

MID-MORNING SESSION

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THE FUTURE OF EPA AND EPAOS

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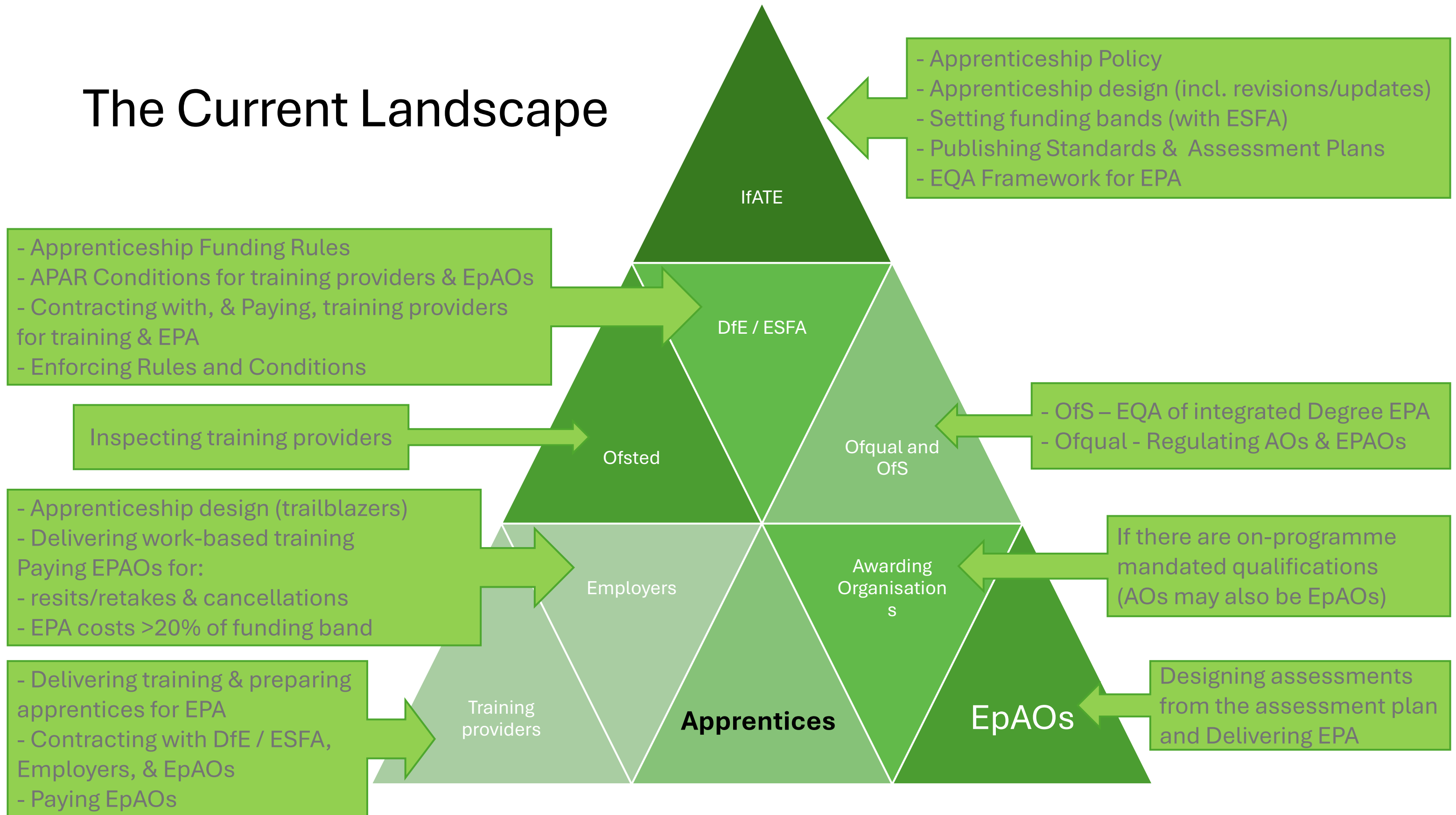
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The future of EPA and EpAOs

The Current Landscape



Quiz

Are EpAOs externally quality assured?

Yes	No
IfATE – EQA delivered by Ofqual and the OfS (integrated degree apprenticeships)	Ofqual – they are a regulator not an EQA provider

If an apprenticeship standard and/or assessment plan changes, can existing apprentices transfer to the new standard?

