

Apprenticeship off-the-job training

A summary with Q&A and examples

INTRODUCTION

- 1 This document provides the ESFA policy context and some best-practice examples around off-the-job training.
- 2 This guidance reflects current ESFA policy, as of 1 August 2019, and is for:
 - 2.1 Training providers: to ensure that they are offering off-the-job training in a compliant way, in accordance with the policy intent, their funding agreement and the [apprenticeship funding rules](#).
 - 2.2 Employers: who wish to understand the off-the-job training requirements and their role in the delivery of an apprenticeship programme; and
 - 2.3 Apprentices: who wish to understand the nature of the off-the-job training that they are entitled to, and should be receiving, as part of their apprenticeship.
- 3 Questions and answers have been incorporated into each section; these present the reader with the opportunity to see some of the common queries that have been raised with the ESFA since the introduction of the policy and our response.

OVERVIEW

- 4 An apprenticeship is a job with a formal programme of training.
- 5 To attract government funding a 20% minimum threshold has been set. This is the minimum amount of time that should be spent on occupational off-the-job training during an apprenticeship. This applies to apprenticeship standards at all levels.
- 6 All apprenticeship standards have been developed under the guidance that they must be sufficiently stretching to require at least one year of full time employment, with off-the-job training accounting for at least 20% of the apprentice's normal working hours over this period. By normal working hours we mean paid hours excluding overtime. This direction helps trailblazer groups, who design the new standards, to predict a typical duration for someone who requires the full content of the apprenticeship.

DEFINITION OF OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING

- 7 The definition of 'off-the-job training' is set out in the ESFA funding rules:-

“Off-the-job training is a statutory requirement for an English apprenticeship. It is training which is received by the apprentice, during the apprentice's normal working hours, for the purpose of achieving the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the approved apprenticeship referenced in the apprenticeship agreement. By normal working hours we mean paid hours excluding overtime.

“It is not on-the-job training which is training received by the apprentice for the sole purpose of enabling the apprentice to perform the work for which they have been employed. By this we mean training that does not specifically link to the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship.”

Frequently asked questions:

8 “Why must off-the-job training be conducted during the apprentice’s normal working hours?”

An apprenticeship is a work-based programme. The training is required to help the apprentice become fully occupationally competent in the workplace. Therefore, it is reasonable that the apprenticeship should be delivered during the apprentice’s normal working hours. It is not appropriate, and would be unfair, to expect an apprentice to undertake the apprenticeship in their own time, in addition to their job role.

If training must, by exception, take place outside of the apprentice’s normal working hours, e.g. in an evening or at a weekend for an apprentice that normally works Monday to Friday between 9-5, we would expect this to be recognised, for example through time off in lieu or by an additional payment to the apprentice.

Illustrative Example:

Sarah is undertaking an apprenticeship in professional accounting. Her training provider informs her of a lecture taking place on Wednesday evening; this will cover some of the knowledge that is fundamental to the apprenticeship standard that she is working towards. The lecture is taking place outside of Sarah’s core hours of Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm.

Sarah’s training provider contacts her employer and they agree that if Sarah attends the two hour lecture on Wednesday evening, she can leave two hours early on Friday to make up the time.

9 “Why is overtime excluded from the definition of off-the-job training?”

Overtime, by its very nature, is unplanned as it is often related to the pressure requirements of the business e.g. peak periods. It would therefore be difficult to plan a training programme on this basis and the expectation must be that the apprentice can complete their apprenticeship, including all the required off-the-job training, within their normal working hours. In short duration apprenticeships, including overtime would also increase the amount of off-the-job training to be delivered.

10 “What does the following mean. ‘It is not on-the-job training for the sole purpose of enabling the apprentice to perform the work for which they have been employed?’”

It is reasonable to expect that some individuals might require training, in addition to their apprenticeship, to enable them to perform particular aspects of their job role, especially if they are new to the job role. However, training for knowledge, skills and behaviours that are not covered in the apprenticeship standard must not be included as off-the-job training.

For example: an apprentice baker, following the advanced baker standard, might need to understand the equipment, machinery and process limitations within their organisation and also how to maintain and repair the machinery which they use. The maintenance and repair of the machinery is not listed within the advanced baker standard, it is a requirement of the employer (i.e. it is training that is exclusively (solely) needed to perform the job). Therefore maintenance and repair is not off-the-job training and should not be included in the off-the-job training calculation.

