

ADVANCED FOOD & DRINK TECHNICAL OPERATOR

STO196/AP06



END POINT ASSESSMENT FEES GUIDE

September 2021



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1. Introduction

This document contains the policy and procedures relating to the costs, fees and circumstances that apply for the provision and fee setting for a Level 3 Advanced Food & Drink Technical Operator Apprenticeship Standard (STO196/AP06). This is a revised Standard replacing the previous AP05 F&D Process Operator version on the 30th August 2021.

Background

EPA is a method of testing the apprentice's knowledge, skills and behaviors in a consistent way in order to assure quality in the apprenticeship system. It replaces the previous model of continuous assessment used widely in National Vocational Qualifications circa 2011 - 2018. The standard based apprenticeship comprises a period of work and training lasting at least 12 months followed by a up to three discrete and independently delivered end point assessments (exams).

FDQ is the only specialist Food and Drink end point assessment organisation in the UK dedicated to food related examinations and for the past 20 years we have served the food industry as a non-for-profit body with qualification and apprenticeship services approved by the Government and regulated by Ofqual.

2. Gateway Services

Apprentices must meet the gateway requirements and provide evidence of doing so to FDQ before plans and dates for their EPA can be formally commenced. At gateway, the employer and training provider (if applicable) must be satisfied the apprentice is consistently working at, or above, the level set out in the occupational standard and will complete an FDQ **Gateway Declaration Form** confirming readiness for EPA and be able to provide authenticated evidence (copies of certificates) to confirm achievement of;

- **English and mathematics at Level 2**
- **a portfolio of evidence to underpin the interview**
 - *the evidence uploaded to FDQ supports the observation with questions and includes other sources of evidence such as workplace specific policies, requirements or standard operating practices and instructions*

On receipt, FDQ will check and confirm the required gateway evidence has been provided and accepted as meeting the gateway requirements.

Once this has been confirmed, the EPA 3-month period will commence with the apprentice moving into the Gateway.

FDQ will often commence talks with the employer and training provider prior to the gateway stage, however this is formalized following receipt of the entry to gateway evidence of completion.

At these meetings FDQ will go through the EPA requirements including venue details, dates and final fees with this information inserted to a Contract of Services that will underpin the agreement between all parties.

The EPA will be completed within a minimum 12-week assessment window. The whole assessment process is pre-arranged with one of FDQs Service Managers with the EPA conducted by an independent examiner (IE) who submits their initial results & grade to a moderation process at FDQ where upon an outcome is confirmed.

The employer and provider will receive a Statement of Result usually within 21 working days that must be agreed by all parties and upon confirmation FDQ will request the final completion certificate from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

3. Exam Services for this standard

FDQ will provide the end-to-end service package for candidates on the Level 3 Advanced Food & Drink Technical Operator apprenticeship with the apprentice undertaking three discrete exam-based components within a 12-week period

- i Multiple-choice test
- ii On Site Observation with questions
- iii Interview underpinned by a portfolio of evidence

Our service includes a dedicated EPA Manager providing a one-to-one preparation service including a pre-site visit with the employer and apprentice to ensure all questions can be answered prior to commencing the gateway. Once settled in and the EPA is scheduled FDQ will arrange for trained and experienced Food Examiner to conduct the EPA at a convenient time including night and weekends if necessary.

4. Fee Information

FDQ requires the agreed fee to be paid and collected at the earliest opportunity. This means, except in cases where the cost is not known, all fees will be collected within 30 days of the invoice. If payment is not made or evidence of a third-party commitment to pay is not produced the EPA cannot take place.

FDQ will generate the invoice for the EPA once contracts have been issued **usually 7 days** prior to the appointed EPA date.

Information on fees as contained in this document will be made available to employers to enable them to negotiate and agree the fee with payment to be routed via their preferred RoAPT approved training provider.

