



Degree Apprenticeships Guidance Document for External Examiners

Thank you for agreeing to be an external examiner at the University of Nottingham for our Apprenticeship programmes. External examiners who are responsible for apprenticeship programmes are appointed using the same process as those external examiners who are responsible for other UG and or PGT programmes. External examiners for UoN are required to be academics but in the latest nomination forms you will see we are interested in the vocational experiences you may have.

This guidance and the associated training session is designed to support the standard external examiner briefing session provided by the University of Nottingham and must be done in addition to (not as a replacement of) that training.

Introduction

What is a degree apprenticeship?

Apprentices are full time, paid employees of a business who combine work with a programme of study which is often delivered under a blended/hybrid learning model with content being made available to apprentices through our virtual learning environment. The delivery method for each programme of study will vary with some programmes including face to face online or in person sessions which could be one day a week or blocks of study days (for example 5 weeks each year). The apprentice spends a minimum of 20% of their contracted hours in study or training with the apprenticeship provider (called 'off-the-job' learning). They are also required to apply their learning and engage in wider opportunities through 'on-the-job' learning.

These programmes of study are built from an occupational standard. Occupational standards are designed by employer groups and must be ratified by Government. The occupational standards provide a list of duties and knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) which someone who is occupationally competent would be able to perform. These are the building blocks of any apprenticeship.

All apprenticeships have an End-Point Assessment (EPA). This is the final assessment of the apprenticeship which tests both academic learning and workplace competence and determines whether the apprentice is occupationally competent. Each EPA has a plan (EPA plan) which is designed alongside the specific occupational standard using the same employer group (quite often with input from training providers such as HEIs). At the time of producing this guidance EPAs can take two forms; integrated or non-integrated.

If an EPA is integrated it means that the EPA is credit bearing and forms part of the degree qualification. External examiners have oversight of the academic award (degree) associated to the apprenticeship and this will include a final module that provides credits towards the degree but also the outcome of the apprenticeship award; in this case we can term it the 'EPA module'.

If an EPA is non-integrated an organisation external to the University is responsible for assessing the apprenticeship certification, and the degree is completed in full before progressing to the EPA. External examiners will not play a direct role in the EPA process for non-integrated standards but will have oversight of the academic award (degree) associated to the apprenticeship only.



Current apprenticeship programmes at the University of Nottingham

We currently have eight apprenticeship programmes, a list with the links to the occupational standards can be found below. We have also included a link to the [University of Nottingham Degree Apprenticeships](#) webpages.

Advanced Clinical Practitioner (Health)	<i>Integrated Programme</i>	[link]
Senior Leader	<i>Non-Integrated Programme</i>	[link]
Architect	<i>Integrated Programme</i>	[link]
Laboratory Scientist	<i>Non-Integrated Programme</i>	[link]
Bioinformatics Scientist	<i>Non-Integrated Programme</i>	[link]
Advanced Clinical Practitioner (Veterinary)	<i>Integrated Programme</i>	[link]
Data Scientist	<i>Integrated Programme</i>	[link]
Electro-mechanical Engineer	<i>Non-Integrated Programme</i>	[link]

So what is different and what do I need to do as an External Examiner?

The activity an external examiner undertakes for a degree apprenticeship is aligned to the normal duties prescribed for the role. It is largely about appreciating the dual nature of the programme requirements and applying this to your evaluation and feedback activities.

Integration of the apprenticeship knowledge, skills and behaviours into the programme and modules

Your Programme Director can share with you the curriculum mapping documents outlining not only the inclusion of the degree learning outcomes (LOs) but also the apprenticeship KSBs. In some programmes, the LOs and KSBs are designed to be the same.

Verification of Assessments (not EPA Module)

Assessments will largely be designed in the form you would be familiar with for degree programmes in terms of academic level and size for the stage of study. However, you will note that links to relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours for the apprenticeship will be evident in documentation. Additionally, some assessments may require integration of workplace context or activities to support a project or coursework.

Please verify assessments as usual but appreciate some activities may be adapted for part-time students based in the workplace. Also assessed pieces or specific grading criteria may include aspects such providing evidence of learning both 'off-the-job' and 'on-the-job' and this is to be encouraged if degree LOs are also being addressed. There may also be cases where apprentices map the knowledge, skills and behaviours from the relevant apprenticeship standard to their learning as part of the assessment.

