

AELP Webinar: Frameworks to Standards – what you need to know

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Webinar Chair: Mike Cox, AELP

Guest speakers:

David Sampson, James Corbett, BIS/DfE Apprenticeships Directorate and
Rob White, Sales Director, Babington Group

Assessment

Q: The Standard and Assessment Plan are approved. What happens next? We are aware Awarding Organisations have submitted material for approval for the assessment process but no further information is available. This is for Automotive Retail Service Maintenance Technician. We all feel a little in the dark.

A: The standard is allocated a funding cap at the same time as its Assessment Plan is approved (although indicative caps will be allocated at the standard approval stage for standards submitted from now on). The standard is then referred to as “ready for delivery.” The Register of Apprenticeship Assessment Organisations will then open for organisations to apply for approval to offer assessment services against that particular standard. Organisations that have been approved are detailed on the Register. Training providers can still enrol a learner and start on-programme delivery. Providers can access support through the Training Foundation Future Apprenticeship programme ETF <http://www.apprenticeship-staff-support.co.uk/>

Q: It is wrong to start a learner on a program of learning when you cannot tell how and by who they will be assessed.

A: AELP’s view is that providers must have confidence that they are putting a learner on the best possible course of learning and that the provider supports the learner through their course to the highest standards. If you cannot give the learner assurance of how they will be assessed then recruitment and planning for delivery (i.e. SOW) will be difficult.

An outline of how the apprentices will be assessed is available in the published Assessment Plan.

Q: 30 of the first 45 'ready to deliver' standards still have no assessment organisation approved? Why?

A: The Register of Assessment Organisations opens for applications shortly following publication of

the final Assessment Plan and funding caps. As some Apprenticeships can be up to 4 or 5 years in duration, Government has taken the decision to permit starts, whilst closely monitoring applications to the Register against each Standard to ensure an Assessment Organisation will be in place at the point when apprentices progress onto this phase of their Apprenticeship. Trailblazers are also encouraged to play a role in stimulating demand for Training Providers and Assessment Organisations to enter the training and assessment market respectively.

Q: "Ready to deliver" is a really confusing and inaccurate phrase. Perhaps the reason why starts are really low is because they are not. For example many of the "ready" standards do not have any independent assessment organisations identified or ready.

A: AELP's view is that maybe the terminology should be changed to reflect the actual status. Suggestion – "Approved for Delivery"?

Q: What is the process if a learner fails the end assessment? What are the costs etc.?

A: Individual assessment plans may outline conditions relating to retakes/resits. Where a retake/resit is to take place the employer would need to negotiate the cost with the assessment organisation. You should refer to the latest guidance regarding funding for retakes/resits. The co-payment can be used when apprentices are required to undertake additional learning in order to re-take qualifications and/or non-accredited elements which meet the apprenticeship standard. Any additional learning required by apprentices must be eligible and meet the requirements of the apprenticeship standard. If necessary, a new price can be agreed between the employer, lead provider and their subcontracted providers to include this additional learning. If the new price exceeds the allocated co-funding cap, no further government contribution will be made and the employer will need to meet these additional costs directly.

Q: Who will be responsible for the end test QA? Will it be the connected provider or the employer that has to ensure the QA of the end test assessment takes place?

A: Internal quality assurance is carried out by the assessment organisations themselves and involves making sure that individual assessments are run correctly and the assessors they employ/contract are assessing to a consistent level and standard. External quality assurance proposals will be for the Trailblazer to develop, to ensure consistency of approach between Assessment Organisations accepted onto the Register. Trailblazers have three choices when developing an external QA approach – set out at paragraph 146 of the Trailblazer guidance:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-guidance-for-trailblazers>

Q: How do we become an end point assessment centre?

A: Register through Bravo. Further information at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-apprentice-assessment-organisations>

Q: Who are the assessment bodies?

A: The Register of Assessment Organisations has five entry criteria (evidence of financial health, assessment competence and capacity, occupation competence and capacity, internal controls and audit arrangements and organisational data). Potential applicants must satisfy the SFA that they

have met each of these before approval to be on the register for standards will be granted. The register is open to all types of organisation to apply. A list of approved assessment organisations is published here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/register-of-apprentice-assessment-organisations>

Funding

Q: Will SMEs have to make a contribution?

