

The Institute of Animal Technology Education Programme

STEVEN CUBITT
Chair, IAT Board of Educational Policy

Correspondence: info@iateducation.co.uk

Introduction

The IAT was founded in 1950 and has been committed to raising professional standards in the field of Animal Technology and Welfare. We believe the most valuable element for this aim is the education and qualification of Animal Technicians/care staff which promotes both animal welfare and career progression.

The IAT is recognised as an Awarding Body by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) which regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. We offer qualifications that encourage Animal Care staff and Animal Technologists to develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes so that the highest standards of Animal Welfare and good science are maintained. IAT diplomas are flexible enough to be delivered in a range of settings, from small providers to large colleges, in the workplace, classroom or remotely.

The IAT has one of the longest established animal technology training programmes in the world for those pursuing a career in the care of animals used in research.

The Institute has kept its examination and qualifications structure under regular review throughout its seventy two-year history and the current structure is accredited by Ofqual as part of the national UK educational framework, plus the European Qualification Framework (EQF).

IAT qualifications are nationally and internationally recognised.

FE Education

IAT Level 2 Diploma in Laboratory Husbandry

IAT Level 2 Diploma in Laboratory Animal Science and Technology

IAT Level 3 Diploma in Laboratory Animal Science and Technology
(Level 3 trailblazer apprenticeship standards for Animal Technology)

HE Education

IAT Level 4 Diploma in Laboratory Animal Science and Technology

IAT Level 5 Diploma in Laboratory Animal Science and Technology

IAT Level 6 Diploma in Laboratory Animal Science and Technology*

*Qualification for IAT Fellowship (FIAT) and Masters Degree Entry

Individuals who work with animals in research need education and training to develop their knowledge and skills at whatever task they do.

This is aligned with the principles of refinement from the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement), where knowledge obtained through education and training addresses Animal Welfare, recognition of pain and distress and appropriate housing. This requires a structure that allows growth and development of individuals that results in a Culture of Care.

IAT Education (<https://iateducation.co.uk>) enables a professional pathway through its commitment of raising professional standards by ensuring its End Point Assessments (EPA) are delivered by highly qualified industry experts, through a rigorous but fair EPA process. IAT Education works with employers and providers to deliver diplomas and EPAs covering several standards via Levels 2 and 3 modern apprenticeships. The IAT L2 and L3 programmes delivers the knowledge to ensure that the EU Directive requirements on having suitable qualified animal care staff is met. L2 provides the entry



levels for animal care staff to work unsupervised with L3 building on that knowledge/skill base.

The IAT Education and its Educational Providers have found fresh challenges since early 2020, primarily due to restrictions introduced in the UK at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and this has pushed forward changes, flexibility and investment in our systems and delivery.

Blended learning

Much has had to change due to restrictions implemented because of COVID-19. One of the many changes which had to be made quickly was the options for delivering education and assessing student outcomes. IAT Education act as an End Point Assessing Organisation and an Awarding Body, the onus falls upon us to continue to support students and not let them be disadvantaged in any way, even during a pandemic.

In the early days of COVID, it became apparent that the way in which education was delivered and the assessment of students completing apprenticeships needed also to completely change not only to a method that kept all parties safe but also so that the EPA is transparent and can be fully audited.

