

How to Guide for Tests

What are they?

This method includes a variety of tests that are predominately used to assess knowledge. The different types of end-point assessment (EPA) tests are:

- Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ), Knowledge Tests (KT) or Situational Judgement Tests (SJT)
- Short Answers (SAQ) or
- Written Responses.



A **multiple-choice** test (**Knowledge Test** or **Situational Judgement Test**) consists of a series of questions in which apprentices are asked to select the correct answer from a number of (usually 4) options. Individual questions or groups of questions may include case studies, scenarios, and sections of text, graphs or diagrams, on which the questions are based.

A **short answer** or **written** test consists of a series of questions which apprentices are required to answer. These could consist of one type, or a variety of types of question, such as open questions and scenario-based questions. Short or long answer responses allow the apprentice to demonstrate the extent and depth of their knowledge and skills.

Many apprenticeship standards include tests in their EPA activity. The type of skill being assessed will inform the test type, e.g. a multiple-choice test would not allow an apprentice to show a great depth of knowledge and understanding in relation to evaluation or analysis, as a more detailed answer would be required. If the answer was directly related to a policy, procedure or an act, a multiple-choice question would probably suffice. This is taken into consideration when assessment development and production takes place.

Tests assess knowledge; there are some limitations related to what skills and behaviours they can assess. Apprentices can expect to have their occupational knowledge assessed using this method, whereas their skills and behaviours will probably use more practical-based and discussion assessment methods.

How to Prepare

NCFE produce sample test questions and papers to allow apprentices to prepare for EPA. All test content is based on the criteria set in the appropriate standard, so these should be reviewed by the apprentice to help inform their test preparation. The content and subject of the test questions will be based on the relevant apprenticeship standard and criteria, so using them as the basis of revision and preparation activities would be very appropriate and beneficial.

Sample mark schemes are also usually produced by NCFE and made available, and the NCFE Specification and Guidance document will clearly state what the Pass, Merit and Distinction grades are, as appropriate, as not all tests have the higher grades. Apprentices should also refer to the provided Glossary within the NCFE Specification and Guidance, as this will identify the important terms and language used in their work area and explain their meaning and use in context. Using these in revision activities will help, as the terms will more than likely be used and referred to in EPA test questions.

'Test conditions' can also increase fear and anxiety levels for apprentices. Using the sample papers and questions to help practise, especially under 'test conditions' (i.e. in a set time frame and in a quiet room), would be useful in preparing for this EPA method.

Short answer questions (SAQs) do not have options to choose from - they expect the apprentice to draw from existing knowledge to respond to a question, based on a given scenario or context. There will also be guidance related to how many words will be expected, normally a maximum number; for example, a maximum of 250 words. For this EPA method, it is vital for the apprentice to look carefully at each question to identify the **key words**. Different levels of apprenticeship will have differing levels and types of questions. We wouldn't expect a Level 2 apprenticeship to have the same types of questions as a Level 5 apprenticeship. The level of the question will be guided by the **command verb** in it; examples of the type of **key words** used in questions at differing levels include:

- Level 2 – **describe, explain, state, define**
- Level 3 – **compare, examine, identify**
- Level 4 and 5 – **analyse, justify, evaluate, recommend.**

Therefore, it is important to take notice of the key words to identify exactly what the question is asking the apprentice to do. For example, the answer required to 'describe' something will be very different to when asked to 'analyse' something.

SAQs are normally based on a scenario, and require the apprentice to consider their answer in more depth than for an MCQ. They will need to draw from the knowledge and skills gained during their time on-programme to answer it.

There will also be guidance regarding how many words to write for SAQs. This is normally given as a maximum number, so practising writing answers to questions in full sentences and coherent paragraphs is also recommended. This is where literacy skills are important.

Sometimes, just getting started with an SAQ is the hardest part. Tips for this include:

- making brief notes about thoughts on the question topic or scenario
- producing a quick 'mind-map' of ideas related to the question topic or scenario
- splitting ideas into positive or negative to start evaluating them
- using some of the wording from the question to structure the answer (see example on page 13)
- practising answering example questions and turning notes into full sentences and paragraphs
- working with Independent Training Providers (ITPs) to predict what the SAQs might ask, and exploring and practising how to produce effective written answers to questions.

