

covid-19 forum

Thursday 9th April

— now what! —

NEXT SESSION

Friday 17 April 12.00 – 1.00: Register [HERE](#)

Questions in advance where possible to: r.rhodes@bolton.ac.uk

Previous Recordings:

Thursday 9 April [CLICK HERE](#)

Friday 3 April [CLICK HERE](#)

Outcomes agreed at the latest Forum:

1. UVAC to produce a template for advice to apprentice and employers (see template below)
2. UVAC and ESFA to agree and populate a scenarios advice guide for apprenticeships during furlough
3. UVAC to produce, based on the Staffs University template, a template for employers and apprentices to confirm arrangements for Furloughing apprentices. (see Furlough Declaration template in the Additional Resources section)



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HOW TO RAISE QUERIES & QUESTIONS

1. Email questions in advance of the forum session to r.rhodes@bolton.ac.uk
2. Post queries, views, suggestions on to Centre for Degree Apprenticeships [COVID-19](#) Topic Forum via the [CDA Home Page](#)
3. Raise queries by either route post on to the CDA forum site or email me r.rhodes@Bolton.ac.uk



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES – see also CORE RESOURCES on the back page

Slides (Webcast link is in the Resources slide)

[Thursday 9th April](#)

[Friday 3rd April](#)

Templates

[Furlough Declaration & Notes](#)

Other

[Treasury Advice on Criteria for Furlough](#)

[Updated IFATE advice on Nursing Apprenticeships](#)

[OFQUAL Announcement on English & maths](#)

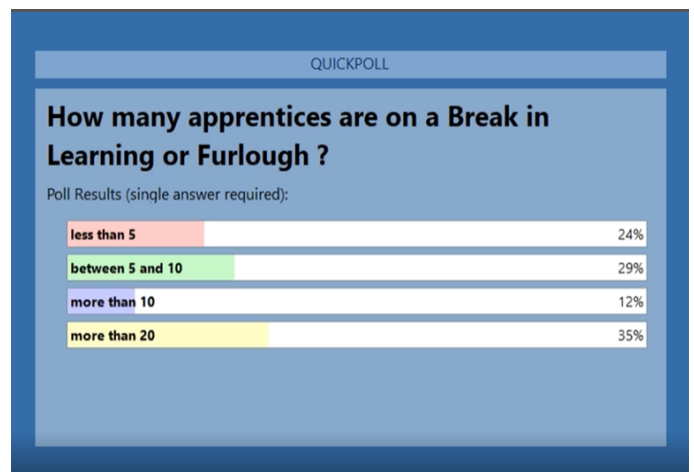
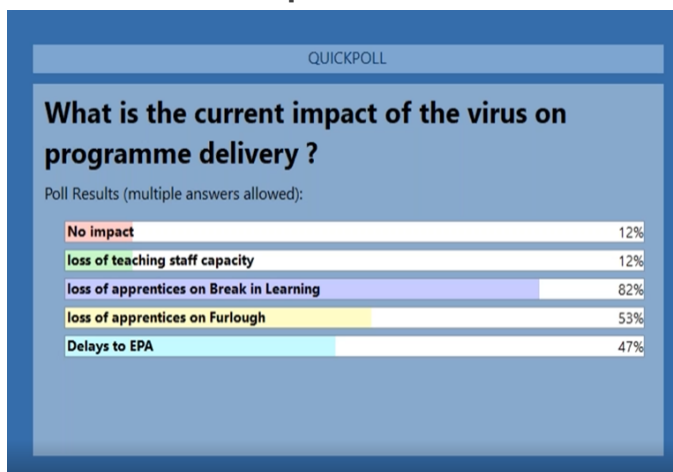
[OFQUAL Summer 2020 Advice for Vocational, Technical & Other Qualifications](#)

[QAA Covid-19 Thematic Guidance](#)

