Department for Education

Guidance

Providing apprenticeships during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak

Updated 20 April 2021

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Details

This guidance is for apprenticeship training providers (providers), employers, end-point assessment organisations (EPAOs) and apprentices.

It describes:

- how and when apprentices can safely train and undertake an assessment in the workplace, education and assessment settings
- the temporary flexibilities which apply during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

It should be read alongside:

- the safer working guidance
- the further education (FE) operational guidance
- the government's coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance and support for businesses
- the apprenticeship funding rules
- the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education guidance
- the public health guidance to support exams

Our aim is to help employers and apprentices start, continue and complete their apprenticeships wherever possible.

Some of this guidance can be found on the apprenticeship service help page for employers, providers and assessment organisations, as well as in articles for apprentices.

Updates

On-site training and assessment

From 8 March 2021, all apprentices can attend on-site training and assessment. The only exception is apprentices in Higher Education (HE). Apprentices can only return to HE settings if they need practical training and access to specialist equipment and facilities. All apprentices in HE can return to in-person teaching and learning no earlier than 17 May, alongside step 3 of the roadmap out of lockdown.

Flexibility permitting EPA prior to FSQ achievement

From 25 February 2021, eligible apprentices can start their end-point assessment (EPA) before they achieve their functional skills qualifications (FSQ) if they have been waiting for the opportunity to access functional skills assessments but have been prevented from doing so due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Apprenticeship training and assessment

Apprenticeship training and assessment usually takes place in education settings, assessment centres (including community settings), and the workplace. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have had to restrict where training and assessment takes place.

From 8 March, apprentices may attend on-site training and assessment in educational settings as well as workplaces.

Apprentices can return to HE settings if they need practical training and access to specialist equipment and facilities. Apprentices should not return to HE settings if they can continue to train remotely. Apprentices undertaking higher and degree apprenticeships in FE and community settings can continue to undertake training and assessment on-site. All apprentices in HE can return to in-person teaching and learning no earlier than 17 May, alongside step 3 of the roadmap.

Providers, employers and EPAOs should operate in line with the relevant guidance and continue to judge the appropriate balance of on-site and remote training and assessment.

We will review and update this guidance as necessary.

Training and assessment in educational settings

Apprenticeship delivery can be very flexible, and it is up to training providers, employers and EPAOs to agree:

- how apprenticeship training is delivered
- how assessments are undertaken
- whether to use more than one delivery method
- the appropriate balance of on-site and remote training based on the apprenticeship and the apprentice's ability to train remotely

Where apprentices are in training settings, providers should follow the further education (FE) operational guidance.

HE providers should follow the HE guidance.

Apprentices undertaking EPA and FSQ assessment

From 8 March all apprentices will be able to undertake EPA and functional skills qualifications (FSQ) in all settings.

EPAOs should continue to determine the appropriate balance of on-site and remote assessment based on the apprenticeship and the apprentice's ability to take their assessment remotely.

Where the EPA takes place onsite, the guidance on delivering exams within the further education (FE) operational guidance must be followed.

Where face to face assessment is undertaken remotely, guidance from The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) must be followed.

Apprentices in the workplace

Apprentices should only attend workplaces if they cannot work from home and it is essential for them to do so. If it is essential, apprenticeship training and assessment can be delivered in the workplace providing that workplace meets COVID-19 secure guidelines.

Disruption to training

Breaks in learning

Apprentices may be unable to attend training because of illness, caring responsibilities and operational disruption, or training providers may be unable to deliver training.

Apprenticeship funding rules state that for disruption in learning of:

- less than and up to 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 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

As well as apprentices, employers and training providers can now, temporarily, initiate and report a break in learning if:

- restrictions prevent apprenticeship training from continuing for a period of more than 4 weeks
- the apprentice, employer or provider believe that remote delivery of off-the-job training or a lack of access to the workplace is compromising the quality of the apprenticeship training and there is a risk that the apprentice will not be ready for end-point assessment by the planned end-date
- the apprentice is unwell, in self-isolation, or facing challenges getting to their place of employment or location for training provision
- there is a temporary need to redeploy apprentices to different roles
- access to the workplace or practical equipment is required to undertake training but is not possible
- there are challenges in providing training or assessment due to staff absences or closure of facilities

For a break in learning greater than 4 weeks:

- the training provider should report this in their individualised learner record (ILR) submission using the last date in learning.
- 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 from resuming
- the employer should inform the EPAO and the provider should inform the FSQ assessment providers

If a break in learning has been necessary and the planned end-date for an apprenticeship has moved, employers and providers should work with apprentices to reschedule training, which may include reviewing apprenticeship agreements and commitment statements.

