

27 April 2009

Dear Colleague

Apprenticeships

As you are aware, we have agreed with Ministers a set of flexibilities on Apprenticeships to support apprentices to continue their training during the current economic downturn. These temporary measures are aimed at achieving a balance of providing high quality Apprenticeships with significant employer involvement, whilst recognising that there will be specific local circumstances which may mean that an individual is made redundant and to safeguard as best we can their learning, whilst they look for another employer.

In the current economic circumstances, we wish to make clear to providers that an apprentice who has been in employment but has subsequently been made redundant will be supported in full time provision for a period of up to 6 months. This will allow redundant apprentices to maintain their framework for an extended period while they and their provider seek a new employer, and it reflects the greater challenge in finding a new employer place in the present climate.

To support the individual, we have provided revised guidance about their ability to access Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and hardship funds (subject to eligibility) which is already available – a briefing note on Hardship Funding was published in January 2009 and went to all training providers.

We recognise that a key element of the Apprenticeship is the work-based evidence of knowledge and skills, and the experience of working for an employer and we must seek to ensure that this remains the case. In most instances, it should be possible for the Key Skills and Technical Certificates to be achieved in a provider setting. In addition, we would wish that, in the current economic climate, where it is possible for elements of the NVQ to be carried out in a provider setting for that to be acceptable, with the provider ensuring that the NVQ Code of Practice is followed. However, if an individual is made redundant and is close to completing their Apprenticeship framework and has evidence of the extensive and relevant employment whilst on their Apprenticeship, we would ask that Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and awarding bodies take this into consideration. SSCs and awarding bodies should work with the provider with regard to ensuring that an appropriate assessment methodology and requirements can be applied which can take account of individual circumstances whilst still recognising what has been achieved. We would expect providers and awarding organisations to review on a case by case basis the need for any adaptation of assessment methodology and ensure that can be applied on a case by case basis and without detriment to standards or quality.

Ministers have also agreed that, for all new apprentices, we should allow individuals who have achieved an A* or A grade in GCSE or O'Level maths and English to be exempt from key skills where the employer and SSC agrees. We wish to work with you all to ensure that this can be applied appropriately.

Finally, to ensure that we have a good understanding of what is happening across the country, we have asked colleges to record redundant apprentices within the Individual Learner Record (ILR).

I would be grateful if you could ensure that all the relevant people within your organisation are aware of these flexibilities and apply them appropriately.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Waugh', with a small dot at the end.

Simon Waugh
Chief Executive
National Apprenticeship Service