

Covid Flexibility Withdrawal

This document will outline an overview for all standards that currently have a COVID-19 flexibility applied to it that Training Qualifications UK are an End-Point Assessment Organisation for. Within this document, we will outline the arrangements that have existed during COVID-19 and the approach that will be taken from January 2022 onwards.

Outside of standard specific discretions, there are a number of flexibilities that the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) approved during the pandemic which they have permitted to remain post January 2022. We will outline them below and make further reference to them in relation to particular standards where necessary.

Retained Apprenticeship flexibilities	
1	Assessment gateway sign off being done remotely.
2	Assessment element delivery being in any order.
3	Simulated environments being used instead of observation in workplaces.
4	Remote delivery of assessment (including invigilation).
5	Assessments taking place outside of usual venues.
6	Pauses being allowed between elements of End-Point Assessments.
7	Assessment exams being online instead of on paper.

IfATE plans to discontinue three types of flexibilities from 1 January 2022, depending on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic at that time. Where necessary, this deadline may be extended for specific sectors still experiencing disruption due to COVID-19. If this should be the case we will provide the relevant details and update this document.

Non-retained Flexibilities
The extension to the length of the End-Point Assessment (EPA) period
Changes to who sits on assessment panels
Allowing other suitable evidence of achievement to be used in place of mandated qualifications

In addition to this, the Department for Education have confirmed that the flexibility of waiving the requirement for level 2 Apprentices to attempt level 2 functional skills tests is being discontinued from 31st December 2021. This was communicated to the sector [via an update on 31 June](#) and is in the new August [21 – July 2022 funding rules](#).

In the table below, we will outline the Apprenticeship Standard, the current temporary dispensations in place for that standard, and the approach going forward.

Sector/Standard	Current COVID-19 Dispensation	January 2022 onwards Delivery
Business Generics		
Customer Service Practitioner	The observation may be replaced with witness testimony from someone familiar with the Apprentice's work. The Apprentice would then be assessed through Q&A with an external assessor	Apprentices will be required to undertake the 90 to 120 minute Practical Observation as per the published assessment plan.
Customer Service Specialist	The observation may be replaced with witness testimony from someone familiar with the Apprentice's work. The Apprentice would then be assessed through Q&A with an external assessor.	Apprentices will be required to undertake the 60-minute Practical Observation with Q&A as per the published assessment plan.
Healthcare		
Healthcare Support Worker	The observation assessment may be replaced with a reflective statement written by the apprentice and validated by an expert witness. This will be followed by a question and answer session of up to 30 minutes with an independent assessor	Apprentices will be required to undertake the 90 to 120 minute Observation of Practice as per the published assessment plan.
Senior Healthcare Support Worker	The observation assessment may be replaced with a reflective statement written by the apprentice and validated by an expert witness. This will be followed by a question and answer session of up to 30 minutes with an independent assessor.	Apprentices will be required to undertake the 120-minute Observation of Practice as per the published assessment plan.
Healthcare Assistant Practitioner	The observation assessment may be replaced with a reflective statement written by the apprentice and validated by an expert witness. This will be followed by a question and answer session of up to 30 minutes with an independent assessor.	Apprentices will be required to undertake the 90-minute Observation of Practice as per the published assessment plan.
Education		