When the apprenticeship resumes, training providers should update their ILR data in line with the training provider ILR support manual to ensure accurate recording and earnings calculations.

During breaks in learning apprentices do not need to comply with the minimum of 20% off-the-job training requirement. When training resumes, the minimum of 20% off-the-job training requirement will apply over the remaining duration of the apprenticeship.

Training providers will not receive payments for apprentices who are on a break in learning.

Provider payments

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 Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) reserves the right to recover funding which was claimed for and paid to the provider but for which the provider was found not to be eligible.

Providers:

- will not be paid more for rescheduling off-the-job training and bringing it forward, the normal monthly payment profile will apply over the length of the apprenticeship - training providers should factor this in if they are considering a change to the delivery methodology and timetable
- may need to revise the price of their 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 that may result in a change in price, then this should be discussed and amended
- are encouraged to record any material changes in costs, but it may not be possible to do so immediately

Disruption to assessment

From 8 March all apprentices are able to undertake EPA and FSQ in all settings.

EPAOs should continue to determine the appropriate balance of on-site and remote assessment based on the apprenticeship and the apprentice's ability to take their assessment remotely.

Remote tests

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

- arrangements are cleared in advance by the EQA provider
- the apprentice's identity is verified
- remote tests are supervised by an appropriately trained invigilator or assessor who has the necessary qualifications, training or experience and who has not been involved in the training, preparation or line management of the apprentice
- appropriate technology and systems are in place
- the impact that remote assessment may have on apprentices is to be taken into consideration to ensure a fair and reliable assessment of occupational competence
- where alternatives are not appropriate, a pause and rescheduling might be the only action - an extension of 12 weeks is allowable for those EPA plans where a time limit is specified from gateway to EPA, it is to be logged and shared with EQA providers on a timely basis

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 details of invigilators are recorded and available for confirmation by EQA providers.

Rescheduling EPA

Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment but cannot be assessed due to issues relating to COVID-19 can have their EPA rescheduled. If the EPA timeframe needs to be extended beyond what is allowed in the assessment plan (where specified), EPAOs are responsible for agreeing extensions to timeframes. EPAOs should work with EQA providers to ensure that quality is maintained.

Direct observation should be rescheduled if they cannot be done remotely. Where a specified assessment method for a standard might need to be adjusted to meet the original intent without threatening safety, EPAOs should discuss this with their EQA provider, who may refer it to the Institute for authority. The substitution of assessment methods is not considered appropriate at this time.

If an apprentice is unwell, or in a period of self-isolation and unable to attend their EPA, they should contact their training provider as soon as they are able to allow them maximum time to re-schedule.

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 and keep EPAOs informed.

EPA flexibilities

To maintain progress, achievement and delivery of EPA, the Institute have introduced flexibilities and discretions to assessment plans. These allow apprentices to complete their apprenticeship in the event of disruption.

All EPA flexibilities and discretions put in place due to COVID-19 have been extended until at least 31 August 2021. The Institute will give 12 weeks' notice from when any changes are announced to existing flexibilities before EPAOs will have to deliver them.

In addition to the flexibilities set out by the Institute, EQA providers have agreed additional discretions to the delivery of EPA which apply to more than 100 apprenticeship standards.

EQA providers remain responsible for assuring consistency and quality of assessment. EPAOs should engage with EQA providers and agree arrangements in advance if remote assessment replaces face-to-face assessment or if a simulated environment is to be used. EPAOs may propose modifications (rather than substitutions) to assessment methods providing they do not compromise quality or the intention of the assessment. The authority for any flexibilities remains with the Institute, to whom any modification proposals should be referred, and who will approve or deny any applications made via EQA providers.

