



Level 4

Apprenticeship Assessment For **Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Automation Practitioner** (ST1512)

nqual.

APPRENTICESHIP
SPECIFICATION

Contents

Introduction	2
Reference Glossary	2
Important Information for Employers	4
Entry Requirements	5
Assessment Options	5
NQual Approach	5
Approved Centre Approach	6
Assessment Design	7
Mandatory Component	8
Project	8
Additional Component	10
Professional Discussion	10
Assessment Materials	11
Apprentice Assessment Timelines	11
Assessment Assessor and IQA Requirements	12
Assessor Requirements	12
IQA Requirements	12
Grading and Standard Setting	13
Gateway to Completion	13
Behaviours	14
Certification	14
NQual Details	14

This document is a sample version of the NQual Apprenticeship Specification Pack.

Introduction

This Apprenticeship Specification provides the requirements, advice, and guidance for the assessment of the NQual Level 4 Apprenticeship Assessment for Artificial Intelligence and Automation Practitioner (ST1512). It outlines the assessment methods, timelines, and expectations for apprentices, employers, and training providers, and is structured to cover all relevant aspects of the assessment process.

The information in this Specification is based on the Skills England Assessment Plan for the Artificial Intelligence and Automation Practitioner Apprenticeship. For reference, you can access the official document: [Artificial intelligence \(AI\) and automation practitioner / Skills England](#)

The Artificial Intelligence and Automation Practitioner Apprentices support improvement wherever digital workflows exist and are typically embedded in operational teams, working in digital support roles, or in change delivery functions. They may also be employed by consultancies or service providers helping organisations optimise internal and customer-facing processes.

Reference Glossary

Below is a reference glossary of the new Skills England terminology, with a brief explanation of what each term means. You might want to refer to this table when using this document.

New Term / Process	What it Replaces	What it Means:
Apprenticeship Specification	New Concept	NQual designs Apprenticeship Specifications to support employers, learners and training providers in their delivery of Apprenticeship Standards. This document also outlines the assessment requirements in Full.
Training Provider / Approved Centre	New Concept	Both terms refer to the organisation that delivers the on-programme training for an apprentice. Approved Centre refers to those who have undergone additional quality and compliance checks with NQual and are approved to undertake assessments on NQual's behalf, as per the CASS strategy. Training Providers refers to those who have chosen the NQual Approach and have not undergone additional quality and compliance checks with NQual and are not approved to undertake assessments on NQual's behalf.
Gateway to Completion	Gateway	Final checkpoint before an apprenticeship certificate can be requested. Confirms the apprentice has met all completion requirements (English & maths, any mandatory qualifications, and behaviours).

Employer Verification of Behaviours	NQual Assessment of Behaviours	Employers confirm the apprentice has sufficiently demonstrated the behaviours in the occupational standard. NQual no longer assesses behaviours. NQual requires behaviours to be confirmed as achieved prior to finalising 'Gateway to Completion'.
Apprenticeship Assessment Plan (AAP)	End-Point Assessment Plan	The document sets out how a specific apprenticeship is assessed: assessment outcomes, assessment requirements/methods, and performance descriptors. NQual are required to use the Apprenticeship Assessment Plans (AAP) to design their Apprenticeship Specification.
Assessment Organisation (AO)	End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO)	The organisation responsible for designing, quality assuring and (where applicable) delivering the apprenticeship assessment. NQual is the Assessment Organisation.
Assessment Outcomes	New Concept	Broad statements group knowledge and skills to describe how an apprentice demonstrates occupational competence. Each knowledge/skill statement maps to one outcome; all outcomes must be fully assessed in every version.
Performance Descriptors	New Concept	Describe the level of performance needed for a pass or distinction. They bridge assessment outcomes and NQual's grading approach and support comparability; apprentices are not marked directly against them. Performance Descriptors have been set by Skills England, prescribed for each level.
Mandatory Knowledge and Skills Statements	New Concept	The subset of content in an AAP that must be assessed in every version of the assessment. Other statements must still be assessed but can be covered over time.
Sampling	New Concept	A structured approach allowing NQual to assess across the full range of non-mandatory content over time, rather than every statement in every assessment version.
Centre Handbook	Centre Handbook	A document specifically for Approved Centres who are undertaking apprenticeship assessment on behalf of NQual, outlining key policies and processes to support success.

