

Individual (Initial & Ongoing) Needs Assessment against the Apprenticeship Standard

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

1. The Initial Needs Assessment (INA) is the essential building block for every apprenticeship. It is an assessment by the learner that identifies gaps in knowledge and skills and experience for occupational aspects of the apprenticeship standard, the English and maths requirements for an apprenticeship, and any additional learning needs which the learner will require to help them to achieve their apprenticeship.
2. The initial needs assessment process ensures that New College of the Humanities (the College) forms a holistic picture of each learner and their skills to inform the delivery to meet employer and learner objectives. In doing so, the College ensures that it complies with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Funding Rules and does not draw down funding for prior learning, skills and experience relevant to the apprenticeship.
3. The College uses this procedure with the learner and their line manager to:
 - Create an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) for each apprentice to recognise prior learning skills and experience and ensure that they can achieve their apprenticeship and demonstrate competency in their specific role.
 - To confirm that the apprenticeship is at the right level and scope for the learner's role, will provide sufficient new learning and that any action needed is reflected in their ILP/Commitment Statement
 - Conduct a robust assessment of prior learning, skills and experience against the apprenticeship standard to ensure that the College does not fund learning outcomes that the learner has already demonstrated.
 - Confirm whether the learner has the necessary English and maths to achieve their apprenticeship.
 - Organise any additional learning support needed to enable an learner to successfully compete their apprenticeship.
 - Agree the final content, duration, schedule and price of the apprenticeship with each employer based on this assessment.

OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

MANDATORY OPERATIONAL AND FUNDING RULES

4. As part of their application to the College, every learner must complete an INA of their current knowledge, skills and qualifications against the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship Standard for which they are applying.
5. Applicants must also submit evidence of their prior learning and qualification achievements as part of this submission – this may take the form of certificates and/or through the applicant's Personal Learning Record (PLR) This will be checked at point of submission.
6. No applications can progress until the INA, certificates/PLR and supporting evidence has been received by the Director of Operations (Apprenticeships) (DOA).
7. The Business Development Manager (BDM) must ensure that employers complete, sign and date the declaration and Initial Contact Form and the Employer Specification, and that employers understand that apprenticeships are delivered to meet the needs of the job role and the specific skills gaps of each learner which the College confirms through its INA processes. The BDM must ensure that employers also understand:
 - 7.1. That an apprenticeship requires off the job learning and development time, which must comprise at least 20% of the learner's time during their apprenticeship.
 - 7.2. That this must take place in paid hours during the learner's typical working time.
 - 7.3. That an apprenticeship also requires on the job learning, which needs to progress alongside the planned off the job learning and provide the relevant experiences as part of the learner's day-to-day tasks to embed new knowledge and skills and develop the competency needed in their job role.
 - 7.4. That the learner must have a named workplace mentor, usually their line manager, providing supervision and support throughout their apprenticeship. This person must attend the Tri-partite reviews.
8. All applications must be assessed to confirm whether the applicant does have relevant knowledge skills and experience that would provide an exemption against the knowledge skills experience and behaviour criteria set out in the apprenticeship standard for which they are making an application.
9. The Programme Director (PD) must conduct a robust and thorough assessment against the standard and must take time to consider the pattern of answers submitted by the applicant and must not assume that learning at a lower level does not confer content exemptions for an apprenticeship at a higher level, or that experience does not confer exemption.
10. An apprenticeship can only be delivered for learners where there is a minimum of 12 months of learning and training remaining in the

apprenticeship once prior learning has been exempted from the apprenticeship. If this is the outcome of the prior learning assessment, the BDM must inform the employer of this outcome. Learners will not be informed of outcomes that affect the employer's apprenticeship programme before the employer is aware. In this case the BDM will work with employer and applicant on alternative short-course provision through NCH for example using our online courses, or through one of our partners.

