

## HIGHER AND DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP FRAMEWORK

1. This framework outlines the requirements for the design and delivery of higher and degree apprenticeships, which are developed by the University or its partner institutions in conjunction with employers and allow apprentices to combine employment with study and training.
2. The framework should be read in conjunction with other relevant University regulations, policies and procedures, including:
  - [Admissions Policy](#)
  - [Framework and Regulations](#) for the relevant type of award
  - [Additional Time due to Extenuating Circumstances Policy](#)
  - [Recognition of Prior Learning Policy](#)
  - [Course approval, monitoring and review procedures](#) within the [Quality Manual](#)
  - Statement on Employer Engagement Practice (Apprenticeships)
3. Apprenticeships must include an academic programme leading to a University award at Levels 4 to 7. The University validates two levels of apprenticeship programmes:
  - Higher apprenticeships (Levels 4 and 5)
  - Degree apprenticeships (Level 6 and above)
4. All apprenticeship programmes must be aligned with an approved national Apprenticeship Standard and associated Assessment Plan, which set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours each apprentice needs to have to be fully competent in the role. Apprentices on an apprenticeship programme will be expected to successfully complete an End-Point Assessment (EPA) to test full competence in the role, in accordance with the requirements of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard.
5. The design and delivery of all apprenticeship programmes should be informed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) (June 2022). Sector arrangements for quality assessment of apprenticeship programmes should also be taken into consideration, with Ofsted responsible for inspecting the quality of higher and degree apprenticeship training provision at all levels of study from 1 April 2021. Where Ofsted inspections raise wider concerns about quality, this may inform the regulatory activity of the Office for Students (OfS).
6. All apprenticeship programmes must operate in accordance with the latest Government funding and performance management rules for apprenticeships, as published by the Education

and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apprenticeship-funding-rules> (hereafter referred to as “the funding rules”). For apprenticeship programmes delivered by the University, the University is responsible for compliance with the funding rules. For apprenticeship programmes delivered by partner institutions that incorporate a validated University of Suffolk award, the partner is in receipt of the funding and is responsible to the ESFA for compliance with the funding rules. Elements of this framework that relate to funding rule compliance are therefore intended to provide partner institutions with a broad overview of University expectations, while noting that the partner may have specific arrangements in place to ensure their own compliance.

7. Staff involved in the delivery and support of apprenticeship programmes within the University will be kept informed of the requirements of the funding rules (and any associated changes) by the Apprenticeship Management Group and Apprenticeship Board. Staff must act in accordance with the funding rules, including retaining appropriate documentation demonstrating compliance as part of an associated evidence pack.

### **Apprenticeship Agreement**

8. There must be a written agreement, in accordance with current ESFA funding rules, between the Employer and the Apprentice. The University must also ensure that there is a signed Apprenticeship Agreement between the apprentice and their employer in place prior to the start of, and throughout, their apprenticeship. The Apprenticeship Agreement must be updated to account for breaks in learning and signed by the employer and the apprentice when returning from a break in learning.

### **Training Plan (formerly the Commitment Statement)**

9. For each individual apprentice, there must be a Training Plan, signed by the apprentice, the employer and the University prior to the apprentice start date, which sets out how all three parties will support the achievement of the apprenticeship. The content of the Training Plan must align with the requirements of the funding rules, including setting out the planned content and schedule for the training (including module list and EPA); start and end dates for the apprenticeship (including EPA); start and end dates and duration of the practical period (excluding EPA); the number of planned off-the-job training hours for the full apprenticeship; the roles and responsibilities of each party; and written confirmation from the employer that the apprentice will be allowed to undertake the required amount of off-the-job training (and English and Maths training if required) within their normal working hours. The Training Plan must be completed before the Apprenticeship Agreement is signed. The Training Plan must be kept up to date with any material changes, with any revisions resulting from a change in circumstance, for example breaks in learning, and kept in the evidence pack.

### **Contract/Service Level Agreement (Letter of Engagement)**

10. There must be a written agreement which forms the contract for services between the two institutions in relation to the negotiated fees, using the advised [apprenticeship funding bands](#) and set against the pricing matrix of the University including the cost of EPA. The agreement must also include any adjustments to costs accounting for any RPL and also the full module delivery and assessment schedule of the apprenticeship programme. The agreement must be in place prior to commencement of the apprenticeship programme.

