Accelerate People

# Qualification Specification

Accelerate People L4 EPA for Public Relations and Communications Assistant ST0311/V1.2

QAN 610/5005/2

Classification: Public

Accelerate People

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# Contents

# Qualification Objective

The level 4 Public Relations and Communications Assistant apprenticeship is one of a suite of apprenticeships that have been designed by industry employers to meet a range of job roles across different industries and sizes of business.

Accelerate People are an end-point assessment organisation (EPAO) for apprenticeship standards that are defined by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (IfATE). The apprenticeship standard and assessment plan can be found on the IfATE website.

As part of this apprenticeship, all apprentices are required to complete an independent end-point assessment (EPA). The purpose of the EPA is to independently assess that any apprentice on this standard is competent in a relevant job role and can evidence meeting all the assessment criteria relating to the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSB) outcomes.

# The Level 4 Public Relations and Communications Assistant Apprenticeship

## Role Profile

This occupation is found in organisations that come from the public, private and third sectors. Typically, public relations and communications assistants work in agencies or in-house for employers.

The broad purpose of the occupation is the building, protecting, and maintaining of positive reputation for brands, organisations, and individuals. The role also concerns the way those brands, organisations and individuals communicate about themselves, their products, or their services with a range of audiences, via different methods.

In their daily work, an employee in this occupation will communicate and build relationships with different people. This includes the media, stakeholders, the public, internal colleagues, and various audiences to get their client's or organisation's message across and influence opinions and behaviour in the most effective way.

An employee in this occupation will be responsible for researching and understanding their clients' or organisation's goals. They will then use their communication expertise to support the day-to-day delivery of effective campaigns to deliver specific objectives or organisational goals. Typically, this would include developing written and non-written content, contributing towards campaigns or new business proposals, and managing and sharing information with stakeholders. An individual will spend time researching various audiences and stakeholders. They will analyse and report on the impact of campaigns and programmes.

The occupation requires using one's own initiative while supporting those leading on campaigns and programmes and involves working closely with colleagues in a team environment.

As a core element of their role, public relations and communications assistants will be required to have a good knowledge of current affairs, the media, the public relations industry and how it informs their role. They will understand how their role supports the wider organisation structure. They will apply codes of practice, legislation, and regulation in respect of their organisation's areas of operation. This will apply not only to legal and ethical responsibilities but will include the central placement of inclusion and sustainability.

Public relations and communications assistants will use IT systems and software to support campaigns. This may extend to the production of non-written content such as film production, live streaming, image creation and infographic production.

Typically, employees will be mainly desk-based, although travel to meetings, events and training is routinely part of the role.

## Typical Job Titles:

Campaign assistant, communications assistant, internal communications assistant, junior account executive, junior press officer, junior publicist, public affairs assistant and public relations assistant.

## Duties:

This apprenticeship standard includes duties to support alignment between the job role and the apprenticeship standard. Listed below are the duties that all apprentices must demonstrate in their apprenticeship. These duties are not assessed or graded as part of the EPA.

**Duty 1:** Develop written and non-written content and schedule this content for publication/distribution according to the public relations and communications or campaign plan.

**Duty 2:** Contribute to the creation of campaigns or new business proposals planning and their implementation.

**Duty 3:** Research, analyse and monitor stakeholders to inform engagement strategies.

**Duty 4:** Monitor media to keep up to date with current affairs and build knowledge of the journalist and media landscape.

**Duty 5:** Research, analyse and evaluate campaigns against key performance indicators (KPIs) to prepare future campaigns.

**Duty 6:** Share content with relevant stakeholders and media, to inform and influence audiences to maintain positive relationships.

**Duty 7:** Undertake reputation assessment and formulate responses to support stakeholders with the planning and implementation of reputation management and/or crisis strategies.

**Duty 8:** Support the Public Relations and Communications' team with routine administrative, logistical, and time-sensitive tasks.

**Duty 9:** Support the planning and delivery of ad hoc engagement activities such as events.

**Duty 10:** Contribute to team development through sharing relevant knowledge and skills when required.

**Duty 11:** Organise and coordinate stakeholder meetings.

**Duty 12:** Contribute to the organisational objectives and key performance indicators to support communication activities which drive and improve performance and sustainability goals.

