CIPD

Championing better work and working lives

Level 5 People Professional End-point Assessment (EPA)

Guidance for the professional discussion underpinned by a portfolio of evidence

Issue 1

Contents

Introduction

The People Professional end-point assessment (EPA) has three assessment methods. Assessment method 2 is a professional discussion underpinned by a portfolio of evidence.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for the professional discussion and the portfolio. It gives guidance on how to approach the portfolio of evidence and on how to prepare for the professional discussion. It will also be useful for your employer and training provider when considering how they can best support you.

The professional discussion is used to assess 11 grading descriptors (GDs) and associated knowledge, skill and behaviour (KSB) components. It is important that you follow the guidance provided in this document when collating and producing your portfolio of evidence and when preparing for the professional discussion. This will give you the best opportunity to provide evidence for all the GDs assessed in this assessment method.

Expectations set out in the assessment plan

These are the expectations set out in the assessment plan for the portfolio and professional discussion. The CIPD has provided guidance on our interpretation in this document.

- You must compile a portfolio of evidence during the on-programme period of the apprenticeship and submit it at gateway.
- The portfolio of evidence should only contain evidence related to the GDs and KSBs that are assessed in the professional discussion.
- Evidence must be clearly mapped against the GDs.
- Each piece of evidence can be used to demonstrate more than one GD.
- A qualitative approach rather than a quantitative approach to the portfolio is recommended, that is, provide your best work example for each section of the portfolio.
- Evidence sources can include (this is not a definitive list):
  - workplace documentation/records, for example, policies, procedures
  - communication plans and documents, for example, presentations, emails, articles
  - annotated photographs and video clips (maximum 10 minutes' duration)
  - witness statements based on direct observation and not opinion.
- The portfolio should not include methods of self-assessment or reflective accounts.
- The portfolio evidence must be valid and attributable to the apprentice and contain a statement from the employer and apprentice confirming this.
- The assessor will review the portfolio of evidence in preparation for the professional discussion (but will not assess the portfolio directly).

Abbreviations used

- GD(s): grading descriptors outlined in the assessment plan and at the end of this document
- PDP: refers to a pass-level GD
- PDD: refers to a distinction-level GD
- KSB(s): knowledge, skill and/or behaviour component(s) as outlined in the apprenticeship standard
- EPA: end-point assessment
- PD: professional discussion
- SEPA: SmartEPA system – the platform used to register, book EPA and receive results

Guidance on your portfolio

Your portfolio of evidence will underpin the professional discussion (PD) and will be the starting point for the question areas in the PD. It is important, therefore, that you follow this guidance carefully when compiling and collating your portfolio during the on-programme period of your apprenticeship. You will need to submit your portfolio at EPA gateway.

Portfolio template

The portfolio template has been developed to support apprentices in compiling and submitting their portfolio. All apprentices must complete this template and submit it with their portfolio evidence.

At the start of the template, you will be asked to give a brief overview of your role and the company you work for. This is important contextual information and helps your assessor to understand the evidence presented in the portfolio and PD.

The portfolio template is split into sections that map to the question areas in the PD and GDs assessed by these question areas. Each section of the template provides recommendations on the type of portfolio content that you might include and suggested evidence sources.

It is recommended that you provide your best work example and piece(s) of evidence for each section of the portfolio template – the one(s) that provides the best or highest-quality evidence of the GD(s). We expect that you will include between seven and 20 discrete pieces of evidence in your portfolio. If relevant, you can use the same work example or piece of evidence for different sections of the portfolio if it provides evidence for several GDs.

You will be asked to number each individual piece of evidence in your portfolio and record these in your portfolio template. You will also be asked to give a brief description of the evidence you submit for each question area and describe how it relates to the GD(s). This is to help your assessor understand the pieces of evidence in context and help guide them to the most important elements.

You will need to submit your portfolio of evidence (including the completed portfolio template) at gateway using SmartEPA (SEPA). For further guidance on gateway and timings, please refer to the Level 5 People Professional Specification and Gateway Submission document.

Recommended portfolio content

This table indicates the type of evidence you could choose to include in your portfolio to underpin each of the question areas in the professional discussion. The project discussed during this assessment cannot be the same as the piece of work used as the focus of the presentation.

