BCS APPRENTICESHIP OPERATIONS MANUAL

Version 4.0

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INTRODUCING BCS

BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT — that's us! We're the professional body for the people who work in IT and tech. Together we're on a mission, set by Royal Charter, to create a positive digital future for everyone in society. It's something we've been committed to since 1957.

We work with our key partners and global membership community to promote IT education and develop tech talent in all its forms. By understanding emerging opportunities, and identifying skill gaps and risks, we deliver essential training, assessment and consultancy services that equip tomorrow's digital professionals, today.

In fact, we're a global awarding body for IT, digital and tech qualifications and the leading end-point assessment organisation for digital apprenticeships. But we can't do any of it without you! As a BCS-approved centre, you have a frontline role in driving up standards of competence and conduct across the digital industry. We're incredibly proud of our partnership and what we achieve when we work together.

All BCS apprenticeships are regulated by Ofqual and comply with <u>Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition</u> and Ofqual's EPA Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements.

WHO'S THIS MANUAL FOR?

This guidance is for approved centres who deliver BCS apprenticeship standards. They can be training providers or employers, delivering training for the BCS knowledge modules and units and/or using our end-point assessment service.

The manual sets out the requirements that approved centres need to meet and the processes they need in place to be compliant with BCS which, in turn, ensures BCS is compliant with the regulators.

This guidance also provides information about the apprentice's journey, from registration and the gateway process to assessment, quality assurance and certification — and how to support apprentices at every step so they get the best from their programme.

It's the responsibility of the centre manager to make sure their team follows the required processes correctly.

When there are any updates to the information in this manual, we'll let the centre manager know. The latest version will be available to view and download in the BCS apprenticeships portal.

Failure to meet the requirements set out in this manual may negatively impact your apprentices' performance and results. It can also lead to BCS applying sanctions to your centre.
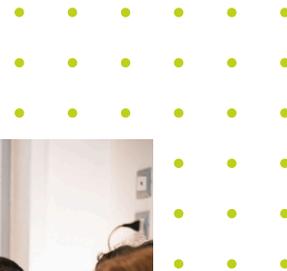
GETTING IN TOUCH

We have dedicated teams on hand to support your centre with your apprenticeship delivery.

BCS teams:	Channel partner quality team	Service delivery team	End-point assessment (EPA) team
Contact the team for help with:	✓ centre approval ✓ staff training ✓ apprenticeship quality issues ✓ requirement breaches ✓ audits and audit actions ✓ re-accreditation ✓ trademark and logo use	✓ apprentice registrations ✓ knowledge module/unit bookings ✓ knowledge module/unit certification ✓ knowledge module/unit reasonable adjustments	✓ gateway processing ✓ assessment method bookings ✓ EPA bookings ✓ EPA resits/retakes ✓ EPA certifications ✓ EPA reasonable adjustments ✓ EPA appeals
Email:	**cpqt@bcs.uk**	**apprenticeships@bcs.uk**	**epateam@bcs.uk**
Telephone:	**01793 417 560** Mon to Fri 9am – 5pm	**01793 417 441** Mon to Fri 8.30am – 4.30pm	**01793 417 608** Mon to Fri 8.30am – 5pm

BCS resources

All supporting documents and user guides referenced in this manual are available to download from our BCS apprenticeships portal, a web-based SharePoint site providing approved centre staff with all the documentation and information they need to manage and administer our apprenticeships.

The centre manager will gain access to the portal as part of your organisation's BCS approval process. To arrange access for other staff members, they'll then need to email a request to our channel partner quality team at cpqt@bcs.uk.

To access the portal, staff must be registered with BCS and have a Microsoft-enabled email address. All of your centre's BCS-registered staff should have access including trainers, invigilators and administrators.

BCS APPROVED CENTRE STATUS

To deliver BCS apprenticeship standards, your organisation must have **approved centre** status. BCS-approved centres are organisations such as training providers and employers who meet the BCS requirements and have been approved by us to deliver our Ofqual-regulated knowledge modules/units and to use our end-point assessment services.*

For guidance on becoming an approved centre, please refer to the *BCS approval and accreditation requirements and process manual* available to download from the BCS apprenticeships portal.

(*Prior to January 2023, organisations were not required to gain approval to use our EPA services — approved centre status was only a requisite for delivering our knowledge modules/units. From January 2023 however, as part of our transition to full External Quality Assurer (EQA) status with Ofqual, we now require all training providers and employer providers who deliver any element of a BCS apprenticeship to be BCS-approved.)

Ofqual registration

Before becoming an approved centre, organisations must be registered on the *Ofqual Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register (APAR).* For full details about the register and how to apply, go to Apply to the APAR as an apprenticeship training provider (www.gov.uk)

Apprenticeship standards offered by BCS

Your BCS approved centre status enables you to deliver learning and facilitate assessment for a wide range of digital apprenticeship standards — view our full portfolio here: bcs.org/develop-your-people/develop-your-team-or-organisation/digital-it-apprenticeships-for-your-team/offer-our-apprenticeships-standards/

Every apprenticeship standards we deliver is approved by IfATE and published here: www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards
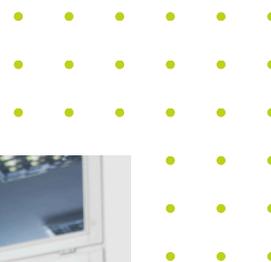
CENTRE POLICIES AND LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

BCS approved centre status is a recognised benchmark in IT training and education, reflecting your organisation's commitment to delivering high quality learning and assessment and to having skilled staff and robust procedures in place.

Our dedicated team will provide your team with the support needed to embed appropriate procedures, ensuring your centre meets with BCS requirements and we remain complaint with our regulators.

Ofqual regulation
BCS apprenticeship delivery is regulated by Ofqual (the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation).

As an Ofqual-approved awarding organisation, we deliver our apprenticeship learning and assessment in line with the conditions the office sets out in these handbooks:

- General Conditions of Recognition (www.gov.uk)
- EPA Qualification Level Conditions and Requirements (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Health and safety
Your organisation must meet all current health and safety legislation before you begin any apprenticeship training or assessment activity. The centre manager must confirm these requirements with their health and safety representative or the Health and Safety Executive.

Disabled access
Access for disabled apprentices must be available at every site offering BCS apprenticeships. If it's not possible to provide disabled access to the site, alternative arrangements will need to be made, such as providing another venue that's suitable for the apprentice.

Data protection
Your centre must have relevant data protection notices in place for apprentices so they know exactly what happens to their data.

Trademark and logos
As an approved centre, you can use the appropriate BCS partner logos to promote your approved status. Always check you're using the latest version and applying it correctly. You'll find detailed BCS brand guidelines in the BCS apprenticeships portal.

Payment of invoices
All invoices issued to approved centres must be paid **within 30 days,** in accordance with our standard payment terms. If invoices are not paid on time, we may apply sanctions to your centre or withdraw your BCS-approved centre status.

Liability insurance
Your employers' and public liability insurance documents must be available to view at your centre, either displayed as a hard copy or available in electronic format.

Approved centre policies

Your centre is required to have a number of policies in place to support your apprenticeship delivery. There's a full set of policy templates in the BCS apprenticeships portal which you can adapt to reflect what happens in your organisation before incorporating them into your own policy documentation.

We recommend making all your policies publicly available. As a minimum, it's important your apprentices are aware of them and know where they can access them if needed.

You may also be required to submit your policies to BCS when you undergo an audit.

