

— now what! —

NEXT SESSION

Friday 15 May [CLICK HERE](#)

Previous Recordings:

[Thursday 7 May CLICK HERE](#)

[Friday 1 May CLICK HERE](#)

[Friday 24 April CLICK HERE](#)

[Friday 17 April CLICK HERE](#)

[Thursday 9 April CLICK HERE](#)

[Friday 3 April CLICK HERE](#)

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



CONTENTS – new additions are highlighted in yellow

Previous Recordings:	1
HOW TO RAISE QUERIES & QUESTIONS	1
Outcomes agreed at the latest Forum:	2
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES	2
QUICK POLL RESULTS	2
QUESTIONS & ANSWERS	3
General Guidance	3
Future Policy	3
Apprentice / Learner Satisfaction Surveys	4
Teaching & Learning During the Lockdown	4
English & Maths Flexibilities	5
Furlough & Break in Learning	6
Qualification Achievement Rates /NARTS	8
Redundancy	8
Off the Job Learning 20%	8
Change of Role	9
Eligibility Checks for new starts during lockdown and beyond	9
End-point Assessment	10
Communicating with Employers & Apprentices	11
Funding	12
Other	12



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 to the Centre for Degree Apprenticeships [COVID-19](#) Topic Forum via the [CDA Home Page](#)
3. Raise queries by either a post on the CDA forum site or email me r.rhodes@Bolton.ac.uk



Outcomes agreed at the latest Forum:

1. UVAC to raise EPA queries and furlough scenarios to the ESFA for response – 28 April
2. UVAC to convene a forum with key organisations on the Nursing (and wider medical) EPA - 6 May
3. UVAC to produce a template for advice to apprentices and employers (see template below)
4. UVAC and ESFA to agree and populate a scenarios advice guide for apprenticeships during furlough
5. 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)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Slides (Webcast link is in the Resources slide)

[Thursday 7 May](#)
[Friday 1st May](#)
[Friday 24 May ALL](#)
[Friday 17th April](#)
[Thursday 9th April](#)
[Friday 3rd April](#)

Templates

[Furlough Declaration Template](#)

Other (listed in most recently added first)

[ESFA UPDATE](#): 06.05
[IfATE Funding Consultation](#): new timetable
[IfATE Covid-19 FAQ](#): 06.05
[IfATE list of Agreed Flexibilities](#) : 06.05 [download the latest list](#) in word with new additions in **RED** (Levels 5 -8) and **YELLOW** (other Levels)
[Ofsted](#) : first published reports from prior to the lockdown

Previous sessions:

[IfATE Apprentice Survey Page](#) and also see :
[IfATE Apprentice Survey - Word Version](#)
[IfATE Senior Leader Timeline for Implementation](#)
[IfATE list of Standards with temporary discretions or flexibilities](#)
[IfATE/ESFA EPA Update 6](#)
[ESFA UPDATE](#) 30 April
[DfE Statistics](#) March 2020
[HASO Covid-19 FAQ webpage](#) contains the SfH 'ESFA Policy Request' Button
[HEE Nursing Associate Update](#)
[NOCN Nursing Associate EPA Overview](#)
[OFQUAL Summer 2020 Advice for Vocational, Technical & Other Qualifications](#)
[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](#)
[Functional skills legacy qualifications have been extended to December 2020](#)
[QAA Covid-19 Thematic Guidance](#)



CORE SOURCES OF ADVICE

ESFA:

[ESFA FAQ](#)
[ESFA COVID-19 Guidance line](#)
 0800 150 600 or
helpdesk@manage-apprenticeships.service.gov.uk

IFATE:

[Covid-1 Apprenticeship Info Hub](#)
[FAQ](#)
[Response to COVID-19 including EPA](#)
enquiries.ifa@education.gov.uk
 (subject line: EPA_Covid 19 plus your org name)

