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 30 July 2020

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Updates

We update the apprenticeships and Technical Education Fund pages that set out point assessment (EPA) flexibilities put in place due to coronavirus (COVID-19) will be kept up to date. Please check back regularly for the latest information.

We have introduced a temporary flexibility to allow apprenticeship certificates to be sent to an alternative address. Read more about it in the Apprenticeship certificates section.

General information

These are difficult times for employers, apprentices and providers of apprenticeship training and assessment. We are working closely with partners including the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), implementing new measures, until further notice, to make it easier for apprenticeships to continue and apprentices to be employed. We will keep this guidance under review and supplemented by other sector-specific guidance.

The usual apprenticeship funding rules apply to main providers, employer providers, and employers delivering and supporting apprenticeships training and assessment, as evaluated under the apprenticeship programme. The case-by-case part of the terms and conditions of funding for 2020 to 2021 apprenticeships and apprenticeship training and assessment contract is unchanged.

This document, however, sets out guidance and some temporary flexibilities to the apprenticeship funding rules, to support the sector in its response to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and provides answers to questions raised by sector changes and other coronavirus questions. Some of these flexibilities, introduced during March and April 2020, have been extended to 31 July 2020. Other flexibilities in place should be extended beyond both the 2019 to 20 and 2020 to 21 apprenticeship funding rules, which can be found on the apprenticeship funding rules page.

This document also gives information on apprenticeship training and assessment in the context of the Prime Minister's announcement setting out the steps to restart the economy. Read the Prime Minister's announcement. Further guidance on restart should be read alongside the government's coronavirus (COVID-19) recovery strategy.

Ofqual, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) has also published new guidance on the delivery of assessments.

This document includes information on:

- how apprenticeship training and assessment can continue in line with the new rules and guidance
- delivering apprenticeships flexibly in those working at home
- furloughed employees continuing apprenticeship training and end-point assessment (EPA) while on furlough
- applying the safety-in-numbers model
- delays to EPA
- extended 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 the training takes place. This includes in the workplace or remotely using technology, and in a way that is safe and secure for all. This clarification on centre needs does not amount 'guidance on centre delivery' as set out in the ESFA rules. It also includes training dates in educational settings in line with the new guidance for schools, colleges and childcare providers and higher education providers and guidance and advice on IfATE's pathways and providers' responsibilities in relation to start of the 2020 academic year
- supporting employers to take furloughed apprentices to continue their training, and to take their EPA, and to furlough furloughed employees to carry on continuing their apprenticeship, as long as it does not provide services to, or generate revenue for, their employer
- encouraging training providers to deliver training to apprentices who are working from home or furloughed, allowing the modification of EPA arrangements, including remote assessments, and providing flexibilities to the rules on funding for furloughed employees, continuing and end-point assessment organisations, training and assessment organisations and apprenticeship training providers
- supporting employers who are furloughed and who cannot be assessed due to coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, can have their EPA rescheduled and their apprentice pathway is delayed can have an extension to the assessment timetable
- supporting apprentices who are furloughed and who cannot be assessed due to coronavirus, where the completion of training due to coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak is unlikely
- recognising that, where apprentices are made redundant, it is an ambition to find them alternative employment and continue their apprenticeship training as soon as possible and within 12 weeks
- ensuring that training providers are made redundant and are ready to go through gateway, provided they are able to make the necessary procurement arrangements to support these apprentices
- ensuring that training providers are not disadvantaged with the apprenticeship funding rules, and that training providers can continue to be paid for training they have delivered to apprentices who are furloughed
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Our objective for these measures is to support all employers to retain their apprentices and to continue training and assessment. We want apprentices to have the best possible service to apprentices where possible, so that they may progress and complete their apprenticeship as planned. This guidance will help all parties to plan with more certainty and to make the best decisions.

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 will keep this guidance under review and supplemented by other sector-specific guidance. We will continue updating this guidance as new information is available and policy decisions 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 apprenticeships and skills page.

Unfortunately, we cannot address individual scenarios or circumstances. If your issue is not covered by this guidance, please contact the apprenticeship service helpline by telephone or through the email at enquiries@apprenticeships.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 and employees affected by the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19). Read details of this support.

We have published guidance on how the government's package of financial support can be accessed by training providers and employers affected by coronavirus (COVID-19). Read the Coronavirus (COVID-19): financial support for businesses, and employees and self-employed guidance.

We are continuing to work 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. As part of the Budget on 11 March, we have introduced targeted financial support measures in the form of a provider relief scheme. The purpose of the scheme is to return capacity within the apprenticeships and adult education sector, so that it can continue to deliver training and assessment services to employers. As part of this, we also want to support providers to continue to provide support for existing learners and employers and, where possible, enable new learners to start. Details of the provider relief scheme are available at ESFA's guide for training providers.

