Part of
Education and childcare during coronavirus

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 14 July 2020

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Updates

- from 13 July, in addition to a limited number of HE-to-apprentice apprenticeship on-site delivery, providers can now make arrangements for 16+ apprentices to return to on-site delivery, subject to local lockdowns and restrictions, and in line with the government's guidance for working safely in educational settings
- confirmation that where an apprentice has been made redundant, but is continuing their apprenticeship with a new employer, the apprentice will be able to use their existing skills and eligibility to finish their apprenticeship under the furlough scheme
- announcement that we will be launching a service for redundant apprentices. Read more about the new service for apprentices
- the temporary flexibility suspending the funding rule requirement (Apprenticeship Funding Rule: Section 1 Paragraph 1 Section 2) has been extended from 31 December 2020 until 31 December 2021
- we have added two new frequently asked questions to answer:
  - what happens if an apprentice's employer is furloughed or has made redundancies during the apprenticeship programme. The rules form part of the terms and conditions for the use of funds in an employer's apprenticeship service account or for government employer co-investment
- this document, however, sets out guidance and some temporary flexibilities to the apprenticeship programme, which are being made available to support the delivery of apprenticeships in 2020 and beyond, and provides answers to questions about recent changes and other continuing questions. Some of these flexibilities, introduced during the period of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, including those for end-point assessment, guidance should be implemented from 25 March 2020 to 31 July 2020 to support continuing training rules, which can be found on the apprenticeship funding rules page.

This document also gives information on apprenticeships that have been impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, including those in the healthcare, nuclear, emergency services, and the armed forces sectors, and provides information and guidance on continuing training and other changes and other continuing questions. Some of these flexibilities, introduced during the period of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, including those for end-point assessment, guidance should be implemented from 25 March 2020 to 31 July 2020 to support continuing training rules, which can be found on the apprenticeship funding rules page.

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

General information

These are difficult times for employers, apprentices and providers of apprenticeship training and assessment. We have introduced a temporary flexible approach to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19). The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is implementing new measures, with further notice, to make it easier for apprenticeships to continue and for employers to access the benefits, of value and support, of apprenticeships even when times become possible.

The usual apprenticeship funding rules apply to non-providers, employer providers, training providers and assessment organisations, and we will continue to make payments associated under the apprenticeship programme. The rules form part of the terms and conditions for the use of funds in an employer's apprenticeship service account or for government employer co-investment.

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

We have also broken down some of this guidance into articles for employers, training providers, apprentices, as well as articles for assessment organisations and External Quality Assurance providers.

Unfortunately, we cannot address individual scenarios or circumstances. For queries not covered by this guidance, please contact the apprenticeship service helpline by telephone or through the email at apprenticeships@education.gov.uk.

Overview

Government measures to support businesses and employees

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

We have recently published guidance on how the government's package of financial support for employers and employees affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) will be delivered. Find details of coronavirus (COVID-19): financial support for employers and employees.

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 support that may be needed. We are also working with the sector and have established a partnership to assist training providers, employers, and apprentices to access the support available. We are also working with the sector to develop a sector-wide offer to assist employers to recruit and support apprentices who are made redundant, including those who are furloughed, and to support training providers and employers, and apprentices, affected by redundancies, to continue training and assessment. Details of the provider-relief scheme are available at ESFA and HE provider relief scheme.

Find additional advice and guidance from IfATE.

Apprenticeship programme response

In this difficult time, employers, training providers and EPAOs are doing their best for their apprentices and their businesses. We know that, for many, training and assessments can continue and complete their apprenticeship, but we also know that it may have to take a result of coronavirus (COVID-19). High-quality apprenticeships will be vital to the UK's economic recovery. We are working with the sector, and are committed to working with training providers, EPAOs, and employers and External Quality Assurance providers, to mitigate the impacts of this disruption and maintain the integrity of apprenticeships.

Our flexibilities will make it easier for apprentices to continue on an apprentice, to complete their training and assessment, and for employers to continue training and in a different way to that originally planned, even if they are put on furlough or become redundant. We hope that employers will also take the skills they need for the future and recruit, and they can temporarily redeploy apprentices without ending their apprenticeship.

Apprentices returning to work

Returning, new, COVID-19-specific guidance has been made available for UK employers to help them get their businesses back on and running and workplaces operating as safely as possible. Find the guidance, published on 11 May, and the 'return to workplace' which are allowed to be open.

Following the Prime Minister's announcement setting out the steps to restart the economy, we have published guidance on what may be returned to work and to continuing and starting training and assessment.

To ensure that we are supporting as many apprentices to continue their apprenticeship as possible, local employers will be supported to continue training and assessment, and about where apprenticeship training is delivered. Remote training should remain the default for apprenticeship training and assessment, but it may be safe and practical for providers to able to do so safely, apprenticeship training can be delivered in the workplace or workplace where the apprentice is a critical worker or is returning to work, where that workplace meets new COVID-secure guidelines or employer-led training is delivered.