The Institute works with EQA providers to understand where standards require measures to be put in place and regularly updates the list of standards. The Institute will continue to update COVID-19 related guidance. If the information isn't in the Institute's guidance, contact Enquiries.IFA@education.gov.uk.

EPA for apprentices on furlough

If an apprentice is on furlough, they can sit their EPA providing that they meet the conditions for apprentices on furlough. If the person who would normally sign off an apprentice as ready to take their EPA has been furloughed, and there is no suitable alternative, we support training providers to make the gateway decision. This temporary arrangement can only be relied upon where the provider can supply evidence to the EPAO that the apprentice has met the relevant gateway requirements and is ready to sit their EPA. Where this is not the case, the EPA should be rescheduled.

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.

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.

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

Ofqual guidance for EPAOs

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

Qualification certificates

If awarding organisations are unable to issue certificates confirming 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. For authentication, emails must contain the following information:

- apprentice details
- certification run date
- unique number

The awarding organisation will issue the formal certification when they are able to do so.

Apprenticeship certificates

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. The flexibility also applies to requesting a replacement certificate.

Disruption to employment

If apprentices are required to work in their usual job at their usual place of work, they could:

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

If apprentices cannot attend their usual place of work, they could:

- engage in digital or distance learning at a convenient time within their agreed working hours
- take a short pause in their learning of less than 4 weeks while still completing by their planned end-date
- take a formal break in learning of 4 weeks or more and re-calculate their planned end-date upon their return to learning

Apprentices on furlough

Apprentices on furlough can take part in volunteer work or training for their apprenticeship so long as it does not provide services to or generate revenue for their employer. Training in this context includes apprenticeship off-the-job training. Therefore, a furloughed apprentice can continue their apprenticeship where a training provider can continue to deliver training remotely. The off-the-job training rules continue to apply. Training can be done as a block where this is agreed between the provider and the employer. The 20% minimum off-the-job training over the length of the apprenticeship will still need to be satisfied.

If an employer wants to query an example of what an apprentice can do whilst on furlough they should speak to the HMRC helpline.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) allows employers to claim for 80% of furloughed employees' 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. This includes apprentices.

The Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme has been extended until 30 September 2021. Information can be found in the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme guidance.

Where training is undertaken by workers on furlough, 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. This is because time spent training is treated as working time for the purposes of the minimum wage calculations and therefore must be paid at the appropriate rate, considering the increase in minimum wage rates from 1 April 2020.

When calculating whether to top up an apprentice's wage, employers should consider the hours that an employee is expected to train during the period of the furlough (which must be a three-week minimum). Employers will need to ensure that the furlough payment provides sufficient monies to cover these training hours.

Examples of furlough payment can be found in annex A.

Apprentices on unpaid leave

If apprentices are placed on unpaid leave (not on furlough), or the nature of their employment changes and no longer supports their apprenticeship, the apprentice, employer and training provider should agree a break in learning if the disruption will last 4 weeks or longer. (See the section on breaks in learning). If this is a permanent change, the apprentice should be withdrawn.

Redundant apprentices

Following redundancy, providers may still be able to offer apprentices training, based on their circumstances.

If an apprentice is made redundant, the main provider must help the apprentice find another employer to continue their apprenticeship as quickly as possible. Where a significant number of apprentices are made redundant (for example, because a large employer faces difficulties), ESFA will attempt to provide exceptional practical support to the apprentices and training providers to secure alternative employers for the individuals.

Funds are available to help all redundant apprentices complete their apprenticeship if they are at least 75% of their way through their apprenticeship at the point of redundancy, and were made redundant after 15 October 2020. The ESFA update has more information.

We've updated our apprenticeship funding rules to require providers to create a 'record of apprenticeship part-completion' to help apprentices find employment when they are withdrawn because they have been unable to find a new employer.

Support for redundant apprentices

If an apprentice is made redundant but wants to continue their apprenticeship and undertake EPA or other mandatory qualifications, including FSQs, providers can access funding to continue training the apprentice, in line with the eligibility criteria set out in the funding rules for main providers.

Situation 1: Apprentice was made redundant on or after 1 August 2020 but before 15 October 2020 who, on the day of dismissal, was within 6 months of the final day of training

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.