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, where possible, apprentices can continue and complete their apprenticeship, despite any breaks they may have had to their training and assessment. We have made a number of changes to a stick-particular to the economic recovery that will follow the outbreak. We have made changes to the rules on funding for furloughed employees, continuing and end-point assessments (EPA) 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 to take their EPA. We have made these changes in a way that is efficient way to that originally planned, even if they are put on furlough or become redundant. We want to ensure that employers will still have the skills they need for the future, and that they can remarkably redeploy apprentices without ending their apprenticeships.

Apprentices returning to work

COVID-19 as well, guidance has been made available to all employers to help them get their businesses back up and running and workplaces operating as safely as possible. Read the guidance, workplace guidance, check if anywhere you may be able to attend 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 also to continue or restart their training in the workplace.

We want to make it easier for employers and training providers to continue their apprenticeship training and assessment, and to make it easier for employers to take on new apprentices, about where apprenticeship training is delivered. Where a provider is able to do so safely and securely, we encourage providers to deliver training to apprentices who are furloughed, to a critical worker in a workplace to work, where that workplace meets the COVID-19 secure' guidance 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 training and assessment can take place. Assessment can take place, requiring apprentices can only home, those are a workplace.

If there is no option to take the assessment remotely, and an assessment centre needs to be used, assessment centres should follow the guidance on safety-in-numbers model. EPAO should also refer the guidance on safety-operating-from-a-place-of-work and guidance for further education providers as relevant to the prevention of EPA to ensure they are implementing the appropriate protective measures for education and childcare settings.

Apprentices returning to train in an educational setting

Some of the new measures EB cover further education settings have been able to reopen the number of EPA assessments can be delayed, in line with the guidance on wider opening from 15 June 2020 and the guidance for further education providers. Read more about the measures for further education settings including training within apprenticeships.

From the week commencing 15 June, further education providers could offer some face-to-contact for 16 to 19 year-olds apprentices where possible and practical, as part of a controlled return to the workplace, in line with the guidance for further education providers.

To help reduce the coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission risk, the IfATE guidance under gateway from 15 June stated that the number of EPA learners attending the centre should be limited to a quarter of those on the first year of a new apprenticeship. Where a provider is able to do so safely and securely, we encourage providers to deliver training to apprentices who are furloughed, to a critical worker in a workplace to work, where that workplace meets the COVID-19 secure' guidance on ensuring the workplace is safe.

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Detailed guidance for training providers and employers

To support some of this document is understanding and is changing and how this 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 not be able to complete their training and assessment as planned, or be able to complete over the coming weeks or months. This also could cause significant impacts on employers, apprentices and employers, as well as for training providers and EPAOs whose income maybe disrupted.

This may be necessary:

- for an individual, due to illness or self-isolation, or challenges in getting to their place of work, or to a place of training or assessment
- 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 absence 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 should be extended by the number of days of the interruption
- more than 4 weeks – in these circumstances, employers and training providers must report a formal break in learning. Where a break in learning is reported, the apprenticeship end-date for the apprentice 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 to apprentices, based on the usual payment profiles and for six-monthly individualised learner record (ILR) submissions and results relevant for compliance and earn-back. The ESFA reserves the right to recover funding which was paid in error, for example, if a training provider fail to which the training they have found not to be eligible.

Where learners take breaks in learning, training providers must report this in line with the usual rules, and the apprenticeship end-date should be adjusted to reflect the break in learning.

Where the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak results in loss of income due to onward or reduced delivery of training, training providers should consider their contingency plans for the wide range of financial support that HM Treasury has already announced for businesses. Read about the coronavirus business 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 delivered training during March, but had to suspend this training before the end of the month. It is likely that this training and base been suspended knowing that the learner would not be able to complete the training and assessment in March.

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

- include these learners in their March ILR submission as an apprentice
- record, retain and submit evidence in the usual way
- record a break in learning, with the start date being the date that a learner was seen as not in effective learning or training
- ensure that these learners are not recorded as permanently withdrawn from their apprenticeship training. Completion fees, payable in April, will be paid for these learners, but training providers should not claim for any earn-back for these learners in training.

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 training provider should make up the training when it is safe to do so. Where the apprenticeship does not expire, 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 of March as the start date of the break in learning
- the apprenticeship should be paused by the employer through the provider's service of the point the break in learning begins. The employer should not 'stop' the apprenticeship, but pause the apprenticeship service so this period is excluded automatically

When the apprentice, training provider and employer are all ready for the apprenticeship to restart, the training provider should report the end of the interruption (should update from 6 weeks to end with section 3 in the training provider support manual, to ensure accurate recording and earnings calculations. Training providers will not receive funding payments during a break in learning.