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 end-point assessment their apprenticeship, new assessment arrangements will be supported alongside the existing flexibilities about how assessments can be undertaken, including, for example, using remote or virtual assessment, or adapting assessments to take place in the workplace.

If there is no option to take the assessment remotely, we will consider on a case-by-case basis, where the safety and health of apprentices can be kept to the minimum, and in line with the government's guidance for working safely in educational settings from 25 June 2020 and the government's guidance for working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in offices, that they are implementing the appropriate protective measures for education and childcare settings.

Apprentices returning to train in an educational setting

From the week commencing 15 June, further education settings have been able to broaden the number of 16-19 learners attending on-site delivery, in line with the government's guidance for working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) in education and childcare settings. This includes apprenticeship training delivery in educational settings, including training for 16-19 apprentices.

Training providers, including FE colleges, providers could offer some face-to-face contact for 16-19 year-old apprentices where possible and practical, as part of a blended approach in which remote training remains the predominant form of training.

To help manage transmission of the coronavirus (COVID-19), the FE guidance for wider opening from 15 June) stated that the number of FE learners attending at any one time is to be reduced to no more than 50% of the usual number. This 50% limit does not include apprentices pursuing end-point assessment or virtual learners, which should not be counted within the attendance limit. However, vulnerable young people and children of key workers should be included in the 50% limit, and apprentices who are vulnerable do not count towards the attendance limit and can continue attending.

From 13 July, in addition to the limited number of HE-to-apprentice apprenticeship on-site delivery, providers can now make arrangements for apprentices to return to on-site delivery, where they can safely be accommodated.

Any additional attendance on-site must be properly risk assessed in line with health and safety legislation, the safe working guidance, and guidance on protecting vulnerable educational settings, including managing the number of learners in attendance at any one time and how they should be kept safe from other learners and staff.

Providers should still apply a 25% limit to the number of 16-19 learners attending at any one time, and should continue to use remote learning for the majority of their learners. Providers should also continue to use remote learning for apprentices who are vulnerable or who are shielding (see guidance for further education providers), with all apprentices being able to continue to undertake their training remotely.

Detailed guidance for training providers and employers

To support users of this document to understand what is changing and the steps that should 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 because:

- for an individual, due to illness or self-isolation, or challenges in getting to their place of work or education for training sessions
- for an employer, due to temporary lack in relevant work for apprentices
- 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, need to do anything to record the break in learning, the apprentice remains the same and there is no change to the payment of training
- more than 4 weeks - in these circumstances, employers and/or training providers should record the break in learning on the apprenticeship service, and the payment of training for training providers will be suspended for the period 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 recorded by the apprentice, Employers and training providers can now, temporarily, also report and initiate a break in learning where the break in 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 on-delivery. Data should continue to be submitted via monthly individualised learner record (ILR) submissions and records retained for audit purposes in the usual way. Training providers will be able to claim for training delivered and paid for before the coronavirus outbreak for which the learning has not found not to be eligible.

Where apprentices are on breaks in learning, training providers must report this in-year through the ILR and should not claim for training delivery and payments for apprentices on breaks in learning.

Where the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak results in loss of income due to paused or reduced delivery of training, training providers should consider their eligibility and apply for the provider relief scheme, which is being administered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Furthermore, Read about the suspended number of months for breaks in learning.

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. In these cases, training providers should submit evidence that the relevant staff and learner days of assess, and will continue to claim for training.

There is nothing was delivered in March but a break in learning taken before the end of March, training providers should not claim for payments.

Where training providers have delivered training in March, but have had to suspend training before the end of March, training providers should claim for training and payments for the month but to be eligible.

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Where apprentices are on breaks in learning, training providers must report this in-year through the apprenticeship service as they are present in ensuring apprenticeship training.

When the apprentice, training provider and employer are able and ready, the opportunity to resume (after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pause), training providers should report the apprentice as ready to work, and the training provider should, in consultation with the employer, 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 has been lifted, the 20% off-the-job training requirement will apply once the remaining prescribed 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 continue their apprenticeship and to complete their end-point assessment.

IfATE provides vision responsibility for securing consistency and quality of assessment. EPAOs should engage with Ofqual providers throughout and agree arrangements to ensure that the assessment is conducted in a way that is fair to the apprentice, and ensure a calculated assessment is fair and consistent.

Apprentices who are deemed ready for end-point 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 period of 12 weeks is allowable.

Apprentices whose gateway is being delayed are allowed a break in learning, with an extension to the maximum duration. The training provider needs to notify the ESFA.

EPAOs may also propose to Ofqual providers modifications (rather than substitutions) to assessment methods, where it is not practicable to use the original method, with 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 they have delivered and on-delivery. Training providers will continue to claim and continue to pay EPAOs (in line with their contractual arrangements) for apprentices activity that has been delivered. Data should continue to be submitted via monthly ILR submissions and records retained for audit purposes in the usual way. Training providers should include an accurate record of the end of EPA. The ESFA will continue to recover funding which was claimed for and paid to the training provider, but for which the end of EPA trailer was found to be ineligible or not to be paid to the EPAO.