Your centre should have the following policies and procedures in place:

Policy/procedure	What's covered
Equalities policy	your centre's commitment to providing equal opportunities and how this is demonstrated through working practices
Safeguarding policy	your commitment to safeguarding apprentices including: • how you ensure young people and vulnerable adults are protected while they're an apprentice at your centre • the policies, codes of practice and action plans you adopt in your organisation to minimise potential risks • confirmation you have a safeguarding officer in place • details of the training that relevant staff undertake
Quality assurance policy	your centre's commitment to quality assurance with reference to the processes you have in place to support this
Identification check procedure	your process for checking an apprentice's ID
Reasonable adjustment policy	how you'll meet the specific requirements of individual apprentices — this may also include a special considerations policy
Assessment security policy	your commitment to ensuring the security of all assessment materials including exams, projects and supporting documents
Malpractice and maladministration procedure	your process for managing malpractice and maladministration in your organisation
Complaints procedure	how your centre handles complaints from apprentices (prior to the complaint being raised directly with BCS)
Apprentice appeals procedure	how apprentice appeals are managed in your approved centre (prior to an appeal being submitted to BCS)

Confidentiality

In line with our BCS / approved centre contractual agreement, all correspondence and documentation shared between BCS and your centre must be treated confidentially and kept securely (where required).

Change of centre name/address

If your organisation's name and/or address changes, your centre manager must notify BCS by completing the Organisational detail change request form and emailing it to our channel partner quality team. The form is available to download from our BCS apprenticeships portal.

If there's a change to your organisation name, you'll be asked to sign a new contract.

Approved centre withdrawal/closure

If you stop trading or wish to withdraw from BCS-approved centre status, you'll need to complete a Notice of closure form available on the BCS apprenticeships portal and send it to our team at cpqt@bcs.uk.
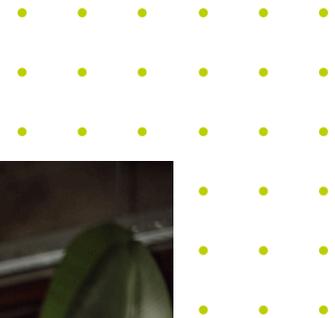
STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff members involved in the management, delivery, administration or invigilation of BCS apprenticeships must be registered with us. A member of staff can be registered in more than one BCS role.

BCS role requirements

To deliver BCS apprenticeships, your centre needs to have staff members registered in the following roles:

Registered BCS role	Number of staff required
Approved centre manager	1
Second centre manager (recommended)	1
Administrator (optional)	Optional
For centres delivering knowledge modules/units	
Trainer, per apprenticeship standard	2
Invigilator	2

Registering staff roles: it's the responsibility of the centre manager to register staff members by emailing the channel partner quality team with the details: cpqt@bcs.uk. They should also let the team know of any changes to staff details and roles.

Deregistering staff: if a member of staff leaves your organisation or is no longer involved in delivering BCS apprenticeships, you must deactivate their access to the BCS systems straight away and notify cpqt@bcs.uk.

The approved centre manager role

The centre manager is the single main point of contact for BCS and is required to have an excellent working knowledge of the digital apprenticeships offered by your organisation.

They're responsible for ensuring that the information in this manual is shared, understood and followed by all staff involved in BCS apprenticeships delivery and assessment — and that the centre remains compliant with the requirements it sets out.

Other key responsibilities include (but are not limited to):

Staffing:
The centre manager is responsible for ensuring:

- every staff member involved with BCS apprenticeship delivery is registered with BCS
- BCS is kept up to date with any staffing changes or amends to staff member details
- the workforce is the appropriate size for the apprenticeship standards being delivered and administered, with the appropriate levels of competence
- staff have access to the latest version of the BCS apprenticeship operations manual
- all staff complete the BCS training relevant to their role
- sufficient management controls are in place and evidenced for all operational activities relating to BCS apprenticeships, including management of BCS-registered staff

Apprenticeship delivery and administration:
The centre manager is responsible for ensuring:

- the ongoing quality of training, testing and assessment of apprentices in line with the apprenticeship standard
- the security of all assessment materials, including exam banks
- any conflicts of interest are recorded and managed
- all reasonable steps are taken to protect the interests of apprentices should the centre withdraw their BCS apprenticeships delivery
- they have a sound knowledge of all policies and procedures that the approved centre must adhere to

Communicating with BCS:
The centre manager is responsible for ensuring:

- all enquiries are responded to promptly
- the channel partner quality team is notified immediately of any suspected malpractice or maladministration
- the centre assists BCS in carrying out reasonable monitoring activities and investigations when required
- a full report is provided to BCS, when requested, detailing any identified testing anomalies
- BCS is made aware prior to the change of centre manager and a comprehensive handover is carried out with the new centre manager

Centre manager training

Before they can start in their role, centre managers must complete BCS training. In fact, you're unable to gain access to the required systems or register apprentices onto BCS programmes until the training's been carried out.

Centre manager training is in the format of a recorded webinar.
It covers the operational requirements outlined in this manual and takes a closer look at the process for registering apprentices and booking exams.

Access the centre manager training webinar

The second centre manager role

BCS recommends registering a second centre manager who can deputise for the centre manager and assist them with their duties. This is especially beneficial during end-point assessment when they can support the process and help to avoid any unnecessary delays.

The second centre manager will be expected to share the same responsibilities as the centre manager. As such, they'll require the same level of knowledge and will also need to carry out the BCS centre manager training before taking up their role.

The invigilator role

Invigilators are responsible for making sure all requirements are met when preparing for, delivering and following an exam session. To deliver BCS knowledge modules/units, your centre requires a minimum of two BCS-registered invigilators. An invigilator is responsible for monitoring exam sessions to ensure our test requirements are met.

The centre manager must ensure that the invigilators:

- are registered with BCS
- complete the BCS invigilator training before undertaking any invigilation
- are observed by a BCS registered member of staff at their first live exam session — and an invigilator observation report is completed and signed by both observer and invigilator
- are annually observed by a BCS registered member of staff to ensure regulations are being followed — and an invigilator observation report is completed and signed by observer and invigilator
- are not involved in invigilation activity if they've had any prior involvement with the training of the apprentices undertaking the test or if the apprentice is known personally to them.

Invigilator conflicts of interest

Invigilators are not permitted to be involved in invigilation activity where an apprentice is known to them personally, nor if they've had any prior involvement with the training of an apprentice who's being tested, no matter how far back it was.

An invigilator must not receive any financial incentive such as a bonus or performance-related incentive for their invigilation, regardless of the exam outcome — although they may receive standard fees for their invigilation. Similarly, if the invigilator is supplied by another organisation, that organisation must not receive any financial incentive for the invigilation, regardless of the exam outcome.

Invigilator training

It's mandatory for all invigilators to complete BCS training before they
can access the required BCS systems. The training is in the format of a recorded webinar It covers the requirements outlined in this manual and takes a closer look at the process for registering apprentices and booking exams.

There are also invigilator guidelines available on the BCS apprenticeships portal which we recommend downloading ahead of your training session as they'll support your learning.

Access the invigilator training webinar

Observing invigilation

BCS requires observations of invigilation to be carried out for all invigilators. This is to ensure that exam regulations are being met, and corrective action can be taken in the event of non-compliance.

To document the quality assurance of invigilation, centre managers must ensure:

- observations are completed by an approved centre representative who is registered with BCS
- the observer observes the whole exam session
- an invigilator observation report is completed and signed at the time of the observation — the report is available to download from the BCS apprenticeships portal
- the report is retained as it may be required for audit, or requested by BCS

Observation feedback

If issues are identified during an observation, feedback must be provided to the invigilator and corrective action taken — this may include identifying further training requirements and carrying out that training.

While observing the invigilator or completing the observation report, the observer should also highlight any aspects of good practice they see during the exam session, along with any areas that could be improved.

The trainer role

Your trainers are responsible for teaching your apprentices their knowledge module/unit syllabuses.

You must have at least two trainers for each apprenticeship standard approved for delivery in your centre.

Your trainers must:

- have at least **three years** of practical on-the-job experience for the standard(s) they're delivering —or recent experience (in the last three years) teaching the relevant subject area
- not be involved in any invigilation activity if they've had any involvement with the teaching of the apprentices

The administrator role

While the administrator role is not a mandatory requirement, centre staff who are involved with registering apprentices or booking BCS knowledge modules/units can register with BCS as an administrator giving them access to the required systems.