For the avoidance of doubt, during learner is returning it is not necessary for apprentices to start from the beginning of the apprenticeship, or to repeat any elements of the training, learning, and, and training elements, 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, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education and EPAOs to compose their apprenticeship in the event of disruption to assessment.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has announced that all EPA will be delayed by a minimum of 4 weeks, and that EPA should not be rescheduled for the period. They have also confirmed that they will give 12 weeks notice before any other changes are announced to existing flexibilities before EPAOs will have to deliver them.

ESA providers remain responsible for ensuring consistency and quality assurance. EPAOs should engage with ESFA providers throughout and agree arrangements in advance of any assessment. Providers should be given sufficient notice and consulted prior to any assessment.

Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment and cannot be assessed due to coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak can have their EPA rescheduled and their apprenticeship pathway delayed. Where there is a minimum 4 weeks EPA delay delayed, a further extension of 2 weeks is allowable.

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

EPAOs may also propose to ESFA providers modifications (rather than substitutions) to the assessment plan, where they can show that the modification will ensure the retention of the assessment. The authority for any flexibilities remains with IfATE, to which any modification proposals should be referred.

Payments to EPAOs

Apprenticeship training providers will continue to be paid retrospectively for the training they have delivered to apprentices, based on the usual payment profiles and for six-monthly individualised learner record (ILR) submissions and results relevant for compliance and earn-back. The ESFA reserves the right to recover funding which was paid in error, for example, if a training provider fail to which the training they have found not to be eligible.

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New EPA flexibilities

In addition to the guidance flexibilities allowed by the IfATE, ESA providers have to date agreed additional flexibilities to the delivery of EPA to support the sector in response to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19). Some of these flexibilities are now available for all apprenticeships to undertake EPA, despite the current operating conditions.

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

The IfATE continues to work with ESA providers to understand where other standards may be suitable for consideration, and will keep regularly updated 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 on EPA during the pandemic.

If the information you seek is not included in IfATE's guidance, or the FAQs, please email a question to Ofqual@ofqual.gov.uk and IfATE will respond 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 additional information.

EPA flexibility for functional skills qualifications (FSQs)

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has put in place a temporary flexibility for apprentices who are unable to complete their EPA due to cancelled FSQ exams. The cut-off point for awarding organisations to collect calculated grades is 31 July 2020.

The flexibility allows apprentices, who would otherwise be short of gateway pending the FSQ exam, to progress through gateway and take their EPA.

This flexibility applies to:

- all apprentices awaiting their calculated FSQ result
- apprentices who have completed their end-point assessment plan but are required to resit a functional skills and sufficient evidence is demonstrated to be received (a calculated FSQ exam)
- all independent competent apprentices at gateway who are ready to progress to their EPA

This temporary measure supports qualifying apprentices to complete their EPA without undue delay. Where calculated results for FSQs are issued, the apprentice will be provided with evidence that has been in apprentice between 31 March 2020 and 31 July 2020 to support their end-point assessment plan. Awarding organisations will only achieve their apprenticeship once they have received the evidence and have completed their end-point assessment plan. Awarding organisations will provide proof 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 functional skills 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

Where awarding organisations are unable to issue certificates confirming that apprentices have completed the necessary qualifications to go through gateway, as a temporary measure, we will accept other evidence from training providers, in lieu of qualification certificates the awarding organisation as evidence of achievement. We encourage authentication emails must contain the following information:

- learner details
- certification can date
- unique number

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

Temporary flexibility for apprenticeship certificate addresses

Apprenticeship Certificates are usually sent to the apprentice's employer, however, we are now allowing training providers to request a temporary change to send the certificate to the apprentice's training provider address or to the apprentice's home address if the employer's office is closed. This will ensure that apprentices are not disadvantaged and held up because the main news is that their apprenticeship is complete.

The flexibility also applies to the current process to request a replacement certificate.

Disruption to employment

Where apprentices are furloughed (partial or lower of absence), they are permitted to continue with their training and assessment plan, and continue to accrue evidence towards their end-point assessment plan.

Employers who have furloughed their apprentices will need to consider their employment changes and no longer support their apprenticeship, the apprentice may be made redundant and their employment ended. If this is the case, the apprentice, Clear and Concise on break is deemed to be a redundancy.

Where apprentices are made redundant, it is our ambition that they will be supported to find alternative employment and other training opportunities as soon as possible and within 12 weeks. We will keep under review whether the 12 week period should be extended.

Apprenticeship funding rules already make provision for apprentices who were made redundant before March 2020 to be eligible for a new apprenticeship. As we announced on 25th March 2020 the funding rules have been temporarily amended to include apprentices who were made redundant since March 2020.

