Part of
Education and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Ofsted, Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

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).

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Temporary flexibility for apprenticeship certificate address

Apprenticeship certificates are usually sent to the apprentice's employer, but we have introduced temporary flexibility so that certificates can instead be sent to the apprentice's training provider address or to the apprentice. This flexibility is in place until 31 March 2026 and applies to all new and in-flight apprenticeships and is for use when employers are unable to receive certificates.

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

Disruption to employment

Where apprentices are furloughed or have their employment ended with their training where their training provider can continue to deliver this remotely.

Where apprentices are furloughed (or their employment is ended) or where the nature of their employment changes and no longer supports their apprenticeship, they may be able to continue their training if it could consider whether a break in learning would be appropriate. (See section above on breaks in learning.)

If a break in learning is not needed, it is our ambition that they will be supported to find alternative employment and continue their apprenticeship with a new employer. (See section on 'Redundancy'.)

Apprenticeship training can already make provision for apprentices who are made redundant or that, wherever possible, they can continue their apprenticeship training with a new employer. (See ESFA's Apprenticeship Funding Rules, Rule 2.4 and Rule 2.5 and ESFA's Apprenticeship Funding Rules for 2019 to 2020, for further details).

Where an apprentice is furloughed, the main provider must support the apprentice to find another employer. In instances where a significant number of apprentices are furloughed, ESFA will work with training providers and Ofsted effectively, the DfE will also provide additional support and guidance to the apprentices and training providers to secure alternative employers for individuals.

Furloughed apprentices

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) allows employers to claim 80% of furloughed employees' (employees' salary for furloughed or furlough work) wages costs, up to £2,500 a month, plus the associated employer National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment pension contributions on this wage.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will cover 20 October 2020 onwards.

When an employee is furloughed they can take part in volunteer work or training, but they must not do any work for their employer. Employers can top-up the wage they receive from the government, but they are not required to do so.

Where their training provider can continue to deliver training remotely, a furloughed apprentice could still 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 the work. The hours that furloughed workers spend training should not count towards wage, so the amount of time they are required to carry out their training hours. However, where the furlough payment does not meet the minimum wage for the training hours, the employer should top-up the furlough to the additional hours required. The purpose of the apprenticeship or the worker's wage to be paid by the government, and the use associated with that funding, is to support employers to retain their workforce. Training that will allow it to be an employee's job when furloughed ends is a form of this and should not be subject of top-up. (See section on 'Furloughed' for the time they are furloughed.)

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will cover 20 October 2020 onwards.

Redundant apprentices

Support for apprentices

Where an apprentice made redundant but wishes to continue with their apprenticeship, main provider should be able to continue training the redundant apprentice in line with the eligibility criteria set out in the funding rules for new starts.

Apprentice circumstances

Apprentice is between first and 12 months of the first day of training.

Funding support

We will fund the remaining costs of the price negotiated between the main provider and the previous employer, for a maximum of 12 weeks.

Within the 12 week period:

- if the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the new employer resumes outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point
- if the apprentice takes a job with an employer which is not related to the apprenticeship, we will continue to fund the remaining costs for up to 12 weeks
- if a new employer is not found within 12 weeks, the apprenticeship is withdrawn from the programme. If they return at a later date to the same apprenticeship, we will fund the remaining costs for up to 12 weeks

Employer providers can only train their own staff, and therefore if they make redundancies they will not be able to continue training their staff. Training special licence providers can continue training their redundant apprentices. If an employer provider is on the register of apprenticeship training providers as a training provider, they can also continue training their redundant staff. The apprenticeship must continue to comply with the funding rules for new starts.

Apprentice circumstances

Apprentice is more than 12 months away from the first day of training.

Funding support

We will fund the remaining costs of the price negotiated between the main provider and the previous employer, for a maximum of 12 weeks.

Within the 12 week period:

- if the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the new employer resumes outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point
- if the apprentice takes a job with an employer which is not related to the apprenticeship, we will continue to fund the remaining costs for up to 12 weeks
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Increased Cost for apprentices

To further support redundant apprentices, the Department for Work and Pension (DWP) will provide an additional 5 weeks benefits income to make redundant but a continuing their apprenticeship study. they can claim Universal Credit (UC) and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) benefits. This will include being able to start and complete their apprenticeship training, including any travel to work or training, without their benefits being affected.