Mandatory Assessment method	New Concept	Featured in the AAP. The single assessment method that must appear in every version of an assessment, giving a common feature regardless of when/where the assessment happens. NQual may add optional methods from the set list in the AAP.
Mandatory Qualification (MQ)	Mandated Qualification	An additional qualification required for completion (For legal, professional-body or sector requirements). Depending on coverage, an MQ may be the sole assessment or sit alongside an apprenticeship assessment.
Pass / Distinction	Pass / Merit / Distinction	The standard grades under reform. Merit has been removed to improve consistency and fairness across apprenticeships.
Resits and Retakes	Same Concept	Resit = resitting without further training Retake = Further training, then reassessment. Apprentices can choose to resit/retake to achieve a higher grade.
Skills England	IFATE / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education	The body is now responsible for occupational standards and apprenticeship assessment plans, working with DfE, Ofqual and OfS.

Important Information For Employers

The Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation Practitioner apprenticeship assessment has been updated as part of national assessment reform led by Skills England. These changes are designed to reduce duplication and ensure assessments reflect occupational competence.

Key changes include:

- Assessment timing can be flexible and based on apprentice readiness, and the 'Gateway Period' has been replaced by the 'Gateway to completion' process. Apprentices can now complete some or all their assessments on programme; at least one assessment should be towards the end of the programme.
- Employers are responsible for verifying that apprentices have sufficiently demonstrated the behaviours set out in the occupational standard before 'Gateway to Completion'.
- Assessment Organisations (AO) and Training Providers (TP) are no longer required to assess behaviours themselves. This ensures behavioural judgements are made by those with direct workplace insight and supports a more streamlined and appropriate assessment approach.

Gateway to Completion will take place once the apprentice has:

- Passed both assessment components.
- The employer has verified completion of behaviours.
- Achieved any Maths and English qualifications required in line with funding and employer rules.

Entry Requirements

- Minimum age: 16 years old.

Assessment Options

NQual offers two options for Apprenticeship Assessment:

- The NQual Approach.
- The Approved Centre Approach.

The NQual Approach

If providers choose this option, NQual will complete all assessment components.

Registration

Apprentices must be registered on ACE360 at least 90 days before their first assessment. Assessments can take place on the programme in any order.

Training Providers are required to complete the NQual Booking Form, confirming that the apprentice, provider and employer agree that the apprentice is ready to complete the assessments.

Booking forms must be submitted via ACE360 by the following time frames:

- All components: 2 weeks prior to the requested assessment date

Where booking forms are not completed within the timelines, preferred dates might not be accommodated.

The Project, must be submitted directly to NQual via ACE360.

Results

Results will be sent to the apprentice, the training provider and uploaded onto ACE360 within 10 working days after the completion of the final component.

Following completion of all assessment components, centres must submit Gateway to Completion evidence in line with the requirements set out in the Gateway to Completion section of this document. NQual will confirm completion within 48 working hours of all evidence being uploaded.

Resits and Retakes

For standards comprising multiple assessment components, apprentices will only be required to resit or retake the component(s) in which they have been unsuccessful.

Apprentices may also choose to resit an assessment component with the aim of improving their grade; however, an increased grade cannot be guaranteed.

There is no formal cap on the number of resits and retakes, and the grade achievable is not restricted through reassessment attempts. However, it is strongly recommended that the apprentice is adequately prepared prior to reassessment to minimise repeated attempts.

