Apprenticeship Assessment

VQA Level 4 End-Point Assessment for ST0936 Town Planning Assistant

Qualification Number: 610/4172/5

Version Number: 1.0

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Key Information

Reference:	ST0936
Version:	V1.0
Level:	4
Typical duration to gateway	24 months
Typical EPA period	6 months
Maximum funding	£12,000
Route:	Construction and the built environment
Approved for delivery:	15 June 2021
LARS code:	633
EQA provider:	Ofqual
Review:	This apprenticeship standard will be reviewed after three years.
Qualification number:	610/4172/5

Summary

Occupation Summary

This occupation is found in the planning, construction, architectural, infrastructure, environmental and local government sectors. Town Planning Assistants may work in local authorities, small consultancies, large multidisciplinary consultancies, central government, or other organisations that are undertaking planning work.

The broad purpose of the occupation is to work with and provide technical and administrative support to Chartered Town Planners to deliver new development projects and to shape and create sustainable places for the benefit of the public. They also help members of the public and/or clients to navigate the planning system and explain its rules and requirements.

Town Planning Assistants research and compile the planning history of a site or area and undertake initial site analysis for developments, including producing documentation and graphical representations as well as checking compliance with planning legislation and environmental designations. They assist Chartered Town Planners with community engagement and consultation and provide members of the public, developers, clients, and local councillors with relevant planning advice.

Town Planning Assistants who are Associate Members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) must abide by the RTPI Code of Professional Conduct and ethical standards. They must also abide by an Employer Code of Conduct. Town Planning Assistants also need to interact with specialists in a range of occupations, including Architects, Surveyors, Building Control, Housing Officers, Urban Designers, Ecologists, Historic Environment Officers, Transport Planners and Landscape Architects. The role is varied; office-based with meetings and on-site visits, which Town Planning Assistants need to be willing and able to travel for.

Employees in this occupation are responsible for their own work, including interpreting written policy documents and case law, and making recommendations to Chartered Town Planners. They work under the supervision of Chartered Town Planners for more complex analysis and assessment work, including writing reports and processing their caseload of major planning applications. They are expected to manage their workload to set deadlines and work in accordance with health and safety and environmental considerations.

Typical Job Titles

Assistant Town Planner, Enforcement Assistant, Planning Assistant, Planning Support Officer, Planning Technician, Technical Support Officer, Town Planning Assistant, Town Planning Technician.

Professional Recognition

This standard aligns with the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). Upon successful completion of the apprenticeship standard and following a period of relevant experience, an application for associate membership of the RTPI can be made.

Assessment Methods

The end-point assessment (EPA) for this standard consists of three assessment methods/ components:

- Knowledge Test
- Professional Discussion underpinned by a portfolio
- Project

Assessment Order

The assessment methods can be delivered in any order.

EPA Window

The EPA period starts when VQA confirms the gateway requirements have been met and is typically six months.

Gateway Considerations

Before the apprentice can start their EPA, the training provider is required to upload the following:

- Photo ID
- Portfolio of evidence
- Project report subject, title and scope

At gateway, the training provider is also requested sign a declaration to confirm that the English and maths requirements have been met in line with the funding rules.

Knowledge Test

Assessment Overview

The knowledge test is computer-based and consists of **20 multiple-choice questions**. Each question has four possible answers, one of which is correct. One mark is awarded for each correct answer.

15 of the questions will be multiple-choice knowledge questions. These will ask apprentices to recognise and recall facts and concepts across the knowledge criteria detailed within the standard. **5** of the questions will be used to assess the apprentice's understanding through multiple-choice scenario-based questions. These questions will present a scenario that the apprentice could experience within the workplace and ask them to answer in the context of that scenario and their occupation.

The apprentice must have **60 minutes** to complete the test. The test is closed book, so the apprentice cannot refer to reference books or materials.

This is a formal assessment, therefore it must take place in a controlled environment, free from any distractions.

Grading

This assessment is graded according to the table below.

