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 15 October 2020

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Updates

- Information on the actions that training providers should take for the return of apprentices from September. Read more about it in the returning to workplace and educational settings section.
- Information on how apprentices who have been made redundant, or who are at risk of redundancy, can access online and telephone support through the Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices. Read more about it in the redundant apprentices section.
- Confirmation that we are planning to restart routine funding audits from September 2020. Read more about it in the audit section.
- Information on the new incentive payment for hiring a new apprentice. Read more about it in the apprenticeship programme response section.
- Information on local alert levels has replaced information on local outbreaks. Read more about it in the returning to work and educational settings section.

General information

As part of the cross-government efforts to respond to the impact of coronavirus (COVID-19), the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) implemented measures to make it easier for apprenticeships to continue and complete in a different way, or to break and resume an apprenticeship later when that became possible.

The usual apprenticeship funding rules apply to main providers, employer providers, and employers delivering and supporting apprenticeship training and on-programme assessment under the apprenticeship programme. The rules form part of the terms and conditions for the use of funds in an employer's apprenticeship service account or for government-employer co-investment.

This document, however, sets out guidance and some temporary flexibilities to the apprenticeship funding rules that we introduced to the programme during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, and provides answers to questions related to these changes and other common questions. Some of these flexibilities, introduced during the 2019 to 2020 funding year continue beyond 1 August 2020 and therefore this guidance should be read alongside both the 2019 to 2020 and 2020 to 2021 apprenticeship funding rules.

This document also provides guidance on how apprentices can safely return to the workplace and educational settings, as well as the actions that training providers should take for the return of all apprentices from September.

It should be read alongside the safer working guidance, the Further Education (FE) autumn term guidance, and the government's coronavirus guidance and support for businesses.

Our objective for these measures is to support all employers to retain their apprentices and to support apprenticeship training and assessment providers to continue to deliver services to apprentices where possible, so that they may progress and complete their apprenticeships as planned. Although apprentices are returning to the workplace and educational settings, our guidance still aims to help all parties through this period of transition.

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

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

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

Overview

Government measures to support businesses and employees

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

We published guidance on how the government's package of financial support can be accessed by further education and apprenticeship training providers.

In line with Cabinet Office guidance we introduced targeted financial support measures in the form of a provider relief scheme. The purpose of the scheme is to retain capacity within the apprenticeships and adult learning sector to deliver the skills we will need to support economic recovery post-outbreak.

As part of that, we also want to support training providers to maintain delivery to and support for existing apprentices and employers and, where possible, enable new apprentices to enrol. Find out details of the ESFA post-16 provider relief scheme.

Additional advice and guidance from ACAS is also available.

Apprenticeship programme response

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

In addition to the flexibilities we have developed to support existing apprentices, we are also keen to support the government's Plan for Jobs which will help to kickstart the nation's economic recovery. In recognition of the value apprentices can bring to our economy, an incentive payment will be made to employers who hire an apprentice between 1 August 2020 and 31 January 2021.

More information about the new incentive payment for hiring a new apprentice, the eligibility criteria, and how it can be claimed, can be found in the 2020 to 2021 apprenticeship funding rules.

To support users of this document to understand what is changing and the steps that should be taken, the information in this document is necessarily technical in places.

Returning to the workplace and educational settings

As apprentices return to work, assessment centres and educational settings, training providers, employers and EPAOs should consider how best to minimise the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission when determining how and when training and assessment takes place.

Apprenticeship delivery can be extremely flexible and it is up to training providers, employers and EPAOs to agree how apprenticeship training is delivered, and how assessments are undertaken. They should consider whether they want to take advantage of more than one delivery method to balance minimising any risks from coronavirus (COVID-19) with providing a full educational experience.

Training providers, employers and EPAOs should also consider how much apprentices from different employers mix with other learners and staff when training in an educational setting or undertaking assessment. Minimising contact with, and mixing between, people reduces transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). This is important in all contexts, and training providers, employers and EPAOs must do everything possible to minimise contacts and mixing while delivering training and assessment, information on how to group students can be found in the system of controls section of the FE autumn term guidance.

Where possible they should also maintain appropriate distance between people and consider how you implement the other practical actions for businesses. For example, block release may be better at reducing movement between sites.

There cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach where we prescribe the appropriate action to take in every scenario. Training providers, employers and EPAOs will be best placed to understand the needs of their organisations and communities, and to make informed judgments about how to balance delivering a broad and balanced programme with the measures needed to manage risk.

Apprentices returning to work

'COVID-19 secure' guidelines have been made available to UK employers to help them get their businesses back up and running and workplaces operating as safely as possible. This means that apprentices can return to work and are able to continue or restart their training in the workplace. The guidance covers a range of different areas of work for the types of business that are able to reopen.

To ensure that we are supporting as many apprentices to continue their apprenticeship as possible, new arrangements will be supported alongside the existing flexibilities about where apprenticeship training is delivered. Where a provider is able to do so safely, apprenticeship training can be delivered in the workplace where that workplace meets 'COVID-19 secure' guidelines on ensuring the workplace is safe.

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

Apprentices returning to undertake EPA within assessment centres

To ensure that apprentices can work to complete their apprenticeship, new assessment arrangements will be supported alongside the existing flexibilities about how apprenticeship assessments are delivered. Where assessment centres meet the safer working guidance, then apprentices can travel to them to undertake their EPA, however remote assessments can still take place in line with IFATE's guidance on the delivery of assessment.

EPAO's should also refer to the FE autumn term guidance to ensure they are implementing the appropriate protective measures for education and childcare settings.