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 Skills Funding Agency will consider on a case by case basis, how training providers can be supported to secure alternative employers for the apprentices. It is hoped that the government's substantial package of financial support for business and employers will prevent this from happening. The Skills Funding Agency will keep 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' salaries, up to a maximum of £2,500 per employee per month, up to £2,500 a month, plus the associated employer National Insurance contributions, and minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contributions on that wage.

Existing employees who were furloughed or who return work in training, are to be included in the CJRS. Employers can furlough apprentices and claim for them through the CJRS and continue to receive apprenticeship off the job training.

Where their jobs can continue to deliver the training remotely, a furloughed apprentice can therefore continue their apprenticeship whilst 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 this time. In line with the National Minimum Wage (NMW) Regulations, from April 1st 2020, apprentices will be entitled to receive 'Clear training hours. However, where the furlough payment does not meet the appropriate minimum wage for the time spent training, the employer will need to top up the furlough payment.

The CJRS will continue to be in place from until the end of July 31st (subject to the paying the 80% subsidy). The Chancellor has been clear that getting people back to work is a priority and the government will review the CJRS in June. The CJRS will ensure employers and employees who furloughed, employers currently using the scheme and who have flexibility to bring their furloughed employees back to work part-time will still receive support from the scheme.

This will run for three months from August through to the end of October. Employers will need to contribute towards the salaries of their furloughed workers. The employer contribution will contribute the contribution the government's scheme will be making, ensuring that staff continue to receive 80% of their salary, up to £2,500 a month, for the hours they do not work. The employer contribution will be made available by the end of July.

For additional information read HTMC's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme guidance.

Redundant apprentices

Support for apprentices

Providers are able to access funding to continue training redundant apprentices, in line with the funding rules.

Apprentice circumstances	Funding support
Apprentice is within 6 months of the end of their training.	We will fund 100% of the remaining cost of the price negotiated between the provider and the previous employer, up to the funding band maximum. Within this 6 month period: If the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the provider can claim the 20% employer contribution for the new employer. If the apprentice takes a job with an employer which is not linked to their apprenticeship, the provider can claim the 20% employer contribution.
Apprentice is more than 6 months from completing their training.	We will fund the remaining cost of the price negotiated between the provider and the previous employer, for a maximum of 12 months. Within this 12 month period: If the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the employer contribution will be payable, subject to the usual rules. If the apprentice takes a job with an employer which is not linked to their apprenticeship, we will continue to fund the training for up to 12 months. If a new employer is not found within 12 weeks, the apprentice is entitled to have the remaining training and assessment fully funded, subject to the usual rules.
Apprentice is more than 12 months from completing their training.	We will fund the remaining cost of the price negotiated between the provider and the previous employer, for a maximum of 12 months. Within this 12 month period: If the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the employer contribution will be payable, subject to the usual rules. If the apprentice takes a job with an employer which is not linked to their apprenticeship, we will continue to fund the training for up to 12 months. If a new employer is not found within 12 weeks, the apprentice is entitled to have the remaining training and assessment fully funded, subject to the usual rules.

Universal Credit for apprentices

To further support redundant apprentices, the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) has confirmed that where an apprentice has been made redundant, but is continuing their apprenticeship study, they can claim Universal Credit (UC) as long as they are looking for work and meeting the other conditions of receiving UC, such as undertaking work related activity i.e. being available and looking for work, and doing this alongside their study.

Where study is work related this may be accepted as work preparation activity and other expectations reduced accordingly. This is normally not expected to be more than 35 hours a week, but may be less if the study is part time. Where the UC claim is ongoing, it is also possible for it to be available to be re-opened, in order for claimants who need to discuss their particular circumstances with their coach.

Claiming as an 18-year-old

Young people who are 18 or over may be able to claim Universal Credit, but there are exceptions which allow 16 or 17-year-olds to apply. If a redundant apprentice is under 18 and they are not eligible to claim UC, in their own right, they may be able to claim UC if:

- have limited capability for work or have medical evidence and are waiting for a Work Capability Assessment
- are caring for a severely disabled person
- are a lone parent
- are in a couple with responsibility for at least one child and your partner is eligible for Universal Credit
- are pregnant and 11 weeks or less before your expected week of childbirth
- have had a child in the last 9 weeks
- are a young care leaver who is being supported by an approved local authority or other organisation

More information on eligibility criteria can be found on the Universal Credit page on GOV.UK. If there is any discrepancy between that page and this document, the UC page on GOV.UK takes precedence.

Support service for apprentices

We will soon be launching a 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
- provide information on the Skills Funding Agency 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 maths functional skills qualifications to complete their apprenticeship. Vocational apprentices are also required to study towards, and attempt, the functional skills qualifications at level 2.

