Department for Education
Education & Skills Funding Agency

Guidance

Guidance for apprentices, employers, training providers, end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) and external quality assurance providers about changes to apprenticeships due to coronavirus (COVID-19)

Updated 2 June 2020

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Updates

- Information on which apprentices should be prioritised in the offer of face-to-face training in line with the Prime Minister's announcement that further education settings can broaden the number of 16 to 19 learners attending on-site delivery from 15 June. More information can be found in the apprentices returning to train in an educational setting section of the guidance.
- The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education have put in place a flexibility that enables apprentices to take end-point assessment (EPA) ahead of receiving their calculated functional skills qualification results later on in the summer. More information can be found in the EPA flexibility for functional skills qualifications (FSQs) section of the guidance.

General information

These are difficult times for employers, apprentices and providers of apprenticeship training and assessment. As part of the cross-government efforts to respond to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is implementing new measures, until further notice, to make it easier for apprenticeships to continue and complete in a different way if they need to, or to break and resume an apprenticeship later when that becomes possible.

This document sets out guidance and some temporary flexibilities that we are introducing to the programme during the outbreak, and provides answers to questions related to these changes and other common questions. It also gives information on apprenticeship training and assessment following the Prime Minister's announcement setting out the steps to restart the economy, and the safer working guidance published on 11 May 2020. Our information should be read alongside the government's COVID-19 guidance and support for businesses.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) has also published new guidance on the delivery of assessment.

This document includes information on:

- how apprenticeship training and assessment can continue in line with the new safer working guidance
- delivering apprenticeships flexibly to those working at home
- furloughed employees continuing apprenticeship training and end-point assessment (EPA), or starting an apprenticeship
- applying the policy on breaks in learning
- delays to EPA
- alternative arrangements and flexibilities for EPA, external quality assurance, and certification
- extensions to contracts for training providers with existing procured contracts
- funding audits and evidence

Specifically, we are:

- supporting employers, providers and apprentices to work together to mutually agree where and how this training takes place. This includes in the workplace where a provider is able to do so safely and where that workplace meets new 'coronavirus (COVID-19) secure' guidelines on ensuring the workplace is safe. It also includes training taking place in educational settings in line with the new the guidance on wider opening from 15 June 2020 and guidance for further education providers
- confirming flexibilities to allow furloughed apprentices to continue their training, and to take their EPA, and to all existing furloughed employees to start a new apprenticeship, as long as it does not provide services to, or generate revenue for, their employer
- encouraging training providers to deliver training to apprentices remotely and via e-learning as far as is practicable. Allowing the modification of EPA arrangements, including remote assessments wherever practicable and possible. This is in order to support employers, providers and end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) to maintain progress and achievement for apprentices
- clarifying that apprentices ready for assessment, but who cannot be assessed due to coronavirus (COVID-19) issues, can have their EPA rescheduled. Apprentices whose gateway is delayed can have an extension to the assessment timeframe
- enabling employers and training providers to report and initiate a break in learning, where the interruption to learning due to coronavirus (COVID-19) is greater than 4 weeks
- confirming that, where apprentices are made redundant, it is our ambition to find them alternative employment and continue their apprenticeship as quickly as possible and within 12 weeks
- confirming that, where apprentices are made redundant and are ready to go through gateway, providers and EPAOs are able to make the necessary assessment arrangements to support these apprentices
- confirming that we are extending the transition period onto the apprenticeship service. Funds available for new starts on non-levy procured contracts can now be used until 31 March 2021. All starts will be through the apprenticeship service from 1 April 2021

Our objective for these measures is to support all employers to retain their apprentices and to support apprenticeship training and assessment providers to continue to deliver services to apprentices where possible, so that they may progress and complete their apprenticeships as planned. This guidance will help all parties to plan with more certainty through this difficult period of disruption.

This guidance and these measures start immediately and apply until further notice, unless otherwise stated.

As users of this document will understand, this information, and any changes we are making, are being developed during a time of rapid social and economic developments. We are keeping the developing situation, and our guidance, under review, and will continue updating this guidance as new information is available and/or the situation evolves.

We have also broken down some of this guidance into articles for employers, training providers and EPAOs, as well as articles for apprentices. These can be found on our Apprenticeship Service Help page.

Unfortunately, we cannot address individual scenarios or circumstances. For queries not covered by this guidance, please contact the apprenticeship service helpline by telephone on 08000 150 600 or email at helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk.

Overview

Government measures to support businesses and employees

Apprentices and their employers, and training and assessment organisations as businesses, are able to access the government's package of measures to support businesses to withstand the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Find details of this support.

We have recently published guidance on how the government's package of financial support can be accessed by further education and apprenticeship providers. This can be found at Coronavirus (COVID-19): financial support for education, early years and children's social care.

We are continuing to working closely with HM Treasury to monitor how the support packages are benefiting training and assessment organisations and to consider any further action which may be required, and in line with Cabinet Office guidance we are introducing targeted financial support measures in the form of a provider relief scheme. The purpose of the scheme is to retain capacity within the apprenticeships and adult learning sector to deliver the skills we will need to support economic recovery post-outbreak. As part of that, we also want to support providers to maintain delivery to and support for existing learners and employers and, where possible, enable new learners to enrol. Details of the provider relief scheme are available at ESFA post-16 provider relief scheme.

Find additional advice and guidance from ACAS.

Apprenticeship programme response

In this difficult time, employers, training providers and EPAOs are doing their best for their workforce. We want to support that by ensuring that, wherever possible, apprentices can continue and complete their apprenticeship, despite any break they have to take as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). High-quality apprenticeships will be a vital contributor to the economic recovery that will follow the outbreak. We are committed to working with training providers, EPAOs, and external quality assurance (EQA) providers, to mitigate the impacts of this disruption and maintain the integrity of apprenticeships.

Our flexibilities will make it easier for apprentices to continue as an apprentice, by enabling them to take a break from their learning, or do their learning or assessment in a different way to that originally planned, even if they are put on furlough by their employer. As well as ensuring that employers will still have the skills they need for the future, it means that they can temporarily redeploy apprentices without ending their apprenticeship.

Apprentices returning to work

Recently, new 'COVID-19 secure' guidelines have been made available to UK employers to help them get their businesses back up and running and workplaces operating as safely as possible. The new guidance, published on 11 May, covers 8 workplace settings which are allowed to be open.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement setting out the steps to restart the economy, we understand that some apprentices may be returning to work and able to continue or restart their training in the workplace.