Moderation of Assessments (not EPA Module)

As an external examiner in general please moderate grading in a manner usual for degree provision and using the associated detailed criteria. However as noted above the nature of the assessments may ask for evidence of development of KSBs or readiness for starting their EPA, or discussion and debate around theory and practice and where apprentices evidence their learning from the workplace and underpin this with the relevant theories. There may be some difference in the feedback provided by



assessors and you may want to comment about the quality of this feedback to the learner as well as the summative grade assigned.

The EPA Module (for integrated programmes only)

(As noted above for non-integrated programmes the EPA is conducted externally to the University, and the UoN external examiner will not be involved).

In verifying the EPA module, you will observe some differences in structure of the assessments and grading criteria. As noted earlier each occupational standard has an associated EPA plan and this is required to be adhered to for purposes of grading the overall apprenticeship award (dependent on standard usually (or part of), distinction, merit, pass, fail). For integrated degree-level programmes, providers are required develop assessments that directly meet the EPA plan, in addition to ensuring a process is in place for awarding a variable grade as credits towards the degree award. Assessment is undertaken by 'Independent Assessors' and there is a more detailed internal moderation process.

It is required you moderate this module as usual for degree contribution purposes but be mindful of the specific and important nature of this stage for the apprenticeship. Please discuss with your Programme Director and relevant module convenor about the specific requirements when verifying or externally moderating the EPA module.

Reflective Learning Logs

These are developed by each apprentice as they progress through their studies both 'off-the-job' and 'on-the-job' and logged into software called Aptem. This activity is designed to help apprentices provide evidence of development of their KSBs and also can be used for portfolio or reflective assessment both in their main programme and as part of the EPA module. It is worthwhile being aware and perhaps viewing examples of these logs so you can appreciate the development of learners toward successful completion of the apprenticeship.

Your Annual report

In our institutional external examiner annual report that you will complete we have 3 specific questions:

- Were you involved in the review of Apprenticeship Provision (Yes/No)
- Overall, were apprenticeship learners achieving and progressing in line with the requirements of the apprenticeship (either standalone or as part of a mixed cohort)? (Yes/No)
- If you stated 'No', or wish to expand your answers in this section, please use the box below (Open text)

As noted above for all our programmes the apprenticeship KSBs are formally mapped to the programme and modules, thus module grade achievement provides an indicator of progression in development of these KSBs. If not done so already, you may wish to discuss this question with the Programme Director to understand the nature of the apprenticeship and how it links to the degree modules you are reviewing. We would encourage you to add some comments in that last question.

Your work to moderate assessments, feedback provided to learners and evaluate other broader activities specific to the programme should inform the progression of our apprentices well from an external examiner perspective. As is usual reflect on progression of the cohort alongside the sample



you are moderating. For mixed cohorts you may wish to look at the development of learners on both the degree programme and apprenticeship degree programme to evaluate achievement and progression has been comparable. If the EPA module is included in your scope for the year (only one such programme has reached this stage in 2022), then you may wish to comment on final outcomes with respect to the apprenticeship award

External Requirements

Ofsted

Since April 2021 the quality of degree-level apprenticeship programmes in the UK (up to the point the learner starts the EPA) are regulated by Ofsted. Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) quality assure EPAs from 2022. It is very unlikely Ofsted will want to engage with external examiners but what you write in the annual report could be reviewed. As part of Self Assessments Reporting required for Ofsted inspection readiness, programme teams will review your annual reports, as such if you have any queries before adding your comments to the report, please do contact your Programme Director.

Safeguarding and Prevent training will be offered if you are interested in completing this. It is only mandatory if you plan to speak to apprentices unaccompanied and can be accessed within our online central course provision (using your UoN username) as required.

Information of note for the future

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) as provider of the occupational standards, undertake review and updates of these standards regularly (every few years). Additionally following recent stakeholder consultations there will be a move over time to transfer many degree apprenticeships into 'integrated' model, which will largely occur during the next planned review of that standard. As such you may be briefed of future curriculum changes required to support the updates.

Finally

We hope this document will provide a useful reference tool for you as an external examiner of our degree apprenticeships. It is also designed to support the specific online training session provided each year (alternative recording or resource will also be made available). Please contact your Programme Director in the first instance (or your examination correspondent) if you have further questions.

Dr Emma Weston
Academic Director for Degree Apprenticeships