Ofqual has published the approach to assessment for qualifications and skills in light of coronavirus (COVID-19). This includes confirmation that students due to take functional skills qualifications will receive a grade based on evidence, in line with Ofqual's guidance, and the fact that a standard functional skills assessment may not be taken place, the rule requiring level 2 apprentices to study towards, and attempt, the functional skills qualifications at level 2 in order to complete their apprenticeship, apprentices, employers, providers, and EPA organisations, to focus on other key requirements for completion of Level 2 apprenticeships.

Therefore, apprentices who are due to take their EPA up until 31 December 2020 should be passed through gateway to end EPA without the need to attempt the functional skills qualifications. Providers should make every reasonable effort to assess if an apprentice did not take the level 2 assessments due to coronavirus (COVID-19) and if they are ready to proceed to end Functional skills in English and/or maths in order to complete apprenticeship.

The temporary concession applies to both apprentices and non-apprentices.

Apprentices undertaking Level 3 or higher apprenticeship are still required to hold or achieve an approved English and Mathematics qualification, but providers will be able to use their discretion to assess if the apprentice is ready to proceed to end EPA.

Vocational skills qualifications in English and maths, qualifications at Level 2 are not required for the Level 3 apprenticeship.

Non-levy procured apprenticeships contracts

Contract extensions were issued for training providers of the beginning of March via the Provider pre-education and skills funding service, with a start date of April 2020.

Training providers with existing procured contracts have received a 1 month extension to their contracts, which covers the existing financial year (2019-20). These extensions are by default, and providers do not need to accept them. The extension will allow providers to start ramping up and including 2020-21 contracts. This aligned with our commitment to start contracts 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 current coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, we are extending the procured contracts to allow providers to start ramping up and including 2020-21 contracts. The extension of procured contracts can be used until 31 March 2021.

Following this extended transition all starts will be funded through the apprenticeship service from 1 November 2020. We will keep under review the impact of coronavirus and the changes and performance management rules will be confirmed through the usual routes.

We remain committed to giving smaller employers greater control over their apprenticeship choices by moving levers a system in which employers select an apprenticeship training provider from a list of providers who are on the register waiting for all new apprenticeships through the apprenticeship service. In preparation for this means, we ask, more employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy are ready to start using the apprenticeship service to access training. We will work through provider with an existing Government contract (Levy-paying employers) 2019 Procured.

Audit

Prior to the Prince Michael's announcement of the new coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown measures on Friday 20 March 2020, we made the decision to pause the audit of training providers. We made this decision to ease the burden on providers at the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown. We have now decided to start to cover the period for, at least, the duration of the lockdown.

Where funding audits and investigations are already in progress, we have sought to complete the work, taking into account providers' capacity to resolve any issues. We will continue to support providers to resolve any issues identified during audits and investigations and have been sending to these challenges with coronavirus (COVID-19).

It may be necessary for the ESFA to contact providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in order to maintain effective oversight and assurance of public funds. Where such contact is necessary, we will continue to be sensitive to the challenges providers are facing in responding to our queries.

We will continue to monitor and review the situation in the light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown measures are relaxed and there is a return to normality 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 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 contacted by telephone on 0800 015 0400 or email helpdesk@apprenticeships.sfa.bis.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 to their employer. How can my apprentices continue their learning?

If your apprentices are required to attend their usual place of work, they should not take (critical workers). There are several options available:

- apprentices could engage in digital or distance learning at a convenient time within their agreed working hours
- they could take a reasonable amount on site mentor support
- they could take a reasonable amount of learning of less than 4 weeks while still completing by their planned end date
- they could take a break learning of 4 weeks or more and re-calculate the planned end date upon their return to working

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 linked to the job role that the individual is undertaking. If a key worker apprentice is moved into a different business critical role, we must ensure that apprenticeship and continue to successful completion of their training and skills. Funding rules currently state that a break in learning must be initiated by the employer. If a key worker is moved into a different business critical role, we will include a break in learning where the interruption to learning is a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) and the impact on the business. We will review the situation on a case by case basis when breaks in learning are more or less than 4 weeks, and if break continues during or after 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?

Where apprentices can remain on their programme, they should continue to fulfill the minimum 20% off the job training requirement. Off-the-job training can be delivered flexibly at a time and way to suit the employer and apprentice (remote learning, evenings and weekends). If a key worker apprentice is moved into a different training related to apprenticeship (coronavirus (COVID-19)), it is acceptable for the off-the-job training requirement to be met through this training. We will review the situation on a case by case basis towards EPA (end training but this should be discussed and agreed between the training provider and employer. We will review the situation on a case by case basis towards EPA (end training but this should be discussed and agreed between the training provider and employer, where training is being accessed. It must be delivered by an organisation on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. Evidence of delivery must be kept.