Payment and Fee Collection

Fees can be paid by any of the following methods:

Choose one of methods below	
1	For FDQ centers the usual BACs based payment system applies
2	For non-FDQ centers providers can set up a payment facility via our online registration system (FDQ awards) and this enables information/payments to be uploaded to gateway via a secured portal.

5. The end point assessments explained

The apprentices will undertake **three discrete** end point assessments

Assessment One - Knowledge Test

The Knowledge Test consists of multiple-choice questions that assesses the apprentices underpinning knowledge and understanding. The KT is independently invigilated with a 60-minute time limit in a closed book environment. The KT will test understanding across a range of areas such as :

• monitoring and assessing risks	• asset care	• data analysis and food operations
• continuous improvement	• incident management	• internal and external audits
• high quality systems	• environmental management systems	• health and safety systems
• food science and technology	• Planning and stock control.	•

The questions will be presented in two sections, a core multiple choice question (MCQ) format (**40** questions 1 mark each. The KT grading boundary is fail or pass with apprentices scoring 30 or above to pass

Acceptable achievement – Pass
>30 marks out of 40

Assessment Two - On-site Observation with Questions

An observation with questions requires FDQs independent examiner to observe and question an apprentice undertaking work as part of their normal duties, in the workplace. This allows for a practical demonstration of the Knowledge Skills and Behaviors (KSBs) through naturally occurring evidence. The apprentice will answer questions in relation to KSBs that have not been observed

The observation with questions will take 2 hours (assessment time) allowing for comfort breaks as necessary and/or moving from one location to another as required.

The observation & questioning will cover the following aspects of the standard:

Principles of monitoring and assessing risks, including Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP)	Principles of data analysis and food operations	Principles of high quality systems
Principles of health and safety systems	Compliance with Health and Safety regs, e.g., Isolation & Lock off, guarding, PPE, Manual Handling	Contribute to risk assessment
Analyse and report data & Effective communication:	Interpret and implement SOPs & Technical Compliance procedures	Carry out routine and specialist maintenance of equipment
Carry out testing for quality control	Safe working: & Ownership of work:	Pride in work: Integrity and respect:

The observation will be marked and scored using robust methods of assessment. The observation will result in a fail, pass, merit or distinction grade. FDQ will provide a range of sample materials, mock examples and specifications for employers and providers that will assist preparations for the apprentices.

Assessment Three - Interview underpinned by a portfolio of evidence

The formal interview consists of an independent examiner asking the apprentice a series of questions to assess their competence against the KSBs. The examiner leads this process to obtain information from the apprentice to enable a structured assessment decision-making process. This assessment method allows the apprentice

to showcase their KSBs on tasks that may not occur on a predictable or regular basis. In addition, apprentices can offer a range of potential answers that cannot be tested through the multiple-choice test.

Usually conducted onsite, this EPA can equally be conducted remotely, and the both the examiner and apprentice can refer to the portfolio of evidence to support the q&a process. The interview must last for 60 minutes comprising a minimum of 8 open questions – one for each theme. The purpose of the questions will be to cover the following themes:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • food and drink technical operator’s role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • first line mechanical engineering maintenance and asset care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fault-finding and taking action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuous improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • internal and external audits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing standard operating procedures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • team working and development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Questions are open and competence based with additional follow ups to seek clarification and to make judgements against the grading descriptors. Apprentices shall have access to their portfolio of evidence during the interview. Apprentices can refer to, and illustrate their answers, with evidence from their portfolio of evidence, however the portfolio of evidence is not directly assessed.

This assessment will result in a fail, pass, distinction grade.

Overall Grading

The above three EPAs methods will determine the overall apprenticeship Standard grade of fail, pass, merit or distinction.

6. Fee setting principles

The Government sets the funding rate for all apprenticeships and the FDTO was assigned £16,000 valuation in Aug 21. A maximum of 20% of this rate is ring fenced to cover the costs of the EPA, therefore up to £3,200 is the maximum available for this standard (AP06).