### **Student recruitment and admissions**

11. Entry requirements for the apprenticeship programme must be aligned with the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and verified against ACE (Apprenticeship Certificates England) as acceptable evidence; see Transferable Skills Guidance Document at <https://acecerts.co.uk/web/knowledge-base> or guidance provided by the DFE. All apprentices must have successfully achieved Level 2 functional skills or equivalent in line with the requirements stated by ACE, or GCSE grade A\* to C (or 9 to 4) in English and Mathematics before being eligible to start the Apprenticeship.

12. In accordance with the funding rules, apprentices on apprenticeship programmes are required to be in full-time or part-time employment (normally for at least 30 or more hours per week) and must have an employment contract which is long enough for them to successfully complete the apprenticeship programme (including the EPA). Information on paid hours must be provided at the application stage. The apprentice's job role must provide them with the opportunity to embed and consolidate new knowledge, skills and behaviours gained throughout the apprenticeship. The government have now started to pilot other delivery models with the option of more flexible routes. For example, a new type of 'Flexi-Job' Apprenticeship will allow employers taking on an apprentice to only give a three month commitment, instead of the usual twelve month minimum commitment. This will allow these apprentices to complete discrete blocks of employment with training, with different employers and businesses throughout the course of their apprenticeship. The University will determine how such alternative models of delivery will be managed internally prior to implementation.

13. The University is responsible for checking the eligibility for funding for individuals prior to admission to the apprenticeship programme, in accordance with the eligibility criteria outlined in the funding rules. All employers must have a unique learner number (ULN) and be registered on the Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS).

14. A Skills Analysis of the apprentice's existing knowledge, skills and behaviours against those required to achieve occupational competence must be undertaken as part of the process for determining eligibility for admission to an apprenticeship programme and included in the evidence pack. This must include consideration of any knowledge, skills or behaviours gained via work experience and/or prior education or training. In accordance with the funding rules, the University is required to demonstrate that prior learning has been accounted for and that the content, duration and price of the apprenticeship is adjusted accordingly where the apprentice has prior learning necessary to achieve occupational competence.

15. Any relevant prior learning identified through the Skills Analysis Assessment process must be formally approved in accordance with the University's *Recognition of Prior Learning Policy*, using the information contained within the Skills Analysis form and associated evidence. Skills Analysis Assessments must be authorised by the relevant Course Leader prior to the apprentice induction and subsequent start date.

16. As part of the initial assessment (which is an eligible cost), the University must undertake a screening exercise for learning support. Where this assessment identifies potential learning difficulties and / or disabilities, and before a claim for learning support funding (to cover the cost of reasonable adjustments) can be made, the University may need to undertake a further detailed assessment to identify whether an apprentice has a learning difficulty or disability that directly impacts their ability to complete the apprenticeship on which they are enrolled. This further detailed assessment is not eligible for funding.

### **Approval of apprenticeship programmes**

17. The validation and re-approval of apprenticeship programmes is undertaken in accordance with the University's standard procedures for course validation and re-approval as outlined in the Quality Manual. Specific requirements for the (re)approval of apprenticeship programmes are outlined in the procedures and associated guidance material. Where Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Body (PSRB) approval is required for delivery of the apprenticeship, this should be secured before delivery commences, usually as part of the validation process.

18. Apprenticeship programmes may either be (i) developed as a new programme or (ii) developed using an existing programme, adapted to meet the requirements of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard (in liaison with employer representatives). In all cases, the programme is required to undergo the full validation process.

19. The validation and re-approval processes will include consideration of the full apprenticeship programme including preparation for, and arrangements for conduct of, EPA regardless of whether this is integrated or sits outside the University's award (see paragraph 38 for further information). The process will also verify that suitable arrangements are in place to comply with ESFA funding rules in relation to the delivery of the programme.

20. Course Handbooks and Definitive Course Records for all apprenticeship provision will be reviewed and updated annually to ensure currency, with copies lodged with the Apprenticeship Hub and the Quality team (for the course files).

