



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Guidance

Changes to apprenticeship assessment, 2025 to 2026

Updated 30 March 2026

Applies to England

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This publication is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-rules-2025-to-2026/changes-to-apprenticeship-assessment-2025-to-2026>

Responsibility for this guidance moved to the Department for Work and Pensions on 1 April 2026. You should continue to follow this guidance.

This guidance outlines the changes to apprenticeship assessment being introduced between 2025 and 2026 to create a more flexible, streamlined and proportionate system. The reforms replace end-point assessment (EPA) with a new assessment model that allows assessment to take place at any stage of the apprenticeship, rather than only at the end. These changes respond to feedback that the existing EPA system can be overly disproportionate and burdensome.

Roles and responsibilities are being rebalanced. Employers will verify apprentice behaviours demonstrated in the workplace, providers may mark some assessments where appropriate, and assessment organisations will continue to design assessment materials and assure quality. Assessment plans are being redesigned to be shorter and clearer, focusing on core assessment outcomes, reducing duplication and providing flexibility while maintaining rigour.

Revisions to apprenticeship assessment plans will continue to be introduced by Skills England in phases, as set out in [apprenticeship standards: revisions and adjustments](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-revisions-and-adjustments) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-revisions-and-adjustments>). As a result the sector will remain in a period of transition during 2026 and 2027 as these changes are implemented.

This guidance is intended to assist:

- providers
- assessment organisations
- employers
- the professional sector and regulatory bodies
- apprentices

It also supports alignment with the [Apprenticeship funding rules](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-rules-2025-to-2026) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-funding-rules-2025-to-2026>) and reflects the principles set out in the [Apprenticeship Assessment Principles](https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/24599908217746-Apprenticeship-Assessment-Principles) (<https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/24599908217746-Apprenticeship-Assessment-Principles>).

If you have any questions about this guidance, please contact DfE officials via APAR.MAILBOX@education.gov.uk.

Following the Machinery of Government changes announced on 16 September 2025, responsibility for apprenticeships, adult further education, skills, training and careers, and Skills England will transfer from the Department for Education to the Department for Work and Pensions.

As a result, this mailbox will move to a DWP address, which we will update from 1 April.

Policy background and purpose of the reforms to apprenticeship assessment

It is important to understand the change of terminology which the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (and previously the Department for Education (DfE)) and Skills England have adopted to reflect the reform principles and changes to apprenticeship assessment, notably that assessment can take place at any stage of the apprenticeship, not just at the end. The terminology for revised assessment is as follows:

- ‘apprenticeship assessment’ has replaced end-point assessment
- ‘assessment organisation’ has replaced end-point assessment organisation
- ‘gateway to completion’ has replaced gateway
- ‘assessment’ throughout this guidance refers to assessment which may take place either during the course of the apprenticeship or towards the end and which contributes towards the final grade

Following the machinery of government changes in September 2025, DWP is responsible for apprenticeships and for overseeing reforms to improve the way apprenticeship assessment is delivered. These changes help deliver greater value and ensure a better experience for apprentices and employers, while maintaining the high standards of rigour and quality that define the apprenticeship programme.

This work builds on a review of EPA undertaken in 2024. This review was carried out by DfE, in close collaboration with:

- the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE)
- Ofqual
- the Office for Students (OfS)
- sector stakeholders

While the review found that apprenticeships continue to deliver strong outcomes and enjoy high satisfaction levels, feedback from across the sector has highlighted that the EPA process can be overly disproportionate, burdensome, and time-consuming.

In response, DfE announced the [apprenticeship assessment principles \(https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/24599908217746-Apprenticeship-Assessment-Principles\)](https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/24599908217746-Apprenticeship-Assessment-Principles) in February 2025 which guide the redesign of apprenticeship assessment to better reflect the needs of employers and apprentices. These principles will apply to all apprenticeships across all levels.

The assessment process is being streamlined by enabling more design and delivery flexibility so that:

- assessment is more proportionate to the competency being tested and removes any duplication
- where appropriate, assessment can be designed to take place throughout the duration of the apprenticeship
- where appropriate, providers will be able to deliver and mark elements of the assessment
- assessment organisations (previously known as end-point assessment organisations) will continue to design the assessment and continue to ensure the validity of outcomes

Skills England is leading on the implementation of the published principles with revisions to all assessment plans in collaboration with professional, sector and regulatory bodies, including:

- employers
- DWP
- Ofqual
- OfS
- employers
- providers
- assessment organisations
- Skills England's expert network

Roles of key organisations in shaping and delivering assessment reform

This section outlines the distinct responsibilities of the DWP, Skills England, Ofqual, and OfS in the development and implementation of reforms to apprenticeship assessment.