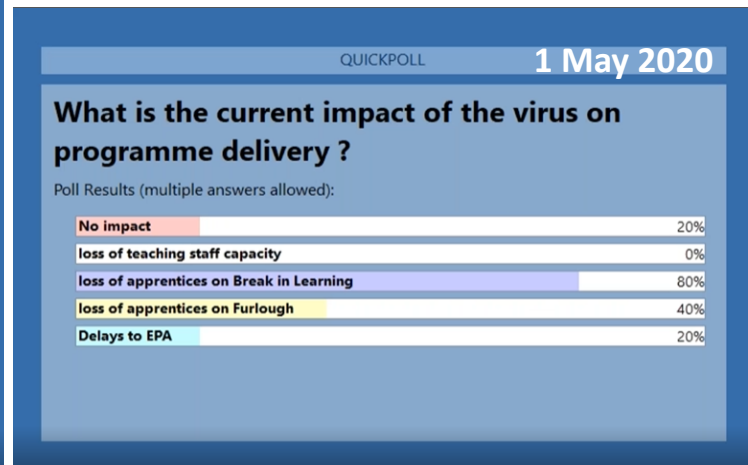
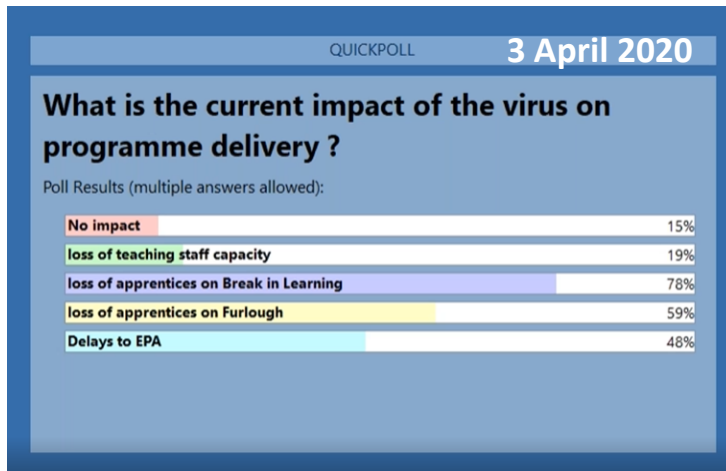
DfE:

Coronavirus helpline:
 Telephone 0800 046 868



QUICK POLL RESULTS

Temperature Check comparison



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

General Guidance

- Will the ESFA be releasing updates to the guidance? Considering lobbying that 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.
- 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 - see the Resources List
- 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.
- How do you get access to the ESFA/ IfATE Update Emails**
 - You have to be the named contact for the Register of End-point Assessment Organisations and there doesn't seem to be a way of 'subscribing' ESFA Confirmed that this is restricted to the main contact but have agreed to add UVAC to this list so we will post the updates as we receive them.

Future Policy

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

6. Funding Review

The IfATE have announced that having extended their consultation to 18 May they will be postponing piloting their new funding model which was originally planned for summer 2020. They have not set a date for implementation of either the pilot or the rollout.

Apprentice / Learner Satisfaction Surveys

7. 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

8. How are the IfATE publicising their Apprentice Survey ?

- The IfATE have now asked providers to circulate the link to the survey which ends on 29 May <https://www.cognitoforms.com/InstituteForApprenticeships1/apprenticeshippanelsurvey>. A basic paper copy of the survey can be downloaded from the resources section on page 1.

Teaching & Learning During the Lockdown

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

FORUM COMMENTS

- Cohort splits: this has limited impact on us as our majority are closed cohorts of apprentices.
- We have had a shift generally to online for programmes
- 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 do not yet have an indication of how we will manage mixed groups.

10. We have an apprentice who does not have the Internet at home and nor do they have a laptop. How are others responding to apprentices in this situation? Are they asking their employers to provide this resource, or are they providing themselves:

FORUM COMMENTS

- We have opened an additional fund to support students and apprentices if they require additional equipment / broadband facilitated by our student support team
- Our university has extended a specific hardship fund application process - specifically to help purchase equipment and broadband. This is being managed by our alumni team. Apprentices are eligible
- all We have been posting documents/work to a learner in this position
- We have loaned laptops to students during lockdown

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

12. Are people finding issues with apprentices 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 furloughed 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 do not 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

13. Why are higher apprentices still required to compete L2 Functional Skills? In many cases their skills demonstrated on the course work will reach at least to, and often well above L2.

