

Conflict of Interest Policy

Responsibility:	Liz Scott-Walter, Responsible Officer	Date doc. approved:	V6.0 October 2025
Print name sign off:	Simon Little, Managing Director	Previous review date of doc:	V5.0 October 2024
Signature:		Next review date:	October 2026

Document Control

Version Number	Date	Changes
V5.0	28 October 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Change name of Responsible Officer (RO)▪ Updated IFATE to Skills England▪ Removed paragraph linked to BPN training provision

Please Note: This policy has been reviewed at a time when apprenticeship reform is in progress and organisations are transitioning from End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs) to Assessment Organisations (AOs), and from end-point assessment to apprenticeship assessments. The terminology used within this policy is EPAO and End-Point Assessments (EPA), to be updated to AO etc. once that transition is complete.

Section 1. Overview

This policy applies to the End-point Assessments (EPAs) provided by Best Practice Network – End Point Assessment Organisation (BPN-AO) EPAO.

1.1 Conflict of Interest- definition

A conflict of interest arises when the judgement of someone involved in the work of BPN end-point assessment may be compromised or when an individual, or organisation, has competing interests or loyalties.

Conflicts of interest can be:

- perceived or actual
- personal or organisational
- financial or non-financial

Organisational conflicts of interest may be where BPN has:

- a financial stake in an apprenticeship training provider or a customer (employer)
- agreements with other EPAOs and providers to deliver EPAO for each other's apprentices.

Scope of the policy

This policy covers the delivery of Best Practice Network (BPN) End-Point Assessments (EPA) which are subject to internal and external quality assurance.

The policy is designed to:

- ensure EPA tools and materials are designed free of conflict of interest and bias
- protect apprentices who are registered with us
- minimise the risk of an Adverse Effect occurring
- help support us and all other partners involved in risk management and risk minimisation
- help ensure we and all partners comply with all relevant legislation and guidance
- help improve and refine our products and services

Coverage

The Conflict-of-Interest procedures will apply to everyone involved in the delivery of end-point assessment, including:

- The Governing Body, including sub-committees, and the full BPN SLT.
- End-point assessors undertaking end-point assessment activities.
- Associates and employees acting in the capacity as EPA or IQA.
- Qualification design team (those designing, developing and testing the EPA tools).
- The EPA delivery team (inc. admin, finance etc.).
- Stakeholders, including employers, providers, and apprentices.
- BPN panel members such as appeals, complaints, sanctions, and malpractice.
- Partner organisations to include Awarding Organisations/External Quality Assures (EQAs) and certification bodies.

For our partners, this policy supports the compliance with the Contract. It does not replace any of the requirements contained within that Contract. Non-adherence to our Apprenticeship Services EPA policies may constitute Maladministration, Malpractice and / or a breach of the Contract. Please ensure all policies are read and implemented carefully.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with the following policies, which are available on our webpage or from our Assessment Team:

- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Fair Access and Special Considerations Policy
- Recruitment Policy and Procedure
- Appeals Policy

- Complaints Policy

1.2 Purpose of the policy

BPN is committed to the highest standards of integrity, openness, and probity. We are committed to directly providing, and working with our partners who provide, a transparent and honest working environment that is free from wrongdoing, malpractice, or corruption.

The purpose of this policy is to allow our apprentices, staff, partners and other organisations to feel comfortable and secure in raising relevant disclosures, made in good faith and reasonably believed to be true, without fear of victimisation or other adverse repercussions. In particular, relevant disclosures are likely to be those which may be in conflict with our commitments as outlined above.

1.3 Who needs to know about the policy?

Partners must make the apprentices and staff (including site, sub-site or contractual staff) who are involved in the design, delivery, management, assessment, and quality assurance of BPN EPA aware of, and familiar with, the contents of the policy.

1.4 Obtaining copies of the policy

Partners can download copies of the policy from our EPAO webpage or obtain copies from our BPN Assessment Team.

1.5 Reviewing the policy

We will review this policy annually and may revise it as required in response to any of the findings.

Section 2. Introduction

Due to the nature of our business, there are many situations when a conflict of interest may arise. For the purpose of this policy a conflict of interest is defined as a situation in which an individual, or organisation, has competing interests or loyalties.

This policy applies to all partners working for or on behalf of BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA, including all colleagues at all locations and at all levels, board members, external contractors, agency workers, partners, any associates, any subsidiaries or their employees or any other person associated with us.

This policy is intended to set out the responsibilities on all partners in managing conflicts of interest in line with their contract/agreement and in supporting us to meet the requirements set out in the Ofqual Conditions of Recognition.

All existing and reasonably foreseeable Conflicts of Interest will be identified by our organisation and monitored in line with our standard procedures and escalated to the Managing Director where appropriate. These Conflicts of Interest will be monitored closely, particularly during periods of change, in order to mitigate the possible impact of any potential adverse effect.

Conflicts of interest can have a significant and lasting impact on the apprentice, their employer and on BPN.