To ensure that we are supporting as many apprentices to continue their apprenticeship as possible, new arrangements will be supported alongside the existing flexibilities about where apprenticeship training is delivered. Remote training should remain the predominant mode of learning for most apprentices during this time. However, where a provider is able to do so safely, apprenticeship training can be delivered in the workplace where the apprentice is a critical worker or is returning to work, where that workplace meets new 'COVID-19 secure' guidelines on ensuring the workplace is safe.

We support employers, providers and apprentices working together to mutually agree where and how this training takes place.

Apprentices returning to undertake EPA within assessment centres

To ensure that apprentices can work to complete their apprenticeship, new assessment arrangements will be supported alongside the existing flexibilities about how apprenticeship assessments are delivered. Where remote assessments can take place, meaning apprentices can stay home, these are preferable.

If there is no option to take the assessment remotely, and an assessment centre meets the safer working guidance, then apprentices can travel to them to undertake their EPA. EPAO's should also refer to the guidance on wider opening from 15 June 2020 and guidance for further education providers as relevant to the provision of EPA to ensure they are implementing the appropriate protective measures for education and childcare settings.

Apprentices returning to train in an educational setting

On 24 May the Prime Minister announced that further education (FE) settings (including general further education colleges, sixth form colleges, and other providers) should plan on the basis that, subject to the government's 5 tests being met, from the week commencing 15 June, they can broaden the number of 16 to 19 learners attending on-site delivery, in line with the guidance on wider opening from 15 June 2020 and guidance for further education providers. This includes apprenticeship training taking place in any educational setting, including training centres within employer-providers.

From the week commencing 15 June, providers should offer some face-to-face contact for 16 to19 year old apprentices where possible and practical, as part of a combined approach in which remote training remains the predominant form of training.

To help reduce the coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission risk, the FE guidance (on wider opening from 15 June) asks that the number of FE learners attending at any one time is limited to a quarter of those on the first year of a 2 year 16 to 19 study programme. Vulnerable young people and children of critical workers, within this cohort, are to be counted within the attendance limit. However, vulnerable young people and children of critical workers outside of this cohort (who might already be in full-time attendance) do not count towards the attendance limit and can continue attend.

Apprenticeship training taking place in educational settings should also be prioritised for 16 to 19 apprentices. We support offering face-to-face contact to any 16 to 19 apprentice, although training providers may decide to offer face-to-face training to certain groups of 16 to 19 apprentices, for example those who:

- are on the first year of an apprenticeship
- require face-to-face training to help them complete their apprenticeship
- have upcoming key assessment dates and would therefore particularly benefit from face-to-face training

Although we support that main face-to-face contact is prioritised for 16 to 19 apprentices, there may be some apprenticeships that include apprentices within a classroom-based training environment that are over 19. Providers can choose to allow apprentices who are over 19 to attend, but should continue to prioritise 16 to 19 apprentices. If older apprentices attend on site delivery, the maximum number of 16 to 19 year olds attending on site at any one time must be reduced to ensure the setting remains within the overall limit.

Educational settings must adhere to the principles set out in the guidance on protective measures in educational settings.

Detailed guidance for training providers and employers

So that we can support users of this information to be clear on what is changing, and the steps that can be taken, the information in this document is necessarily technical in places.

Disruption to training

Because of illness, caring responsibilities, and operational disruption, apprentices may be unable to attend training, and training providers may be unable to deliver training, over the coming weeks or months. This will create significant implications for apprentices and employers, as well as for training providers and EPAOs whose income may be disrupted.

This may be necessary:

- for an individual, due to illness or self-isolation, or challenges in getting to their place of employment or location for training provision
- for an employer, due to a temporary need to redeploy apprentices to different roles
- for a training provider, due to challenges in providing training or assessment due to staff absences or closure of facilities

Changing apprenticeship learning arrangements

We are encouraging and supporting employers, and training and assessment providers, to make use of distance-learning tools wherever possible and practicable to do so.

Breaks in learning

Apprenticeship funding rules already make provision for disruption in learning:

- less than 4 weeks – in these circumstances neither the employer, nor the training provider, needs to report the interruption, the end-date for the apprenticeship remains the same and there is no change to the payment of funding
- more than 4 weeks – in these circumstances, employers and/or training providers must report a formal break in learning. Where a break in learning is reported, the payment of funding to the training provider will be suspended for the duration of the break in learning

Where breaks in learning are required, it is our goal that apprentices are able promptly to resume their apprenticeship and continue to successful completion of EPA.

Funding rules currently state that a break in learning must be initiated by the apprentice. Employers and training providers can now, temporarily, also report and initiate a break in learning where the interruption to learning is greater than 4 weeks.

Payments to training providers

Apprenticeship training providers will continue to be paid retrospectively for the training they have delivered and can evidence. Data should continue to be submitted via monthly individualised learner record (ILR) submissions and records retained for compliance and audit checks. The ESFA reserves the right to recover funding which was claimed for and paid to the training provider but for which the training provider was found not to be eligible.

Where learners take breaks in learning, training providers must report this in line with the guidance below. Training providers will not receive payments for learners who are on breaks in learning.

Where the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak results in loss of income due to ceased or reduced delivery of training, training providers should consider their eligibility and apply for the wide range of financial support that HM Treasury has already announced for businesses. Read about the substantial package of support for businesses.

Arrangements for disrupted training delivery in March

As a result of coronavirus (COVID-19), there will have been cases where training providers have delivered training during March, but had to suspend this training before the end of the month. It is likely that this training will have been suspended knowing that the interruption will last longer than 4 weeks, and will constitute a break in learning.

Where training was delivered in March but a break in learning began before the end of March, to ensure payment for these apprentices, training providers should:

- include these learners in their March ILR submission as on programme
- record, retain and submit evidence in the usual way
- record a break in learning in their April ILR submission (the date should be 1 April or later so as not to affect the March payment)
- ensure that these learners are not recorded as permanently withdrawn from their apprenticeship by entering the 'Completion status' field of the ILR as '6', denoting that the learner has temporarily withdrawn from learning due to an agreed break in learning

Training which cannot be delivered in March but for which the training provider receives payment should be delivered within the remainder of the apprenticeship and the previously agreed total cost of the apprenticeship before the planned end-date. Where the apprenticeship does not resume, and the training provider has received payment for training in March, which was not delivered and cannot be delivered in the future, ESFA reserves the right to recover payment.