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

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

Apprenticeships have been designed to be responsive to changes in apprentices' circumstances, for example during periods of illness. If you need to self-isolate, please talk to your training provider about how you can continue to make progress with your apprenticeship or report a break in learning.

Options include:

- an increase in learning
- a short pause of less than 4 weeks in your apprenticeship while you are in self-isolation, if your training provider can still continue training
- a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more that your training provider should report to the ESFA. This will result in the planned end date for your apprenticeship being recalculated to reflect the period you were off-the-job training (and therefore time with the length of your break.
- re-scheduling planned assessment activity for a later date

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

5. 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 available from your training provider. Please check their website or contact them to discuss your options.

6. 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).

7. 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.

Where you are unable to work, we support speaking to your employer about their sick pay scheme, and ensuring they are aware of the government's Statutory Sick Pay Rebate which will pay the wages of employees (including apprentices) during the coming months.

8. 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 apprenticeship training providers continuing to be paid monthly payments for their apprentices who are unable to continue with their training current plans during this pause, and this may include breaks from provider to continue delivery, an apprentice must be put on a break in learning to pause training and assessment. Apprentices who are able to continue their training to ensure continuity of training where possible to the end, this may be subject to some. 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/post learning events, there are several options available to you:

- your training provider may provide digital or distance learning
- if your training provider is able to continue training, it may be possible to less than 4 weeks and you will still be able to complete your apprenticeship by your planned end date
- you can take a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more which your training provider should report to the ESFA and will result in the planned end date of your apprenticeship being re-planned upon returning to learning, to take into consideration the duration of your break.

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

10. How do I record progress towards my apprenticeship while I am subject to different working conditions like 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 current time.

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 all English apprenticeships. It is training which is received by the apprentice during the apprentice's normal working hours but is not performance of their normal role. It must be delivered by approved organisations delivered to the apprenticeship apprentice.

All off-the-job training must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship, but this can now be delivered more flexibly, including remote working.

Employers may not employees training hours when they're working from home, but employers should be clear about benefits 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 to date can be recognised if it is relevant to the apprenticeship and apprentice will be eligible for funding. Examples of recognise activity 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 funding payment profile will apply over the length of the apprenticeship. As it currently does whether providers deliver blocks of training or more frequently. Providers are encouraged to bring forward the 'off-the-job' training 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 changed?

The price of an apprenticeship is negotiated and agreed upon by an employer and training provider. If a change occurs to the agreed delivery method, the price would not change in 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 material changes to be recorded, we 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 have changed.

15. Can training continue for furloughed apprentices?

Yes, where apprentices are furloughed, they can continue to train for 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 release, day release, or flexibly over a period of time. The minimum 20% off the job training over the length of the apprenticeship will still need to be satisfied.

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 from completing their training and skills. We know that it may be tough, the learning through apprenticeshipsmay pose challenges, but the benefits from carrying on with the apprenticeship during this time, including continued employment and progression that can all be applied to the job once it is safe and practical to do so.

19. Will apprentices who are furloughed continue to train?

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

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

No, the normal funding payment profile will apply over the length of the apprenticeship. As it currently does whether providers deliver blocks of training or more frequently. Providers are encouraged to bring forward the 'off-the-job' training to the delivery methodology and timetable.

Apprentices who are furloughed

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

No. While furloughed you will still be paid by your employer and you have from your employer the right to continue your normal employment terms and conditions and undertake training. Where training has been required by your employer you should be paid the appropriate minimum wage for the time spent training. This will be covered in your normal pay for furloughed employees.

Your time spent training is not part of the appropriate minimum wage. If you are furloughed total furlough payment amount equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage for the number of hours you are furloughed, during the furlough period, your employer should top up your furlough payment.

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?

Where training is undertaken by furloughed employees, or the request of the employer, the employee should be paid the appropriate minimum wage for the time spent in training. 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, if the time spent training during the furlough period, when added to the minimum wage entitlement in excess of the furlough payment, employers will need to top up the furlough payment. The time spent in training will be 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 increase in minimum wage rates from 1 April 2020.

Employers should consider the hours that an employee is expected to train during the furlough period, and ensure that the furlough payment, when added to training pay, ensures that the furlough payment provides sufficient money to cover the training hours. Where the entire furlough payment equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage for the number of hours the employee is furloughed, the employer will need to pay the additional wages to ensure at least the appropriate minimum wage is paid for the time spent training.

Example 1
If an employee is furloughed for 20 hours per week contract and has been furloughed for the whole month of April, the furlough payment is £500.

In terms of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) regulations they must be paid £5.70 for every hour they train. (Note that the NMW legislation does not apply to time that is not in training.)

Over the 2 week furlough period (the pay reference period) this amounts to an NMW entitlement of £570. (£5.70 x 5 hours x 2 weeks).