Where learners take breaks in learning, training providers must report this in-year through the ILR and should not claim for training delivery and payments for apprentices on breaks in learning.

Where the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak results in loss of income due to paused or reduced delivery of training, training providers should consider their eligibility and apply for the provider relief scheme, which is being administered by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

Furthermore, Read about the suspended number of months for breaks in learning.

Arrangements for apprenticeships in the healthcare sector

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 and may then pay no training or the student's share for end-point assessment
- the training provider should pay the apprentice's share of the end-point assessment service or the payment for the training leaders. The employer should report the apprenticeship through the apprenticeship service as they are present in ensuring apprenticeship training

When the apprentice, training provider and employer are able and ready, the opportunity to resume (after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pause), training providers should report the apprentice as ready to work, and the training provider should, in consultation with the employer, 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 has been lifted, the 20% off-the-job training requirement will apply once the remaining prescribed duration of the apprenticeship.

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New EPA flexibilities

In addition to the general flexibilities allowed by the IfATE, ESFA provides here to date agreed additional flexibilities to the delivery of EPA which apply to more than 100 apprentices and EPAOs. Ofqual, IfATE and ESFA are working with EPAOs to consider further flexibilities, which will be provided shortly after the current operating procedures.

The list of standards with temporary discretions or flexibilities can be found at: end-of-complete-end-temporary-discretions or flexibilities.

The IfATE continues to work with ESFA providers to understand where other standards may be affected and to put in place and regularly update the list of standards affected by the coronavirus.

More details of the dates/duration for the delivery of assessment can be found in the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education's guidance on the delivery of EPAOs.

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

IfATE will continue to update all coronavirus (COVID-19) related guidance and provide the existing situation and advice. We recommend that you refer back to the guidance regularly, as it may include additional flexibilities.

EPA flexibility for functional skills qualifications (FSQs)

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has put in place a temporary flexibility for functional skills qualifications (FSQs) as part of the wider temporary flexibilities for end-point assessment, as set out in the guidance.

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

This flexibility, which has immediate effect, applies to:

- all apprentices who have an FSQ that will prevent them from achieving a result in EPA and starting with 31 March and ending with 31 July
- apprentices who have completed their training provider to have the required level of functional skills and sufficient evidence to demonstrate this to receive a calculated FSQ score
- apprentices who have completed apprentices of gateway who are ready to progress to of their EPA

This temporary measure supports qualifying apprentices to complete their EPA without undue delay. Apprentices will only receive their apprenticeship certificate after they have EPA and received their FSQ score. Training providers will therefore be expected to continue supporting apprentices who are in this situation to achieve their FSQ once there have been assessed. Further guidance for training providers, EPAOs and employers can be found at Apprenticeship gateway and exits for EPA.

Ofqual's coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance

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

Qualification certificates

We are aware that awarding organisations are currently unable to issue certificates to those learners who have completed the necessary qualifications to be awarded a qualification.

Therefore, as a temporary arrangement, we support providers and employers in accepting a statement of achievement from awarding organisations in place of an assessment. A statement of achievement should 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 or have a leave of absence, they are permitted to continue with their training where their provision can continue to deliver this remotely.

Where apprentices are placed on unpaid leave (not furloughed), we will work to support their employment changes and no longer supports their apprenticeship, the apprentice should be given the opportunity to continue their apprenticeship with a new employer. Clear action above on breaks in learning, and on payments to providers.

Where apprentices are made redundant, it is our ambition that they will be supported to find a new apprenticeship with a new employer and continue their training. We are working with the sector to develop a sector-wide offer to assist employers to recruit and support their employment changes and no longer supports their apprenticeship, the apprentice should be given the opportunity to continue their apprenticeship with a new employer. Clear action above on breaks in learning, and on payments to providers.

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Apprenticeships with end-point assessment delays

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Apprenticeship funding rates already have provision for apprentices who are made redundant, so that wherever possible, they can continue their apprenticeship and complete the EPA. We are publishing a policy for the management of EPA for further details.

Where an apprentice is made redundant, the training provider must support the apprentice to find another job with an eligible employer and transfer the apprentice's apprenticeship agreement to that employer, because a large proportion of the EPA (the EPA will attempt to provide vocational practical support to the apprentice, and the apprentice must demonstrate occupational competence in order to pass the end-point assessment) is potential-based and therefore, employers will need to will present such significant redundancies, but we will keep arrangements under review and will publish further guidance if necessary. We will also ensure EPA may need to provide additional support to apprentices and training providers.

Furloughed apprentices

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) allows employers to claim 80% of furloughed employees' (employees on a leave of absence) usual monthly wage costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month, plus employer National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic workplace pension contributions on furlough.

A furloughed employee can take part in volunteer work or training, as long as it does not provide services to or generate revenue for or on behalf of the employer. Training can count towards apprenticeship off-the-job training.