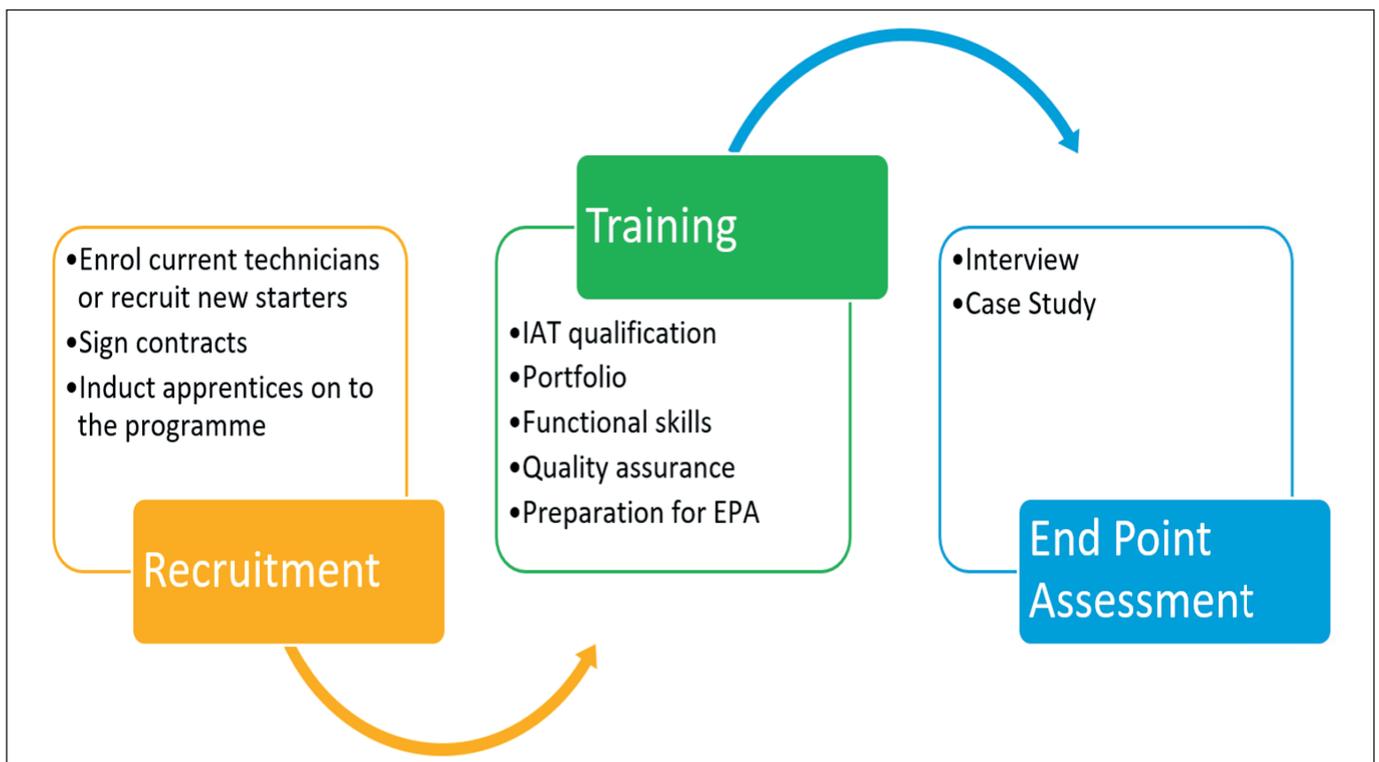
These changes were in two key areas, the first of which was delivery which moved from the classroom to being wholly online, with tutors delivering sessions virtually and by providing online material. This move to a blended style of teaching meant students could complete online work within a time frame, at a time convenient to themselves and in a safe environment.

Animal Technology Apprenticeship

Deliverables of Apprenticeship

Skills

- Handle, sex and health check.
- Demonstrate technical/manual skill to conduct scientific procedures and animal husbandry.
- Apply legal obligations.
- Ethical standards.
- Apply good animal care and welfare (3Rs).
- Recognise pain, suffering/distress.
- Analyse data.
- Recognise and resolve problems.
- Effective communication.



Knowledge to understand

- Business environment and role within.
- How role impacts on others.
- How to conduct scientific/husbandry procedures (SOPs).
- Legal/ethical responsibilities.
- Husbandry/animal management systems.
- Structure/function physiological systems.
- Clinical signs of ill health.

Behaviours

- Commitment to Culture of Care.
- Commitment to ethical standards.
- Commitment to effective team working.
- Confidence to work independently.
- Time management.
- Willingness to handle change.
- Commitment to Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

Remote assessment

Pre-COVID, an assessor would go to the student's place of work, watch them perform given tasks, question them around the ways and background knowledge of what they were doing followed by a more in-depth 'professional' discussion to ascertain the student's broader comprehension of the subject and experience.

How was this achieved during a pandemic? In short, remotely. With the advent of better platforms such as ACE360, Moodle, SharePoint, Zoom and Teams, EPAs were carried out very successfully using remote access. Unforeseen benefits also became apparent. For example, recording the task and interview allowed assessors to revisit the student's answers during the post assessment discussion. Going forward, remote assessment will be useful where students work in restricted barriered areas and the added financial advantages of reducing travel and cost to the student's place of work of providing the EPA.

Although it all seemed very daunting at the beginning, some of the 'flexibilities' which have arisen in response to the pandemic have worked so well that The IAT is currently working with government education agencies (Ofqual and Institute for Apprenticeship Standards) to embed these remote assessment techniques permanently in the Standards we assess and award.



Next year (2023) we deliver HE in a new format using rules of combination allowing Animal Technologists to be educated in specialist areas.

A radical change with new online platforms that will allow access across Europe and Internationally to 39 different units.

1. These can be taken individually as CPD.
2. Rules of Combination.
3. To gain degree and IAT Fellowship.

2023-2024 will see the launch of the new HE system and we will be holding a Graduation ceremony at our new centre which has fabulous teaching laboratories and facilities.



HE Graduation