

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 students 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
 - [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 5 to 7. The University validates two levels of apprenticeship programmes:
 - Higher apprenticeships (Level 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. Students 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](#) (July 2019). Sector arrangements for quality assessment of apprenticeship programmes should also be taken into consideration, with Ofsted responsible for inspecting the quality of higher apprenticeship training provision at Levels 4 and 5, and the Office for Students (OfS) responsible for regulating higher and degree apprenticeship training provision at all levels (in liaison with Ofsted for higher apprenticeship provision).

6. All apprenticeship programmes must operate in accordance with the Government funding and performance management rules for apprenticeships, as published by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) (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. All 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 team and ILR and Funding Manager. Staff must act in accordance with the funding rules, including retaining appropriate documentation demonstrating compliance as part of an associated evidence pack.

Apprenticeship Agreement and Commitment Statement

8. There must be a written agreement, in accordance with current ESFA funding rules, between the University and the employer which forms the contract for services between the two institutions in relation to the negotiated fees, set against the pricing matrix of the University including the cost of EPA. The agreement must also include the full module delivery and assessment schedule of the apprenticeship programme. The agreement must be in place prior to commencement of the apprenticeship programme.

9. For each individual apprentice, there must be a Commitment Statement, 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 Commitment Statement must align with the requirements of the funding rules, including setting out the planned content and schedule for the training (including EPA), start and end dates, the number of planned off-the-job training hours for the full apprenticeship, and the roles and responsibilities of each party. The University must also ensure that there is an Apprenticeship Agreement between the apprentice and their employer in place at the start of, and throughout, their apprenticeship. The Commitment Statement must be completed before the Apprenticeship Agreement is signed.

10. Signed copies of the Apprenticeship Agreement and the Commitment Statement must be in place at the start of the apprenticeship and for its entire duration, with any revisions resulting from a change in circumstance kept in the evidence pack.

Student recruitment and admissions

11. Entry requirements for the apprenticeship programme must be aligned with the relevant Apprenticeship Standard. All apprentices must have successfully achieved Level 2 functional skills or GCSE grade A* to C (or 9 to 4) in English and Mathematics before being eligible to proceed to the Gateway to EPA. Where this is not set as an entry requirement for the apprenticeship programme, the University will make provision for enabling apprentices to achieve Level 2 functional skills. It is mandatory in these cases that apprentices undertake an initial diagnostic assessment as part the induction process, with a copy of their results stored in the evidence pack prior to their first date in learning. A functional skills support plan must be in place prior to any functional skills examinations being arranged. Successful achievement of functional skills through an awarding organisation recognised by Ofqual must be evidenced prior to the Gateway.

12. In accordance with the funding rules, students on apprenticeship programmes are required to be in full-time or part-time employment (normally for at least 30 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 employer must provide the University with evidence that they will allow the apprentice to complete the apprenticeship (including English and Maths training if required) within their working hours and contribute to the 20% off the job training requirement.

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

Approval of apprenticeship programmes

14. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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 25 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.

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

17. 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.

18. In accordance with funding rules, all apprentices must spend at least 20% of their paid hours in off-the-job training over the planned duration of the apprenticeship programme. Off-the-job training must be 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. Off-the-job training does not include English and Mathematics training, progress reviews or training undertaken outside the apprentice's normal working hours. The number of planned off-the-job training hours for the full apprenticeship must be recorded on the Apprenticeship Agreement, the Commitment Statement and (for starts on or after 1 August 2019) the Individualised Learner Record (ILR). Arrangements for delivering this training and monitoring whether the 20% requirement has been met will be considered as part of course validation and re-approval processes. Apprentices must record 20% off the job learning activity throughout their apprenticeship programme, and this will be monitored through the tripartite review process.

19. 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 distance learning. In accordance with the funding rules, off-the-job training cannot be delivered solely via distance learning. 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

20. Tripartite progress review meetings must be held each semester, or more frequently 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. The meetings should involve a representative from the University (usually the Apprenticeships Skills Coach, a personal tutor or a designated member of academic staff), the employer and the individual apprentice. The meetings should be used to review and set academic targets; monitor the apprentice's wider knowledge, skills and behaviours; and provide information, advice and guidance on a regular basis throughout the apprenticeship programme. All reviews must include a review of progress against the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and Commitment Statement, including ensuring that the apprentice is on target to meet the 20% 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 and Funding Manager and Student Records team. A formal record of these meetings must be maintained within the evidence pack.