### **Structure and timing of programme delivery (including off-the-job training)**

21. The structure of the academic year for apprenticeship programmes should align with the requirements outlined in the Framework and Regulations for the relevant award. The typical and maximum duration of the programme will be outlined in the relevant Apprenticeship Standard. Multiple start dates within the academic year may be required to accommodate the business needs of levy employers.

22. In accordance with funding rules, for full-time apprentices (those that work 30 hours per week or more) to be eligible for government funding, at least 20% of their normal working hours, capped at 30 hours per week (for funding purposes only), over the planned duration of the apprenticeship practical period, must be spent on off-the-job training. This means that the minimum requirement for full-time apprentices is an average of six hours of off-the-job training per week (i.e., 20% of 30 hours) over the planned duration. When calculating the required amount of off-the-job training, the apprentice's statutory leave entitlement must be deducted. Employees who work a five day week receive at least 28 days paid leave (20 days annual leave plus eight bank holidays); this is the statutory leave entitlement referred to in this paragraph and is the equivalent of 5.6 weeks of holiday. This provides, as a minimum, 278 hours of off-the-job training (46.4 weeks x 6 hours).

23. Part-time apprentices (those that work less than 30 hours per week) should have an extended typical and maximum programme duration. To be eligible for government funding, at least 20% of their normal working hours over this extended duration must be spent on off-the-job training. When calculating the required amount of off-the-job training, the apprentice's statutory leave entitlement must be deducted (pro-rata for part time workers).

24. Off-the-job training must deliver new skills that are directly relevant to the apprenticeship and can include the teaching of theory, practical training, shadowing, mentoring, industry visits; or learning support and time spent completing assessment tasks.

25. Off-the-job training does not include training for achievement of English and Mathematics Functional Skills, progress reviews or training undertaken outside the apprentice's normal working hours. Where an apprentice needs more than the minimum number of hours of off-the-job training to develop full occupational competence, then this must be provided. The number of planned off-the-job training hours for the full apprenticeship must be supported by the Skills Analysis and recorded on the Apprenticeship Agreement, the Training Plan and (for starts on or after 1 August 2019) the Individualised Learner Record (ILR).

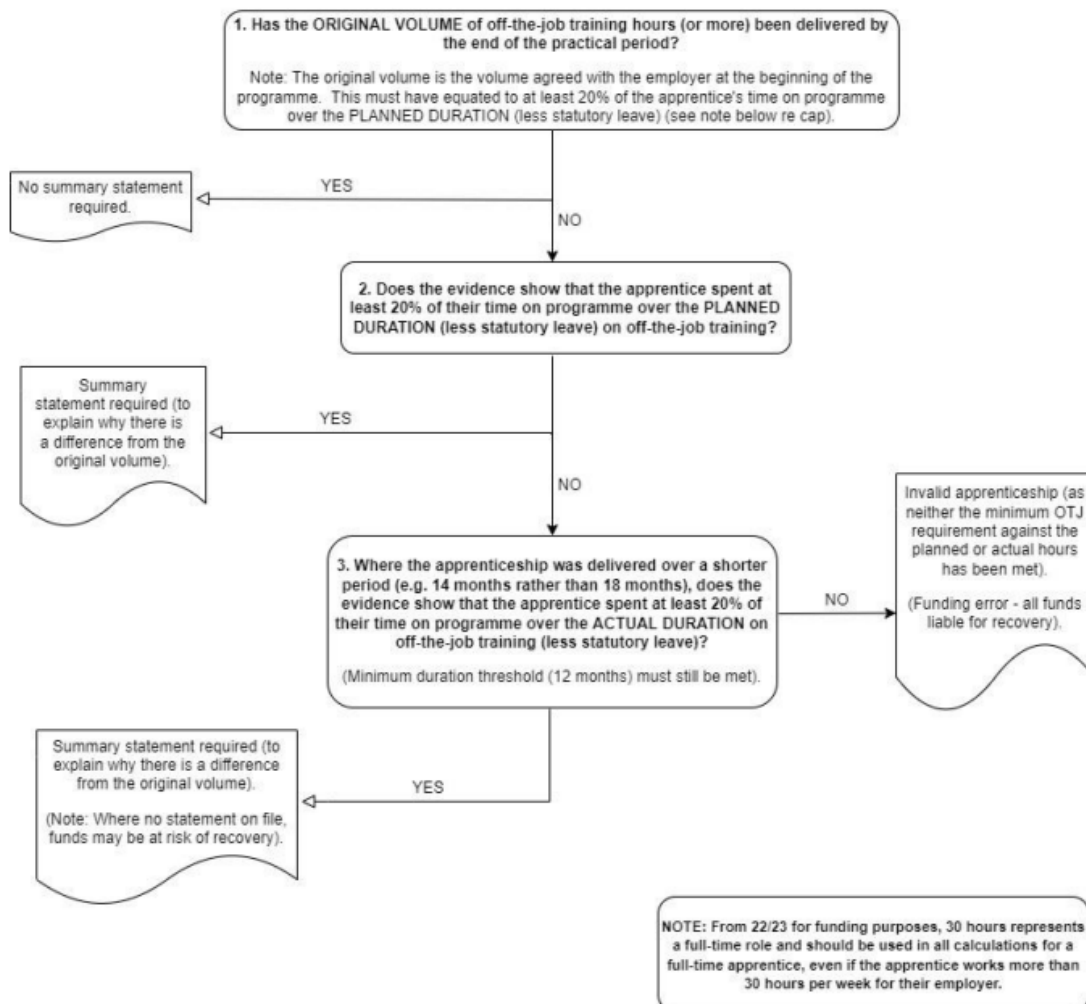
26. Arrangements for delivering off-the-job training and monitoring whether the minimum requirement has been met will be considered as part of course validation and re-approval processes. Apprentices must record off-the-job learning activity throughout their apprenticeship programme, facilitated by APTM, which provides an opportunity for apprentices to reflect on the previous month's off-the-job calculations. Compliance with off-the-job training requirements will be monitored through the tripartite review process and overseen by the relevant School Apprenticeship Panel. Actual hours of off-the-job training must be documented on the ILR, with proof of delivery contained within the evidence pack.