To help prepare for MCQs, SJTs and SAQs completing practice tests, answering example questions and exploring the answers with others would be beneficial.

It must be remembered that question content will be taken from across the apprenticeship standard; therefore, it is very important to ensure that that apprentices have knowledge and understanding of the **whole standard** so that there are no surprises when they complete the EPA test. A review of current knowledge in relation to the full apprenticeship standard is recommended in case there are any areas which don't naturally occur in the apprentice's workplace.

Some standards contain a number of pathways, so test questions could be from areas less known in some workplaces. Some criteria might not be relevant to some workplaces, but the apprenticeship is for the industry and not only the apprentice's current employer or company. Therefore, it is recommended that apprentices make themselves aware of the full coverage of their standard, and ask their ITP and/or their employer for guidance and information if there are any areas they are unfamiliar about or unsure of.

Become the Question Writer!

Apprentices could also look at the criteria for their own standard to predict what the question might be. A top tip would be to use the criteria to write a question – this will help them to prepare for EPA. Employers, ITPs and colleagues could look at specific criteria and explore how a question might be structured. An example of this is shown in the table below.

Apprenticeship:	Level 2 Adult Care Worker
Criteria:	C. The importance of communication. 13. The importance of active listening.
Sample question:	<p>'Anne', a service user, is upset about a family argument she has had recently. Which of the following demonstrates active listening from the care worker talking to her about it?</p> <p>A. checking what is happening in the corridor while Anne is talking. B. looking at some case notes while Anne is talking. C. maintaining eye contact and nodding while Anne is talking. D. writing in a notebook while Anne is talking.</p>
Possible other questions/topics they could be asked about:	<p>For topic: discussion about what active listening is, e.g. repeating or paraphrasing, not interrupting or talking over someone; defining terms and asking for clarity on specifics; listening 'between the lines'; smiling and nodding; having a positive posture (not folding arms, looking bored or elsewhere); mirroring the body language of the speaker; ignoring distractions; asking questions for more detail; showing empathy and summarising what has been said.</p> <p>Possible other questions/points for discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What impact on the working relationship with a service user could poor active listening have? • How does active listening promote effective working relationships? • Why is active listening important when working in adult care? • A service user is angry at a letter they have recently received. How could active listening skills be used to help them calmly formulate a response to it? • What experience do they have in relation to the importance of communication and how they have used active listening techniques?

Marks and Timings

It is important for the apprentice to manage their time effectively when completing this EPA activity.

- If 60 minutes are allowed for a MCQ and there are 40 questions, then that would allow for 90 seconds per question.
- If 60 minutes are allowed for test completion, and there are 40 MCQs and 4 SAQs, if 1 minute per MCQ was used then the apprentice would have 20 minutes left for the SAQ – resulting in 5 minutes per question. This does not allow for a great deal of time to write up to 250 words for each SAQ!
- If 90 minutes are allowed, the 40 MCQs could be completed in 40-50 minutes, leaving at least another 40 for the SAQs.

This type of approach to tests can be very useful, breaking the test times up so we have some structure to the best use of time during the tests. However, every individual will need differing times for each type of question. Practise is therefore key here as it improves our awareness of development needs in relation to completing tests, reduces the fear and improves self-confidence. It is important to practise completing tests under timed conditions. This will help the apprentice get a sense of how fast they work and how to best manage their time during tests, in order to gain maximum possible marks.

In the SAQ example below, the important and useful words are highlighted and used in the example answer. This shows how the question can be used to structure the answer, but also ensure coverage of all the important points.

The word **evaluate** is very important as the answer needs to identify the risks and benefits, but also review and assess the impact they may have: this is where **evaluation** comes in. Apprentices could draw from their own experiences, but could also make informed judgements to help them to evaluate the question in sufficient detail. Practising this is important and an exploration of the difference between identifying/describing and evaluating/reviewing would probably be useful.

