

Getting the VIVA right

Railway Engineering Operative L2 End-Point assessment

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ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT SPECIFICATION

Introduction

The Viva is a structured and formal discussion between the apprentice and the independent assessor, drawing upon the Portfolio of Evidence and records of how the apprentice has performed during the Apprenticeship. It is designed to focus on all the components of the Apprenticeship Standard providing a synoptic view of the apprentice's competence. It covers the tasks the apprentice has completed in the workplace, the standard of their work and the behaviours they have demonstrated throughout.

The Viva enables the end-point assessor to assess the apprentice synoptically, covering a broad range of knowledge, skills and behaviours, for example:

- methods and techniques used to safely maintain assets relevant to their chosen pathway
- company quality processes and procedures and documentation
- understanding the practical and theoretical requirements of rail engineering components/systems
- being proactive in finding solutions to problems.
- demonstrate effective interpersonal skills (behaviours)
- complying with statutory, organisational and health and safety regulations while undertaking their occupation.

Key considerations

- The Viva will be 50-60 minutes long.
- The Viva must be conducted in an environment where the apprentice feels comfortable, is free from intrusion, intimidation or interference.
- The employer can also attend but the decision to allow the employer to attend should be based on whether this is likely to have a positive influence on the apprentice's comfort level.
- On completion of the Occupational Competence Validation Interview (Viva) the apprentice will be awarded a grade of Pass or Fail.

Use of the Portfolio of Evidence

Assessors should access the Portfolio of Evidence just prior to the Viva in order to be made aware of the contents. This means that the Portfolio of Evidence should remain with the employer until 24 hrs before the Viva. After the Viva, the Portfolio should be left with the assessor and will be returned to the apprentice after the assessment decision has been made.

The Portfolio of Evidence will include as a minimum, three different examples of competent performance evidence that must include:

- Products of the apprentice's work, such as items that have been produced or worked on, drawings, plans, production and/or quality records, reports, documents produced as part of a work activity, records or photographs of the completed activity

- Evidence of the way the apprentice carried out the activities to meet the requirements of the Standard, such as assessor observations, supervisor/mentor references/ witness testimonies or authenticated apprentice reports of the activities undertaken

Use of Performance Records

The assessor should have records of how the apprentice has performed during the apprenticeship made available to them to help shape the nature of the enquiry. These records should be forwarded 24 hrs in advance, along with the Portfolio of Evidence contents.

Assessor questioning in the Viva

The assessor is tasked with establishing the extent to which the apprentice is able to demonstrate with the aid of their work in the portfolio:

- Is their own
- Adequately addresses the quality of work expected in the standard
- Appropriately covers the content of the standards

With at least three substantial assessment artefacts in the portfolio capable of demonstrating the apprentice's knowledge, skills and understanding, assessors need to lead the Viva with questions looking to establish the extent to which the apprentice has sufficient:

- general and specialist knowledge
- general and specialist skills
- evidence and examples of exhibiting the appropriate behaviours

The rigour and robustness of the Viva assessment is achieved by targeting questions at key areas of the standards without the apprentice knowing what to expect. The apprentice will know that nothing will be asked that is not in the standard and that the level of questioning will be directed at larger workplace competences that they should be able to discuss using examples from their portfolio.

There will be six key discussion areas, with each able to be developed or checked to confirm level of understanding or performance. Each discussion area must result in satisfactory responses in order to achieve a pass for the Viva.

A satisfactory response is one that:

Reassures the assessor/s that the apprentice understands or is demonstrating the required level of knowledge, ability and/or performance.

A satisfactory response where application or knowledge, skills and performance of work-based tasks is involved will always involve how the apprentice took responsibility for their own work; completed relevant integrity and compliance checks and reinstated the work area after engineering activity. If this is not an immediate inclusion in the initial response it can be probed for but must feature at some point for the response to be satisfactory.

Where performance is being questioned a satisfactory response needs to also include how the correct utilisation and storage of tools, materials and equipment as carried out, and the lifting and moving of materials, components and equipment was done correctly. If this is not an immediate inclusion in the initial response it can be probed for but must feature at some point for the response to be satisfactory.

An unsatisfactory response or responses is/are one that:

Leaves the assessor uncertain whether the apprentice has understood, demonstrated or performed in a way that is commensurate with the expectations set out in the standard.