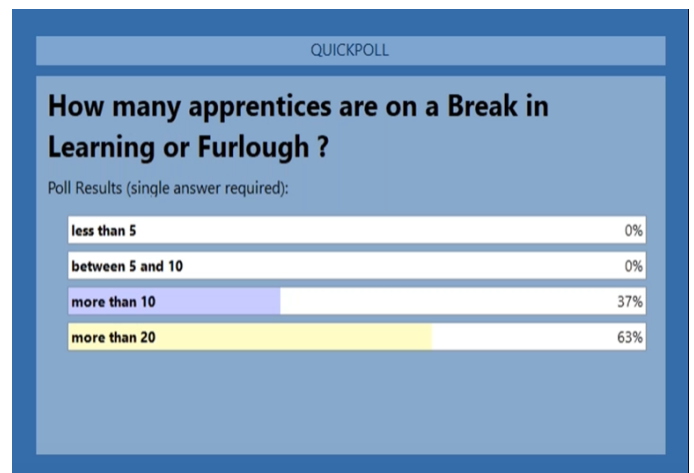
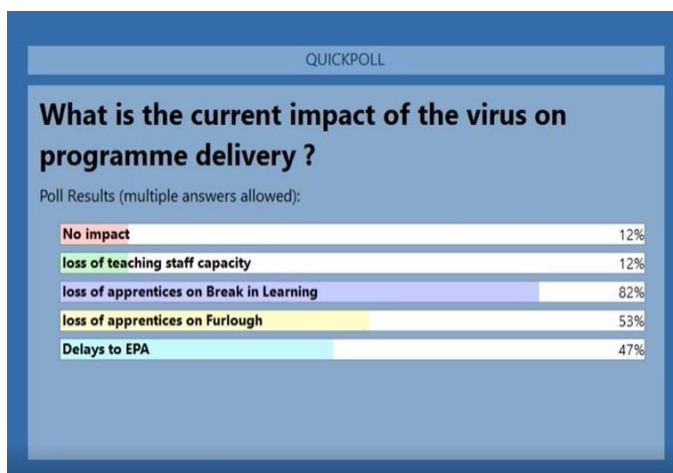


QUICK POLL RESULTS

Results from the 3 April Forum: 23 attendees



Results from the 9 April Forum - 37 attendees





QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

General Guidance

1. Will the ESFA be releasing updates to the guidance? Considering lobbying that there has been made.
 - *Yes, the expectation is that the main guidance document [ESFA COVID-19 Guidance](#) will be updated as decisions are made. the ESFA Weekly 'Update' will flag changes.*
2. Has anyone had anything from QAA re apprenticeships as guidance either as EPAQ or just generally?
 - *some mention in QAA guidance on WBL which was published on 8th April*

Teaching & Learning During the Lockdown

3. How are people looking at reordering teaching if they do joint teaching with non-apprentices who are still continuing but apprentices can't? Marrying this with teaching capacity...

FORUM COMMENTS

- *Cohort splits: this has limited impact on us as majority are closed cohorts of apprentices. shift generally to online for programmes but on-going decision making*
- *Teaching to non-apprentices (which is shared) has moved online and asynchronous, so can be used by apprentices now or at a later date*
- *Some of our programmes are stand-alone cohorts, but others are mixed. The stand-alone ones are easy to manage, but we don't yet have an indication of how we will manage mixed groups.*

4. Are people finding problems with Furloughed apprentices being prevented from accessing their email accounts ?

5. Are people finding issues with apprentice not looking at their uni email in the first place?

FORUM COMMENTS

- *We have not had a problem with furloughed apprentices being prevented from using work email accounts. But - think this is probably because no one through about it yet!*
- *We have quite a few furlough in construction area but hoping to still do uni work*
- *The problem with using alternative email addresses, is that we are not meant to use personal emails to contact students*
- *We have contacts at employers not looking at their emails which makes communicating with employers difficult*
- *All our Apprentices funnel their emails to one account. we have preferred emails and often email information to both personal and work emails.*
- *We have given advice on how to auto forward uni email*
- *We have contacted all our apprentices and asked them to update their student record with an alternative email address, just in case*
- *We don't issue students with a University email address and haven't for around five years - they've always been able to give us their preferred address*

English & Maths Flexibilities

6. Will there be any flexibilities in the assessment of English & maths in apprenticeships as there have been in schools for example

- *Just had an FENews update about Functional Skills announcements*

Furlough & Break in Learning

7. How do we manage Break in Learning when an apprentice is likely to be intermittently away from their work and their apprenticeship e.g. several 2 week breaks over a 6 week period?