Administrators are also required to complete the BCS centre manager training so they have a clear understanding of the systems and processes.
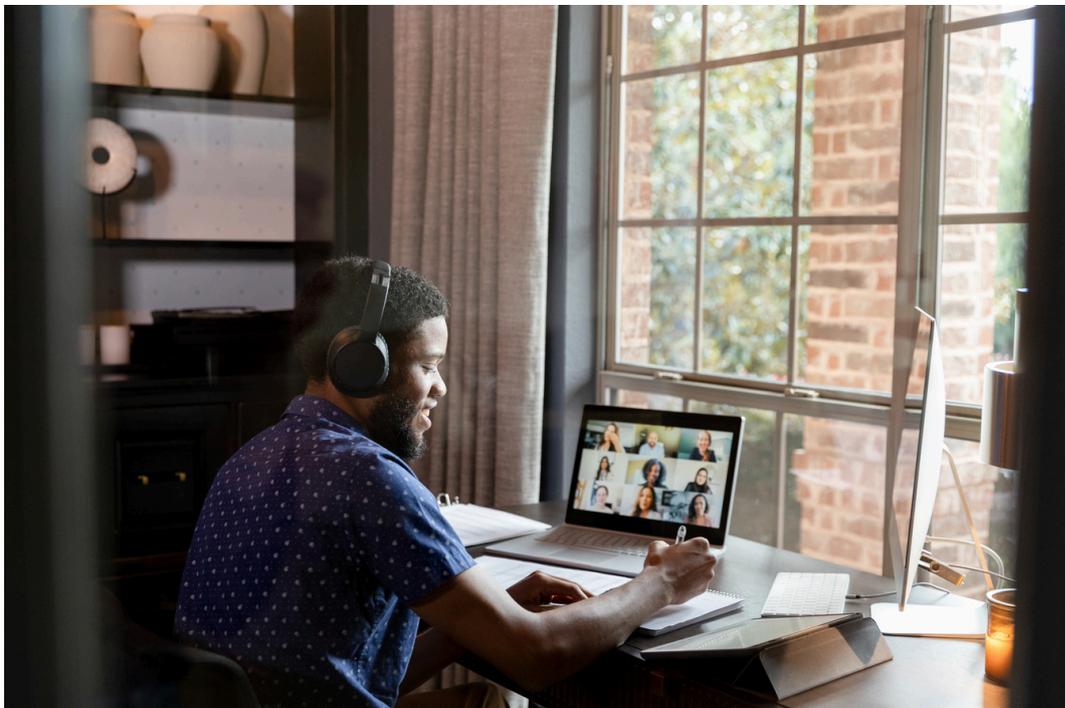
CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND PERSONAL INTEREST POLICY

At BCS, we apply strict procedures to avoid/remove any potential conflicts of interest. This not only helps us meet our regulatory requirements, it protects your apprentices and approved centre staff.

We classify any of the following as examples of potential conflicts of interest:

- a trainer being involved with invigilation for an apprentice who they have taught for that unit
- an invigilator invigilating an apprentice personally known to them (i.e. outside of the working environment)
- an observer carrying out observation of an invigilator who they know personally
- a trainer, line manager or observer monitoring a controlled assessment of an apprentice who they know personally

The centre manager must ensure any conflict of interest is identified and recorded in a Conflict of interest record which you can download from the BCS apprenticeships portal.

Staff sitting tests at the centre

If a member of your centre staff sits a BCS test or assessment at your centre, the following additional measures must be put in place to ensure we remain compliant with our regulators:

- Staff can only sit an assessment if they've had no previous access to it, nor any involvement with its teaching, invigilation or administration.
- Staff must sit their assessment with other apprentices registered at the centre, and not with other staff members. Where this isn't possible, for example if your centre only tests internal staff, you should contact our channel partner quality team for further advice.
- For sessions where staff members are being tested, there must be two invigilators — the names of both invigilators must be recorded in the central recording system along with their signatures.

If a staff member is planning to take a BCS assessment in the future, they must not involve themselves in any aspect of its teaching, assessment or administration until after they've completed the qualification. This ensures they don't have an unfair advantage over other apprentices. Their results may be invalidated if it's found that they did gain an advantage.

REGISTERING APPRENTICES

In line with ESFA requirements, all apprentices must be registered on the ACE360 platform a minimum of six months prior to their gateway approval.

If you register your apprentice nine months prior to their EPA approval date, they may be eligible for an early bird discount (our price list is available in the BCS apprenticeships portal).

When registering an apprentice, you'll be required to provide the following details:

- apprentice information (name, DOB, gender, NI number, ULN number)
- apprentice contact details (address)
- apprentice additional information (funding, reasonable adjustments)
- apprentice's employer information (company name, contact name, company sector, company size, ERN)
- apprentice start date / expected date for EPA
- the correct version of the standard, as per the registration with ESFA

If the apprentice is employed in a government organisation accessing sensitive material which requires security clearance for our end-point assessor, please highlight this to our EPA team at the point of registration to allow sufficient time to obtain the required clearance. Please note: the costs for obtaining clearance will need to be covered by the employer/training provider.

For more about registering your apprentices, take a look at our ACE360 user guide which you can download from the BCS apprenticeships portal.

Accessing the ACE360 platform

As part of your organisation's BCS-approved centre process, your centre manager will receive instructions for arranging an ACE360 set-up session where they'll gain access and training on the platform to get them started.

Once they have access, the centre manager will be able to set up access for other staff members.

There are detailed instructions for registering your apprentices in our ACE360 user guide which you can download from the BCS apprenticeships portal.

BCS uses ACE360 to securely store and process all the evidence and documentation required for the purposes of an end-point assessment. The information is retained for six years, in line with IFATE requirements, after which time it is securely destroyed.

APPRENTICESHIP GATEWAY

The gateway is the stage of an apprenticeship when the apprentice has completed their training and is ready for assessment. The gateway sets out the requirements that the apprentice must meet in order to be put forward for their end-point assessment, ensuring they've completed all mandatory aspects of the apprenticeship standard and any work relating to the specified assessment methods.

At the end of the training, a discussion should take place between the apprentice, employer, and approved centre to determine if the apprentice has met all the requirements of the apprenticeship standard (including the functional skills — level 2, grade C and above or equivalent) and is occupationally competent. If they all agree the apprentice meets the requirements, this is the point at which they're ready to pass through the gateway and begin the EPA process.

The employer also needs to agree that the apprentice will remain in employment for the duration of the end-point assessment process. (This is confirmed and signed on the gateway form.)
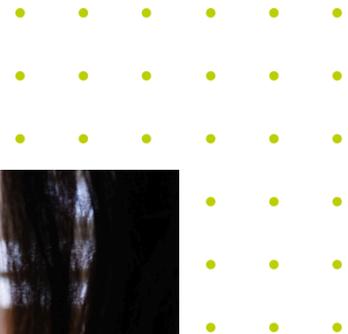
Questions to ask before presenting your apprentice for EPA

- Can the apprentice's competence be evidenced across the standard — have they covered the duties set out in the standard?
- Are they aware of the assessment plan, assessment methods, EPA window and evidence required for EPA?
- If they're preparing a portfolio, does it include their best pieces of work? A concise selection of high-quality work is better than a wide range of average examples?
- Is the apprentice prepared for the interview/professional discussion and knows what to expect, so they'll feel confident on the day?
- For any practical demonstrations or assessments, has the apprentice been given practice activities and are they familiar with any specific environments identified for assessment?
- Are the appropriate mapping and checklist documents completed and submitted?
- If the apprentice is funded by a prime provider, is there an agreement in place between BCS and the prime ensuring the EPA can be processed in accordance with the appropriate ESFA funding guidance?
- Are there any reasonable adjustments BCS needs to be aware of prior to gateway and EPA?
- Does the apprentice have any annual leave booked? The EPA window can't be extended due to holidays so, if they've booked holiday, you may consider entering them into gateway after it's taken place.