11. Where there is evidence of relevant prior learning, skills or experience that leads to an exemption that does not breach the 12-month rule set out in paragraph 9. above, the duration, price, and contents of the learner's individual learning plan must be reduced to reflect this prior learning.
12. Where there is overlapping content in a similar context or where there is insufficient detail to provide clear evidence for a judgment, the PD must request additional information from the learner and use this as part of their prior learning assessment. The PD must retain evidence that confirms with absolute clarity whether prior learning does, or does not, exist for this learner and provide this for the DOA to retain in the learner evidence file
13. The PD must follow the College's policies and practice relating to the recognition of prior learning. [See Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer Policy].
14. However, the PD must be aware that the apprenticeship ESFA Funding Rules hold primacy over all other prior learning regulations regarding funding of all apprenticeship learning.
15. Employers cannot use their levy or co-funding where a learning aim in the apprenticeship has already been met. Employers with learners who are formally exempted by the College for a course must pay for this element. This applies whether the learner must complete an exempt course due to external regulation or accreditation that the College is bound by, or simply because the employer (or learner) wishes the learner to undertake the exempted learning for other reasons, despite their prior learning.
16. The PD is responsible for recommendations on decisions to grant exemption. Where prior learning has been assessed, the PD must:
 - 16.1. Complete and sign an Assessment of Prior Learning Rationale form and attach relevant evidence. The rationale must include a full explanation for the judgment.
 - 16.2. Quantify the hours reduction in content, assignments and other related off the job learning that this prior learning exemption confers.
 - 16.3. Specify the courses by code and name with the dates where an learner is not required to take part in the study or assignments.
17. The responsibility for discussing prior learning outcomes with the employer and agreeing the final schedule and price for an apprenticeship rests with the BDM. Accountability for final price decisions rests with the Director of Apprenticeships.
18. Decisions on prior learning are a balance between ensuring academic rigour, offering the best opportunity for a successful outcome for the learner for

both their apprenticeship and competency in their role, and compliance with the ESFA Funding Rules on prior learning. Ultimately, should the ESFA audit identify what it believes to be unjustified claims for learners who should have received an exemption for prior learning, the College may be subject to significant funding clawback. For this reason, the final decision regarding prior learning exemptions rests with the Director of Apprenticeships.

PROCEDURES

19. The DOA is responsible for managing and monitoring the evidence pack of which the INA forms a part. The DOA is supported by the BDM and PD who coordinates the INA process internally (working closely with the PD) and is available to support any learners who require help with completing the INA. The BDM works closely with the DOA and the PD feeding in the outcomes of the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to employers.
20. The INA is part of the application process for all learners who apply to the College to undertake an apprenticeship. The INA is undertaken in conjunction with both the learner and the employer and requires input from both in the final application. The INA comprises of three distinct elements:
 - 20.1. The initial assessment of English and maths.
 - 20.2. The initial assessment of skills and knowledge against the apprenticeship standard.
 - 20.3. The assessment additional learning support.

PROGRAMME APPROVAL

21. As part of course validation the PD is responsible for submitting an Apprenticeship Course Map, setting out the courses, assessments, mode of learning and delivery schedule for all off the job learning in the apprenticeship. This must be mapped to the specific knowledge, skills, experience and behaviours set out in the Apprenticeship Standard documentation and the Apprenticeship Standard Assessment Plan.
22. The Apprenticeship Course Map must include a breakdown of anticipated off the job learning hours and mode for every element of the planned programme. It must provide sufficient granularity and detail on the theories, knowledge and skills included within each course to provide a robust INA framework against which individual applicants, supported by their line manager, can self-assess.
23. The Apprenticeship Course Map must also indicate relevant on the job learning that the PD would anticipate learners would need to experience at work while undertaking their day-to-day tasks, to enable line managers and learners to plan and include this as part of their on the job activity during the apprenticeship.

PRE-APPLICATION

Employer Information

24. The TNA which the BDM undertake with every employer will help the employer clarify their skills needs and priorities and explore the different benefits from the options available to meet these needs. The apprenticeship

is only one of the options to meet skills needs that the College and partners can offer and will work with the employer on the most suitable solution for them. The employer can then decide how to proceed, and if chosen, confirm why the apprenticeship offers the most appropriate route for them. [See Employer Engagement Procedure for more on the employer Training Needs Analysis.]

25. BDMs must explain the INA process with the employer at the Training Needs Assessment meeting so that employers are clear on the knowledge, skills and behaviours delivered through the apprenticeship standards and other training options that map to the roles in their organisation.
26. If the employer opts for an apprenticeship route, in discussions with employers the BDM will confirm the employer's business objectives for their programme to enable the PD to respond to these objectives and adjust content or delivery. The BDM will also work with the employer to establish where the programme can be adjusted to match the scope of roles in their organisation, and where the programme offers opportunities for company specific activity e.g. in projects or assignments. It is also essential that the TNA identifies maps the Apprenticeship and its full occupational profile to the scope of the organisation's roles. Any gaps and the plan for the employer to address these must be included in the Employer Specification.
27. BDMs must also explain that realising these benefits will require employer investment in and commitment to the delivery requirements for every apprenticeship:
 - 27.1. To line manager support and engagement.
 - 27.2. To ensure learners 20% minimum off the job training and development time in the working paid hours.
 - 27.3. To attend termly tri-partite progress reviews.
28. The Apprenticeship Employer Handbook includes details of the INA process and is distributed to employers at the Training Needs Analysis.
29. BDMs must ensure that all employers complete an Apprenticeship Employer Specification as an output of their Training Needs Analysis. This will include confirmation of employer arrangements for recruitment and selection, the dates by which this must be completed in order for the successful applicants to join the planned apprenticeship programme, and an employer declaration confirming their commitment.