Marks	Grade
0-15	Fail
16-20	Pass

Knowledge Test – KSBs

K1: Legislation and Policy: The features of current town planning regulations, policy, and guidance. Appreciation of the implications of case law for planning applications and statutory plan making.
K4: Environmental procedures and sustainability: The features of environmental and ecological designations and processes relevant to the planning system. Where to find information identifying potential flood risk for developments and matters such as energy and climate change

K5: Conservation and design: The features of the natural and historic environment that can be affected by developments and how they can and should be protected by the planning system. The features of technical constraints related to design.
K6: Conditions, appeals and enforcement: The features of monitoring compliance of authorised and unauthorised developments and support the processing of planning appeals.
K9: Health and Safety: Responsibilities under health and safety legislation on safe working practices.

Portfolio of Evidence

Apprentices must compile a portfolio containing evidence to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) that the professional discussion will assess. The portfolio will typically contain **15 pieces of evidence**.

Evidence should be mapped against the KSBs assessed by the professional discussion and may be used to demonstrate more than one KSB. The apprentice must provide evidence for all the KSBs. Incomplete portfolios will be rejected at the gateway stage.

Evidence sources may include:

- workplace documentation (for example, reports or meeting notes)
- witness statements (from a line manager or client, for example, confirming the work undertaken)
- annotated photographs of the work
- video clips (of a maximum total duration of 10 minutes).

The apprentice should always be in view and identifiable. Any employer contributions to the portfolio of evidence should focus on direct observation of performance (a witness statement, for example) rather than opinions.

This is not a definitive list; other evidence sources are possible. However, the evidence provided must be valid and attributable to the apprentice.

The portfolio of evidence should not include reflective accounts or any methods of self-assessment.

As the portfolio is to underpin the professional discussion, it is not directly assessed or marked. It will only be reviewed to prepare questions for the professional

Professional Discussion

Overview

The professional discussion involves the End-Point Assessor and the apprentice actively listening and participating in a formal conversation. The questions must be appropriately structured to allow the apprentice to make detailed and proactive contributions to confirm their competency across the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) mapped to this method.

The End-Point Assessor will conduct and assess the professional discussion, which must last for **60 minutes**. The End-Point Assessor has the discretion to increase the time of the professional discussion by up to 10% to allow the apprentice to complete their last point.

The training provider must submit the apprentice's portfolio of evidence at gateway. The End-Point Assessor will then have a minimum of **three weeks** to review the portfolio of evidence prior to the professional discussion to prepare questions based on the KSBs identified for this method. The End-Point Assessor will ask a minimum of **eight open questions**: two for each grading theme. Follow-up questions are allowed to probe replies further. The apprentice should be encouraged to refer to their portfolio of evidence during the professional discussion to support their responses.

VQA must make arrangements for the professional discussion with the apprentice's employer. Apprentices must be given a minimum of **three working weeks**' notice of the venue, date, and time of the professional discussion.

The professional discussion must take place in a suitable venue, for example, the employer's premises, in a controlled environment, free from any distractions.

The professional discussion can be conducted by video conferencing using Microsoft Teams.

Grading

The End-Point Assessor will make all grading decisions.

This assessment is graded fail, pass or distinction according to the grading criteria.

To achieve a pass in this assessment, the apprentice must meet all the pass criteria. To be awarded a distinction, they must meet all the pass criteria and all the distinction criteria.

If the apprentice does not meet all the pass criteria, this assessment will be graded as a fail.

Professional Discussion – KSBs and Grading Criteria

Communication and Engagement	
Pass	Explains how they effectively engage different stakeholders, internally and externally, using appropriate techniques (K7, S5, S9, S10)
Dist	Justifies approaches and techniques they use to communicate effectively with, overcome barriers and engage different stakeholders whilst maintaining positive relationships (K7, S5, S9, S10)
K7 Stakeholder engagement: The wider decision-making and political context in which planners work. Including the types and sizes of organisations working in planning, statutory authorities, and other consultees, including the local community	
S5 Communication: Communicate effectively with members of the public, clients, and other stakeholders. Respond to queries in writing and verbally. Use community engagement techniques to encourage participation in the planning system	
S9 Presentation – internal: Discuss and present planning information, documentation, and findings to colleagues	
S10 Presentation – external: Prepare and deliver presentations to external audiences e.g. members of the public or other community or professional stakeholders	
Casework	
Pass	Explains how they effectively manage different casework projects to meet organisational requirements (K2, K10, S6)
	Explains how they assess the size and scale of the case in relation to planning policy and use this effectively in their case work (K2, K10, S6)
Dist	Justifies approaches to effectively manage casework projects exceeding organisational requirements and expectations (K2, K10, S6)
K2 Planning Process: Forms of development management and development plans that happen in planning and their supporting administrative processes. How to respond to requests for technical information about proposals and planning issues	
K10 Size and scale: How to assess the size and scale of developments and structures in relation to planning policy and impact on adjacent developments	
S6 Casework: Process own casework of projects including checking planning documentation for completeness and taking action in response to missing documentation	