These questions will vary depending on the assessment methods for the standard. For more information, take a look at the standard-specific documentation in our BCS apprenticeships portal where you'll also find content and webinars designed to help you smooth your apprentice's EPA journey. Also refer to the assessment plans on the IfATE website.

Standard-specific documentation

We've produced standard-specific documentation to help you understand what your apprentice needs to do to meet, and exceed, the requirements of their apprenticeship standard. These guidance documents include useful templates and checklists for helping approved centres meet their responsibilities when supporting an apprentice through the gateway to EPA. Everything can be downloaded from the BCS apprenticeships portal — go to the *Standards Documentation* within the *end-point assessment documentation* on the BCS Apprenticeships Portal.

You can also find more information about EPA requirements in the latest guidelines from ESFA: Apprenticeship funding rules (www.gov.uk).

Gateway and employer declaration form

Once the employer, approved centre and apprentice have agreed that the EPA should commence, the approved centre must complete the *ACE gateway & employer declaration form* which you can download from the BCS apprenticeships portal. The form should include the start date for the assessment methods, any notes for the EPA team, and whether there are any reasonable adjustments for the apprentice. (Where possible, please submit reasonable adjustments ahead of the EPA to agree what needs to be put in place for the apprentice.)

Uploading the gateway components to ACE360

The following EPA gateway components must be uploaded to the apprentice's ACE360 record:

- ·English and maths certificate (level 2, grade C or 4 and above/A level grade E) — full criteria is _detailed here_; see _latest funding rules_ for ALN/SEND apprentice flexibilities
- ·associated documentation in line with the standard assessment plan

Once the gateway evidence is uploaded, you'll be asked to upload the apprentice's ACE gateway & employer declaration form too.

When uploading the gateway form please check that:

- the apprentice's email address is up to date and the details on the form match the details in ACE360
- the employer's information is up to date and the details on the form match the details in ACE360
- a PO number is included on the form which BCS will use to raise an invoice — if a PO isn't available, the EPA team will use the apprentice's ULN
- all required project/case study choices and documentation are included
- the ULN on the form matches the details in ACE360
- if there's a prime training provider involved, their details are on the form
- any dates to avoid for assessment are highlighted on the form
- the form is 'wet signed' or digitally signed as we can't accept typed signatures

Once the above checks have been made and you've uploaded the form, please email epateam@bcs.uk with the start date required for the EPA window. The email subject line should contain the apprentice's name, apprenticeship standard and the start date of the first assessment method.

You should send one email per apprentice, and look out for the automated ticket number you'll receive in response. If you don't receive a ticket number, it means we haven't received your email and you will need to resend it.

> The gateway evidence must be received **10 working days** before the proposed start date of the synoptic or work-based project.

What happens next?

BCS will check the uploaded evidence in ACE360 to make sure a full and complete submission has been received. If the submission is approved, the project or case study will then be issued where applicable. For standards with an EPA window, you'll receive a gateway confirmation email providing details of the dates that need to be adhered to throughout the EPA process.

If the submission is rejected, we'll advise you via the ACE360 system, providing you with the reason for the rejection, e.g. incomplete submission. We'll also email you to let you know.

It's important to note:

- The apprentice can update and change their evidence prior to the gateway submission but once the ACE gateway & employer declaration form has been submitted and approved by us in ACE360, the evidence will be locked down and no evidence can be added or changed.
- It's the approved centre's responsibility to ensure all evidence uploaded to ACE360 is correct and does not contain third party links to external web pages; if these are submitted, they'll not be assessed.)
- Our EPA team will only check for the core documentation that's required by the assessment plan, and will not be able to identify where other EPA evidence may be missing.
- If any core documentation is missing, BCS will not process the gateway and nor start the EPA window.
- Once they're through the gateway, if an apprentice has a change in circumstances and is no longer able to complete their EPA, they can be withdrawn — to action this, you'll need to withdraw and archive their record on ACE360 and email the EPA team to confirm.
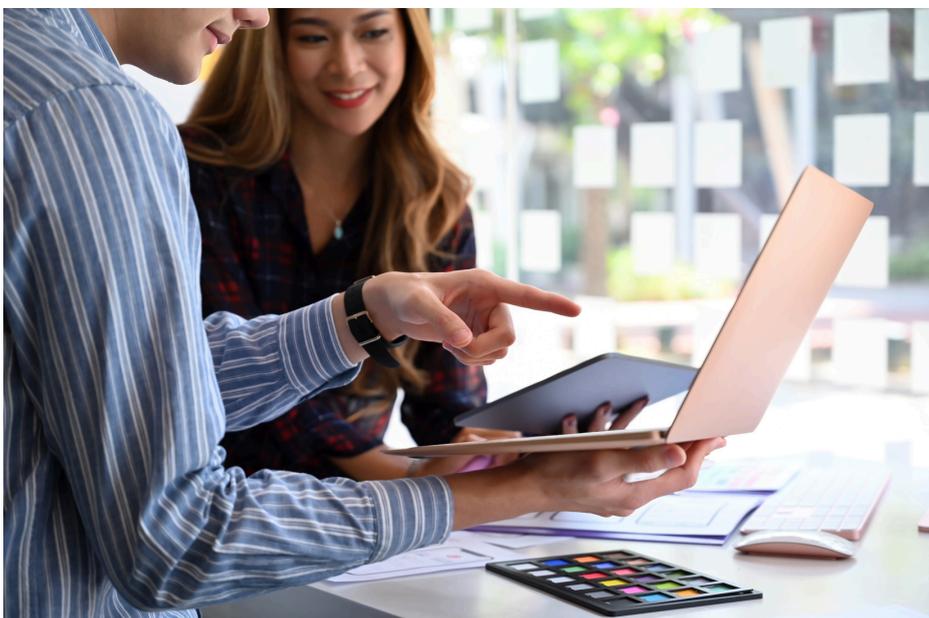
PORTFOLIO

Your apprentice's portfolio should comprise a small number of complete and/or discrete pieces of their best work which, when combined, cover the full assessment method as set out by the standard and/or assessment plan.

The employer and approved centre should support the apprentice in identifying which pieces of evidence to include, ensuring they present a holistic and coherent view of their application of learning. It's also important there isn't any duplicated evidence.

Simulated or fabricated evidence can't be used to evidence competencies in the portfolio and you must ensure there are no links to third party websites/documentation contained in the portfolio.

Please refer to the standard-specific documentation in our BCS apprenticeships portal for more information about the portfolio requirements.

Submitting the portfolio

The completed portfolio should be uploaded to ACE360, and an email sent to our EPA team to notify them. It's the approved centre's responsibility to ensure that all documentation is submitted within the portfolio itself to ensure the data being assessed is static.

When we receive the file, we'll check to make sure all the documents can be opened and the content accessed.
Please note that once the portfolio has been submitted, the file is locked down so no further evidence can be added.

EMPLOYER REFERENCE / TESTIMONIAL

The employer reference/testimonial gives the employer an opportunity to provide their perspective on how the apprentice has applied their knowledge, skills and behaviours in the workplace.

It's important that the employer's made aware of the requirement for a reference/testimonial, at the beginning of the apprenticeship, so they ensure they have sight of the apprentice throughout the programme and can retain evidence throughout in preparation for their statement.

The employer's reference/testimonial should complement the other supporting gateway evidence by explaining how the apprentice has applied their learning to support workplace activities in line with the competencies in the standards. The employer should not grade the apprentice in their testimonial, nor give a rating, as they won't have the comparative experience or evidence in line with the expectations of the assessment plan.