Yes	No
Apprenticeship Funding Rules 252.1: “Apprentices already engaged on the earlier version of a standard may transfer to the latest version of the same standard (that is where the ST number remains the same) at any stage within their apprenticeship subject to meeting the rules on end-point assessment” “Where an apprentice wishes to move to a new version of a standard, the provider must ensure that this is agreed by them, the apprentice and their Employer”	IfATE website, eg, for ODM and TLS: “This revised version has been agreed and is available for information only at present. It will replace version 1.2 for new starts from 19 September 2024 ”

Are resits eligible costs for public funding?

Yes	No
APAR Condition 15: eligible costs include those that are “associated with any further assessment required by the apprentice to achieve EPA (for instance retakes or resits)” ESFA guidance on resits: "An EPAO may offer one or more resits in the initial contract price"	Apprenticeship Funding Rules (97.2.12): "Resit costs for any non-mandatory qualification are ineligible“ ESFA guidance on resits: "Resits are ineligible costs and are not funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)"

Fact, Fiction, and Predictions (from me!)

Fact

- Skills England established (transfer of IfATE functions)
- ESFA functions moving to DfE (April 2025)
- Levy Reform - Growth and Skills Levy
- ESFA APAR Conditions under review
- IfATE EQA framework under review / revision
- New post-apprenticeship recognition scheme (PARS) – Chartered Institution for FE & Association of Apprentices

Fiction

We do not know:

- What IfATE functions will transfer to Skills England
- What the reformed levy will fund
- The timescales for implementation
- What will happen to the mandated qualifications in apprenticeships policy
- The EPA pilots have not been publicly confirmed by DfE / IfATE

Predictions (from me)

- EPA Pilots will go ahead, and EPA will be reformed
- EPAO APAR conditions will be removed
- Loss of EQA, with regulation taking precedence
- Bundling will be permitted & will default to regulator rules around packaging
- Earliest reform implementation dates – 2025 academic year

EPA reform - considerations

Independence

If employers and providers start end-point assessing, will it mean an end to independence?

If all parties must provide independent assessors, where will they all come from?

Coverage

who will decide which KSBs are assessed by which organisation?

Will all KSBs be directly assessed? If not, who decides which will be directly assessed, and how will occupational competence be assured?

Quality

Will splitting EPA across providers / employers / EpAOs risk greater levels of inconsistency? – **what does that mean for the learner?**

EpAOs would require Centre Agreements and CASSS strategies (those under Ofqual)

Are we risking even more layers of contracting, regulation, and quality assurance?

Consistency

Who would make the final grade decision, who would claim the certificate?

Who would resolve appeals / complaints if the assessment is split across multiple organisations?

What if the employer / provider / EpAO disagree on grading decisions?

Funding

If EPA is spread across multiple organisations, how will the price be determined?

How and where will the public purse be protected if the funding body has no contractual relationship with the EpAO?

Non-integrated degree EPA is regulated by Ofqual. This means that no matter who delivers EPA (EpAO, Provider, employer), it must all comply with the Ofqual Conditions

If EpAOs remain regulated by Ofqual, then it is the EpAOs that carry the can if things (EPA) go wrong at the provider or employer

Will reform make things less bureaucratic, more efficient, better for the learner, and save money, or will it simply re-distribute the existing challenges?

The Future – The Good The Bad and the Ugly

The Good

- Skills England, DfE, Ofqual, OfS, & Ofsted work together to develop, test, & issue joined up policy & approaches
- Employers, providers, & EpAOs share responsibilities effectively & all operate in a co-ordinated manner
- Assessment is consistent across all organisations, enhanced by external quality assurance
- The learner is independently assessed & occupationally competent upon completion
- Apprenticeships are a qualification of choice with excellent retention & achievement rates
- Apprenticeships are treated, & recognised, in parity with all other regulated qualifications

The Bad

- Skills England, DfE, Ofqual, OfS, & Ofsted respond only to those who shout the loudest
- Skills England, DfE, Ofqual, OfS, & Ofsted produce (joint) policy that has not been fully debated & tested from all perspectives, or in a transparent manner
- Employers, providers, & EpAOs do not operate in a co-ordinated or consistent manner
- Loss of independence of assessment
- EPA reforms do not address the challenges it was set to address
- EpAOs withdraw from the market, further reducing choice

The Ugly

- Ofqual withdraws from the regulation of EPA
- Apprenticeships are undermined and lose credibility
- Independence & occupational competency cannot be assured
- Levy reforms see employers shifting away from apprenticeships