- *Ofqual have published their approach to assessment for [vocational and technical skills](#) in light of COVID-19. This includes confirmation that students due to take functional skills assessments this summer will receive a calculated grade.*
- *Functional skills legacy qualifications have been extended to December 2020 – announced on 24th April - see the [OFQUAL Summer 2020 Advice for Vocational, Technical & Other Qualifications](#)*
- *Learners who are taking other qualifications that are used for progression to and through employment, further or higher education, where appropriate, are to receive results this summer in order to allow them to progress to the next stage of their lives – key extracts are below :*

Functional skills

'It is government policy that learners due to take assessments for Functional Skills qualifications before the end of the summer, receive a calculated result rather than an adapted or postponed assessment, because of their importance for progression. Under our proposals, awarding organisations will be required to take all reasonable steps to provide learners taking these qualifications with a calculated result.'

Apprenticeships

- *'Arrangements for end-point assessments (EPAs) are not covered by the direction or the extraordinary regulatory framework. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has set out guidance outlining what flexibility there may be in adapting assessments where the rescheduling or delay of an EPA would cause hardship to the apprentice, and has confirmed that approaches to calculate results cannot be used with EPAs.*
- *Apprentices taking other vocational and technical qualifications as part of their apprenticeships may find their results are calculated or assessments are adapted, as we propose they will be for learners taking these qualifications outside of apprenticeships.*
- *The regulation end date for legacy Functional Skills qualifications will be extended to the 31 December 2020 to allow learners who are currently on these qualifications, but who are yet to certificate, an opportunity to complete their qualification'.*

Furlough & Break in Learning

14. Can line managers who are furloughed take part in the Tri-partite reviews and continue to act as their apprentice's workplace mentor?

- *The purpose of the Tri-partite review is to support the apprentice progress in their apprenticeships and this includes their off the job learning and planning their future learning, in addition to understanding how they are performing and embedding this learning - all still part of CPD, and not 'generating revenue or 'creating benefit', as intended by the Furlough rules. WE WILL RAISE WITH ESFA FOR CONFIRMATION*

FORUM COMMENTS

- *Reviews can take place with learners without their employer being part - especially during Furlough, the review can focus more on the learning progress rather than the workplace progress*
- *With progress review meetings - how does that make any sense it is a role for work (mentor) and so that its not training or volunteering so I can see why mentors don't want to be involved if furloughed*
- *There is a difference between the fact that furloughed mentors being allowed to engage with tripartite reviews (in the regs) and them actually being willing to do so!*

15. Where are the boundaries for "creating benefit for business" – does a work based project or assignment count as 'benefit for business' or is this learning ?

16. 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.*

17. Does unpaid leave require a Break in Learning, whether instigated by the Apprentice or the Employer?

18. An apprentice has work, but is unable (refusing) to go to work due to home life/situations and not wanting to take the risk home. As there is work, he cannot be furloughed by his company unless he is shielding, which he is not. He has taken 3 weeks paid leave, but due to extension of lockdown, likely to need to take 3-4 weeks unpaid leave. As it is leave, if there is enough flexibility in his programme (as he is ahead) is this ok? Or does he need a break in learning? I

thought latter as more than 4 weeks of no work at work...but he is taking leave, albeit not paid for the additional weeks.

- *If the apprentice is taking paid leave and this is not exceeding a month, even if this happens several times, this does not require a break in learning, particularly if they are ahead in their studies. The question here is the **unpaid** leave - whether they can be an apprentice if they take unpaid leave as they are technically not being paid – a requirement for their time as an apprentice. The guidance Q21 suggests that they would take a BiL. The fact that they are ahead in their apprenticeship means that don't actually need one as they will not be behind as a result of the unpaid leave but there is no ruling on this. WE WILL CONFIRM*

FORUM COMMENTS

- *If you can evidence any form of learning which is being undertaken whilst on furlough at home, then he does not need to be on a break in learning*
- *As he is working he can still support and work with others so he is completing on and off the job learning - cant any work be done from home ?*

19. 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*

20. 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?.

21. 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*

22. 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'*

23. 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*

24. 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. See also the updated ESFA guidance to employers on paying apprentices on Furlough published on the Apprenticeship Service -the link is in the resources section*

25. 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.*

26. Can an employer recruit a new member of staff into the business as an apprentice?

- *Yes-It is important to note that an employer can only claim for furloughed employees that were on the PAYE payroll on or before 19 March 2020.*

27. Can an existing member of staff start an apprenticeship whilst they are furloughed?

- *Yes, if eligible – usual arrangements apply and the provider should consider how they would assure the ESFA of the identity and eligibility of the individual and how they would carry out the initial assessment.*

Qualification Achievement Rates /NARTS

28. 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.*
- *What are ESFA/ Ofsted doing with the performance data that they collect – even if they are not publishing it how is it being used, now and in the future ?*

Redundancy

29. In the current situation, will the rules relating to redundancy and if the current rules still stand (i.e. will they have 12 weeks to find a new employer or will this be extended to say 24 weeks?)