There's further guidance in the BCS apprenticeships portal along with suggested formats and approaches for setting out the reference/testimonial. If the employer has another specific format in mind which they would like to use, please contact our EPA team to check it'll meet with requirements.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

At BCS, we follow the assessment methods set out in the specific guides for each apprenticeship standard — for more information on each standard, please go to www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/

In our BCS apprenticeships portal you'll find detailed guidance on all the requirements for these assessment methods, including hints and tips for each particular standard. All the documentation in our portal can be shared with apprentices and employers.

There are currently both legacy and new/updated apprenticeship standards available, with a number of different assessment methods in place.

Assessment methods applicable to the legacy standards and the new/updated standards:

Legacy standards	New/updated standards
- Knowledge modules (where applicable) - Interview/professional discussion - Synoptic project - Portfolio - Employer reference	- Knowledge units/tests/technical tests - Professional discussion/questioning - Work-based project/simulated assessment/case study

Assessment window

All assessment methods should be completed within the EPA window. The EPA window cannot be extended due to holiday so, where possible, the apprentice should avoid taking annual leave when in EPA.

If there are exceptional circumstances that have prevented an apprentice from completing an assessment method — e.g. sickness — medical or employer evidence will need to be submitted to epateam@bcs.uk together with confirmation of the dates when the apprentice was unable to complete their assessment method and a proposed timeline for the remainder of the EPA process.

ASSESSMENT SECURITY

It's the responsibility of the centre manager and all centre staff to keep the specific content of BCS assessments confidential at all times.

This manual outlines the procedures your organisation must follow to protect the assessment content, including these general principles:

- Locations used for storing assessment content must be secure
- Access to exams should only be given to staff who need it to fulfil their role
- Staff are not permitted to view the live assessments for teaching purposes
- Project overviews must remain secure when in transit
- Staff who have knowledge of the assessment content must never share the information
- There must be a secure procedure for issuing passwords to staff and apprentices that gives them access to systems holding test questions
- All users of the automated exam system — apprentices and invigilators — should have their own login with a password known only to them
- The locations used for storage must be secure

If there's a breach to the security of an assessment at your approved centre, you must report it to BCS immediately by emailing our channel partner quality team.

KNOWLEDGE MODULE/UNIT EXAMS AND TECHNICAL TESTS

There are two methods available for assessing BCS knowledge modules/units.

Exam method	Method detail
Online: centre invigilated	• the exam is delivered digitally via our *e-professional* portal • apprentices can sit their exam at a fixed location or another location providing it's quiet and private • a BCS-approved invigilator will be present for both methods
Online: remote proctored	• the exam is delivered digitally via our *Questionmark* partner portal • once we've confirmed the booking, apprentices need to register directly with *Questionmark* and arrange their exam date and time through the portal • the exam can be sat at any location providing it's quiet and private • invigilators attend virtually via the *Questionmark* platform

e-professional

All the administration for knowledge module/unit exams takes place in our *e-professional* portal, a web-based system which approved centre staff log into to carry out activities including exam booking, registering apprentices and viewing results.

Accessing e-professional

When your organisation becomes an approved centre, we set up an *e-professional* account for your centre manager and send an email with their username and link for setting up their password. (The username will always be the staff member's email address.)
Once your centre manager has logged into the portal they'll be able to set up access for other staff members.

For more information and detailed instructions for using the portal, please read our *e-professional user guide for accredited training providers,* available in our BCS apprenticeships portal.

Who should have access?
- centre manager
- administrators who book exam sessions
- invigilators

ID check

Apprentices must provide identification when they book a knowledge module/unit exam or technical test. The apprentice's identification must be checked and recorded on the central recording system as the information is required for compliance and audit purposes.

Apprentices can choose to provide an item from list 1 or two items from list 2:

List 1: one item required

- passport
- EC identity card
- full driver's licence with photograph
- HM Armed Forces Veteran card

OR

List 2: two items required

- birth certificate (original)
- bank card: credit, charge, cheque guarantee, debit (in date)
- bank or building society book
- full driver's licence without photograph
- letter showing home address
- rent book or tenancy agreement
- utility bill
- benefit letter or agreement
- services identity card
- marriage certificate
- travel pass with photograph
- standard acknowledgement letter (held by people seeking asylum)
- any other form of identification

Exam booking timescales

Before sitting a BCS knowledge module/unit exam or technical test, as well as being registered with BCS, your apprentice will need to be registered with the ESFA for the apprenticeship standard they're completing.

Knowledge module exams	Knowledge unit and technical tests
Online classroom exams: Booking must be made on *e-professional* at least **7 working days** before the date of the exam	A test can't be taken until the gateway evidence is locked and approved by BCS. Tests taken prior to gateway will be void.
Online remote-proctored exams: Booking must be made on *e-professional*, we recommend at least **10 working days** before your apprentice intends to sit the exam	You're able to book tests prior to gateway, but you must ensure the lead time is within the EPA window.
Reasonable adjustments	
Please allow up to **10 working days** before the date of the exam if you are applying for a reasonable adjustment.	
Multiple tests	
Please refer to the assessment plan for timescales on sitting multiple tests and resits/retakes. All knowledge units must be sat within the EPA window. Please refer to the assessment plan to ensure your apprentice sits the knowledge units over consecutive days from the initial sitting. Any failed assessments must be retaken within the EPA window.	

For more information about booking an exam, please read our *e-professional user guide for accredited training providers,* available in our BCS apprenticeships portal.

Exam preparations

For online knowledge module/unit exams, *Questionmark* software needs to be available on all the desktops or laptops that are going to be used — this should be uploaded and tested before the day of the exam.

There's a user guide available on our BCS apprenticeships portal to support your delivery of knowledge module/unit exams on *e-professional*, as well as user guides for invigilators and apprentices too.

Before the exam commences, the following preparations should be made (typically by the invigilator for that session):

Preparing the environment, ensure that:

- there's a minimum space of 1.25 metres between each computer/work station, or that apprentices are sitting at alternate machines
- there's a wall clock visible to all apprentices and the invigilator, so they can all work to the same time
- the date and time is accurate on the computers being used for exams
- the room is quiet
- the walls don't display information that could help
- apprentices with exam questions
- system checks have been completed prior to the live test taking place
- invigilators are able to log into the online test system with their own secure login details

Preparing apprentices, ensure that:

- each apprentice is registered with BCS for the knowledge module/unit they're being tested for
- the identity of the apprentice is checked and recorded
- they're aware of the start and finish times of the exam — apprentices have a designated time period to complete each unit, unless extra time has been approved as part of a reasonable adjustment application (which includes any reading time the apprentice requires)
- apprentices are able to log into the online test system with their own secure login details
- all live tests ended once the duration has passed

Apprentice regulations during the exam

At the start of each test, you must make apprentices aware that they have to follow these regulations while the exam is in progress:

- books and other aids cannot be used during the exam
- mobile phones must remain switched off for the full duration of the session
- use of a calculator or other electronic device (MP3 player, personal laptop etc) is not permitted, unless the exam format specifies that they can be used
- apprentices mustn't observe each other's work
- apprentices must not talk to each other or ask the invigilator about exam questions
- plain paper and a pen/pencil can be provided by the invigilator if required — this will be collected at the end of the exam
- apprentice should only address the invigilator if they experience a hardware or software failure, require plain paper or a pen, need a comfort break or have a medical issue
- no apprentice should leave the room unaccompanied (by a member of staff)
- if there's a breach of any of these regulations, the exam will be terminated and invalidated

Exam interruptions

There are a number of reasons why an exam might be interrupted, for example a technical issue, building evacuation or medical emergency.

Any interruptions must be documented by the invigilator and reported to the centre manager. The details should be recorded in an interruptions report to be made available on *e-professional* once the exam has ended.

These records may be requested by BCS for audit purposes or during an apprentice appeal.