- *You don't need to report a Break in Learning until an apprentice has been absent continuously for 4 weeks and this absence continues beyond this point. This means for example, that an apprentice can take a long holiday or have a reasonable time away ill before you need to formally report the absence.*
- *If an apprentice is away from their work duties for several weeks and not able to undertake their apprenticeship, even if this happens repeatedly you do not have to report this as a Break in Learning. If you know this is for a specific reason and that this is for a short period only e.g. as now they are in work occasionally undertaking other duties for 6 weeks, you do not need to report a Break in Learning providing that none of the individual absences from their apprenticeship role extends to 4 weeks.*
- *However, if this situation was to continue, for example the apprentice is repeatedly absent for a week over many months, a Break in Learning is most likely a better option, alongside a conversation with the employer about the impact of the repeated absences on the apprenticeship. Here, the issue is that the apprentice will quickly get very behind with their learning and the employer will need to find significant amounts of off the job learning time over the rest of the apprenticeship to maintain the 20% off the job requirement and allow the apprentice to complete. In this scenario, it is better to agree a Break in Learning as soon as the pattern of absence emerges to allow the situation to stabilise. The Bil allows the end date to be extended to accommodate additional off the job learning needed.*

8. We are having a problem with some employers not informing us that apprentices are being furloughed. Are others experiencing this?

- *We are getting a declaration signed by the employer and the apprentice and getting a copy of the letter the employer gives the apprentice re furloughed. SEE THE FURLOUGH DECLARATION TEMPLATE HERE*

9. How are people ensuring that Furlough training is staying on the right side of not contributing to the business: Clear guidance or examples would be useful to help teaching teams stay the right side.

10. If an apprentice is on furlough and is writing an assignment, will the rules of the furlough ensure that they get appropriate access to their organisation and/or their organisation's data to enable them to be able to complete their assignment?

- *When Furloughed, staff should have usual access to their company systems as needed to pursue their learning, apprenticeship, CPD without breaching the furlough rules. the guiding principle is that apprentice must not be 'generating revenue'. ESFA will work with UVAC on a set of furlough scenarios - send this to Rebecca*

11. Are ESFA happy that someone who is Furloughed at home can continue on their apprenticeship as long as they are accessing distance learning?

- *Yes – an apprentice on furlough is still employed and CPD is eligible activity to undertake when being paid but not at work. They must not, however (to keep within the Treasury rules on furlough) be doing productive work (otherwise they should be being paid as usual) so nothing that 'generates revenue'*

12. We have individuals who were due to start an apprenticeship who have been furloughed. Can we still start them? Or can only existing learners who have been furloughed participate in apprenticeship training?

- *it is clear that starting an apprenticeship if they are an existing member of staff is fine but it's not clear if, for example, they were offered or even appointed before or after the furlough and have not yet started. EFA have taken this away to consider the response*

13. Can we expect detailed guidance on furloughed apprenticeships?

- *HMT have issued guidance which Paul explained does include CPD as eligible activity during the Furloughed period. Uvac will be working with ESFA on a guidance document for Furlough during an apprenticeship to include scenarios raised during the Forum.*