The 80% furlough payment that they have received from their employer is £400. This furlough payment provides sufficient money to cover these training hours.

Example 2
An apprentice and employer agree that the apprentice will train for 5 hours per week (25 hours per day) (to cover as much off the job training as possible during this period).

In terms of the National Minimum Wage regulations they are entitled to £8.29 for every hour they train. (Note that the NMW legislation does not apply to time that is not in training.)

Over the 2 week furlough period (the pay reference period) this amounts to a NMW entitlement of £1,658 (£8.29 x 5 hours x 4 days x 2 weeks).

The 80% furlough payment that they have received from their employer is £1,536. This furlough payment provides sufficient money to cover these training hours and the employer would need to top up the difference (£3.85).

Note in both cases above the employee, 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 their apprentices and undertake off the job training and assessments as part of their employer. This includes progress reviews.

If the employer (line manager) is also furloughed, then we appreciate that arranging a progress review may be more difficult. However, if the line manager is furloughed and is about the progress of the apprentice, they are 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 option, but the apprentice must be furloughed of the full-time of their pay so furloughed they must not carry out their normal work.

23. Can a furloughed apprentice listen in to (without taking part in) work-related meeting / discussions and do off the job training?

Apprentices who are continuing to train for their apprenticeships must not provide services to a genuine revenue for their employer. Apprentices who are furloughed and are able to work for an apprenticeship can do what is in the furlough guidance.

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 the short term. They may be able to support you in finding a new employer.

If that more becomes permanent, you should look to see which alternative apprenticeships are available in your area. Please use the Find a Apprenticeship and liaise 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 eligible for furlough payments if they start working for their new employer?

Yes, if the employer has furloughed their employees in accordance to a June 30 cut-off date between employers who started their jobs before the outbreak, and employees who have not been permitted to start working for and training with their new employer because of the outbreak, employers will be able to furlough employees within 30 days of leaving their last job, that is not later than 30 days between employees who, if the coronavirus (COVID-19) had not arisen 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 will now be 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. Furloughed employees can still do training, and your employer may decide that training is now considered to be furloughed. There is a section in the guidance on furloughed employees that covers this.

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 speak to your training provider, who will inform us of a break in learning.

Once you return to work and you resume your apprenticeship, which your training provider can help with too. You should refer any queries around terms and conditions, including wages, to 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 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 support to continue paying part of their employees' salary for those employees that would otherwise be laid off during this crisis. This will ensure that furloughed workers keep their jobs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.

Alternatively, Universal Credit may be available for both workers and the unemployed who have been affected by coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Please see GOV.UK for information on what you may be able to support this activity.

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

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 the outbreak. The Government is encouraging employers to do this where they can and wait the process is still able to support this activity.

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

29. 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 learner eligibility and pre-employer eligibility criteria of the apprenticeship funding rules. Employers who are furloughing their staff may be interested in taking on apprentices programmes that are continuous training duration of 12 months, with a minimum of 20% off the job training over the duration to become occupationally competent. With training being delivered by training providers and assessments being carried out by the EPA of the identity and eligibility of the individual and how they would carry out the model assessment.

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

When starting 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 signature are as follows:

- the apprenticeship agreement
- the commitment statement
- external audit reports for subcontractors
- evidence linking to additional payments such as additional learning support and the disadvantage uplift
- contracts for services
- agreements that an apprentice has passed an gateway requirements

It is expected that where providers already have a digital/electronic signature process, they must continue to utilise these existing processes in accordance with the respective GDPR rules.

Where a provider has no digital or electronic systems and processes in place, and a learner or employer signature then, until normal circumstances, a wet signature is acceptable. Providers should then, when normal circumstances, start to put a process in place where practicable, that is compliant.

It is recognised that providers delivering training and/or recruiting learners during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak will experience difficulty in obtaining learner and employer signatures. Therefore, where providers do not have systems and processes in place to obtain signatures, or where the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions are still place, alternative evidence to be obtained instead are as follows:

For the purpose of audit evidence, we expect a record of acknowledgement or adoption of a genuine electronic message or document.

Acceptable evidence includes:

- an email from the learner or employer's email address with details of the confirmation and their typed name at the end of the message
- a screenshot or an electronic form or document emailed from the learner and/or employer
- a signed scanned document attached to an email from the learner and/or employer
- a document or form completed by the learner and/or employer and sent by email from the learner and/or employer

We are allowing providers to use this type of electronic confirmation during the period of restrictions due to coronavirus (COVID-19), only where no other auditable digital/electronic processes exist. This is not to be used as alternative evidence as part of the GDPR compliance arrangements under the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions are lifted.