Or

Leaves the assessor certain that the apprentice has not understood, demonstrated or performed in a way that is commensurate with the expectations set out in the standard.

Discussion during the VIVA must look to ascertain the level of attainment in the following six areas:

1. Understanding and the ability to apply safe working practice and follow appropriate legislation and policies
2. Ability to perform engineering tasks (general and pathway specific)
3. Ability to plan, execute and make good work sites, tools and resources
4. Recognition of and ability to perform common and specialist maintenance and repair, maintenance, renewal and construction tasks
5. Understanding of the commercial pressures on this part of the rail sector
6. Ability to communicate effectively and in a timely fashion, and work as part of a team

These foci are open and able to be shared with the apprentice, employer and provider well in advance of any formal assessment intervention.

EXAMPLES OF VIVA DISCUSSION POINTS

Initial discussion point - Explain how you demonstrated safe and professional working practices and kept yourself and others safe by adhering to safe working practices.

Follow-up questions if not volunteered – Explain the statutory regulations and organisational safety requirements you were applying or conforming too as you did this work?

Discussion point – Explain the engineering activities in relation to maintenance, construction / installation and/or renewal of assets that you have carried out.

Follow-up: Ask about other activities if only one type is volunteered

What specific methods or techniques have you used for track inspection, maintenance and replacement work?

What do you consider a track defect or variation to be?

Discussion point – How would you identify common problems? How would you know when to escalate them?

Discussion point – Can you tell me what commercial principles are important in the rail sector and say why you think these are important?

Specialist pathway questions (track) examples

Discussion point – How would you restore plain line track geometry, rail switches and crossings? Have you restored conductor rail systems to operational condition?

Discussion point - Walk me through how you maintain the track and its environment including vegetation and drainage.

Discussion point – How do you prepare for a high standard of technical work?

Answer to include how they gather and interpret information including drawings, plans and schedules needed for rail engineering activities and prepare the work location.

Follow-up – When it comes to delivering a high standard of technical work what is always important?

Discussion point - Can you show me any examples of how you have communicated effectively?

Answer can include oral, written, electronic and IT based methods and systems for the accurate communication and reporting & recording of technical and other information, using correct terms, standards, templates and certifications.

Follow-up – On one method not seen or in a team working environment.

Who will assess the Viva?

The Viva will be assessed by the Independent Assessment Organisation and it may also include an employer's representative. In the situation where an employer representative also takes part in the interview (optional) it is the Independent Assessment Organisation who will have the final decision as to whether the apprentice has successfully completed the Viva or not.

The organisation must to be able to demonstrate that they are able to provide assessors who:

- are able to demonstrate independence from the Apprentice. This means that they have not had direct involvement with the apprentice as their mentor, coach, direct trainer or direct supervisor / line manager have successfully undertaken appropriate Assessor training
- hold a current and appropriate Assessor qualification
- have relevant rail knowledge and recent rail experience
- are able to demonstrate the processes they adhere to ensure consistency across assessments
- agree to provide management data regarding Apprenticeships and apprentices to the Employers Group or their nominated organisation on a regular basis as required in order to collate sector Apprentice intelligence
- are selected from the SFA's Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations

If the Apprentice does not successfully complete the Viva the apprentice, as well as the apprentice's line manager, mentor and if appropriate training provider, will be informed and provided with feedback within 5 working days. The apprentice will be advised about the shortfalls in evidence and how this can be addressed. Company processes will be reviewed to develop an understanding of why the apprentice was unsuccessful and if necessary, rectifying actions taken.

JOB SPECIFIC SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE VIVA QUESTIONS

The numbers in the columns relate to the skills and knowledge criteria on the first page of the standard, numbered from 1 and then down the list for ease of reference.