Apprentices returning to train in an educational setting

Since June, training providers could offer face-to-face contact for some apprentices as part of a combined approach to delivery. From this autumn, our plan is for apprenticeship training providers to resume delivery so that apprentices of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full. In line with the FE autumn term guidance we expect training providers to fully deliver planned hours for apprentices of all ages from a training providers normal term start date in autumn 2020, or 1 September where they do not have a normal term start date.

Training providers must also ensure that face-to-face delivery resumes (recognising that this may need to be supplemented by high quality remote delivery where plans to limit the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) require it). However, apprenticeship delivery has always been extremely flexible and it is up to the provider and the employer to decide how apprenticeship training is delivered and whether they want to take advantage of more than one delivery method – for example, a combination of face-to-face delivering, interactive on-line learning, mentoring and self-directed distance learning.

Health and safety legislation require employers (which includes training providers) to assess risks and put in place proportionate control measures. This includes taking reasonable steps to protect staff, apprentices and others from coronavirus (COVID-19) within the education setting.

Training providers may already have implemented proportionate control measures to limit the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) for a limited number of learners but as part of planning for welcoming more learners back for the autumn term, they should:

- revisit and update risk assessments
- consider additional risks and control measures to enable a return of all learners from the beginning of the autumn term, including those who may be at more risk of an adverse outcome if infected
- review and update wider risk assessments and consider whether they need to put in place additional controls to meet HSE requirements set out in the estates section of the FE autumn term guidance. Training providers should implement proportionate control measures which follow the health and safety system of controls to mitigate these risks
- have arrangements in place to monitor control measures to ensure they are working as planned. Arrangements should be updated appropriately according to any issues training providers identify or changes in public health advice

Training providers should also consider whether they need any additional processes in place for apprentices who regularly attend more than one site or move between a training provider and workplace as part of their apprenticeship.

The FE autumn term guidance sets out what training providers must do to minimise the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) in educational settings, and should be read alongside this document to get more information.

Face coverings

From 1 September, advice, which can be found in the FE autumn term guidance, applies to the use of face coverings by staff and learners in further education settings.

The guidance is not mandatory, and any legal exemptions that apply to the wearing of face coverings in shops and on public transport also apply to this new advice.

Local outbreaks

The tiers of restriction for education and childcare, summarised in annex 3 of the contain framework, work alongside the local COVID alert levels. At all local alert levels, the expectation is that education and childcare provision should continue as normal.

The government has been very clear that limiting attendance at schools and other education settings should only be done as a last resort, even in areas where a local alert level is 'high' or 'very high'.

Decisions on any restrictions necessary in education or childcare settings are taken separately on a case-by-case basis in the light of local circumstances, including information about the incidence and transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Contingency plans for outbreaks

Training and assessment providers should develop a strong contingency plan for remote training and assessment provision by the end of September to ensure they are able to rapidly shift to blended, or if necessary, remote training and assessment should the need arise, accepting that some provision cannot be delivered remotely. This planning will be important to make sure training is maintained in a range of scenarios, from a single apprentice needing to stay at home, to circumstances where large numbers of apprentices are required to remain at home due to new local restrictions being imposed.

Disruption to training

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

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

Changing apprenticeship learning arrangements

As far as it is possible and practicable to do so, we are encouraging and supporting employers and training and assessment providers to make use of distance-learning and assessment tools and techniques where apprentices are unable to attend the workplace, educational setting, or assessment centre. This will enable apprentices to continue learning and assessment and complete their apprenticeships.

Payments to training providers

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

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

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

Breaks in learning

Where it is not possible for an apprenticeship to continue, a break in learning may be initiated. Apprenticeship funding rules already make provision for disruption in learning:

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

Where breaks in learning are required, it is our goal that apprentices are able to promptly 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.

For a break in learning greater than 4 weeks that began on or after 1 April 2020:

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

When the apprentice, training provider and employer are all ready for the apprenticeship to resume (after the coronavirus (COVID-19) pause), training providers should update their ILR data in line with section 5.4 in the training provider support manual to ensure accurate recording and earnings calculations.

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

Disruption to assessment

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

The Institute have announced that all EPA flexibilities put in place due to coronavirus (COVID-19) will be extended until the end of the year. The Institute have also confirmed that they will give 12 weeks' notice from when any changes are announced to existing flexibilities before EPAOs will have to deliver them.

EQA providers remain responsible for assuring consistency and quality of assessment. EPAOs should engage with EQA providers throughout and agree arrangements in advance where remote assessment replaces face-to-face assessment or where a simulated environment is to be used. Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment and cannot be assessed due to coronavirus (COVID-19) related issues will be able to have their EPA rescheduled.

Where there is a specified time limit for EPA after gateway, a further pause of 12 weeks is allowable in addition to this time limit.

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

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

Payments to EPAOs

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

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

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

EPA flexibilities

In addition to the general flexibilities allowed by IFATE set out in their coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance and IFAT's supporting COVID-19 FAQ document, EQA providers have to date agreed additional flexibilities to the delivery of EPA which apply to more than 100 apprenticeship standards. These flexibilities have the potential to allow thousands of apprentices to undertake EPA, despite the current operating constraints.

Read the list of standards with temporary discretions or flexibilities.

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

IFATE will continue to update all coronavirus (COVID-19) related guidance to reflect the evolving situation and advice. We recommend that the guidance is referred back to regularly, as it may include updated information. If the information isn't in IFATE's guidance or the FAQ, a question can be sent to Enquiries.IFA@education.gov.uk.

