
- Witness testimonies must be signed and authenticated. If they don't meet the requirements, they will be excluded from the assessment
- Witness testimonies can also be submitted as audio or video recordings. See the "Audio and Video Recordings" section for more information

SIGNATURES

You are not required to sign all evidence, however, witness testimonies must be signed, and a typed name in any font cannot be accepted as a valid signature.

Acceptable forms of signature are as follows:

- Wet signature (this can include a scanned signature inserted into a document)
- Digital signature (using software such as Adobe Sign)
- Supporting email with a full business signature that includes name, title and contact details

AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDINGS

It is acceptable to include audio or video recordings.

These may include:

- Recorded observations of you performing certain tasks
- Recorded witness testimonies
- Recorded professional discussions with your training provider

It is good practice for recorded evidence to be time-stamped in the DSW referencing table (see example below).

Grading Descriptor	Reference
Communicate complex information to your team	Audio recording 1: 2m 30s to 4m 50s
Use different communication styles to suit audience needs	Audio recording 2: 6m 15s to 9m 10s

Individual recordings which exceed 5 minutes in length must be time-stamped in line with the example above.

At the start of recordings, participants must state the following:

- Name of the participant
- Position of the participant
- Relationship with the apprentice
- Date of the recording
- Grading descriptors being addressed (this is good practice)

Without this information, it may not be possible for the IEPA to confirm the validity and currency of the evidence, and it may be discounted.

MALPRACTICE, MALADMINISTRATION AND PLAGIARISM

You must not claim anyone else's work as your own. All work must be your own.

If you use text from an external source (e.g. a textbook or webpage), you must:

- Acknowledge the source clearly
- Demonstrate your understanding of the topic. Simply quoting large sections, even with citations, is insufficient

If the IEPA identifies any malpractice, including plagiarism, they may issue a grade of fail for your assessment.

Please refer to DSW's Malpractice and Maladministration policy for further information, which is available on the DSW website.

DATA PROTECTION AND UK GDPR

It is important to redact sensitive information before submitting your evidence.

This includes:

- Personal data regarding individuals
- Confidential details about organisations

Certain information is protected under law and must be redacted before submission. Failure to redact appropriately may result in grading descriptors relating to confidentiality or GDPR being marked as not met.

Overly redacted evidence may become unusable for assessment. Ensure you only redact truly sensitive information. Information already in the public domain, such as a colleague's business email address, doesn't require redaction.

Please refer to DSW's Data Security and UK GDPR Guidance for further information, which is available on the DSW website.

APPENDIX I – AMENDMENTS

V1 MARCH 2025

- Creation of evidence requirements amalgamation of portfolio requirements and project requirements into one document
- Clarification provided around VARCS principles, including evidence attribution, dates and discounting evidence
- Clarification and example added to anecdotal evidence
- Recordings over 5 minutes are to be timestamped