# Entry Requirements

## Qualifications

Apprentices aged 16-18 on their apprenticeship start date, without level 2 English and maths, will need to achieve this level prior to taking the EPA. For those with an education, health and care plan or a legacy statement, the apprenticeship's English and maths minimum requirement is Entry Level 3. A British Sign Language (BSL) qualification is an alternative to the English qualification for those whose primary language is BSL.

Apprentices aged 19+ on their apprenticeship start date, without level 2 English and maths, are exempt from achieving this prior to taking their EPA; this exemption is by prior agreement between the apprentice and employer.

### Experience

There are no pre-requisite knowledge, skills or understanding requirements defined for entry onto this qualification.

## EPA Requirements

To successfully complete the level 4 Public Relations and Communications Assistant apprenticeship, apprentices must achieve at least a pass in both EPA assessment methods. This EPA consists of two discrete assessment methods which have the following grades awarded.

Assessment Method 1 (AM1): Written project report with presentation and questioning.

- Fail.
- Pass.
- Distinction.

Assessment Method 2 (AM2): Professional discussion underpinned by a portfolio of evidence.

- Fail.
- Pass.
- Distinction.

Failed assessment methods must be re-sat or re-taken within a six-month period from the EPA outcome notification, otherwise the entire EPA will need to be re-sat or re-taken in full.

# EPA Gateway

For this apprenticeship all apprentices must spend a minimum of 12 months on programme, of which a minimum of 20% must be spent undertaking off-the-job training, before being eligible to undertake the EPA.

Before starting the EPA, an apprentice must meet the following gateway requirements:

- The apprentice's employer must confirm that they think their apprentice is working at or above the occupational standard. The apprentice will then enter the gateway. The employer may take advice from the apprentice's training provider(s), but the employer must make the decision.
- Apprentices must have achieved English and Maths qualifications in line with the apprenticeship funding rules.
- For the professional discussion underpinned by a portfolio of evidence (AM2), the apprentice must submit their portfolio of evidence.

Apprentices may request additional time if they require a reasonable adjustment. Information on how and when to apply is contained within the reasonable adjustments policy.

Once the apprentice is ready to enter gateway the following must be submitted to progress:

- Gateway form:
  - Confirming any dates the apprentice is unavailable during the EPA period.
  - Advising Accelerate People if the apprentice requires any reasonable adjustments to be made during the EPA.
  - Confirmation signatures that the apprentice is ready for the EPA.
  - For the written project report with presentation and questions, the apprentice must submit a project scoping document which contains the project plan, research requirements and time frames.
- Evidence of:
  - Maths and English qualifications at Level 2 or above (or acceptable equivalent as specified in the entry requirements section), **or**
  - Confirmation that the apprentice is exempt from achieving English and Maths qualifications.
- The apprentices completed electronic portfolio (for AM2).

The gateway form along with all documentation must be uploaded before the EPA can commence. Failure to upload any of the required documentation may delay the EPA start date.

# Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours

There are no mandatory vendor qualifications or knowledge modules for this apprenticeship. Apprentices are expected to be able to demonstrate competence against the assessment criteria specified within the assessment plan. The assessment criteria are based on the following KSBs, which apprentices are expected to be competent in before entering gateway.

## Knowledge

**K1:** Current affairs, the media, the public relations industry, and how they impact their role.

**K2:** How their role supports the wider organisation structure and works alongside other multi-disciplinary teams such as internal communications and marketing.

**K3:** The organisation structure and objectives and how these affect the work with stakeholders or clients.

**K4:** The structure of communication plans and how these feed into the overall communications strategy.

**K5:** The creation and management of materials which support communication programmes, campaigns, or new business proposals.

**K6:** The operational processes required to prioritise team and individual workloads to meet deadlines and objectives.

**K7:** Technology and software used in the delivery of programmes and campaigns.

**K8:** Production lead-times and deadlines for digital build, content creation, print, and media.

**K9:** Communication techniques and approaches to interact with stakeholders to meet their requirements.

**K10:** The importance of horizon scanning for future changes and developments in relation to the industry or sector.

**K11:** The principles of Qualitative and Quantitative research.

**K12:** Risk assessment methodologies and approaches to mitigate or manage reputational impact and implementation of crisis plans.

