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Correspondence

ESFA Update further education: 29 April 2020

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-29-april-2020/esfa-update-further-education-29-april-2020>

1. Latest information on coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Department for Education (DfE) has published guidance about COVID-19 in educational settings for staff, parents and carers, pupils and students

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>) on GOV.UK.

Please check GOV.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-schools-and-other-educational-settings>) regularly for updates.

There is also guidance on the apprenticeship service about COVID-19

(<https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/sections/360003793119-Coronavirus>).

2. Information: post-16 provider relief scheme

The post-16 provider relief scheme (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-post-16-provider-relief-scheme>) opened on Friday 24 April. It is available to training providers with contracts for services that were procured as a service under the Public Contract Regulations 2015.

The purpose of the Relief Scheme is to ensure training providers can continue to deliver high quality education and training to make sure we have the skills needed to rebuild our economy post COVID-19. This also includes supporting new learners where possible to get the skills they need to progress.

Training providers will need to demonstrate that they have a need for the funding requested in order to maintain capacity within their organisations to support learners and respond to the economic recovery. If successful, you will later need to provide a summary of how the funds have been used, and retain evidence, for audit purposes, that the providers have delivered activities prescribed by the scheme and that the funds have been used for eligible costs. We reserve the right to recover unused funds or funds used inappropriately.

The closing date for applications is 30 April 2020 at midnight and providers will be notified if they are to receive support on or around 15 May 2020.

3. Information: qualification funding approval 2020 to 2021

We have published the principles that we will use to approve qualifications for funding (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/qualification-funding-approval>) in the funding year 2020 to 2021. This guidance document brings together the approval principles and processes for qualifications funded through:

- ESFA funded adult education budget (AEB)
- offers for students aged 14 to 16 and 16 to 19 (previously known as Section 96)
- advanced learner loans
- European Social Fund (ESF)

It sets out how and when we will publish funding approval information for approved qualifications.

We have also published the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding (<https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/>). This website contains funding approval information for all qualifications that we have approved for funding through the funded offers listed above.

If you have any further queries, please use our contact form (https://form.education.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?form_uri=sandbox-publish://AF-Process-f9f4f5a1-936f-448b-bbeb-9dcdd595f468/AF-Stage-8aa41278-3cdd-45a3-ad87-80cbffb8b992/definition.json&redirectlink=%2Fen&cancelRedirectLink=%2Fen&consentMessage=yes).

4. Information: procured adult education budget (AEB) including 19-24 traineeships and advanced learner loans bursary (ALLB)

Earlier this month, we explained what we would do about year end reconciliation for grant funded providers in receipt of ESFA funded AEB, including 19-24 traineeships and ALLB fund for 2019 to 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision/maintaining-education-and-skills-training-provision-further-education-providers>).

We can also confirm that for providers funded through a contract for service for AEB and ALLB, we will remove the financial year controls set out in the funding and performance management rules for 2019 to 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/adult-education-budget-aeb-funding-rules-2019-to-2020>).

This means we will pay any over delivery in the August 2019 to March 2020 period by utilising the April 2020 to August 2020 period funding, up to the full 12 month contract value. The commitment to fund delivery up to 103% of adult skills and 110% of traineeships contract values will still apply over the full funding year.

If you have any questions, please contact us.#

5. Information: new flexibilities for EPAs during COVID-19

New flexibilities to make it easier for end-point assessments (EPAs) to take place during the COVID-19 outbreak have been introduced.

The new temporary flexibilities, are set out in this list published by IfATE (<https://t.co/rEhFQ6Gtuh>).

The flexibilities, which may include remote assessment in areas previously assessed through face-to-face contact, have been introduced to ensure apprentices can progress normally where possible, while maintaining high-quality standards.

Remember that furloughed apprentices can also still take their EPAs, as long as they meet the correct conditions. More information about the delivery of assessment is available in:

- Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's guidance for COVID-19 (<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/response-to-covid-19/>)
- Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's FAQs (<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/covid-19-information-regarding-apprenticeships/covid-19-faq/>)

If the information you want is not included in IfATE's guidance, or the FAQs, please send a question to Enquiries.IFA@education.gov.uk and IfATE will come back to you as quickly as possible.

If ATE will continue to update all COVID-19 related guidance to reflect the evolving situation and advice. We recommend that you refer back to the guidance regularly, as it may include updated information.

6. Information: ESFA apprenticeship agreement for training providers - amendment

In response to industry feedback, from June the ESFA will issue variations to the 2020 apprenticeship agreements for training providers which were issued in March. The variation will vary the required level of professional indemnity insurance from £10m to £5m.