27. If the apprentice has spent less than the minimum policy requirement (over their actual duration) on off-the-job training, then the programme is not a valid apprenticeship, and all funding is at risk of recovery. The flow chart below shows what to check if the actual duration and off-the-job training delivered is less than the original planned duration and volume of off-the-job training. However, at the end of the practical period, if the training has been delivered over a shorter duration (e.g. 14 months compared to 18 months) AND the actual volume of off-the-job training hours delivered is less than the original volume of planned hours agreed with the employer, the University must produce a statement to summarise the following:

- a. The original volume of planned hours
- b. The actual hours delivered (supported by proof of delivery).
- c. The reason for delivering less.
- d. Confirmation the apprenticeship met the minimum duration.
- e. Confirmation the off-the-job training hours actually delivered met the minimum policy requirement over the apprentice's actual (shorter) time on the apprenticeship.

The University must arrange for the employer and apprentice to sign this statement to confirm they are satisfied by the quantity of training delivered, even though this was less than the volume original agreed.

### Flow chart: Where actual off-the-job training is less than the original plan



28. Modes of delivery for apprenticeship programmes will vary according to employer need, and may include day release, block release or a blended learning approach involving a combination of face-to-face and virtual learning. In accordance with the funding rules, off-the-job training cannot be delivered solely via virtual learning unless there are exceptional mitigating circumstances, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The structure and timing of delivery and duration of study will be approved at the point of validation and outlined in the Course Handbook.

### Apprentice progress monitoring

29. Progress review meetings must be held at least once every ten weeks to meet the 12-weekly window in the funding rules. Reviews may be more frequent as required if the apprentice

has an additional learning requirement and/or is at risk, for whatever reason, of not meeting their planned end date.

30. The meetings should involve a representative from the University (usually the Apprentice Practice Educator/Skills Coach, a personal tutor or a designated member of academic staff), the employer and the individual apprentice.

31. The meetings should be used to review all the components of an apprenticeship programme including safeguarding, PREVENT, British values, Citizenship and Sustainability, and should also include the provision of impartial careers advice and guidance on next steps.

32. The meetings should set academic targets based on feedback provided by the curriculum team; monitor the apprentice's wider knowledge, skills and behaviours; and provide information, advice and guidance on a regular basis throughout the apprenticeship programme, in preparation for their End Point Assessment.

