

INITIAL ASSESSMENT & RPL

# Team leader

ST0384 · Level 3 · Business and administration

Starting points, prior learning recognition and programme adaptation

STANDARD

**ST0384**

VERSION

**1.4**

LEVEL

**3**

GENERATED

**30 March 2026**

DURATION

**15 months**

MIN. HOURS

**348 hours**

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Team Leader (ST0384) apprentices frequently arrive with hands-on supervisory experience, having been promoted from within or already performing management duties informally. This means initial assessment must distinguish carefully between practical competence in day-to-day team management and the underpinning knowledge, strategic awareness, and formal skills the standard requires — such as change management, data interpretation, and equity and inclusion practice. RPL decisions for this standard are therefore highly individual: two apprentices with similar job titles may have very different starting points, and the training plan must reflect those differences clearly.

## Assessment Areas

### Occupational experience in team leadership and supervision

#### Why It Matters

Many apprentices enrolling on this standard are already performing supervisory or first-line management duties. The depth, scope, and context of that experience varies enormously — from informal team leading with limited accountability to structured management of diverse teams with budget responsibility. Understanding what they actually do day-to-day is essential to avoid funding delivery of competence they already hold.

#### What to Look For

- How long they have been leading or supervising others, and in what context
- Whether they set objectives, conduct one-to-ones, or manage performance formally
- Whether they have experience of managing change, resolving conflict, or coaching team members
- Whether they work across teams or with external stakeholders
- Whether they have budget or resource management responsibility

KSBs: K1, K2, K7, K8, K17, K18, S1, S2, S4, S9, S10, S15, S16, B1, B3

### Prior qualifications and relevant occupational learning

#### Why It Matters

Some apprentices will hold prior qualifications in management, business, administration, or a related subject area. The content and level of that learning — not the title alone — determines whether specific KSBs have been covered. A qualification in a related subject area may cover knowledge of management theory, project management tools, or communication techniques, but may not address the operational, regulatory, or sustainability dimensions of this standard.

#### What to Look For

- Any qualifications in management, business, leadership, administration, or a closely related area
- Whether prior learning covered people management, project management, stakeholder communication, or change management
- Whether qualifications were studied at a level and depth comparable to Level 3 expectations
- Whether the learning is recent enough to be reasonably current
- Whether any prior apprenticeship included relevant on-programme content

KSBs: K3, K4, K5, K6, K9, K11, K12, K13, K17, S3, S5, S6, S7, S11, S12

## English and maths

### Why It Matters

This is a Level 3 standard with a gateway requirement for English and maths. For 16 to 18 year-old apprentices who do not already hold a suitable approved Level 2 equivalent in English and/or maths, achieving Level 2 is required before gateway. For apprentices aged 19 and over, standalone English and/or maths study is an employer opt-in — there is no blanket mandatory requirement if the employer does not include it. Where English and/or maths is part of the programme, the apprentice's current level must be assessed to plan appropriate support.

### What to Look For

- Whether 16 to 18 year-old apprentices already hold an approved Level 2 equivalent in English and/or maths
- For those who do not, their current level to plan appropriate supported progression to Level 2 before gateway
- For 19+ apprentices, whether the employer has opted into English and/or maths as part of the programme, and if so, the starting level
- Literacy and numeracy demands relevant to this role — report writing, data interpretation, budget management — which may inform support needs regardless of formal requirements

KSBs: K20, S3, S8

## Digital competence and technology use

### Why It Matters

Team leaders at this level are expected to use digital tools for planning, communication, project management, and data reporting. Competence with relevant technology varies considerably — some apprentices will be confident users of collaboration and productivity software; others may have significant gaps, particularly around data tools or project management platforms. This affects both the pace of delivery and the sequencing of digital content.

### What to Look For

- Familiarity with productivity and communication software used in their workplace
- Experience using project management or planning tools
- Confidence in producing documents, presentations, or reports digitally
- Understanding of how technology supports team performance monitoring
- Any prior learning or workplace use of data tools, dashboards, or reporting systems

KSBs: K14, S6, S8, S19

## Awareness of operational context, regulation, and organisational strategy

### Why It Matters

This standard requires team leaders to understand and apply relevant regulation, organisational strategy, and external factors — including sustainability and the wider economic environment. Apprentices with experience only in a narrow operational role may lack the broader contextual awareness the standard demands, even if their people management skills are strong.

