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Guidance

Apprenticeship unit assessment guidance

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Applies to England

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Purpose of this guidance

This guidance supports the apprenticeship unit funding rules in relation to assessment. It helps providers understand the assessment options, their role in the assessment of learners on an apprenticeship unit and in helping employers to choose the right approach for them.

Roles and responsibilities

Providers

Training providers must ensure that a skills test is carried out for every learner to confirm they have acquired the knowledge and skills set out within the apprenticeship unit. They are responsible for determining the format of the test, agreeing the approach with the employer and setting out this detail on the training plan at the outset of the training. The training provider must administer the skills test and ensure that validation has been carried out with the employer and learner.

Where a skills test has not been passed, the training provider may permit the learner to re-sit where appropriate.

Training providers need to work with both the employer and learner to support them to decide which assessment approach to take. The final decision must be agreed with the employer.

A discussion should take place to understand:

- the employer's needs and expectations
- the context of the role
- whether the learner is working in a regulated profession
- whether a regulatory or professional body expects independent assessment (i.e. assessment that is designed and delivered by someone independent of the training provider) or quality assurance

Employer and learner

The employer and learner must choose which approach to the skills test they want to use for each apprenticeship unit. The employer and learner are also required to validate that the training plan has been successfully delivered, the skills test has been passed and that the learner has acquired the new knowledge and skills required to apply in their job role i.e. the knowledge and skills set out in the

apprenticeship unit.

Assessment approaches

There are 2 approaches to the assessment of apprenticeship units:

- **Mandatory assessment:** a skills test to assess whether the learner has acquired the skills and knowledge in the apprenticeship unit and is therefore competent to take on the relevant tasks and responsibilities in line with the employer's expectations. The format of this test is determined by the training provider. All learners must undertake a mandatory assessment.
- **Optional extended assessment:** the use of a non-mandatory qualification which aligns with the knowledge and skills set out within the apprenticeship unit. This may be relevant in some contexts, such as where a qualification aligns with sector expectations or regulatory requirements. If this option is chosen, it must be carried out in addition to the mandatory assessment.

As a minimum requirement, the provider must administer the skills test for the apprenticeship unit. Providers may either:

- design and administer the skills test
- Commission an external specialist, such as an Awarding Organisation (AO) to design it
- purchase an assessment which would test the knowledge and skills set out within the apprenticeship unit

Where an employer has chosen to follow the mandatory assessment approach, where the training provider designs and administers the assessment, it is important to ensure:

- there is independence from those directly involved in delivering the training
- the individual(s) designing and delivering the assessment have sufficient subject and assessment knowledge and expertise – they should be qualified in the relevant subject at the same level or above

The costs of developing and delivering assessment activities are funded within the apprenticeship unit funding rate. Different apprenticeship units may require different approaches. For some units, designing and delivering the mandatory assessment

internally may meet the needs of the employer. For others, such as those linked to regulated professions or requiring specific independent assurance, an extended approach may be more appropriate. Both approaches are valid – the key is working with the employer and learner to select the option that best supports their requirements.

Employer validation

Regardless of which approach to assessment is taken, there must be employer validation. The purpose of validation is to confirm that the training has been delivered in full, the skills test has been passed and that the learner has acquired the new knowledge and skills set out in the apprenticeship unit.

Validation is:

- short, targeted feedback after assessment
- evidence that the learner has acquired the knowledge and skills
- an additional check to support confidence in the assessment outcome

Validation should not be:

- a substitute for actual assessment
- a general satisfaction survey
- an unstructured opinion on the learner's capability

Good validation focuses on:

- confirming that all the learning has taken place
- whether the learner has demonstrated the unit's required skills

- confidence that the learner can apply these skills in the workplace

Validation must be:

- collected by the training provider
- securely recorded
- consistent across cohorts

Evidence requirements

As set out in the funding rules, the evidence requirements for the skills test must:

- Include a statement on the training plan to acknowledge the plan is complete (signed by the employer, provider and learner). There must also be evidence that the learner has passed the skills test, for example the test results if using multiple choice questions, or a written statement of the outcome of practical observations.
- Show that the skills test has been developed by a suitably qualified person who is independent from training delivery and that they have confirmed that it meets the requirements set out in the funding rules.

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