

Benchmarking the Cambridge Assessment Network Advanced Assessment Practitioner Award



Ecctis has found the Advanced Assessment Practitioner Award awarded by Cambridge Assessment Network comparable to RQF Level 6.

Context and scope

Cambridge Assessment Network, a division of Cambridge Assessment and part of the University of Cambridge, offers professional development to the assessment community. The Network has been developed to provide practitioners with the 'knowledge and skills needed to design and develop effective assessments, from an understanding of the key principles to in-depth and practice-based learning in the design and delivery of successful, valid assessment'.¹ Learning solutions include practitioner workshops, online courses and bespoke training.

Ecctis concluded an independent benchmarking and evaluation of the Advanced Assessment Practitioner Award (AAPA) against the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) in the UK in January 2024.

¹ Cambridge Assessment Network. Available at: <<https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/>>. [Accessed 5/10/2023].

AAPA

The AAPA is awarded to learners who complete 60 hours of professional development through Cambridge Assessment Network training courses and achieve a pass in a written assignment. The duration, structure and content of the AAPA will vary depending on the courses chosen. Typically, learners will complete two 'A10' courses. This may include successfully completed assignments, or assessment practitioner workshops (APWs) to meet the 60 hours CPD requirement. Learners can also take one 'A10' course and make up the other CPD hours through APWs. All courses are delivered online via Cambridge Assessment Network's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). The VLE contains course content, and any required tasks and assignments for learners.

Learners can select from one or two of the following 'A10' courses:

'A10' courses
A101: Introducing the Principles of Assessment
A102: Introducing Assessment Practice
A103: Introducing Data Literacy
A104: Psychometrics in Educational Assessment

The AAPA is assessed through a 3,000-word written assignment which requires learners to develop, analyse and reflect upon an 'innovation' in their assessment practice that they have contributed significantly towards. The 'AAPA assignment' is marked on a pass/fail basis. Learners are also required to complete a range of tasks to test their knowledge and understanding of individual course content; however, these tasks do not contribute to the final AAPA pass/fail mark.

Key findings

Ecctis' in-depth, independent and objective review and comparative analysis of the AAPA in the context of the UK education system found the AAPA comparable to RQF Level 6 standard overall.

The AAPA requires learners to demonstrate a broad range of knowledge and skills comparable to descriptors from RQF Levels 5 to 7. In 'A10' courses the learning outcomes indicate the requirement to find ways forward and adapt, and address complex problems that may have limited definition, which reflect skills at both RQF Level 5 and Level 6. Furthermore, there were some elements in 'A10' courses concerning the development of strategies to present data, and the interpretation and evaluation of data which are indicative of RQF Level 6 knowledge and skills regarding designing research and development to inform actions, and evaluating complex information and ideas. The APW series learning outcomes reflect higher order thinking skills such as 'critical reflection' and 'critical evaluation' and 'developing strategies' which, overall, align closely with RQF Level 6 descriptors.

The 'AAPA assignment' requires learners to apply advanced technical and conceptual knowledge in contexts where there are many interacting factors,

and evaluating methods employed in their innovation, as per knowledge and skills of RQF Level 6. In addition, the assignment assesses learners' ability to critically analyse and evaluate principles and practices of assessment, and analyse different assessment methods used, reflecting the expectation at RQF Level 6 that individuals can undertake critical analysis, and evaluate actions and methods. The requirement for learners to undertake self-reflective practice, which encourages learners to think critically about their experiences and actions, is further indicative of skills expected at RQF Level 6.

As part of the 'AAPA assignment', some learners may have the opportunity to design and undertake research, development or strategic activities to inform or produce change in assessment practice and use specialised skills to address problematic situations, and to demonstrate understanding of the wider contexts of assessment methodology and practice, reflecting skills at RQF Level 7.

Methodology

Based on Ecctis' well-established methodology for credential evaluation, this independent evaluation and benchmarking study comprised a review of the AAPA in terms of:

- Entry requirements
- Duration
- Content and structure
- Modes of learning and assessment
- Learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Associated outcomes.

The comparative analysis of the AAPA focused mainly on the learning outcome statements and assessed skills of the 'A10' series of courses against the relevant RQF level knowledge and skill descriptors. In addition, evaluation of the knowledge and skills assessed in the 'AAPA assignment' was informed by a review of the assignment criteria, the assignment prompt questions and a sample of completed assignments marked at pass grade. Quality assurance and control mechanisms and processes were also considered for the purposes of Ecctis determining comparability.