11 ***“Why must an apprenticeship teach new knowledge, skills and behaviours?”***

Off-the-job training is about upskilling an individual to reach full occupational competency, not accrediting their existing skills. If it is not new learning (i.e. the apprentice already has the knowledge, skills and behaviours at the required level), then it is not off-the-job training. Instead, it is prior learning and should be excluded from the off-the-job training calculation.

WHAT CAN BE INCLUDED IN OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING?

12 The apprenticeship funding rules state that off-the-job training can include the following:

“The teaching of theory (for example: lectures, role playing, simulation exercises, online learning or manufacturer training),

“Practical training: shadowing, mentoring, industry visits and participation in competitions,

“Learning support and time spent writing assessments / assignments.”

Frequently asked questions:

13 ***“Why is learning support included as off-the-job training?”***

The ESFA is committed to ensuring that the apprenticeship programme is open and available to all individuals. This means making sure that the right level of support is available, to remove barriers to education and training, so that learners can make the most of their potential.

To be successful, learners may need a range of approaches and support, which should be targeted appropriately. As well as material assistance, such as physical adjustments or access to accessibility software, some apprentices may benefit from additional time, revision classes or personal support from their training provider, to help them to stay on track and to achieve specific knowledge, skills and behaviours. It is appropriate that these additional inputs are recognised.

Additional funding may be available when learning needs are identified and further guidance can be found in the apprenticeship funding rules.

14 ***“Why is the time spent on assignments included in the off-the-job training definition?”***

New knowledge, skills and behaviours can be learnt and developed through individual or group assignments. For example, an apprentice may learn new theoretical material in a class-room environment. They may then be asked to produce an analytical / reflective assignment to consider how the theoretical knowledge applies to their workplace. They are therefore continuing to learn through this process.

15 “If it is unclear whether an activity is off-the-job training is there an easy way to check?”

Yes, there are four key tests:

- Is the person signed up to the apprenticeship programme?
- Is the activity directly relevant to the apprenticeship?
- Is the activity teaching new knowledge, skills and behaviours?
- Is the learning taking place in the apprentice’s normal working hours?

If the answer to all four questions is ‘yes’ then the activity can be regarded as off-the-job training. This checklist has been represented in a useful [infographic](#).

16 “Can research, networking events and seminars be included as off-the-job training? What about shadowing others and time spent in the supply chain?”

Yes, these can be included but only if the activity is imparting new learning to the individual, which will help them to achieve the required knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in their apprenticeship.

Illustrative Example:

Lisa is an engineering apprentice. She has weekly training on how to use a particular piece of equipment. This forms part of the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for her apprenticeship and so counts as off-the-job training.

Lisa works with Dave who is a fully qualified engineer. As this particular piece of equipment is new, Dave is also receiving the same training. The fact that Dave is receiving the same training as Lisa is irrelevant; the training is part of Lisa’s apprenticeship.

17 “Can reflective learning and self-evaluation type activities be included?”

Off-the-job training must be about gaining new skills. If the reflective learning and self-evaluation is imparting new knowledge, skills and behaviours, this would be relevant. However, if it is being used as a temperature or progress check then no, this would not be off-the-job training.

WHAT MUST BE EXCLUDED FROM OFF-THE-JOB TRAINING?

18 The apprenticeship funding rules state that off-the-job training does not include:

“Training to acquire knowledge, skills and behaviours that are not required in the standard;

“Progress reviews or on-programme assessment required for an apprenticeship standard,

“Training which takes place outside the apprentice’s normal working hours, or

“English and maths (up to level 2) which is funded separately.”

Frequently asked questions:

19 “Why is “training to acquire knowledge, skills and behaviours that are not required in the standard.” excluded from the definition?”

Off-the-job training must teach new knowledge, skills and behaviours that will contribute to the successful achievement of an apprenticeship. Whilst the individual might receive other training, if it is not directly relevant to the apprenticeship then it should not be included in the off-the-job calculation and apprenticeship funding must not be used.

The knowledge, skills and behaviours listed in the apprenticeship are those that the trailblazer groups, who designed the standards, have deemed that an individual requires, in order to be fully occupationally competent at the level of the apprenticeship.

20 “Why are progress reviews and on-programme assessments excluded from the definition?”

A progress review is the regular tripartite discussion that should take place between the employer, training provider and apprentice, to review the progress of the apprentice in relation to the planned programme of learning set out in the commitment statement.

An on-programme assessment is a periodic or modular assessment that might be required for a qualification that is being delivered as part of the programme.

Neither of these activities impart new learning to the apprentice and this is why both are excluded.

21 “Can English and maths (up to level 2) be included in the off-the-job training calculation if the apprenticeship specifically requires it?”