	Core Ref			
	L2	L3	L4	
Q1	1 2 5 9	1 2 9	1 2 11	<p>Using three examples taken from your portfolio explain the safe operation and operating principles of complex equipment you have used in you work. In each, detail where and how you used the equipment and why it was selected?</p> <p>Assessor Guidance: <i>This question can be applied to all six pathways within rail engineering and can be applied to all levels of apprentices. The equipment explained by the apprentice can be also be taken from renewals, Installation, maintenance or testing activities.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At L2 the apprentice may be assisting in the use of the equipment but is still expected to demonstrate their understanding of safety, principles and why the equipment was being used. • At L3 the apprentice should demonstrate they were using the equipment independently or at least if being assisted were the decision maker on the equipment's use. • At L4 it is expected that the apprentices was leading an activity and whilst may not have actually been operating the equipment they should demonstrate their understanding of the equipment and the rationale of why it was chosen/they chose it for the task.
				<p>Response: Equipment 1:</p> <p>Equipment 2:</p> <p>Equipment 3:</p>

	Core Ref			
	L2	L3	L4	
Q3	6	7	10	<p>Using three examples from your portfolio describe to me how you <i>(prepared/planned)</i> for your rail engineering activity and list any resources and documentation in your plan?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>At L2</i> the apprentice may be assisting and planning is limited to gathering documentation and preparing the work area, the apprentice should be aware of issue numbers and process for checking they have the right documents • <i>At L3</i> the apprentice should demonstrate they were independently planning the work based on the documents gathered and also planning resources and availability. • <i>At L4</i> it is expected that the apprentices was leading the activity and as such has been involved in preparing the work plan, this should include showing risk and contingency was considered
				<p>Response:</p> <p>Example 1:</p>

				<p>Example 2:</p> <p>Example 3:</p>
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	Core Ref			
	L2	L3	L4	
Q4	7	7	11	<p>From your portfolio can you give an example of a rail engineering activity you have (<i>assisted in/carried out/led others in</i>) and describe what testing was undertaken to confirm correct operational compliance to allow the asset to return to service?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At L2 the apprentice may be assisting in the use of the testing equipment/processes but is still expected to demonstrate their understanding of why the equipment/process was being used. • At L3 the apprentice should demonstrate they were using the testing equipment/process independently or at least if being assisted were the decision maker on the correct use/application of the equipment/process and has responsibility for recording results and for reinstating the work area. • At L4 it is expected that the apprentices was leading an activity and whilst may not have actually been carrying out the testing they were responsible for ensuring the testing was carried out correctly and they were also responsible for the transfer of the assets post testing and compliance testing activities.
				<p>Response:</p>

				Example 3:
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	Core Ref			
	L2	L3	L4	
Q6	1	1	1	<p>Explain the importance of complying with statutory, quality, organisational and health and safety regulations and the potential consequences of not doing so?</p> <p><i>At all levels the apprentice must show they understand their responsibility to health and safety of themselves and others. They must show they understand how their activities or lack of compliance with health and safety may have an impact on the workplace for all.</i></p>
				<p>Response:</p>

	Core Ref			
	L2	L3	L4	
Q7	8	9 3	12 3	<p>From your portfolio can you show me an example of where you have (identified or solved) a problem, please identify the actual problem and how you resolved it/escalated it in line with you level of responsibility. (All levels)</p> <p>L3 and 4 only -Please include any problem solving techniques you employed and how you ensured the problem did not reoccur?</p>
				<p>Response:</p>

	Core Ref			
	L2	L3	L4	
Q8				<p>From your portfolio can you show me three different examples of where you have (used/managed/supervised the use of) resources?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At L2 the apprentice must demonstrate the correct storage and use of resources. The examples should be different and include correct utilisation of tools and equipment and use of lifting equipment. • At L3 the apprentice must demonstrate the correct storage and managing of resources. The examples should be different and include correct utilisation of tools and equipment and use of lifting equipment. • At L4 it is expected that the apprentice was managing the resources. At L4 managing resources includes utilising teams and individuals and also monitoring team and individual performance and development.
	9	10	14	<p>Response:</p> <p>Example 1:</p>

				<p>Example 2:</p> <p>Example 3:</p>
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	Core Ref			
	L2	L3	L4	
Q9	3	4	6	<p>Explain the importance of compliance with company policies in areas of ethics, equality and diversity, what are the consequences of non-compliance?</p> <p>This can be asked of all level apprentices.</p>
				<p>Response:</p>

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	Core Ref			
	L2	L3	L4	
Q10	3	4	6	<p>Why is 3rd party client confidentially important to a rail engineering company?</p> <p>This can be asked of all level apprentices.</p> <p>Response:</p>