Digital Skills Newsletter - 24

Keep-in-Touch

Dispensation, Mitigations and Adaptations

Further to the information we gave out at our last session of 2012 various dispensations, mitigations and adaptations for qualifications and EPAs (end-point assessments) were to be removed at the end of this year. We have had an update to say the end date for the these will now be 28 February 2022, though the notification from IfATE on what they would be withdrawing and what would stay is still the same.

3 dispensations being withdrawn

- Changes being made to who sits on the EPA interview/discussion panel (when someone in addition to the independent assessor is specified)
- Allowing other suitable evidence of achievements being used in replacement of functional skills qualifications at gateway (other mandated qualifications are covered under temporary discretions)
- Extension to the length of the EPA period (where specified)

ALL use of the three dispensations will be **switched off** on the *28 February 2022* regardless of where the apprentice is within the EPA.

The cut-off point for those flexibilities which are being withdrawn is the date at which the actual assessment occurs, not the date of gateway.

7 dispensations to remain in place

- Observations taking place in simulated environments
- Remote delivery of assessments (including invigilation)
- Pauses being allowed between assessment methods during EPA period
- Assessments taking place outside of usual venues
- Delivery of assessment methods in any order (when a specified order is in the assessment plan)
- Exams/tests being online instead of on paper (where originally specified as paper-based only)
- Gateway sign off being done remotely (where originally specified as having to be face to face

Any end-point assessments that **begin** prior to or on *28 February 2022* but are completed after *1 March 2022* can continue to make use of the flexibilities being withdrawn.

City & Guilds guidance for training providers

- Apprentices that complete their EPA before *28 February 2022*, using a flexibility that is being withdrawn, but who require a resit/retake after *1 March 2022*, are permitted to continue to use the withdrawn flexibility for their resit/retake.
- Apprentices that are due to complete their EPA before *28 February 2022* using the flexibility but, due to extenuating circumstances, are unable to do so prior to the flexibility being withdrawn should be given the opportunity to continue to be assessed using the flexibility, if that is still appropriate.

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Synoptic Projects at home

Following conversations with NSAR, the Synoptic Project assessment dispensation - *Assessments taking place outside of usual venues –* looks set to continue for the foreseeable future (i.e., into 2022).

The NSAR document is available on our website under the Digital and IT qualifications area, on the Updates and webinars page - http://bit.ly/CGDigitalUpdate.

Vendor qualifications for legacy Standards

As we are all aware, many of the Vendor qualifications have changed or been retired while the Standards and Assessment Plans have not been updated to reflect what has been happening. City & Guilds did produce an updated document to include some new offers and changes (CCNA for example), but it has been a plaster on a situation that is continually in flux.

We are pleased to announce that NSAR will introduce a quality process at EPAO (end-point assessment organisation) level that allows employers and providers to have some flexibility and continue to meet assessment plans in one of the following ways:

1. if no vendor quals are appropriate just do the knowledge modules
2. use an alternative vendor qualification that serves as a suitable proxy for the knowledge module

If you wish to use option (2), and it is not one of the products we have already recognised, you will need to provide a mapping document to show at least 80% coverage of the knowledge module that you wish to claim against. Before you submit this for Gateway, we will need agreed that it does map as you have indicated with similar or the same learning objective.

This process offers a flexible, evidence based, sustainable and straightforward approach for the Standards that require a vendor qualification as part of the On-programme evidence and will allow NSAR clear sight of activity and administration.

It is important that you confirm your chosen action with us at earliest opportunity, checking that the vendors and products you intend to use are acceptable, as opposed to wait until going through Gateway, as delays may occur while the relevant checks are carried out.

As with the current situation, Certificates of Achievement signify summative vendor qualification attainment. Proof of attendance, practice assessment or other evidence related to taking the course **do not**.

NOTE: if the Standard requires a vendor qualification, there is no change in the acceptance of **one** and **one only.**

VRQ qualification reminder

IT Professional qualifications

We have mentioned several times that we are editing and introducing new units to the following qualifications: 7540 (Level 2 and 3), 7630 (Level 4) and 4520 (Levels 2 to 4) and we are still looking at having the full qualifications published during February 2022, with the Unit Route products (7540 and 7630 only) to be ready for the end of March.