Question area	Grading descriptors	Recommended portfolio content	Suggested evidence sources
1	PDP1 – Describes the functions within the people profession and how each delivers people solutions for the business in the context of different people operating models and theories.	Description of the people or HR function/department within your organisation, what it delivers and how it operates.	Annotated structural diagram of your organisation's people/HR function or its operating model, with a narrative describing what each function/area delivers and how it works with stakeholders.
2	PDP2 – Explains how they adapted to changing circumstances when managing and delivering people-related projects to meet business aims and objectives. PDD2 – Justifies their approach when managing and delivering people-related projects to meet business aims and objectives.	Evidence of a people-related project* that you managed and delivered to meet business objectives. * This must be different from the piece of work selected for your presentation.	Project document(s) and/or presentation describing the people-related project and how you managed/delivered it.
3	PDP3 – Applies commercial awareness of the business and the external environment to analyse commercial and financial implications of people management and solutions, ensuring value for money.	Evidence of demonstrating commercial and financial awareness in your work.	Spreadsheet/document showing how you have calculated and/or managed costs or the budget for a people solution/service to ensure value for money. OR Spreadsheet/document showing how you have reviewed costs for an area of work to ensure value for money.

4	PDP4 – Applies current sustainable working practice, taking personal responsibility for sustainability in their own work and staying up to date with developments in the sector. PDD4 – Evaluates sustainable working practices within the business and proposed ways these might be improved.	Evidence of taking an environmentally sustainable approach in your work.	Work/communication document(s) demonstrating how you adopted and promoted environmentally sustainable practices. OR Annotated work/communication document(s) demonstrating the environmental practices in your workplace and your role or contribution.
5	PDP5 – Explains their use of technology and innovation to support the delivery of people strategies in line with regulations and policies, including how emerging digital trends can be embedded in their practice. PDD5 – Evaluates the delivery of people strategies using digital trends, technology and innovation in accordance with regulations and policies and recommends improvements. PDP6 – Applies legislative requirements when handling and processing people data.	Evidence of using technology and digital trends in your work* and taking account of relevant legislation, regulation and policies, including data protection. * This could include people processes, practices, policies, services or initiatives.	Work document(s) describing how you used technology (may include screenshots or visuals).

6	PDP7 – Explains the impact of how they apply employment legislation and policies to advise and make decisions on HR issues as well as escalating concerns outside own area of responsibility.	Evidence of advising on and making decisions on people/HR issues by applying employment legislation and policies.	Work/communication document(s) outlining your advice and decisions on a people/HR issue.
7	PDP8 – Leads and improves people capability in the business, contributing to the development of policy, procedures or initiatives.	Evidence of developing people* in the workplace and contributing to the development of policy, procedures or initiatives. * This could be managers, peers/colleagues, employees, leaders.	Work/project document(s) demonstrating your role in developing other people* in your organisation and how you contributed to creating policy, procedures or initiatives.

Guidance on your professional discussion

Overview

The professional discussion (PD) is a structured 75-minute discussion which assesses all grading descriptors in this assessment method. The discussion takes place between you and the assessor and is conducted over a video call.

The purpose of the PD is to give you the opportunity to demonstrate the depth and breadth of evidence for the GDs and associated KSBs assessed in this assessment method. You can refer to and illustrate your answers with evidence from your portfolio. The PD will be led by the assessor but there will be opportunities for you to make proactive contributions.

An outline of the question areas in the professional discussion (including the assessed GDs) is provided in this guidance to help you prepare.

Structure of the professional discussion

The professional discussion will cover seven question areas. For each question area, the assessor will usually ask an overarching question and will ask follow-up questions as necessary.

All professional discussions will follow the same structure. There will be variation in the questions asked based on the nature of the evidence submitted in your portfolio and to avoid predictability, but the order of the question areas will remain consistent.

The detailed structure of the professional discussion is outlined in the following table.

Question area	Grading descriptors	What to expect
Introduction		Your assessor will outline the structure of the PD, when breaks are scheduled and what will be covered. They will also ask if you have any questions.
1	PDP1	This question area will explore your knowledge of the functions/areas within the people profession and how they work with stakeholders to deliver people solutions. You should be prepared to discuss the structure, function and operating model of the people team in your organisation and how this might differ from other organisations. In addition, a specific example of how the people team works with stakeholders (such as managers, employees, leaders or representative bodies) to deliver people solutions or objectives in your organisation.
2	PDP2 PDD2	This question area will explore a people-related project that you managed and delivered,* referring to the example and evidence in your portfolio. Your assessor will want to know about how the project contributed to business aims/objectives and your evidence to support this; how you managed and delivered the project; and how you adapted your approach or demonstrated flexibility.