Department for Work and Pensions

DWP has overall responsibility for the apprenticeship programme and is leading on the reforms to improve how assessment is delivered. These changes reflect ministerial priorities to:

- reduce unnecessary bureaucracy
- deliver better value
- improve the experience for both apprentices and employers while maintaining the high standards that underpin the apprenticeships programme

While Skills England is leading on the practical implementation of these reforms, DWP retains strategic oversight to ensure delivery remains aligned with government priorities and the long term vision for apprenticeships.

Skills England

Skills England has been established to equip our national workforce with the skills needed to drive economic growth and support people to get better jobs faster. Its strategic priorities include working with employers and other partners to co-design solutions to meet national, regional and local skills needs.

Skills England has responsibility for the development and approval of apprenticeship assessment plans, in line with the provisions of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. In carrying out this work, Skills England will work with employers and sectors to ensure the changes to apprenticeship assessment plans work for employers.

Skills England exercises responsibility for ensuring these assessment plans comply with DWP policy, and for publishing the assessment plans such that they are available for use by assessment organisations and providers in the development and delivery of assessment specifications.

Skills England is also responsible for ensuring that apprenticeship assessment is evaluated in alignment with legislative requirements. In the majority of cases, this is delivered through the regulatory functions of Ofqual

and OfS. Skills England also maintains a register of other external quality assurance providers for a small number of other apprenticeship standards.

Ofqual

Ofqual is the independent regulator for qualifications in England and currently regulates the assessment of more than 580 occupational standards. Ofqual has worked closely with Skills England and DWP on the reforms to apprenticeship assessment and intends to introduce a new regulatory framework for apprenticeship assessments, which reflects government's assessment principles.

Ofqual's statutory objectives include securing the standards of, and promoting public confidence in, regulated qualifications. Ofqual's role is to steward the qualifications system, taking a whole system, long-term, proactive approach to protect the value of qualifications for students and apprentices and to support economic growth.

Ofqual's rules, which awarding organisations must follow, are designed to achieve this. Ofqual monitors the application of its rules, supporting compliance and taking regulatory action where necessary.

Office for Students

OfS is the independent regulator of higher education in England. It ensures that all students, including those undertaking higher education apprenticeships, have a fulfilling experience. Its regulatory approach is underpinned by the functions, duties and powers given to it in the Higher Education Research Act 2017 (HERA).

OfS provides external quality assurance for 'integrated' higher and degree apprenticeships delivered by providers registered with the OfS. As part of this role, the OfS quality assures apprenticeship assessment to ensure assessment practices are effective, valid, and reliable, and that apprenticeship outcomes are credible. The outcomes of these assessments may inform judgements about a provider's compliance with the [OfS's B conditions of registration \(https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/registering-with-the-ofs/registration-with-the-ofs-a-guide/conditions-of-registration/\)](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-providers/registering-with-the-ofs/registration-with-the-ofs-a-guide/conditions-of-registration/).

Under its regulatory framework, the OfS may exercise its intervention powers if there is a risk, or an actual breach of, its conditions of registration.

Roles and responsibilities

Employers

As they do now, employers remain best placed to verify apprentices are demonstrating the required behaviours outlined in the occupational standard. To remove unnecessary duplication, those behaviours will no longer need to be separately assessed by providers or assessment organisations, who will focus on assessing knowledge and skills.

The employer will have a crucial role in verifying behavioural competence, verifying that each behaviour statement has been sufficiently demonstrated by the apprentice over the course of the programme. This must have taken place before the apprenticeship certificate can be requested.

Providers

Providers will play a greater role in developing apprentice readiness and supporting centre based assessment. Where appropriate, and as set out in the revised assessment plan, providers may be able to deliver and mark some elements of assessment.

Assessment organisations

As is currently the case, assessment organisations will be responsible for developing all assessment materials in accordance with the assessment plans to ensure the quality and consistency of assessments conducted and marked within their approved centres.

Differences in terminology

Organisations involved in the delivery and assessment of apprenticeships may be referred to differently depending on the regulatory or policy context.