Arrangements for April and beyond

For a break in learning greater than 4 weeks that begins on or after 1 April:

- the training provider should report this in their April ILR submission using the last day in learning or in the month in which the break of learning commenced
- the apprenticeship should be 'paused' by the employer through the apprenticeship service at the point the break in learning begins. The employer should not 'stop' the apprenticeship through the apprenticeship service as this will prevent it resuming subsequently

When the apprentice, training provider and employer are all ready for the apprenticeship to resume (after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pause), training providers should update their ILR data in line with section 5.4 in the training provider support manual, to ensure accurate recording and earnings calculations. Training providers will not receive funding payments for apprentices during a break in learning.

For the avoidance of doubt, during breaks in learning it is not necessary for apprentices to comply with the minimum of 20% off-the-job training requirement. When the break in learning ends, and training resumes, the 20% off-the-job training requirement will apply over the remaining amended duration of the apprenticeship.

Disruption to assessment

In order to maintain progress, achievement and delivery of EPA, we are working with IFATE and Ofqual to introduce some flexibilities. This will enable apprentices to complete their apprenticeship in the event of disruption to assessment.

EQA providers remain responsible for assuring consistency and quality of assessment. EPAOs should engage with EQA providers throughout and agree arrangements in advance where remote assessment replaces face-to-face assessment, or where a simulated environment is to be used.

Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment and cannot be assessed due to coronavirus (COVID-19) related issues will be able to have their EPA rescheduled. Where there is a specified time limit for EPA after gateway, a further pause of 12 weeks is allowable.

Apprentices whose gateway is being delayed are allowed a break in learning, with an extension to the assessment timeframe. The training provider is required to record this in the ILR.

EPAOs may also propose to EQA providers modifications (rather than substitutions) to specified assessment methods provided that they do not compromise quality or the intention of the assessment. The authority for any flexibilities remains with IFATE, to whom any modification proposals should be referred.

Payments to EPAOs

Apprenticeship training providers will continue to be paid retrospectively for the training and assessment that has been delivered and can be evidenced, and they should continue to pay EPAOs (in line with their contractual arrangements) for assessment activity that has been delivered. Data should continue to be submitted via monthly ILR submissions and records retained for compliance and audit checks. This submission should include an accurate record of the cost of EPA. The ESFA reserves the right to recover funding which was claimed for and paid to the training provider, but for which the training provider was found not to be eligible such as where an EPA has not taken place.

Where learners take breaks in learning, training providers must report this in line with the guidance below. Training providers and EPAOs will not receive payments for learners who are on breaks in learning.

Where the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak results in loss of income due to ceased or reduced delivery of training, EPAOs should consider their eligibility and apply for the wide range of financial support that HM Treasury has already announced for businesses. Full details of this substantial package of support can be found at Financial support for businesses during coronavirus.

New EPA flexibilities

In addition to the general flexibilities allowed by the IFATE, EQA providers have to date agreed additional flexibilities to the delivery of EPA which apply to more than 100 apprenticeship standards. These flexibilities have the potential to allow thousands of apprentices to undertake EPA, despite the current operating constraints.

The list of standards with temporary discretions or flexibilities can be found at List of standards with temporary discretions or flexibilities.

The IFATE continues to work with EQA providers to understand where other standards require such measures to be put in place and regularly update the list of standards to reflect the latest position.

More details of the above direction on the delivery of assessment can be found in the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's guidance for COVID-19 and its FAQs.

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.

IFATE will continue to update all coronavirus (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.

EPA flexibility for functional skills qualifications (FSQs)

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has put in place a new temporary flexibility that enables apprentices to take EPA ahead of receiving their calculated FSQ results later on in the summer.

The flexibility enables apprentices, who would otherwise be stuck at gateway pending their FSQ, to pass through gateway and take their EPA.

This flexibility, which has immediate effect, applies to:

- all apprentices due to take an FSQ test and receive a result in the period starting with 20 March and ending with 31 July
- those apprentices that are deemed by their training provider to have the required level of functional skills and sufficient evidence to demonstrate this to receive a calculated FSQ pass
- occupationally competent apprentices at gateway who are ready to progress to sit their EPA

This temporary measure supports qualifying apprentices to complete their EPA without undue delay. Apprentices will only achieve their apprenticeship once they have passed EPA and received their FSQ pass. Training providers will therefore be expected to provide prompt confirmation of the apprentice's FSQ calculated results to EPAOs once these have been awarded. Further guidance for training providers, EPAOs and employers can be found at Apprenticeship gateway and resits for EPA.

Ofqual's coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance

Ofqual have published guidance for EPAOs where they are the EQA provider.

Qualification certificates

We are aware that awarding organisations are currently unable to issue certificates confirming that apprentices have completed the necessary qualifications to go through gateway.

Therefore, as a temporary arrangement, we support providers and employers in accepting a confirmation email from the awarding organisation as evidence of achievement. To ensure authentication emails must contain the following information:

- learner details
- certification run date
- unique number

In due course the awarding organisation will issue the formal certification.

Disruption to employment

Where apprentices are furloughed (granted a leave of absence), they are permitted to continue with their training where their provider can continue to deliver this remotely.

Where apprentices are placed on unpaid leave (not furloughed), or where the nature of their employment changes and no longer supports their apprenticeship, the apprentice, employer and training provider should consider whether a break in learning would be appropriate. (See section above on breaks in learning.)

Where apprentices are made redundant, it is our ambition that they will be supported to find alternative employment and continue their apprenticeship as quickly as possible and within 12 weeks. We will keep under review whether this 12-week period should be extended.

Apprenticeship funding rules already make provision for apprentices who are made redundant, so that wherever possible, they can continue their apprenticeship and proceed to EPA. (See P271-P273 in the funding rules for main providers 2019 to 2020 for further details).

Where an apprentice is made redundant, the training provider must support the apprentice to find another employer. In instances where a significant number of apprentices are made redundant (for example, because a large employer faces difficulties), the ESFA will attempt to provide exceptional practical support to the apprentices and training providers to secure alternative employers for the individuals. It is hoped that the government's substantial package of financial support for business will prevent such significant redundancies, but we will keep arrangements under review and consider whether there are circumstances in which the ESFA may need to provide additional support to apprentices and training providers.

Furloughed apprentices

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) allows employers to claim for 80% of furloughed employees' (employees on a leave of absence) wages, up to a maximum of £2,500 a month, plus the associated Employer National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contributions.

A furloughed employee can take part in volunteer work or training, as long as it does not generate income for the employer. If it does, the furloughed employee's wage can be claimed include apprenticeship pay for training.

Where their provider can continue to deliver training remotely, a furloughed apprentice can therefore continue their apprenticeship while furloughed.