Where study is work related this may be accepted as work preparation which will allow regular benefits to continue.

This is normally not expected to be more than 16 hours a week, although more than 16 hours may be allowed if it is part of a job centre plus offer of work requirements to be available to work for work coach. Claimants will receive their usual benefits payment, plus the amount of their course fees.

Claiming on or 16 year old

For 16 year old and under apprentices, who is training at level 2 or below, plans to cash out the 16-19 bursary, discretionary bursary funding, their eligibility will be based on how they they train for and whether they meet the apprenticeship eligibility.

For apprentice is 19 or over and training for a level below (Year 13 hours a week) will be eligible for benefits income.

- they are 19 or over and training for a level 2 or below
- they are responsible for a child, either as a single person or as a couple
- they are responsible for a child and receive Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and have limited capability for work
- they are 19 or over and have a long-term health condition or disability and support, for example, they are receiving Employment and Support Allowance and have an active work-related activity

For apprentice is 19 or over, but do not meet the criteria above but is studying more than 16 hours a week (Year 13 hours a week) and is aged 19 or over, the parents would be able to claim the child allowance of £1,21 (English) and £1,30 (Welsh) a week for the 1st child and £1,00 (English and Welsh) for subsequent children.

Exceptions for 16 and 17-year-olds

Young people who are 16 or 17 year-old will be eligible for Universal Credit (UC) if they are responsible for a child or a disabled child. An apprentice is under the age of 18 they would be eligible to claim UC if the own right if they are responsible for a child or disabled.

- have limited capability for work or have medical evidence and are waiting for a decision about their benefits
- are carrying for a severely disabled person
- are responsible for a child
- are a lone parent and have been in work for at least one child and their partner is eligible for Universal Credit
- are pregnant and it's 11 weeks or less before their expected week of childbirth
- have had a child in the last 15 weeks
- are in a couple and both are under apprentice age, where they and their partners and their or their child are eligible for Universal Credit

Find out more information on eligibility criteria can be found on the Universal Credit for 16 and 17 year-olds Government webpage and this document. (Page 20 and 21 for Universal Credit).

Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices

Apprentices who have been made redundant, or who are at risk of redundancy, can access the Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices (RSSA) Redundancy Service for Apprentices.

The new service provides clear, accessible advice and guidance to individuals who are at risk of redundancy or have been made redundant. It signposts apprentices to identify new employers and training providers to continue their apprenticeship, and where they are eligible, complete their current apprenticeship.

Apprentices who are at risk of redundancy or have been made redundant may be redundant in the future, can visit https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeships-if-your-employer-is-at-risk-of-redundancy for information and advice. This resource supports learning continuity and will help apprentices who are looking to offering new apprenticeship opportunities in their area.

Employers who would like to offer a redundant apprenticeship or offer new apprenticeship opportunities, should visit https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeships-if-your-employer-is-at-risk-of-redundancy and select 'I already have the valuable skills and experience that organisations need'.

Functional skills requirements

Level 2 Functional Skills requirements, English and mathematics, are set at level 1 to both English and maths functional skills qualifications to complete their apprenticeship. Apprentices who have English and maths GCSE grade 3 can attempt the functional skills assessments at level 2.

Ofqual have published their approach to assessment for vocational and technical qualifications and apprenticeships. Ofqual have confirmed that students who have taken a GCSE in English and mathematics in 2020 and 2021 will receive a calculated grade. Taking into account this guidance, and the fact that the Functional Skills qualifications are equivalent to GCSEs, we will treat Functional Skills assessments in English and mathematics as equivalent to GCSEs and level 2 functional skills assessments is suspended temporarily. This will allow apprentices who have achieved a GCSE in English and mathematics to meet their skills requirements for completing their apprenticeship.

Therefore, apprentices who are due to take their EPA up until 31 December 2020 should be assessed in English and mathematics at level 1 if they have not attempted the level 2 functional skills English and maths assessment. Main providers should continue to support their apprentices to take the functional skills assessments as normal. Functional skills English and maths assessments will require a level 1 functional skills in English and/or maths in order to complete their apprenticeship.

