

**CIPD**

*Championing better  
work and working lives*



*End Point Assessment (EPA)  
Professional Discussion guidance*

*Learning & Development  
Practitioner  
Level 3 Apprenticeship Standard*

## Professional Discussion guidance

### What is a Professional Discussion?

A two-way **discussion** between an independent assessor and an apprentice to assess an apprentice's depth of understanding of their work.

### Booking the Professional Discussion

The Professional Discussion is booked by the CIPD on the date proposed by the apprentice and employer. This must be within the maximum five-month EPA period. The apprentice will receive an email from the CIPD at least three weeks before the scheduled Professional Discussion is due, with confirmation of the time, date and instructions for accessing the virtual classroom. As the Professional Discussion is recorded, the apprentice must have already given their consent to the recording beforehand.

The Professional Discussion is on the same date as the assessment for EPA2, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed.

### Preparing for the Professional Discussion

The Professional Discussion is an opportunity for the apprentice to make detailed and proactive contributions to confirm their competency across the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for the standard. As such, the apprentice should approach the Professional Discussion being ready to present information to the assessor.

- Use the information in the CIPD's grading amplification document as a guide.
- Practise displaying the skills and behaviour, proof of their clear existence – for example: demonstrate active listening skills and show the independent assessor your undivided attention by using gestures and body language to show you are engaged.
- Practise talking fluently for five to six minutes and provide qualitative detail on specific knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Show breadth of understanding, build or elaborate on evidence and try to generate as much additional evidence as possible to validate competence.
- Self-assess the **Executive Summary Report** and identify any component that may have been difficult to cover – be prepared to articulate additional detail for meeting the standard or demonstrating competence against the distinction criteria.
- Draw upon the supporting evidence to effectively authenticate it.
- Be clear on reasons for ideas, decisions or actions taken in the project and be prepared to talk about them.

## **The Professional Discussion assessment environment**

Allow plenty of time before the day of the assessment to make sure the software and hardware meet the virtual classroom's requirements with a:

- browser check
- connectivity check
- sound check
- camera check
- microphone check
- connection speed check.

Make sure a suitable room has been booked and that the assessment will not be interrupted.

A comfortable headset with microphone is useful and often preferable, as it can help eliminate external noises.

Bring:

- a drink
- tissues
- notes
- fan (in warm weather)
- watch/clock
- photographic ID
- pen and paper
- Executive Summary report

## **The Professional Discussion assessment activity**

- The Professional Discussion is a formal assessment so allow enough time before the assessment and on the day of the assessment to prepare the technology and set up
- It will start with an introduction from the independent assessor who will, in turn, invite the apprentice to introduce themselves.
- The independent assessor will outline when the 60 minutes will start and how it will be spent.
- The independent assessor will cover confidentiality issues, ask for photographic ID and confirm that they are assessing the correct apprenticeship standard.
- The independent assessor will ask whether the apprentice has any questions before they start.

The Professional Discussion will be conducted as a two-way discussion between the independent assessor and the apprentice. The discussion should involve both the independent assessor and the apprentice actively listening and participating in a formal conversation. The apprentice will be given the opportunity to make detailed and proactive contributions to confirm competency across the knowledge, skills and behaviours mapped to this assessment method (as per the grading justification document).

The discussion will be semi-structured and consist of 8 to 10 clearly defined questions, which may be followed by probing questions if the independent assessor needs further clarification.

### **Completing the Professional Discussion**

The independent assessor will manage the time and tell the apprentice when the assessment is over. They will not be able to give the apprentice detail about their grades but will explain the next steps. The independent assessor will make the judgement on the grade when they complete their report. It will be combined with the grade for EPA 2 to reach an overall apprenticeship grade. The independent assessor's decision is subject to moderation procedures by the CIPD, which may take up to two weeks to complete. The decision cannot be confirmed until this process is complete when the apprentice will be notified by email of their overall grade.

### **Next steps:**

After the Professional Discussion the apprentice and assessor will sign out of the virtual classroom. The apprentice will be given a short break before starting EPA2.