Ofqual uses the term 'awarding organisation' to describe all entities it regulates, regardless of the type of qualification offered. This includes those organisations involved in the assessment of apprenticeships.

DWP, Skills England and the OfS have adopted the broader term 'assessment organisation' to refer to all bodies involved in apprenticeship assessment. This includes organisations regulated by both Ofqual, OfS and other regulatory bodies. The use of this term reflects the wider policy and operational framework introduced through apprenticeship reforms.

While the terminology varies, both terms refer to overlapping groups of organisations. Ofqual's terminology is grounded in its statutory role and regulatory responsibilities. DWP, Skills England, Ofqual and OfS continue to work together to ensure clarity and consistency in how these organisations are described and understood.

Verification of behaviours

For revised apprenticeship assessment plans, employers are responsible for verifying that apprentices have sufficiently demonstrated the behaviours set out in the occupational standard. This reflects the principle that behaviours remain an essential element of occupational competence and that employers who directly observe apprentices in real work situations are best placed to make informed judgements about their conduct and performance in the workplace.

Because of this, employers will be required to confirm these behaviours before gateway to completion. Verification should already be part of normal performance management and ongoing line management conversations between the apprentice and their employer and will form a core component of the 'gateway to completion' process that enables a request for apprenticeship certification to be made.

Importantly, assessment organisations and providers will no longer be required to assess behaviours themselves, nor to quality assure employer judgements. This removes duplication, ensures behavioural judgements are made by those with direct workplace insight and supports a more streamlined and appropriate assessment approach.

Employers, however, will still need to confirm that the required behaviours have been met as part of the gateway to completion process. To support this, Skills England will provide an optional pro forma that employers can use, alongside guidance which will set out clearly how this should be applied.

For further information on verification of behaviours, guidance on resits and retakes, grading, performance descriptors and minimum assessment requirements see Skills England's [requirements and guidance for apprenticeship assessment](#).

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/requirements-and-guidance-for-apprenticeship-assessment/requirements-and-guidance-for-apprenticeship-assessment>)

Certificate and assessment recording for apprenticeships

For many apprenticeship standards, the existing process for recording and issuing certificates will remain unchanged. Assessment organisations (AOs) will continue to record grades and initiate certification via [the apprenticeship assessment service](#) (<https://assessors.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/>) as per standard practice. This requirement is essential and will remain in place.

However, the approach to recording grades to initiate certification for apprenticeship standards where the mandatory qualifications provide full or majority coverage of the knowledge and skills will change, where the assessment plan has been revised or apprenticeship assessment removed as part of the reforms.

For standards where a mandatory qualification provides full or majority coverage of the knowledge and skills:

- no additional apprenticeship assessment or involvement of an assessment organisation is required, certification will be based on successful completion of the mandatory qualifications listed in the specific apprenticeship standard along with any other completion requirements
- as a result, training providers will therefore be responsible for recording the apprenticeship grade, via [the apprenticeship assessment service](#) (<https://assessors.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/>), which will initiate certification, this will replace the current requirement for assessment organisations to manage these steps
- training providers must continue to work with the relevant awarding bodies and maintain a formal agreement that includes:
 - ensuring that the awarding body updates the [Learner Record Service \(LRS\)](#) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/learning-records-service-lrs>) to ensure compliance and reduce risk
 - maintaining an audit trail for apprenticeship certificate for quality assurance purposes

To reiterate, these arrangements apply only to standards where the mandatory qualification provides full or majority coverage of the knowledge and skills requirements, this will be clearly indicated on each revised apprenticeship assessment plan. This new process will take effect once the revised assessment plan for that standard has been published and new apprenticeship starts are permitted against it. The same requirements will also apply to apprentices transferring to the new version of the standard, provided all transfer and eligibility criteria have been met. Until then, existing assessment, recording of grades and certification processes remain in place.

System updates to the apprenticeship service are currently being reviewed and DWP will provide further details in due course.

If you already hold an account, there is no change to the current process for recording grades to prompt certification.

If you do not yet have an account and need to record a grade to prompt certification, please email APAR.mailbox@education.gov.uk and request access.

Assessment design

Apprenticeship assessment plans will be much shorter and will now lay out the high-level assessment requirements that apply to all apprenticeship assessment in that occupation. Assessment organisations will work within these parameters aligning with the relevant regulatory framework to develop apprenticeship assessments.