Where training is undertaken by furloughed workers, at the request of their employer, the employer can claim for the cost of the training, as long as it does not lead to work or income. For training lasting longer than a month or a week in length, up to the value of £3,500, with provable staff members to cover those training hours. However, where training is undertaken by furloughed workers at their own request, they can not claim training, employers will not pay the additional wages.

The £1,500 will continue in its current form until the end of July 2. the government announced on 29 May 2020 that employers will be able to claim an additional £1,000 per furloughed worker for a maximum bonus, working out £1,500 per. the bonus is announced for 12 May from August, employers currently using the scheme will have to pay National Insurance and employer pension contributions back to work for the working support from this time.

This will run for three months from August through to the end of October. Employers will be asked to pay contributions towards the salaries of their furloughed staff. Small employer payments will subsidise the contribution the government is currently making to furloughed employees' salaries, which will be reduced from 80% to 60% a month. Plan specific details and information around implementation will be made available by the end of May.

For additional information read HTMCL's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme summary.

Functional skills requirements

As part of Coronavirus flexibilities, apprentices must achieve a level 1 in both English and Maths before they can complete their apprenticeship. Functional skills assessments are also required to study towards, and attempt, the functional skills assessment at level 2.

Ofqual have published their approach to assessment for vocational and technical skills qualifications, including functional skills. Ofqual have said that, for functional skills, functional skills assessments this summer will receive a calculated grade. In light of this guidance, and the fact that scheduled functional skills assessments are not taking place, the Institute has agreed that, for apprentices who have met all other functional skills requirements at level 2, it is essential/ temporarily. This will allow apprentices, employers, providers, and EPA organisations, to focus on other key elements of the apprenticeship during this difficult period.

Therefore, apprentices who are due to take their EPA on and 31 July 2020 could be passed through gateway to sit their EPA without the need to attempt the level 2 functional skills assessment. Apprentices who are due to complete their gateway and EPA in September and beyond, have 3 assessments due to consecutively (EPA, Level 2 apprentice will only require a level 1 functional skills in English and/or maths in order to be eligible for gateway, and EPA). The position is July 2020 for consideration whether the suspension should continue.

The temporary suspension applies to both apprenticeship standards and frameworks.

Apprentices undertaking a level 2 or higher apprenticeship are still required to hold or work towards a functional skills qualification, but if they are unable to complete these can automatically complete their apprenticeship.

Ofqual has also confirmed that it will extend the equalisation and data for levers functional skills qualifications in English and maths to 31 December 2020.

Not levy procured apprenticeships contracts

Contract extensions were issued to training providers at the beginning of March as the Pandemic was unfolded and crisis hitting service, with a latest date of 31st March.

Training providers with existing procured contracts received extensions to these same contracts, which cover the existing financial year (2020-21). These extensions will be issued on the same terms as previous apprenticeships as well as new apprenticeship starts, with the exception of the 20% off-the-job training requirement. Training providers will be able starts to be funded through the apprenticeship service from 1 November 2020.

In light of the challenges being faced by providers and employers as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has extended the transition period for the various. Funds available for new or in-flight procured contracts can now be used until 31 March 2021.

Following this extension an alert will be issued through the apprenticeship service from 1 April 2021. Contract variations will be issued in the summer to support providers and performance management rules will be confirmed in the autumn term.

We remain committed to giving smaller employers greater control over their apprenticeship choices by moving towards a system in which employers select apprenticeship standards, choose their training provider and secure access to funding through the apprenticeship service. Implementation of this will be kept under review this means, work three employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy can now access funding for training and assessment of apprentices. Training is funded through a provider with an existing Government contract (now extended until 31 March 2021).

Audit

Prior to the Prime Minister's announcement of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown measures on Monday 23 March 2020, we made the decision to pause the start of any new routine funding audits for all parent 16 providers for the starts, as well as for the continuation of audits. This will be kept under review and we will cover the period for, at least, the duration of the lockdown.

Where funding audits and investigations were already in progress, we have sought to complete the work, taking into account providers' capacity to resolve any issues and understand the challenges providers face as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) and the subsequent lockdown measures and restrictions on movement.

A key lens reviewed for the 2019/20 contract providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in order to continue to maintain effective oversight and protection of public funds. We will continue to review our approach to audit and investigations as the challenges providers face as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) evolve.

We will continue to monitor and review the situation in the light of the circumstances. When the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown measures are eased and we are able to return to office based working across the country, we will assess when it is appropriate to restart routine funding audits.

Frequently asked questions and further information

These questions and answers will be updated regularly in line with advice from central Government, the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) and Public Health England (PHE).

For queries not covered by this guidance, please contact the apprenticeship service helpline. They can be reached by telephone on 0800 015 0400 or email helpdesk@apprenticeships.service.gov.uk.

Apprenticeship training frequently asked questions

Apprentices who are still working

1. Due to business continuity measures, all staff are required to be available at their usual place of work in their usual job role. How can my apprentices continue their learning?

If your apprentices are required to attend their usual place of work in their usual job role (critical workers), there are several options available:

- apprentices could engage in digital or distance learning when their agreed working hours
- they could be offered additional on-the-mentor support
- they could be offered a temporary change of duties than 4 weeks while still completing by their planned end date
- they could take a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more and re-calculate the planned end date upon their return to learning

2. I am having to move critical worker staff into different and/or business critical roles that aren't related to their apprenticeship. What happens to their apprenticeship if they can't continue training?

Apprenticeship training must be delivered in a way that the individual is undertaking a role that is directly related to their job role and apprenticeship training. Employers must ensure that apprenticeship and continue to successful completion of EPA at a future date. Employers should discuss with their training provider or contact their assigned apprentice. Employers and training providers can now temporarily vary or suspend or initiate a break in learning where the interruption to learning is greater than 4 weeks. Employers should discuss with their training provider and agree the best course of action where a training are more or less than 4 weeks, and if that break continues during an office March.

3. I am having to move critical worker staff into different and/or business critical roles that are connected to their apprenticeship. Can they continue training?

While apprentices can continue in their programme, they should not count towards the minimum 20% off-the-job training entitlement. Off-the-job training can already be delivered in a variety of ways, including: Distance learning, Online learning, Virtual classrooms, observation, distance learning, etc. Lord mayor provides have developed digital training material in response to coronavirus (COVID-19). If a critical worker apprentice cannot complete their apprenticeship, they will need to be made redundant. Apprentices, Employers and training providers can now temporarily vary or suspend or initiate a break in learning where the interruption to learning is greater than 4 weeks. Employers should discuss with their training provider and agree the best course of action where breaks in learning are more or less than 4 weeks, and if that break continues during an office March.

4. I am having to move critical worker staff into different and/or business critical roles that are unrelated to their apprenticeship. Can they continue training?