Apprentices who have achieved a level 2 functional skills in English and maths will be able to attempt the level 2 functional skills English and maths assessment. Main providers should continue to support their apprentices to take the functional skills assessments as normal. Functional skills English and maths assessments will require a level 1 functional skills in English and/or maths in order to complete their apprenticeship.

The temporary suspension is in place until further notice.

Apprentices undertaking a level 3 or higher apprenticeship are still required to hold or achieve an approved level 2 functional skills English and maths. Apprentices who have English and maths GCSE grade 4 or above, or equivalent, meet the requirement. Apprentices who have achieved a level 2 functional skills English and maths qualification in English and maths to 31 December 2020 meet the requirement.

Non levy procured apprenticeships contracts

Contract extensions were issued to training providers at the beginning of March by the Employer non-levy procurement and skills funding service, with a start date of 1 April 2020.

Training providers will continue to be able to issue contract extensions to these same contracts, which cover the existing financial year (2020-21). These contracts will be issued by the Employer non-levy procurement and skills funding apprenticeship team, with a start date of 1 April 2020 and ending 31 March 2021. This aligned with our intention for all starts to be funded through the apprenticeship levy from April 1st, September 2020.

In light of the challenges faced by training providers and employers we will be extending the contract extension process for a further month to include procured contracts to include starts in April and May 2020 onwards. Fully available for new starts on non-levy procured contracts can be issued until the end of May 2020.

Delivering this extension will allow training providers to continue to offer apprenticeship service from 1 April 2020. Contract variations will be issued to training providers for existing non-levy procured apprenticeships which will be confirmed shortly thereafter.

We remain committed to giving smaller employers greater control over their apprenticeship training and have made it easier for them to transfer unspent funds on apprenticeship standard, choose their training provider and secure access to training. We will be ensuring that training providers are able to deliver originally planned. This means that, where continuation of training is not possible, the apprenticeship levy will begin to access apprenticeship training as the apprentice progresses through their training programme. (See the Government contract Extension extended until 31 March 2020).

Audit

Due to the assessment lockdown measures on Monday 23 March 2020, we made the decision to pause the start of any new routine funding audits for all post-16 training providers, with the exception of apprenticeship providers.

We are now planning to restart routine funding audits on a remote basis for apprenticeship providers. We will be contacting providers to let them know which apprenticeships we will be sampling and we will be concentrated on restarting our audits for audits and investigations. So that we have the ability to do so, where we need to, we will be sampling a smaller number of apprentices than we would normally do. We will be sampling a smaller number of apprentices than we would normally do.

Where funding audits and investigations were already in progress prior to the lockdown, we have paused the audits and will restart them when we have sufficient providers' capacity to resolve any issues.

It may be necessary for the Apprenticeship training providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in order to continue to maintain effective oversight of their provision. We will be in touch with providers to let them know if we will continue to be sensitive to the challenges training providers face as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Frequently asked questions and further information

These questions and answers will be updated regularly in line with advice from Public Health England (PHE) and the Government's response to the coronavirus (COVID-19).

For queries not covered by this guidance, please contact the apprenticeship service helpline. They can be contacted by telephone on 08450 150 600 or email apprenticeships@managingagents.co.uk.

Apprenticeship training frequently asked questions

Apprentices who are still working

Due to business continuity measures, all staff are required to be available to their usual place of work. Can they still continue with their job or apprenticeship continue their training?

Apprentices are expected to perform their usual place of work in their usual job role. Here are several options available:

- apprentice continues with their job and training within the workplace, or an alternative workplace, if their usual place of work is closed or unavailable
- apprentice could engage in digital or distance learning at a convenient time within their agreed working hours
- they could be offered additional on-site weekend work
- they could be offered a change of job role, provided that it meets skills criteria supporting their apprenticeship
- they could take a formal break in learning (if it seems or may end in completion the apprenticeship, see section on 'Breaks in learning')

Is it critical worker staff are having to be moved into different work business critical roles that are outside their apprenticeship training? Can they still continue training?

Apprenticeship training must be linked to the job role that the individual is undertaking. If a critical worker is being moved into a different role, apprenticeship training could be continued if it is deemed appropriate and is successful completion of EPA at a future date. Funding rules currently state that training should be for a minimum of 12 months, however training providers can be supported to develop a new apprenticeship training if it is learning where the interruption is learning is greater than 4 weeks. This apprenticeship training should be for a minimum of 12 months and should be focused on learning and not on the job role.