33. All reviews must include a review of progress against the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and Training Plan, including ensuring that the apprentice is on target to meet the minimum off-the-job training requirement. Any change in circumstance (for example to the apprentice's paid hours, line manager or personal contact details) should also be discussed, recorded on the review form, and shared with the ILR Manager and Student Records team. A formal record of these meetings must be maintained within the evidence pack.

34. APTM provides an effective mechanism for setting targets, reviewing progress and tracking off-the-job training. Further advice and guidance for using APTM is available within the APTM staff and student resource guides, and associated presentations from the training sessions.

35. Attendance monitoring and absence reporting must be undertaken in accordance with the University's *Student Attendance and Engagement Monitoring Policy*. The apprentice's employer must be notified in the event of any concerns regarding attendance and/or engagement highlighted through established monitoring procedures, and this must also be considered as part of both informal and formal progress reviews. Apprentices should be encouraged to consider a break in learning where there are extenuating circumstances meaning that they are not fit or able to study for an extended period and agreed with the employer (see paragraph 43).



### **Support in the workplace**

36. Course teams must ensure active employer engagement in the design and delivery of apprenticeship programmes, for example through active participation in induction processes, informal and formal progress reviews, and supporting apprentices in the workplace. There must be clear points of contact and channels of communication between the University and the employer to facilitate effective programme delivery and partnership working through employer and apprentice forums.

37. Support is normally provided by the employer through the appointment of a mentor (or equivalent), who is usually a more senior or experienced member of staff who can provide advice and guidance to the apprentice and support them in developing the required knowledge, skills and behaviours outlined in the Apprenticeship Standard. The course validation and re-approval process must ensure that there are appropriate arrangements for supporting the apprentice in the workplace, including any arrangements for appointing, briefing, training and supporting workplace mentors.

### **End-point assessment (EPA)**

38. EPA provides a holistic and independent assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that have been acquired through the apprenticeship programme. The approach to EPA will be outlined in the Assessment Plan for the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and confirmed at the point of course validation. EPA may either be integrated into the programme of study, or it may represent an additional stage beyond meeting the requirements for the relevant University award. In both cases the course team is responsible for supporting apprentices' preparations for EPA, and this will be built into the curriculum. For Level 4 apprenticeships, the EPA is regulated by Ofqual to ensure that the assessments are at the right level of demand.

39. Where EPA is not integrated into the programme, apprentices who fail to successfully complete the EPA may still receive the relevant University award where the requirements for that award have been met but will not receive the apprenticeship completion certificate from the ESFA.

40. Where EPA is integrated, there should be a clear separation between apprenticeship programme delivery and the conduct of EPA known as gateway. The University's *Conflict of Interest Policy for Apprenticeship End Point Assessment* must be observed in this regard.

41. Non-integrated EPA requires the involvement of an authorised independent End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) listed on the ESFA Register of End-Point Assessment Organisations (RoEPAO). The University will provide information to employers about possible

EPAOs but the selection of the EPAO is the responsibility of the employer. The EPAO must be selected by the employer at the start of the apprenticeship programme, in liaison with the relevant course team, and notified to the Apprenticeships team so that EPAO details can be included in the agreement between the University and the employer. The University will liaise with the EPAO to confirm contractual arrangements and schedule the EPA, and will fund the cost of the EPA from the apprenticeship fee paid to the University. One EPA for each apprentice will normally be funded, with funding for any re-sits based on the agreement between the University and the employer as set out in the Written Agreement.

42. An apprentice can only take the EPA once they have satisfied the Gateway requirements set out in the Assessment Plan (including attainment of English and Mathematics at Level 2) and both the employer and the University are content that they have attained sufficient skills, knowledge and behaviours. The employer and apprentice will also need to confirm as part of the Gateway declaration that the planned minimum 20% off-the-job training hours detailed in the Training Plan have been undertaken and fulfilled.

### **Break in Learning**

43. The apprentice must be involved in active learning (off-the-job training or English and maths training) throughout the apprenticeship, from the learning start date to the learning actual end date (the practical period), with active learning taking place in every calendar month of the practical period. A break in learning must be used where there is no active learning for four weeks or more.

