**Initial Assessment to recognise prior learning**

**The purpose of this document is to outline our policy and process to ensure every learner is assessed prior to starting an apprenticeship programme to ensure the programme is appropriate, valid and fit for purpose.**

**This document has been created in line with the publication of the ESFAs guidance on Initial Assessment to recognise prior learning published in March 2019.**

**The aim of the policy is to;**

1. Recognise prior learning that extends beyond English, maths and existing qualifications;
2. To ensure all the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the standard are considered in reviewing the prior learning of the apprentice;
3. Recognition of prior learning is part of the learner eligibility assessment;
4. To ensure the selected Apprenticeship programme provides good value for money and is of an appropriate duration based upon any prior learning;
5. To ensure high-quality apprenticeships and evidence of a robust initial assessment

This policy provides additional information to support initial assessment of prior learning in accordance with the apprenticeship funding rules.

**1. What is an initial assessment?**

Before an apprenticeship begins, Skills Consultants will assess the individual’s prior learning to establish the ‘starting point’, or baseline, of the apprentice. This informs how much of the apprenticeship training content the individual requires. It checks that the apprenticeship is an appropriate training programme for the individual.

**2. Why is initial assessment important?**

Initial assessment checks that the apprenticeship (both the job role and the training) is an appropriate programme for the individual. Apprentices should not be spending paid time doing training they do not need, and the apprentice will not have a good experience if they are repeating training. Apprenticeship funding should not be used to pay for, or accredit, existing knowledge, skills and behaviours.

We want to demonstrate the ‘distance travelled’ by the apprentice and the value added by the training programme. By establishing the starting point of an apprentice, we can correctly assess the distance travelled and the quality of the apprenticeship training that has been delivered. We aim to evidence a robust initial assessment, clear milestones and progress against these.

**3. How does initial assessment check the eligibility of the individual for an apprenticeship?**

The initial assessment checks how much of the apprenticeship programme the individual requires to reach occupational competency. If there is some relevant prior learning, we must assess whether the individual still needs an apprenticeship with a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% off-the-job training. In some circumstances, this amount of training will not be necessary for the individual so the learner is ineligible for the apprenticeship programme and an alternative should be considered.

**4. What counts as prior learning?**

In recognising prior learning, the following should be considered against the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the standard or framework:

* Work experience (this is particularly important if the apprentice is an existing employee);
* Prior education, training or associated qualification(s) in a related sector subject area (this goes beyond just English and maths); and
* Any previous apprenticeship undertaken

**5. Who is responsible for doing the initial assessment?**

Each tutor is responsible for:

* Assessing the prior learning of the individual before the apprenticeship can begin;
* Agreeing with the employer how the programme will be delivered to reflect any relevant existing knowledge, skills and behaviours; and
* Recording prior learning in the evidence pack and commitment statement

**6. How is prior learning assessed?**

We will use the following (as a minimum) to determine the baseline for initial assessment and any prior learning;

* Apprenticeship standard (SKBs)
* CV
* Certificates
* Current Job Description
* Aspirational Job Description (If provided by the employer)
* Completed Skills Scan
* Interview with learner
* Discussion with employer
* On-line initial assessment tool for Maths and English
* Learner Record System entries

Each Skills Scan is created and mapped against the Skills, Knowledge and Behaviours (SKBs) of the relevant Apprenticeship Programme. The learner is required to indicate which, if any, of the SKBs they believe they have prior learning of. This self-assessment requires them to;

1. Score on scale of 1 to 10 their assessment of their current level of competency (1 being the lowest level)
2. Identify any tasks related to and demonstrating competency of the relevant SKBs
3. Indicate the frequency of those tasks on a daily, weekly, monthly or annual basis

The relevant apprenticeship standard will always be used as the basis for initial assessment and include;

* What are their Individual learning goals?
* Where are they currently against those goals?
* How much of the content is new to them?
* Do they require significant and sustained new learning?

**7. How should prior learning be recorded?**

Tutors should evidence the initial assessment of prior learning through completion of the on-line Skills Scans stored with Aptem or upload copies of the Skills Scans where a paper-based copy has been completed. Any additional comments or notes from discussions with learners and employers should also be recorded in the tutor notes on the system for each learner within Aptem. The Individual Learning Plan will be amended to reflect any reduction in hours and content. Each learner will also upload a copy of their CV, Certificates and Job Description.

**8. How does recognition of prior learning feed into funding negotiations?**

The funding band of the apprenticeship is based on an apprentice requiring the full content of the apprenticeship, and in the case of standards this means all the listed knowledge, skills and behaviours. Each SKB is mapped out against a delivery model with associated activities, tasks and assignments. Each of these has an assigned set of Guided Learning Hours (GLH) and Off-the-job hours (OTJH). Where prior learning is identified the tutor must re-calculate the learning required and adjust the hours accordingly. Any percentage reduction in learning will be reflected in the same percentage reduction of funding for the learning delivery element of the programme and indicated on the Written Agreement and Commitment Statement.

Independent audits will be conducted to assess eligibility and ensure ESFA funding rules are met. These will be conducted by the Administration team as part of our audit and compliance checks and by our Internal Quality Assurers as part of our quality assurance processes.

All staff involved in the delivery of Apprenticeships are trained on how to calculate a reduction in Apprenticeship funding based upon prior learning.

**9. How does this all link to a 12-month minimum duration and off-the-job training?**

Where there is prior learning, the content and duration of the apprenticeship must be reduced to reflect this. The new (reduced) duration must still meet the minimum threshold of 12 months. At least 20% of the paid hours for the new (reduced) duration must be spent on off-the-job training.

**Summary**

**Preparation for Initial Assessment:**

1. The employer specifies apprenticeship standard for the individual
2. The tutor discusses prior learning with the learner to consider relevant information against the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) set out in the apprenticeship

**Initial Assessment:**

1. The tutor assesses the individual’s work experience, prior education, training or associated qualifications in a related sector subject area against the SKBs set out in the apprenticeship
2. The tutor will set out the individual’s baseline level of competency against the KSBs to determine the remaining content required

**Decision required at Initial Assessment:**

1. Assuming some existing prior learning, the tutor will assess whether the individual still meets the eligibility criteria of requiring significant and sustained new training (a minimum duration of 12 months with at least 20% off-the-job training) based upon the recalculation.

If not, the individual is not eligible for an apprenticeship and an alternative programme should be found.

**Following Initial Assessment and a decision that the learner is eligible for apprenticeship:**

1. The tutor will document prior learning through completion of the Skills Scan and add comments to the individual learner account on Aptem and summarise this in the Individual Learning Plan, Commitment statement and Written agreement
2. The tutor and employer will agree how the programme will be delivered (including the cost) to reflect the learner’s prior learning and existing SKB requirements
3. The tutor will set out key milestones for the apprentice so their progress can be reviewed against this in the Individual Learning Plan on Aptem
4. The tutor will assess the apprenticeship training material against the job role to ensure sufficient opportunities for the apprentice to consolidate their learning in the workplace is evident