EPA flexibility for functional skills qualifications (FSQs)

IFATE had put in place a temporary new end-point assessment flexibility that enabled apprentices to take EPA ahead of receiving their calculated FSQ results. The cut-off point for awarding organisations to collect calculated grades was the 31 July 2020.

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

This flexibility applied to:

- all apprentices awaiting their calculated FSQ result
- those apprentices that were deemed by their training provider to have the required level of functional skills and sufficient evidence to demonstrate this to receive a calculated FSQ pass
- occupationally competent apprentices at gateway who were ready to progress to sit their EPA

This temporary measure supports qualifying apprentices to complete their EPA without undue delay. Where calculated results for FSQs are issued, this only applies to assessments which would have been taken by apprentices between 20 March and 31 July 2020. We do not expect calculated results to be issued after 31 July 2020.

Apprentices will only achieve their apprenticeship once they have passed EPA and received their FSQ pass. Training providers will therefore be expected to provide prompt confirmation of the apprentice's FSQ calculated results to EPAOs once these have been awarded. Further guidance for training providers, EPAOs and employers can be found at Apprenticeship gateway and resits for EPA.

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

- apprentice details

- apprentice details
- certification run date
- unique number

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

Temporary flexibility for apprenticeship certificate address

Apprenticeship certificates are usually sent to the apprentice's employer, but we have introduced a temporary flexibility to allow apprenticeship certificates to be sent to the apprentice's training provider address or to the apprentice themselves if the employer's office is closed. This will ensure that apprentices are not disadvantaged and held up as they plan the next steps in their post apprenticeship journey.

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

Disruption to employment

Where apprentices are furloughed, they are permitted to continue with their training where their training provider can continue to deliver this remotely.

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

Where apprentices are made redundant, it is our ambition that they will be supported to find alternative employment and continue their apprenticeship as quickly as possible and within 12 weeks.

Apprenticeship funding rules already make provision for apprentices who are made redundant so that, wherever possible, they can continue their apprenticeship and proceed to EPA. (See P271-P273 in the funding rules for main providers 2019 to 2020 and P290 – P291 in the funding rules for main providers 2020 to 2021 for further details).

Where an apprentice is made redundant, the main provider must support the apprentice to find another employer. In instances where a significant number of apprentices are made redundant (e.g. because a large employer faces difficulties), the ESFA will attempt to provide exceptional practical support to the apprentices and training providers to secure alternative employers for the individuals.

Furloughed apprentices

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

The Chancellor has been clear that getting people back to work will be introduced in a measured way, avoiding a cliff edge. As the Chancellor announced (on 12 May), from August, employers currently using the scheme will have more flexibility to bring their furloughed employees back to work part time whilst still receiving support from the scheme.

From 1 August 2020, the level of grant will be reduced each month, along with who has responsibility for National Insurance contributions and minimum automatic enrolment employer pension contributions. The timetable for changes to the scheme is set out in the changes to the Coronavirus Job Retention scheme guidance.

This will run for 3 months from August through to the end of October. Employers will be asked to pay a percentage towards the salaries of their furloughed staff. The employer payments will substitute the contribution the government is currently making, ensuring that staff continue to receive 80% of their salary, up to £2,500 a month.

! The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme will close on 31 October 2020.

When an employee is furloughed they can take part in volunteer work or training, as long as it does not provide services to or generate revenue for or on behalf of the employer. Training in this context includes apprenticeship off-the-job training.

Where their training provider can continue to deliver 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 most cases, the furlough payment of 80% of a worker's wage, up to the value of £2,500, will provide sufficient monies to cover these training hours. However, where the furlough payment does not meet the appropriate minimum wage for the time spent training, employers will need to pay the additional wages. It is important to note that the percentage of the worker's wage to be paid by the government, and the cap associated with that percentage, will be reduced each month in September and October. Employers will have to top-up employees' wages to ensure they receive 80% of their wages up to a cap of £2,500 for the time they are furloughed.

For additional information on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme please consult HMRC's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme guidance.

Redundant apprentices

Support for apprentices
Where an apprentice is made redundant but wishes to continue with their apprenticeship, main providers are able to access funding to continue training the redundant apprentice, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in the funding rules for main providers.

Apprentice circumstances:
Apprentice is within 6 months of the final day of training.

Funding support:
We will fund 100% of the remaining costs of the price negotiated between the main 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 new employer assumes outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point
- If the apprentice takes a job with an employer which is not related to their apprenticeship, we will continue to fund the remaining costs

Apprentice circumstances:
Apprentice is between 6 months and 12 months of the final 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 this 12-week period:

- If the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the new employer assumes outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point.
- If the apprentice takes a job with an employer which is not related to their 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 apprentice is withdrawn from the programme but can return to the same apprenticeship at a later date, without the need to satisfy the 12-month minimum duration rule.

Apprentice circumstances:
Apprentice is more than 12 months away from the final 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 this 12-week period:

- If the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the new employer assumes outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point.
- If the apprentice takes a job with an employer which is not related to their 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 apprentice is withdrawn from the programme. If they return at a later date to the same apprenticeship, they would need to satisfy the 12-month minimum duration rule.

Employer-providers can only train their own staff, and therefore if they make an apprentice redundant that apprentice can no longer be trained by them. As training cannot take place, no further funding will be awarded. However, if an employer-provider is on the register of apprenticeship training providers as a main provider, they may be able to continue to be funded through 100% government co-investment for up to 12 weeks in line with the funding rules for main providers.