Following the period of coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, providers using the above alternative evidence must review their process for obtaining signatures and ensure they are compliant with the GDPR requirements. Providers must then put in place wet signatures received during the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions is genuine and indicative, 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 raise apprenticeship quality and ensure employers are in control of the training their apprentices receive. Back in May, HMT Treasury ran a current plans to pause the collection of the apprenticeship levy because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The Government is now considering the best use of the package of support for businesses and employers and stands ready to announce further action wherever 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 arrangements.

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 though they can't deliver training? This will help the cape with the financial impacts of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Where training cannot take place for any reason, we do not expect to pay for a course in learning. When an a lesson in learning the technical will still be employed and classed as training, the provider can continue training, but we cannot claim for the training that isn't taking place.

Where the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak results in loss of income due to caused or related to sickness, self-isolation, childcare or other related factors, we will be paying for the wide range of financial support the HMT Treasury has already announced for businesses. Read the support for businesses guidance.

34. 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 access co-investment 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 training to manage 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 they do not want to restart training. The 'Pause' function is more transparency, and allows the employer and provider to discuss and agree when training can restart in the future, when it is appropriate to do so, in the 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 afterwards?

You must be employed when you are taking your EPA, so where a break in learning has occurred because of coronavirus (COVID-19) and you are no longer employed by the same back, please speak to your employer and training provider. We would expect them to work with you to reschedule your training which may also include revisiting your apprenticeship agreement and commitment statement. We advise they take 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 speak to your training provider as soon as you are able. It allows them maximum time to reschedule your assessment.

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

Yes, where apprentices are furloughed, they can on 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 timeframe due to the current disruption?

Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment, and cannot be assessed due to coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, will be considered to be in a pause in their 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 (where specified), EPAOs are responsible for agreeing extensions to the EPA timeframes during the current disruption. EPAOs should work closely with EQA providers and employers to ensure that the EPA is rescheduled when the apprentice is being prepared, the training providers must report this as a break in learning in the LR.

42. What is the EPA plan if the end-point assessment is conducted face-to-face, but cannot meet 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 classed in advance by the EQA provider
- the apprentice's identity is verified
- remote tools are supported by an appropriately trained invigilator or assessor who is able to intervene if required, and the apprentice:
  - and also has not created the training, preparation or assessment environment to their advantage
  - has access to technology and systems are in place
- the input of their employer is present and plays an appropriate in the taken into consideration to ensure a fair and reliable assessment of occupational competence
- where alternatives are not appropriate, a pause should be taken until the end of the cohort. A maximum of 12 weeks is allowable for those EPA plans where a break in learning is being taken, this is to be kept under review and closure will EQA providers on a timely basis.

43. How will invigilation of assessments be conducted remotely?

Remote tools should be supervised by an appropriately trained invigilator or assessor who is able to intervene if required, and the apprentice's identity is verified, involved in the training, preparation or the management of the apprentice.

Tools must only be carried out within a supervised and controlled environment and should be used in accordance with the provider's GDPR requirements. Details of invigilators 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 EQA?

EPAOs are not expected to carry out an assessment of an apprentice if their line manager has been furloughed, and there is no suitable alternative, we support providers to make the decision to pause the EPA. Training providers should work closely with assessment providers on a solution to ensure that the apprentice is ready to take the end-point assessment and is ready to sit their EPA. Where this is not the case then the EPA should be rescheduled.

Apprentices whose gateway is delayed can have an extension to the assessment timeframe.

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

We would not consider this to be appropriate at the current time. Our intention is to ensure that apprentices are prepared, and at the time we believe that the EPA is an important part of that.

EQA providers have agreed flexibilities which apply to over-65 contracts from Ofsted Inspection to Service Support Services to Adult Care Review. These facilitates have the potential to allow thousands of apprentices to undertake EPA, despite the current operating constraints.

We are currently working on the register of end-point assessment organisations a copy of the register, which will include details of which the apparentices are able to undertake online.

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

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

It is the responsibility of the end-point assessment organisation to agree the schedule EPA. You should refer to the assessment plan for the apprenticeship standard to understand the requirements for the assessment methods and how they are delivered.

Where an EPA cannot be undertaken immediately, a pause and rescheduling might be the way ahead. We would consider it a pause for those EPAs where a long-term break in learning has been agreed by EPA. It is to be logged on and shared with EQA providers on a timely basis.

49. Apprentices are ready for EPA but can't take it. Should they be paid more than the apprenticship 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 unable to take it because of coronavirus, or 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 coronavirus (COVID-19)?

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

You should add a dated note to the evidence pack for the apprentice explaining that the test was not taken due to revised guidance during 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.

Is this page useful? Yes No Is there anything wrong with this page?

Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support

The UK has left the EU

Check the new rules for January 2021

Services and information

Benefits
Births, deaths, marriages and care
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