A: The existing standard funding model (which applies to all sizes of employer) involves Government contribution £2 for every £1 contributed by the employer up to the cap allocated to the standard with additional incentive payments available for small businesses and relating to 16-18 year old apprentices and successful completion. The funding model relating to non-levy payers (i.e. those with a paybill of less than £3m) from April 2017 onwards is still being developed.

Q: Will the 2017 transition deadline move? Will the funding follow Trailblazer Rules?

Steve Cressey, Head of Service - Partnerships & Projects, Vision West Nottinghamshire College
All apprenticeship starts will be on standards by 2020, but there is an expectation that the majority of starts will be through the new standards by 2017/18. Frameworks will be switched off for new starts earlier where possible; notice has been given on the first frameworks to be switched off for new starts.

Q: Will the levy be used to pay the whole cost of training or will it still be 2 for 1 from the government as per the current banding model?

A: Levy payers will be able to claim the whole cost of eligible off the job training up to the cap and the amount of money it has paid into the levy.

Q: What will the 'commitment to apprenticeship training' look like for employers to gain additional funding? % of app in workforce?

A: This is still being determined.

Q: Will the Levy payments go into a general "pot" or will it be placed in the individual employer account to be used to fund Apprenticeships?

A: Levy paying employers will have an individual account.

Q: Just to confirm, does the levy mean the end of SFA funding completely, albeit that it will be phased out?

A: At this time there is no plan to phase out SFA funding especially for employers who do not qualify for the levy. However, the details of how the funding process will apply to non-levy paying employers is yet to be clarified. The SFA will still have a role in processing levy payments to providers.

Q: Is it mandatory/statutory for employers with £3m+ employee costs to taken on an apprentice or have an apprenticeship programme? Same question also applies to public sector bodies.

A: Private organisations cannot be forced to take on an apprentice. Certain public sector bodies will be set targets in relation to apprentice numbers and this is currently the subject of a consultation: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-sector-apprenticeship-targets>

Q: Why does 2020 vision doc make no mention of the over 90% of employers who won't pay the levy? How will they be funded? Even a clue would be appreciated by all!

A: Up to the introduction of the levy, the “two thirds / one third” model described above will apply. The model for non-levy payers beyond April 2017 is still in development.

Q: If the levy is taken from an employer's entire payroll, does this mean that it can use its digital accounts to provide apprenticeships for ALL employees? In other words, will the current eligibility requirements, particularly age and EU residency, be lifted?

A: The apprenticeships programme is - and will remain - an all age programme subject to any restrictions relating to specific standards. You should refer to the funding rules for individual eligibility requirements regarding residency etc. However, most individuals who want to take part in learning will be eligible for funding if:

They are a citizen of the United Kingdom and Islands, have Right of Abode (the right to live permanently in the United Kingdom without any immigration restrictions), or are a citizen of a country that is within the European Economic Area (EEA), they have been ordinarily resident in the United Kingdom and Islands or the European Union (EU) or the European Economic Area (EEA) continuously for at least the previous three years on the first day of learning and, The learning is taking place in England.

The following individuals are not eligible for funding:

- Those who have been granted a Tier 4 Visa by the UK government,
- Those who are not EEA citizens and are in the United Kingdom on holiday, whether with or without a visa,
- Those who are not EEA citizens and are considered to be ‘over stayers’ by the UK government,
- Those who are not EEA citizens, are a family member of a person granted a Tier 4 Visa, have been given immigration permission to stay in the UK and have not been ordinarily resident in the UK for the previous three years on the first day of learning.

Employers in England who pay the levy and are committed to apprenticeship training will be able to get out more than they put in to the levy through a top up to their digital accounts. The value and mechanism for these top ups is still be considered.

Q: Is the employer contribution for large [levy paying] employers assumed from the 0.5% taken through HMRC? Or is this in addition to the levy?