Evacuating an exam room

If you need to evacuate the room during an exam, apprentices can resume the exam afterwards providing that, during the evacuation:

- all exam materials were secured
- apprentices were separated from each other not allowed to speak to anyone
- apprentices had no access to any teaching/learning or revision material

If the exam lapses during the evacuation period, you can contact the service delivery team at BCS who'll be able to restart the remaining time allowance.

If the invigilator decides that any apprentice has been disadvantaged by the interruption, the apprentice has the option to either:

- resume the allocated exam (providing test conditions have been maintained and the system permits)

or

- take a new exam

If the exam can't be resumed on that day, it must be ended — a live exam can't be 'carried over' and resumed on another day.

Professional judgement should be used as to whether an apprentice retakes on the scheduled day of the exam or on another agreed date. If you need guidance about this situation, please get in touch with our channel partner quality team.

Exam certificates

On successful completion of the exam, apprentices will receive their e-certificate from BCS via the online e-professional platform. The e-certificate will be available to view and download straight away.

BCS can provide a hard-copy certificate for a fee — please contact our service delivery team at apprenticeships@bcs.uk to find out more.

Exam certificates are not available for the L7 Artificial Intelligence-Data Science Technical Test. The assessment method grading reports will be issued via ACE360 once the exam has been marked by an independent assessor.

Exam resits

If an apprentice fails an exam, they have the option to retake it.

Resits for knowledge unit exams and technical tests

Apprentices resitting a knowledge unit or technical test must do so within the designated EPA window.

Resits for knowledge module exams

Apprentices resitting a knowledge module exam must wait a minimum number of days following their last exam attempt before sitting it again. For example, if they fail the initial exam, an apprentice must wait five full working days before taking their first resit. This duration increases as the resits progress, as outlined in this table:

Resit attempt	Waiting period required, following the previous exam attempt
1st	5 working days
2nd	10 working days
3rd	20 working days

Subsequent knowledge module resits

If the apprentice doesn't pass their third resit attempt, the approved centre can contact our service delivery team to request a fourth resit attempt. At this point, we'll require evidence to show the additional learning support your apprentice has received prior to retaking their exam a further time.

Once BCS authorises a fourth resit attempt, and any subsequent resits after that, the full waiting period of 20 working days will apply between each resit attempt.

> Exam results may be invalidated if these resit rules aren't followed.

SYNOPTIC PROJECT, WORK-BASED PROJECT AND SIMULATION ASSESSMENT

This assessment is designed to give apprentices the opportunity to demonstrate how they can apply their learning in a real-work environment to achieve real-work objectives. BCS aims to make at least two synoptic projects/ assessments available per standard, unless otherwise stated in the assessment plan.

Assessment environment

It's the responsibility of the approved centre or employer to provide and prepare a controlled environment for the apprentice to undertake their assessment, using the list of requirements covered in the assessment overview. The assessment plan will also specify the duration of the project — this can cover more than one day.

The location should be off-the-job, away from the normal working environment so the project can be carried out in a quiet, controlled area. While similar to a work environment, in as much as there's access to materials and tools, the area must provide the space and privacy the apprentice needs to complete their work.

If the apprentice will be using a personal device during the project, the software on the device must be declared in advance.

Supervising the assessment

A responsible person is required to supervise the apprentice for the duration of the project, ensuring they don't discuss the project with anyone else throughout its duration. This can be a member of centre staff or a member of staff at the employer organisation.

They will provide the apprentice with the full assessment documentation once they're in the controlled environment, ensuring all associated materials are handed back to them when the apprentice finishes for the day. They'll also need access to the declaration form which they must sign to confirm the project is the apprentice's own work.

Practice labs

Assessment for some of the standards involves using a practice lab. When a practice lab is involved, the apprentice is provided with a Hyper-V code which gives them access to the lab.

Hyper-V codes are required for the following standards assessment:

- Cyber Intrusion Analyst
- Network Engineer
- Infrastructure Technician
- L3 Cyber Security Technician
- L4 Cyber Security Technologist (2021) All pathways

(Hyper-V codes may also apply to new standards as they are released.)

Practising in the practice lab!

Your apprentice will have five working days to use their Hyper-V code, prior to their assessment, allowing them time to get used working in the practice lab and saving their work. It's essential they make the most of this time to familiarise themselves with the process so they don't experience any obstacles once they're under assessment conditions.

BCS can provide you with a list of Hyper-V codes so you're able to plan and support your apprentices as they prepare for their assessment. Email the EPA team on epateam@bcs.uk if you'd like to receive a list of codes.

Uploading the project/simulation

When the apprentice has completed their project, they need to complete and sign their declaration form and upload the form and project documents to the *Shared documents* area of ACE360 in the LTP uploads folder.

Please ensure the form is 'wet' or digitally signed as we can't accept typed signatures.

For legacy apprenticeship standards: please ensure the number of hours the apprentice took to complete the project is stated on the form and it's signed by all the relevant parties.

For new/updated standards: please ensure that the word count is stated on the declaration form.

Important: notifying BCS

When documentation is uploaded to ACE360, BCS does not receive notification from the system, so it's necessary for you to send an email to the EPA team separately to let them know the apprentice's project has been uploaded.

When you email the team, you'll receive an automated ticket number in response. Always check for your ticket — if you don't get one, it means your email hasn't been received so you'll need to resend it.

Submitting by email

If the apprentice has any issues uploading their file to the platform, they can email it to our EPA team instead at epateam@bcs.uk. Remember to look out for your automated ticket number in response, confirming we've received your email

Please note: tutors and coaches should not feed into the project proposal or sign-off process as this should be the apprentice's own work. Any sign-off document received with comments from a tutor or coach will be rejected and a new project sign-off document submitted.

What happens next?

When we receive your apprentice's files, we'll check to make sure all the documents can be opened and the declaration form is signed by the required parties.

An apprentice's project/simulation assessment should be treated in the same way as exam materials so please ensure the documents are stored securely.

INTERVIEWS, PROFESSIONAL DISCUSSIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Interviews, discussions and presentations are carried out virtually and can take place at your approved centre, the apprentice's place of work or from the apprentice's home — between the hours or 9am and 7pm, Monday to Friday. All interviews and presentations are recorded for monitoring and standardisation purposes.

Interview environment

It's essential that the interview takes place in a quiet location where there is no risk of interruption. The ideal environment is a closed room where the apprentice is alone. If the apprentice requires someone in the room with them, an application for a reasonable adjustment will need to be made in advance and approved by BCS.

Equipment required for interview

Microsoft Teams: as well as Wi-Fi access, your apprentice must have access to Microsoft Teams — we'll send them their MS Teams link to join the meeting. If there are known employer restrictions with using MSTeams, please advise the EPA team at epateam@bcs.uk as soon as possible; the interviews/scenario demonstrations can then be scheduled using Zoom.

Webcam: they'll need a working webcam so they can show their photographic ID to the EPA assessor at the start of the interview, and so quality assurance checks can be made throughout the interview process.

Apprentice ID

The apprentice will be required to show their proof of ID to the camera at the start of the interview.

Apprentices can choose to provide an item from list 1 or two items from list 2:

OR

List 1: one item required

- passport
- Citizen Card
- EC identity card
- driver's licence with photograph*
- Emergency Services ID card
- HM Forces ID card
- HM Armed Forces Veteran card
- Voter Authority Certificate

provisional/expired licences can be accepted

List 2: two items required

- birth certificate (original)
- bank card: credit, charge, cheque guarantee, debit (in date)
- bank or building society book
- driver's licence without photograph*
- letter showing home address
- rent book or tenancy agreement
- utility bill
- Universal Credit/benefit letter or agreement
- marriage certificate
- travel pass with photograph
- Home office status letters (statement of nationality entitlement)

If the apprentice is unable to present the required ID, the interview will be cancelled and rearranged — this may be subject to a charge.

Accessing evidence during the interview

The apprentice is allowed access to all of the evidence they've submitted for assessment and can freely refer to it during the interview. They can also bring with them and refer to any additional material they'd like to discuss with the assessor, such as other relevant evidence they've generated in the workplace since the submission of the portfolio.

