

CIPD

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work and working lives*



End Point Assessment (EPA)

The Professional Discussion Guidance

*Level 3 HR Support Apprenticeship
Standard*

Guide to the Professional Discussion

Level 3 HR Support Apprenticeship Standards

In this document you'll find information on

- the Professional Discussion:
- Hints and tips
- Example question and Answers (Appendix 1)
- A full list of the Professional Discussion Components for Level 3 HR Support (Appendix 2)

What is a Professional Discussion?

The professional discussion is a two-way discussion between you and an independent assessor, which will take place after the Consultative Project has been reviewed and marked. The Professional Discussion allows you the opportunity to make detailed and proactive contributions to confirm your competency across the necessary skills and behaviours as per the Level 3 HR Support Apprenticeship Standards.

The Professional Discussion is carried out via video conference and lasts up to 60 minutes. If there are any technical difficulties your independent assessor will call you and, if necessary, will conduct the Professional Discussion over the phone or via an alternate virtual platform such as MS Teams.

If you requested a maximum of three components to be assessed in the professional discussion instead of the consultative project, your assessor will add these questions to the end of the Professional Discussion and add up to 15 minutes extra time.

Preparing for the Professional Discussion

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

Hints and tips for completing a successful Professional Discussion

- Practice talking fluently for five to six minutes and provide qualitative detail on specific knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Practice displaying the skills and behaviour, show proof of their existence – for example: demonstrate active listening skills and show the independent assessor your undivided attention by using gestures and body language to show you're engaged.
- Show breadth of understanding, build or elaborate on evidence and try to generate as much additional evidence as possible to validate competence.
- Have the components from the level 3 HR Support apprenticeship standards with you for reference.
- In preparation of the discussion prepare examples by using the skills and behaviour components

- You can take notes in with you but do not read your notes as a script use your active listening skills and structure, you're response to the question that has been asked
- The components are on skills and behaviours, make sure your examples describe what you do and the way you conduct yourself.

The Professional Discussion Assessment Environment

Before the day of the assessment make sure the software and hardware meet the virtual classroom's requirements you can do this by completing:

- Browser check
- Connectivity check
- Sound check
- Camera check
- Microphone check
- Connection speed check.

Make sure a suitable room has been booked and the assessment will be uninterrupted.

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

The Professional Discussion Assessment Activity

The Professional Discussion is a formal assessment, so allow enough time before the assessment to prepare the technology and set up.

- It will start with an introduction from the assessor who will, in turn, invite you to introduce yourself, describe your role and your organisation.
- The assessor will cover confidentiality issues, ask for photographic ID and ask you to verify the apprenticeship standard you're being assessed against.
- The assessor will outline when the 60 minutes will start and how it will be spent.
- The assessor will ask whether you have any questions before they start.
- The Professional Discussion is a two-way conversation between the assessor and yourself. If you're unsure of any question asked, you can always ask the Assessor to repeat or rephrase the question for you.
- Don't assume that your Assessor knows what you do and how you do it, the Assessor will only grade you on what you tell them. This is your opportunity to showcase your skills and behaviours by providing them with examples and evidence.
- The discussion will be semi-structured and consist of 13 clearly defined questions.

Completing the Professional Discussion.

The independent assessor will manage the time and tell you when the assessment is over. They will not be able to give you any detail about your grades but can explain the next steps. The assessor will make the judgement on the grade for this assessment when they complete their report.

The assessor's decision is subject to moderation procedures by the CIPD, which may take 2 – 3 weeks to complete. The decision cannot be confirmed until this process is complete when you'll be notified by email of your overall grade.

Appendix 1

Example Question 1 - Component S3.1 Skills: Communication & Interpersonal

Deals effectively with customers/colleagues, using sound interpersonal skills and communicating well through a range of media eg phone, face to face, email, internet. Adapts their style to their audience.

Question

Give an example of when you have delivered a piece of work which has required you to use a range of different communication methods.

The answer you give should include:

- Giving examples of how you communicate with different customers internal and external in your organisation. (**Deals effectively with customers/colleagues**)

if I'm responding to senior management I tend to use email communication and approach a more formal style whereas if I was sharing information to a wider group of staff I would use the internal messaging service making the comms fun and light-hearted.....

- Describing what communication methods, you use and why. (**Using sound interpersonal skills and communicating well through a range of media eg phone, face to face, email, internet**)

I prefer to use either face to face or phone communication as it delivers a more personal approach helping to build relationships especially at a time where due to lockdown and isolation we need to keep better contact on a more personal note to bring the teams together rather than just a formal email which is less personal and distant.....

- Describing how and why you adapt your style to your customers how does this help you in your role. (**Adapts their style to their audience**)

We often use SMS messaging and alerts via WhatsApp groups but some of our staff prefer a phone call or email so I've made a point to learn and understand the teams needs and adapt to their preferred method of working which again helps to build trust and shows support.....

Example Question 2 - Component B2.1 Behaviours: Flexibility

Adapts positively to changing work priorities and patterns when new tasks need to be done or requirements change.

Question

Give me an example of when you have had to adapt to changing work priorities.

The answer you give should:

- Describe a situation of how and why you had to adapt your work priorities.

Working in the HR team my focus was on general recruitment but when the global pandemic hit the focus had to change to wellbeing and support and absence management and so I had to understand more about mental health and adapt my work priorities to include regular check-in with the teams.....

- How did this make you feel what behaviours did you display?

It was daunting at first having to change my home to an office environment, learning to separate personal from work building boundaries with family at home also adapting to new technologies and being a positive support for my colleagues.....

Appendix 2

Level 3 HR Support Professional Discussion Components

These are the components you'll be assessed against in the Professional Discussion. You must show evidence and examples that meet each component to be able to pass.

	Component Title	Code	Description	Assessment Method
S3	Communication and Interpersonal	S3.1	Deals effectively with customers/colleagues, using sound interpersonal skills and communicating well through a range of media eg phone, face to face, email, internet. Adapts their style to their audience.	Professional Discussion
		S3.2	Builds trust and sound relationships with customers.	Professional Discussion
		S3.3	Handles conflict and sensitive HR situations professionally and confidentially.	Professional Discussion
S4	Teamwork	S4.1	Consistently supports colleagues /collaborates within the team and HR to achieve results.	Professional Discussion
		S4.2	Builds/maintains strong working relationships with others in the team and across HR where necessary.	Professional Discussion
S7	Personal Development	S7.1	Keeps up to date with business changes and HR legal/policy/process changes relevant to their role.	Professional Discussion
		S7.2	Seeks feedback and acts on it to improve their performance and overall capability.	Professional Discussion
B1	Honesty and Integrity	B1.1	Truthful, sincere and trustworthy in their actions. Shows integrity by doing the right thing.	Professional Discussion
		B1.2	Maintains appropriate confidentiality at all times.	Professional Discussion
		B1.3	Has the courage to challenge when appropriate.	Professional Discussion
B2	Flexibility	B2.1	Adapts positively to changing work priorities and patterns when new tasks need to be done or requirements change.	Professional Discussion
B3	Resilience	B3.1	Displays energy and enthusiasm in the way they go about their role.	Professional Discussion
		B3.2	Deals positively with setbacks when they occur. Stays positive under pressure.	Professional Discussion