Where apprentices can continue in their programme, they should not count towards the minimum 20% off-the-job training entitlement. Off-the-job training can already be delivered in a variety of ways, including: Distance learning, Online learning, Virtual classrooms, observation, distance learning, etc. Lord mayor provides have developed digital training material in response to coronavirus (COVID-19). If a critical worker apprentice cannot complete their apprenticeship, they will need to be made redundant. Apprentices, Employers and training providers can now temporarily vary or suspend or initiate a break in learning where the interruption to learning is greater than 4 weeks. Employers should discuss with their training provider and agree the best course of action where breaks in learning are more or less than 4 weeks, and if that break continues during an office March.

5. Apprentices who are self-isolating, caring for family members, or sick

6. If I need to self-isolate, what will happen to my apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships have been designed to be responsive to changes in apprentices' circumstances, including illness or caring for others. If you need to self-isolate, please talk to your employer and training provider about the best way to continue with your apprenticeship or report a break in learning.

Options include:

- an increase in steaming
- a short pause of less than 4 weeks in your apprenticeship while you are self-isolation. This will reflect the planned end date of your apprenticeship
- a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more, which will re-calculate your planned end date. This will result in the planned end date for your apprenticeship being re-planned upon returning to learning to take into consideration the duration of your break in learning
- or re-initiating a planned assessment activity for a later date

The appropriate steps will be agreed based on your and your employer training provider's situation.

7. I need to take care of myself/a family member. Can I continue my apprenticeship learning at home?

Yes, this may be possible, depending on your apprenticeship and whether a learning is agreed with your training provider. Please check their website or contact them to discuss your options.

Options include:

- an increase in steaming
- a short pause of less than 4 weeks in your apprenticeship while you are self-isolation. This will reflect the planned end date of your apprenticeship
- a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more, which will re-calculate your planned end date. This will result in the planned end date for your apprenticeship being re-planned upon returning to learning to take into consideration the duration of your break in learning
- or re-initiating a planned assessment activity for a later date

The appropriate steps will be agreed based on your and your employer training provider's situation.

8. What do I do if I think an employee is at risk of being unable to work (especially in a health setting)?

Employers should follow the government's guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19).

9. If I can't work/attend training, will I still be paid?

An apprenticeship is a job with training, so even when you are not able to do your training, you are still employed, unless you have been notified otherwise by your employer. You will be paid in line with the details in your employment contract.

Apprentices who are furloughed may be able to undertake training and learning that is ancillary or any. The government is currently exploring ways of supporting furloughed staff to return and pay the wages of employees (including apprentices) during the coming months.

10. My provider has put my apprentice on a break in learning because they can't deliver training. As the apprentice is working as normal and I want their apprenticeship to continue, can I override this break in learning?

We have committed to supporting training providers continuing to be paid retrospectively for the training that they have delivered and can deliver. Where training providers are able to continue to deliver training, we expect that they will continue to continue delivery, an apprentice must be on a break in learning if they are unable to undertake their training. Training providers will be able to claim for the training continuity of training where provider and for some. this may take some time. If you have concerns, we encourage you to discuss these with the provider.

Apprentices who are working at home

9. My employer is enforcing a work from home policy and my classroom provision has been withdrawn. What are my options?

If you are unable to attend a face-to-face training events, there are several options available to you:

- your training provider may provide digital or distance learning
- you can take a short pause if it is delay your apprenticeship can resume in less than 4 weeks and you will also be able to complete your apprenticeship in the planned date
- you can take a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more which your training provider will need to re-calculate your planned end date for your apprenticeship. Your apprenticeship training is paused upon returning to learning, to take into consideration the duration of your break in learning

Please talk to your employer and training provider to agree the appropriate steps for your circumstances.

You should already be receiving your off-the-job training activity using an approach agreed with your training provider. Please continue to use this in the coming weeks.

11. When an apprentice is working from home, can we count anything they do as off-the-job training?

Off-the-job training is a statutory requirement for an English apprenticeship. It is training which is recognised as training during the apprenticeship and is in addition to the training that the apprentice will need to undertake to be competent in the occupation (assessing relevance) in the apprenticeship agreement.

Off-the-job training must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship. It can also now be delivered more flexibly. Including remote working.

Employers may set expenses training hours when they're working from home. but where these are not directly linked to the apprenticeship. It cannot be classed as off-the-job training.

12. Can I change training provider if they are offering more on-line/digital delivery?

A change in training provider can occur at any time, although it is likely to be more difficult in the current climate.

When an apprentice and employer start working with a new training provider, activity should take place to ensure that the apprenticeship programme and apprentice are suitable for the new training provider and include:

- initial assessment of the apprentice
- completion and signing of agreements

Evidence must be collected and retained to support this activity but can be held in a digital or electronic format.

13. Will training providers be paid more for rescheduling off-the-job training and bringing it forward?

No, the normal monthly payment profile will apply over the length of the apprenticeship, as it currently does without deviation from the agreed profile or more evenly spaced training. Providers should factor this in if they are considering a change to the delivery methodology. Flexibility.

14. Will employers and training providers need to revise the price of the apprenticeship if the delivery method is changing?

The price of an apprenticeship is negotiated and agreed upon by an employer and training provider. Any changes to the price of the apprenticeship should be agreed if a change is price. then this should be discussed and amended.

We accept that this might be challenging in the current environment and so, while we would encourage normal changes to be recorded, we understand that it may be possible to do it immediately.

Employer providers will need to ensure that they are only claiming for the actual costs incurred throughout the apprenticeship and that these might now have changed.

Apprentices who are furloughed

15. Can training continue for furloughed apprentices?

Yes, where apprentices are furloughed, they can continue to train for their apprenticeships, as long as it does not provide services for or generate revenue for their employer.

17. Why should I continue my learning if I can't attend my place of work?

We do not want the disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak to prevent apprentices continuing to learn where this is still possible. We want to help apply the learning straight away bright young talent some challenges, but there are benefits to continuing with training where possible. This will ensure that skills development and progression that can all be applied to the job once it is safe and practical to do so.

18. Will I be paid for continuing my learning if I have been furloughed?

Yes. While furloughed you will still be paid by your employer and pay leaves from your income. While you cannot undertake work for your employer while on furloughed leave, you can undertake training and learning. Your employer may choose to continue to pay you the appropriate minimum wage for the time spent training. This will be covered as part of your furloughed payment in the first instance.

Your time spent training must be paid at the appropriate minimum wage. Where the training is undertaken during your normal working hours, your employer can include the total amount of your time spent training, during the furlough period. your employer should top up your furlough payment.