For example, it may result in:

- one apprentice or employer being favoured over another
- the requirements of the assessment not being delivered/met
- lower quality, unreliable quality assurance, and sampling
- the validity and reliability of assessment decisions being compromised
- apprentices not being fully competent in their job role creating a risk to their employer and their business
- damage to the reputation of BPN, which could include the removal from the register of end-point assessment organisations

Section 3. Types of Conflict of Interest

Conflicts of interest can arise in a variety of circumstances in relation to our business activity, for example:

- When any Independent End-Point Assessor (IEPA), partner, and/or invigilator we appoint does not disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest.
- when an individual has a position of authority in BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA Team which conflicts with his or her interests in another organisation.
- when an individual has a position of authority in one part of the BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA which conflicts with his or her interests in another part of the BPN group.
- when an individual has personal interests or relationships that conflict with his/her professional position.
- where an individual works for or carries out work on BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA Teams behalf, but who may have personal interests – paid or unpaid – in another business which either uses BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA products or services, or produces similar products to BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA Team.
- where an individual works for or carries out work on BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA Teams behalf, who has friends or relatives taking BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA Team assessments, including examinations.
- when one part of BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA Team creates and follows a procedure that conflicts with its regulatory responsibilities as an End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO).
- where an individual takes on additional paid work (on either an employed or self-employed basis) or voluntary work outside BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA Team which conflicts with the work of BPN group.

Conflicts of interest can also arise where:

- An individual may be employed in one organisation involved in EPA and has links with and/or is employed in the same organisation as the apprentice or an organisation undertaking the on-programme delivery.
- An individual involved in EPA has a prior link with the apprentice, their employer or an organisation involved in the on-programme delivery for the standard they are assessing against. For example, they may have friends or relatives involved in delivery.

- An individual involved in EPA may be working for an organisation that is in direct competition with the organisation involved in on-programme delivery.
- At both organisational and individual level, the official role of the individual/organisation undertaking the EPA has any other interests that may compromise their assessment decisions.

Section 4. Acknowledging a Conflict of Interest

If a conflict of interest arises or partners anticipate that it might arise, they need to let the BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA Team know using the Conflict of Interest Declaration Form located [here](#). We will work with partners to take steps to minimise any risks and resolve the issue or escalate it to their Head of Organisation if this is not possible. Partners can add as many conflicts as they need to. This information will be reviewed by the RO and/or EPA Manager who will work with partners to address any areas of particular concern. If there is any doubt whether or not an activity represents a conflict of interest - report it! Where further action is needed as a result of a declaration, this is documented and managed accordingly; this may include removing the individual from any involvement in EPA or referring their assessment decisions to another assessor with no vested interest.

All partners must immediately communicate any issue s/he feels are urgent to an appropriate manager, director or board member which may be done in confidence. It should be noted that individuals are protected under the Whistle-blowing policy.

We will also monitor any conflicts of interest and may on occasion take steps to minimise any conflicts due to the level of the risk or the frequency that the risk occurs.

Section 5. Responsibilities

All partners/associates/employees must complete the [Declaration of Conflict of Interest Form](#) and notify the BPN Apprenticeship Services EPA Team of any actual or potential conflicts of interest. All parties will adhere to stringent confidentiality protocols generally operating on a “need to know basis” meaning that information will be shared only among parties who need to have detailed knowledge in order to carryout, monitor or manage EPA. Assessments will be monitored through spot observations, employer and learner feedback and remote activities. BPN will take all reasonable steps to:

- Adhere to relevant requirements, and having regard to relevant guidance, set by Skills England and/or the regulatory body on conflicts of interest in relation to EPAs. This includes any relevant requirements or guidance in an Assessment Plan or the Apprenticeship Standard on which an Assessment Plan is based.
- Ensure as far as possible that, where a conflict of interest cannot be avoided, each assessment remains fit for purpose. In particular, each assessment should remain valid.
- Maintain confidentiality of assessment materials by guidance, training and password protection processes to minimise the risk of a breach of confidentiality by the future disclosure of materials provided in connection with the training.
- Manage organisational conflicts of interest, as well as those at an individual level.

- Ensure that processes and procedures in relation to the delivery of the apprenticeship are sufficiently separate from assessment, and that assessment processes and procedures are sufficiently separate from each other, so as to avoid any conflict of interest having an Adverse Effect
- Issue policy and training to staff on conflicts of interest.
- Contracts, whether they be for self-employed freelance assessors or staff, will contain the same requirements regarding Conflict of Interest.
- Check staff and assessor CVs, and employment histories against the end-point assessment activity will be undertaken.
- Notify assessors of the names of the apprentices and their employers to be assessed (subject to data sharing and protection policy) to check for any assessor apprentice.

On an annual basis, or when starting a role with BPN linked to our EPAO/AO services, the governing body, senior officers, administration staff and lead assessors are required to complete a declaration of 'No Conflict of Interest' to confirm they have read and understood the policy and have no known Col. If they do have a Col, they are required to declare through the [Declaration of Conflict of Interest Form](#)

Section 6. What should you do if you think someone is acting improperly?

If partners/employees/associates become aware of something they don't feel comfortable with, or they feel someone may be acting in an improper way, please refer to our Whistle-blower policy.

