

covid-19 forum
Friday 17th April



now what! -

NEXT SESSION

Friday 24 April to Register [CLICK HERE](#)

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

Previous Recordings:

Friday 17 April [CLICK HERE](#)

Thursday 9 April [CLICK HERE](#)

Friday 3 April [CLICK HERE](#)

Outcomes agreed at the latest Forum:

1. UVAC to convene a forum with key organisations on the Nursing (and wider medical) EPA w/c 20 April
2. UVAC to produce a template for advice to apprentice and employers (see template below)
3. UVAC and ESFA to agree and populate a scenarios advice guide for apprenticeships during furlough
4. 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)



CONTENTS – new additions are highlighted in yellow and extend to Page 2

NEXT SESSION	1
Previous Recordings:.....	1
Outcomes agreed at the latest Forum:	1
HOW TO RAISE QUERIES & QUESTIONS.....	2
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES – see also CORE RESOURCES on the back page	2
QUICK POLL RESULTS.....	2
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS	3
General Guidance	3
Future Policy	3
Learner Satisfaction Survey	3
Teaching & Learning During the Lockdown	3
English & Maths Flexibilities	4
Furlough & Break in Learning.....	4
Qualification Achievement Rates /NARTS	5
Redundancy.....	5
Off the Job Learning 20%.....	5
Change of Role	6
End-point Assessment	6
Communicating with Employers & Apprentices	7
Funding.....	8
Other	8
CORE INFORMATION & ADVICE SOURCES	8
SPECIFIC APPRENTICESHIPS	8
Nursing & Medical Professions	8
Senior Leader & the Removal of Degrees from Apprenticeships	9



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)

Friday 17th April
[Thursday 9th April](#)
[Friday 3rd April](#)

Templates

[Furlough Declaration Template](#)

Other (listed in most recently added first)

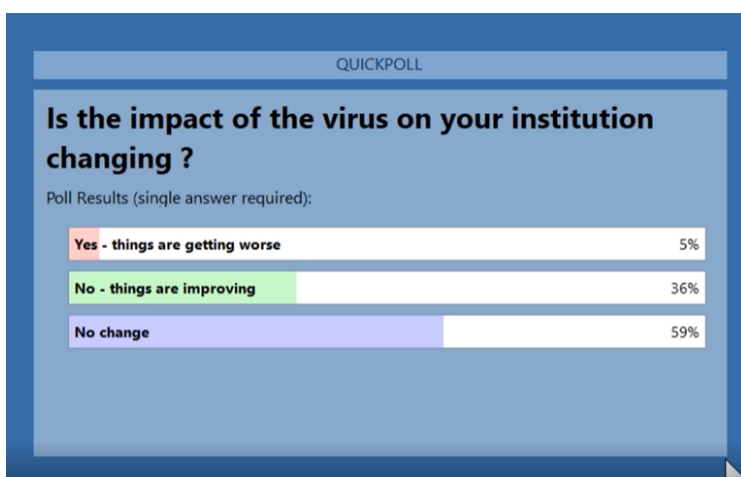
[UVAC Senior Leader Position Statement](#)
[UVAC Letter to the IfATE CEO](#)
[HASO Guidance on Nursing EPA Flexibilities](#)
[Learner Satisfaction Survey Cancellation Letter](#)
[UVAC Position Statement – Senior Leader Consultation](#)
[Qualification Achievement Rate Announcement](#)

[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

Temperature Check from 17 April Forum: 34 attendees:



People felt things were improving on the whole because:

- *The amount expected to go on BIL is less than we thought it would be*
- *Still have lots on furlough but able to continue*
- *Getting better because of recent announcements around EPAs for teaching and Nursing Associate*
- *More actions from Govt such as not publishing institution QATR data, flexibility with EPA delivery.*
- *Opportunities with Functional Skills also helps to improve things*



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*
3. Can we be directed to anything about future skills policy post covid?
 - *We are not aware of any guidance currently, but we know that government departments and agencies are putting / have put in place teams focussing on the recovery phase planning and decisions. We currently have a call out to one of the DfE leads to join us for a future forum session.*

Future Policy

4. Do we know if the subcontracting consultation response will be delayed?
 - *ESFA have not indicated that this timeline has changed.*

Learner Satisfaction Survey

5. Has the Apprenticeship Learner Satisfaction Survey been cancelled?
 - *YES – A letter was sent out from the Department for Education on the 26th March 2020 confirming that the Learner Satisfaction Survey 2019 2020 has been stopped. This does not appear to have reached everyone but the link to the letter is in the Resources*

Teaching & Learning During the Lockdown

6. 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.*
7. Are people finding problems with Furloughed apprentices being prevented from accessing their email accounts ?
 8. 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 thought 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

9. 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

10. 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.*

11. 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*

12. 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.

13. 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*
14. 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'*
15. 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 its 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*
16. 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.*
17. 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

18. 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?
- *The ESFA have announced that they will not publish any institution-level qualification achievement rates in the national achievement rate tables for the 2019 to 2020 academic year in response to COVID-19. They may still publish national data. The announcement can be read from the link in the Resources section.*

Redundancy

19. 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?)
20. 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.

21. Why do apprentices absolutely have to do 20% OTJ each week even? This is more for the TNAs and those pulled back into critical roles but are not taking a break? If the 20% OTJ is over the lifetime of the apprenticeship then why is it an issue if they only did 5 or 10% a week for the next month or so? TNAs get more than enough OTJ overall.