19. As an employer how will I know if I need to top up an employee's wages if they are furloughed but continuing with their apprenticeship?

Where training is undertaken by furloughed employees, at the request of the employer they are entitled to be paid at least their appropriate National Minimum Wage for this time spent training. Training undertaken at the request of the employer is work for the purposes of the NMW, and provides sufficient income to cover these costs. However, where the overall time spent training during the furlough period, attract a higher rate than the furlough payment, the employer is responsible for making up the additional wages. This is because time spent training is treated as working time for the purposes of the minimum wage calculations, and therefore must be paid at the appropriate rate. Taking into account the number of hours spent training in the furlough period.

Employers should consider the hours that an employee is expected to train during the period of the furlough and must be a 3-week minimum). Employers should then calculate the amount of pay that the employee should receive for those training hours. Where the entire furlough payment equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage for the training hours that the employee is undertaking, the employer will need to pay the additional sum required to bring the total payment to the minimum wage is paid for the time spent training.

Our worked example illustrates how to calculate whether the furlough payment equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage entitlement for time spent training.

Example 1:
18 year old first year apprentice is a 37 hours per week contract and has been furloughed. They are continuing to train for 1 day per week (7.4 hours).

In terms of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) regulations they are entitled to £4.35 per hour. Meaning that the NMW legislation does not apply to the time they are working.

Over the 3 weeks furlough period (the pay reference period) this amounts to an NMW entitlement of £93.24 (£4.35 x 7.5 hours x 3 weeks).

The 80% furlough payment that they have received from their employer is £268. This furlough payment provides sufficient income to cover the NMW.

Example 2:
22 year old second year apprentice is a 37 hours per week contract and has been furloughed. They have agreed, with their employer and provider, to train for 4 days per week (29.6 hours) over 3 weeks. Training is undertaken during their normal working hours (9-5 pm).

In terms of the National Minimum Wage regulations they are entitled to £8.20 for every training hour. (Note that the NMW legislation does not apply to time spent training at work).

Over the 3 weeks furlough period (the pay reference period) this amounts to a NMW entitlement of £728.28 (£8.20 x 29.6 hours x 3 weeks).

The 80% furlough payment that they have received from their employer is £736.96. This furlough payment does not provide sufficient income to cover the NMW. Meaning that the employer would need to top up the difference (£8.68).

There is both cases above the apprentice, prior to furlough, was paid slightly to the National Minimum Wage.

20. Where an apprentice is furloughed can they and their employer still take part in a progress review?

Yes, where apprentices are furloughed, they can continue to train for their apprenticeships. This can include progress reviews for a proportion of their time spent training.

If the employer (line manager) is also furloughed, then we appreciate that arranging a progress review may be more difficult at the current time. We would encourage them to about the progress of the apprenticeship, they are able to take part in the discussion.

21. Can a furloughed apprentice use work technology (laptop etc) to access apprenticeship off-the-job training?

Yes, a work laptop can be used to access apprenticeship training if this is the only option, but the apprentice must be furloughed at the time of their activity and furloughed they must not carry out their normal work.

22. Can a furloughed apprentice listen in to (without taking part in) a work-related meeting / discussion to aid off-the-job training?

Apprentices who are continuing to train for their apprenticeships can access services for a general revenue for their employer. If an employer wants to pass on information or what an apprentice can do while on furlough they should speak to the HMRC helpline.

Apprentices who are made redundant

23. My employer is making me redundant. What happens to my apprenticeship?

Please speak to your training provider if you are made redundant as your apprenticeship may be at risk of being ended.

Your training provider may still be able to offer training, based on your circumstances, in the short term. They may want to be able to support you or finding a new employer.

If that move becomes permanent, you could choose to see which alternative apprenticeship your apprentice can transfer to or find apprenticeship Training and take with your training provider in your way.

24. What funding support is currently available to support redundant apprentices?

The existing funding support relating to redundancy is outlined in the table below. In addition to the funding support, a package of practical support is currently being put together and information will follow on this shortly.

Apprentice circumstances	Funding support
Apprentice is able to continue training	We will fund 100% of the training cost of the pre-redundancy apprentice (no provider and the employer contribution, as the training provider)
	Within this 6-month period
Apprentice is between 6 months and 12 months	If the apprentice has a pre-redundancy training delivery date completed from apprenticeship, we will fund the training cost of the post-redundancy apprentice
	If the apprentice leaves a job with an employer which is not related to the apprenticeship, we will continue to fund training
Apprentice is between 12 months and 18 months	We will fund the training cost of the pre-redundancy apprentice (no provider and the employer contribution)
	Within this 12-month period
	If the apprentice has a new employer where they are a student their apprenticeship, we will continue to fund training

If the apprentice does not qualify at an employer which is not related to their apprenticeship, we will contact the training provider to arrange a refund.	
Apprentice is more than 6 months into their apprenticeship, and qualifies for a full payment	If it was envisaged in a full-funded letter (3 weeks), the apprentice is withdrawn from the apprenticeship, and the training provider is contacted to arrange a refund. If not, we will wait for the remaining months of the apprenticeship before and qualify for full payment.
	We will wait for the remaining months of the prior-negotiated between the provider and the employer, and qualify for a full payment.
Apprentice is more than 6 months into their apprenticeship, and does not qualify for a full payment.	Within the 12 week period	
	If it was envisaged in a full-funded letter, the apprentice is withdrawn from the apprenticeship, and the training provider is contacted to arrange a refund. If not, we will wait for the remaining months of the apprenticeship before and qualify for full payment.
	If the apprentice does not qualify at an employer which is not related to their apprenticeship, we will contact the training provider to arrange a refund.
	If it was envisaged in a full-funded letter (3 weeks), the apprentice is withdrawn from the apprenticeship, and the training provider is contacted to arrange a refund. If not, the apprentice is waiting for 12 month minimum duration.

Apprentices who are on unpaid leave

25. My employer is asking me to take a period of unpaid leave. What happens to my apprenticeship during that time?

Many employers who had planned to use apprentices to take unpaid leave during this period are now able to access the government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and receive financial support to keep you employed. You should speak to your employer about this if you are concerned about your job. Your apprenticeship training and your status is now considered to be furloughed. There is no action to be furloughed apprentices in this document.

If you are still being asked to take unpaid leave, then you can take a break from your apprenticeship and resume when you return to work. Please get in touch with your training provider to let them know what is happening.

Once you return, at work also can resume your apprenticeship, which is a training provider can help with too. You should refer any queries around pay and conditions, including wages, to your employer in the first instance.