### What to Look For

- Whether they have any exposure to organisational strategy or business planning
- Whether they understand regulation or compliance requirements relevant to their sector
- Whether they have considered sustainability, net zero, or environmental responsibilities in their role
- Whether they have worked across teams or engaged with senior stakeholders on strategic matters

KSBs: K3, K5, K6, K15, K16, K21, S11, S12, S18, S19

## Learning preferences, support needs, and potential barriers

### Why It Matters

Team leader apprentices span a wide range of ages, backgrounds, and prior educational experiences. Some will be returning to formal learning after many years in work; others may be stepping into a structured programme for the first time. Identifying preferences and potential barriers at the outset enables the provider to adapt delivery appropriately and reduces the risk of early withdrawal or disengagement.

### What to Look For

- Any declared learning difficulties, disabilities, or support needs
- Prior experience of formal or structured learning, and how recent it is
- Confidence with written work, presentation, or reflective practice
- Working pattern, shift arrangements, or access constraints that may affect off-the-job learning
- Motivation for starting the programme and any personal development goals

KSBs: B4

## Typical Learner Profiles

### Experienced supervisor promoted internally

PARTIAL

#### Prior Learning

Several years of practical team leadership in a specific operational context. Strong people management habits, informal coaching, and day-to-day task allocation. Often has ad hoc knowledge of policies and procedures without formal management training.

#### Remaining Gaps

Formal knowledge of change management, stakeholder theory, project management tools, equity and inclusion frameworks, sustainability responsibilities, and organisational strategy. Likely to need structured development in data interpretation, budget management, and how to communicate strategic decisions to their team.

#### Training Plan Impact

Training plan should acknowledge operational experience and reduce duplication in people management basics, but must include substantive delivery on knowledge-led KSBs — particularly K5, K6, K12, K13, K15, K16, K22, K23 — and skills such as S3, S5, S6, S7, S11, S12, S17, S18, S19 where formal competence has not yet been developed.

KSBs covered: K1, K7, K8, K17, K18, S1, S2, S4, S9, B1, B3

### New to management — stepping up for the first time

LIMITED

#### Prior Learning

Strong technical or operational competence in their field but limited or no experience of managing others. May hold qualifications in their occupational area but not in leadership or management. Has observed management practice but has not applied it.

#### Remaining Gaps

Almost all leadership, management, and people-related KSBs will require full delivery. Project management, performance management, stakeholder engagement, change management, and communication skills all represent genuine development areas. Will need a well-sequenced programme that builds confidence progressively.

#### Training Plan Impact

Full programme scope appropriate. Sequencing should build foundational knowledge (role purpose, organisational context, team dynamics) before introducing more complex topics such as managing change or interpreting strategy. Employer support and coaching conversations will be especially important early in the programme.

KSBs covered: K3, K5, K14

## Experienced team leader with relevant prior qualifications in management or business

SUBSTANTIAL

### Prior Learning

Holds a qualification in a related subject area — such as management, business administration, or leadership — completed at a level broadly comparable to Level 3. Has also been working in a supervisory role for some years.

### Remaining Gaps

Sustainability and net zero responsibilities, equity and inclusion practice as applied in the workplace, digital planning tools, and current regulatory context specific to their organisation are likely to need delivery. The applied skills — particularly S10, S12, S16, S17, S18, S19 — may not have been developed through prior study alone.

### Training Plan Impact

Prior learning can meaningfully reduce the scope of funded delivery for knowledge areas already covered, but the training plan must address applied skills and behaviours in a workplace context. Duration may be shorter than the published 15 months, but must still meet the minimum on-programme period required before gateway.

KSBs covered: K1, K2, K4, K6, K9, K12, K13, K17, S3, S5, S7, S11

## Graduate with no direct management experience

PARTIAL

### Prior Learning

Holds a degree or higher-level qualification in a business, management, or related subject. Strong academic grounding in theory but limited applied experience of leading a team, managing performance, or operating within an employer's procedural framework.

### Remaining Gaps

Practical application of management theory in a real team context is the primary gap. KSBs requiring workplace competence — S1, S4, S9, S10, S14, S15, S16 — will need substantial on-programme development. Knowledge of specific regulation, organisational policy, budgets, and equity and inclusion practice in context will also require delivery.

### Training Plan Impact

Training plan should avoid re-teaching theoretical concepts already covered at a higher level, but must invest in applied, work-based learning opportunities. Employer involvement in setting challenges, structured workplace activities, and reflective practice are particularly important for this profile.

KSBs covered: K4, K6, K9, K12, K13, K20, K21

## Internal transfer from another apprenticeship or structured programme in a related area PARTIAL

### Prior Learning

Has recently completed or is transferring from a programme in a related administrative, customer service, or business area. Has some formal learning in communication, organisational processes, and professional behaviours, with limited leadership content.