New assessment plans will:

- be informed by employers (as they are now) but must also reflect input from assessment and delivery experts including relevant professional bodies, plus assessment organisation and provider representation, to ensure proportionality, value for money and deliverability
- name one required assessment method, allowing assessment organisations to select additional methods as they feel appropriate
- avoid duplication of assessment unless essential
- consider the best use of technology and digital tools when setting assessment methods

An example structure of a new apprenticeship assessment plan can be found at Annex B.

Skills England developed the new assessment plan framework using a three-model approach, determined by the complexity and risk associated with each standard. Further information on this approach is available at Annex C.

In October 2025 Skills England published three initial apprenticeship assessment plans. These were shared as illustrative examples to support employers, training providers and assessment organisations in preparing for future delivery. These initial published assessment plans were:

- [ST0002 level 3 assistant accountant](https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0002-in-revision)
(<https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0002-in-revision>)
- [ST0795 level 3 data technician](https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0795-in-revision)
(<https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0795-in-revision>)
- [ST0135 level 3 early years educator](https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0135-in-revision?view=epa)
(<https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0135-in-revision?view=epa>)

Details of all revised published assessment plans and those currently under review can be seen in Skills England's [Apprenticeship standards: revisions and adjustments](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-revisions-and-adjustments) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-revisions-and-adjustments>).

Skills England will continue to publish the revisions and adjustments status report which provides transparency around standards that are being revised, adjusted, or retired. This report offers stakeholders a clear overview of planned changes and timelines.

As assessment reforms are being introduced in phases, apprentices should continue to follow the current version of the occupational standard and assessment plan until the revised version is released for starts.

Flexibility in assessment approach

The apprenticeship reforms introduce greater flexibility in assessment timing and methods. As they do now, assessment organisations will be responsible for developing all assessment materials and the assessment approach (where the assessment plan allows flexibility to do so), guided by relevant regulatory frameworks and employer requirements.

All apprenticeship assessment must align with the published assessment plan for the occupational standard and provide a valid measure of occupational competence.

Assessment plans

Revised assessment plans will reflect the assessment outcomes required to demonstrate occupational competence. These outcomes are informed by employer expectations and are designed to support comparable outcomes across an occupational standard.

Occupational competence remains central to every apprenticeship. Apprentices still learn the full content of the occupational standard and all assessment outcomes must always be assessed. Content sampling is used only where appropriate and is a structured, evidence-based way to assess competence efficiently without reducing rigour. Employers help identify the mandatory knowledge and skills that must always be assessed, and assessment organisations design sampling approaches that ensure it reliably assesses occupational competence across all assessment outcomes and mitigates risks to validity, predictability and comparability.

In addition, as part of the assessment plan development process, experts, including employers, providers, assessment organisations and professional bodies will identify individual knowledge and skills statements (mandatory content) which must also be assessed every time.

To ensure appropriate coverage of the apprenticeship standard and give confidence to users of the apprenticeship, each apprenticeship assessment plan (AAP) specifies an appropriate subset of knowledge and skills statements that is mandatory. This means that the identified content must be assessed in each version of the apprenticeship assessment that an assessment organisation makes available.

The proportion of mandatory content identified will be significant, and likely to vary from standard to standard, depending on the needs of the occupation.

Content identified as mandatory presents a starting point for assessment organisations to develop valid assessments of occupational competence which cover all of the assessment outcomes. It does not present the minimum content to be assessed.

Quality assurance and regulation

Where assessment is conducted by providers, assessment organisations remain responsible for quality assurance. For example assessment organisations regulated by Ofqual remain responsible for consistency in the

application of the marking or assessment criteria to ensure that all apprentices are reliably and fairly assessed.

Ofqual's general conditions of recognition and the proposed regulatory framework for apprenticeship assessment (being published in spring 2026) require assessment organisations to develop apprenticeship assessments which are fit for purpose, valid, and manageable. Ofqual propose to require assessment organisations to justify their assessment design and delivery decisions. Ofqual will use its full range of regulatory tools to monitor the delivery of apprenticeship assessments.

Assessment organisations will continue to be responsible for quality assurance, in line with the requirements set by the relevant regulatory body for the occupational standard. For example, assessment organisations will be required by the OfS to demonstrate that their assessment design and delivery comply with its conditions of registration. This includes providing high-quality academic experiences, ensuring apprentices have access to appropriate resources and support, ensure credible assessments and qualifications, and maintaining consistent standards aligned with sector-recognised standards.