Teaching Assistant	The observation may be replaced by an alternative assessment consisting of a reflective account written by the apprentice and an expert witness statement. The apprentice will then undertake a question and answer session of up to 30 minutes with the external assessor.	Apprentices will be required to undertake the 120-minute Practical Observation with 15 minute Q&A as per the published assessment plan.
Hair and Beauty		
Hair Professional	<p>New</p> <p>The apprentice must produce a package of information that shows evidence of their summative assessment. This will include a mapping document, utilising reappropriated evidence provided from the apprentice's on programme period, which is mapped to the knowledge skills and behaviours detailed in the EPA plan. An employer authentication of the apprentice's competence statement can be used. A professional discussion will be used to confirm the apprentice's knowledge and understanding</p> <p>Original</p> <p>Where end-point assessment cannot be carried out in accordance with the EPA plan the following Covid-19 temporary discretions may be applied to the Hair Professional standard. Further guidance and scenarios have been produced by the Trailblazer Group HBA D2 [https://www.nhbf.co.uk/advice-and-resources/apprentices-and-t-levels/apprenticeships-in-england/] and the end-point assessment organisation will decide whether or not a discretion is appropriate.</p> <p>General (all pathways) as detailed in HBA D2:</p> <p>Additional 20% time for the practical observation</p>	<p>(Hairdressing) Apprentices will be required to undertake the Observation of Practical Assessment with questioning for a maximum of six hours, excluding breaks, as per the published assessment plan.</p> <p>(Barbering) Apprentices will be required to undertake the Observation of Practical Assessment with questioning for a maximum of three hours, excluding breaks, as per the published assessment plan.</p>

	<p>Multiple styles and services can be demonstrated on a single model.</p> <p>Hairdressing pathway:</p> <p>A blockhead may be used only where Government guidelines preclude the full EPA being completed due to social distancing or limited space restrictions to demonstrate a hair-up style, curly blow dry and/or setting technique.</p> <p>Barbering pathway (facial hair and shaving services KSBs):</p> <p>Where apprentices are unable to complete the full EPA due to Government restrictions but have completed facial hair and shaving services units of the Diploma before lockdown, these may be submitted to the end-point assessment organisation in lieu of direct observation by the external assessor.</p> <p>As a minimum that evidence will consist of consultation and assessment sheets used in the summative assessment of the units.</p> <p>The external assessor will review the evidence and question the apprentice (15 minutes on facial hair and 15 minutes on shaving services) before making a final decision.</p>	
Digital Marketing		
Digital Marketer	<p>The EQA provider for this standard has agreed the following temporary flexibilities for this standard until further notice and has informed the relevant end-point assessment organisations.</p> <p>Employers can request EPAO permission to allow apprentices to take the project at home.</p> <p>A dispensation is in place for the mandated qualifications on this standard, please see details below. For further information</p>	<p>Apprentices will be required to complete the Synoptic Project in a controlled environment over four days at either their Employer's or Training Providers premises while invigilated as per the published assessment plan.</p>

	please discuss with your Training Provider and End-Point Assessment Organisation.	
Learning and Development		
Learning and Development Practitioner	<p>On programme project can replace or supplement a post Gateway project where this has not been able to be completed.</p> <p>Where there is no recording or the recording has not been possible this can be replaced by a witness testimony from an appropriate member of staff from the employer.</p>	<p>Apprentices must complete their 2250 word project post-Gateway.</p> <p>A recording of the delivery aspect must be submitted as per the published assessment plan.</p>
Learning and Development Consultant/Business Partner	The work-based project in Learning and Development standards are pre EPA and can be now used as part of the EPA assessment.	Apprentices must complete their 5000 word project post-Gateway as per the assessment plan.
Hospitality and Catering		
Hospitality Team Member	<p>The following Covid-19 temporary discretion has been agreed until further notice.</p> <p>The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor.</p> <p>The current discretion continues. The use of a witness testimony covering an observation was felt to be efficient, keeping the burden on the employers manageable. Allowing the external assessor to undertake the question-and-answer session will ensure independence and verify and check the apprentice's coverage of the KSBs.</p> <p>The competency framework document will support the evidence gathered and will be signed off by the employer, moving away from the time-bound evidence which cannot be achieved due to COVID-19 restrictions in the industry</p>	Apprentices will be required to complete a 120-minute observation of the Apprentice in the working environment as per the published assessment plan.
Hospitality Supervisor	The following Covid-19 temporary discretion has been agreed until further notice.	Apprentices will be required to complete a four-hour observation of the Apprentice in the

