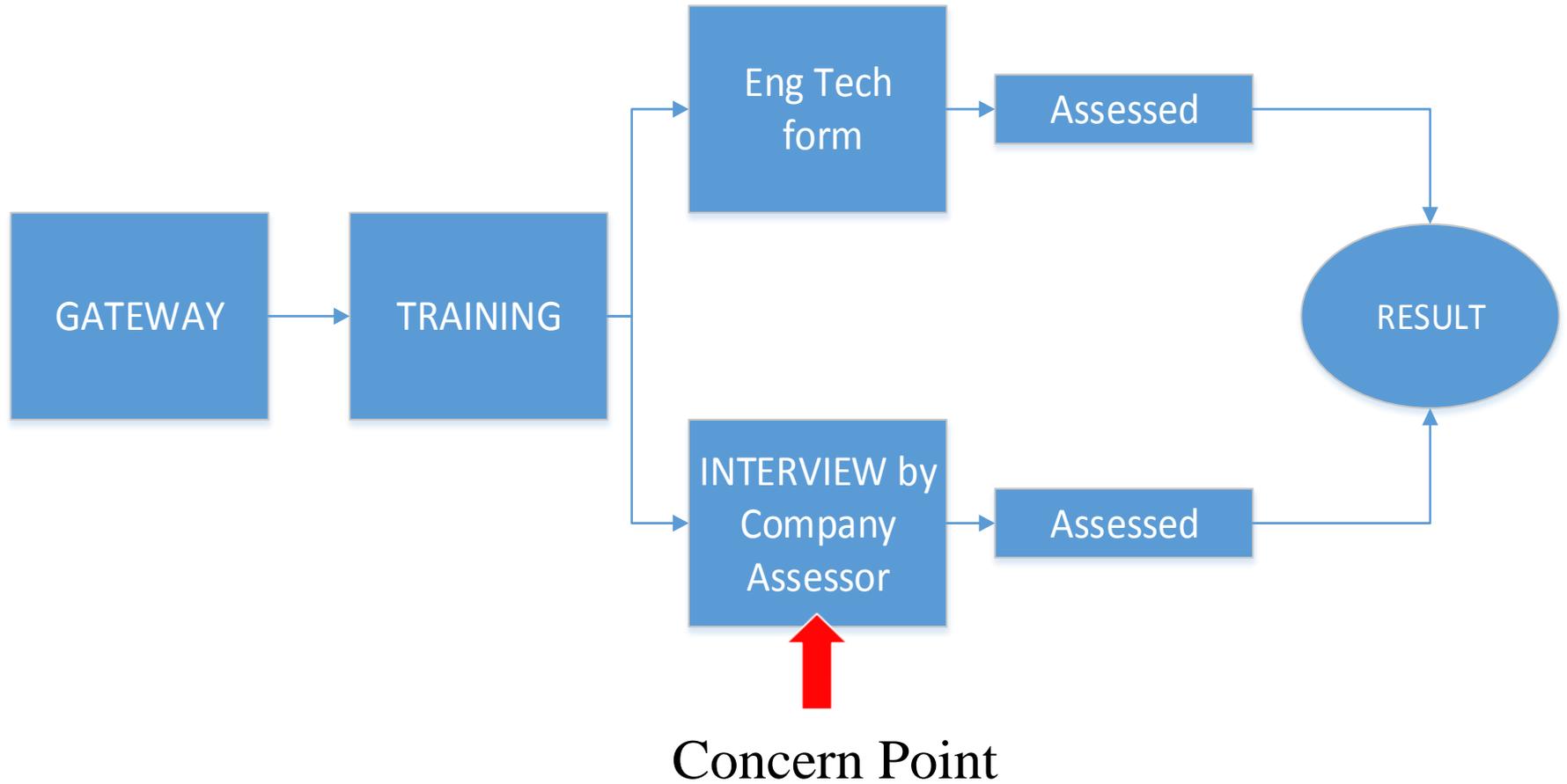


The Providers experience of EPA

**Andrew Parsons
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Chair of Auto Trailblazer group

Early Process



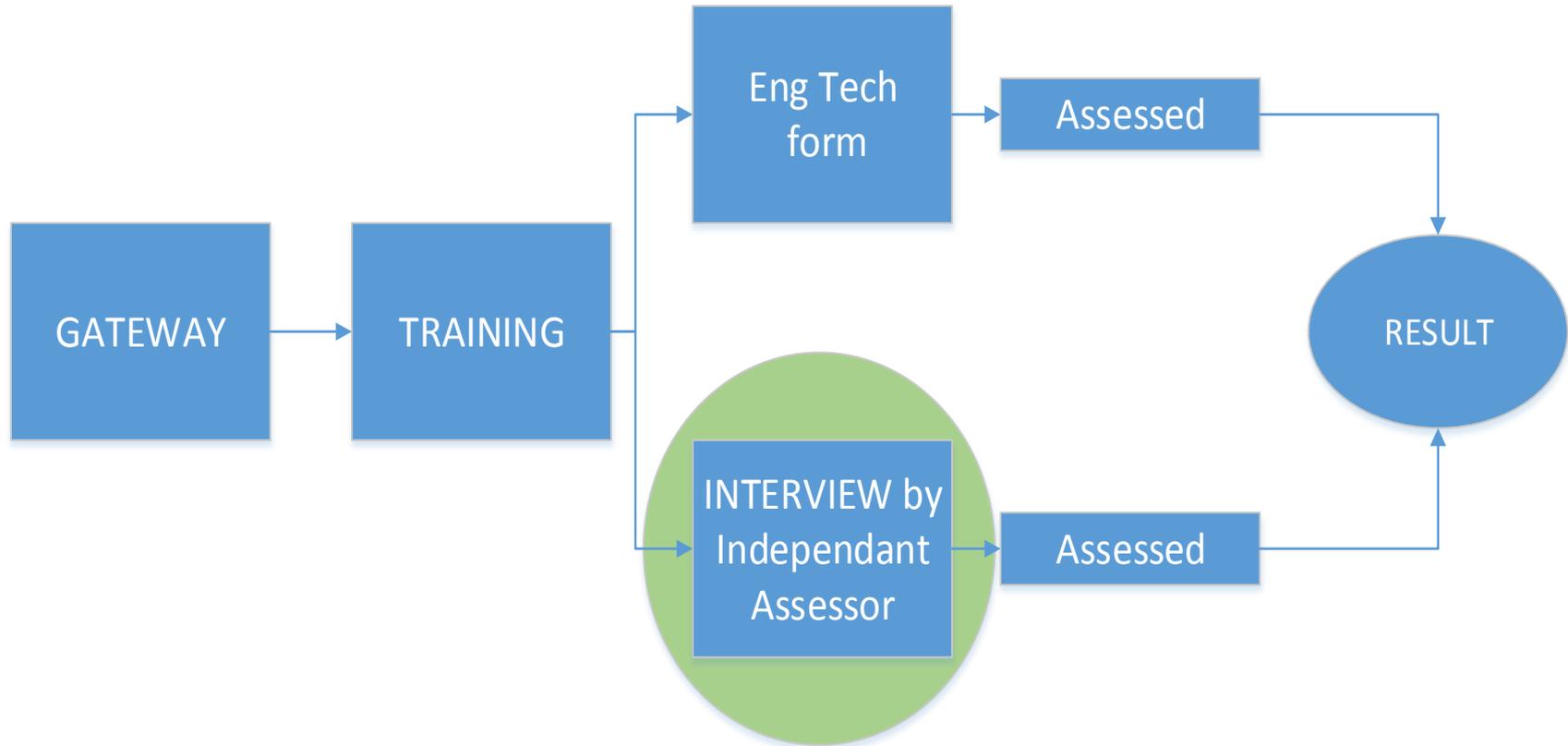
Issues using in-company assessors

- Willingness
 - Additional Burden on assessor and employer
 - Assessor nervousness about the role
- Availability – SME's
 - Impact on business if short term crisis
- Separation
 - Linked to above, how to be independent
- Variance
 - Differing levels of skill, differing levels of interpretation
- Compliance?
 - Linked to variance, no 'standardisation' from Assessor to Assessor as required for IQA

Not popular and some SME's could not support.