NQual's approach to resits and retakes will not limit an apprentice's ability to achieve a distinction grade or place a cap on the grade an apprentice can achieve, or such an approach.

All resits and retakes must be completed within 12 months of the initial fail notification. Each resit or retake is subject to employer agreement and confirmation of apprentice readiness prior to booking.

The Approved Centre Approach

If providers choose this option, specified components of the assessment can be undertaken by the approved centre. These components are carried out in line with NQual's CASS strategy and are subject to ongoing External Quality Assurance (EQA).

Centres wanting to use this approach must undergo NQual's Centre Approval process prior to registering and undertaking any form of assessment of any apprentices. If you would like to become an NQual Approved Centre, please contact admin@nqual.co.uk for our helpful NQual Centre Approval Process Guide.

Centres must declare conflicts of interest in advance, and apprentice tutor/assessors must not undertake formal assessments.

When choosing this approach, all assessors and internal quality assurers (IQA) details must be recorded by NQual and are subject to EQA review to ensure competence. Please see 'Assessment Assessor and IQA Requirements' on page 12. Assessors conducting apprenticeship assessments on behalf of NQual are subject to initial standardisation and the completion of an 'Assessor Declaration'.

Registration

Apprentices must be registered on ACE360 at the start of the programme, within 60 days of the start date, and will be subject to ongoing EQA activity.

For assessment components delivered by the Centre, NQual must be notified of the assessment date and time at least 2 weeks in advance, by completing the NQual Booking Form, which must be uploaded to ACE360.

When the apprentice is ready to submit the Project to NQual, the Centre must do this via ACE360, confirming that the apprentice, employer, and Centre agree that the apprentice is assessment ready. NQual will then mark the Project written submission.

Results

All results remain subject to confirmation through NQual's External Quality Assurance process.

For the NQual assessed component, results will be sent to the apprentice, the training provider and uploaded onto ACE360 within 10 working days after the completion of the final component. Results from the additional component, completed by the centre, will be subject to additional external quality assurance, and results will be confirmed within 10 working days.

Following completion of all assessment components, centres must submit Gateway to Completion evidence in line with the requirements set out in the Gateway to Completion section of this document. NQual will confirm completion within 48 working hours of all evidence being uploaded.

Resits and Retakes

NQual must be informed of booked resits and retakes via the NQual Booking Form, uploaded to ACE360.

For standards comprising multiple assessment components, apprentices will only be required to resit or retake the component(s) in which they have been unsuccessful.

Apprentices may also choose to resit an assessment component with the aim of improving their grade; however, an increased grade cannot be guaranteed.

There is no formal cap on the number of resits and retakes, and the grade achievable is not restricted through reassessment attempts. However, it is strongly recommended that the apprentice is adequately prepared prior to reassessment to minimise repeated attempts.

NQual's approach to resits and retakes will not limit an apprentice's ability to achieve a distinction grade or place a cap on the grade an apprentice can achieve, or such an approach.

All resits and retakes must be completed within 12 months of the initial fail notification. Each resit or retake is subject to employer agreement and confirmation of apprentice readiness prior to booking.

Assessment Design

The Apprenticeship for Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation Practitioner requires the completion of two assessment methods.

To meet the requirements of this apprenticeship assessment, apprentices must complete one mandatory component and one additional component. The mandatory component for this apprenticeship standard is a Project. For this standard, it has been outlined that the mandatory component must be completed by NQual.

The apprentice must additionally complete a Professional Discussion to complete their apprenticeship.

Mandatory Component

Project

The Project requires the apprentice to plan, design, develop and critically evaluate an end-to-end AI or automation solution within their workplace.

The Apprentice will be responsible for identifying opportunities to improve workflow efficiency and productivity using digital tools. They will analyse current systems and processes, make recommendations utilising low-or no-code solutions, including AI-driven automations.

This assessment component must be completed by NQual and will typically start after month 6.

At the point of booking the apprentice will be given a project brief detailing what their project should be based on.