14. BIL paperwork - we have been told by ESFA RM that we will have to have the paperwork completed on return which given volumes that could be affected seems to be inflexible and is going to be a headache. As getting paperwork sorted normally is difficult in normal circumstances sometimes starting the and updating apprenticeship agreements or commitment statements etc for example when key employer are absent due to ongoing illness etc.
- *It is a Funding Rule requirement to hold up-to-date copies of documentation about the apprenticeship and their apprenticeship at all times. If paperwork has been issued on time, or was planned but is on hold pending return to work or other unforeseen circumstances which prevented planned issues or signatories taking place on time, the rationale and evidence for this delay should be recorded and retained in the evidence pack.*

Qualification Achievement Rates /NARTS

15. DfE has stated that educational performance data for schools and colleges will not be published. Will this also apply to apprenticeship NART for 2019-20?
- *No decisions have been made regarding quality or other monitoring structures*

Redundancy

16. In the current situation, will the rules relating to redundancy and if the current rules still stand (ie will they have 12 weeks to find a new employer or will this be extended to say 24 weeks?)
17. Whose responsibility is it to help find an apprentice made redundant (with more than 6 months to go) an alternative job and to continue the apprenticeship?
- *no decisions have been made currently to relax the rules and providers retain the responsibility to work with the apprentice to consider alternative employment. Government have said they will keep the 12 week period under review but in the case of large numbers of redundancies, the ESFA will attempt to provide 'exceptional practical support to apprentice and providers to secure alternative employment.*

Off the Job Learning 20%

We are aware that finding 20% OTJL will be very challenging after virus arrangements have ended, given the number of staff in some organisations who were placed on Furlough or on a Break in Learning. This will particularly affect those sectors where the pressure on work is currently high and will remain so after the end of main virus arrangements e.g. food manufacturing, logistics, nursing.

18. For programmes in health (nursing degree Apprenticeships in particular) where apprentices are returning to practice, are we still to ensure the 20% OTJ and evidence of this, and also that stretch and learning is occurring during the workplace?
19. Can there be flexibility of within contract hours e.g. to extend the ability to work outside these for a short period of time – otherwise trusts are not going to manage with this due to ongoing workload, which forces a Break in Learning where one might not have been needed
20. 20% off the job might be variable during this period e.g. with Nursing Associates, any allowances?
21. We have IT staff working in NHS where their OTJ time has been sacrificed to support the covid-19 effort who are being forced to take a break in learning
- *There is currently no plan to relax the off the job learning requirements of the apprenticeship.*

Change of Role

22. Will there be flexibility in the funding rules for change of role if there is a delay in start of the new job. I know sept 19 onwards have 30 days leeway, but will this been allowed for all apprentices as this is might happen with delays in current situation.

Nursing Apprenticeships

We are anticipating a relaxation of / change to arrangements for Nursing Associate Apprenticeships to either relax requirements for completing EPA for those who have passed or are in Gateway. The Forum concurred with this view.

End-point Assessment

We are already aware that there are delays and postponements initiated by EPAOs where they are unable to switch to remote assessment, where there are delays in setting up alternative forms of EPA or the EPAO's existing systems cannot handle alternative modes. This was confirmed by the forum contributors:

FORUM COMMENTS

- *'Our biggest concern at the moment is around EPAs that were planned but now being cancelled or delayed by EPAOs. Achievements being pushed back to next academic year. I assume this will affect our QAR as these were apprentices on the older ILR reporting schedule where planned end date included EPA'*
- *'I have had the EPA for my own L3 apprentice cancelled by City and Guilds who say they can't support the test remotely!'*
- *'I understand from our EPAO that the ESFA/Ofqual are prepared to be flexible with assessment plans, eg with Nursing Associates'*
- *'EPAOs are making these proposals but the delays in getting feedback on the proposals are unacceptable. We've been working closely with Innovate, who are our Nursing Associate EPAO. They put forward change proposals 2 weeks ago and only yesterday received feedback on this'*
- *'Together with Innovate, we offered up our simulation suites as an alternate venue to do the observations as soon as we realised that NHS Trust workplaces would not be appropriate. There was a week when we could have made this happen and were all lined up for it - but still waiting approval that this would be ok. Clearly IfATE did not recognise the urgency in this because by the time they replied, we had all been told to close our campuses so no longer an opportunity. Disappointing as we were all ready to respond quickly to implement changes'*
- *'RICS have stopped face to face and suspending EPA and they only run panel exams twice a year'*
- *'Following a meeting with British Computer Society they stated that for digital apprenticeship level 4 Knowledge Modules are able to be done online and have also said that they are no longer a requirement of gateway -but it will be a requirement for final certification'*