Strong 'push back' in general about assessing the apprentices of others (although some did)

Recent Process



Recent process - external assessors

- Willingness – Employers strongly support
- Availability - No issues (currently, but see below)
- Separation - No issues
- Variance - much reduced
- Compliance - compliance assured

Single issue could be future lack of suitable assessor staff once EPA ramps up in numbers.

IFA View is that ‘in Company’ assessors could be used – this has proved unworkable

Costs

- Generally costs are below the maximum 20% of cap
- Cost cap for EPAO is challenging for low value standards – but not for high value standards. Is there an element of cross-subsidy occurring?
- Little transparency from EPAO companies – is not clear why costs are what they are (i.e 4 EPA/Day @ £1400 = £5600 for the day)
- Business expects strong volume discounts (practically costs of 4 EPA in one day should not be so dissimilar to 1 EPA) – this needs to be demonstrated
- But since many businesses cannot spend levy, there is little incentive to challenge – this may change, but lack of competition in the market does not help.
- Money routing has to change. Theoretically Business negotiates with EPAO, but EPAO is paid by provider giving rise to ‘Anti – Trust’ issues.

Business expects that in the longer term the market will develop and costs will be more tightly negotiated

What EPA has meant for..

EMPLOYERS

- Opportunity at gateway to 'Hold providers feet to the fire'
- Opportunity to formally reflect on the apprentice and the development that has taken place

APPRENTICE

- Challenging but positive experience
- Makes them realise how far they have travelled
- Provides a real 'End Event' and gives sense of achievement

EPA – if done properly, is a positive experience

Perhaps more positive than initially imagined!

'Gateway' is an essential addition

Problems and Issues

Overall - Pilot phase EPA felt rushed, little time to prepare, much improved

Certification:-

- Employers are 'blind'. "what's happening?" and "Do you know where Fred's certificate is?" are regular questions
- Process can be slow (3 – 6 weeks not untypical)
- For EPAO, once certification triggered, are 'blind' to rest of process
- 'HR' issues arising – when to promote / trigger salary rise?
- For providers – what triggers ILR close down?

On balance, apart from certification, our experience has been positive.

'Open Loop' of certification must be closed.

Preparing for EPA

- Reflect on KSB's particularly B! Do you need to add to your delivery an opportunity for a project that will demonstrate behaviours on the job?
- Employers must fully understand the process before Apprentices
- Ensure long lead time for Apprentices – initial brief at 12-18 mths prior so that they know what they are headed toward
- Detailed Apprentice brief with worked examples / case studies / what 'best' looks like, at 3 - 5 months prior (normally by EPAO).
- Ensure employers are involved – they have to be guardians of quality at gateway
- Some of the Eng Tech required responses are tricky (section 3) (Give an example of where you have applied/upheld ethical principles as defined by your organisation or company)
- Consider practice interviews - but be careful about doing too much. If the apprentice is not ready, then 'artificially' coaching through the process does more harm than good.

Log Books

- The apprentice 'Log Book' is the single most important element to ensure a successful EPA
- For L3 Eng tech, the Log Book informs both the interview and the Eng Tech Indicators form, and so the quality of the log book directly affects the quality of the end point.
- Train apprentices to do log books properly, following a full job cycle

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- The apprentice 'Log Book' is the single most important element to ensure a successful EPA
- For L3 Eng tech, the Log Book informs both the interview and the Eng Tech Indicators form, and so the quality of the log book directly affects the quality of the end point.
- Train apprentices to do log books properly, following a full job cycle
- But don't forget that behaviours have to be evidenced too!
- If possible, track Log Book completed entries against target, and ensure employer sign off is obtained (back to EITB.....)
- Then support the Apprentice to cross-ref Log book entries to KSB's.
- (NB – an 'NVQ write up' and a log book entry should not be duplicated, it's OK to use an NVQ assessed task as a log book entry as assessed evidence can now be used to 'inform' and EPA decision)

Summary Points

- A clear schedule needs to be set out and understood
- Employers must fully understand the process
- Employers must be engaged to support their Apprentices
- Apprentices must be prepared for EPA
- We face future challenges in the areas of:-
 - Assessor provision
 - Cost Clarity
 - Cost negotiation

But overall EPA is a positive step, and well received if done well

Questions