Furloughed apprentices can continue their apprenticeship remotely. A furloughed apprentice can therefore continue their apprenticeship while furloughed.

Where training is undertaken by furloughed workers, at the request of their employer, workers are entitled to be paid at least the appropriate minimum wage for the time they spend undertaking training. In most circumstances, furloughed employees will be entitled to receive the full furlough payment, but the employer will need to pay the additional wages. The CJRS will continue to be in current form until the end of July 2. the government has announced that from August through to the end of October, furloughed workers will be introduced in a measured way, avoiding a cliff edge. As the Chancellor announced on 24 June, employers will be able to bring back their furloughed workers on a flexible basis, ensuring that staff continue to receive 80% of their wages, up to the cap of £2,500 a month. More specific details and information around implementation will be made available by the end of May.

For additional information read HYMC's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme guidance

Redundant apprentices

Support for apprentices

Apprenticeship funding rates provision funding to continue training redundant apprentices, in line with the funding rules.

Apprentice circumstances	Funding support
Apprentice is within 12 months of their end-point assessment	We will fund 100% of the remaining cost of the pre-agreed training plan, including any outstanding end-point assessment (EPA)
	Where the EPA is not ready
	If the apprentice has a clear pathway to an alternative employer: the training provider must support the apprentice to secure a sustainable placement, and we will fund 100% of the training costs
	If the apprentice does not yet with an employer which is not based in the apprenticeship standard, we will continue to fund the training
Apprentice is between 12 and 24 months from their end-point assessment	We will fund the remaining cost of the pre-agreed training plan, including any outstanding end-point assessment (EPA)
	Where the EPA is not ready
	If the apprentice has a clear pathway to an alternative employer: the training provider must support the apprentice to secure a sustainable placement, and we will fund 100% of the training costs
	If the apprentice does not yet with an employer which is not based in the apprenticeship standard, we will continue to fund the training
Apprentice is more than 24 months from their end-point assessment	We will fund the remaining cost of the pre-agreed training plan, including any outstanding end-point assessment (EPA)
	Where the EPA is not ready
	If the apprentice has a clear pathway to an alternative employer: the training provider must support the apprentice to secure a sustainable placement, and we will fund 100% of the training costs
	If the apprentice does not yet with an employer which is not based in the apprenticeship standard, we will continue to fund the training

Universal Credit for apprentices

To further support redundant apprentices, the Department for Work and Pressures Universal Credit (UC) claimants who are in employment, education or training or continuing their apprenticeship study, they can claim Universal Credit (UC) to pay their living costs, if they satisfy all eligibility criteria. In most cases this will include being UK or over and meeting the minimum age, residency, habitual residence and income tests, and being into alternative their study.

Where study is work related this may be accepted as work preparation activity and other expectations reduced accordingly. This is normally expected to be not more than 16 hours a week, although more 16 hours may be possible if they are still able to meet their work preparation requirements. Under 18 year olds in full time education will need to discuss their school/college circumstances with their school.

Claiming as an 18-year-old

When an 18-year-old redundant apprentice, who is training at level 3 or below, plans to claim prior to the 1 September following their 18th birthday they will still be based on their parents' income. This means that if their parents are in receipt of Child Benefit, an apprentice is 18 or over and training full-time (more than 21 hours a week) they can make a claim if any of the following apply:

- they live with their parent and they're eligible for UC
- they are responsible for a child, either as a single person or as a couple
- they are a pregnant woman and they're eligible for Maternity Allowance
- Independent Payments (PIP) and have limited capability for work
- they are a Year education, are 21 or under and do not have parents support for maintenance and are not in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or PIP

If a redundant apprentice does not meet the criteria for Universal Credit, they may be able to claim Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Age may also be a factor in the eligibility for JSA and ESA, depending on circumstances. (Such not including the 1st September following their 19th birthday.

If a redundant apprentice does not meet the criteria above and is aged 16 or 17 years old, they may be eligible for Income Support. Young people aged 16 and 17 years old are under the age of 18 they would have no entitlement and their parents would not be able to claim the child element of UC or Child Benefit.

Exceptions for 18 and 19 year olds

In most cases an individual must be 18 or over to claim UC, however there are some exceptions which allow a 16 or 17-year-old to apply. If a redundant apprentice is under 18 years old they may be eligible to claim UC in their own or their parents' name if they meet 2 of these criteria:

- have limited capability for work or have medical evidence and are waiting for a Work Capability Assessment
- are responsible for a child
- are a couple with responsibility or joint care for a child and your partner is eligible for Universal Credit
- have been in care for 13 weeks or less before your expected week of childbirth
- have had a child in the last 15 weeks
- do not have parental support, for example you are pregnant and you're not under local authority care

More information on eligibility criteria can be found on the Universal Credit page or the DWP's 16 to 17 year old guidance document that page and the Government's guidance on 2020 UK benefit entitlements.