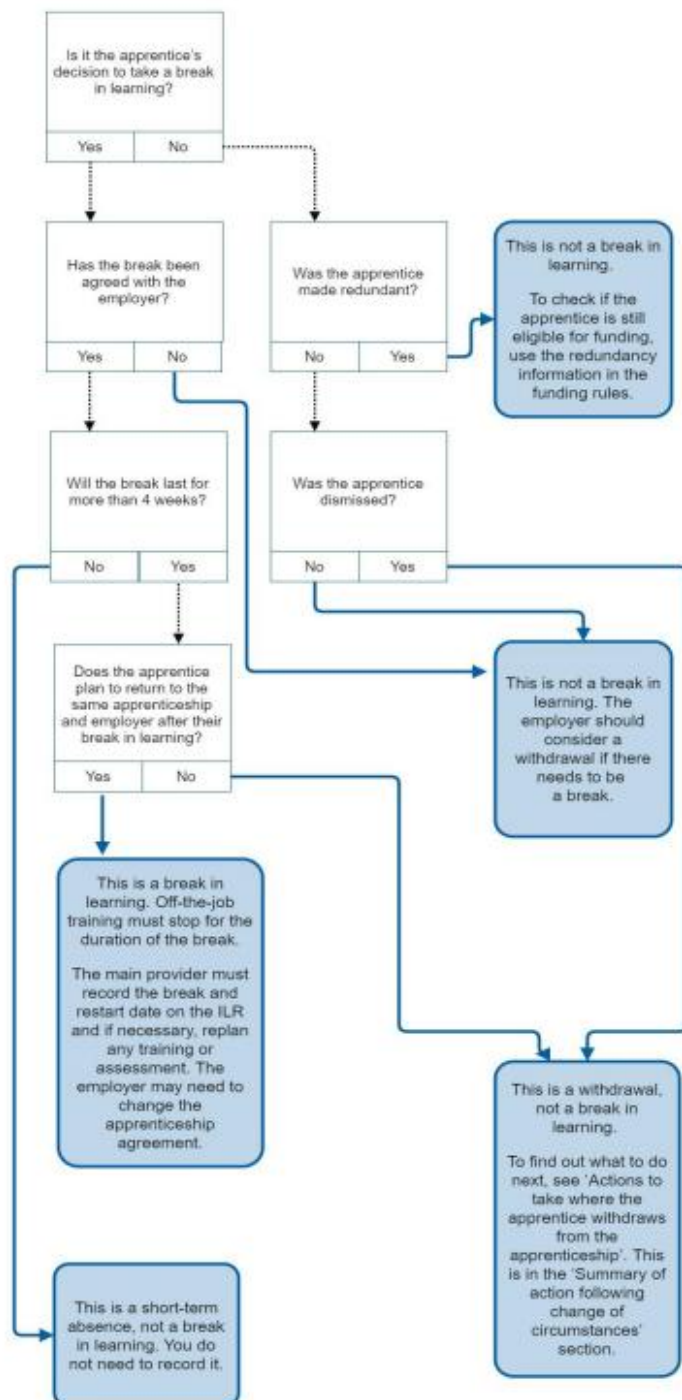
44. Apprentices may submit claims for a break in learning where they take a period of leave from their work and/or their off-the-job training lasting more than four weeks as a result of extenuating circumstances (such as medical treatment, maternity or paternity leave, parental leave or leave for other personal reasons). The request for a break in learning will be considered in accordance with the approval process outlined in the University's *Additional Time due to Extenuating Circumstances Policy*. Any break in learning must be agreed with their employer via the submission of a supporting statement and must be reported to the ESFA (via the ILR and Funding Manager) so that the original planned end date can be adjusted accordingly on the ILR (see flowchart summarising the ESFA rules on breaks in learning below).

45. In accordance with the funding rules, annual leave or short-term absence of up to four weeks is not considered by the ESFA to be a break in learning and does not require the apprentice to take a break from their studies at the University. Where the apprentice takes a break in learning

and then returns to the same apprenticeship, they will return to the same funding rules they were following prior to their break unless specified otherwise in the latest set of funding rules.