### Remaining Gaps

Leadership, people management, performance management, change management, stakeholder engagement, and the strategic dimensions of the team leader role are likely to be largely new. Prior programme content should be reviewed carefully to avoid both duplication and gaps in coverage.

### Training Plan Impact

Training plan should reflect confirmed overlap from prior programme content, agreed with the employer. Delivery should focus on the leadership, management, and strategy KSBs that distinguish this standard from their previous programme, rather than repeating administrative or procedural content already attained.

KSBs covered: K3, K5, K8, K10, K14, S2, S8, S13, B1, B3, B4

## RPL Decision Principles

### **Ground RPL decisions in the specific KSBs of this standard, not in general topic overlap**

A qualification or experience in 'management' or 'business' does not automatically cover the KSBs of this standard. Review what was actually studied or practised against the specific knowledge, skills, and behaviours required — for example, whether prior learning included equity and inclusion practice at work (K23, S17), sustainability responsibilities (K15, K16, S18, S19), or data interpretation and reporting (K20, S3). Broad subject similarity is not sufficient grounds for RPL.

### **Distinguish between knowing and doing — knowledge and applied skill are separate**

For this standard, prior qualifications may evidence knowledge KSBs (e.g. K4 project management tools, K13 change management principles) without demonstrating the corresponding applied skills (e.g. S6 using digital tools to monitor projects, S10 managing others through change). RPL decisions should reflect this distinction, and the training plan should address unevidenced skills even where the underpinning knowledge has been recognised.

### **Use evidence from multiple sources to build a complete picture**

For a team leader, relevant evidence may include prior qualifications, job descriptions, performance reviews, examples of work produced (such as reports, plans, or communications), and discussion with the apprentice about what they actually do. The combination of sources gives a more reliable picture of starting point than any single item. Where prior learning is identified, the outcome should be agreed with the employer and reflected clearly in the training plan.

### **Recency matters for this occupation**

Team leadership practice evolves — approaches to equity and inclusion, sustainability expectations, digital tools, and regulatory requirements change over time. Prior learning that is significantly dated may not reflect current practice, even if the subject content overlaps. Consider whether knowledge gained several years ago remains applicable to the standard as it stands today, particularly for KSBs such as K5, K15, K16, K21, K23.

### **RPL reduces what is taught — it does not change what is assessed**

Removing funded delivery for KSBs already attained is appropriate and required. However, the apprentice must still meet the assessment requirements of the standard's EPA methods. RPL planning and EPA planning are separate activities — do not confuse reducing teaching scope with reducing assessment coverage.

### **Reflect agreed RPL outcomes clearly in the training plan**

Where prior learning reduces the scope of funded delivery, the training plan must document which areas of the standard have been recognised, what remains to be developed, and how the programme has been adjusted. This ensures all parties — employer, apprentice, and provider — share a clear and consistent understanding of what the programme will cover and why.

### **Apprenticeship funds must not pay for competence already attained**

If the initial assessment establishes that an apprentice already holds genuine competence in a specific KSB area — through qualifications, prior work experience, or both — that content must be removed from the funded training plan. Retaining it on the basis of 'reinforcement' or 'confidence-building' is not compliant. The funded programme must represent new learning.

## Compliance Essentials

### Funding Rules

#### **Initial assessment must consider all relevant prior learning and experience against the standard's KSBs before funded delivery begins**

'If prior learning covers specific KSBs, those must be removed from the funded training plan. Where prior learning reduces funded content and hours, the programme price must be adjusted in line with current DfE funding rules and evidenced on file.

#### **The practical period must be at least 8 months after prior learning has been taken into account — and this standard's EPA plan requires at least 12 months on-programme before gateway**

'Both minimums apply. RPL can reduce funded off-the-job learning hours and training content, but the apprentice cannot reach gateway before the EPA plan's 12-month minimum has been met. Plan programme duration accordingly.

#### **Initial assessment must evidence that the individual needs significant new knowledge, skills, and behaviours to achieve occupational competence**

'If initial assessment cannot demonstrate genuine remaining development need, the individual may not be eligible for the apprenticeship. This is particularly relevant for highly experienced team leaders whose existing competence is close to the full standard.

#### **Where prior learning is identified, the training plan must reflect the agreed impact on content, hours, and duration**

'The training plan is the primary record of how starting point assessment has shaped the programme. It must show what has been recognised, what remains, and why the programme is structured as it is.