Is it critical worker staff are having to be moved into different work business critical roles that are outside their apprenticeship training? Can they still continue training?

Where apprentices can remain on their programme, they should continue to do so. Training providers should be supported to continue. Off-the-job training can already be delivered flexibly at a time and way to suit the employer and apprentice, including in the workplace, online or at home. Training providers have been supported to develop and deliver training online in response to coronavirus (COVID-19). It is critical employer apprentices have redeployed to critical roles, that they are able to continue their training and gain valuable skills and experience. Training providers will be supported and provided with the skills and knowledge to support the apprentice and employer. Training must be delivered in a way that demonstrates the apprentice gaining the skills and knowledge required for their apprenticeship, and where training is delivered, it must be in a way that demonstrates the apprentice is learning and developing the skills and knowledge required for their apprenticeship. (See section on 'Breaks in learning' and 'Apprenticeship Training Providers, Evidence of attendance' for more details).

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

If an apprentice needs to self-isolate, what will happen to their apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships can be supported to be flexible to support the apprentices' circumstances, for example during a period of illness, if an apprentice is self-isolating or caring for family members. Training providers can be supported about the best way to continue with their apprenticeship or take a break in learning. Options include:

- an increase in learning
- a short pause of less than 4 weeks in their apprenticeship while they are off sick, self-isolating or caring for family members (see section on 'Breaks in learning')
- a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more that their training provider can support (see section on 'Breaks in learning'). Training providers can be supported to develop a new apprenticeship training plan to take into consideration the duration in the with the length of their break
- a changing apprenticeship commitment to a shorter duration

The appropriate check will be agreed based on the apprentice's and the employer's training needs and circumstances.

Q: An apprentice needs to take care of themself or family member. Can they continue their apprenticeship training?

Training providers should be supported to discuss with the apprentice and employer if training is available from their training provider. Apprentices should check the training provider is able to deliver training remotely.

Q: What should happen if a Bio-Medical Scientist apprentice is not well enough to complete their EPA because they are self-isolating, or their apprenticeship training provider is unable to deliver training remotely?

Q: If an apprentice can't work/attend training, will they still be paid?

An apprenticeship is not a job, and apprentices are not required to be able to do their training. Key skill employed, unless they have been notified otherwise by their employer, they should be able to do their job role from home.

Where they are unable to work, we support that apprentices open to their employer about their concerns.

Q: If apprentice had got an apprentice in a break in learning because they can't complete their apprenticeship training because of the coronavirus, can they lose their opportunity to continue, can the employer pause the break in learning?

We have committed to supporting apprenticeships to continue to be retrospectively for the training that they have delivered and not evidence of the skills, knowledge and behaviours they have gained. We will be in the gift of the providers to determine, on a case-by-case basis, whether a break in learning is to cease payments. Training providers are working hard to support their apprentices and employers and will be supported to make a decision jointly, for some, this may take the form of an Employers have concerns, we encourage they to discuss them the employer.

Apprentices who are working at home

Q: An employer is achieving a work from home policy and placement provision for their apprentices. Would this be acceptable?

For apprentice is unable to attend scheduled learning events, there are several options available:

- their training provider can deliver training remotely
- they can take a short pause if it is likely their apprenticeship can resume in the near future (see section on 'Breaks in learning' and 'Apprenticeship training frequently asked questions')
- they can take a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more which their training provider can support (see section on 'Breaks in learning'). Training providers can be supported to develop a new apprenticeship training plan to take into consideration the duration of their break

Some employers have concerns, we encourage they to discuss them the apprentice, as it currently does where training providers deliver blended or distance learning. Training providers are working hard to support their apprentices and employers and will be supported to make a decision jointly.

Q: Are there any additional training providers need to review the price of the apprenticeship if the training is delivered through?

The price of an apprenticeship is negotiated and agreed upon by an employer and provider. If any additional costs are incurred, the provider should discuss with the employer and agree if the price needs to be varied.

