

ASP End Point Assessment Guidance

Introduction

This document provides guidance for trainees preparing for the Advanced Specialist Scientific Practitioner (ASP) End Point Assessment (EPA). The EPA is designed to assess whether trainees have met the nationally defined standard of competence required for independent practice at the level of a newly qualified independent healthcare scientist.

The final ASP assessment is delivered through Professional Discussions and is conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National School of Healthcare Science. The structure, format, and assessment criteria are set nationally and are applied consistently across all candidates.

Final ASP Professional Discussions are usually held in June, with a possible resit period in the following October where required. The number, duration, and structure of assessments undertaken will depend on the specialist modules completed as part of the ASP programme.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with national curriculum documentation and any technical instructions provided in advance of the assessment.

ASP Professional Modules and Contents

If you are completing Upper GI and practice in breath tests, you will undertake four Professional Discussions (PDs): three Upper GI PDs and one Breath Test PD, with the Breath Test PD being a compulsory pass.

If you are completing Upper GI only, and are not practicing in breath tests you will undertake four Professional Discussions, all of which will be Upper GI PDs.

If you are completing Lower GI only, and are not practicing in breath tests you will undertake four Professional Discussions, all of which will be Lower GI PDs.

If you are completing Lower GI, and Upper GI modules *and* practice in breath tests you will undertake eight Professional Discussions in total: one Breath Test PD (compulsory pass), three Lower GI PDs, and four Upper GI PDs.

See the table below if any further clarification is required on the PD combination which you will take.

Modules Undertaken	Practise in Breath Testing	Total Number of PDs	PD Breakdown	Breath Test PD Required
Upper GI	Yes	4	1 × Breath Test 3 × Upper GI	Yes (compulsory pass)
Upper GI	No	4	4 × Upper GI	No
Lower GI	No	4	4 × Lower GI	No
Lower GI + Upper GI	Yes	8	1 × Breath Test 3 × Lower GI 4 × Upper GI	Yes (compulsory pass)

Please note that the academic module CVR8005 Introduction to Gastrointestinal Physiology does not directly correspond with any EPA professional discussion element. You will only be required to sit a Breath Test PD if you practice (and aim to become independent in) Hydrogen / Hydrogen and Methane breath testing.

Assessment Regulations

The final ASP Professional Discussion is conducted under exam regulations. These regulations will be explained to you before your assessment and are summarised in the Starting the Assessment section below. You are required to comply with all assessment instructions provided by the assessor panel.

ASP Professional Discussion

The final ASP assessment takes the form of a 60-minute Professional Discussion (PD) conducted with a panel of two specialist assessors.

The assessment is structured into:

- **Four discussion elements**, each lasting **10 minutes**
- **Five minutes of pre-reading time** before each discussion element

Each discussion element focuses on a different aspect of your specialist clinical practice. During a discussion element, you may be asked about topics including, but not limited to:

- Basic tests and safety checks
- Taking and interpreting patient history
- Teaching or supervising a colleague
- Explaining specific tests or examinations
- Interpreting test results, images, or graphs
- Data interpretation
- Patient pathways
- Recognition of system artefacts

During the pre-reading time, you may make notes on the materials provided and may refer to these notes during the corresponding discussion element, however you may not take these materials with you upon completion of the assessment.

If you are undertaking more than one Professional Discussion assessment (for example, Upper GI and Lower GI), you will receive separate materials and instructions for each assessment.

Standard Required to Pass the ASP Professional Discussion

To achieve a PASS, you must demonstrate competence at the level expected of a newly qualified independent healthcare scientist.

- You must pass **at least three of the four** discussion elements to achieve an overall PASS.
- Passing fewer than three discussion elements will result in a FAIL.

To award a PASS, the assessor panel must be satisfied that:

- You are competent to practise such that, following induction into a new workplace, you would be able to conduct, interpret, and report clinical tests within the scope of your ASP training with minimal supervision; and
- You demonstrate appropriate professional behaviours, including respect for patients, patient safety, colleagues, and professional standards.

The outcome of the assessment will be recorded as either PASS or FAIL. You will be notified of the result by email after the assessment.

ASP Professional Discussion Assessor Panels

The assessor panel will normally consist of two specialist assessors, one of whom will act as the Lead Assessor.