This is what it means for you:

England: wider options for work in traineeships or adult education, with cyber options to develop short programmes as required

generic programming units will allow you to deliver any application language that fits in with *object oriented, procedural or event driven*.

Wales: Like above PLUS:

more options for delivery as part of apprenticeships, combined with the Vendor Alike units this allows for programmes that cover software, hardware, infrastructure, web development and cyber security

N Ireland: Like above PLUS:

more options for delivery as part of apprenticeships, combined with the Vendor Alike units this allows for programmes that cover software, hardware, infrastructure, web development and cyber security

R Ireland: Like above PLUS:

more options for delivery as part of apprenticeships, combined with the vendor-alike units this allows for programmes that cover software, hardware, infrastructure, web development and cyber security

To provide some insight around the new units to be included, here is a taster:

Level 2 Level 2 User Profile Administration (6 credits)
Level 2 System Management (6 credits)
Level 2 ICT System Operation (9 credits)

Level 3 Level 3 Carrying out Information Security Incident Management activities (9 credits)
Level 3 Carrying out Information Security forensic examinations (6 credits)
Level 3 Carrying out Information Security audits (6 credits)

Level 4 Level 4 Human Computer Interaction (15 credits)
Level 4 IT & Telecoms System Operation (15 credits)

Communications Cabling qualifications

We will also be publishing the new Communications Cabling qualifications in February 2022, with a brand-new Level 2 (3668-02) to replace the current product (3667-02). It has been brought up to date with current industry requirements as an entry into this job role, with new assessment and continuing to meet the requirements for JIB and their ECS Network Infrastructure Installation Assistant card (white with green stripe).

There will also be a brand-new Level 3 product that will go into greater depth and breadth than the Level 2 and be aimed at those working for commercial cable installers and includes new units to meet industry needs at the level of competence now being demanded. Again, we have worked with JIB to gain recognition of this qualification and it will meet the ECS Network Infrastructure Installer (Level 3) card (white with gold crosshatch).

The Design and Planning qualification at Level 3 (3667-03) will remain in place, this product will not be reviewed and updated at this time.

Using Vendor Alike units – 7540/7630-6nn

We are aware that several Vendor exams have been retired and that we have not really been in a position to provide the latest offering against our units. In line with what has been done for the England Apprenticeship Standards, we will allow centres to use a suitable Vendor certification

against one of our Vendor Alike units if they can provide mapping of the content that shows around 80% of the Outcomes and Assessment Criteria have been met.

These means for the Software Fundamentals unit you could use the new Microsoft Azure Fundamentals or something from Amazon that would equally fulfil the criteria.

We feel this will allow centres the flexibility needed to meet local employer needs rather than rely on us to get everything checked out, especially as these changes happen faster than we may be able to keep up with and we are only informed once the new Vendor product is live.

Level 3 Consultation (England) – Occupational Technical Qualifications

IfATE and Ofqual are looking to plug some of the gaps at Level 3 not covered by T-Levels for the 16–19-year-olds and flexible programmes for the 19+ age range. Once again Digital is the first industry sector called on to do the work and the idea is to have products that would provide similar learning outcomes the Level 3 Apprenticeship Standards in this area.

We will need to submit our proposals to them by the end of March 2022 and will be basing our offer on units from within 7540-13 – adding in specific certification for those areas with limited Rules of Combination of units as appropriate – and 3668-03 for the Network Cabling area. However, while there is a rush to get our submission done, the actual first offer (date set by IfATE) will not be until September 2024.

Other news

Princes Royal Training Awards

The 2022 PRTA are now open for applications.

https://twitter.com/CityGuildsGroup/status/1478679591346655234

Honouring employers (including colleges and private training providers) who have created outstanding training and skills development programmes which have resulted in exceptional commercial benefits.