We accept that this might be challenging in the current environment, and we would encourage providers to be flexible and supportive of their apprentices and employers and apprentices are eligible for funding. Examples of necessary activity include:

- initial assessment of the apprenticeship
- production of an individual training plan

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

Q: Will training providers be paid back for rescheduling off-the-training and EPA activity?

Yes, the normal monthly payment will be made for the length of the apprenticeship, as it currently does whether training providers deliver blended or distance learning. Training providers are working hard to support their apprentices and employers and will be supported to make a decision jointly.

Q: IfIS employers and

may not be possible to do it immediately. Employer providers will need to discuss with their EPA how they will carry out the assessment and agree an apprenticeship which they can start later.

FAQ 8B8 apprentices who have been able to return to England, due to the pandemic, can start a new apprenticeship with their employer in their home country.

FAQ 8B9 Although the funding rules require an apprentice to spend at least 50% of their working time in England, if they are able to do so in a different way, apprentices will have no option but to work and train remotely from a location outside of England. Employers will need to discuss with their EPA how they will carry out the assessment and agree an apprenticeship standard. It is good for coronavirus (COVID-19) they will remain eligible for support.

Apprentices who are furloughed

FAQ Can training continue for furloughed apprentices?

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

Training continues to count towards off-the-job training, can this be more than one day a week?

Yes. The normal off-the-job training requirement of 20% of working time as a block where this is agreed between the provider and the employer. The 20% requirement is a minimum and should be kept under review to ensure it is still appropriate for the apprentice.

FAQ Why should apprentices continue training if they can't attend their place of work?

We do not want the disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak to interrupt apprenticeships. Furloughed apprentices should be able to complete training and gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need, but there are benefits from carrying on with the apprenticeship during the period. It may be possible for apprentices to do some of their off-the-job training to the place they're safe and comfortable in.

FAQ Will apprentices be paid for continuing training if they have been furloughed?

Yes. While furloughed apprentices will still be paid by their employer and pay taxes their pay means they will be eligible for support for their employer while furloughed, they are undertaking training. Where training has been interrupted because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, employers should be the same pay as before. This is in line with the furlough scheme guidance.

Apprentices (new open training) must be paid at the appropriate minimum wage. Where the full training programme is not completed, the wage that the appropriate minimum wage for the total amount of their time spent training. Employers should continue to pay apprentices at the rate they were paying before furlough.

FAQ How will employers know if they need to top up an employer's wages if they are furloughed and continue training their apprentices?

Where training is undertaken by furloughed employees, at the request of the employer, the employer will need to top up the apprentice's wages to the appropriate minimum wage for the hours spent training. For example, if an employee's regular wage, up to the value of £2,500, will provide sufficient income to cover these training hours.

However, where the overall time spent training, during the furlough period, means that the wage payment, up to the value of £2,500, will not provide sufficient income to cover the training hours, then the employer (who has spent training is treated as working time for the purposes of the minimum wage legislation) will need to top up the apprentice's wages to the amount that accrued the minimum wage for the training hours they have undertaken.

From 1 August 2020, the level of grant will be reduced each month, along with the maximum number of furlough days that employers can claim for. Employers will need to top up their apprentices' wages accordingly. This includes the changes to the scheme is set out in the changes to the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme from July.

Employers will be asked to pay a percentage towards the salaries of their furloughed employees, in addition to employer National Insurance contributions and employer pension contributions. Employers will continue to receive 80% of their salary, up to £2,500 a month.

When calculating what they need to top up an apprentice wage, employers should consider the hours that an apprentice is expected to train during the furlough period. Employers will need to top up their apprentice's wages to ensure that the overall payment they receive is at least the minimum wage for the training hours they have undertaken.

Where the entire furlough payment equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage entitlement for the training hours undertaken, the employer and the employee will need to pay the additional wages to ensure of the appropriate minimum wage for the training hours undertaken.

Our worked examples show how to calculate whether the furlough payment covers the minimum wage for training hours undertaken during furlough and training.

Example 1

12 year old social care 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) for 8 days each month.

In terms of the National Minimum Wage (NMW) regulations they are entitled to £4.35 for 7.5 hours (the 1 day per week they are training) and employer is paying £2,500 for 37 hours. Employer is paying £2,500 for 37 hours and the employee's regular pay

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

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