ACAS may also be a good source of information.

26. What happens to the apprentice during a period of unpaid leave in terms of monies, do they have access to universal credit?

Through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all UK employers will be able to access grants to cover 80% of furloughed workers' wages. This will be backdated to March and would otherwise have been cut off during this crisis. HMRC will notify the 1.9 million of furloughed workers wage costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.

Alternatively, Universal Credit may be available for both workers and the unemployed alike, as long as they meet the other conditions of entitlement (including that the claimant's savings are below £16,000). Those who are furloughed, or self-employed, may be entitled to access Universal Credit during a period of unpaid leave. They may also have access to Universal Credit even if they were working and being paid. Being laid off or even hours could increase the rate of Universal Credit entitlement.

Apprentices on unpaid leave may also be eligible for other benefits.

Recruiting new apprentices

27. Can an employer recruit a new member of staff into the business as an apprentice?

Yes, an employer can recruit and start apprentices as they would have done prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Training providers are still able to carry on as well and the provider is still able to support the training.

It is important to note that an employer can only claim for furloughed employees that were on PAYE payroll on or before 19 March 2020. Therefore, it would not be possible for an employee to recruit an apprentice after this date where the intention is to furlough this person immediately and claim wage support from the CJRS.

28. Can an existing member of staff start an apprenticeship whilst they are furloughed?

Yes, a furloughed member of staff can start an apprenticeship, but they must still meet the criteria set out in the furlough guidance issued by HMRC and furlough the eligible rules. If employed, the apprenticeship must be a real job, the candidate must require a programme that has a minimum training duration of 12 months, with a minimum of 20% of their working time spent on training, and the apprenticeship must meet the requirements for a new apprentice. The provider should consider how they would assess the ESFA of the identity and eligibility of the individual, and how they would carry out the initial assessment.

29. Are the evidence arrangements around obtaining learner signatures being relaxed during coronavirus (COVID-19)?

When starting a new apprenticeship, and throughout training, signatures are required to form part of the evidence pack. Examples of where the funding rules ask for evidence of signatures to be retained are:

- the apprenticeship agreement
- the commitment statement
- the training plan and/or subcontracts
- evidence linking to additional payments such as additional learning support and the care leavers bursary
- contracts for services
- agreements that an apprentice has passed all gateway requirements

It is expected that when providers already have a digital/electronic signature process, they must continue to utilise their existing processes in accordance with the respective delivery plan.

Providers who have no digital or electronic signature arrangements in place to capture learner or employer signatures (for, under normal circumstances, a wet signature is required for recruitment and evidence of continuing learning, it wet signature is created when a person physically 'marks' a document).

Providers who have no digital or electronic signature and for recruiting learners during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and ensuring evidence difficulty in obtaining learner or employer wet signatures. Therefore, where providers do not have systems and processes in place for electronic/digital signatures, during the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions we will allow confirmation/evidence to be obtained through email.

Providers should ensure that they have a record of receipt of an email/record or adoption of a physical document/message in their records.

Acceptable alternative evidence includes:

- an email from the learner and/or employer's email address with details of the apprenticeship they are undertaking, and the date they agreed to it
- a typed name on an electronic form or document emailed from the learner and/or employer
- a signed document attached to an email from the learner and/or employer
- photo taken on a smartphone/tablet of the signed document attached to an email from learner and/or employer

We are allowing providers to use the type of statements confirmation during the period of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, as long as they are in line with existing electronic processes exist. This is not to be used as alternative evidence as part of the provider's business as usual process once the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions are lifted.

Following the period of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, providers using the above alternative evidence will need to ensure that they have a robust process in place to retrieve relevant documentation. Providers must ensure that all alternative evidence replacing wet signatures received during the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions is genuine and verifiable, and the evidence is retained for audit purposes.

Apprenticeship levy and service frequently asked questions

The apprenticeship levy

30. Will levy payments be paused for employers?

The apprenticeship levy is an important part of our aim to raise apprenticeship quality and employer engagement with training. It is a key part of our funding system. We will, as ever, to HM Treasury has no current plans to pause the collection of the apprenticeship levy because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) disruption.

The Chancellor has set out an unprecedented package of support for businesses and employers and stands ready to announce further action whenever necessary.

31. Will you increase the time available to employers to spend their levy funds?

Employers already have 24 months in which to spend their levy funds before these expire. For now, we do not intend to make any changes to current arrangements.

32. I am a levy-payer with funds in my account. Why can't my funds be used to continue to pay the provider even though they can't deliver training? This will help them cope with the financial impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Where training cannot take place for any reason, an apprentice must be put on a break in learning. We can at a leaning the individual will still be employed and continue as an apprentice, and they can continue working, but we cannot pay for training delivery that isn't taking place.

Where the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak results in loss of income due to caused or staff absence, employers may be eligible for financial support. Details of the support for the wider range of financial support that HM Treasury has already announced for businesses. Read the support for business guidance.

33. I am a non-levy paying employer recruiting for/with apprentices due to start. Can I still go ahead and reserve funds on the system?

Employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy are able to reserve apprenticeship training funds and co-invest in training via the system. Read apprenticeship funding for employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy guidance.

34. What happens to my funding reservation as a non-levy employer if my apprentice can't start?

Reservations will expire if they are not turned into a commitment within 3 months of the apprenticeship start date, delayed for 3 months. When a commitment is needed and a previous reservation has expired, a new reservation must first be made.

35. Can you release early the 20% completion payment that would normally be withheld until the end of apprenticeship training to manage cash flow challenges faced by training providers?

This requirement applies to the delivery of apprenticeship training and assessments for the entire range of financial support that HM Treasury has already announced for businesses. Read the support for business guidance.

36. Should employers use the 'Stop' or 'Pause' apprentice facility in the apprenticeship service?

In circumstances related to coronavirus (COVID-19), employers should use the 'Pause' function in the service. Employers must ONLY use the 'Stop' function when they are certain that training will not resume at any point. Using 'Pause' will stop payments automatically, but allow the employer and apprentice to resume the apprenticeship later date.

We are reviewing options to simplify the process of re-starting apprentices on the service, including to facilitate a transfer to a different apprenticeship or employer in due course.

Apprenticeship assessment frequently asked questions

End-point assessment (EPA)

37. I am on a fixed-term contract which would ordinarily have gone enough time to complete the training and the EPA. If the training is delayed, and I have not completed my EPA before I leave employment, can I do the EPA afterwards?