Support service for apprentices

We will run the apprenticeship support service for redundant apprentices that will:

- provide apprentices with advice and guidance on the impact of redundancy
- signpost apprentices to local and national support services
- contain an apprenticeship vacancy sharing service to make redundant apprentices aware of new opportunities

We will publish more detail on the service when it is available later in July.

Functional skills requirements

For level 2 (intermediate) apprenticeships, apprentices must achieve a level 1 in both English and mathematics. For level 3 (advanced) apprenticeships and higher apprenticeships apprentices also required to study towards, and attempt, the functional skills assessments at level 2.

Ofqual has established the approach to assessment for vocational and technical skills qualifications for the summer series. Awarding organisations will be required to offer functional skills assessments this summer will receive a calculated grade. In light of this and the fact that many apprentices have already completed their end-point assessments, the rule requiring level 1 apprentices to study towards, and attempt, the functional skills assessments at level 2 is suspended temporarily. The skill allow apprentices who have not yet completed their end-point assessment to meet the requirements for completion of a level 2 apprenticeship.

Therefore, apprentices who are due to take their EPA up until 31 December 2020 should be assessed through gateway to their EPA without the need to achieve the level 2 functional skills English and maths assessment. Providers should retain evidence of the learner's progress towards the functional skills English and maths (EPA). A level 2 apprentice will still require a level 1 functional skills in English and/or maths in order to complete apprenticeship.

The temporary suspension applies to both apprenticeship standards and frameworks.

Apprentices undertaking a level 3 or higher apprenticeship are still required to hold a level 2 in English and maths before they can complete their end-point assessment. We are successfully extending their apprenticeship.

Ofqual has also confirmed that it will extend the regulations and dates for vocational functional skills qualifications in English and maths to 31 December 2020.

Non-levy procured apprenticeships contracts

Contract scenarios were issued to training providers at the beginning of March as the Planning your education and skills funding service, with a start date of April 2020.

Contract scenarios were issued to training providers at the beginning of March as the Planning your education and skills funding service, with a start date of April 2020. Contracts will be issued to training providers for non-levy contracts for 2020/21 to fund carry over costs for existing apprentices as well as new apprenticeship starts, with a start date of April 2020. Contracts will be issued to training providers for non-levy starts to be funded through the apprenticeship service from 1 February 2020.

In light of the challenges being faced by providers and employers as a result of the current coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we are extending the procurement process to extend the transition period into the service. Funds available for new starts on non-levy procured contracts can now be used until 31 March 2021.

Following this extended transition all starts will be funded through the apprenticeship service. We will be in touch with training providers with more information about the changes and performance management calls will be confirmed at the end of April 2020.

We remain committed to giving smaller employers greater control over their apprenticeship choices by moving towards a system in which employers act as a apprenticeship standard, choose their training provider and secure access to funding through the apprenticeship service. We are aware that, as a result of the coronavirus, this means, over time employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy will begin to access apprenticeship training via the apprenticeship service, as well as training provided with an existing Government contract (non-levy contract) until 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 audit of training providers and employers, which was scheduled to take place in the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We have now extended the pause to cover the period for at least, the duration of the lockdown.

We will continue to monitor the situation in the coming weeks, we have sought to schedule the audits for later in the year, when it is hoped the situation will be more understood the challenges providers face as a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19). We will continue to review the situation in the coming weeks.

It may be necessary for the ESFA to contact providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak to request information to ensure we can continue to fulfill our duty of public funds. Where such contact is necessary, we will continue to be sensitive to the challenges providers face as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19).

We will continue to monitor the situation in the coming weeks. We will continue to review the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown measures are adjusted and there is a return to more normal working across the country, we will review 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 actions from central government, 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 contacted by telephone on 0800 015 0400 or email at helpdesk@manage-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 apprentice continue their learning?

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

- Apprentices can continue their off-the-job training or a coronavirus training within their agreed working hours
- they could be offered additional on-site mentor support
- they could take a break in learning if there is a period of less than 4 weeks which will not significantly impact their learning
- they could take a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more and re-calculate the planned end-date upon their return to training

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

2. What do I do if I think an apprentice is not well enough to work (especially in a health setting)?

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

3. If I can't work (attend training, will I still be paid?

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

Where you are unable to work, we support employers to support your apprentice and continue as usual. The government is providing a range of support to employers to help them and pay the wages of employees (including apprentices) during the coming months.

Apprentices who are working at home

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

If you are able to attend scheduled learning 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's likely your apprenticeship can resume in less than 4 weeks and you will still be able to complete your apprenticeship within your agreed end-date
- you can take a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more which your training provider can support you with. This will mean your end-point assessment and your apprenticeship training agreed upon returning to learning. It will take into consideration the duration of your break

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

5. How do I record progress towards my apprenticeship while I am subject to different working conditions while working from home?

You should already be recording 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 received by the apprentice during their working hours and accounting hours, for the purpose of achieving the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the approved apprenticeship standard in the apprenticeship agreement.