Free to enter the Awards are open to all UK employers who can show how investing in training has directly improved their people and organisational performance.

Training is at the core of every successful business. It allows you to recruit better staff, retain quality colleagues and future proof your talent pipeline.

It's the investment that offers a return time and time again.

We are delighted to offer this prestigious award, in line with the City & Guilds Group values, to employers in the UK who can prove that their outstanding training and skills development programmes have resulted in exceptional benefits for their business.

Lifelong Learning

ESFA/DfE have announced an extension to the eligibility for accessing the Level 3 adult offer funded by the National Skills Funding (NSF).

Previously, only learners without a prior full Level 3 qualification were able to access full funding for the qualification on the NSF list. But at the AOC conference, the Secretary of State announced that the offer would now be extended. From April next year any adult in England who is earning under the National Living Wage or is unemployed will also be able to access these qualifications for **free**, regardless of their prior qualification level.

The following digital/ICT product has been added to this list

Qualification number	Qualification Title	Level	Funding
500/3476/5	City & Guilds Level 3 Certificate in ICT Systems and Principles	3	National Skills Fund – level 3 offer

Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQs)

City & Guilds is still in the process of developing its EDSQs and is currently waiting for feedback from Ofqual about the technical evaluation of the qualifications.

Once we have this feedback, we will be able to share with centres more information about our qualifications and a planned launch date.

In the meantime, a link to information about the National Digital Standards these qualifications are based on is available from this webpage and we will update the information here as we have more to share.

Flexi-job apprenticeships

We have been asked in the past how to handle apprentices in England who may need to move around employers, until now there has not been any easy way (if any at all) to allow this to happen. Now, for those working in areas where most employers are small and could work together to give an apprentice the full experience – knowledge, skills and behaviours – required to meet the outcomes of Standard comes the Flexi-job apprenticeships.

The Dept for Education (DfE) is launching the pilot delivery scheme for flexi-job apprenticeships (previously known as portable apprenticeships) beginning in April 2022. This will enable an individual apprentices to complete their apprenticeship across multiple short employment contracts.

ESFA are inviting providers to engage in the process and submit an EOI for the pilot to test a new model of apprenticeship delivery and support ongoing developments in the apprenticeship programme. The Expression of Interest and further details about flexi-job apprenticeships can be found on Jaggear, the DfE's eSourcing platform - https://education.app.jaggaer.com/web/login.html

The closing date for Expressions of Interest is 28 January 2022.

Bootcamps – new allocations

DfE/Government have supplied funding of £1.4 million to establish four new Bootcamps as part of the expansion of this programme. As well as adding £3.5 million to be allocated to high-performing existing Bootcamp providers and authorities to deliver additional places (including our own Intertrain to deliver their Bootcamp to prisoners).

The four new Bootcamps receiving the £1.4 million are;

- Lancashire LEP/Council
- Hull and East Yorkshire LEP/Hull City Council
- Tees Valley Combined Authority
- North of Tyne Combined Authority.

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Base Funding Rate to increase from 2022-2023

Some good news form DfE, as they have increased the base funding rate for 16-18 learners. The new base rate (highlighted in yellow in the table below) applies from 1st August 2022. This comes with some other directions, such as DfE expect all T Levels and students funded in band 5, to receive an additional 40 hours (and other students to receive a proportional increase) and ESFA will monitor this delivery.

It does mean that although more funding is available, you will need to deliver more hours and have higher costs (electricity etc.).

And there is potentially more good news, but for your colleagues in an increase of 10% in some programme weightings, which will help increase college income from some subject areas. Sector subject areas receiving an increased weighting are; **medicine and dentistry; nursing; transportation operations and maintenance; building and construction; and urban, rural and regional planning**.