	<p>The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor.</p> <p>The current discretion continues. The use of a witness testimony covering an observation was felt to be efficient, keeping the burden on the employers manageable. Allowing the external assessor to undertake the question-and-answer session will ensure independence and verify and check the apprentice's coverage of the KSBs.</p> <p>The competency framework document will support the evidence gathered and will be signed off by the employer, moving away from the time-bound evidence which cannot be achieved due to COVID-19 restrictions in the industry</p>	<p>working environment as per the published assessment plan.</p>
<p>Commis Chef (AP01)</p>	<p>The following Covid-19 temporary discretion has been agreed until further notice.</p> <p>The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor. In addition the Culinary Challenge may be replaced by evidence from apprentice, training provider, witness statement and Q&A.</p> <p>The current discretion continues. The use of a witness testimony covering an observation was felt to be efficient, keeping the burden on the employers manageable. Allowing the external assessor to undertake the question-and-answer session will ensure independence and verify and check the apprentice's coverage of the KSBs.</p> <p>The competency framework document will support the evidence gathered and will be signed off by the employer, moving away from</p>	<p>Apprentices are required to complete a three hour practical observation and a two hour culinary challenge observation as per the published assessment plan.</p>

	<p>the time-bound evidence which cannot be achieved due to COVID-19 restrictions in the industry.</p>	
Chef de Partie (AP01)	<p>The following Covid-19 temporary discretion has been agreed until further notice.</p> <p>The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor. In addition the Culinary Challenge may be replaced by evidence from apprentice, training provider, witness statement and Q&A.</p> <p>The current discretion continues. The use of a witness testimony covering an observation was felt to be efficient, keeping the burden on the employers manageable. Allowing the external assessor to undertake the question-and-answer session will ensure independence and verify and check the apprentice's coverage of the KSBs.</p> <p>The competency framework document will support the evidence gathered and will be signed off by the employer, moving away from the time-bound evidence which cannot be achieved due to COVID-19 restrictions in the industry.</p>	<p>Apprentices are required to complete a four hour practical observation and a three hour culinary challenge project observation as per the published assessment plan.</p>
Production Chef	<p>The following Covid-19 temporary discretion has been agreed until further notice.</p> <p>The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor.</p> <p>The current discretion continues. The use of a witness testimony covering an observation was felt to be efficient, keeping the burden on the employers manageable. Allowing the external assessor to undertake the question-and-answer session will ensure independence and verify and check the apprentice's coverage of the KSBs.</p>	<p>Apprentices are required to complete a 120-minute practical observation with 20-minute question and answer session as per the published assessment plan.</p>

	<p>The competency framework document will support the evidence gathered and will be signed off by the employer, moving away from the time-bound evidence which cannot be achieved due to COVID-19 restrictions in the industry.</p>	
Senior Production Chef (AP02)	<p>The following Covid-19 temporary discretion has been agreed until further notice.</p> <p>The practical observation may be replaced by evidence from Training Provider, assessed through a Q&A with an external assessor.</p> <p>The current discretion continues. The use of a witness testimony covering an observation was felt to be efficient, keeping the burden on the employers manageable. Allowing the external assessor to undertake the question-and-answer session will ensure independence and verify and check the apprentice's coverage of the KSBs.</p> <p>The competency framework document will support the evidence gathered and will be signed off by the employer, moving away from the time-bound evidence which cannot be achieved due to COVID-19 restrictions in the industry.</p>	Apprentices are required to complete a four hour observation with a 20-minute questioning session as per the published assessment plan.
Retail		
Retailer	<p>The following Covid-19 temporary discretion has been agreed until further notice.</p> <p>The Observation may be replaced by evidence of practice, validated by an expert witness statement and assessed through a Q&A session with the external assessor of up to 30 minutes.</p>	Apprentices are required to complete a 120 minute hour observation as per the published assessment plan.

The table below outlines the standards that will not have the assessment delivery affected by the removal of the applied COVID-19 flexibility from January 2022 onwards.

