



Department  
for Education

# **Apprenticeship off- the-job training**

**Policy background and examples**

**June 2017**

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## Summary

This publication provides policy context and some best-practice examples around off-the-job training.

## Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- Employers that wish to understand the off-the-job training requirements involved in an apprenticeship.
- Providers that wish to ensure that they are offering off-the-job training in accordance with the funding rules and policy intent.

## Policy background

An apprenticeship is a job with a formal programme of training. As set out in “[English apprenticeships: our 2020 vision](#)”, published in 2015, the requirement for at least 20% off-the-job training is one of our core, and well established, principles that underpins a quality apprenticeship. The 20% threshold is the minimum amount of time that should be spent doing off-the-job training during an apprenticeship and this applies to both apprenticeship frameworks and apprenticeship standards. All apprenticeship standards have been developed under the guidance that they are sufficiently stretching to require at least a year of employment, with off-the-job training accounting for at least 20% of the apprentice’s employed time. This requirement applies to apprenticeships at all levels.

The importance of this training to a quality apprenticeship was emphasised in the Richard Review in 2012. Ofsted have also pointed to off-the-job training as a vital feature of a quality apprenticeship. Training is distinct from assessment and off-the-job training reinforces practical, work-based learning with technical and theoretical learning. The focus of off-the-job training is on teaching new skills rather than assessing existing skills. A key element of Ofsted’s inspection regime is a judgement about how well apprentices make progress from their starting points: what can they do because of their training and experience on the apprenticeship that they could not do before? HEFCE will also quality assess apprenticeships at level 6 and above on the off-the-job training element, with input from the QAA.

Some employers may prefer that their provider offers all of the required ‘off-the-job’ training as part of the agreed cost for the apprenticeship training. Other employers may also undertake off-the-job training with an apprentice themselves. It is the responsibility of both the main provider and the employer to ensure that an apprentice spends a minimum of 20% of their employed time doing off-the-job training, as set out within the funding rules.

## Definition of ‘off-the-job training’

The definition of ‘off-the-job training’ is set out in the [ESFA funding rules](#). This definition is reproduced below. This document is not intended to further define off-the-job training, rather it is intended to demonstrate the flexible ways that this definition can be applied.

Off-the-job training is defined as learning which is undertaken outside of the normal day-to-day working environment and leads towards the achievement of an apprenticeship. This can include training that is delivered at the apprentice’s normal place of work but must not be delivered as part of their normal working duties.

The off-the-job training must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship framework or standard and could 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 attendance at competitions,
- Learning support and time spent writing assessments/assignments.

Off-the-job training does not include:

- English and maths (up to level 2) which is funded separately,
- progress reviews or on-programme assessment needed for an apprenticeship framework or standard,
- training which takes place outside the apprentice’s paid working hours.

## Delivering off-the-job training

### When the off-the-job training should take place

Apprenticeships must last a minimum of 12 months and involve at least 20% off-the-job training. This 20% off-the-job training requirement is measured over the course of an apprenticeship (as opposed to over an academic year). The off-the-job training is an essential part of an apprenticeship and therefore must take place during employed time. If training must, by exception, take place in an evening, or outside of contracted hours, we would expect this to be recognised (for example, through time off in lieu).

We recognise that some apprentices may wish to undertake study or training outside of their working hours, however training undertaken outside paid employment (and therefore outside the apprenticeship) cannot be counted towards meeting the 20% requirement.

It is up to the employer and provider to decide at what point during the apprenticeship the training is best delivered (for example, a proportion of every day, one day a week throughout, one week out of every five, a proportion at the beginning, middle or end). This will depend on what is best for the organisation and the apprentice and on the technical or theoretical requirements of the apprenticeship standard.

However the training is delivered, it is important to remember that the apprentice must receive off-the-job training for a minimum of 20% of the time that they are paid to work.

#### **Varied models of delivery:**

- A training provider in the accountancy sector ensures that their apprentices attend learning centres on a weekly basis – on a “day release” model.
- A training provider in the engineering sector ensures that their apprentices undertake 6 months at a dedicated training centre, followed by a day-release model.