Band (study programmes excluding T levels)	Annual planned hours	Students	National funding rate per student
5	580+ hours	16- and 17-year-olds and students aged 18 and over with high needs	**£4,542 (**previously £4188)
4a	485+ hours	students aged 18 and over who are not high needs	£3,757
4b	485 to 579 hours	16- and 17-year-olds and students aged 18 and over with high needs	£3,757
3	385 to 484 hours	all students	£3,056
2	300 to 384 hours	all students	£2,416
1	Up to 299 hours	All students	£4542 as a proportion of band 5 (FTE)

AEB Grant funding – Claw-back for 2020-2021

Every year someone does not use all their budget and ESFA look at ways to get what has not been spent back, usually by downsizing the new allocation.

But over 80% of college and adult learning providers that were due to receive a reduced AEB allocation for 2021-22, due to the adult education budget funding clawback process, have had a reprieve from the ESFA. Originally, providers in receipt of AEB grants contracts (that's colleges and local authorities in the main, not private providers) in 2020/21 were told that they would only receive their full funding if they could prove they had delivered at least 90% of their allocation for that year.

ESFA has now backtracked on that position and 65 providers have received positive confirmation that they will not have funding clawed back.

13 other colleges and LAs are awaiting appeals outcomes.

- If you have struggled to curriculum plan due to funding constraints and you may not have been willing to discuss certain programmes with us and we hope that if you are affected, we can now talk.

- The parliamentary question and answer can be found –

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-12-03/86554

More Free Cisco Instructor Training

By now, you may be aware that we normally offer free Cisco Instructor training three times a year. If you are interested in the next batch, please go to his article to learn more.

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/more-free-instructor-training-andrew-smith

Enrolment ends on the 31 January 2022 at 23:59 UK time. However, once this collection of courses commences, we will not offer any further free courses until October 2022.

Please do share with colleagues or consider your own enrolment.

Supporting – literacy, maths and ESOL

We're committed to supporting your maths, English and ESOL delivery in the best way we can.

"Connect. Share. Network" is a place for teachers/ tutors and co-ordinators delivering any of our City & Guilds Bite-sized maths and English qualifications, ESOL, Employability, Essential Skills (Northern Ireland) and Essential Skills (Wales); to network, share insights and reflect on their experiences.

For more information, visit our maths and English resource hub:

https://email.cityandguilds.com/1LRT-7M7CK-8SBRNF-4MCMMW-1/c.aspx

Supporting learning – WorldSkills Hub

The Skills Development Hub has been upgraded for 2022. If the new year has motivated you to advance your teaching skills, then why not look to start using it today!

https://bit.ly/CGWorldSkillsHub

You can focus on your own professional development with their free courses. You'll also find engaging resources to use with students and apprentices to help them develop their technical, employability and mindset skills.

With new resources and an improved look and feel, there's never been a better time to sign up. Read more about the improvements in our blog.

Whether you work for a Further Education college or an independent training provider, this is your chance to join 400 other organisations who are benefitting more than 1,500 young people across the UK with the Hub.

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Work for an Independent Training Provider?

Give your learners the mindset skills to succeed this year by signing them up for our free Live Mindset Workshops with performance experts Grey Matters UK. The next online workshop takes place on 10 February. Sign up today.

Mindset workshops : https://bit.ly/WSMindsetLive

Updates and webinars – and more

Are you still a bit unsure as to how some of the things around Apprenticeship Standards work or just want a reminder of some of the things we have discussed at events and on webinars? Then, please visit our Updates and Webinars page.

http://bit.ly/CGDigitalUpdate

Please check out the information held there as this may answer many of the questions you have.

Next Digital and IT Skills Keep-in-Touch webinars

1 February 2022 (09.30 – 10.30)	https://bit.ly/CGDigitalKIT1Feb22
3 February 2022 (09.30 – 10.30)	https://bit.ly/CGDigitalICTEPA3Feb22
22 February 2022 (09.30 – 10.30)	https://bit.ly/CGDigitalKIT22Feb22

If you have any specific topics, you would like discussed at these events, please forward your suggestions to:

Ken Gaines ken.gaines@cityandguilds.com
OR
David Wackett david.wackett@cityandguilds.com

Note from David and Ken

As always, we urge you to Stay Safe. Please make sure you check the Covid-19 webpage. www.cityandguilds.com/covid-19