Section 7. Managing Conflict

Any conflict of interest should be declared and recorded, and these will be maintained, evaluated, and formally reviewed on a regular basis. Where conflicts of interest have been identified, the Responsible Officer or EPAO/AO Manager will indicate on the declaration how the conflict of interest will be managed and mitigated and its scope and duration / review date.

Breaches may be identified via – declaration, whistleblowing, audit, etc. and all breaches will be reported to the Programme Board.

Where further action is needed as a result of a declaration, this is documented and managed accordingly. This may include:

- reorganising activities and/or key functions
- allocating an alternative assessor
- removal of expert from the end-point assessment design
- changes to the risk rating of an assessor (this is only if you risk rate your assessors)
- increased sampling or monitoring
- removing the individual from any involvement in EPA
- referring assessment decisions to another IEPA with no vested interest

BPN will make every effort to manage and mitigate any potential or real conflict of interest in the delivery of the end-point assessment service. This may mean, for instance, removing individuals from any involvement in the assessment process where there is a risk of conflict. The independence of our decision on the competency of the apprentice is paramount. Any actual or perceived conflict of interest can undermine both the outcome of the end-point assessment and our creditability as a trusted assessor of apprentices.

All EP assessments will be delivered in such a way that no organisation or individual who has been involved in the management or training of the apprentice can conduct an assessment method without the independent assessor being present or making the sole decision on competence and passing the EPA. This means that an end-point assessor or invigilator should not be employed by the same organisation as the apprentice, nor involved in, nor responsible for any on-programme delivery, line-management or on programme assessment of the same apprentices.

As an organisation required to develop question banks and administer and mark tests, we have in place clear arrangements to ensure the development, administration and marking of the tests is not subject to conflict of interest and that there is clear separation across these activities.

Section 8. Mandatory disclosure and confidentiality

8.1 Mandatory disclosures

It is imperative that the integrity of our assessments is maintained. We are aware that partner organisations often work with more than one End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) in, and that therefore more than one EPAO may be at risk when things go wrong.

Our regulators have outlined specific conditions that we must meet to protect the integrity across the sector. This includes the requirement that where certain things are identified (such as malpractice), or certain actions taken (such as when sanctions are applied), the Regulators and other relevant EPAOs who may be affected must be informed.

Depending on the seriousness of the matter, we may be required to declare to our regulators that we are no longer compliant due to an act or omission by partners which has put us in breach. In this event, we may have regulatory action directed against us, such as Monetary Penalties. In accordance with the Agreement for Provision of Services Relating to End Point Assessment, we reserve the right to direct such financial penalties against partners, should they be as a result of the act or omission.

8.2 Confidentiality

We may need to access confidential information. We will ensure that such information is kept secure and only used for the purposes of the investigation and in line with relevant data protection legislation. We will not normally disclose the information to third parties unless required to do so, e.g. to our regulators and / or the Police or other relevant and / or Statutory Bodies.

Section 9. Termination for Convenience

Our actions under this policy will be proportionate. Where possible, we will always try to work with our partners in resolving issues. However, nothing within this policy precludes us from invoking our right under our agreement to terminate our relationship with our partners.

Section 10

Contact Information

If you have any queries relating to enquiries and appeals, please contact BPNs EPA Quality and Compliance team in writing:
Email: epa@bestpracticenet.co.uk

Post: Best Practice Network EPAO
Newminster House, 27-29 Baldwin St
Bristol, BS1 1LT

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Abbreviation or Term	Meaning
Contract	A contract may be a service level agreement (SLA), partnership agreement, contract for goods/services or any other signed agreement in place with our partners.
EPA	End-Point Assessment: An EPA is a collection of assessments that offers confirmation of knowledge, skills, and behaviours (known as KSBs) for a particular role. It takes place once the apprenticeship training has been completed, and the apprentice is deemed ready to enter the Gateway for EPA. The EPA must be achieved before an apprenticeship certificate can be issued. The structure of an EPA is designed to ensure that those making a decision on the competency of an apprentice are totally unbiased. This means that an assessment must either be conducted by an independent third party, or in a way that ensures no party involved in the management or training of the apprentice can make the sole decision on competence and passing the EPA – via a panel of experts, for example.
EPAO / AO	End-Point Assessment Organisation / Assessment Organisation: an organisation providing EPA.
Gateway	When an apprentice reaches the end of their training, the employer (supported by the Independent Training Provider) will make the decision on whether or not the apprentice is ready to take the EPA – this decision process or stage is known as the “Gateway”.
TP	Training Provider: a person or organisation who delivers training to an apprentice to enable the apprentice to reach Gateway in conjunction with employers.
IEPA	Independent End-Point Assessor: a person who facilitates an unbiased assessment of an apprentice's competencies against the KSBs of the standard.
LIEPA	Lead Independent End-Point Assessor: a person responsible for internal quality assurance and standardisation of all assessment practice within EPA and is the sector expert.
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation: a government body regulating examinations, assessments, and qualifications in England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland.

Partner	This can be apprentices, employees, employers, external quality assessors, independent training providers, and workers.
---------	---