**K13:** The importance of evaluation in demonstrating the value and impact of public relations.

**K14:** Regulatory and legislative requirements relevant to their sector such as data protection and codes of practice.

**K15:** How to analyse and interpret complex technical information.

**K16:** The support requirements or development needs of their team.

**K17:** The tools used in their organisation to measure the impact of organisational objectives, the wider environment and sustainability on public relations and communications activities.

**K18:** Principles of conducting public relations and communications which are ethical and inclusive.

**K19:** The principles of non-written content.

**K20:** Approaches to distributing content using social media channels.

**K21:** Where to source information on career professional development.

# Skills

**S1:** Use IT systems and software to support campaigns.

**S2:** Build stakeholder relationships including developing contacts within the media and presenting to them in both formal and informal settings.

**S3:** Support campaigns by undertaking tasks such as desk research, event co-ordination, and database management to ensure compliance with agreed service or performance levels.

**S4:** Produce written content such as news releases, articles, social media content, bulletins, and blogs, that is accessible to meet the needs of different audiences and channels.

**S5:** Able to adapt communication styles as appropriate to the audience.

**S6:** Support the production of non-written content such as film production management, producing short user generated style content, live video streaming, social image creation, and infographic production.

**S7:** Distribute content using social media channels.

**S8:** Use qualitative and quantitative research to analyse and evaluate public relations and communications activities and present findings to project stakeholders.

**S9:** Analyse and interpret complex subjects through different communication channels and identify areas for improvement.

**S10:** Input to and review communications programmes and plans with a focus on environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles within their organisation's procedures.

**S11:** Undertake risk assessment and provide information to support stakeholder planning and strategy.

**S12:** Plan and deliver engagement activities for stakeholders, such as curating the content, supporting events, and collating feedback.

**S13:** Proofread and edit communications materials such as news releases, graphics and video, and social media content.

**S14:** Support team and colleague development through buddying or coaching.

**S15:** Contribute to activities which focus on improving sustainability within their organisation's procedures.

**S16:** Apply relevant legislation, regulations, codes of practice, and ethical guidance where appropriate to their work.

# Behaviours

**B1:** Acts professionally and with integrity to build trust.

**B2:** Works collaboratively and builds strong relationships with others across the organisation and external stakeholders.

**B3:** Has accountability and ownership of their tasks and workload.

**B4:** Seeks learning opportunities and continuous professional development.

**B5:** Takes responsibility, shows initiative, and is organised.

# Assessment

## AM1: Written Project Report with Presentation and Questioning

A written project report involves the apprentice completing a significant and defined piece of work that has a real business application and benefit. The written project report must meet the needs of the employer's business and be relevant to the apprentice's occupation and apprenticeship. The project is undertaken before the gateway and the written project report is completed after the gateway. This assessment method has two components:

- An outcome component - a written project report.
- A presentation with questions and answers.

Together, these components give the apprentice the opportunity to demonstrate the assessment criteria and KSBs mapped to this assessment method. They are assessed by an independent assessor.

The employer should ensure the apprentice has sufficient time and the necessary resources, within this period, to plan and undertake the work associated with thewritten project.

The apprentice must complete a written project report based on any of the following:

- A specific problem.
- A recurring issue.
- An idea or opportunity.

Examples of the types of written project report an apprentice could submit include:

- Develop and lead on the social media associated with a client's campaign. Make recommendations for potential improvements, for solutions to challenges, and for potential risk mitigation. Explain what stakeholders you consulted with, why you selected them and how you communicated with them. Analyse what went well and what did not, identifying potential areas for improvement.

- Plan and deliver an event. Describe the reasons for the event and explain what risks had to be managed. Explain what stakeholders you invited and why. Analyse what went well and what did not, identifying potential areas for improvement.