Sampling and comparability

The apprenticeship assessment principles aim to promote flexibility and proportionality in assessment design. Where multiple assessment organisations offer the same apprenticeship, the assessment outcomes and performance descriptors outlined in the assessment plan will support comparability of apprentice outcomes.

The assessment outcomes group and summarise the knowledge and skills that must be demonstrated in assessments. All assessment outcomes must be assessed and it is the responsibility of the assessment organisation to ensure this.

The assessment plan will also identify mandatory content which must be assessed in every version of the assessment that is made available.

Of the remaining content, assessment organisations are permitted to sample within and between knowledge and skill statements, provided there is sufficient opportunity for apprentices to demonstrate competence in all assessment outcomes.

Promoting quality and choice

Healthy competition amongst assessment organisations can drive improvements in quality, innovation, and responsiveness. It offers employers and providers greater choice, encourages cost efficiency, and promotes accountability. Oversight mechanisms are in place to prevent unfair competition based on ease or cost of assessment.

Regulatory bodies, such as Ofqual and OfS will be responsible for ensuring that confidence in performance standards is maintained. For example, Ofqual's oversight mechanisms are directed at ensuring awarding organisations comply with their general conditions of recognition and the proposed regulatory framework for apprenticeship assessment.

Implementation and transition

As is the case now, new versions of an occupational standard and its associated assessment plan will be published on the Skills England's [apprenticeship finder \(https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/\)](https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/). The revised version of the assessment plan will include when new starts can commence.

Depending on the complexity of the occupational standard and the nature of the revisions, lead-in periods and go-live dates may vary. This flexible approach recognises that embedding the changes to apprenticeship assessment will take time and may require phased adoption.

To ensure continuity, the existing (EPA) version of the standard will remain available for new starts until the revised version is formally released for starts. This approach guarantees uninterrupted access to apprenticeship starts and supports a smooth transition for employers, providers, and apprentices.

Revisions to the assessment plan will not affect the occupational standard training code, and the existing publication process for new versions will remain unchanged.

Since December 2025 Ofqual recognition for apprenticeship assessment has been based on a combination of:

- apprenticeship assessment
- the sector subject area (SSA)
- the level of the apprenticeship standard

This means that for Ofqual recognised awarding organisations with apprenticeship assessment in their scope of recognition, as long as the SSA and the level of the apprenticeship standard remains the same, their

existing recognition for a standard will continue even if an assessment plan or a version of the standard changes. If an AO wishes to deliver an Ofqual regulated apprenticeship assessment for a standard outside the SSA or level it currently has scope of recognition for, it must apply to Ofqual for an expansion to its scope. More details can be found in the [apply to have your qualifications regulated \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-have-your-qualifications-regulated\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-to-have-your-qualifications-regulated) guidance.

A responsive implementation approach

The changes to apprenticeship assessment are being introduced to uphold the rigour, credibility and esteem of apprenticeships and are intended to support a system that is responsive to employer and apprentice needs, without compromising quality.

Feedback from assessment organisations and other sector stakeholders has played a key role in shaping the implementation strategy for revised apprenticeship assessment plans. In response to calls for a balanced and manageable rollout that supports quality and provider readiness, a phased implementation model will ensure a consistent and coordinated approach.

To support informed and timely adoption, Skills England will consider, where appropriate, a lead-in period between the publication of a revised assessment plan and its release for new starts. This will be informed by engagement with employers, providers, and assessment organisations, helping to determine a suitable implementation timeline. For example, this may involve allowing around 6 months from the publication of a revised assessment plan before it is released for apprentice starts. This approach is designed to reflect the complexity of each standard and the sector's readiness to deliver, ensuring flexibility while maintaining momentum.

Where a swift transition is deemed appropriate, revised assessment plans may be made available for starts with a shorter lead-in period. All lead-in periods will be determined by Skills England on a case-by-case basis, reflecting the readiness of the sector and the nature of the standard in question.

During this lead-in period, apprentices may continue to start on the existing version of the occupational standard and associated EPA assessment plan. This version will remain available for new starts until the revised version goes live, helping to ensure continuity and minimise disruption for employers and providers.

Skills England may publish some revised assessment plans in preview mode. For example where the funding band is awaiting approval from the Secretary of State. In these cases, the apprenticeship plan is available for

information only. A lead-in period will then commence when the apprenticeship is approved for delivery with a funding band. At the end of the lead-in period, starts can commence allowing providers and employers to start working with assessment organisations to deliver this assessment. Until then, the current end-point assessment will remain in place.