Universal Credit for apprentices
To further support redundant apprentices, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have advised that where an apprentice has been made redundant but is continuing their apprenticeship study, they can claim Universal Credit (UC) as long as they satisfy all eligibility criteria. In most cases this will include being 18 or over and undertaking work related activity – meaning 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 16 hours a week, although more than 16 hours may be possible if they are still able to satisfy all their requirements to be available to look for work. In each case, claimants will need to discuss their particular circumstances with their coach.

Claiming as an 18-year-old
Where an 18-year-old redundant apprentice, who is training at level 3 or below, plans to claim prior to the 1 September following their 19th birthday, their eligibility will be based on how long they train for and whether they meet the appropriate eligibility criteria.

If an apprentice is 18 or over and training full-time (more than 12 hours a week) they can make a claim if any of the following apply:

- they live with their partner and they're eligible for UC.
- they are responsible for a child, either as a single person or as a couple.
- they are disabled and entitled to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and have limited capability for work.
- they are in further education, are 21 or under and do not have parental support, for example, they're estranged from their parents and they're not under local authority care.

If a redundant apprentice does not meet the criteria above but is studying more than 12 hours a week, then they would not claim UC in their own right, but their parents would be able to claim the child element of UC (if eligible) and Child Benefit instead, up until (but not including) the 1st September following their 19th birthday.

If a redundant apprentice does not meet the criteria above and is studying 12 hours a week or less, then they would be able to claim UC in their own right if 18 or over. If they are under the age of 18 they would have no entitlement and their parents would not be able to claim the child element of UC or Child Benefit.

Exceptions for 16 and 17-year-olds
In most cases, an individual must be 18 or over to claim UC, however, there are some exceptions which allow a 16 or 17-year-old to apply. If a redundant apprentice is under the age of 18 they still may be eligible to claim UC in their own right if they are training at level 3 or below and they:

- 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 responsible for a child.
- are in a couple with responsibility 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
- do not have parental support, for example they're estranged from their parents and they're not under local authority care.

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

Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices
Apprentices who have been made redundant, or who are at risk of redundancy, can access online and telephone support through the Redundancy Support Service for Apprentices.

The new service provides clear, accessible advice and guidance to individuals on the impact of redundancy, their options and next steps. It also helps apprentices to identify new apprenticeship and employment opportunities, and, where they are eligible, complete their current apprenticeship.

Apprentices that have been made redundant, or think they might be made redundant in the future, can visit facing redundancy during your apprenticeship for more information. This includes the option of registering for our new vacancy sharing service which will alert redundant apprentices to employers offering new apprenticeship opportunities in their area.

Employers who would like to recruit a redundant apprentice or offer new apprenticeship opportunities, should visit Hiring an apprentice who has been made redundant. Those apprentices that have been made redundant may already have the valuable skills and experience that organisations need.

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. Intermediate apprentices are also required to study towards and attempt the functional skills assessments at level 2.

Ofqual have published their approach to assessment for vocational and technical skills in light of coronavirus (COVID-19), which includes confirmation that students due to take functional skills assessments until 31 July 2020 will receive a calculated grade. Taking into account this guidance, and the fact that scheduled functional skills assessments are not taking place as planned, the rule requiring level 2 apprentices to study towards, and attempt, level 2 functional skills assessments is suspended temporarily. This will allow apprentices, employers, training providers and EPA providers to focus on other key requirements for completion of a level 2 apprenticeship.

Therefore, apprentices who are due to take their EPA up until 31 December 2020 should be passed through gateway to sit their EPA without the need to attempt the level 2 functional skills English and maths assessment. Main providers should retain evidence if an apprentice did not take the level 2 assessments due to coronavirus (COVID-19). A level 2 apprentice will still require a level 1 functional skills in English and/or maths in order to complete apprenticeship.

The temporary suspension applies to both apprenticeship standards and frameworks.

Apprentices undertaking a level 3 or higher apprenticeship are still required to hold or achieve an approved level 2 functional skills English and maths qualification before they can successfully complete their apprenticeship. Ofqual has also confirmed that it will extend the regulation end date for legacy functional skills qualifications in English and maths to 31 December 2020.

Non levy procured apprenticeships contracts

Contract extensions were issued to training providers at the beginning of March via the Manage your education and skills funding service, with a start date of 1 April 2020.

Training providers with existing procured contracts received extensions to these same contracts, which cover the existing financial year (2020-21). These extensions are to fund carry-over costs for existing apprentices as well as new apprenticeship starts, with start dates up to and including 31 October 2020. This aligned with our intention for all starts to be funded through the apprenticeship service from 1 November 2020.

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

Following this extended transition, all starts will be funded through the apprenticeship service from 1 April 2021. Contract variations will be issued in the summer to support the changes and performance management rules will be confirmed shortly through the usual routes.

We remain committed to giving smaller employers greater control over their apprenticeship choices by moving towards a system in which employers select an apprenticeship standard, choose their training provider and secure access to funding for all new apprenticeships through the apprenticeship service. As originally planned, this means that, over time, more employers who do not pay the apprenticeship levy will begin to access apprenticeship training via the apprenticeship service, as well as through a provider with an existing government contract (now extended until 31 March 2021).

Audit

Prior to the announcement 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, as result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

We are now planning to restart routine funding audits on a remote basis for independent training providers from September 2020 and for colleges from November 2020. We are also carrying out a risk assessment on restarting site visits for audits and investigations, so that we have the ability to do so, should we need to. We recognise the challenges training providers face as a result of coronavirus (COVID-19) and will be sensitive to these in agreeing arrangements for both remote funding audits and site visits with providers.

