

“Never going back to test centres”: Quantum Awards, an Ofqual-accredited End-Point-Assessment awarding body, choose TestReach for secure and professional online exam delivery for apprenticeship standards



“Being able to provide assessments remotely has increased demand, as we can work with a larger network of training providers across England, which in turn leads to higher numbers of candidates taking the apprenticeship exams.

With Ofqual being the accreditor on behalf of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Training, it has added an increased level of rigour into the instruments for assessment and how they are controlled.”

Background

Quantum Awards Ltd is an Ofqual-accredited and regulated End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO). Based in the UK, the awarding body works with training providers in England to deliver assessment services for the Lean, Quality and Improvement Apprenticeship Standards.

To ensure validity and reliability of the assessment, apprenticeship qualifications in the UK must be assessed by an organisation separate to the training provider. Quantum Awards Ltd is registered to provide end-point assessment (EPA) for all four of the Improvement standards (Level 3, 4, 5, 6), and also the L4 Quality Practitioner standard. These standards prepare individuals to implement process improvements and minimise waste, and learn how to take a structured approach to completing work. Apprentices come from a wide variety of industries - manufacturing, finance, local government, National Health Service - covering everything from retail to healthcare to distribution.

Quantum Awards has grown rapidly to become one of the foremost EPAOs in England for assessing standards in this specialised area.

Solution

Quantum Awards was keen to offer end-point apprenticeship exams online, with remote invigilation, allowing learners the flexibility to take their exam securely without travelling to a test centre. Exams could be provided more frequently and closer to the period of tuition. The pandemic considerably accelerated this process, as it became essential to move away from test-centres.

TestReach was seen as a good fit for Quantum Awards. It provided not only an online assessment management system, but also included live remote invigilation exam delivery (using TestReach trained supervisors) as an integral part of the solution. This secure all-in-one approach met the high-standards for Ofqual accreditation, and enabled IFATE (Institute

for Apprenticeships and Training) to issue certifications after the examinations.

TestReach's question banking tool was another important factor in achieving Ofqual accreditation, as it enabled further security for exam content. On the administrative side, the TestReach blueprint feature streamlines the creation of varied exam papers for each cohort of candidates. The moderation module in TestReach facilitates the analysis of scoring and ensures the standard pass mark is applied fairly to all candidates.

Results

The roll out of online examinations with remote invigilation has been a successful project for Quantum Awards. It has given the organisation the ability to work with more training providers throughout England, significantly increasing the scale of assessments they can offer, as there is no longer a restriction to only work with local providers.

The numbers of candidates taking exams with Quantum has increased by 50% in the past two years, and is expected to grow by an additional 30% in the coming year. This is a specialised apprenticeship area, with potential to further develop as Quantum's reputation and high quality delivery is recognised.

Mark Smith, Managing Director of Quantum, says:

"Being able to provide assessments remotely has increased demand, as we can work with a larger network of training providers across England, which in turn leads to higher numbers of candidates taking the apprenticeship exams. With Ofqual being the accreditor on behalf of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Training, it has added an increased level of rigour into the instruments for assessment and how they are controlled." he added.

"It is so important that our assessments are reliable, valid and secure and that there is no opportunity for cheating. The live proctoring with a close level of supervision and secure computer lockdown ensures that the exam is not compromised. We also enhance security through randomisation of exam content. We have a large item bank with question picking rules set up for each subject, so that every exam paper is a valid and fair assessment but unique for each candidate. TestReach assisted us with building the question bank in the authoring platform and setting up the rules for randomisation."

"We find the moderation tool in TestReach very helpful. We can review the scoring and ensure the pass mark is applied fairly to all candidates. Another positive aspect of the solution is that we can offer candidates a choice as to when they wish to take their invigilated exams, so they can select a time that suits best, which is very convenient. We are never going back to test centres."

"I am very comfortable with the service that we've had from TestReach. We are happy with the solution, and the support team are really responsive and ensure we meet all the requirements for our candidates. It has been a very positive experience."