Lead-in timelines

Outline lead-in timelines for revised occupational standards and assessment plans have been developed in consultation with Skills England, Ofqual, and OfS. These timelines are designed to support a smooth and responsive transition for apprentices, employers, providers, and assessment organisations.

Example lead-in periods

Examples of implementation periods for:

- most standards
- standards with mandatory qualifications
- complex standards

Most standards

A lead-in period of around 6 months will typically apply, allowing assessment organisations, providers and employers sufficient time to prepare for delivery.

For example, if a revised assessment plan is published on 1 October, it will typically become live for starts around 1 April.

During this six-month lead-in period:

- the previous version of the standard will remain active and available for new starts
- around 1 April, the revised standard will become live, and the previous version will be closed, at this point all new starts must commence on the latest version of the standard and assessed in line with the reformed assessment model
- consideration should also be given to whether existing apprentices can be transferred from the previous version of the standard to the new one

Standards with mandatory qualifications

Where a mandatory qualification fully meets the assessment requirements of the occupational standard, a shorter lead-in period will typically apply. In such cases, a lead-in period of 3 months is typically expected following approval for delivery. Skills England will consider the appropriate lead-in period for each assessment plan revised.

This reduced timeframe reflects the fact that no additional assessment development is required, while still allowing sufficient time for employers and providers to prepare for delivery.

For example, if a revised assessment plan is published on 1 January, it may become live for starts between 1 January and 1 March. The start date will be clearly identified on the revised assessment plan as determined by Skills England.

Complex standards

As with all revised assessment plans, Skills England will consider on a case by case basis an appropriate lead-in period for standards which are more complex for example to allow a longer period to accommodate additional planning and coordination.

Changing to a new version of the standard

Apprentices may move from an existing occupational standard (and EPA style assessment plan) to a newer version of the standard and revised assessment plan where this has been published and is live for starts. This process is designed to be consistent, proportionate, and in the best interests of the apprentice.

The rules for transfer remain as outlined in the [funding rules](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules>). The key principles being as follows:

- transfers must be agreed upon by the apprentice, employer, and training provider, where applicable, the assessment organisation should be consulted, however the final decision to move the apprentice to a new version of the occupational standard (and revised assessment plan) rests with the employer, apprentice, and training provider in line with the existing funding rules
- the main provider and employer must update both the apprenticeship agreement and the training plan to reflect this agreement to transfer the apprentice

- where an apprentice changes version, the provider must make sure that the training and assessment they receive across the whole apprenticeship delivers occupational competence in all aspects of the new standard version and enables them to pass all elements of assessment
- once transferred, apprentices cannot revert to a previous version
- apprentices returning from a break in learning may resume the version they were on, subject to agreement from all parties
- employers may choose to re-negotiate the price with the main provider and assessment organisation for the new version

Instigating and approving version changes on the apprenticeship service

In line with the reforms to apprenticeship assessment and the existing system processes on the apprenticeship service, training providers or the employer must continue to complete the usual actions required when supporting a transfer to a new version of the occupational standard.

The apprenticeship service requires both employer ([sign in to your apprenticeship service account \(https://www.gov.uk/sign-in-apprenticeship-service-account\)](https://www.gov.uk/sign-in-apprenticeship-service-account)) and provider action ([apprentice service for training providers \(https://providers.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/\)](https://providers.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/)).

A transfer may be initiated by either the provider or the employer. Whichever party initiates the transfer, the other must review and approve changes recorded on the apprenticeship service.

The receiving party must approve the change in their apprenticeship service account. Once approved:

- the apprentice's apprenticeship service record updates overnight
- the learner's portal reflects updated knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) and assessment information
- where relevant, the associated assessment plan is updated

This process and approval requirement applies to all apprentice version transfers that take place.

If this process is not completed this may lead to missing apprentice notifications, outdated KSBs being displayed, and data mismatches between the apprenticeship service and ILR that may trigger data locks.

Further guidance can be found at the [apprenticeship service support \(https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb\)](https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb).

Revised assessment plan transfer guidance by apprenticeship type and duration

To support transitions to a new standard version and with a revised assessment plan, this guidance outlines expectations based on apprenticeship type and remaining duration.

Standards under 12 months

Transfers would not typically be expected due to the compressed timeframe.