The apprentice can choose to deliver their project as either a Presentation with Q&A or a Written Project Report. The apprentice can only choose one delivery method for their project.

Delivered as Presentation with Q&A

If the apprentice decides to deliver their project as a Presentation, they should review this section.

The Presentation requires the apprentice to present the approach, analysis, findings and recommendations from a real workplace project, using appropriate visual support.

The Presentation is delivered live to a qualified Independent Assessor from NQual and is followed by a question-and-answer session. The apprentice must complete assessments independently; any referenced material must be cited appropriately, and outputs must not include plagiarism nor the unauthorised use of Artificial Intelligence. Please refer to NQual's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy regarding the use of AI and plagiarism.

The apprentice will complete the assessment in a controlled environment, ensuring they are alone in the room and free from any external influence, in accordance with the required assessment conditions. The assessment decision will be issued within 10 working days of the assessment date.

Timings

The total time for the Presentation with Q&A is 40 minutes (+/- 10%), typically the presentation will last 20 minutes (+/- 10%) followed by the question-and-answer session.

Delivered as Written Project Report

If the apprentice decides to deliver their project as a Written Project Report, they should review this section.

The written project report must not exceed 4,000 words. Appendices can be submitted but will not be counted towards the word count.

Example Projects include, but are not limited to;

- Automating repetitive administrative or operational tasks (e.g. data entry, document processing, email handling).

- Designing automated workflows across multiple business systems (e.g. CRM, HR, finance or productivity platforms).
- Developing AI-assisted solutions to support business decision-making.
- Implementing AI solutions to support forecasting, planning or operational decision-making while maintaining appropriate human oversight.
- Creating internal AI assistants or knowledge management solutions.
- Improving accessibility, user experience or workforce enablement through responsible AI and automation solutions.
- Developing data workflows or pipelines to enable intelligent automation.

The apprentice has a maximum period of 16 weeks to complete their project, this includes 12 weeks to complete the project and gather evidence, and a further 4 weeks for the write-up.

The suggested structure of the written project includes:

- Introduction and context: the business problem or opportunity, stakeholders involved, and strategic rationale for the AI or automation approach adopted
- Solution design: tools, platforms, integration methods and configuration decisions made
- Development and implementation: key steps taken, challenges encountered and how these were addressed
- Testing and evaluation: approach to testing, user feedback gathered, results and iterations made
- Governance, risk and assurance: regulatory and ethical considerations, risk mitigations and assurance activities undertaken
- Impact and continuous improvement: outcomes achieved, evaluation against original objectives and recommendations for further improvement
- Reflection: what the apprentice would do differently and what this experience demonstrates about their professional development
- Appendices are not included in the 4000-word count, and may include, but are not limited to, workflow diagrams, test evidence, and training materials.

Additional Consideration

An independent Assessor from NQual will mark this component.

Details of all criteria covered in this component can be found in the Methods Table within this document.

The apprentice must complete the written submission independently. Any referenced material must be cited appropriately and must not include plagiarism nor the unauthorised use of Artificial Intelligence. Please refer to NQual's Malpractice and Maladministration Policy regarding the use of AI and plagiarism.

Additional Component

Professional Discussion

The Professional Discussion component will typically be completed after month 6.

The NQual Approach

The Professional Discussion is a structured discussion conducted remotely by a qualified Independent Assessor from NQual.

The apprentice will complete the assessment in a controlled environment, ensuring they are alone in the room and free from any external influence, in accordance with the required assessment conditions.

Apprentices are permitted to bring with them the NQual approved 'Self-Assessment Document', which apprentices can prepare in advance and take with them to their assessment. This document should be submitted in advance to NQual along with the NQual booking form. Apprentices can also bring an additional notes page on the template provided by NQual.

Details of specific criteria assessed in this component are provided in the Methods Table within this document.