Apprenticeships are designed to have sufficient stretch to require at least 20% off-the-job occupational training. They are designed on the basis that an apprentice already has the required levels of English and maths and therefore training for English and maths must be on top of the minimum 20% off-the-job training requirement.

English and maths is funded separately to off-the-job training. Also, it may not be required by all learners. It would be unfair if two learners received the same time away from their jobs but one of those learners used up a high percentage of this time studying English and maths, to the detriment of any occupational upskilling that their colleague was receiving.

Illustrative Example:

Zoe and Imran both have the same employer. They are working towards their level 3 dental laboratory assistant apprenticeship. Their training provider has agreed the same programme of off-the-job training for both apprentices with their employer, to teach them the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they will need to successfully achieve their apprenticeship.

Imran already has a GCSE in English and maths, but Zoe needs to pass level 2 qualifications in English and maths before she can take her end-point assessment.

Both apprentices spend equal amounts of time doing their off-the-job training, getting an equal opportunity to learn the core elements of their apprenticeship. Zoe studies for level 2 English and maths on top of this.

22 “Does travel time for block release count as part of the 20% (e.g. if the apprentice travels the day before and is therefore not in work)?”

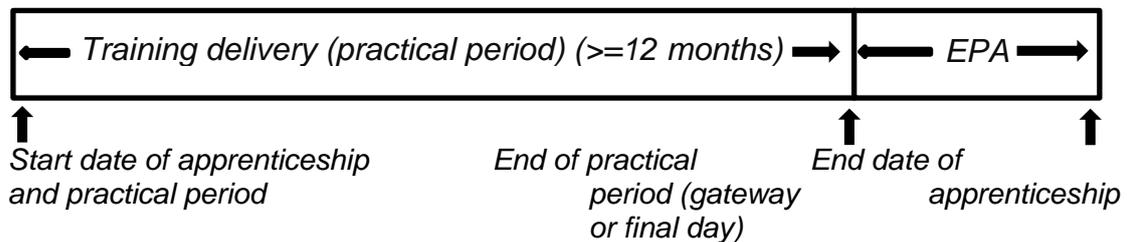
No, 20% off-the-job training is about learning new skills. This can't be accomplished during periods of travel to and from a training provider.

THE ALIGNMENT OF THE JOB ROLE WITH THE APPRENTICESHIP

- 23 This is important because if the apprentice is studying an apprenticeship at too low a level they will likely become bored with the content. Also, from a funding perspective, they may be ineligible if they do not require significant upskilling. Equally, if they are studying an apprenticeship at too high a level they may disengage from the programme as the content may not be relevant to their job role and / or may be too stretching.
- 24 An apprentice will spend up to 80% of their normal working hours in their productive job role and some of this time must be about consolidating the new knowledge, skills and behaviours, gained from off-the-job activities, so that they are fully occupationally competent at the end of the programme. If there is a mismatch between the apprenticeship and the job role this will be harder to achieve.

TIMEFRAME FOR THE CALCULATION

Apprenticeship standards



- 25 In the apprenticeship standard model shown above (figure b), the full apprenticeship is split into two distinct parts: the practical period and the end-point assessment.
- 26 The practical period is the training delivery period, where new knowledge, skills and behaviours are delivered by a training provider.
- 27 The end-point assessment period is where the training delivered within the practical period is independently assessed by an end-point assessment organisation.
- 28 The meeting point between these two distinct parts - the end of the practical period and the beginning of the end-point assessment period - is generally known as the gateway. (Note: legally the last day of the practical period is called the 'final day').
- 29 Therefore, the relevant timeframe within a standard, for the calculation of off-the-job training, is the practical period only, which begins at the start of the apprenticeship and finishes at the planned final day / gateway. The end-point assessment period should not be included in the off-the-job calculation as new learning is not delivered in this part of the apprenticeship.

Frequently asked questions:

30 *“Is there a difference between the duration that should be used for the off-the-job training calculation and the minimum duration of an apprenticeship?”*

For standards, the minimum duration of a full apprenticeship is 372 days. The apprenticeship is split into the practical period of learning; this should be a minimum of 12 months and is the minimum period that the off-the-job calculation should be based on. The remainder of the programme is the end-point assessment period; the minimum end-point assessment period is 7 days but can be considerably longer.

THE CALCULATION

31 The 20% off-the-job requirement is based on the apprentice’s normal working hours, over the planned duration of the training period of the apprenticeship (for standards this is called the practical period). By normal working hours we mean paid hours excluding overtime. Off-the-job training is measured over the course of the full apprenticeship (as opposed to an academic year) and excludes end-point assessment for standards.