Assessment recording

The assessment will be recorded but won't be available to view by training providers, employers or apprentices as the recordings are classed as exam material.

Cancellation and no-shows

If an apprentice fails to be present at the appointed date and time of their interview, the approved centre is liable to be charged — unless evidence can be provided in writing that the non-attendance was due to circumstances beyond the apprentice's reasonable control.

For more information, take a look at our *End-point assessment cancellation and no-show policy,* which is available to read in the BCS apprenticeship portal.

Medical emergencies

If an apprentice feels unwell at any point during their interview, they must tell the assessor straight away who may contact the EPA team for assistance. Likewise, if the assessor is taken ill during the assessment, please call the EPA team for assistance immediately on 01793 417608.
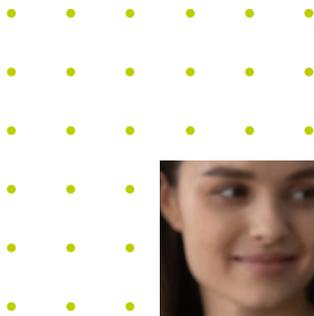
REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

BCS aims to remove any unnecessary barriers for apprentices by allowing reasonable adjustments and/or special considerations to be made where appropriate — while ensuring the validity, reliability and integrity of the qualification is also preserved.
Approved centres must have effective internal procedures in place for identifying specific apprentice needs, and these procedures must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Our *Access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy* explains the adjustments that can be made and the process you should follow when applying them. The policy is available in the BCS apprenticeships portal.

Handling sensitive personal data
It's important to remember that any information about a person's physical or mental health or condition is sensitive personal data. In line with the Data Protection Act, centres must take the necessary precautions when dealing with this type of data to ensure it remains secure.

Information and/or supporting evidence should only be sent to BCS if requested and only if the apprentice has provided written consent. The centre manager should securely retain a copy of the supporting evidence documentation until the apprentice completes the apprenticeship or leaves the approved centre. BCS may request to see this evidence — with the apprentice's permission — as part of an audit.

Reasonable adjustments request form
To request a reasonable adjustment, your centre must complete the Apprenticeships reasonable adjustments form which is available to download from the BCS apprenticeships portal and submit it to BCS as follows:

- For knowledge modules/units: email the completed form to our service delivery team at apprenticeships@bcs.uk at least **10 working days** prior to the date of the assessment.

- For end-point assessment: email the completed form to our EPA team at epateam@bcs.uk along with the ACE Gateway & Employer Declaration Form and medical evidence — we'll review the request and notify you of our decision within two working days. If our response is going to take longer or we need you to provide further supporting evidence, we will get in touch. Reasonable adjustments must be approved before the apprentice takes their assessment so we always recommend early dialogue with the EPA team to allow sufficient time to process the requests.

For more info about reasonable adjustments, take a look at the end-point assessment reasonable adjustments guidance on the IfATE website.

Provide supporting evidence

Evidence is not required when the implications of a difficulty or disability are apparent, for example if an apprentice is registered as blind or partially sighted, or they have a profound hearing impairment or physical difficulties.

Where the implications of a disability or special need are not apparent, BCS will require supporting evidence of the effect of the impairment on the apprentice's performance in the exam. This could cover requests such as:
·a specific learning difficulty, e.g. dyslexia
·English as a foreign language (EFL)
·a temporary illness or injury

We'll contact the centre manager if we require further supporting evidence. They will then need to send us the evidence — with the apprentice's authorisation — in a password-protected zip file, emailed as an attachment to the service delivery team at apprenticeships@bcs.uk or for EPAs to the EPA team at epateam@bcs.uk.

Special considerations

If an apprentice has been disadvantaged during their EPA, you can request a special consideration, post-assessment, by completing the *Special considerations form* available on the BCS apprenticeships portal.

These requests must be submitted to us no later than **five working days** after the assessment, before the results are released. We'll respond to your request within two working days of receipt — if we haven't come to a final decision in that time, we'll provide you with our estimated response date.

After an apprentice's results have been released, we will only accept a request for a special consideration under the following specific circumstances:

- an application has been overlooked at the centre and this oversight is confirmed by the centre manager
- medical evidence comes to light that confirms the apprentice was affected by a condition at the time of the exam, even though it was not revealed until after the exam had ended

Our *Access arrangements, reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy* is available to download from the BCS apprenticeships portal. The policy provides examples of the types of supporting evidence that are accepted.

GRADE OUTCOME AND APPRENTICESHIP CERTIFICATION

On completion of each assessment method, the EPA team will release a grading report containing feedback via the ACE360 record, and an email notification will also be sent to training providers. The reports will be uploaded to the shared area within 5 working days of the interview (subject to moderation completion).

Once all the assessment methods have been attempted or the EPA window has closed (for the new standards), the overall grade will be awarded to the ACE360 record.

On successful completion of their EPA, your apprentice will be issued with their certificate by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Once the overall grade has been awarded to the ACE360, and after 20 days for Pass/Merit grades, and 7 days for Distinctions, the certificate application programming interface (API) will claim the certificate. This allows sufficient time for the apprentice to appeal in the unlikely event that they dispute the grade they've been given. For more information about the appeals process, please read our Appeal policy on the BCS apprenticeships portal.

Once the certificate has been claimed on ACE360, you should then allow 15 working days for the certificate to arrive. The ESFA will send the apprentice's certificate to their employer via recorded delivery using the employer's address details in ACE360, so it's important that these are kept up to date. If the apprentice changes their employer during the four-week window, please update the ACE360 Certificate tab with the correct delivery information.

Once the certificate's been requested we're unable to change the delivery address. Please ensure the ILR has been completed and all details match both systems as any incomplete info or a difference between the two records can prevent the certificate from being sent, for example if there's a difference in the version number or wrong pathway, no address or incomplete ILR.

If the apprentice doesn't receive their certificate, please contact epateam@bcs.uk and we'll investigate.

Referrals and fails

If an apprentice fails to demonstrate the full range of competences set out in their apprenticeship standard or specific assessment method, the assessor will refer/fail them.

Feedback and next steps will depend on the type of standard the apprentice has taken, as follows:

Legacy apprenticeship standards	New/updated apprenticeship standards
The approved centre will receive feedback in the assessor's report detailing why the apprentice didn't achieve a pass. It may be possible for the apprentice to provide further evidence or to resit their synoptic project. You should discuss the outcome with your apprentice and the employer to decide whether the EPA process should be repeated. If the apprentice received good feedback on their synoptic project, they could resit with an enhanced portfolio and employer reference to underpin the portfolio.	The centre will receive feedback against each of the assessment criteria, identifying it as a resit/retake. (A resit doesn't require further learning, whereas a retake does.) You should discuss the outcome with your apprentice, and the employer, to decide what additional learning may be needed, taking into consideration any restrictions from the EPA window. For some standards your apprentice may be able to rework their submitted project or they may have to submit a new one. This varies between standards so please refer to the final grade report for the assessment method or assessment plan. All resits should be completed within the EPA window (allowing sufficient time to schedule and complete the discussion with an assessor too).

Please note that the process will vary for some standards, and resits and retakes may depend on the assessment plan. For further guidance, please read our standard-specific documentation in the BCS apprenticeships portal.

Resits and retakes

Any apprentice who fails their EPA is eligible to apply for a resit/retake — a resit doesn't require further learning, whereas a retake does.

The apprentice will need to complete the assessment or the assessment method again — they'll have a number of options available to them depending on the assessment method and also the assessment plan for the individual standard.

Please read the guidance in the assessment plan carefully to ensure the apprentice is made aware of all the different options available to them, which will vary depending on the standard and the assessment method.

You will need to request the resit through the ACE360 platform and email a copy of the new *ACE gateway & employer declaration form* to our EPA team detailing the resit option the apprentice has selected. The resit must then be completed before the EPA window closes.