FDQ rarely needs to charge the full rate and as a charity-based Organisation serving the food industry our starting point is usually 15% of the funding rate equal £2,400. That said we treat each commission on the individual circumstances of the apprentice and that is our priority.

The final fee for an the Advanced FDTO apprenticeship standard end-point assessment may vary as FDQ in discussion with the employer / provider will consider the following dependent factors:

- **Dual EPAs** – Instances where at least two apprentices from the same employer/workplace are assessed in the same location on a single day

- **Multiple EPAs** – Where several apprentices from the same company are going to be using FDQ for their EPA services over a period of time.
- **Geographical** – Where apprentices may be in areas requiring extended travel and, in some cases, overnight accommodation for examiners.
- **Late/Early Shift** – FDQ appreciates the food industry is often a 24/7 working environment so there may be times when FDQ conforms to the preferred overnight/weekend shift patterns that suit the apprentice

In summary, the guiding principle for FDQ to be transparent about the fee setting calculation and where savings are applicable to share these with the employer/provider.

Example Single apprentice fee

Single apprentice takes their EPA in an external assessment facility		Rate
Single applicant	Price is fixed on the following assumptions	£2,400 Single Rate
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The employer will offer the facility on a free of charge basis for EPAs to be carried out. 2. The provider will ensure the necessary ‘controlled’ environment is sufficiently isolated for the EPAs 	
Setting	FDQ will accommodate early starting times and weekends as required but certain surcharges may apply.	
Additional Discounts 1	FDQ will apply a 10% reduced rate for occasions where at least two apprentices undertake their EPA on the same day(s) in the same place. For eg 2 x apprentices undertake a 10% discount = £240 each. In this instance the fee would be lowered to £2,160 for each of the two candidates	

Other scenarios may occur and fees will need to be set on a case by case basis with discrete discounts applying for different types/volumes as considered at the discretion of the CEO.

7. Guidance for re-sits/re-takes

Where an apprentice may fail one or more assessment method(s) FDQ will ensure they receive a result notification with constructive feedback on the areas of weakness, this will help them and their provider to focus and refresh for the next time.

Working with the provider and employer, FDQ will offer the opportunity to take a re-sit or a re-take as applicable. A re-sit does not require further learning, whereas a re-take does and apprentices should have a supportive action plan to prepare for a re-sit or a re-take.

FDQ will be pleased to provide optional timescales for a re-sit or re-take as applicable, for example a re-sit is typically taken within 2 months of the EPA outcome notification. The timescale for a re-take is dependent on how much re-training is required and is typically taken within 4 months of the EPA outcome notification.

The Government rules expect a re-sit or re-take to be completed within a 6-month period from the EPA outcome notification, otherwise the entire EPA will need to be re-sat or re-taken. The rules for re-sits and re-takes also dictate that apprentices cannot improve their grade from pass to a higher grade.

Fees for re-sits-re-takes

EPA to be undertaken	Proportion of original fee
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge test	25%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• On Site Observation	50%
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interview underpinned by a portfolio of evidence	25%

*FDQ will apply discretion as required for re-sits /re-takes

9 Refund of fees

If FDQ cancels an EPA then any fees paid will be automatically refunded to the applicant Organisation.

If the apprentice withdraws from their EPA without providing 24 hours' notice to FDQ the fee remains payable as detailed in the ***EPA Fee Terms and Conditions (Appendix A)*** and any fees paid will not be refunded. This always applies and, in all situations, including changes of circumstance and cases of hardship.

If the learner is not able to undertake their EPA on account of ill health then, on the production of medical evidence (e.g. a doctor's note), then a postponement may apply and the EPA could be rescheduled. On occasions where severe weather causes a postponement then some discretion will apply, however FDQ will always endeavor to factor in weather conditions in advance.

The FDQ Chief Executive must approve any refunds/credit notes before issue.

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