32 Each apprenticeship has a recommended ‘typical’ duration. This is an estimate of how long the apprenticeship should take to deliver if the apprentice requires all of the training content.

33 The minimum duration of each apprenticeship is based on the apprentice working at least 30 hours a week, including any off-the-job training they undertake. If the apprentice works fewer than 30 hours a week, the duration should be extended using the formula in the apprenticeship funding rules.

34 If, as part of the initial assessment and eligibility check, there is prior learning to consider, this should be discounted and the remaining learning must still meet the minimum 20% off-the-job training and the minimum duration rules.

35 In Annex A there are some helpful example calculations which show how the off-the-job training hours can be calculated for full-time and part-time apprentices, who need both the full apprenticeship content and a reduced programme of learning (after prior learning has been recognised).

36 The ESFA will monitor where actual and planned end dates are significantly different for a number of apprentices at any one training provider. This may indicate an issue with the initial assessment process and the setting of planned end dates. Planned end dates should take into account individual circumstances.

Frequently asked questions:

37 *“If an individual completes their modules earlier than the planned duration i.e. a level 4 24 month planned duration but the apprentice completes all modules in 18 months, is this acceptable to the ESFA?”*

Yes, if the apprentice has, for whatever reason, been able to complete in a quicker timescale, then so long as: a) the full content of the commitment statement has been delivered and b) the minimum training duration threshold of 12 months has passed then this is acceptable. The implication is that either the apprentice is a ‘fast learner’ or more than 20% has been delivered to the individual over a shorter timeframe.

YOUR OFF THE JOB TEMPLATE

Below is a screenshot of an OTJ Template. We have prepared this to mirror the delivery of your apprenticeship programme and it has formula embedded within it.

- **Column 1 (Green Heading)** – When you attend a training/coaching session, please insert “Y” into the completed box and this will populate the hours column with the session time.
- **Column 2 (Yellow Heading)** – When you complete a reflective journal (you have 15 to complete) place a “Y” in the completed box and this will populate 3hrs to represent the time to write the journal. It will also populate 18 hours in **Column 3 (Blue Heading)** which is the time you would spend at work researching and gathering evidence. This is the time that we estimate have estimated and you are welcome to overtype the hours with a higher number if you have spent longer.
- **Column 4 (Brown Heading)** – This is a free type box for other activities such as mentor meetings, conferences, briefings, research, shadowing others, self study time

APPRENTICESHIP OFF THE JOB LEARNING

As an apprentice you are required to invest 20% of your employed time in learning. This will comprise a range of activities which we have grouped into four categories as follows: (1) All of your on-programme activities, such as training days at GEL, your webinars and workbooks; (2) the tasks you complete as part of your skills assessments; (3) the activities you complete in the workplace when applying the tasks; and (4) other activities you conduct in the workplace that make you a more informed, better manager.

Name			
Apprenticeship	L4 Associate PM	Today	16/09/2021
Cohort	GEL (1)	Attendance at GEL	32
Start Date	19/04/21	Completion of Tasks	6
End Date	31/07/22	Workplace activities (tasks)	36
Break		Workplace activities (free type)	4
Restart		Total Hours	77
New End Date		OTJ Due	143
Weeks on programme	67	Difference	-66
Contract Hours	37.5	Remaining	369
OTJ Hours (total)	446		

APPRENTICESHIP OFF THE JOB LEARNING

Tasks Done	Task Done
PMQ	PFQ 1
ILM (1)	Portfolio
ILM (2)	sentation
J1 1	J9
J2 1	J10
J3	J11
J4	J12
J5	J13
J6	J14
J7	J15
J8	

Date	Training Activities	Possible Hours	Completed Y = Yes	Hours
20/05/21	Disc	0.5	y	0.5
	Induction	3	y	3
10/06/21	Project life cycle	4	y	4
24/06/21	Coaching session 1	4	y	4
08/07/21	Governance	4	y	4
22/07/21	Coaching session 2	4	y	4
19/08/21	Business Case	4	Y	4
02/09/21	Coaching session 3	4	Y	4
16/09/21	Planning	4	Y	4

Tasks	Complete	Hours
PMQ		
ILM (1)		
ILM (2)		
J1	y	3.0
J2	y	3.0
J3		
J4		
J5		

Workplace Activities (tasks)	Hours
Create/gather evidence	18
Create/gather evidence	18

Date	Workplace Activities (free type)	Hours
30/06/2021	Meeting with my mentor (project lifecycle)	1.5
30/07/2021	Meeting with my mentor (governance)	1
27/08/21	Meeting with my mentor (business case)	1.25