

Level 4 Retail Manager

EPA-Kit

Assessing the Professional Discussion

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The Professional Discussion - Guidance

The end-point assessment plan states that the professional discussion will be a structured discussion between the apprentice and the end-point assessor. The employer may be present to support, but not lead, the apprentice and to confirm information, at the assessor's request.

The employer will not be allowed to add any further information or examples to what the apprentice has stated or lead them in any way. Highfield would encourage the employer/training provider and the apprentice to plan for the professional discussion and consider what resources they may bring with them to support them during their professional discussion. This must be their own work and will only be used to support their discussion.

The professional discussion will need to take place in a suitable environment and should last for 1 hour. The discussion will be against the set criteria that are outlined in the following pages and will be appropriately structured to draw out the best of the apprentice's energy, enthusiasm, competence and excellence. It should take place after the retail business project has been completed, to establish the apprentice's understanding and application of the remaining knowledge, skills and behaviours.

The purpose of the professional discussion is to clarify any questions the end-point assessor has for specified standards:

- confirm and validate judgements about the quality of work
- explore aspects of the work, including how it was carried out, in more detail
- discuss how the apprentice would behave in specific scenarios, should they not have occurred within the practical observation
- ask questions in relation to personal development and reflection
- provide a basis for the end-point assessor to make a decision about the grade to be awarded

The end-point assessor conducting the professional discussion should normally be the same person who assessed the retail business project. The professional discussion will recognise areas which have already been covered in the retail business project so as not to re-assess an area in which the apprentice has already demonstrated competence.

Before the assessment:

Employers/training providers should:

- plan the professional discussion to allow the apprentice the opportunity to demonstrate each of the required standards
- ensure the apprentice knows the date, time and location of the assessment
- ensure the apprentice knows which retail manager criteria will be assessed (outlined on the following pages)
- encourage the apprentice to reflect on their experience and learning on-programme to understand what is required to meet the standard
- be prepared to provide clarification to the apprentice, and signpost them to relevant parts of their on-programme experience as preparation for this assessment

It is suggested that a mock assessment is carried out by the apprentice in advance of the end-point assessment with the training provider/employer giving feedback on any areas for improvement.

Apprentices will be marked against the pass and distinction criteria included in the tables on the following pages. Apprentices meeting all pass criteria will be awarded a pass, and if all of the distinction criteria are also met the result will be a distinction.

Professional Discussion – Mock Assessment

It is the employer/training provider's responsibility to prepare apprentices for their end-point assessment, and Highfield recommend that they experience a mock professional discussion in preparation for the real thing. The most appropriate form of mock assessment will depend on the apprentice's setting and the resources available at the time. In designing a mock assessment, the employer/training provider should consider the following elements in their planning:

- the participation of other personnel to play the parts of customers and team members
 - it is strongly recommended that the mock professional discussion has been practiced beforehand and all personnel involved are properly briefed on their roles
 - the roles should provide the opportunity for the apprentice to demonstrate both the "pass" level and the "distinction" level criteria
- a 1-hour time slot should be available for the complete professional discussion, if it is intended to be a complete mock assessment covering all relevant standards, however this time may be split up to allow for progressive learning
- consider an audio recording of the mock, and to allow the mock to be observed by other apprentices, especially if it is not practicable for the employer/training provider to carry out a separate mock assessment with each apprentice
- ensure that the apprentice's performance is assessed by a competent trainer/assessor, and that feedback is shared with the apprentice, to complete the learning experience. The mock assessment document sheets later in this guide may be used for this purpose
- structured 'open' questions should be used as part of the professional discussion which do not lead the candidate, but allows them to express their knowledge in a calm and comfortable manner, some examples of this may include the following:
 - Business
 - Does your company have a mission statement?
 - What does the mission statement mean to you?
 - Stock
 - How often is stock delivered to this store?
 - How does it arrive?
 - Customer
 - How could you ensure that each customer has a positive experience within this store?
 - Describe your typical customer

Professional Discussion Criteria

Throughout the 1-hour professional discussion, the assessor will review the apprentice's competence in all of the pass criteria outlined below as a minimum, therefore apprentices should prepare for the professional discussion by considering how the criteria can be met. The apprentice can only achieve a distinction by covering all of the distinction criteria, which is outlined in the distinction column

Professional Discussion

To pass, the following must be evidenced	To gain a distinction
<p>PD1 Clearly articulate examples from the workplace relevant to evidencing competence across the standard</p> <p>PD2 Explain why it is essential to instil the importance of following procedures to staff</p> <p>PD3 Provide examples of how staff are managed effectively, including motivation and development of teams and individual staff members</p> <p>PD4 Provide an overview of how the retail operation meets the needs of the business</p> <p>PD5 Provide reasoned examples of how the operation operates efficiently</p> <p>PD6 Explain the importance of keeping up to date with current industry trends and provide examples of how this has been achieved</p> <p>PD7 Provide evidence to show they have been part of the budgeting and cost control in the organisation</p> <p>PD8 Describe how the retail operation meets legislative and regulatory needs</p> <p>PD9 Provide an effective evaluation of own performance, including behaviours, identifying where opportunities for improvement have been taken and results thereof evaluated</p> <p>PD10 Demonstrate how feedback has been sought from managers and customers and how this has been effectively dealt with</p>	<p>PD11 Explains how effective retail management and contingency planning have been developed and implemented and how this has decreased vehicle down time and increased overall departmental performance</p> <p>PD12 Describe how recommendations for the improvement of quality, cost, value or efficiency have been made and implemented in the organisation</p> <p>PD13 Demonstrates staff engagement, motivation, performance management and how this has led to increased performance</p> <p>PD14 Demonstrate how a proactive approach to risk management has been implemented, including proactively educating and monitoring staff on health and safety and risk matters beyond the legislative minimum</p> <p>PD15 Provide examples of when improvement activities have been actively sought to develop own performance to raise standards in sales, promotions, team performance and customer service</p> <p>PD16 Provides mentorship to team members with measurable improvements to the performance of individuals and the team</p> <p>PD17 Proactively invite feedback from all stakeholders and use this to develop and implement measurable improvements in performance of self and team</p>