- Implement and develop public relations tactics and strategy to reposition a client in the public domain. Explain why this was required and how you agreed what was needed, who you consulted with and how you went about implementing the strategy. Review what risks had to be managed and what you learnt from the process. Identify potential areas for improvement. Analyse what went well and what did not, identifying potential areas for improvement.
- Evaluate an internal communications project. Explain the research undertaken and which stakeholders you liaised with, why you selected them and how you communicated with them. Make recommendations and reasons for change. Identify risks of implementing the change and how to mitigate. Analyse what went well and what did not, identifying potential areas for improvement.
- Produce a reputation risk assessment and explain how you have supported stakeholders with the planning and implementation of reputation management or crisis strategies. Analyse what went well and what did not, identifying potential areas for improvement.

The list above is not exhaustive.

## Component One: Written Project Report

The written project report must have a word count of 3,000 words. A tolerance of 10% above or below is allowed at the apprentice's discretion. Appendices, references and diagrams are not included in this total. The apprentice must produce and include a mapping in an appendix, showing how the report evidences the KSBs mapped to this assessment method.

To ensure the written project report is robust and sufficiently covers the KSBs, it must include:

- An introduction including an outline of the written project report aims.
- Approach taken including research and risks as applicable.
- Stakeholders involved and their roles.
- Communication plans which have fed into the communication strategy.
- Outcomes and impact of the written project report recommendations and conclusions.
- Appendix containing mapping of KSBs to the report.

The apprentice must complete and submit the written project report and any presentation materials to the EPAO by the end of week 12 of the EPA period.

## Component Two: Presentation with Questions

The presentation with questions will be structured to give the apprentice the opportunity to demonstrate the KSBs mapped to this assessment method to the highest available grade.

The apprentice must prepare and deliver a presentation to an independent assessor. After the presentation, the independent assessor will ask the apprentice questions about their project report and presentation.

The presentation will focus and expand upon the written project report and should cover the following:

- An overview of the project.
- The project scope (including key performance indicators).
- Summary of actions undertaken by the apprentice.
- Project outcomes and how these were achieved.

The apprentice must prepare and submit their presentation and supporting materials to the EPAO at the same time as the project report by the end of week 12 of the EPA period.

Key points:

- Presentation with questions will take place online via video conferencing.
- Apprentices will need access to the internet and a working webcam.
- The apprentice must have access to a quiet room and, unless reasonable adjustments have been requested for additional support, be alone in the room.
- Apprentices must have photographic identification (ID) to verify their identity, if they do not produce any ID then the presentation with questions will be cancelled.
- Apprentices are required to outline details of visual aids to be used and specify any equipment required for the presentation.
- The presentation with questions will last for 40 minutes, the presentation will last 15 minutes, and the questioning will last for 25 minutes. The independent assessor can increase the time of the presentation and questioning by up to 10%.
- A minimum of four questions will be asked based on both written project report and the presentation and will be formed based on the evidence and grading requirements in the table below.
- Apprentices are allowed access to their written project report and presentation throughout the questioning.

- Questions will only be based on the evidence submitted for this assessment method.
- Apprentices will have two weeks' notice of the presentation with questions date.

# AM2: Professional Discussion Underpinned by a Portfolio of Evidence

## Portfolio of Evidence

Training providers must work with the employer and apprentice to select the best evidence completed during the whole of the apprenticeship. All evidence should be real work tasks, and be clear, well documented and demonstrate competency against the assessment criteria listed in the assessment plan.

Typically, portfolios will contain 12 discreet high-quality tasks covering a range of different assessment criteria in each, although it is expected that there will be overlaps of assessment criteria in each task. Evidence sources may include:

- Workplace documentation and records, for example:
- Workplace policies and procedures.
- Witness statements.
- Annotated photographs or screenshots.
- Blog content and press releases.
- Case studies and reports.
- Project plans from projects they have completed during the apprenticeship (this should not include the project to be undertaken for end-point assessment).
- Video clips (maximum total duration 5 minutes); the apprentice must be in view and identifiable.
- This is not a definitive list; other evidence sources are possible.

Where apprentices have worked on confidential or secure tasks, they should write high level statements about these tasks but not upload any restricted information. Apprentices should be prepared to discuss further details during the professional discussion.