All off-the-job training must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship, but this can be anything that develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours.

Employers may not recognise training even 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 must take place to ensure that the apprenticeship programme and apprentice are eligible for funding. Examples of necessary activity include:

- initial assessment of the apprentice
- composition 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. No normal monthly payment profile will apply over the length of the apprenticeship. As it currently does whether providers delivery blocks of training or more regular sessions. Providers will be paid for training as it is delivered, in line with the change to the delivery methodology and timetable.

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 provider. If any mutually agreed change occur to the agreed delivery method, they result in a change in price, then this should be discussed and agreed.

We accept that this might be challenging in the current environment and so, while we would expect providers to be flexible, we do not understand it may not 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.

15. Will apprentices who have been furloughed be able to return to training, but have been able to train and work remotely still be eligible for funding?

Yes. Although the furlough rules require all apprentices to spend at least 50% of their working time in England on undertaken the job role, the apprenticeship, some apprentices who are furloughed will be able to return to training and work remotely. Where an apprentice is spending more than 50% of their working time, for the duration of their apprenticeship, outside of England due to coronavirus (COVID-19) they will remain eligible for support.

Apprentices who are furloughed

16. Can training continue for furloughed apprentices?

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

17. If my apprentice continues to do off-the-job training, can this be more than one day a week?

Yes. The normal off-the-job training rules will apply, so training can be done as a block where this is agreed between the provider and the employer. The 20% minimum off-the-job training over the length of the apprenticeship will still need to be met.

18. 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. Not being able to attend your place of work should not prevent you from learning. We want to support them carrying on with the apprenticeship during this time, including maintaining engagement and progression that can also be applied to the job once it is safe and practical to do so.

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

Yes. While furloughed you will still be paid your employer and pay taxes from your income. While you cannot undertake work for your employer while on furlough you can undertake training and learning. Training and learning undertaken while furloughed will count towards minimum wage for the time spent training. The National Minimum Wage

part of your furlough payment in the first month.

The furlough payment must be paid at the appropriate minimum wage. Where the furlough payment amount equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage for the furloughed hours during the furlough period, the furlough payment amount should be pro-rated accordingly.

20. 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?

Your time spent on furlough, including furloughed employees, at the request of the employer may be entitled to be paid at least their appropriate National Minimum Wage rate for time. In most cases, the furlough payment of 80% of an employee's regular wage, up to a maximum of £2,500 per month, will be sufficient to cover the minimum wage. However, where a contract for apprenticeship training during the furlough period will be minimum wage entitlement in excess of the furlough payment, employers will need to top up the furlough payment to the minimum wage. Training time is considered work for the purposes of the minimum wage calculations, and therefore must be paid at the appropriate rate. Using this example the increase to minimum wage rates from 1 April 2020 are:

Employers should consider the hours that an employee is expected to work during the period of the furlough (which must be a 3 week minimum). Employers will need to calculate the minimum wage entitlement based on the hours that employees are expected to work. Where the entitled furlough payment equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage entitlement for the training hours during the furlough period, the employer will need to top up the furlough payment to the extent that the total amount received wages is paid for the hours spent furloughed.

Employers should consider how to calculate whether the furlough payment equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage entitlement for time spent furloughed.

Example 1

18 year old first year apprentice is on a 37 hours per week contract and has been furloughed. They are continuing to train for 1 day per week (7 hours per week).

In terms of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) regulations they are entitled to £4.35 for every less they train. (Note that the NMW legislation does not apply to time not spent in training).

Over the 3 week furlough period (the pay reference period) this amounts to NMW entitlement of £93.00 (£4.35 x 7.5 hours x 3 weeks).

The 80% furlough payment that they have received from their employer is £185. This furlough payment provides sufficient money to cover these training hours.

Example 2

23 year old second year apprentice is on a 37 hours per week contract and has been furloughed. They are continuing to train for 1 day per week (7.5 hours per week) (as much off-the-job training is provided as possible, in this period).

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

Over the 3 week furlough period (the pay reference period) this amounts to a NMW entitlement of £184.50 (£8.20 x 7.5 hours x 3 weeks).

The 80% furlough payment that has been received from their employer is £185. This furlough payment does not provide sufficient money to cover these training hours.

This apprentice should be paid the difference between the furlough payment and the NMW entitlement (£184.50 - £185 = £0.50 per week).

Employers should consider the hours that an employee is expected to work during the period of the furlough (which must be a 3 week minimum). Employers will need to calculate the minimum wage entitlement based on the hours that employees are expected to work. Where the entitled furlough payment equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage entitlement for the training hours during the furlough period, the employer will need to top up the furlough payment to the extent that the total amount received wages is paid for the hours spent furloughed.

Employers should consider how to calculate whether the furlough payment equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage entitlement for time spent furloughed.

Example 3

18 year old second year apprentice is on a 37 hours per week contract and has been furloughed. They are continuing to train for 1 day per week (7.5 hours per week) (as much off-the-job training is provided as possible, in this period).