Apprenticeship:	Level 5 Assistant Practitioner (Health)
Criteria:	Knowledge: research and development in the health and social care sector to inform and improve quality of care.
Sample SAQ:	Your team is hosting clinical trials on medication for individuals who have suffered from a stroke . Evaluate the benefits and risks to a stroke patient in taking part in a clinical trial and draw a conclusion . (5 marks)
Possible answer:	<p>Engaging patients in clinical trials is an important role of a Health Practitioner. The results of such trials are used to inform improvements in the quality of care and treatment of conditions. However, there are benefits and risks involved in part in clinical trials. The advantages for the patients include gaining access to treatment, which is not readily available to everyone, being more closely monitored and supervised by medical practitioners and the opportunity to play a more active role in their own healthcare.</p> <p>The potential risks should not be overlooked. There may be unexpected side effects or risks not known or expected, more time will be spent attending appointments and the patient's stress levels could increase. Taking part in a trial will mean commitment from the patient; it could be very time consuming, and restrictions could be placed on them related to activities they can and cannot do; for example, not eating certain foods and limitations on alcohol consumption. It should also be noted that the different/new approach may not 'work' for the patient.</p> <p>For a recovering stroke patient, there may be specific benefits and risks related to their recovery. As the most common psychological problems affecting people after a stroke are depression and anxiety, the increased levels of care participating in the trial would create could help to support these needs. The stimulation that taking part in the trial would bring could promote cognitive development; however, it might also increase fatigue levels whilst in recovery.</p> <p>To conclude, there appears to be more benefits than risks in participating, and the opportunity to help other people with the condition would probably motivate and improve the sense of worth for the patient involved.</p>
Possible other questions/topics they could be asked about	<p>For topic: discussion about the general benefits and risks of participating in clinical trials; what experience they have had in their workplaces of patients being involved in trials and how the patients were engaged in them; an exploration of how patients they have worked with benefitted from being involved, but also the cons; if limited experience, an evaluation of how different trials might impact on the physical and psychological wellbeing of patients might be affected.</p> <p>Possible other questions/points for discussion: Differing types of clinical trials, how the results are used to inform practice, the benefits and risks for other conditions and diseases, how trials are financed and made more engaging for patients.</p>

Become the Marker

All SAQs will include information regarding how many marks are awarded to the questions, and sample mark schemes explain how the marks are awarded. This is important detail to help apprentices prepare for this EPA method. As previously mentioned, time should be allocated to the questions that will give the best chance of gaining marks, with priority given to the questions which gain more marks and have a subject which the apprentice is more confident and competent in.

Using the Mark Scheme

It would also be useful to explore the mark scheme for the sample questions. Once the 'possible answer' has been reviewed, apprentices could 'become the marker' and evaluate the answer using the mark scheme. Discussion around what marks would be awarded to this sample would support understanding of how to answer SAQs with confidence.

Using the mark scheme below, what marks would the 'possible answer' be awarded?

Question No.	Mark Scheme	Marks
44	<p>Sample question:</p> <p>Your team is hosting clinical trials on medication for individuals who have suffered from a stroke. Evaluate the benefits and risks to a stroke patient in taking part in a clinical trial and draw a conclusion.</p> <p>Information on how marks are to be awarded:</p> <p>Award 2 marks for explaining the benefits. Apprentices should cover 2 benefits in detail. Possible benefits could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • access to new treatments before they are widely available • gain increased understanding and ownership of their treatment and condition • higher levels of involvement, monitoring and support from healthcare professionals • opportunity to help other people with the same condition. <p>Award 2 marks for explaining the risks. Apprentices should cover 2 risks in detail. Possible risks could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the new strategies and treatments being studied aren't always better than current standard care • new approach may have side effects or risks that doctors don't know about or expect, and then only discover when testing on patients. <p>Award 1 mark for drawing a conclusion.</p>	5

It is also useful to know the grading for the tests. Different standards have different grading. Apprentices should know how their tests are scored and graded, so they can work towards the gaining the grade they aspire to.

For example:

Apprenticeship	Maximum Marks	Pass Mark	Merit Mark	Distinction Mark
Business Administrator (L3)	50	30 - 39	N/A	40+
Adult Care Worker (L2)	60	40 - 49	50 - 54	55+