21. E-portfolios provide an effective mechanism for setting targets, reviewing progress and tracking off-the-job training. The e-portfolio is also often a requirement for the EPA. Further advice and guidance on e-portfolio systems and their use in supporting apprenticeship provision is available from the digital learning specialists in Learning Services.

22. Attendance monitoring and absence reporting must be undertaken in accordance with the University's Student Attendance and Attendance Monitoring Policy. The apprentice's employer must be notified in the event of any concerns regarding attendance 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 (known as intercalation) where there are extenuating circumstances meaning that they are not fit or able to study for an extended period (see paragraph 29).

Support in the workplace

23. 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.

24. 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 is able to 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)

25. EPA provides a holistic and independent assessment of the knowledge, skills and behaviours that have been acquired through the apprenticeship programme. 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. The approach to EPA will be

outlined in the Assessment Plan for the relevant Apprenticeship Standard and confirmed at the point of course validation. 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.

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

27. 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.

28. 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.

Intercalation (break in learning) or withdrawal

29. Apprentices may submit claims for a break in learning (referred to within the University as intercalation) 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 break in learning must be initiated by the apprentice; it cannot be initiated by the University or the employer unless there are exceptional circumstances sanctioned by the

ESFA that temporarily prevent the University and/or employer from delivering training. The request for a break in learning will be considered in accordance with the intercalation approval process outlined in the University's Extenuating Circumstances Policy. Any breaks 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 Appendix A for a flowchart summarising the ESFA rules on breaks in learning). 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 intercalate their studies at the University.

30. Where an apprentice is made redundant by their employer, in accordance with paragraph 271 of the funding rules (August 2019 to July 2020) or any subsequent revisions, the University must:

- make reasonable efforts to find the apprentice a new employer;
- record the change in employment status in the ILR (this must match the date the apprentice became redundant, and a copy of the apprentice's redundancy notice must be maintained in the evidence pack); and
- record apprentices more than six months from the final day of their apprenticeship as having left their apprenticeship if a new employer is not found within twelve weeks of them becoming redundant.

31. If an apprentice is made redundant within six months of the final day of their practical period specified in the Apprenticeship Agreement, they may continue on the programme without being employed under a written Apprenticeship Agreement. In these circumstances, in accordance with paragraph 272 of the funding rules (August 2019 to July 2020) or any subsequent revisions:

- the University can continue to deliver the apprenticeship's training as long as all the remaining elements and EPA can be successfully delivered (with the ESFA continuing to fund the remaining costs of the price negotiated between the University and employer up to the funding band maximum);
- if the apprentice finds a new employer where they can complete their apprenticeship, then the new employer will assume all outstanding liabilities and benefits from that point (the University will negotiate a new price, if required, with the new employer and input this on the ILR);

- if the apprentice takes a job with an employer which is not related to their apprenticeship, the ESFA will continue to fund the remaining costs of the price negotiated between the University and employer up to the funding band maximum).

32. 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.

33. 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

34. 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 tripartite review meetings, providing an opportunity to monitor and raise awareness. Mandatory professional development workshops are provided by the designated Safeguarding Officers within the University for all staff engaged with apprentices.