Standard	Current COVID-19 Dispensation	January 2022 onwards Delivery
Adult Care		
Adult Care Worker	<p>The EQA provider for this standard has agreed the following temporary flexibilities for this standard until further notice and has informed the relevant end-point assessment organisations</p> <p>Flexibilities agreed to accept suitable evidence of achievement offered as a 'proxy' for certification or achievement</p>	<p>Assessment delivery will not be affected but the flexibility for Level 2 attempt at Functional Skills will not be available from 31st December 2021 onwards, as detailed within the funding rules. Functional Skills at Level 2 must therefore be attempted prior to End-Point Assessment.</p>
Lead Adult Care Worker	<p>The EQA provider for this standard has agreed the following temporary flexibilities for this standard until further notice and has informed the relevant end-point assessment organisations.</p> <p>Flexibilities agreed to accept suitable evidence of achievement offered as a 'proxy' for certification or achievement</p>	<p>Assessment delivery will not be affected by this change.</p>
Leadership and Management		
Operations/ Departmental Manager	<p>It has been agreed due to Covid-19, that the panel can be hosted by the independent end-point assessment only. However, every effort should be made to ensure a sector expert is a part of the panel. If the decision is to have only the independent end-point assessment then this needs to be authorised by the employer.</p>	<p>There will be no changes to the End-Point Assessment following January 2021 as the current method of assessment delivery regarding not having the sector specific panel member was approved with the EQA prior to COVID-19.</p>
Business		

Associate Project Manager	It has been agreed due to Covid-19, that the panel can be hosted by the independent end-point assessment only. However, every effort should be made to ensure a sector expert is a part of the panel. If the decision is to have only the independent end-point assessment then this needs to be authorised by the employer.	There will be no changes to the End-Point Assessment following January 2021 as the current method of assessment delivery regarding not having the sector specific panel member was approved with the EQA prior to COVID-19.
Human Resources		
HR Support	Pre-gateway work examples can be used for the consultative project. Apprentices can only use work examples from the last 6 months of the apprenticeship.	We have confirmed with the EQA that our interpretation from the assessment plan is that pre-gateway evidence may be used to support the project as the published assessment plan defines the completion of the project being post-gateway rather than the start.
HR Partner	Pre-gateway work examples can be used for the consultative project. Apprentices can only use work examples from the last 6 months of the apprenticeship.	

Following feedback from a range of sources TQUK have submitted a number of extension request forms to IfATE via the relevant EQA provider, requesting that many of the standard specific discretions remain in place/ be extended for a period of time where it is felt that reverting back to the sole use of the published assessment plan will create challenges and disadvantages to Apprentices. IfATE will be reviewing all such feedback from EPAOs/Trailblazer groups and will communicate final decisions no later than **14th of December**. However, updates may be provided sooner, which we will communicate out with haste.

We will be offering additional training and support sessions on the original assessment methods to support the transition back to the assessments as outlined within the assessment plan. We will provide further detail on these shortly.

We have also asked for clarification on the following questions

- Does the removal of dispensations come into effect for all Apprentices who progress through Gateway from January 2022, or does this affect Apprentices that will have already progressed through Gateway by 31st December 2021 with assessments planned for January 2022 and beyond?
- If an Apprentice has failed an assessment undertaken via an approved dispensation before 31st December 2021, are they permitted to resit/retake the assessment using the dispensation after 1st January 2022?

- If an Apprentice has an assessment booked between now and December 31st 2021 and plans to be assessed via a dispensation, but due to extenuating circumstances the booking is delayed until January 2022 or beyond are we able to permit the use of the dispensation?
- If a dispensation is removed, but an Apprentice's individual circumstance would cause them to be disadvantaged by this, can we utilise the dispensation via our internal Reasonable adjustments/ Special considerations policy?

We will communicate updates based on responses received. Should you have additional questions to those listed above please contact us via epasupport@tquk.org