46. For front loaded and block release models that have been agreed with the employer and documented in the training plan, the University must use a break in learning where there is no plan for any active learning to take place within a three calendar month period,

### Flow chart: Find out what to do if your apprentice wants to take a break in learning



## **Withdrawals and changes to employment**

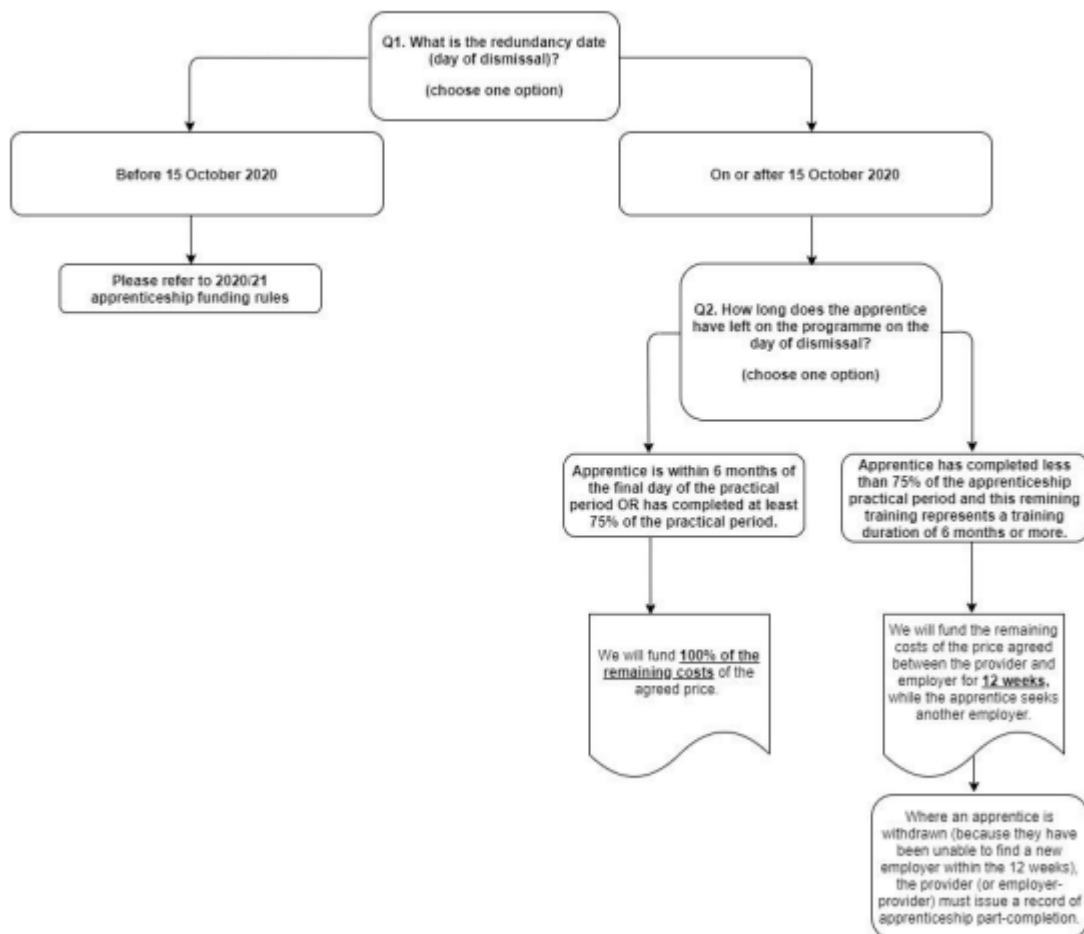
47. An apprentice must be employed continuously for the duration of the apprenticeship. If their employment is terminated, the individual cannot continue with their off-the-job training (with the exception of redundancy).

48. When employment or an apprenticeship agreement has ended (resignation, dismissal or any other action by the apprentice or the employer that results in the apprenticeship agreement ending, with the exception of redundancy) and new employment has commenced within 30 days, a withdrawal does not need to be recorded. If new employment has not commenced within 30 days, the University must record the apprentice as on a break in learning. Where the apprentice does not re-start with a new employer after 12 weeks, the University must withdraw the apprentice to ensure funds are not paid when the apprentice is not employed.