Ongoing monitoring and review of apprenticeship programmes

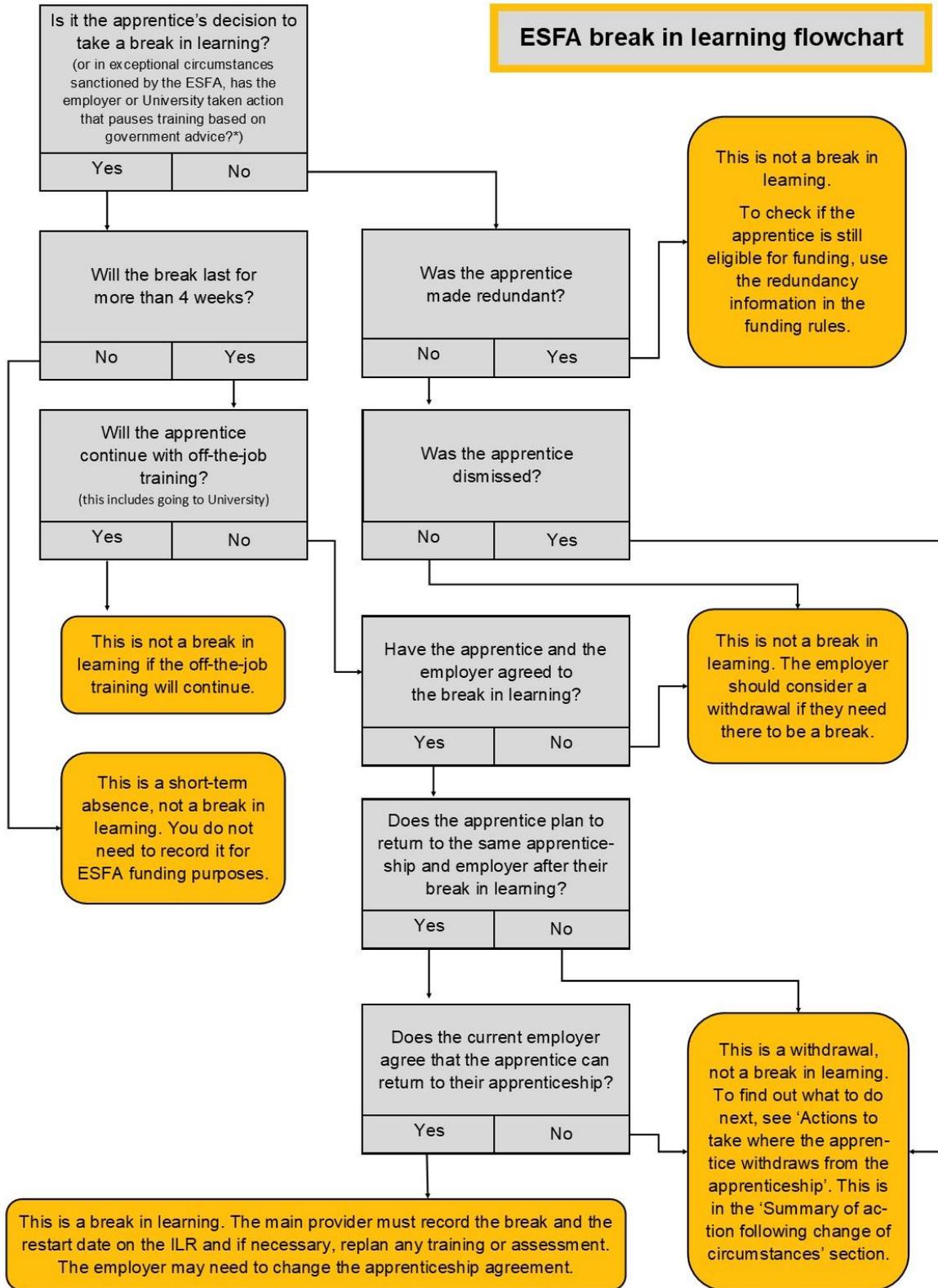
35. Apprenticeship programmes are subject to the University's standard Risk-Based Monitoring and Enhancement (RiME) processes as outlined in the Quality Manual. This

includes arrangements for gathering student feedback, for example through module questionnaires, student representation on course committees, and completion of the Internal Student Survey (ISS) and the National Student Survey (NSS).

36. 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 course committees and/or the establishment of employer consortium groups is also encouraged as a means of securing employer input and gathering feedback.

Points of contact regarding apprenticeship provision

37. Overall responsibility for leadership and management of higher and degree apprenticeship provision lies with the Director of Business Engagement and Entrepreneurship and the relevant Dean of School.



* For example as a result of a serious national incident or event that temporarily affects the ability of the University and/or employer to continue to support training, e.g. if the apprentice is put on unpaid leave or furlough by their employer or is temporarily redeployed to a different role in response to the incident or event.