The Lead Assessor is responsible for:

- The overall conduct of the assessment
- Ensuring assessment regulations are followed
- Ensuring the assessment starts and ends as scheduled

Starting the Assessment

At the start of the assessment, the Lead Assessor will ensure that:

- You have been briefed on the assessment regulations and exam conditions
- Your identity has been verified using an approved form of photo identification (e.g. passport, driving licence, workplace photo ID, or professional body photo ID)
- You are dressed in a professional manner appropriate to clinical practice (this may include your usual work uniform) or smart dress.

You must follow all instructions given by the Lead Assessor throughout the assessment.

Unexpected Interruptions or Exceptional Circumstances

If you or an assessor is unable to continue the Professional Discussion, the Lead Assessor will record the time and nature of the interruption and liaise with other assessment teams to determine whether the assessment can continue.

In exceptional circumstances where a contingency assessor is not available, you may be asked for permission for the Professional Discussion to be audio recorded. This allows the assessment to continue and for a third assessor to contribute to the outcome and feedback.

Any recording made will be securely deleted once the assessor panel has agreed the final outcome and feedback.

Conduct of the Professional Discussion

Assessors will use a semi-structured approach to questioning. Initial questions may be followed by more detailed or probing questions to explore your responses further.

- Questions may be asked by either assessor, or solely by the Lead Assessor
- You may respond to the assessor asking the question or to the Lead Assessor
- The assessor panel may take notes during the discussion to support decision-making and feedback

If you do not understand a question, you may ask for clarification. No additional time will be provided for clarification, and you may not seek feedback on your responses during the assessment.

If the panel has completed its questioning within a discussion element, you will be asked whether you wish to add anything further. If you choose not to do so, the panel may remain silent while making notes. You may add relevant comments at any point before the end of the discussion element.

Review of Outcome by the Examination Board

You will receive the outcome of your assessment by email following your Professional Discussion. This communication may include feedback from the assessor panel.

Unsuccessful Outcome

If you are unsuccessful, you may contact AGIP to arrange a support call with an assessor. This call provides an opportunity to:

- Discuss feedback from the assessor panel
- Receive guidance on how to prepare for a further attempt

You may invite your supervisor or a colleague to attend this support call. Please inform AGIP of any additional attendees in advance.

Appeals

You have the right to appeal a FAIL outcome from the End Point Assessment. Appeals must follow standard examination regulations and be constructive and evidence-based.

Appeals will not be accepted on the basis that:

- You knew the answer but forgot on the day
- You usually perform well or have extensive experience

Any appeal must:

- Be submitted in writing
- Clearly state the grounds for appeal
- Be supported by your supervisor

The appeal will be reviewed by a minimum of two assessors who were not involved in the original assessment. You will be informed of the outcome as soon as possible.

Resit and Deferral

Resit

If required, a resit will be offered and arranged as soon as practicable. As a general guide, resits are typically scheduled for October, subject to assessor availability.

In line with the National School of Healthcare Science STP Fitness to Practise and Final Year Assessment (FYA) policy, trainees may defer an assessment where required. However, once an initial assessment attempt has been initiated, a trainee who does not achieve a pass will be permitted a maximum of two further attempts to pass the assessment. These additional attempts must take place within a two-year period following the initial assessment attempt.

In the event that a resit is required, trainees will only be required to repeat the Professional Discussion elements that **were not** passed at the initial assessment. **Any discussion elements that were passed at any previous attempts will be carried forward and will not need to be reassessed.**

To achieve an overall PASS, trainees must have passed at least three of the four discussion elements when considering performance across the initial assessment and any subsequent resit attempt(s). Passing fewer than three discussion elements in total will result in an unsuccessful outcome.

The cost of a resit is £300, which is the same as the initial assessment fee.

Deferral

Deferral may apply to any part of the ASP programme.

- Deferral of the academic component must be arranged through Newcastle University (pgclinsci@newcastle.ac.uk).
- Deferral of the End Point Assessment (EPA) must be requested in writing to the AGIP Education Secretary.

Where the EPA is deferred, OneFile is also deferred by default, as portfolio completion occurs one month following the EPA.

Further Information and Support

Trainees are encouraged to familiarise themselves fully with this guidance and to seek clarification at an early stage if they are unsure about any aspect of the End Point Assessment process.

Support is available throughout the assessment period. For questions relating to assessment structure, process, or requirements, please contact:

John Gallagher

AGIP Education Secretary

John.Gallagher6@nhs.net