Yes, if you are delayed when you are taking your EPA, or where a break in learning has been necessary, and the planned end-date for your apprenticeship has had to move back, please speak to your employer and training provider. We would expect them to work with you to complete your training and EPA. Options also include revisiting your apprenticeship agreement and commitment statement. We will keep this under review as the situation evolves.

38. What will happen if I am not well enough to take my EPA?

If you are unwell, or in a period of self-isolation, and unable to attend your EPA, please contact your training provider as soon as you are able, to allow them maximum time to re-schedule your assessment.

39. I have been furloughed, can I still take my end-point assessment?

Yes, where apprentices are furloughed, they can sit their EPA providing that they meet the conditions for furloughed apprentices.

40. Gateways are being delayed and we cannot complete the EPA in the required timeframe. Can we extend the EPA timeframe due to the current disruption?

Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment, and cannot be assessed due to exceptional delays, or coronavirus (COVID-19) related measures, are allowed to have a break before being their EPA and for the EPA to be rescheduled.

Training providers should work with employers to agree a reasonable date. The assessment plan (EPA) guidance, EPAOs are responsible for agreeing extensions to EPA timeframes during the current disruption. EPAOs should work closely with ESA providers to ensure that quality of EPA is maintained. For apprentices whose gateway is being delayed, the training provider must report this as a break in learning in the ILR.

41. Where the EPA plan states that assessment must be conducted face-to-face, but cannot be under the current circumstances, can we conduct these remotely?

Where an assessment method requires face-to-face engagement, this can be conducted remotely, subject to the following conditions:

- arrangements are cleared in advance by the ESA provider
- the apparatus is identity is verified
- remote tests are supervised by an appropriately trained invigilator or assessor who
  - has the necessary qualifications, training or experience
  - has been briefed on the instructions to the invigilation, preparation or line management of the apprentice
  - appropriate technology and systems are in place

The requirement applies to the independent assessor, apprentices is to be taken into consideration to ensure a fair and reliable assessment of its qualified competence. Where an independent assessor is not available, the employer should take the lead in action. An extension of 3 weeks is allowable for those EPA plans where it has been (14 x specified from gateway to EPA. It is to be logged on and shared with ESA providers on a timely basis.

42. How will invigilation of assessments be conducted remotely?

Remote tests should be supervised by an appropriately trained invigilator or assessor who has the necessary qualifications, training or experience, and has been briefed on the instructions, preparation or line management of the apprentice.

Tests must only be carried out within a supervised and controlled environment and EPAOs must ensure that all existing means security requirements and that the details of invigilation are recorded and available for confirmation by ESA providers.

43. What will happen if an apprentice's line manager has been furloughed and their employer is unable to confirm their readiness to take EPA with their training provider and EPAO?

If the person who would normally sign an apprentice off as ready to take their EPA has been furloughed and there is no suitable alternative, we support providers to make the gateway decision. This temporary arrangement can only be relied upon where the employer is furloughed and unable to be contacted. Providers should be satisfied that gateway requirements and is ready to sit their EPA. Where this is not the case then the EPA should be rescheduled.

Apprentice whose gateway is delayed can have an extension to the assessment plan.

44. If the current situation continues for a long period of time, would you consider awarding the apprenticeship without the EPA?

We would not consider this to be appropriate at the current time. Our intention is to safeguard the quality of apprenticeships, and at this time we believe that the EPA is an important part of that.

ESA providers have agreed flexibilities which apply to over 60 standards from Actuarial Analyst to Zoo Keeper, from Groom to Vet to Rail Core Worker. These flexibilities have potential to allow thousands of apprentices to undertake EPA, despite the current operating constraints.

45. How are the ESFA monitoring the number of cancelled and postponed EPAs?

EPAOs are an important element to delivering quality apprenticeships. In order to support them, and the wider market, to meet the future demand, we have asked and continued to encourage EPAOs to continue to run the EPA recording all coronavirus (COVID-19) related EPA cancellations.

We sent each organisation on the register of end-point assessment organisations a copy of the template return, which should be sent back to the apprenticeship service mailbox.

This information will help us to understand and manage the post-coronavirus (COVID-19) pipeline of apprenticeship assessment.

46. We can deliver part of the EPA, but some sections require direct observation. How do we deal with these components?

These elements of the EPA will need to be rescheduled if they cannot be undertaken safely. Where a part of the EPA has been completed successfully and is part of the assessment plan, the EPAO should seek agreement from the ESA provider. Where a specified assessment method for a specific standard might be adjusted without compromising the integrity of the assessment, the EPAO and ESA provider should discuss this option with their ESA provider, who may refer to the ESFA for advice. This substitution of assessment methods is not considered appropriate at this time.

With the prior authority of their ESA provider, assessors may be conducted in an appropriate simulated environment, such as a training facility.

47. Can EPAs be staggered to ease pressure on EPAOs?

It is the responsibility of the end-point assessment organisation to agree the schedule of EPAs with the ESA provider, taking into account the organisation's capacity and check if there is a time limit for the assessment taking place following gateway.

Where an EPA cannot be undertaken immediately, a pause and rescheduling might be the only action. An extension of 3 weeks is allowable for those EPA plans where a time limit is specified from gateway to EPA. It is to be logged on and shared with ESA providers on a timely basis.

48. Apprentices are ready for EPA but can't take it. Should they be paid more than the apprenticeship minimum wage now?

An apprentice is classed as an employee and therefore, the minimum wage applies. Apprentices must be paid at least the apprentice minimum wage, but an employer can choose to pay an apprentice more than this, all employers must comply with National Minimum Wage legislation.

Functional skills requirements

49. What evidence do I need to provide to show the apprentice did not take the level 2 English and/or maths functional skills test before entering them for EPA?

You should add a claim logic to the evidence pack for the apprentice explaining that the test was not taken due to revised guidance during coronavirus (COVID-19).

50. Will there be a requirement to go back and take the level 2 functional skills test after the apprenticeship has been achieved?

Studying and taking the test for intermediate apprentices is suspended until July 2020, and we are considering how we will support those who have completed their EPA and apprentices who are unsuccessful. Employers who go back and take the level 2 functional skills test.

51. What does this mean for the arrangement for gateway prior to EPA?

We want to make it as straightforward as possible to continue EPA. Lifting the rule to take the test for intermediate (level 2) apprentices should help them to progress to EPA during the coronavirus (COVID-19) disruption.

52. What about the level 2 English and maths exit requirements for level 3 and higher apprenticeships?

This requirement applies to intermediates (level 2) apprentices only. Apprentices undertaking a level 3 or higher apprenticeship are still required to hold or achieve an approved level 2 English and maths qualification before they can successfully complete their apprenticeship.