30. 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.

31. 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.*

32. 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.*

33. 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?

34. 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

35. 20% off the job might be variable during this period e.g. with Nursing Associates, any allowances?

36. 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

37. 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.

Eligibility Checks for new starts during lockdown and beyond

38. For September starts, how do we handle face-to-face eligibility checks in terms of documentation checks?. ESFA requires live checks especially when it comes to ID, visas, etc....is there any updates on flexibilities in this area?

- *No flexibility or relaxation of have been announced except for the need for wet signatures.*

FORUM COMMENTS

- *We are doing teams meetings/skype/zoom with the apprentice and their ID.*

End-point Assessment

EPA Further Queries for resolution

39. Can an apprentice who has completed their gateway and is moving to another employer complete their apprenticeship i.e. take their EPA at this second employer?.

- *As the apprentice has completed their practical period (so already met the requirement for their apprenticeship minimum duration) we think that this should be allowed, though it is not clear in the rule or ILR guidance. WE WILL CONFIRM WITH ESFA*

40. What happens if the EPA is a credit bearing part of the apprenticeship, as in an integrated degree apprenticeship

- *Again, this must depend on the completion of the gateway stage – i.e. the practical period has been successfully completed. WE WILL CONFIRM WITH ESFA*

FORUM COMMENTS

- *With a Nursing Apprenticeship, an NHS Trust has agreed to keep this apprentice on Bank (a zero hours contract, to allow them to go back and complete their EPA)*

EPAO flexibilities

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*

41. 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.*

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

42. How are people communicating with Employers and Apprentices?

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

- *Latest guidance on signatures states:*
- *'signatures' must be obtained the apprenticeship agreement, the commitment statement, external audit reports for subcontractors, evidence linking to additional payments such as additional learning support and the care leavers bursary, contracts for services, agreements that an apprentice has passed all gateway requirements.*
- *If you use digital/electronic signature process, continue in accordance with the respective funding rules. Where you don't have digital processes under normal circumstances, during the COVID-19 ONLY; provider flexibilities are as follows:*
- *For the purpose of audit evidence, we expect a record of acknowledgement or adoption of a genuine electronic message or document. Acceptable alternative evidence includes:*
 - *an email from the learner and/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 learner and/or employer*
 - *a signed scanned document attached to an email from the learner and/or employer*
 - *photo taken on a camera/digital medium of the signed document attached to an email from the learner and/or employer*
- *Following the period of COVID-19 restrictions, providers using the above alternative evidence must resume their usual process for obtaining wet signatures on relevant documentation. 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 purposes.*

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

44. We are aware of at least two HEIs who are reporting unexplained / unplanned payments listed as or 'CAPITAL GRANTS' in their last remittance. These are being investigated but let us know if this has affected you.

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.

45. 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.

46. 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. Payments*

47. We are noticing that non-levy employers are not always making their payments now and have switched to upfront payments for new starts.

Other

48. Are RoEPAO applications affected too by the closure of the RoATP?

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

49. Have ESFA Audits been suspended?

- *Yes, however in the latest ESFA Coronavirus response FAQs, the ESFA qualifies this, confirming that they have now extended this pause to cover the period for at least the duration of the lockdown but will continue to monitor and review the situation. 'When the COVID-19 lockdown measures are reduced and there is a return to office-based working across the country, we will assess when it is appropriate to restart routine funding audits'.*
- *'It may be necessary for the ESFA to contact providers during the COVID-19 pandemic 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 providers face as a result of COVID-19.'*

50. Who is the awarding body for apprenticeship Standards - is it ESFA or the Institute?

51. How do you change the contact on ROEPAO?

- *Its on the Assessment Service Account 'edit details'*

52. To note that the ESFA are tendering for an improved Apprenticeship Service system.....

- <https://feweeek.co.uk/2020/05/04/help-dfe-to-spend-10m-simplifying-the-digital-apprenticeship-service/>

Issue date: UVAC 080520 r.rhodes@bolton.ac.uk