If the apprentice, within this 6-month period:

- finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the new employer assumes outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point
- takes a job with an employer which is not related to their apprenticeship, we will continue to fund the remaining costs

Situation 2. Apprentice was made redundant on or after 15 October 2020 and was within 6 months of the final day of training or they have completed at least 75%

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.

If the apprentice, within this period:

- finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the new employer assumes outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point
- takes a job with an employer which is not related to their apprenticeship, we will continue to fund the remaining costs

Situation 3. Apprentice does not fit into any category above but has less than 12 months until the final day of training

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

If, within this 12-week period:

- the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the new employer assumes outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point
- 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
- a new employer is not found within 12 weeks, the apprentice will be 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

Situation 4. Apprentice does not fit into any category above and is more than 12 months away from the final day of training

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

If, within this 12-week period:

- the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, the new employer assumes outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point
- 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
- a new employer is not found within 12 weeks, the apprentice will be withdrawn from the programme. If they return at a later date to the same apprenticeship, they need to satisfy the 12-month minimum duration rule

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 service provides advice to apprentices on their redundancy, their options and next steps. It also helps apprentices 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, can find help at facing redundancy during your apprenticeship. They can register for our vacancy sharing service which alerts 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.

Apprentices that have been made redundant may already have valuable skills and experience that organisations need.

Changing employers

Funding rules only allow an apprentice to have a 30-day break between employers but, due to the outbreak, some apprentices will have not been permitted to start working for and training with their new employer. Where an apprentice had planned to start with their new employer within 30 days of leaving their last but has had a break of over 30 days between employers due to COVID-19, they will remain eligible for support on their return.

Universal Credit for apprentices

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) advises that where an apprentice has been made redundant but is continuing their apprenticeship study, they can claim Universal Credit if they satisfy all eligibility criteria. In most cases this includes being 18 or over and undertaking work-related activity – for example, being available and looking for work alongside their study.

If the study is work-related, this may be accepted as work preparation activity. This is normally expected to be less than 16 hours a week, although more than 16 hours may be possible if the individual is still able to satisfy all the requirements of being available and looking for work. In each case, claimants will need to discuss their circumstances with their coach.

Claiming as an 18 year old

If an 18 year old redundant apprentice training at level 3 or below plans to claim prior to 1 September 2021 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 claim if any of the following apply. If they:

- live with their partner and are eligible for Universal Credit
- are responsible for a child, either as a single person or as a couple
- are disabled and entitled to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and have limited capability to work
- 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, but their parents would be able to claim the child element of Universal Credit (if eligible) and Child Benefit instead, up until (but not including) the 1 September following their 19th birthday.

If a redundant apprentice does not meet the criteria above and is studying 12 hours a week or less, they can claim Universal Creditin their own right if they are 18 or over. If they are under 18, they have no entitlement, and their parents are not able to claim the child element of Universal Credit 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 may be eligible to claim Universal Credit 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

More information is available on Universal Credit eligibility. If there is any discrepancy between that webpage and this, the Universal Credit eligibility webpage takes precedence.

Apprentices unable to return to work in England

Apprentices who have been unable to return to England due to the outbreak but have been able to train and work remotely will still be eligible for funding. If an existing apprentice spends more than 50% of their working time, over the duration of their apprenticeship, outside of England due to COVID-19, they will remain eligible for support.

Functional skills requirements

Temporarily suspending the requirement for level 2 apprentices to attempt level 2 FSQs

For level 2 (intermediate) apprenticeships, apprentices must achieve a level 1 in both English and maths functional skills qualifications (FSQ) to complete their apprenticeship. Intermediate apprentices are also usually required to study towards and attempt the functional skills assessments at level 2. However, apprentices who are due to take their EPA on or before 31 July 2021 do not have to attempt the level 2 functional skills English and maths assessment and can move through to gateway to sit their EPA. Plan providers should retain evidence if an apprentice did not take the level 2 assessments and add a dated note to the evidence pack for the apprentice explaining that the test was not taken due to revised guidance during COVID-19.

This will allow apprentices, employers, training providers and EPAOs to focus on other key requirements for completion of a level 2 apprenticeship.