Where funding audits and investigations were already in progress prior to the lockdown, we have sought to complete the work, taking into account training providers' capacity to resolve any issues.

It may be necessary for the ESFA to contact training providers during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in order to continue to maintain effective oversight and protection of public funds. Where such contact is necessary, 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 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 08000 150 600 or email at helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk

Apprenticeship training frequently asked questions

Apprentices who are still working

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

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

- apprentices could engage in off-the-job training within the workplace, or an educational setting at a convenient time within their agreed working hours
- apprentices could engage in digital or distance learning at a convenient time within their agreed working hours
- they could be offered additional on-site mentor support
- they could take a short pause in their learning of less than 4 weeks while still completing by their planned end-date
- they could take a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more and re-calculate the planned end-date upon their return to learning

2) Critical worker staff are having to be moved 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. Where this link is broken temporarily, it is our goal that apprentices can promptly resume their apprenticeship and continue to successful completion of EPA at a future date. 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. This guidance document sets out what employers and training providers need to do when breaks in learning are more or less than 4 weeks.

3) Critical worker staff are having to be moved 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 fulfil the minimum 20% off-the-job training entitlement. Off-the-job training can already be delivered flexibility at a time and way to suit the employer and apprentice (remote observations, distance learning, etc.) and many training providers have developed additional training material in response to coronavirus (COVID-19). If a critical worker apprentice has been redeployed into another role then some of this activity may still count towards off-the-job training, but this should be discussed and agreed between the employer and provider, with the aim of ensuring that the apprentice gets the right training and support to be ready to complete their apprenticeship. All off-the-job training must be relevant new training that develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the apprenticeship and, where funding 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 an apprentice needs to self-isolate, what will happen to their apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships have been designed to be responsive to changes in apprentices' circumstances, for example during a period of illness. If an apprentice needs to self-isolate they should talk to their employer and training provider about the best way to continue withtheir apprenticeship or report a break in learning. Options include:

- an increase in e-learning
- a short pause of less than 4 weeks in their apprenticeship while they are in self- isolation. This will not affect the planned end-date of their apprenticeship
- a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more that their training provider should report to the ESFA. This will result in the planned end-date for their apprenticeship being re-planned upon returning to learning to take into consideration the duration in line with the length of their break
- re-scheduling planned assessment activity for a later date

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

5) An apprentice needs to take care of themself/a family member. Can they continue their apprenticeship learning at home?

Yes, this may be possible, depending on their apprenticeship and whether e-learning is available from their training provider. Apprentices should check the training providers website or contact them to discuss their options.

6) What should employer's do if they think an apprentice is not well enough to work (especially in a health setting)? Employers should follow government's guidance for employers and businesses on coronavirus (COVID-19).

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

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

Where they are unable to work, we suggest that apprentices speak to their employer about their polices on pay.

8) A provider has put an apprentice on a break in learning because they can't deliver training. As the apprentice is working as normal their employer wants their apprenticeship to continue, can the employer override this break in learning?

We have committed to apprenticeship training providers continuing to be paid retrospectively for the training that they have delivered and can evidence. Where training cannot take place for any reason, and this may include the ability of the provider to continue delivery, an apprentice must be put on a break in learning to pause payments. Training providers are working hard to develop flexible learning packages to ensure continuity of training where possible and, for some, this may take some time. If employers have concerns, we encourage they to discuss these with the provider.

Apprentices who are working at home

9) An employer is enforcing a work from home policy and classroom provision has been withdrawn. What the options for apprentices?

If an apprentice is unable to attend scheduled learning events, there are several options available to them:

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

However since June, training providers could offer face-to-face contact for some apprentices as part of a combined approach to delivery, and from this autumn, our plan is for apprenticeship training providers to resume delivery so that apprentices of all ages can benefit from their education and training in full. We suggest apprentices talk to their employers and training providers to agree the appropriate steps for their circumstances.

10) How does an apprentice record progress towards their apprenticeship while they are subject to different working conditions like working from home?

Apprentices should already be recording their off-the-job training activity using an approach agreed with their training provider. They should continue to use this.

11) When an apprentice is working from home, can a provider count anything they do as off-the-job training? Off-the-job training is a statutory requirement for an English apprenticeship. It is training which is received by the apprentice during the apprentice's normal working hours for the purpose of achieving the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the approved apprenticeship referenced in the apprenticeship agreement.

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 set employee's training tasks when they're working from home, but where these are not directly linked to the apprenticeship, it cannot be classed as off-the-job training.

12) Can apprentices change training provider if they are offering more online / digital delivery?

A change in training provider can occur at any time, although it is likely to be more difficult in the current climate. When an apprentice and employer start working with a new training provider activity must take place to ensure that the apprenticeship programme and apprentice are eligible for funding. Examples of necessary activity include:

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

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

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

No, the normal monthly payment profile will apply over the length of the apprenticeship, as it currently does whether training providers deliver blocks of training or more evenly spaced training. Training providers should factor this in if they are considering a change to the delivery methodology and timetable.

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

The price of an apprenticeship is negotiated and agreed upon by an employer

and provider. If any material changes occur to the agreed delivery method by more than 6 months, you must inform the Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

We accept that this might be challenging in the current environment, and so we will be flexible in our approach. We will work with you to agree a pragmatic approach to monitoring and evidence collection, but we will still need to ensure that they are only claiming for the actual costs incurred throughout the apprenticeship and that they are eligible to claim.