### **Illustrative example:**

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

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

## **Where the off-the-job training should take place**

As set out in the funding rules, off-the-job training can take place at an employer's workplace or off-site (e.g. in a classroom or from home via distance learning, as part of a blended approach).

It is the activity, rather than the location that determines whether the training meets the funding rules definition.

### **Varied models of delivery:**

- One retail provider has a programme of training that is not suited to the classroom – including till-work and visual merchandising. Therefore they deliver off-the-job training at the employer's premises (away from the apprentice's day-to-day duties), using the employer's environment to develop the relevant practical skills.
- One training provider in the automotive sector provides off-the-job training at the employer's workplace as the specialist equipment that they need is not available anywhere else.
- Many construction and the built environment providers deliver training offsite as the environment is safer. They provide appropriate and relevant tools, resources and support to develop the apprentice's skills before they are applied in the work place. This model allows more time, more intense direction and support and the opportunity for the apprentice to learn outside of the commercial constraints of the employer.

## **Inductions**

An induction does not necessarily count as off-the-job training, for example a tour of the office or picking up a building pass are not activities that would count as off-the-job training. However, inductions could include an educational element that provides some basics of the skills, knowledge and behaviours that are core to the apprenticeship. This

would count as off-the-job training. As with all off-the-job training, we would expect any “induction” activities that were counted towards off-the-job training to adhere to the definition set out in the funding rules.

## **The role of progress reviews and assessment in off-the-job training**

Off-the-job training must teach new knowledge, skills and/or behaviours that will contribute to the successful achievement of an apprenticeship.

By progress reviews, we mean reviewing and testing what an apprentice has already learnt, rather than teaching new knowledge, skills and behaviours. A progress review does not therefore count as off-the-job training. It is important that training providers monitor the progress of their apprentices and although progress reviews do not count towards the 20% off-the-job minimum requirement, they are fundable as an eligible cost in the funding rules.

## **Determining whether an activity should be classed as off-the-job training**

Off-the-job training is outside of normal working duties. However, it is possible to be undergoing training activities outside of normal working duties while physically at your normal workstation. For example, being taught how to operate a new machine or undertaking e-learning at your desk.

To decide whether a training activity constitutes “off-the-job” training, it may be helpful to consider it in comparison to activities undertaken by other staff that are fully occupationally competent.

### **Illustrative Example:**

Lisa is an engineering apprentice. She has weekly training with interactive feedback while she learns to use a core piece of equipment. Learning how to use this equipment forms part of the knowledge, skills and behaviours she needs to achieve the apprenticeship. This activity would count as off-the-job training.

Lisa works with David who is a fully qualified engineer. As part of their health and safety requirements, they must each have an observation once a quarter, to ensure they follow the correct procedure when using the equipment that Lisa has been trained on. Conforming to this requirement would not count as off-the-job training for Lisa as it is a compulsory requirement for all employees and is not part of her apprenticeship.

## Blended learning

Distance learning can be used effectively as part of the off-the-job training requirement, when it is used as part of a blended learning package. This can take place wherever it suits the apprentice and the employer. The funding rules do not permit all off-the-job training to be delivered via distance learning, it must be as part of a blended approach. The following illustrative examples demonstrate what a blended approach may consist of.

### **Illustrative Example:**

Ayo is employed as an apprentice software development technician. The majority of his job is desk-based, at his computer. He has a suite of on-demand learning including: high-quality videos, animations, check learning questions, quizzes, case studies and external resources that are available to him. This is also supported by face-to-face learning.

Ayo's employer likes that they can track his progress as he learns at his own pace and that he has the flexibility to use quieter periods of work to access his distance learning.

A record of Ayo's distance learning is automatically recorded, so the training provider can monitor his progress and evidence his training. As Ayo works 40 hours per week, his training provider can ensure that at least 8 hours per week are spent on off-the-job training.

### **Illustrative Example:**

Sarah is an apprentice solicitor, working full-time, studying a four year practice focused law degree, which is delivered by online distance learning. She attends a two day tailored induction at her university every year and attends university for two days per term to consolidate learning and assess progress.