All the assessment processes will remain the same as their first attempt and the same service levels will apply.

Our full resit policy is available in the BCS apprenticeships portal. If you have any questions or need further guidance on an individual resit/retake, you should contact the EPA team directly on epateam@bcs.uk.

Resit fees

An additional fee will apply for an EPA resit — for full details refer to your BCS apprenticeship agreement or contact your account manager.
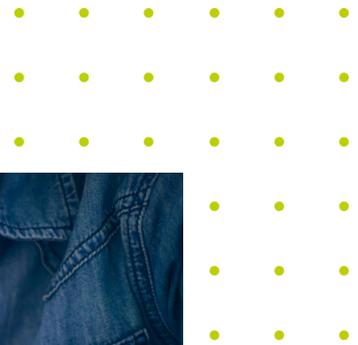
RECORD KEEPING

As an approved centre, you need to maintain a number of records relating to your apprentices and BCS apprenticeship delivery to assist with queries that arise during an audit or when we carry out certificate validation checks.

Central recording system

It's important that you have a central recording system in place for recording all the details of your apprentices, assessments and certifications. If you have multiple sites, you must be able to access and collate all records from all sites that relate to your BCS apprenticeship delivery.

The following data must be recorded and available for checking when you undergo an audit:

Apprentice details	Exam/assessment details
- Title - Forename - Surname - House number or name - Postcode - Date of birth - Gender - Ethnicity - Proof of identification - Standard registered for - Registration date - ULN number - Reasonable adjustments made	- Date - Test version number (if applicable) - Start time - Finish time - Duration (this may be a calculated field) - Outcome (pass/fail, percentage or grade) - Name(s) of invigilator (if applicable) - Proof of identification

Backing up your data

Your central recording system should be retained for the duration of your centre's approval period, with all data backed up and available on request. You can archive data on a secure server as long as it remains accessible when required.

You'll need to keep fully auditable records for a period of three years after the completion of the training/exam. Once the three years are up, you should check that there are no external organisations, such as regulators or funding agencies, who still require access to the data records, before disposing of them securely.

QUALITY ASSURANCE AND AUDITING

At BCS, we're committed to continually improving our internal quality assurance methods, with a focus on key areas including:

- standardisation to support consistent assessment and grading
- assessment moderation
- robust recruitment and training of end-point assessors
- tracked CPD (continuous professional development) for assessors
- clearly documented policies for review and appeals, and other procedures

Quality measures in your centre

The centre manager is responsible for ensuring that there are appropriate internal quality assurance arrangements in place at the approved centre to safeguard the delivery of BCS apprenticeships.

In addition to the mandatory quality assurance processes described within this manual, there are lots of other measures a centre manager might take to further assure themselves of quality of the services your organisation delivers.

The quality assurance activities you choose to undertake should be appropriate to the size of your approved centre and the type of operation you have.

They might include (but are not limited to):

- meeting with staff on a frequent basis and discussing quality issues
- carrying out regular site visits to review measures
- reviewing your programme of delivery
- measuring centre outputs, such as exam data against expected results
- actively collecting and responding to feedback from apprentices

Audits

Approved centres are regularly audited to ensure that all BCS requirements are being continually met and that we're compliant with Ofqual regulations. Our approach to auditing is risk-based, taking into account your centre's structure, exam result profile and history.

Audits are conducted with the centre manager and they can be carried out by any of these methods:

- arranged physical visit from an auditor
- carried out remotely, via video-conferencing or telephone, by an auditor or channel partner quality officer
- unannounced physical visit from an auditor (if serious concerns have been raised about potential malpractice)

Audits may include these activities:

- observation of a test or assessment taking place at any of your assessment venues
- interviews with your BCS-registered staff
- conversations with apprentices to get their feedback — we'll never contact apprentices who are under the age of 18 without prior consent

Your auditor may be accompanied by a second auditor or a member of BCS staff.

Arranging an audit

When an audit of your organisation is due, our auditor or channel partner quality officer will contact your centre manager to offer a range of dates and times for the audit to take place.

Your centre manager should respond as soon as possible to confirm which of these appointments is most suitable or to request an alternative if necessary.

If we don't receive a response, we may get in touch again to advise of a mandatory date that we will be attending. Your approved centre status is at risk if an audit request isn't followed up.

What's covered at the audit?

The auditor or channel partner quality officer will ask you a range of questions to determine your centre's compliance and level of risk to BCS. They may ask to see evidence of your compliance first-hand, such as a demonstration of your central recording system or a visit to the test rooms being used.

The audit is also an opportunity for your staff to raise any questions or issues they may have about BCS apprenticeships and their delivery. It's helpful to make a note of these queries ahead of the audit.
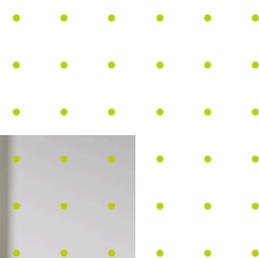
Who should be present at the audit?

It's a requirement for the audit to be carried out with your centre manager. It can also be appropriate for other BCS-registered staff members to attend who are involved in your BCS apprenticeship delivery — for example: a trainer who can talk through your teaching materials and delivery methods; an invigilator who can explain your test processes; or an administrator to discuss apprentice registration and certification.

We may request interviews with individual members of staff and/or apprentices.

What happens after the audit?

We'll provide you with a report outlining our findings from the audit.

If any areas of non-compliance have been identified, our auditor or channel partner quality officer will be able to offer advice about the improvements you need to make and/or tell you where you can get more information and support. We'll also provide you with an action plan, together with appropriate timescales for completion of each action point. The level of non-compliance will determine your centre's risk rating to BCS.

If your approved centre is not meeting our operating requirements or you're in breach of contract, we reserve the right to withdraw your approved centre status or suspend you from registering apprentices and delivering / administering BCS apprenticeships.

You can find out more about sanctions in our *Malpractice and maladministration policy and procedure* available in the BCS apprenticeships portal.

MALPRACTICE AND MALADMINISTRATION

Approved centres must have arrangements in place to prevent instances of malpractice and maladministration. We're required to report any adverse effects arising from malpractice or maladministration to our regulators, Ofqual.

To remain compliant with our regulators, it's essential that your centre:

- has a malpractice and maladministration policy or procedure in place
- reports suspected malpractice or maladministration to us immediately
- assists BCS with any investigations

You must report any suspected or actual malpractice or maladministration to BCS by emailing our channel partner quality team at cpqt@bcs.uk — failure to do so constitutes malpractice in itself.

NON-COMPLIANCE AND SANCTIONS

This manual explains the requirements for compliance with BCS and our regulators, providing examples of what good practice looks like to help you achieve full compliance in your organisation.

To remain complaint, you need to meet all BCS requirements. If there's an instance where a requirement is not being met, your level of non-compliance may lead to sanctions being applied. When this happens, a member of our channel partner quality team will notify the centre manager to inform them of the sanction and explain what will happen next.

Any sanctions are intended to minimise risk to the integrity of our BCS apprenticeship delivery — there are a range of actions that can be applied, as outlined in our Malpractice and maladministration policy and procedure.

For full details, please go to our BCS apprenticeships portal and download our *Malpractice and maladministration policy and procedure (including sanctions).*

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

If the level of service you receive from BCS falls below your expectations, please let us know by contacting our channel partner quality team.

Our *Complaints policy* is available in the BCS apprenticeships portal.

Approved centre appeals
To appeal a decision made by BCS, you must ensure you contact us within 10 working days from the date that we notified you of the decision. You'll find our *End-point assessment appeals policy* on the BCS apprenticeships portal.

Apprentice appeals
For apprentices wishing to appeal a BCS decision, we have an appeals policy that covers knowledge modules and an appeals policy covering EPA — both are available to download from the BCS apprenticeships portal.

For further information please contact:

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The Chartered Institute for IT
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