HS Wind apprentices who have been able to return to England, due to the pandemic, will be able to claim the apprenticeship incentive payment in full.

Yes. Although the funding rules require an apprentice to spend at least 50% of their working time in Scotland, we will be flexible in our approach to ensure apprentices are able to complete their apprenticeship training while they are outside of England. When an apprentice is spending more than 50% of their working time in Scotland, we will be able to claim the apprenticeship incentive. Up to a maximum £2,000.00 they will never eligible for support.

Apprentices who are furloughed

Can I claim training costs for furloughed apprentices?

Yes, where apprentices are furloughed, they can continue to train for their apprenticeships as long as they are able to complete all the programme requirements for their employer.

Training providers can continue to do off-the-job training, can this be more than 20 % per week?

Yes. The normal off-the-job training rules will apply, so training can be done on a block where this is permitted and agreed by the training provider. The 20% minimum off-the-job training over the length of the apprenticeship will still apply for furloughed apprentices.

Will this should apprentices continue training if they can't attend their place of work?

We do not want the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak to be used as an excuse to prevent apprentices continuing to learn where this is still possible. Non furloughed staff can still work from home and apprentices should be supported to do so. Furloughed staff will be able to continue apprenticeship training this time, including continued engagement and progression that can all be agreed by the plan since it is safe and practicable to do so.

HS Wind apprentices be paid for continuing training if they have been furloughed?

No. While furloughed apprentices can continue training, their employer pay leave from their income. While they cannot undertake work for their employer, they can undertake training and education, and their employer can be reimbursed for their salary costs for the time spent training. This will be covered as part of their furlough arrangements by the employer.

Apprentices time spent training must be paid at the appropriate minimum wage rate. Employers will be able to claim back the cost of paying the appropriate minimum wage for the time spent on training and time spent training during the furlough period then employer should top up their furlough payment to cover this.

Will they be eligible for the apprenticeship incentive payment if they have been furloughed but continuing with their apprenticeship?

Where training is undertaken during the furlough period, at the end of the apprentice, they are entitled to be paid of their appropriate national minimum wage. Up to a maximum £2,000.00 (£1,000.00 for 16-18 year olds) for the apprenticeship incentive payment. Employers will need to claim back the monies to cover these training hours.

However, where the employer has ceased training, during the furlough period, attracts a minimum wage entitlement in excess of the furlough payment, the employer will need to top up the furlough payment to ensure the employee will need to pay the difference between the minimum wage calculations and therefore must be paid at the appropriate rate. Taking into account the furlough payment and the training hours.

From 1 August 2020, the period of grant will be reduced to 60 hours, during which time the employer will be able to claim back the cost of paying the appropriate minimum wage for the time spent training.

Apprentices cannot claim for training hours if they can't attend their place of work, but they can be paid for training hours if they are furloughed.

Employers will be able to pay a percentage towards the salary of their furloughed staff. The employer payments will substitute the contribution they would have made to the pension scheme and will contribute to extra APR of their salary, up to £3,000 a year.

When calculating whether they need to top up an apprentice wage, employers should take into account the furlough payment and the training hours during period the furlough and the minimum wage calculations and be sure to ensure that the furlough payment provides sufficient monies to cover these training hours.

Where the entire furlough payment equates to less than the appropriate minimum wage entitlement for the training hours, the employer will need to top up the furlough payment to ensure the appropriate minimum wage is paid for the time spent training.

The contract-for-services (CFS) is not to be used for furloughed staff who are required to take leave, SFA, the employer minimum wage entitlement for time spent training.

Example 1:

If a furloughed apprentice is on a 37 hours per week contract and has been furloughed. They are working part-time, with their employer and provider, to be able to continue training. The employer will top up the furlough payment to provide sufficient funding for training.

In terms of the RPW regulations they are entitled to £6.20 for every hour they work. (Data due to the furlough period, is only entitled to claim for a training hours.

Over a 3 week furlough period (the pay reference period) this amounts to £806 (the furlough payment is £1,800 for 37 hours, 3 weeks).

The SDS furlough payment that they have received from their employer is £806. The furlough payment covers the training hours, so there is no need for top-up.

From September 2020, where the level of grant from the government has been reduced to 60 hours, the employer must substitute the contribution the employer would have made to the pension scheme and will contribute an extra 80% of their salary, up to £2,500 a year.

Example 2:

If a furloughed apprentice is on a 37 hours per week contract and has been furloughed. They have agreed, with their employer and provider, to be able to continue training. The employer will top up the furlough payment to provide sufficient funding for training.

In terms of the RPW regulations they are entitled to £6.20 for every hour they work. (Data due to the furlough period, is only entitled to claim for a training hours.

Over a 3 week furlough period (the pay reference period) this amounts to £806 (the furlough payment is £1,800 for 37 hours, 3 weeks).

The SDS furlough payment that they have received from their employer is £806. The furlough payment covers the training hours, so there is no need for top-up.

From September 2020, where the level of grant from the government has been reduced to 60 hours, the employer must substitute the contribution the employer would have made to the pension scheme and will contribute an extra 80% of their salary, up to £2,500 a year. This is in addition to the £806 paid to the apprentice.

Note both cases above the employer will need to top up the wage and deduct to the NPW.

If the apprentice is furloughed can they and their employer still take part in a progress review?

Yes, where apprentices are furloughed, they can continue to train for their apprenticeship as long as it does not prove practicable to do so (provide reasonable evidence to support this).