Any employer contributions should focus on direct observation of performance (for example witness statements) rather than opinions. The evidence provided must be valid and attributable to the apprentice; the portfolio of evidence must contain a statement from the employer and apprentice confirming this.

The portfolio should **not** include reflective accounts or any methods of self-assessment. Any employer contributions should focus on direct observation of performance (for example witness statements) rather than opinions.

Portfolios should be in an electronic format which must be submitted to Accelerate People at gateway. Paper-based portfolios will **not** be accepted. If an apprentice uploads a video clip this must be a file that can be uploaded with their portfolio. A link to a video will **not** be accepted and will not be used as part of their evidence.

### Professional Discussion

The professional discussion will take place at least two weeks after the portfolio has been accepted at gateway.

- The professional discussion will take place online via video conferencing.
- Apprentices will need access to the internet and a working webcam for the entire duration.
- The apprentice must have access to a quiet room and, unless reasonable adjustments have been requested for additional support, be alone in the room.
- Apprentices must have photographic identification (ID) to verify their identity, if they do not produce any ID then the professional discussion will be cancelled.
- The professional discussion will last for 60 minutes with the independent assessor having the discretion to increase the time of the questioning by up to 10%.
- A minimum of six questions will be asked and will be formed based on the evidence and grading requirements in the table below.
- Apprentices are allowed access to their portfolio throughout the professional discussion.

# Assessment Criteria

## AM1: Written Project Report with Presentation and Questioning

| Themes and KSBs | Pass Criteria | Distinction Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| Communication and Campaigns K4, K5, K7, K8, K9, S1, S3, S4, S5, S9, B2 | Outlines the structure of communication plans and how they feed into the overall communications strategy. (K4)<br><br>Describes how the materials that support programmes, campaigns and proposals are created and managed and how they use technology and software to support the delivery of programmes and campaigns. (K5, K7, S1)<br><br>Explains the production lead times and deadlines they use to produce written content through a variety of different channels using terminology appropriate to the audience. (K8, S4)<br><br>Summarises the communication techniques and approaches used to interact with stakeholders and how they adapt these to work collaboratively to meet the needs of the audience building strong relationships with them. (K9, S5, B2)<br><br>Demonstrates how they analyse and interpret complex subjects through different communication channels in order to support campaigns and identify key areas for improvement to ensure compliance with agreed service or performance levels. (S3, S9) | Evaluates their analysis and interpretation of complex subjects and the impact of their recommendations for improvements to comply with performance levels. (S3, S9) |
| Media and Public Relations | Describes the importance of evaluation in demonstrating | Analyses and evaluates the impact of public relations on |

| Themes and KSBs | Pass Criteria | Distinction Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| K13, K18, S2 | the value and impact of public relations. (K13)<br><br>Explains how they conduct public relations and communications which are ethical and inclusive in order to build stakeholder relationships and develop contacts within the media in both informal and formal settings. (K18, S2) | producing communications which are ethical and inclusive and recommend how these are used to improve stakeholder relationships. (K13, K18, S2) |
| Research and Analysis<br>K11, K15, S8 | Describes the principles of qualitative and quantitative research and how they are used to analyse and interpret complex technical information when evaluating public relations and communications activities when presenting findings to stakeholders. (K11, K15, S8) | Justifies the research principles used to evaluate activities and identify recommendations to improve public relations and communications activities. (K11, K15, S8) |

# AM2: Professional Discussion Underpinned by a Portfolio of Evidence

| Themes and KSBs | Pass Criteria | Distinction Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| Communication and Campaigns<br>K19, K20, S6, S7, S10, S12, S13 | Describes the principles of non-written content used to support the production of communication materials. (K19, S6)<br><br>Explains how they proofread and edit communications materials such as news releases, graphics and video, and social media content. (S13)<br><br>Explains the approaches used to distribute content through | Evaluates the approaches they have used to distribute content through social media and identify any future changes to improve the use of them. (K20, S7) |