A: The 0.5% will be collected through HMRC or similar. This is the levy.

Q: It seems that employers will be effectively drawing down their own money from the digital

voucher system - i.e. they pay in and they take credit out. Does this mean the end of Ofsted inspection, which has always worked on the principle of following the path of government money? Will it have authority to inspect programmes that employers are effectively paying for themselves?

A: Ofsted will still be involved in inspecting providers.

“We will continue to rely on Ofsted to inspect and report on apprenticeship training provision up to level 3 and on Ofqual to regulate any qualifications included in apprenticeships. We continue to talk to both Ofsted and Ofqual about the impact of the reforms on their inspection and regulation frameworks, to ensure these remain fit for purpose in this context. Apprenticeships delivered with higher education (HE) institutions will be covered by the HE quality regime” – extract from HM Government 2020 Vision Document.

Q: Will the top up to a digital account be provided by the government or is the term 'top up' suggesting that employers are at liberty to do so i.e. paying above and beyond their levy contributions aligned to their wage bill?

A: The top up means that employers will be able to draw down more funding than they pay in levy if they take on enough apprentices but the detail is still in development.

Q: What is your understanding of how the funding rules operate alongside the new standards... eligibility compliance and evidence required to be kept to ensure audits are completed successfully?

A: You should refer to the standards funding rules for eligibility and evidence requirements.

Q: 98% of employers will not pay the levy, how will the funding work for them?

A: The funding model for non-levy payers from April 2017 is still in development.

Q: What happens if an employer does not take on apprentices?

A: No employers are required to take on apprentices although clearly the levy will incentivise some to do so. As mentioned above, targets will apply to some public sector organisations.

Q: Do employers get 16-18 incentive and AGE incentive as well??

A:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/452935/Trailblazer_Funding_Rules_2015_to_2016_version_1.pdf

Para 139 of the funding guidance for 15/16 states The Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE) cannot be claimed for apprentices undertaking an apprenticeship standard. AGE is a separate government grant, and is only available for eligible employers employing apprentices on an apprenticeship framework. You can find more information about AGE on our website.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/apprenticeship-grant-for-employers-of-16-to-24-year-olds>

Q: Is there a list or similar of which standards will sit in which band?

A: Up to now, caps have been allocated once the Assessment Plan relating to a standard has been allocated and a list of those allocated to a cap so far is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-ready-for-delivery>. In future, a provisional cap allocation will be made when standard is approved.

Q: How can assessment fees be agreed before the end assessment is confirmed?

A: The methods of assessment are confirmed in the Assessment Plan which needs to be approved before the standard is ready for delivery. Trailblazers are also encouraged to obtain quotes from training providers and assessment organisations, to form an estimate for delivering the end point assessment. An estimate of these costs, expressed as a percentage of the overall cost of the Apprenticeship, is included in all Plans, and forms one of the key 9 approval criteria used in the approval process. The final cost for delivering end point assessment will be for the employer to negotiate with their chosen assessment organisation.

Q: Are Employers able to stagger their contributions throughout training and if so would this in turn stagger Government contribution?

A: Under the current standards funding model, employers can negotiate a payment schedule with their provider – the Government £2 contribution will be paid in line with £1 payments from the employer. Under the levy, employer payments into it will be monthly and we envisage them being able to still negotiate a payment schedule. The post April 17 model for non-levy payers is still in development.

Q: Will the levy be recognised as the employer contribution or will it be in addition?

A: For employers who pay the levy it will be their contribution, although if their volume of apprentices means they exhaust their levy contribution and top up, they will be required to contribute beyond that. The details of this are still in development.

Q: In the Early Years sector gaining employer contributions is really tricky due to a low paid sector how is this going to work?

A: At present employer contributions are a requirement under the standards funding model to enable the release of government funds. The funding model for non-levy payers once the levy has been introduced is still in development.

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

Q: Where can I get a list of all the level4+ Higher & degree apprenticeship standards?

A: A list of all standards and standards in development by level is available via this link. Three ticks means that they are “ready for delivery”:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-list-of-occupations-available>

A separate list of standards ready for delivery by level is available via this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-standards-ready-for-delivery>

Quality

Q: What is the contact details for Trailblazer and or David/James?