If the employer (the employer) is furloughed, can the apprentice be paid furlough arranging progress review may be more difficult at this current time. But, if the employer is furloughed and the apprentice is furloughed, they may be able to take part in the discussion.

(1) Can a furloughed apprentice carry out technology (laptop etc) to access apprenticeship software?

Yes, a work laptop can be used to access apprenticeship training if this is the only option, but the employer will need to be sure that the laptop is safe to be used and that it is not needed for other purposes.

(2) Can a furloughed apprentice be in furlough (taking part in) a work placement (WP) or a modern apprenticeship (MA)?

Apprentices who are continuing to train for their apprenticeships must not provide services to or generate income for their employer. If an employer wants to pay an employee (of an apprentice) on the furlough scheme they should speak to the HMRC helpline.

Apprentices who are made redundant

(24) What happens to an apprenticeship when an apprentice is made redundant?

Apprentices should speak to their training provider if they are made redundant as their apprenticeship may be able to be continued.

Training providers may still be able to offer training, based on an apprentice's current circumstances, and may be able to find a new employer who can continue the apprenticeship training with them.

If that move becomes permanent, apprentices should look to see which alternative apprenticeship training they could do, Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) or Skill Development Scotland (SDS) Apprenticeships.

(25) Will apprentices who would, if not for the pandemic, have started with their new employer still be able to claim the apprenticeship incentive payment?

Yes. Although the incentive payment is normally paid retrospective to have a 30-day break between employers we understand that, due to the outbreak, some apprentices may have been made redundant and have started a new apprenticeship with their new employer. We will continue to make payments to such apprentices and their employer within 30 days of meeting their last but not have a break of over 30 days between employers. Up to a maximum £2,000.00 they will never eligible for support and return.

Apprentices who are unpaid leave

(26) What happens to an apprentice if an employer is asking an apprentice to have a period of unpaid leave?

Employers are not allowed to ask employees to take unpaid leave during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Employers can access Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme and receive financial support to keep their employed staff on payroll. Employers can furlough their staff and claim a grant to cover their pay via HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) and furloughed staff can continue to be furloughed. There is a section on furloughed apprentices in this document.

Apprentices who are furloughed can continue training and should not be asked to leave from their apprenticeships and receive what they return to work. Apprentices who are furloughed, can be paid for training hours, up to a maximum of a break in training.

Once apprentices are back at work they can resume their apprenticeship training, and employers will be able to claim the apprenticeship incentive payment, including wages, and training costs, for the time they were furloughed in the first instance.

The ROSA website may also be a good source of information.

(27) What happens to the apprentice during a period of unpaid leave in terms of Coronavirus? Do they lose their contract?

Through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, all UK employers will be able to furlough employees and claim back 80% of their wages. This means that employees that would otherwise be made redundant can be furloughed and receive 80% of furloughed workers wage costs, up to a cap of £2,500 per month.

Alternatively, Universal Credit is available to those who are unemployed and the unemployed also, as long as they meet the Universal Credit eligibility criteria. Universal Credit is a means-tested benefit, which is paid monthly in arrears (between twelve). Apprentices may be able to claim Universal Credit during a period of unpaid leave. They may also access to Universal Credit even if they are furloughed, if they are on a low enough income. Universal Credit has increased the value of Universal Credit entitlement.

Apprentices on unpaid leave may also access to other benefits.

Recruiting new apprentices

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

Yes, an employer can recruit and start apprenticeships as they would have done in the past. Training providers will be able to support apprenticeships, including those who are furloughed, and will be able to support this activity. It is key to note that an employer can only claim for furloughed employees that are not working for their employer. The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme is not possible for an employer to furlough a new member of staff, in the place where the intention is to furlough this person immediately and claim wage support from the CJRS.

(29) Can an existing member of staff start an apprenticeship which they are already doing?

Yes, a furloughed member of staff can start an apprenticeship if they had still met the earlier eligibility and progress eligibility criteria of the apprenticeship framework. The candidate must have been employed for a minimum of a minimum duration of 12 months, with a minimum of 20% off the job training over this period. The apprenticeship must also be in line with the employer's business eligibility. The provider should be able to support the employer with the identity and eligibility of the individual and how they would carry out the initial assessment.

(30) Are the evidence arrangements around obtaining apprentice signatures relaxed because of Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

When starting a new apprenticeship, and throughout, signatures are required to form part of the evidence pack. Examples of where the funding rules can be relaxed in regard to signatures are:

- the apprenticeship agreement;
- the training plan;
- external audit reports/documentation;
- evidence linking to additional supports such as additional learning support and the care leaver fund;
- contracts for work;
- and any other documents that are required by employer requirements.

It is expected that where training providers are able to obtain wet ink signature on signature process, they must continue to utilise their existing processes in order to obtain wet ink signature.

Where a provider has to digitalise processes, systems and processes in place to support the collection of signature, the provider must be able to demonstrate that a wet signature is required for the purpose of the apprenticeship and that it is not a wet signature created when a person physically 'marks' a document.

Training providers should be able to demonstrate a robust recording and auditing approach during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak will experience difficulties in obtaining wet ink signature on documents. Training providers should be able to demonstrate that they have a robust process in place and that we will allow confirmation/evidence to be obtained through email.

For the purpose of audit and evidence, we would accept the arrangement of adoption of a genuine electronic message or document. Acceptable alternative evidence includes:

- an email from the apprentice and/or employer's email address with details of the apprentice/employer's name, date of birth and/or National Insurance number;
- a signed letter on an employer's letterhead or a letter from the apprentice and/or employer;
- a signature on a document attached to an email from the apprentice and/or employer;
- a photo taken on a camera/digital medium of the signed document attached to an email from the apprentice and/or employer.