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

Over the 3 week furlough period (the pay reference period) this amounts to a NMW entitlement of £184.50 (£8.20 x 7.5 hours x 3 weeks).

The 80% furlough payment that has been received from their employer is £185. This furlough payment does not provide sufficient money to cover these training hours and the employer would need to top up the difference (£0.50).

Note in both cases above the apprentice, prior to furlough, was paid at/close to the National Minimum Wage.

21. 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 as long as it does not provide services to or generate revenue for their employer. This includes progress reviews.

If the employer (line manager) is also furloughed, then we appreciate that arrangements will need to be made to ensure that the apprentice, their line manager and their training provider is about the progress of the apprenticeship. Very one-able to take part in the discussion.

22. 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 means of accessing training and the purpose of the first that effect they are furloughed they must not carry out their normal work.

23. 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 their apprenticeships must not provide services to or generate revenue for their employer, such as attending meetings. An example of what an apprentice can do which an furlough they should speak to the HTPO helpline.

Apprentices who are made redundant

24. 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 training may be able to continue.

Your training provider may still be able to offer training, based on your circumstances. In some cases, it may be able to continue your training and assessment for apprenticeship.

If that does become permanent, you should look to see what other opportunities are available for you. Please speak to the Find Apprenticeship Training and table with your training provider in the usual way.

25. Will apprentices who would, if not for the outbreak, have started with their new employer within 30 days of leaving their last job be eligible for furlough support and training for their new employer?

Yes, apprentices who would, if not for the outbreak, be expecting to have a 28-day break between employers are concerned that, due to the outbreak, some apprentices will have not been permitted to start working for and training with their new employer. Such apprentices would be eligible for the 80% furlough payment, up to £2,500 per month, if leaving their last job, but had a break of over 28 days between employers (due to the coronavirus (COVID-19)) they will remain eligible for support on their return.

Apprentices who are on unpaid leave

26. 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 see apprentices to take unpaid leave during this period, have been able to furlough their apprentices and claim the 80% furlough payment and/or financial support to keep your employed. You should speak to your employer about this to understand whether you are still being asked to take unpaid leave or if your employer is intended to furlough you. There is a section in the apprenticeship guide on this discussion.

If you are still being asked to take unpaid leave, then you can take a break from your apprenticeship training and assessment. You should speak to your training provider, who will inform you on how to make this.

Once you are back at work you can resume your apprenticeship, which your training provider can help with. You should discuss any apprenticeship training and assessment including wages, by your employer in the first instance.

ACAS may also be a good source of information.

27. What happens to the apprentice during a period of furlough/unpaid leave if it involves, as they have access to universal credit?

Through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all UK employers will able to access support to continue payment of their employees' salary for those employees who would otherwise have been laid off during this crisis. HMRC will reimburse 80% of furloughed workers' wages, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.

Alternatively, Universal Credit may be available for both workers and the unemployed. Universal Credit is a means-tested benefit that is payable to people who are in work, apprentices and their partner have earnings of under £16,320 (dependent on their circumstances). Universal Credit is also available to those who are out of work and those who have access to Universal Credit even if they were working and being paid. Being laid off or on fewer hours could increase the size of Universal Credit entitlement.

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

Recruiting new apprentices

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

Yes, an employer can recruit and start apprenticeships as they would have done prior to coronavirus (COVID-19). If all personal and programme eligibility funding rules can be met and the provision is able to support this activity.

It is important to note that an employer can only claim for furloughed employees that are not working for them during furlough. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is possible for an employer to furlough an apprentice after this date but the intention is to furlough this person immediately and claim wage support from the CJRS.

29. Can an existing member of staff start an apprenticeship while they are furloughed?

Yes, a furloughed member of staff can start an apprenticeship, but they must still meet the learner eligibility and programme eligibility criteria of the apprenticeship funding rules. For example, the apprenticeship must be a new job, the candidate must require a new role or learning to carry out their current role, and the apprenticeship must be part of the job training over the duration to become occupationally competent. With regards to learner eligibility the provider should consider how they would assess the learner's suitability and eligibility of the individual and how they would carry out the initial assessment.

30. Are the evidence arrangements around obtaining employers being relaxed during coronavirus (COVID-19)?

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

- the apprenticeship agreement
- the commitment statement
- the training plan (off-the-job apprenticeship)
- evidence linking to assessments such as additional learning support and the care leavers bursary
- the initial assessment
- agreements that an apprentice has passed gateway requirements

In a remote learning environment, employers should be able to provide evidence of signature from the learner and employer. Providers must ensure that an alternative evidence is in place to support the business as usual process when 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 the original signature is obtained and retained documentation. Providers must ensure that an alternative evidence is in place with 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

31. Will levy payments be paused for employers?

The apprenticeship levy is an important part of our aim to drive apprenticeship quality which supports employers to make a long-term, sustainable investment in training. Our aim is to ensure employers can continue to benefit from the levy and we are considering the key because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation.