| Themes and KSBs | Pass Criteria | Distinction Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| | social media channels. (K20, S7)<br><br>Demonstrates how they input to and review communications programmes and plans which focus on environmental, social and governance principles within their organisation's procedures. (S10)<br><br>Describes how they plan and deliver engagement activities for stakeholders. (S12) | |
| Organisation, Structure, and Strategy<br>K2, K3, K10, K12, S11, S15 | Describes how their role supports the wider organisation structure and objectives, including the organisation's work with stakeholders, and how their role contributes to activities which focus on improving organisational sustainability procedures. (K2, K3, S15)<br><br>Explains the importance of horizon scanning to identify future changes in the sector. (K10)<br><br>Describes the risk assessment methodologies and approaches they use to manage reputational impact, implement crisis plans and how they provide this information to support stakeholder planning and strategy. (K12, S11) | Evaluates the approaches they have taken to managing risk and the recommendations they have made to support future stakeholder planning and strategy. (K12, S11) |
| Media and Public Relations<br>K1, B1 | Describes how they work with current affairs, the media, and the public relations industry to | N/A |

| Themes and KSBs | Pass Criteria | Distinction Criteria |
|---|---|---|
| | build trust and how these impacts on their role. (K1, B1) | |
| Team, Performance, and Objectives<br>K6, K16, K17, K21, S14, B3, B4, B5 | Describes the operational processes required to prioritise their workloads maintaining ownership and accountability, in order to meet deadlines and objectives. (K6, B3)<br><br>Explains how they identify support or development requirements of their team and how they support colleague development through buddying or coaching. (K16, S14)<br><br>Explains the importance of being organised and taking responsibility for communication activities when using tools to measure the impact of organisational objectives, the wider environment and sustainability on public relations and communications activities. (K17, B5)<br><br>Explains how they identify and seek out opportunities for professional development. (K21, B4) | Evaluates what impacts have been made on public relations and communications activities and how they have presented their findings and recommendations. (K17) |
| Regulations and Legislation<br>K14, S16 | Explains the regulatory and legislative requirements which impact on their role and their practical application relevant to their work. (K14, S16) | N/A |

# Grading

Each assessment method is graded individually and combined to give an overall grade. Assessment criteria do not appear in more than one assessment method, therefore assessment criteria failed in one assessment method cannot then be demonstrated in the other assessment method. All EPA methods must be passed for the EPA to be passed overall.

Grades from individual assessment methods will be combined in the following way to determine the grade of the EPA as a whole:

| Written Project Report with Presentation and Questioning | Professional Discussion Underpinned by a Portfolio of Evidence | Overall Grading |
|---|---|---|
| Fail | Any grade | Fail |
| Any grade | Fail | Fail |
| Pass | Pass | Pass |
| Pass | Distinction | Pass |
| Distinction | Pass | Pass |
| Distinction | Distinction | Distinction |

## Re-sits and Re-takes

Apprentices who fail one or more assessment method will be offered the opportunity to take a re-sit or a re-take at the employer's discretion. The apprentice's employer will need to agree that either a re-sit or re-take is an appropriate course of action.

A re-sit does not require further learning, whereas a re-take does. Apprentices should have a supportive action plan to prepare for a re-sit or a re-take.

The employer and EPAO agree the timescale for a re-sit or re-take. A re-sit is typically taken within two 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 three months of the EPA outcome notification.

If the apprentice fails the project assessment method, they must amend the project output in line with the independent assessor's feedback. The apprentice will be given four weeks to rework and submit the amended report.

Failed assessment methods must be re-sat or re-taken within a six-month period from the EPA outcome notification, otherwise the entire EPA will need to be re-sat or re-taken in full.

Re-sits and re-takes are not offered to an apprentice wishing to move from pass to a distinction.

An apprentice will get a maximum EPA grade of pass for a re-sit or re-take, unless the EPAO determines there are exceptional circumstances.

# Specimen

All specimen materials can be accessed by registered training providers from the knowledge area on ACE360.

# Accelerate People

Accelerate People are an independent EPAO specialising in digital apprenticeship EPAs. If you have any questions or queries relating to this qualification specification or EPA, please contact us using the details below.

Registered training providers with Accelerate People can access further guidance material on the knowledge base on ACE360.

**Contact Details**

Email: info@accelerate-people.co.uk

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Accelerate People