		* This project must be different from the piece of work covered in your presentation.
3	PDP3	This question area will explore how you have applied commercial and financial awareness in your work. You should be ready to discuss your portfolio evidence in detail, including: • how you ensured value for money • how you calculated, analysed, tracked and/or managed costs • the wider financial and commercial implications, for example on budgets • the impact of the external environment or market.
4	PDP4 PDD4	This question area explores how you have used environmentally sustainable working practices in your own work and what more you or your organisation could do to be more sustainable. You should prepare to discuss your portfolio example/evidence and any other relevant evidence. Your assessor will be interested in how you have taken personal responsibility for adopting and promoting environmentally sustainable practices in your work as well as how you keep up to date with sector developments in this area so that you can evaluate existing practices and suggest further improvements.
Break		At this point you are likely to have a short break.
5	PDP5 PDD5 PDP6	This question area will explore how you have used technology and digital trends to deliver people practice. It will also explore how you have ensured you and your organisation stay in line with legislation, regulation and policies, including in relation to the handling and processing of data. Referring to your portfolio example/evidence, you should prepare to discuss and explain: • reasons for using specific technology(ies) • how technology has enabled you to make improvements and/or innovate in your work • how you have considered data protection legislation, regulation and policies and any other relevant legislation or policies • digital trends and innovation in your area of work • the opportunities and risks of using technology and digitalisation to deliver people practices/strategies.

6	PDP7	This question area explores how you have advised on and made decisions about people issues by applying employment legislation and policies. You should prepare to discuss your portfolio example/evidence, including: • relevant employment legislation and policies and how you applied these • the advice you provided • the decisions you made • the impact of your advice/decision • when you escalate people concerns or issues.
7	PDP8	This question area will explore how you have taken an active role in developing or upskilling people* at work and have contributed to the development of policy, procedures or initiatives. Referring to your portfolio example/evidence, you should prepare to discuss: • who you developed/upskilled and why • how you developed them • how you contributed to associated policies or procedures or initiatives • how this work improved people capability in your business/organisation. * This could be managers, peers/colleagues, employees, leaders.
Close		Your assessor will let you know when they have finished their questions. If there is time, they will ask if you have anything further you would like to add to support your assessment and you will be able to discuss this. Your assessor will explain next steps.

Preparing for the professional discussion

In the professional discussion (PD), you will be asked to explore the work examples and evidence you submitted in your portfolio. You can prepare by refamiliarising yourself with your portfolio of evidence. It is important that you are ready to discuss in detail the work included in your portfolio and other relevant evidence.

We do not expect you to bring additional work examples to the PD; however, if, after gateway, you have work experiences that reinforce the examples presented in your portfolio, you can prepare these and, if there is time, these may be discussed during the PD.

You can also prepare for the PD by reviewing the grading descriptors (GD) and associated KSBs for this assessment method. Think carefully about what evidence you have for all the elements of each GD and prepare notes and/or responses to possible questions.

As time is limited to 75 minutes for the professional discussion, it is important that you are prepared to answer questions clearly and concisely. This will mean you are able to provide evidence for all the GDs in the time available.

As the PD is conducted on a video call, we recommend that you check your hardware, software and the meeting link the day before the assessment. This should include checking your microphone, speakers and camera. A comfortable headset with a microphone is useful and often preferable, as it can help eliminate external noises.

We recommend that you arrange to have access to a suitable room during your assessment that you can have exclusive use of to ensure the assessment is uninterrupted.

You will need to bring photographic ID to confirm your identity at the start of the assessment.

Permitted documents

Please have accessible on the assessment day:

- photographic ID
- your completed portfolio template
- all evidence/documents submitted as part of your portfolio
- any notes you have made in preparation
- blank paper for making notes during the assessment
- copy of the grading descriptors for assessment method 2.

You will not be permitted to use electronic communication devices other than that with which you are accessing the assessment for security purposes.

On the day

You will be able to log in to the video call five minutes before the scheduled start time.

The video call will be scheduled for two hours. This will allow:

- 1 hour 15 minutes for the PD
- 10 minutes for a break
- 15 minutes for introductions and goodbyes
- 15 minutes' contingency time for unexpected issues.

The professional discussion will start with an introduction from the assessor.

The assessor will outline the structure of the PD, when the break is scheduled and what will be covered.

The assessor will ask whether you have any questions before you start the PD.

For each question area, the assessor will usually ask an overarching question and ask further follow-up questions as necessary. Their role is to make sure they ask questions that allow you the opportunity to demonstrate your evidence for the GDs.

If the assessor has enough evidence, or if you are providing information that isn't directly relevant to the question being asked, they may stop you and ask a different question. Please don't worry about this; it's just to ensure that the time is being utilised to give you the best opportunity to showcase your evidence.

If there are any technical difficulties on the day of the assessment, the assessor will call you on your preferred telephone number to find a solution and complete your assessment.

At the end of the assessment, the assessor will explain the next steps.

