



Pearson

Apprenticeships 101

The really simple guide to the 20%
off-the-job training rule



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Who is this guide for?

Employers, especially HR Managers and Apprenticeship Managers

Myth Buster

- ▶ **Myth:** Releasing apprentices for 20% off the job time is going to be an impossible logistical challenge.
 - ▶ **Fact:** Not necessarily! Employers should consider all the different ways their apprentices are getting off the job training (such as shadowing, mentoring, industry visits etc) by using software or other tracking methods. Apprenticeships that are blended, flexible and applied tend to make meeting the 20% off the job training requirement easier.
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- ▶ **Myth:** Releasing apprentices one day a week is going to cost me money and productivity.
 - ▶ **Fact:** Employers might need to take a longer view. Releasing apprentices for a day a week to learn means they get both work experience and practical training. They will be completely up to date on quality assured theory and knowledge which in turn will make them a much better employee in the long run. Making this rule mandatory and outsourcing it to an organisation specialised in the delivery of training ensures not only that it happens, but that it happens to a required and common standard and ensures a quality apprenticeship.

The Really Simple Guide to the 20% off-the-job training rule

▶ What is off-the-job training?

According to the definition provided in the Funding Rules for Training Providers May 2017 to March 2018: "Off-the-job training is defined as learning which is undertaken outside of the normal day-to-day working environment and leads towards the achievement of an apprenticeship. This can include training that is delivered at the apprentice's normal place of work but must not be delivered as part of their normal working duties."

▶ Why is there a 20% off-the-job training rule?

The government believes that ensuring a substantial component of the apprenticeship is given over to off-the-job training is the best way to safeguard the quality of the apprenticeship. While learning skills on the job is no doubt essential in any profession, combining this with broader learning about the occupation offers deeper understanding and knowledge, skills and behaviours that are transferable to other businesses, while allowing the apprentice to bring that knowledge back into your organisation during their period of employment.

There is good precedence for this. Other countries with high-performing and well-established apprenticeship systems also split the apprentices time between work and vocational school - often to a much greater degree than in England. In France for example, it is 50/50. In the Netherlands between 20-40%.

▶ **Why has the government suddenly brought this in?**

It's actually not new. Off-the-job learning was part of each of the old SASE Frameworks guidance. However this is the first time a specific proportion of off-the-job learning has been mandated.

▶ **What is it 20% of?**

Apprentices must spend 20% of their **contracted hours** in off-the-job training, not including holidays. So on a standard 35 hours a week contract, the off-the-job portion of training equates to 300 hours a year. This is however based on a minimum 30 hr/week contract, so for part-time roles the duration of the apprenticeship must be extended pro rata to ensure your apprentice receives sufficient off-the-job training to maintain quality.

▶ **Does off-the-job training mean classroom based training?**

Not at all. The funding rules are broad enough to cover a blended learning approach for off-the-job training. While the teaching of theory may well include lectures, it can also include online courses, simulation exercises, or third-party training. In addition, practical training might involve shadowing colleagues, being mentored, doing industry visits or attending competitions. Finally, off-the-job training can also include learning support and time spent writing assessments/assignments.

▶ **Does the 20% have to be delivered in a particular way - e.g., day release?**

There are no regulations over how you (and your training partner) decide how to parcel up the delivery of off-the-job training. It could be one day a week, a week at a time, or perhaps in a longer block preceding a more intensive on-the-job rotation.

▶ **Do I have to use an external training provider for off-the-job training?**

You must use a training provider who has been accepted onto the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers. However if you meet the criteria, it is possible to apply to become an Employer-Provider, establishing your own training arm to deliver apprenticeships.

▶ **If my apprentice needs additional training on functional skills does this count towards the 20%?**

Unfortunately not, apprenticeship funding including the levy is only eligible for training that is directly related to accomplishment of the standard.

▶ **What else doesn't count towards off-the-job training?**

To state perhaps the obvious - the salary of the apprentice - plus programme reviews or on-programme assessment (apart from the end-point assessment). And, crucially, training that takes place outside an apprentice's normal working hours.

▶ **Why are many organisations calling for more flexibility with this rule?**

One of the main arguments against the 20% off-the-job rule is that it makes life difficult for smaller businesses who cannot financially support the loss of productivity. However this must be weighed against the fact that the government will fully finance apprenticeship training for companies with under 50 employees, as well as the fact that the minimum apprentice wage is lower than the normal apprentice wage. Where possible it is also important for employers to take the longer term view, with eight in every 10 employers believing that apprentices help to generate higher productivity, according to the Education, Learning & Skills Council.



Employers are also questioning whether it should be a blanket rule across all levels of standard. For example, someone studying towards a Level 6 or 7 apprenticeship is likely to be over 18 and could be expected to study in their own time in the same way that many full-time employees combine work with study towards an MBA or other professional qualification for example. At the other end of the spectrum, many of those seeking to undertake a Level 2 or 3 apprenticeship may be lacking maths and English skills - and the ban on using off-the-job study time to achieve functional skills makes them far less attractive as candidates and may be socially disadvantageous.

► Could this change?

The government has given little in the way of signals that this situation is likely to change but with the Skills Minister, Anne Milton, and recently appointed leader of the Education and Skills Funding Agency, Eileen Milner, presenting at key lobbyist the Association of Employment & Learning Providers (AELP) conference in June 2018 perhaps we will learn more then.

Where can I go for more information?

qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/apprenticeships