Sarah participates in a dedicated weekly virtual forum with her peers, where she can also access virtual seminars, academic resources and case studies, share experiences with peers and project work.

Sarah has been assigned a work based trainer who supports Sarah with her studies and observes her working practices which inform her academic learning and assessment processes.

### **Illustrative Example:**

Dave works full-time for a large employer, currently studying a three year Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship.

This is a bespoke apprenticeship, where the employer and the university work very closely to design and deliver a contextualised programme relevant to its business operation. Much of the degree apprenticeship is currently delivered at the employer's premises, as core components of delivery.

Dave also attends a series of intensive block release weeks throughout the year at the university that supplements his on-the-job training to support his apprenticeship studies and develop new learning. Dave builds up a portfolio of evidence through his assignments, reflective journal log, work place observations and projects.

## **English and maths**

Apprenticeships are designed to have sufficient stretch to require 20% off-the-job 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 20% off-the-job training requirement.

### **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 apprenticeships.

Imran already has a GCSE in maths and English, whereas Zoe needs to pass a level 2 qualification 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 apprenticeships. Zoe studies for level 2 English and maths on top of this.

Although her formal English and maths training takes place separately, their provider uses the opportunity whenever they can through off-the-job training to consolidate Zoe's functional skills training.

## Measuring and recording off-the-job training

As well as being a core principle of a quality apprenticeship, the requirement for all apprenticeships to include a minimum of 20% off-the-job training is included in the ESFA funding rules. Compliance with this requirement will therefore be considered as part of normal audit arrangements. More information about the ESFA audit and financial assurance processes can be found [here](#).

In order to comply with the funding rules, each apprentice should have a commitment statement that, amongst other information, outlines the programme of training that the apprentice should receive. This statement should set out how the provider intends to fulfil the 20% off-the-job training requirement. As set out in the funding rules, the funding recipient (usually the main provider) is the custodian of the relevant evidence files.

The ESFA do not prescribe the type of evidence that should be retained as they prefer training providers and employers to use naturally occurring evidence where this is available.

All training providers that deliver levels 2-5 apprenticeships are subject to Ofsted inspection<sup>1</sup> where they will judge the quality of training. All providers that deliver apprenticeships at levels 6 and above are subject to the HEFCE quality assessment regime. HEFCE will work with Ofsted to reach a judgement for apprenticeship providers at level 4 and/or 5 where the apprenticeship standard or framework contains a prescribed HE qualification. These regimes are primarily focused on making judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. As part of this process they may also request evidence of how the upfront planned and agreed off-the-job training is being delivered as well as observing the delivery of off-the-job to make judgements on the quality of it and the value to each apprentice's learning experience.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-and-skills-inspection-handbook>

## Further illustrative examples of off-the-job training

### **Illustrative Example:**

A pharmaceutical company is looking to expand the number of existing staff that they offer apprenticeships to. They already have a successful learning curriculum that operates on a 70:20:10 system, where 70% of time is spent in work assignments, 20% of time is spent on developmental relationships and 10% is “classroom based” coursework and training.

Examining the ESFA funding rules, the company identifies that their classroom based activities would all count as “off-the-job training”, as would many of the activities that sit under the “developmental relationships” heading, such as shadowing and mentoring.

The company is confident that their existing model more than meets the minimum requirements and are happy to expand their apprenticeship programme to existing staff.

### **Illustrative Example:**

Joe is undertaking an apprenticeship to become a creative venue technician. He attends college for one day per week. This time covers some of his off-the-job training and meets his English and maths requirements.

In addition to this time, Joe’s training provider agrees with his employer that he is given 5 hours per week to complete course work, assignments and online learning activities. These activities are flexible and takes place where weekly Joe and his line manager agree this will be least disruptive to Joe’s day-to-day role. Joe also has one-to-one sessions once a quarter with his mentor.

This time ensures that the all of the necessary off-the-job training is delivered, in addition to English and maths requirements, and accounting for college holidays.



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Reference: DFE-00152-2017



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