7. Information: review of apprenticeships carry-in allocations for the 2019 to 2020 funding year

When we issued apprenticeship carry-in (non-procured) allocations for the 2019 to 2020 funding year in July 2019, we committed to review allocations in spring 2020. We have now completed this review and contract variations will be issued shortly to providers who are in scope for an increase.

To calculate increases, we have used the R08 data return (March data submitted during April). To be in scope for an increase you need to have delivered more than your August 2019 to March 2020 contract value or 66.67% of your full year allocation (this is the standard national profile for March).

In October 2020, we will review delivery against carry-in allocations and will fund any delivery above allocations.

Where necessary, we will allocate funds beyond 31 July 2020 to ensure you can continue to fund apprentices that have not completed their apprenticeship by then. We will let you know your carry-in allocation for the 2020 to 2021 funding year in the summer of 2020.

8. Information: minimum standards for all-age apprenticeships 2018 to 2019

In line with our published policy on minimum standards (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/minimum-standards-2018-to-2019>) we have reviewed providers' achievement data published in the National achievement rates tables for 2018 to 2019 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/national-achievement-rates-tables-2018-to-2019>).

Where the provider has failed to meet the minimum standard achievement for all-age apprenticeship provision, we will be taking positive action to challenge this situation. Our position on minimum standards is to continue to be rigorous in driving up the quality of apprenticeship delivery.

We will be writing to all providers from next week on our proposed action for those providers that have failed all-age apprenticeship minimum standard for 2018 to 2019.

9. Information: IDAMs super users contingency planning for loans agreements

We plan to issue advanced learner loans agreements at the end of April for academic year 2020 to 2021. These will need to be signed by the end of May 2020. Please consider increasing the number of contract approvers your organisation has to ensure agreements are signed promptly and funding can continue to flow.

You can access Manage your education and skills funding (MYESF) (<https://skillsfunding.service.gov.uk/>) on your smart phone if you are working remotely.

10. Action: migration of the application programme interfaces (API)

We have recently begun the process of migrating its online resources and legacy websites with the former sfa.bis.gov.uk universal resource locators (URL) address over to the new education.gov.uk address.

In the ESFA Update 4 March 2020 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esfa-update-4-march-2020/esfa-update-further-education-4-march-2020>) we included an article covering the migration of two URLs that were scheduled for migration, and would require users to take action:

- the ESFA developer hub, the portal where developers can register an account to access and test our application programme interfaces (API), was successfully migrated over to the new URL <https://developers.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk> (<https://developers.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk>) on Friday 6th March 2020. To continue to access accounts on the Developer Hub users will need to use this new address.
- migration of the API onto the new URL <https://apis.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/> (<https://apis.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/>) has now also been completed, however the former sfa.bis.gov.uk URL will remain functional during a two month transition period. To ensure there is no interruption to your systems you will need to update all applications you have created using the API , with the new URL before Monday 1 June 2020.

If you have any queries, please contact the Apprenticeship Service on 08000 150 600.

11. Information: National Careers Service Virtual Jobs Fair

The National Careers Service is launching a Virtual Jobs Fair on Monday May 4th to promote local vacancies and support citizens to get back into work. The Virtual Jobs Fair will travel round different regions and give employers the chance to post current opportunities on their social media which the National Careers Service will promote on their channels during #JobsHour.

We are calling on employers get involved and maximise the reach of their vacancies by using #JobsHour. You can view the timetable of the Virtual Jobs Fair below and follow our social media channels @NationalCareers (<https://twitter.com/NationalCareers>) and NationalCareersService (<https://www.facebook.com/NationalCareersService>) to find out how to get involved as we post more details throughout the week.

Virtual Jobs Fair

Timetable

National
Careers
Service

			
①	London	4 May	11am
②	West Midlands & Staffordshire	4 May	1pm
③	East of England & Buckinghamshire	5 May	9am
④	South East	5 May	11am
⑤	North East & Cumbria	5 May	1pm
⑥	South West & Oxfordshire	6 May	11am
⑦	Yorkshire & Humber	6 May	1pm
⑧	North West	7 May	11am
⑨	East Midlands & Northamptonshire	7 May	1pm

#JobsHour

Location	Date	Time
London	4 May	11am
West Midlands and Staffordshire	4 May	1pm
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South East	5 May	11am
North East and Cumbria	5 May	1pm
South West and Oxfordshire	6 May	11am
Yorkshire and Humber	6 May	1pm
North West	7 May	11am
East Midlands and Northamptonshire	7 May	1pm