49. Apprentices who have their apprenticeship agreement terminated by reason of redundancy who, on the day of dismissal, are within six months of the final day of their practical period, or if they have completed at least 75% of the practical period specified in the apprenticeship agreement, may continue their apprenticeship training without being employed under an apprenticeship agreement.

50. Apprentices who have their apprenticeship agreement terminated by reason of redundancy who, on the day of dismissal, have completed less than 75% of the practical period specified in the apprenticeship agreement and the remaining training represents a training duration of six months or more, may continue their apprenticeship training without being employed under an apprenticeship agreement where the University can continue to deliver the apprenticeship's training. The ESFA will fund the remaining costs of the price agreed between the University and the employer for 12 weeks, while the apprentice seeks another employer.

51. If the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, then the new employer assumes all outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point. The University must negotiate a new price, if required, with the new employer and input this on the ILR. Where a new employer is not found within 12 weeks, the University must record the apprentice as withdrawn and the University must record the withdrawal reason as redundancy. The University will issue the apprentice with a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) detailing their achievements to date in accordance with the Framework and Regulations for the award.

**Flow chart: What to check in the case of redundancy**

52. Where a change of circumstance means that training and/or assessment is no longer being delivered, no further funds from the ESFA will be made available. If an apprentice leaves without completing their apprenticeship, the last date of learning will be the last date the University has evidence that the apprentice was engaged in learning that formed part of their apprenticeship programme. This can be evidenced by conducting a formal exit interview with the apprentice and their employer, with a record of the interview maintained in the evidence pack.

53. Where an apprentice is enrolled on an apprenticeship programme where additional responsibilities are placed upon them regarding their professional suitability, as outlined in the codes of practice of the relevant PSRB, failure to meet these requirements may lead to the University's *Fitness to Practise Procedure* being invoked. The apprentice's employer will be involved in the decision-making process as outlined in the [Fitness to Practise Procedure](#). Serious, proven allegations may result in the withdrawal of the apprentice from the apprenticeship programme because they are unfit to practise. Evidence of the reason(s) for withdrawal, as

articulated in the findings of the Fitness to Practise Committee or Appeal Panel, must be maintained in the evidence pack.

### **Safeguarding and Prevent arrangements**

54. The University has a legal duty to create a safe environment for apprentices, protecting and safeguarding their welfare and promoting respect and tolerance through British Values. The University's *Safeguarding Policy* outlines the approach to ensuring the welfare of all those who study, work or visit the University and the procedures for dealing with any safeguarding concerns (including in relation to anyone who may be at risk of being radicalised by any extremist group or ideology). Safeguarding and PREVENT are key themes for discussion at progress review meetings, providing an opportunity to monitor and raise awareness. Mandatory professional development is a requirement for all staff engaged with apprentices.

### **Ongoing monitoring and review of apprenticeship programmes**

55. Oversight of the delivery of all University of Suffolk apprenticeship programmes, including compliance with the funding rules, will be undertaken at school level through the school at risk meetings, and at institutional level through the University's Apprenticeships Management Group (a sub-committee of the Portfolio Oversight Committee).

56. Apprenticeship programmes are subject to the University's standard quality monitoring processes as outlined in the Quality Manual. This includes arrangements for gathering student feedback, for example through module questionnaires, student representation on student voice forums, and completion of the National Student Survey (NSS). The ESFA Learner Satisfaction Survey and Employer Satisfaction Survey provide supplementary sources of information on the quality of apprenticeship programmes from an apprentice and an employer's perspective, and outcomes should feed into quality monitoring processes. Employer representation on student voice forums and/or the establishment of employer consortium groups is also encouraged as a means of securing employer input and gathering feedback.

57. To meet Ofsted requirements, an annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) must be compiled for all apprenticeship provision, drawing on the evaluation methodology outlined in the current Ofsted inspection framework. A template for the SAR and QIP will be provided to relevant teams by the Apprenticeship Hub, and this must be completed and submitted by the specified deadline to inform the institutional self-assessment process. Progress with the actions outlined in the QIP should be subject to regular review through the relevant student voice forum and School Apprenticeship Panel.

**Points of contact regarding apprenticeship provision**

58. Overall responsibility for leadership and management of higher and degree apprenticeship provision lies with the Director of Apprenticeships and Deans of School, who will work with the Apprenticeship Management Group.