

2025-26 SUMMARY OF FUNDING RULE CHANGES

Initial assessment

An initial assessment creates a starting point for each apprenticeship by measuring current competence and learning against the apprenticeship standard. After completing the initial assessment, the provider must be able to evidence that the individual requires significant new knowledge, skills and behaviours in order to be occupationally competent in their job role, and that the training required meets the funding rules. They must discuss or share the outcome of the initial assessment with the individual and their employer, so that all parties understand the results and how these results will inform a tailored training plan for the apprentice.

The learner must be given the opportunity to declare their eligibility for the care leavers' bursary and be assured that the care leavers' bursary is tax free and not treated as income for Universal Credit calculations.

Off-The-Job Training Hours

The minimum number of off-the-job training hours are now specific to each standard, meaning the training provider no longer has to calculate these for each apprentice. You can view the hours on the spreadsheet on this [page](#).

Prior learning: Apprentices with no prior learning (that can be mapped against the apprenticeship standard) must complete this number of off-the-job hours to complete the apprenticeship.

Any prior learning will be identified in the initial assessment, and the amount of off-the-job learning will be adjusted in acknowledgement. This will ensure the apprentice is not undertaking learning they have previously achieved.

The minimum number of off-the-job learning hours must not fall below 187 hours (equivalent of 8 months). If it does, then the individual cannot access funding for an apprenticeship. If delivery is via a front-loaded or a block release model, the provider must explain this delivery model with the employer and this must be documented in the signed training plan.

There will no longer be a distinction between a full-time and a part-time apprentice in relation to off-the-job training delivery. However, when setting the duration, the provider must consider working hours so that training expectations are realistic.

The provider is ultimately responsible for the delivery of all required off-the-job training, to enable the apprentice to reach full occupational competence against the standard, even if another party (e.g. subcontractor, employer, learner) delivers this training.

Each apprentice must clearly demonstrate they have achieved the minimum number of off-the-job training hours as set out in their individual training plan to pass through to Gateway to Completion, and progress to Apprenticeship Assessment. This will be recorded in the apprentices portfolio.

Minimum duration

There is a reduction in the minimum duration from 12 to 8 months, where appropriate, for specific industries or individuals with significant prior learning. These shorter duration apprenticeships will enable learners to achieve occupational competence more quickly and promote growth and acceleration in their sectors.

The DfE have set a minimum number of hours per apprenticeship standard, and the spreadsheet on this [page](#) shows how the programme length can be reduced by increasing the weekly number of hours spent completing off-the-job training.

As a result of the changes to the off-the-job training (OTJT) policy, there is no longer a requirement for the provider to automatically extend the expected duration of the apprenticeship if, at the beginning of the apprenticeship, the apprentice works fewer than 30 hours a week or has a zero-hours contract. However, the provider must still consider the working hours, in setting the duration, so that training expectations are realistic.

Maths and English

Providers must still use initial assessment to determine whether apprentices aged 19+ will be studying maths and/or English during the programme. The employer holds overall responsibility for the decision to opt-in their 19+ apprentices to study a standalone maths and/or English qualification.

For 19+ apprentices who are not studying English and / or maths, they are not required to undertake the diagnostic assessment portion of the initial assessment, nor provide evidence of prior attainment.

Apprentices who are studying English and / or maths must carry out active learning in line with the signed training plan. This is separate to OTJT active learning.

See our [Maths and English Qualifications](#) resource for more information.

Assessment

- “Apprenticeship assessment” will replace end-point assessment
- “Assessment organisation” will replace end-point assessment organisation
- “Gateway to completion” will replace gateway