Administration	
Pass	Explains how they consult or create records or registers for their own and others work (S7, S11, B2)
	Explains how they ensure they use information and case management systems appropriately and respect confidentiality (S7, S11, B2)
Dist	Justifies approaches to maintain and create data and records and actions to mitigate for any issues identified through monitoring processes (S7, S11, B2)
S7 Data monitoring: Consult, create, and, where necessary, maintain records on relevant planning registers	
S11 Administration: Provide administrative support to line managers and peers. Keep an accurate record of meetings. Use appropriate case management systems	
B2 Reliability, integrity, and respect for confidentiality on work-related and personal matters, including appropriate use of social media and information systems. Follows their employers Code of Conduct	
Working Professionally	
Pass	Explains how they take care for their own health and safety and their Continuing Professional Development to meet the expectations of the organisation (B1, B3)
Dist	Justifies actions they take for their own health and safety and any actions they take to mitigate risks to their own health and safety at work (B1, B3)
	Explains how they exceed the Continuing Professional Development expectations of the organisation (B1, B3)
B1 Take care for their own health and safety	
B3 Commitment to their own Continuing Professional Development	
The following can be assessed through any question. The apprentice must:	
Pass	Explain how they work effectively as part of a team and on their own to achieve organisational expectations (B4)
Dist	Explain how their work as part of a team and on their own exceeds organisational expectations (B4)
B4 Work effectively both on their own and as part of a team	

Professional Discussion

Overview

The project should involve the apprentice completing a significant and defined piece of work that has a real business benefit, conducted in the form of a report (paper-based or electronic). It should be designed to ensure that the apprentice's work meets the needs of the business, is relevant to their role and allows the relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) to be assessed.

The project must be undertaken **after** the apprentice has gone through the gateway process. The apprentice will conduct their project and submit it after eight weeks from the date that the project title and scope have been signed off. The employer should ensure the apprentice has the time and resources, within this period, to plan and complete their project. Failure to submit a project on time will be treated as a cancellation and may incur a resit fee.

As the occupation of Town Planning Assistant can be based in the public or private sector, in any area of town planning, the project may, therefore, be based on any of the following:

- developing or assessing a specific site (e.g. an application or pre-application proposal)
- a planning policy area (e.g. gathering data and researching a strategic or development management policy or issue within a local or neighbourhood plan or similar statutory document)
- a planning issue (e.g. gathering data and assessing an improvement to a planning administration procedure or business process)

The apprentice should complete their project unaided, with only supervisory support from their employer. When the project report is submitted, the apprentice and their employer must verify that the submitted project report is the apprentice's own work, rather than the work of a team they were part of.

The project report has a word count of **4,000 words**. A tolerance of 10% above or below is allowed at the apprentice's discretion. The word count does not include any referencing pages or bibliography, the title or contents page, charts, diagrams or graphs, words within images, headings or subheadings, or appendices.

Any words over the maximum permitted word count (4,400 words) will not be assessed and will not contribute to the overall assessment grade.

If the minimum word count (3,600 words) is not met, the submission will be graded as a fail and sent back without marked feedback, only an explanation that the word

count was not met. This fail grade will carry the implications as outlined in Overall Grading and Resits and Retakes.

The project must map, in an appendix, how the relevant KSBs for this assessment method are evidenced.

As a minimum, the project must include:

- an introduction, including the scope of the project
- a project plan
- research and policy analysis
- data collection and analysis
- project outcomes
- mapping, graphical representations and photos to demonstrate the issue
- recommendations and conclusions.