The video call will be automatically recorded for quality assurance purposes.
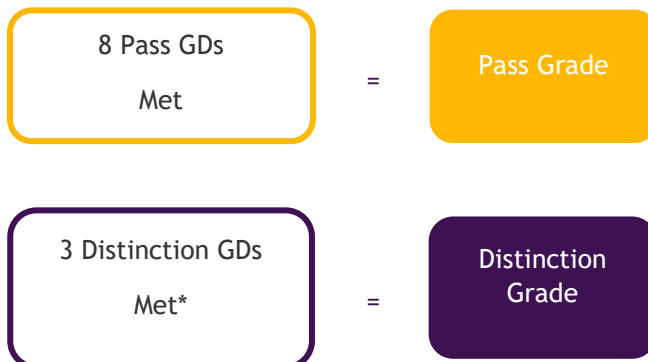
Professional discussion rating and grading

After the assessment, the assessor will evaluate all the evidence presented in the professional discussion and provide a rating for each GD.

They will give one of four ratings to each GD.

Not met
Partially met
Met
Exceeded

To achieve a pass grade for the professional discussion, you will need a rating of 'met' or 'exceeded' in **every** pass-level GD.

To achieve a distinction grade for the professional discussion, you will need a rating of 'met' or 'exceeded' in **every** GD across both pass and distinction levels.

8 Pass GDs Met	=	Pass Grade
3 Distinction GDs Met*	=	Distinction Grade

*and all 8 pass GDs also met or exceeded

Evidence presented in the presentation and questioning cannot be used to rate GDs in this assessment method. All evidence must come from the professional discussion.

Assessors will submit their ratings, which are subject to internal quality assurance procedures.

Once internal quality assurance is complete, results will be released to the SEPA platform.

Results will usually be released within three weeks of the assessment.

Grading descriptors for the professional discussion

Code	Grade	KSBs	Grading descriptor
PDP1	Pass	K3 K4 S7	Describes the functions within the people profession and how each deliver people solutions for the business in the context of different people operating models and theories.
PDP2	Pass	K5 S9 B2	Explains how they adapted to changing circumstances when managing and delivering people-related projects to meet business aims and objectives.
PDD2	Distinction	K5 S9	Justifies their approach when managing and delivering people-related projects to meet business aims and objectives.
PDP3	Pass	K13 K14 S12	Applies commercial awareness of the business and the external environment to analyse commercial and financial implications of people management and solutions, ensuring value for money.
PDP4	Pass	K22 B6	Applies current sustainable working practice, taking personal responsibility for sustainability in their own work and staying up to date with developments in the sector.
PDD4	Distinction	K22 B6	Evaluates sustainable working practices within the business and proposed ways these might be improved.
PDP5	Pass	K12 S13	Explains their use of technology and innovation to support the delivery of people strategies in line with regulations and policies, including how emerging digital trends can be embedded in their practice.
PDD5	Distinction	K12 S13	Evaluates the delivery of people strategies using digital trends, technology and innovation in accordance with regulations and policies, and recommends improvements.
PDP6	Pass	K8 S10	Applies legislative requirements when handling and processing people data.
PDP7	Pass	K9 S3 S14	Explains the impact of how they apply employment legislation and policies to advise and make decisions on HR issues as well as escalating concerns outside own area of responsibility.
PDP8	Pass	S8 S17	Leads and improves people capability in the business, contributing to the development of policy, procedures or initiatives.

Taxonomy

This taxonomy outlines the expected style and depth of response that should be given when different command words are used within a grading descriptor (GD). Command words are an indication only and must be considered in conjunction with the KSBs to understand the evidence requirements. This taxonomy is based on a hierarchy of cognitive skills: generally, the higher the cognitive skill, the greater the complexity expected in the response.

Command word	Definition
Identifies	Recognises or indicates the main features or purpose of the given topic.
Describes	Gives an account of something, such as steps in a process or characteristics.
Details	Provides full information, including specific elements and features relating to a given subject.
Outlines	Gives an overview of something, including key elements, characteristics and/or processes.
Applies	Uses knowledge, skills and/or behaviours effectively and appropriately in practice.
Manages	Plans and takes action to deliver objectives or address issues.
Communicates	Shares key messages clearly and accurately and in a way that engages the audience(s).
Explains	Provides reasons for their approach, covering 'why' as well as 'how' or 'what'.
Interprets	Draws valid conclusions from data or evidence.
Analyses	Examines a range of data and information to create insights.
Evaluates	Considers and weighs up evidence* on an issue/area to provide recommendations; if appropriate, articulates advantages and disadvantages.
Justifies	Gives valid reasons supported by evidence* for why an approach/action is undertaken.
Critically analyses	As 'analyses', but also explores the limitations of the data or analytical techniques and suggests how these could be improved or developed.
Syntheses	Balances insights from different data sources to make connections, identify trends and explore themes.

* Evidence sources can include:

- published research or scientific literature
- organisational data including metrics/measures
- professional expertise and judgement of practitioners, subject-matter experts and/or consultants
- views of stakeholders, both internal (employees, managers, board members) and external (suppliers, investors, shareholders).

Further information on evidence-based practice can be found in the Apprentice Resource Pack.