### Ofsted Expectations

- Ofsted expects providers to establish accurate starting points for every apprentice — not to use a generic or default programme regardless of what learners already know
- Curriculum design should build on what apprentices bring, removing barriers and adapting content so that each learner is genuinely progressing from their starting point
- Inspectors look for evidence that staff are making well-informed assessment judgements — not just completing a process — and that those judgements are reflected in how delivery is planned and sequenced
- Where significant prior experience or qualifications are identified, Ofsted expects the curriculum to reflect that — generic delivery that ignores a learner's starting point is a quality risk

### Documentation Required

- Evidence that prior learning and experience were considered, with a clear record of which KSBs were affected and what impact this had on the funded training plan
- Documentation of agreed changes to programme scope, content, and expected hours, showing how the training plan reflects the individual's starting point
- Evidence that English and maths starting points were considered and that any required provision is included in the training plan where applicable

## Programme Limits

**348**

Published min OTJ hours

**187**

Absolute floor

**8**

Min months

The published programme duration for this standard is 15 months, with 348 off-the-job learning hours as the full programme requirement. RPL may reduce the funded hours below 348, but the apprentice remains eligible provided the remaining hours do not fall below the DfE absolute floor of 187. Where RPL reduces hours, the programme price must be adjusted accordingly. Crucially, this standard's EPA plan requires at least 12 months on-programme before gateway — this minimum applies to all apprentices on this standard regardless of prior learning recognised, and sits alongside the DfE 8-month practical period floor. Providers should not design RPL decisions that bring an apprentice to gateway before the 12-month EPA requirement is met. An apprentice with substantial prior learning whose remaining funded hours fall between 187 and 348 is eligible — do not reject them on the basis of hours alone.

## Common Mistakes to Avoid

### Treating all team leader apprentices as starting from scratch regardless of their supervisory experience

**Risk:** Funded delivery repeats content the apprentice already holds, which is non-compliant. Ofsted may identify this as a failure to establish accurate starting points, and it can lead to audit findings or funding clawback.

**Avoid:** Conduct a thorough initial assessment that explores the actual scope and depth of the apprentice's management experience. Where genuine competence is identified against specific KSBs, remove that content from the funded training plan and reflect this in the training plan.

### Granting RPL on the basis of a job title or qualification title without reviewing actual content

**Risk:** RPL may be given for learning or experience that does not genuinely cover the relevant KSBs, or withheld where it should apply. Both outcomes distort the training plan and risk non-compliance or poor learner experience.

**Avoid:** RPL decisions should be grounded in the actual content and level of prior learning, not the label. Review what was covered against the specific KSBs of this standard before agreeing any RPL outcome with the employer.

### Failing to adjust the training plan to reflect agreed RPL outcomes

**Risk:** The training plan does not reflect the individual's starting point, creating a disconnect between what is planned and what is delivered. This is both a compliance risk and an Ofsted quality concern.

**Avoid:** Once prior learning has been assessed and agreed with the employer, the training plan must be updated before funded learning begins. It should clearly show which areas have been recognised and how the programme scope has changed as a result.

### Confusing RPL scope with EPA assessment coverage — assuming RPL means certain KSBs need not be demonstrated at EPA

**Risk:** The apprentice may be underprepared for their EPA methods, particularly the professional discussion and presentation, which cover a wide range of KSBs. Failure at EPA is a poor outcome for the learner and reflects badly on provider quality.

**Avoid:** Keep RPL decisions and EPA preparation separate. RPL determines what is funded and taught — the apprentice must still meet the full assessment requirements of the standard's EPA methods. Ensure the training plan provides sufficient opportunity to develop and apply all relevant KSBs before gateway, even where some were recognised at the outset.

### Rejecting an apprentice because post-RPL hours fall below the published 348-hour figure

**Risk:** Eligible learners are incorrectly turned away. An apprentice whose remaining off-the-job learning requirement falls between 187 and 348 hours after RPL is still eligible for the programme.

**Avoid:** Understand the distinction between the published full programme hours (348) and the DfE absolute floor (187). An apprentice with significant prior learning may legitimately have a shorter programme. Provided the remaining hours exceed 187 and the programme meets the 12-month EPA gateway minimum, the apprentice is eligible.

**Not considering sustainability, equity and inclusion, or the strategic dimensions of the standard during initial assessment**

**Risk:** These KSBs — including K15, K16, K23, S17, S18, S19 — are often underdeveloped even in experienced team leaders. Failing to identify gaps here means the training plan may not address them, leaving the apprentice unprepared for EPA and underdeveloped in areas the standard explicitly requires.

**Avoid:** Ensure initial assessment explicitly explores the apprentice's awareness and application of sustainability responsibilities, equity and inclusion practice, and organisational strategy. These are not peripheral topics — they are assessed KSBs that must feature in the training plan if genuine gaps are identified.