The Approved Centre Approach

The Professional Discussion is a structured discussion conducted by an independent assessor from the approved centre. The centre can choose to conduct the assessment either face to face or remotely; a video/audio recording must be provided for either option for quality assurance purposes.

The recording alongside the provided NQual grading document must be uploaded to ACE360 within 10 working days of the completed assessment date. Once uploaded, the assessment decision will be externally quality assured by NQual within a further 10 working days.

The apprentice must complete the assessment in a controlled environment, ensuring they are alone in the room and free from any external influence, in accordance with the required assessment conditions.

Apprentices are permitted to bring with them the NQual approved 'Self-Assessment Document', which apprentices can prepare in advance and take with them to their assessment. This document should be submitted in advance to NQual along with the NQual booking form. Apprentices can also bring an additional notes page on the template provided by NQual.

Details of specific criteria assessed in this component are provided in the Methods Table within this document.

Timings

This component must last 45 minutes (+/- 10%), from the point the apprentice is asked their first question.

Assessor Responsibilities

Throughout the assessment, apprentices should not receive feedback. Assessors are responsible for ensuring exam conditions are followed, and complete and record in full the Assessor Declaration.

All assessments must be video/audio recorded in line with NQual's Assessment Processes for quality and compliance purposes. If recordings are not received, NQual reserves the right to request a resit.

Assessment Materials

The required assessment materials, including assessment documentation and question banks, are available to Approved Centres and Training Providers. These materials support centre preparation and assessor standardisation and should be reviewed before delivery commences. Materials are available via ACE360, with Approved Centre Assessment materials being shared directly with each centre following standardisation and training.

Please note that, to align with sampling requirements, regular review of Approved Centre Assessment materials will be completed by NQual's Quality Team, which will result in assessment material updates and version changes. These will be communicated in advance, and a clear start date will be indicated on each.

When apprentice bookings are confirmed, NQual will provide the relevant assessment materials.

Centres must use the correct assessment materials; if outdated assessment materials are used, NQual reserves the right to request a resit of assessments where they deem appropriate.

Apprentice Assessment Timelines

Step	NQual Approach	Approved Centre Approach
Sign - Up	Apprentice signs up with their training provider/centre.	
Registration	Apprentices registered on ACE360 at least 90 days before the first assessment.	Apprentices Registered on ACE360 within 60 days of their 'sign-up' date. This must be before learners complete any assessments.
Learning	On-programme learning	
Booking Assessments	NQual will have 10 working days to review the Project on submission. Training Providers must complete the NQual Booking Form at least 2 weeks prior to the additional component (Professional Discussion).	NQual will have 10 working days to review the Project on submission. Centres should inform NQual using the NQual Booking Form at least 2 weeks before conducting any additional component (Professional Discussion).
Assessments	Assessments are conducted by NQual Independent Assessors.	NQual will assess the Project via written submission or presentation with Q&A. Independent Assessors From the Centre will conduct the additional assessment component (Professional Discussion). Centres submit their evidence using NQual's required paperwork and recordings within 10 working days of the completed assessment.

Results	Results of the component conducted by NQual will be sent out within 10 working days after each assessment component. If an apprentice Fails an assessment method, they must book a resit or retake using the NQual booking form.	Results of the component conducted by NQual will be sent out within 10 working days after the assessment component. Final confirmed results of centre assessed components will be issued by NQual following completion of the EQA process within 10 working days of confirmed uploaded evidence.
Gateway to Completion	The Training Provider / Centre provides evidence of: - Both components achieving Pass or Distinction - Maths & English evidence - Employer-verified Behaviours. NQual confirms Gateway to Completion.	
Certification	NQual applies for the apprenticeship certificate.	

Assessment Assessor Requirements

Assessment Assessor and IQA Requirements remain the same regardless of the Option chosen.