A: Contact details for individual trailblazers are on DIRECT.GOV David/James can be contacted via trailblazers@aoc.co.uk

Q: There appears to be no regulation to the new Apprenticeship Standards, i.e. no requirement for Ofqual etc. as no necessity for qualifications in the new 'Standard' I am unable to see how assessment and delivery can be standardised and levelled with everyone having a different interpretation of the standard and assessment plan.

A: Government firmly believes that employers are best placed to determine the on-programme training and assessment for their own apprentices. Trailblazers are permitted to include qualifications in their standard where they represent a mandatory requirement set by the regulator, are required for professional registration or act as a “hard sift” when applying for jobs in the occupation. These will continue to be regulated by Ofqual where appropriate, although the Apprenticeship End Point Assessment will act as the mark of occupational competence, and will be assured by the external quality assurance process outlined above.

Q: Is there an intention to drop the word Trailblazer in the near future and just use Apprenticeship Standard?

A: Trailblazers refers to the employer groups rather than the apprenticeship standard. It is now a well-known term and useful short hand for all parties to use. Employers involved are still Trailblazing in their respective sectors even if they weren't involved in early Phases. Clearly it won't be appropriate to use the term once we have full coverage of standards, but as for whether it should be dropped before then, BIS would welcome views!
(apprenticeship.trailblazers@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

Q: Of those New Standards which have had starts, which are seen as exemplar in terms of employer financial contributions, learner experience and provider capability?

A: At this stage there is insufficient evidence to suggest one as an exemplar. Also, the delivery and assessment options for standards are very varied so direct comparisons will be challenging. The standards funding model requires financial contributions from all employers.

Q: Will there be any central government directed media releases to inform the UK re Apprenticeship Reform? Similar to when QCF was launched.

A: We have the ongoing “get in go far” media campaign covering apprenticeships generally and Trailblazers are encouraged to undertake their own media activity.

Q: I've tried a number of times to book on some of the events listed but failed to get a place as they are always oversubscribed. Are more going to be put on this year?

A: We (AELP) are hoping to get some more funding to run more events after March when the current contract is up for renewal. There are some more events being released this week on English and maths, employer engagement and leadership support.

Q: Re cascading information to colleagues and staff, for those who know nothing about apprenticeships past, present or future, can you recommend one or two key up to date documents to get them up to speed please?

A: We (AELP) would suggest playing them out like this and the previous webinars. We will provide a link. AELP has produced briefing documents and we will be happy to talk directly to members (and prospective members).

Q: We are a subcontracted training provider who are also the employer to our apprentices and as I understand it - when the new frameworks come in we can no longer be a subcontracted TP and an employer - is this right??

A: The detail on this is still being confirmed but there must be independence between the employer, learner and the assessment organisation.

Q: Slides refer to the fact that business models need to be developed to offer employers a range of packages & associated costs. Will there be any capacity building events or workshops to help put those plans/ideas together? Learn from best practice etc.?

A: We (AELP) are working with provider networks and ETF/BiS to hopefully provide more support in this area after March. There are lots of resources on the Future Apprenticeships website: <http://www.et-foundation.co.uk/supporting/support-practitioners/future-apprenticeships/>

Q: Will there be tandem run of SASE framework and standards post April 2017?

A: Funding for new starts on frameworks will be withdrawn where appropriate; sufficient notice will be given to training providers.

Q: Many of the new standards don't mention a requirement for English and maths. I'm assuming English and maths are still required but can you please confirm?

A: English and maths are still a requirement. For all Level 2 standards, apprentices are required to pass Level 1 E&M and take the test for Level 2 before taking the end-point assessment and for Level 3 and above standards, apprentices are required to pass Level 2 E&M before they take the end-point assessment.

Q: Where and how does a prime contractor such as Babington envisage a relationship working with a sub-contractor...?

A: I asked this during the webinar. Bit unfair as will be speculation only. As yet there is no firm information on how sub-contracting will work in the future.