Grading

The End-Point Assessor will make all grading decisions relating to the project. This assessment is graded as fail, pass or distinction according to the grading criteria. To achieve a pass in this assessment, the apprentice must meet all the pass criteria. To be awarded a distinction, they must meet all the pass criteria and all the distinction criteria. If the apprentice does not meet all the pass criteria, this assessment will be graded as a fail.

Project – KSBs and Grading Criteria

Data collection and analysis	
Pass	Identifies and presents relevant data on the site or issue that is the subject of their project (K3, S1)
	Analyses the data using appropriate techniques (K3, S1)
Dist	Presents a detailed analysis of data, presenting results using techniques to engage the audience and effectively convey key points (K3, S1)
K3 Data collection: Where to find current and historical data on single sites and wider areas for development	
S1 Data analysis: Research, collate and compare data relating to development proposals, applications, and other planning considerations	
Mapping, photography and graphics	
Pass	Create and include relevant site photographs, graphical representations, and maps to explain the issue, using appropriate mapping tools, interpreting them to reach valid conclusions and recommendations (K8, S3, S8)
Dist	Provides clear justification of the choice and impact of their photographs, maps, and graphical representations (K8, S3, S8)
K8 Mapping and graphics: Map preparation and analysis, including taking measurements from maps. Methods and techniques for creating and explaining graphical representations, including specialist graphic tools and mapping technologies as appropriate, and taking site photographs	
S3 Site analysis: Take and edit site photographs correctly, and take site visit notes accurately	
S8 Mapping: Create accurate drawings, maps, and digital illustrations. Interpret drawings and maps, and use appropriate mapping tools	
Policy analysis	
Pass	Applies appropriate legislation, local and national policy, and regulations to form valid conclusions and recommendations (S2)
Dist.	Conclusions and recommendations are clearly justified against the relevant policy and regulations and the wider context of the project (S2)
S2 Policy analysis: Apply legislation, local and national policy and regulations to projects and casework	

Report writing	
Pass	Applies appropriate report writing conventions to convey information that is clear and appropriate to the purpose and audience, including relevant information about planning constraints (K11, S4)
Dist.	N/A
K11 Report writing: How to select and present information about policy constraints, site research and baseline analysis	
S4 Report writing: Write reports and summaries and prepare initial documentation for planning proposals and policy representations	
Time and project management	
Pass	Produces a valid project plan which accurately identifies the scope of the project, key actions required and milestones and targets to work to (K12, B5)
Dist.	Produces a detailed project plan that takes account of potential risks, and applies the plan to monitor progress and adapts the project plan as required (K12, B5)
K12 Project Management: The requirements for projects, including timescales, deadlines, cost implications, and identifying milestones/targets	
B5 Demonstrate time management skills, prioritise workload, work under pressure and be able to meet critical deadlines	

Overall Grading

The overall grades available for this apprenticeship are fail, pass or distinction. Each assessment component is graded individually. Once an apprentice has completed all assessment components, the grades are combined as described in the table below to determine an apprentice's overall grade.

Knowledge Test	Professional Discussion	Project	Overall Grade
A fail in any assessment component will result in a fail overall			
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
	Distinction	Pass	Pass
	Pass	Distinction	Pass
	Distinction	Distinction	Distinction

Resits and Retakes

If an apprentice fails one or more assessment method(s), they are eligible for a resit or a retake. The apprentice's employer needs to agree that a resit or retake is appropriate.

A resit does not need further learning, whereas a retake does. An apprentice should have a supportive action plan to prepare for a resit or a retake.

Resits are typically taken within two months of the fail notification. The timescale for a retake is dependent on how much retraining is required, but they are typically taken within five months of the fail notification.

Failed assessment methods must be resat or retaken within a six-month period from the fail notification, otherwise the entire EPA will need to be resat or retaken in full.

Where any of the assessment methods have to be resat or retaken, the EPA grade will be capped at a pass, unless VQA determines there are exceptional circumstances.

Resits and retakes are not offered to an apprentice wishing to move from pass to a higher grade.

Appeals

VQA's Appeals Policy, including time frames, can be found here.

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