We are allowing training providers to use this type of electronic confirmation as evidence of signature, but training providers should be able to show that it offer greater digital security and assurance. This is not to be used as alternative evidence as part of the provider's business as usual process once Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions are lifted.

Following the period of Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions, training providers using this alternative evidence must ensure their usual process for obtaining wet ink signature is in place. Training providers should be able to show that alternative evidence has been used during the period affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions to generate and mitigate, and the process in relation to the wet ink signature.

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 apprentices' profile and ensure employers are able to make the most of apprenticeships in training. Due to this, HM Treasury has no plans to postpone the collection of the apprenticeship levy because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The Chancellor has set out an unprecedented package of support for businesses and employers to ensure they can continue to pay their salaries whenever necessary.

(32) Will you increase the time available to employers to spend their levy funds?

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

(33) Why can't levy funds be used to contribute to pay the provider even though they are furloughed? Why can't we use the levy funds to top up furlough payments?

Where training cannot take place for any reason, an apprentice must be paid. Training providers are not furloughed, and they are working to support employers and provide a range of training and assessment activities. We cannot pay for training delivery that isn't taking place.

Where the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak means it is not of course due to ceased or reduced delivery of training, training providers should consider the flexibilities in the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funding rules. Training providers has already announced the flexibilities in the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) funding rules. Training providers should also consider the coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions in genuine and individual, and the process in relation to the wet ink signature.

Apprenticeship assessment frequently asked questions

The apprenticeship levy

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Apprenticeship assessment frequently asked questions

End point assessment (EPA)

(37) An apprentice is at a level on the framework which would ordinarily have given them enough time to complete the training and the EPA. If the training is delayed, the apprentice may not have enough time to complete the training and can they do the EPA afterwards?

Apprentices must be employed when they are taking their EPA, so where a delay in training means that the apprentice is not ready to take their end point assessment (EPA) they can continue to be employed while they are in training provider. We would expect employers and training providers to work together to ensure that the apprentice is ready for their end point assessment. The apprenticeship agreement can be extended to allow for this, under review as the situation evolves.

(38) What happens if an apprentice is not ready to take their EPA?

If an apprentice is unwell, or in a period of self-isolation, and unable to attend their EPA, they should contact their training provider to let them know that they will need to reschedule their end point assessment.

(40) Can Endpoint assessments still take place EPA?

Yes, where apprentices are furloughed, they can still their EPA providing that they meet the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance.

(41) Gateways are being delayed and the EPA cannot be completed in the planned timeline. What is the impact on apprentices who are due to complete their EPA?

Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment and cannot be assessed because of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, should be given a date in the future before taking their EPA (at least 2 weeks in advance).

If the EPA timeline needs to be extended beyond what is allowed in the assessment plan (approved by IfATE), EPAOs are permitted to agree extensions to EPA timelines during the current disruption. EPAOs should ensure that the apprentice is informed of the new date for their end point assessment. For apprentices who are furloughed, they will need to be furloughed when next EPA is ready to take place.

(42) What happens if an apprentice is not ready to take their EPA?

Remote tests should be supervised by an appropriately trained invigilator or assessor who has the appropriate qualifications, skills and experience to ensure the integrity of the assessment. Tests must also be carried out with a proctor.

Tests must only be carried out within a supervised and controlled environment and EPAOs must ensure that all testing meets security requirements and that the integrity of the assessment is not compromised by the use of remote invigilation.

(43) What will happen if an apprentice's line manager has been furloughed or their employer is unable to support them in the EPA process with their training provider and EPA?

Training providers should normally sign an apprentice off ready to take their end point assessment. Training providers should also support the apprentice to make the gateway decision. This temporary arrangement should be used only in exceptional circumstances and should be agreed by all parties that the apprentice has met the requirements to be signed off ready to take part in the EPA. Where this is not the case then the EPA should be rescheduled.

Apprentices who are furloughed can continue to be supported through the assessment timeframe.

(44) If the current situation continues for a long period of time, would you consider extending the apprenticeship beyond the EPA? We would not expect the apprenticeship to be extended beyond the EPA, as this would disrupt the quality of apprenticeships and will be the decision of the training provider and employer.

SQA providers have qualified flexibilities which apply to more than 50 standards from Advanced, Technical and Professional apprenticeships. Some of these flexibilities have the potential to allow the pass/fail elements of apprenticeships to be completed, delayed, or even waived.

(45) How are the EPA monitoring the number of cancelled and postponed assessments?

EPAOs are expected to maintain a record of cancelled and postponed assessments. Information on the number of cancelled and postponed assessments will be required by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

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EPAOs are expected to maintain a record of cancelled and postponed assessments. Information on the number of cancelled and postponed assessments will be required by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

(48) Can Gateway sign off EPA, but some apprentices require direct support from the training provider?

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Apprentices who are furloughed

Studying and taking the test for intermediate apprentices is suspended until December 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 EPAs. Lifting the rule to take the test for intermediate (level 2) apprentices should help them to progress to EPA during the coronavirus (COVID-19) disruption.

53) What about the level 2 English and maths exit requirements for level 3 and higher apprenticeships? This requirement applies to intermediate (level 2) apprentices only. Apprentices undertaking a level 3 or higher apprenticeship are still required to hold or achieve an approved level 2 English and maths qualification before they can successfully complete their apprenticeship.

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