



Eduwork.Net

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Providing apprenticeships during the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic and the resulting UK government restrictions have created a plethora of new challenges for all involved in employing, training and assessing apprentices. Indeed, as well as following government guidelines, employers, vocational education and training (VET) providers, and apprentices, have needed to understand and apply these guidelines to multiple contexts. Ensuring a safe environment is of course the ultimate outcome and each individual employer and VET organisation will need to create, implement and update their own Covid-19 Risk Assessment to ensure the highest level of safety possible. A key factor for all concerned is that as far as reasonably possible students should be enabled to complete their course of study to the required standard.

Such unprecedented times requires everyone involved in the provision of work-based learning to collaborate and come up with practical solutions and the best alternative arrangements for how work-based learning can continue, safely. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution, therefore, it is necessary for the creation of a variety of models across different VET courses and employment settings. An established and effective relationship along with a well-organised work-based learning programme will result in partner organisations coming together to explore and implement a flexible approach that maintains the qualification and professional standards everyone expects, and of course, provides the Apprentice with a meaningful experience and the best possible outcomes. The Quality Code's Advice and Guidance on work-based learning outlines that: *Education organisations will use a range of mechanisms to obtain information for monitoring and evaluation, which will include engaging students, employers and service users individually and collectively.*

Further, goes on to say *Governing bodies need to be satisfied that academic standards are being achieved no matter what adjustments need to be made to the learning and assessment strategies in light of Covid-19. In some cases, demonstration of the ability to meet with the relevant professional standard or competencies may only be possible in situ; so, it is suggested that adjustments to the assessment method are made, if appropriate.*

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These responsibilities include those relating to work-based learning provision and for any specific arrangement such as study abroad placements. Erasmus+, for example, advises that 'In many cases it may be possible to find alternative solutions to delivering your (work-based learning) project as originally planned. In cases where the host organisation abroad has made it possible to continue (your) mobility placement through virtual learning or other virtual activities, it is important that (you) also have the approval of (your) UK sending organisation to do so.

The government has provided guidance for apprenticeship training providers, employers end-point assessment organisations, and apprentices, which includes:

- Safer working guidance
- FE operational guidance
- Covid-19 guidance and support for businesses
- Apprenticeship funding rules
- Public health guidance to support exams

More information for employers can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-apprenticeship-programme-response/providing-apprenticeships-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>

The government has provided essential guidance for apprentices which includes:

- The Furlough Scheme
- Redundance Support Service
- Changes to functional skills assessments
- Working as an essential worker during the Covid-19 outbreak
- Working from home during the Covid-19 outbreak
- Taking time off sick because of Covid-19

More information for apprentices can be found here:

<https://help.apprenticeships.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/sections/360003798540-Apprentice>

For more information on Eduwork.Net see www.eduwork.net

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