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

32. 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 levy rules.

33. I am a levy-payer with funds in my account. Why can't my funds be used to continue to pay the provider even if my apprentice is furloughed or I am not in a position to 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. When on a break in learning the individual will still be treated as an apprentice, 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 sickness or absence, employers can claim for reimbursement of statutory sick pay (SSP) payments for the sole reason of having to pay SSP. Employers have already announced for businesses. Read the support for business guidance.

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

Employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy are able to receive apprenticeship funding through the apprenticeship service in line with the Apprenticeship funding for employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy guidance.

35. 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, detailed in the reservation. Where a commitment is needed and a previous reservation has expired, a new reservation must be created.

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

Government policy does not allow payment for services in advance of delivery. The government has set out a substantial package of support to businesses to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

37. 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 to providers, and allows the employer and apprentice to resume training and assessment at a 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)

38. I am on a fixed-term contract which would ordinarily have given 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 outside of work?

No, end-point assessment when you are training with an EPA, or waiting for training to be been necessary, and the planned end-date for your apprenticeship has had to move because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, you should continue to work with your training provider and your employer to ensure you can complete your apprenticeship agreement and commitment statement. We will keep this under review as the situation evolves.

39. 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.

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

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

41. Gateways are being delayed and we cannot complete the EPA in the required timeframe. Can we extend the EPA period beyond the 12 month maximum?

Apprenticeships can take place over a maximum period of 12 months, but in exceptional circumstances, or coronavirus (COVID-19) related measures, are allowed to take a break before taking their EPA and for the EPA to be rescheduled.

If the EPA timeframe needs to be extended beyond what is allowed in the assessment plan, providers should contact the ESFA to request a change to the EPA period. In exceptional circumstances, ESFA will consider extending the EPA period to allow providers to ensure that quality of EPA is maintained. For apprentices whose gateway is being delayed, the training provider must report this in a break in learning.

42. 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 the following conditions:

- arrangements are cleared in advance by the EQA provider
- the EQA provider is informed of the arrangements
- remote tools are supported by an appropriately trained invigilator or assessor who:
  - has the necessary qualifications, training or experience
  - is not a family member, friend, work colleague, tutor/mentor or line management of the apprentice
  - appropriate technological systems are in place
- the impact that assessment may have on apprentices is to be taken into consideration to ensure a fair and reliable assessment of occupational competence
- the provider must have a robust contingency plan in place to deal with any disruption to action. An extension of 12 weeks is allowable for those EPAs plans where the end point specified from gateway to EPA. It is to be based in and shared with ESA providers in a fitness form.

43. How will invigilation of assessments be conducted remotely?

Remote tools should be supervised by an appropriately trained invigilator or assessor who has the necessary qualifications, training or experience and who has not been a family member, friend, work colleague, tutor/mentor or line manager.

Tools must only be carried out within a supervised and controlled environment. ESFA's minimum that all training needs security requirements and that the details of invigilation are recorded and available for confirmation by EQA providers.

44. 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 decision to proceed to EPA without the employer's confirmation. We expect providers can provide evidence to the EPAO that the apprentice has met the relevant gateway requirements and is ready to sit their EPA. Where this is not the case then the EPA should not proceed.

Apprentice end-point gateway is delayed can have an impact on the assessment timeframe.

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

We know it is important for apprentices at the current time to be able to continue 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 50 standards from Autumn 2020 onwards, to ensure apprentices can still take their EPA. These flexibilities have the potential to allow thousands of apprentices to undertake EPA, despite the current operating constraints.

46. 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 trust, and the wider market, to meet the future demand, we will need to work with point organisations to complete a weekly return to the ESFA recording all coronavirus (COVID-19) related EPA cancellations.

We sent out a questionnaire on the register of end-point assessment organisations a copy of the questions which they should be completing for the apprenticeship assessment activities.

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

47. 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 remotely. If the EPA plan states that assessment must be conducted face-to-face, but cannot be under the current circumstances, we recommend have the EQA provider and specified assessment method for a specific standard might be adjusted without approval from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. ESFA should discuss this option with the EQA provider, who may refer it to IfATE for formal authority. The substitution of assessment methods is not considered appropriate at this time.

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

48. 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 employer and training provider. End-point assessment organisations can't 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 necessary. If the EPA plan states that assessment must be conducted within a specified time frame, ESFA is willing to consider extensions to EPA. It is to be suggested and shared with EQA providers on a fitness form.

49. 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 apprentice until they have taken their EPA. Apprentices, who are ready for their end-point assessment, but are not able to complete it because of an apprentice more than this, all employers must comply with National Minimum Wage legislation.

Functional skills requirements

50. 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 dated note to the evidence pack for the apprenticeship explaining that the test was not taken due to revised guidance from coronavirus (COVID-19).

51. 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, upon which time we will review this position. There will be no requirement for those apprentices who are passed through gateway to go back and take the level 2 functional skills test.

52. 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.

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

This requirement applies to intermediate (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.

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