- *The 20% OTJL extends over the life of the apprenticeship and this does not have to be a set amount per working week – otherwise block release programmes could not work, for example. This new pattern of OTJL should reflect the needs of the programme, occupation and employer's on the job activity and, if this is more than a simple email agreement can cover, be written into an action plan and set out in a revised Commitment Statement, even if this does not change the end date for the practical period. If this looks more like a longer term change, then a BiL might be more suitable. In every case, it is key to plan and agree how the remaining OTJL will be met with the employer and apprentice.*

22. If we slow down the 20%, what happens if they overshoot the practical end date - does the total number of hours go up too?

- *At any point during the apprenticeship and particularly at the Tri-partite review, all parties need to keep checking that OTJL is broadly on plan to be achieved by the end of the apprenticeship, and if not, have an action plan in place to address any underlying issues and a schedule to replace the missing time. If the apprenticeship is simply performing well and ahead of their schedule, this plan needs to identify suitable stretch activities to support the apprenticeship and ensure the time is met. If the 20% is drifting due to a period of instability in the employer or apprentice environment, then all parties should consider whether a BiL would be appropriate, and the practical period date then changes.*
- *All this means that it should be unlikely that the practical period is not achieved, because you are adjusting the input throughout the apprenticeship to ensure that it is. Overshooting by a few weeks is fine currently; whilst we do not have a timeliness KPI for apprenticeship Standards e.g. if something occurs later in the apprenticeship or as now when things are very fluid, but even if apprentice are not on a BiL as in Q 21 make sure that variances in scheduled learning or activities are closely monitored and an agreed plan is in place that sets out any revised schedule to ensure the 20% will be met.*

23. 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?

24. 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

25. 20% off the job might be variable during this period e.g. with Nursing Associates, any allowances?

26. 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

27. 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.

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'*

28. 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.'*

29. 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

30. How are people communicating with Employers and Apprentices?

31. 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.

32. 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

33. Are RoEPAO applications affected too y the closure of the RoATP?

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

34. Have ESFA Audits been suspended?

Yes

Issue date: UVAC 200420 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

SPECIFIC APPRENTICESHIPS

Nursing & Medical Professions

UVAV is hoping to organise a web forum session this week on the Nursing EPA, and its wider application to other apprenticeships, with representatives from the main organisations to respond to the queries and concerns being raised by Members. We will email Forum attendees and post detail on our website and the twitter feed.

The [FAQs](#) produced by Skills for Health on the Registered Nurse and Nursing Associate Apprentices End Point Assessment published as part of their Healthcare Apprenticeship Standards Online Resources is very helpful.

The [main HASO Healthcare Apprenticeship page](#) is also a useful resource

Following the publication that EPA decisions have been relaxed, the Forum raised a range of questions and concerns summarised below

SCOPE

- *'We need EPA flexibilities for more than just nursing – there are other apprenticeships including Assistant Practitioner, Advanced Clinical Practitioner and others equally under strain currently*
- *'Does the flex apply to the pre NMC standard?'*

No This guidance only applies to apprenticeships and not the first waves of traditional foundation degree NA programmes.

DURATION

- *How long with this flexibility last? We need a decision now for the next planned End-point Assessment and for future cohorts later in the year. We recommend at least extending as far as possible to offer stability and to enable sufficient planning to take place*
- *The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education / Nursing talks about the changes to the EPA process only applying to the qualifying apprentices during the Covid-19 crisis. So if you had a cohort finishing say on May 15 and the crisis officially ended a week later (for arguments sake), would they still qualify for these emergency measures, or would they have to undertake the EPA as originally planned? Just need to be clear what message to give to our Nursing Associate Apprentices who are close to completing*

IMPLEMENTATION

- *The implementation of the EPA for Nursing Associates, our EPAOs seems a little unsure how to apply the new rules and what the cost structure will be from them given there is no formal assessment required - Patrick*

LACK OF REDUCTION IN EPA PRICE

- *'We are concerned about indications that EPAOs are not reducing their prices in line with the changes in EPA practice'*

EPA APPRENTICE & EMPLOYER EXPECTATIONS

- *The problem is that apprentices are aware that there is to be no EPA and think that there is nothing more to do - so where 's my certificate?*
- *When we are likely to get information for providers about the process for approving NAs under the new arrangements? All our NAs and their employers assume that because the announcement has been made that the NAs will get confirmation soon- a matter of days!*

Senior Leader & the Removal of Degrees from Apprenticeships

The Forum expressed concerns about proposed removal of degrees from apprenticeships, as is currently under consultation for Senior Leader. There are plans to remove the degree from other Standards, including Lab Scientist.

UVAC have published a [position paper on the Senior Leader consultation](#) and we have also [written to the IfATE CEO](#) expressing broader concerns. You can read both you can read using the link in the Resources section.

- *Does the taking out of the MBA requirement mean that we will not be allowed to include an MSc or any HE qualification to support the knowledge development of this standard, and are we expecting a big hit on funding for Management apprenticeships in any case? - Patrick*
- *Would universities who have modelled the impact of the proposed funding band changes share their workings with other institutions? **[these can come into UVAC and be shared anonymously]***
- *I think the funding band will dictate the route we take. We suspect there will be impact as the appeal is in the embedded qualification to Senior Leaders.*

April 20 2020