A level 2 apprentice will still require a level 1 functional skills in English and/or maths to complete their apprenticeship. The temporary suspension applies to both apprenticeship standards and frameworks.

There will be no requirement for those apprentices who are passed through gateway to go back and take the level 2 functional skills test. However, if the apprentice would like to attempt the level 2 functional skills English and maths assessment, they should be allowed to do so. This should not be a barrier to them progressing to EPA, as the (optional) level 2 FSQ assessment can be taken before, alongside or after EPA.

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.

We have also extended the end dates for legacy functional skills qualifications to ensure apprentices have enough time to complete their outstanding assessments. Where there are ongoing difficulties, employers should work with providers to make sure apprentices can complete their FSQ assessments. The end date for legacy functional skills qualifications in English and maths has been extended to 31 July 2021.

Flexibility permitting EPA prior to FSQ achievement

A temporary flexibility allows apprentices at all levels who are ready to take their FSQ assessments in English and maths to go through to their end-point assessment (EPA) and later return to complete FSQ assessment.

This flexibility is only available to apprentices who cannot access FSQ assessment via face to face or remote assessment, and who have confirmed their intent to complete their FSQ within three months of starting their EPA. Confirmation of this must also be evidenced in the learner file evidence pack.

Apprentices who are waiting to take their FSQ assessment can pass through gateway and take their EPA without delay. To be eligible, the apprentice must:

- not be on a break in learning (an apprentice may return from a break in learning to take their end-point assessment)
- meet all other gateway criteria to progress to their EPA as specified in the apprenticeship standard (except meeting the English and maths requirements)
- have been confirmed by their provider and employer as ready for both their EPA and functional skills qualification assessment
- start their EPA on or before 31 May 2021

As completion payments for the apprenticeship will be triggered by progression to EPA, it is essential that training providers are able to demonstrate that they have exhausted all possibilities to access FSQ assessment via face-to-face and remote assessment through their awarding organisation. Apprenticeship funding rules require providers to declare this in their evidence pack along with a written declaration of the apprentice's intent to take the required functional skills assessments within 3 months of starting their EPA. In line with business-as-usual arrangements, this evidence pack content will be subject to audit and associated controls.

Apprentices can still only complete their apprenticeship once they have passed their EPA and achieved their FSQ in English or maths as required. After these achievements have been confirmed by the EPAO, apprentices can request a completion certificate. This means that training providers will be expected to provide prompt confirmation of the apprentice's FSQ results to EPA organisations once these have been awarded, to allow certification to be issued.

Assessment arrangements for FSQs

Alternative assessment arrangements are available for those apprentices who are unable to take their FSQ assessment, either face to face in a safe setting or remotely.

Obtaining signatures

If training providers already have a digital or electronic signature process, they must continue to use their existing processes in accordance with the respective funding rules.

If a provider has no system or process in place to capture a digital or electronic signature, then a wet signature is normally required for recruitment and evidence of continuing learning. A wet signature is created when a person physically 'marks' a document.

If training providers cannot obtain wet signatures due to COVID-19 restrictions, confirmation or evidence can be obtained through email.

For audit evidence, a record of acknowledgement or adoption of a genuine electronic message or document is required. Acceptable alternative evidence includes:

- an email from the apprentice or employer's email address with details of the confirmation and their typed name at the end of the message
- a typed name on an electronic form or document emailed from the apprentice or employer
- a signed scanned document attached to an email from the apprentice or employer
- a photo taken on a camera or digital medium of the signed document attached to an email from the apprentice or employer

Training providers can only use this type of electronic confirmation during the period of restrictions due to COVID-19 if no other useable digital or electronic processes exist. This is not to be used as alternative evidence as part of a provider's business as usual process once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Training providers using alternative evidence must resume their usual process for obtaining wet signatures when restrictions are removed. Training providers must ensure that all alternative evidence replacing wet signatures received during the COVID-19 restrictions is genuine and irrefutable, and the evidence is retained for audit.

Contact us

We cannot address individual scenarios or circumstances. For queries not covered by this guidance, please contact the apprenticeship service helpline by:

Telephone: 08000 150 600

Email: helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk

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