23. What flexibility is there for gateway reviews during Covid-19?

- *'The latest arrangements for EPA do include the ability to extend the time, change modes of assessment with the EPAO and EQAP making proposals to the IfATE. the IfATE have produced additional guidance.'*

24. Is further guidance on functional skills assessments expected? This risks preventing learners from passing gateway but we've had no information from Ofqual on the matter (though City and Guilds and a couple of other AOs are now offering remote assessment)

- *'No guidance on this as yet. Apprentices are still expected to complete all requirements necessary including functional skills before they reach the gateway'*

We also want to remind members that the flexibility for EPA mode and arrangements published by the IfATE have monitoring and reporting requirements and in some cases formal agreement clauses before these can take place – **this applies to integrated degree apprenticeship End-point Assessments.** The [IfATE published guidance](#) sets out what is required and this is summarised in the 3 April Forum slides.

Communicating with Employers & Apprentices

25. How are people communicating with Employers and Apprentices?

26. How are providers are getting signatures on documents where wet-signatures can't be obtained?

FORUM COMMENTS

- *'new apprentices we will be using digital signatures via Aptem, but for historical we will have had most with digital or scanned in docs and "wet" docs (this is more difficult now people are working from home)'*
- *'We have been asking employers to type in names to contracts and then send it back to us from a work e-mail address, The e-mail is then saved in the evidence pack'*
- *'We will use APTEM when it is implemented'*
- *We are sending general update emails to all apprentices and to their employers via central comms (from me as Head of Apprenticeships). Course level specific issues are being dealt with by apprenticeship course leads who are responsible for ensuring all learners are continuing to engage.*
- *We have sent a number of communications out to employers and apprentices and I'm aware other universities have. Could UVAC take an overview of what current guidance is, and issue guidance templates that all could use for consistency of message across the HE sector.*
- *we have been sharing comms with apprentices and employers regularly. For apprentices we have been sending out joint communications as employer/provider.*

Funding

We raised with the ESFA our concerns over the retention of the whole 20% funding for End-point Assessment where these are delayed and the EPA price is less than the 20%, and the remainder is part of the cost of training. This training has already been delivered and may present a substantial financial value left unpaid for many months where whole cohorts are delayed.

27. Is there any prospect of funding being flexed to provide a degree of income/cover costs for BiL? We expect that levels of BiL will be substantial both in terms of volume and duration. We've moved delivery online with success and have worked closely with employers, but many learners have caring responsibilities that make their participation in remote learning difficult. Other learners who are working from home don't want to added pressure of completing their apprenticeship at this time. Employers are generally keen for learners to stay on programme and not take a BiL, but are unlikely to push this too hard with staff given other priorities right now.
- There are no plans currently to change arrangements for funding. Government can't pay in advance of activities taking place and providers are able to access government support funding during the virus.

Other

28. Are RoEPAO applications affected too?

- *No, currently Register of End-point Assessment Organisations is continuing to take applications*

29. Have ESFA Audits been suspended?

Yes

Issue date: UVAC 140420 r.rhodes@bolton.ac.uk



CORE INFORMATION & ADVICE SOURCES

- ESFA: [ESFA COVID-19 Guidance](#)
0800 150 600 or email helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk
- IFATE: [Response to COVID-19 including EPA](#)
enquiries.ifa@education.gov.uk (subject line: EPA_Covid 19 plus your org name)
- DfE: **Coronavirus helpline:** Telephone 0800 046 868