Exceptions may be made if the transfer occurs early in the programme (for example, within the first 2 to 3 months of the apprentice's start).

Transfers should only proceed if the apprentice, employer and provider are prepared for delivery and in full agreement. Where applicable, the assessment organisation should be consulted. The decision to transfer must clearly reflect the apprentice's best interest and comply with the existing funding rules.

Employers must confirm their ability to verify behaviours under the revised plan.

Standards over 12 months

Transfers are generally expected, provided there is sufficient time remaining to complete all required assessment components.

Employers must confirm their ability to verify behaviours under the revised plan.

Standards over 12 months where the mandatory qualifications acts as the sole element of apprenticeship assessment

Transfers are expected when more than 6 months remain on the apprenticeship.

This approach helps avoid duplication of assessment and aligns with the revised model for standards that include a mandatory qualification.

Integrated degree apprenticeships

Transfers are typically expected when all parties agree that there is ample duration remaining, reflecting the complexity of delivery and assessment.

All parties must confirm their readiness to proceed under the revised plan.

Funding and cost implications

The reforms to apprenticeship assessment aim to reduce duplication, streamline assessment, and ensure proportionality. The funding rules for the delivery and assessment of apprenticeships remain those set out in the most recent published version of the rules.

For more information about the funding of apprenticeships and how DfE calculate funding for organisations we also recommended referring to the [apprenticeship technical funding guide](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/988667/Apprenticeships_technical_funding_guide_2020_to_2021_v2.3.pdf) (https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/988667/Apprenticeships_technical_funding_guide_2020_to_2021_v2.3.pdf).

Apprenticeship funding: roles, responsibilities and contractual arrangements

Employers and providers should refer to the latest Apprenticeship Funding Rules on which aspects of training are eligible for government funding. The rules also clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of employers, providers, and assessment organisations.

As is currently the case, funding arrangements for apprenticeship assessment remain subject to negotiation between providers and assessment organisations.

For new versions of occupational standards with revised assessment plans, providers must engage an assessment organisation and put contractual agreements in place at the start of the apprenticeship, as outlined in Annex B of the funding rules.

These contracts should clearly set out the costs agreed and respective responsibilities, ensuring transparency and accountability throughout the apprenticeship programme.

Funding apprenticeship assessment

The way apprenticeships are currently funded remain as set out in the [apprenticeship technical funding guide](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/988667/Apprenticeships_technical_funding_guide_2020_to_2021_v2.3.pdf)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-technical-funding-guide/apprenticeship-technical-funding-guide-from-august-2025#funding-bands>.

For the purposes of calculating earnings, DWP will continue to use the 'total price' of the apprenticeship (after adjustment for any prior learning). The total price of an apprenticeship is the cost of training (field TNP1 on the Individual Learner Record (ILR)) and the cost of assessment (field TNP2 on the ILR) added together, capped at the maximum of the funding band.

As is the case now, 20% of the total price of the apprenticeship will be held back for completion, with monthly instalments calculated from the remaining 80%. The 80% of the total price is released in equal instalments over the number of planned months for the apprenticeship programme and based on whether the apprentice is in learning on each census date (the last calendar day of every month). The planned number of months is calculated from the 'learning start date' and the 'learning planned end date' in the ILR.

Each monthly payment is therefore made up of a proportion of the cost of training (the TNP1 value) and a proportion of the cost of assessment (the TNP2 value). As such, providers are currently paid for both training and assessment activity from the start of the programme, as part of the monthly payments, provided there is a figure on the ILR in the TNP2 field. Where the TNP2 figure is added after the start of the programme, monthly payments are automatically reconciled to include any missing instalments of TNP2.

All funding will continue to be paid initially to the provider and, as now, the provider will be responsible for passing on payments to other parties.

To note as a result of the reforms to apprenticeship assessment, providers and assessment organisations will need to agree on the split of the TNP2 assessment cost (how much the provider will keep and how much funding will be passed on to the assessment organisation) and this split will need to be recorded in the contract for services between the two parties.

Annex A: roles and responsibilities

This section provides a high-level overview of the key roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders involved in delivering apprenticeships.

Please note that this summary is not exhaustive and is intended as a simple guide to support understanding of the revised apprenticeship assessment.

