

Rob Stroud  
Director – Quality Assessment, England  
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education  
Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

16 November 2022

Dear Rob,

## **Approach to External Quality Assurance (EQA)**

I'm writing to confirm the approach to External Quality Assurance (EQA) of End Point Assessment Organisations (EPAO) that the OfS would like the DQB to take.

When the original business case for this work was developed in early 2021, the data available at the time suggested that assessments for up to 69 providers and 32 integrated degree apprenticeship standards with active apprentices, would be required. As you know, more recent data has shown that implementing the current method of assessment based on the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's (IfATE) EQA framework would require the assessment of over 300 instances of apprenticeship standards and cost considerably more than planned for in the business case. We have been in discussion with the Department for Education (DfE), and the IfATE regarding the approach to EQA to deliver efficiencies to the current process. As a result, we would like you to amend your approach to focus your assessment activity on providers offering the following apprenticeship standards:

- Police Constable
- Digital and Technology Solutions Professional
- Advanced Clinical Practitioner.

It is for you to determine which providers are selected for assessment based on the data you have been provided by the DfE. If you consider it possible to undertake assessments of additional standards to the three set out above at the providers you select for assessment, we encourage you to do so. We would hope that the DQB will be able to assess a minimum of eight providers through a revised approach before the end of March 2023.

We would like you to prioritise monitoring activity and are requesting that the DQB does not undertake readiness checks for any provider that is selected for assessment. This is on the basis that providers will already have undertaken end-point assessment (EPA) and therefore an assessment of whether EPA is effective in practice (in line with EQA monitoring) is more

appropriate. We recognise that in some cases it may not be possible for the DQB to undertake all the monitoring activities set out in its handbook, for example monitoring visits, because the timings of your assessment may not be aligned with the timing of the delivery of the end-point assessments by the providers concerned. We would therefore ask that the DQB adopt a pragmatic approach to assessments and indicate in its reporting any area where it considers it would not be reasonable to reach a judgement.

We recognise that this is a departure from approach the DQB published in June 2022. However, we consider that where providers have already been undertaking EPA, it is likely that providers will be able to produce evidence in line with expectations set out within the method, and in IfATE's EQA Framework, which will allow the DQB to make judgements. We do not expect you to amend the published handbook, although we recognise that you will need to explain to providers that you will not be undertaking the first stage of the assessment.

The OfS will directly fund the DQB for these assessments, meaning that the DQB does not have to use its charging powers under s.28, paragraph 2, b, of HERA for the individual assessments. The OfS will also fund the DQB for the purposes of management and oversight of the programme of activity. We will write to you separately in this regard. We acknowledge that the DQB cannot begin this work until the funding arrangements are in place.

Our monitoring approach for this work will continue as present, through fortnightly "Working Group" meetings along with colleagues with IfATE and the DfE.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jean Arnold", followed by a small comma.

**Jean Arnold**  
**Director of Quality**