Assessor Requirements

- Assessors must hold a relevant assessor qualification, such as the Level 3 Certificate in Assessing Vocational Achievement (CAVA). Assessors currently undergoing training must have all assessment decisions confirmed by a suitably qualified assessor.
- Assessors must also be occupationally competent to assess the standard, typically demonstrated by at least two years of recent experience, supported by a regularly updated CPD record. This should evidence current, practical experience and knowledge of AI and Automation in a working environment.
- Conflict of Interest: Assessors must declare any personal or professional relationship, or any potential benefit from the assessment outcome.
- Independence: The assessor must be independent from the apprentice to ensure impartiality and integrity in the assessment process.

IQA Requirements

- IQAs must hold a relevant IQA qualification, such as the Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality Assurance of Assessment Processes and Practice. IQAs currently undergoing training must have all assessment decisions confirmed by a suitably qualified IQA.
- IQAs must also be occupationally competent in the sector area, typically demonstrated by recent and relevant experience, supported by an up-to-date CPD record evidencing current knowledge of industry standards and assessment practices.

- Conflict of Interest: IQAs must declare any personal or professional relationship, or any potential benefit from the sampling process, before carrying out quality assurance activities.
- Independence: The IQA must be independent from the apprentice and assessor, to ensure impartiality and integrity in the quality assurance process.

Grading and Standard Setting

The available grades for this standard are Fail, Pass and Distinction. To achieve a Pass, all assessment outcomes must be demonstrated to the level described in the performance descriptors in both assessment methods to achieve an overall Pass grade.

To be considered for an overall Distinction, the apprentice must first meet all assessment outcomes at the pass standard in both assessment components. A Distinction will then be awarded where the apprentice achieves a minimum of 50% of the available distinction criteria in each assessment component.

The final grade will be decided on the following combinations:

Mandatory Component: Project	Additional Component: Professional Discussion	Overall Grading
Any grade	Fail	Fail
Fail	Any grade	Fail
Pass	Pass	Pass
Pass	Distinction	Pass
Distinction	Pass	Pass
Distinction	Distinction	Distinction

Gateway to Completion

Gateway to completion is the last part of the Apprentice's journey and requires the training provider/centre to upload evidence that the Apprentice is ready to complete their Apprenticeship.

The Gateway to Completion form must be completed and submitted to NQual, along with required evidence via ACE360.

Requirements for Gateway to Completion:

- Both components have achieved a minimum of a pass grade.
- Evidence of achieving relevant Maths and English qualifications or exemptions where required.
- Evidence is required to confirm that the employer deems the apprentice competent against the required behaviours.

Behaviours

As part of this apprenticeship standard, it is the responsibility of the employer to review behaviours throughout the apprentice's programme and confirm sufficient demonstration of these behaviours before a certificate can be requested.

Below is a list of behaviours the employer is required to confirm for this standard.

Behaviours	
B1	Demonstrates empathy by actively considering the perspectives and concerns of staff who may be impacted by AI-driven change. Acts responsibly, recognising organisational efficiency goals with fairness to employees.
B2	Maintains professionalism and upholds confidentiality when discussing sensitive workforce impacts, showing respect for individual contributions.
B3	Demonstrates confidence in sharing concerns or alternative perspectives of self or others, even when under pressure to deliver efficiencies.
B4	Balances respect for leadership decisions with advocacy for employees.
B5	Support leaders to consider the impact of AI automation adoption, not just immediate organisational gains.
B6	Shows curiosity and initiative, experimenting with AI and automation, while ensuring such exploration is conducted safely, ethically, and with regard for potential impacts.

Certification

For this apprenticeship standard, NQual is responsible for requesting the apprentice's certificate once Gateway to Completion has been confirmed.

Need More Information?

This document is a sample version of the NQual Apprenticeship Specification Pack.

Full versions, assessment materials, guidance documents and additional support resources are available to training providers delivering apprenticeship assessments with NQual.

To discuss the standard or request further information, contact the NQual team at admin@nqual.co.uk or [book a meeting](#) with team



Book Your Meeting



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