

The changing face of apprenticeships assessment: assessing resilience.

The focus of summative assessment for apprenticeships in England is end-point assessment of knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) identified in apprenticeship Standards and the accompanying EPA plans. The development of Standards has continued under the direction of the soon-to-be-disbanded Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (more familiarly known as IfATE). Over the years the practicalities of assessing against the needs of employers has reshaped both Standards and EPA plans.

Some of the developments have concerned simplifying and clarifying aspects of assessment: for example, the move to aggregating KSBs within Duties relevant to a specific area of expertise, such as being able to prepare information in the form of “reports for stakeholders within agreed deadlines” accounting for a variety of KSBs. Also of note is the change of tone around assessment of behaviours: resilience, honesty and integrity and values, which were always challenging to assess accurately with impartiality, now lean harder into concepts such as adaptability, and acting professionally and ethically. Both adaptability and ethics appear to capture any previous consideration of alignment with an organisation’s own company values.

For resilience, this change is a matter of interest for assessors as the resilience of individuals, organisations and sectors becomes a matter of increasing focus within economic and commercial environments. The pressure applied onto individuals and organisations to achieve demanding performance targets can be intense. Establishing evidence of adaptability and flexibility to achieve a goal or objective is often quite clear. This might be as simple as evidence that an apprentice is asking for help to prioritise and complete tasks. But resilience is not simply about the ability to adapt or even to be flexible in the approach to a stressful working context.

At a personal and individual level, resilience may be considered a mental health matter that is concerned with cognitive impairments caused both by stress and trauma, and is often associated with the declining ability to do a job to a required standard.¹ At a functional level within an organisation, it may be about the ability to manage issues of resourcing and

¹ A useful study of the views of clinicians about resilience can be found in Herrman et al. “What is Resilience?”, *The Review of Canadian Psychiatry*, vol. 56.5 (May 2011): <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/070674371105600504> and, for a study of business resilience see Niemimaa et al. “Business Continuity of Business Models: evaluating the resilience of business models for contingencies”, *International Journal of Information Management*, vol 49 (December 2019): <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0268401218303517?via%3Dihub>, and for a broader reading of sustainability and resilience, in Kevin Grove’s *Resilience* (London: Routledge 2018).

personnel. At the organisational level it may be about business continuity and managing key infrastructure risks.

To conclude, asking independent end-point assessors to accurately determine the quality of resilience of an apprentice was probably too ambitious. Trailblazers designing Standards and Assessment Plans (or EPA plans) have been justifiably accused of overreaching the capabilities of members of the group who were not assessment subject matter experts. This is an area where CIEA members have been able to provide support and guidance. The direction taken, to assess evidence of adaptability to system-wide changes in organisations, reflects the increasingly dynamic nature of working life.²

² There are many excellent resources available that concern individual and organisational adaptability: for example, Aliev and Sigov's article "Creating a Learning Organisation as an Increase in the Adaptability of a Company's Human Capital to the Volatility of the External Environment" *European Research Studies Journal*, vol 20.4B (2017): https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/33044/1/Creating_a_Learning_Organization_as_an_Increase_in_the_Adaptability_2017.pdf, and Oganisjana et al. "Factors that Impact Adaptability of Companies to Changing Circumstances with Minimal Destructive Effect during Crises", *Journal of Systemics, Cybernetics and Informatics* (2023): <https://www.iiisci.org/JOURNAL/PDV/sci/pdfs/SA170ZE23.pdf>