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## COVID-19 Guidance for Furloughed and Non-Furloughed Apprentices

These are difficult times for employers, apprentices and providers of apprenticeship training and assessment. As part of the cross-government efforts to respond to the impact of COVID-19, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is implementing new measures, for the duration of the pandemic, to make it easier for apprenticeships to continue and complete in a different way if they need to, or for apprentices to break and then resume their apprenticeship training should the need arise.

The HMRC have stated that **'Apprentices can be furloughed in the same way as other employees and they can continue to train whilst furloughed'**.

The impact of the Covid-19 outbreak and the challenges this is placing on individual's work and home life is unique for everyone. For many, the prospect of working from home, or being furloughed, provides an opportunity to facilitate greater focus and application towards your apprenticeship studies. With the majority of training providers continuing to facilitate apprenticeship training via virtual classrooms, webinars and video calls, this period of self-isolation could be the perfect opportunity to advance in your apprenticeship training and ensure your portfolios of evidence, assignments, self-reflections or off the job training records are up to date and in order. The routine structure and stability of apprenticeship training, along with regular learning and development, can be a valuable tool for your mental health and overall wellbeing during this challenging period.

For others, the impact of Covid-19 has resulted in an intensively heavy workload with the first priority having to be a dynamic and reactive response to the current global crisis. We appreciate that apprentices in roles such as these may need to consider a break in learning at some point during the next few months, especially if it is not proving possible to maintain momentum towards your apprenticeship qualification.

Below we have provided a list of FAQs and further guidance for Apprentices in training through the National College Creative Industries and its delivery partner, Access Creative College. If you have any further questions or would like to speak to us, please contact [apprentices@creativeindustries.ac.uk](mailto:apprentices@creativeindustries.ac.uk) and someone will be in touch.



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## FAQs and Further Guidance

### What does Furlough mean?

Furlough leave is a new form of leave which the Government has made available to UK businesses via its Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. A furloughed employee will remain on the employer's payroll, so furlough leave will be a form of authorised absence. The guidance provides that furlough leave must be for a minimum of three weeks.

### Can I continue on my apprenticeship programme if I have been Furloughed?

Yes, the answer to this question is clarified in the latest Government Guidance regarding employees who have been furloughed. A furloughed employee can take part in volunteer work or training, as long as it does not provide services to or generate revenue for, or on behalf of your organisation. This means that your apprenticeship comes under the umbrella of training. Apprentices are permitted to continue with their training where their provider (NCCI / Access Creative College) can continue to deliver this remotely.

### But I have been put on Furlough and don't have to work...

This is true when it comes to work, but as the guidance states you are still permitted to continue with your training. Now is the perfect opportunity to focus all of your attention on your apprenticeship, with no distractions. You can use this time to expand on what you have already learnt, go back and revise on areas you are not certain of and learn new skills that will support your personal development.

### I've NOT been put on Furlough - How is my apprenticeship affected?

If you are required to continue working in your normal place of work, or remotely from home, NCCI will organise remote contact with you within agreed working hours and timescales. We encourage you to complete more academic or theoretical based learning criteria in the coming months, as on the job training and practical sessions are typically less feasible at this point in time. You are still entitled to the 20% off the job training allowance, however you may need to be flexible in how this is allocated. You will need to continue to keep an accurate record of your apprenticeship training hours.



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### **Why should I continue my learning during this period?**

You made a joint commitment with your employer to complete an apprenticeship. The circumstances we find ourselves in today are completely unexpected, and your employer will be doing everything possible to keep the organisation going and to secure your role for the long-term. Part of this will be to maintain your employment, even if this is through the furlough scheme (Government Retention Fund). It also means you can stay on track with your career/ job plans and not let this situation put a halt to these.

### **What happens if my apprenticeship tutor is Furloughed?**

If Access Creative College implements the government job retention scheme within its own organisation, or apprenticeship tutor availability reduces due to illness or other challenges, we may be forced to place learners on a break in learning. In the unlikely case that this occurs, you will be notified by us, and your options will be discussed on an individual basis.

### **I was about to progress through to 'Gateway' / complete my 'End Point Assessment (EPA). What happens now?**

Apprentices who are deemed ready for assessment, and cannot be assessed due to COVID-19 related issues, will be able to have their EPA rescheduled. Where there is a specified time limit for EPA post gateway, a further pause is allowable. The government is allowing the modification of end-point assessment arrangements, including remote assessments wherever practicable and possible in order to maintain progress and achievement for apprentices. We will notify you if this is the case.

### **If I need to self isolate, or I feel unwell, what happens to my apprenticeship?**

Apprenticeships have been designed to be responsive to changes in apprentices' circumstances, for example during a period of illness. If you need to self-isolate, please notify us on [apprentices@creativeindustries.ac.uk](mailto:apprentices@creativeindustries.ac.uk). Discussions can then take place to determine if an increase in e-learning will be appropriate or if a break in learning is required.

### **I need to take care of myself/a family member. Can I continue my apprenticeship learning at home?**

Yes, this should be possible, depending on your apprenticeship and whether e-learning is available. Please contact us to discuss how you can be supported.



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### **I need to be placed on a break in learning - what should I do?**

A break in learning is only applicable to apprentices who find themselves unable to fulfil their apprenticeship studies for a period of four weeks or more. Before an apprentice can be placed on a break in learning the pause must first be agreed by both the apprenticeship training provider and the employer's Apprenticeship Manager/Team. If a break in learning is deemed necessary your apprenticeship will be paused until you are able to resume it again.

### **I've been temporarily moved into a 'business critical role' during the Covid-19 outbreak and it doesn't relate to my apprenticeship training...**

Apprenticeship training must be linked to the job role the apprentice is undertaking. Where this link is broken temporarily, we are hopeful that you should be able to quickly return to your normal role and resume your apprenticeship training. If the change in roles lasts longer than four weeks you will need to be placed on an official 'break in learning' and your apprenticeship will be paused. Please notify us if you find yourself in this position.

### **Am I still entitled to the '20% off the job' training allowance, how does this work if I'm working from home?**

Off-the-job training is a statutory requirement for all apprenticeships in England. It is training received by the apprentice during the apprentice's normal working hours, for the purpose of achieving the knowledge, skills and behaviours of the apprenticeship referenced in the apprenticeship agreement. All off-the-job training must be directly relevant to the apprenticeship, but this can now be delivered more flexibly, including remote working. Off the job training can be taken in any format i.e. a few hours a day, a day week, or as a week block, however this must first be agreed with your line manager. Virtual delivery of your 20% off the job training could consist of tasks such as; virtual classroom sessions, webinars, video calls, independent research and working towards your assignments, tutor set tasks and your portfolio.

### **I am on an apprenticeship fixed term contract. What happens if my apprenticeship is delayed or takes longer to complete than the length of my contract of employment?**

Government rules state that you must be employed at the point of taking your end-point assessment, so where a break in learning has been necessary, and the planned end-date for your apprenticeship has had to move back, your employer should review your contract with you to determine what steps (if possible) can be taken.



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**Can I still ask my Line Manager work / apprenticeship related questions if they have been furloughed?**

Yes, you should still be able to contact your Line Manager if they have been placed on the furlough scheme. They should be able to continue offering support and guidance towards your apprenticeship studies, but they cannot set you specific work based tasks or projects to complete.