

# CIRO celebrates two major industry accreditations

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**The Chartered Institution of Railway Operators is celebrating having achieved its first ever Ofsted rating for its own apprenticeships, as well as recognition with OFQUAL as an End-point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) for the Train Driver Level 4 apprenticeship standard.**

CIRO has been rated as “Good” by Ofsted, with no conditions, which is one of the highest accolades in education. CIRO’s Level 3 Team Leader or Supervisor, Level 4 Passenger Transport Operations Manager and Level 5 Operations or Departmental Manager apprenticeships have been assessed for the first time.

The Ofsted inspection stated: “Apprentices gain substantial knowledge, skills and behaviours as a result of their apprenticeship. They are proud of their work and talk with confidence about what they have learnt and how it is improving their effectiveness in the workplace through the application of managerial techniques gained because of the programme. For example, apprentices on the levels 3, 4 and 5 apprenticeships use the knowledge and skills they have developed successfully to lead and motivate their teams on issues related to compliance, safety and risk management.”

The Ofsted ‘Good’ rating closely follows the recent awarding of OFQUAL recognition in January 2023, which

allowed CIRO to be added to the EPAO register and continue to offer EPA services. A nationwide reform of apprenticeship external quality assessment (EQA) set out by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE), required that all EPA providers become OFQUAL recognised to continue offering the service.

The deadline for the Train Driver Level 3 standard, which had previously been regulated by The National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR), was December 2022. Following a rigorous review process conducted by OFQUAL into CIRO's practices, procedures, and resources, it has now been added to the EPAO register as of January 2023.

CIRO's OFQUAL recognition means the institution can offer an end-point assessment for the Train Driver Apprentice Level 3 into 2023 and beyond.

CIRO's assessment techniques and resources have been developed with the input and approval of a wide range of stakeholder organisations, including The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen. By providing End-Point Assessment (EPA) and CIRO hopes to keep levy funding in the industry.

Acting in a not-for-profit way has allowed CIRO to develop a cost effective, meaningful EPA for the industry whilst maintaining the highest quality.

Ellie Burrows, CIRO Chair commented: "The timing of these two achievements couldn't be better as the industry begins to pick up pace in its reformation.

"CIRO's reliable, robust Apprenticeship and EPA services will be key in championing the professional development of those working in railway organisations, enabling the whole railway system to succeed.

"On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank the CIRO teams involved for their contributions to these two important achievements."

CIRO began offering high level apprenticeships to the railway operations industry in 2018. From October 2018, Ofsted began to carry out monitoring visits to all newly directly funded providers of apprenticeship training provision, which began to be funded from April 2017 or after by ESFA and/or the apprenticeship levy.

*Image credit: Vicki Head*