Employer

The employer will:

- select the provider and the assessment organisation (unless they delegate this to the provider)
- contribute to the training plan with the provider
- where appropriate, play a role in supporting assessment organisations in the development of assessments
- support the apprentice's learning needs
- allow time for off-the-job training during working hours
- participate in regular progress reviews
- confirm that apprentices have demonstrated the required behaviours for the standard
- ensure the apprentice is prepared for their assessments and provide appropriate support

Provider

The provider will:

- develop and manage the training plan, including prior learning and support needs
- be responsible for recording the apprenticeship grade for mandatory qualification apprenticeship standards, via [the apprenticeship assessment service](https://assessors.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/) (<https://assessors.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/>), which will initiate certification for standards where the mandatory qualification negates the requirement to have an apprenticeship assessment
- deliver and evidence off-the-job training
- advise the employer, upon request, on the apprentice's readiness for apprenticeship assessment
- provide feedback to the employer, upon request, on the apprentice's progress and development
- in line with the assessment plan and assessment specification, work with assessment organisations and the employer to prepare the apprentice for

assessment

- in line with the assessment plan, follow the assessment organisation's assessment specification as to which knowledge and skills will be assessed by the provider and which by the assessment organisation, this should take into account any exceptions where necessary, for instance where an external body must be involved for regulatory reasons
- where assessments are intended to be delivered and marked by the provider, assess knowledge and skills as outlined in the assessment specification designed by the assessment organisation
- ensure compliance with funding rules and quality standards

Assessment organisation

The assessment organisation will:

- maintain independence from the training delivery, with the exception of integrated standards where the assessment organisation for an integrated degree standard may be a higher education provider or a professional body
- where applicable, take account of employer requirements in the development of assessment design and materials
- ensure that all assessments are designed, delivered and marked in accordance with the requirements outlined in the assessment plan, the published apprenticeship assessment principles, applicable regulatory requirements, and any other relevant guidance
- maintain robust quality assurance processes in compliance with relevant regulatory requirements, including where assessment is delivered and assessed by the provider

Employers, providers and assessment organisations should note that for occupational standards where a mandatory qualification provides full or majority coverage of all the knowledge and skills, that there will no longer be a requirement for assessment organisations to develop deliver and mark additional assessment methods.

Annex B: example structure of a new apprenticeship assessment plan

These new, shorter assessment plans, ensure alignment with the published principles and a streamlined, effective approach to assessment design.

Where an occupational standard includes a mandatory qualification or has links to professional body membership, these will also be highlighted in the assessment plan.

The assessment plan will specify whether assessments can take place during the course of the apprenticeship or towards the end where essential, otherwise, assessment organisations will determine the assessment approach, guided by Skills England's general requirements, relevant regulatory frameworks and employer requirements

As a minimum, each apprenticeship assessment plan will contain an:

- introduction
- assessment outcomes
- assessment requirements
- performance descriptors

Introduction

Explains the assessment plan's purpose, status and relationship to other documents.

Assessment outcomes

Summarises the content of the occupational standard into assessment outcomes and explains which knowledge and skills statements map to each outcome. Where there is a mandatory qualification, these outcomes describe the content that is not assessed by the mandatory qualification only.

This section also sets out the mandatory knowledge and skills statements that must be assessed in every version of the assessment that is made available.

Knowledge and skills statements which offer opportunities to develop functional English and maths will be identified with an asterisk.

Assessment requirements

Outlines the mandatory assessment method that must be used in every version of the assessment that is made available.

Outlines any additional requirements regarding the setting, marking or timing of assessments.

Performance descriptors

Describes the characteristics of a 'pass' and any grades above a pass.

Annex C: Skills England's assessment plan models

Standard low-prescription plans

This model will be used for the majority of revised assessment plans, providing a minimal level of prescription.

It will allow assessment organisations to design their own assessment strategies and specifications which must align with the streamlined assessment plan and the minimal level of prescription required to meet DfE assessment principles alongside generic 'rules' (for example, Ofqual and Skills England general requirements).

Plans with more prescription

This model will be applicable to safety-critical or regulated occupations. Where medium or high-risk occupations are identified, additional prescription may be added (for example, for safety, regulatory compliance).

Assessment plans under this model will balance the employers' needs with the apprenticeship assessment principles.

Mandatory qualification only

Where a mandatory qualification sufficiently covers the apprenticeship outcomes, it will serve as the sole assessment method provided the qualification sufficiently covers the requisite knowledge and skills. Where this is not the case, further assessment may still be required to ensure comprehensive evaluation.

This model will be appropriate where the qualification is widely recognised and valued by employers.



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