Apprentice Recruitment

30. For employers who are intending to run a recruitment and selection process for learners from within their workforce or externally, BDMs will provide the College Employer Guide – Recruiting and Selecting an Apprentice and the link to the College's online web pages that explain application and initial needs assessment for applicants.
31. Employers may choose to commence the application process only after they have selected their learners. Where this is the case, BDMs must ensure that employers have included the apprenticeship eligibility criteria in the application and selection process. BDMs must ensure that when employers

sign the Employer Specification Declaration they understand the College can only offer apprenticeship places to individuals who meet the apprenticeship eligibility criteria and the College's own application criteria. The College will make a formal offer to an learner only when both sets of criteria are met.

32. BDMs must forward the list of applicants identified by the employer to the DOA by the date agreed in the recruitment schedule to trigger the application and INA process.

APPLICATION

Learner Information

33. The apprenticeship application form is different to that for an undergraduate or postgraduate programme, as it collects a range of additional mandatory information required to register the learner on the ESFA Individualised Learner Record (ILR). The ILR system underpins the College payments for the apprenticeship delivery.
34. All applicants will be given a two-week deadline to complete the application and their INA. They must produce the evidence of their prior learning English and maths and any occupational knowledge, skills and experience against the apprenticeship. This must accompany other mandatory eligibility evidence.
35. All applicants will be provided with an Apprentice Guide - Making an Apprenticeship Application to the College as early as possible in the employer's recruitment timetable but as part of their application as a minimum. This enables applicants to begin the process of sourcing their English and maths certificates and evidence of any prior learning qualifications achieved; alongside other evidence required as part of the application, or to check and supply their PLR report summary.
36. The DOA offers ongoing support for applicants as they complete their application by email and phone. Queries must be answered promptly typically within a working day to promote efficient customer service and to ensure that there is no delay in meeting application deadlines for the learner.
37. The DOA will track all applications and chase any late returns from the day these become overdue. After applications become one week late, the DOA must compile a list of late applicants and BDMs must inform their employers that the application process is in jeopardy if documents are not received by return.
38. The DOA and BDM must continue to track and chase missing applications and INA documentation. If this is not produced within two weeks of the planned start date, BDMs must confirm to the employer that the apprenticeship start date is no longer available. BDMs can then discuss future start dates.
39. The Apprentice Guide will be available to learners on the College's apprenticeships admissions web page. The guide sets out the INA process and timelines, offers advice on completion and explains what the INA seeks to achieve. Details on the help provided by email and phone from the DOA

is included in the process of application and Personal Learning Record and UKNARIC where this applies.

40. The evidence requirements are included as a checklist in the guide and includes information on how to apply and the use their personal learning record, as an alternative to producing certificates. This is achieved by providing their Personal Learning Record report and their Unique Learning Number.

INITIAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT

41. The INA is the document on which the assessment is based, but this must be considered alongside additional information supplied at application including the application form or other information supplied by employer or applicant. For this reason, it is essential that timelines for the return of prior learning assessments are met by the PD. The PD must make sufficient time to use the INA to understand the particular strengths in development areas for each learner as part of planning their learning objectives and Individual Learning Plans and for overall planning for each cohort.
42. The College expects to work with apprentices who have relevant knowledge, skills and experience that will result in exemptions from modules in the apprenticeships. This supports the College's aim to develop an Individual Learning Plan that responds to each individual's skills gaps and objectives to meet their role and wider occupation. This also confirms, for compliance purposes, that the College is not seeking funding for learning aims the apprentice has already demonstrated.
43. On receipt of the application forms, the DOA will review each INA to establish whether the application has been completed correctly and can be processed, or whether it must be returned to the applicant to chase missing information or supporting evidence.
44. The DOA will then review the evidence submitted through the PLR or in certificate form.
45. The DOA and PD must consider the whole of the submitted INA and to be vigilant for missing information and learners' confused responses (for example, indicating they have prior qualifications in the prior learning and experience table and then not referring to this elsewhere). The DOA must ensure that all INAs are triaged at point of entry and returned to learners where missing details are indicated. The PD must receive application information provided by the learner.
46. The DOA must first consider whether, based on the TNA and the INA information provided, an apprenticeship is the best route for each learner, and whether there are other more appropriate options, for example where the applicant might benefit from a lower level apprenticeship that might better match their experience, or where their skills gaps are clustered mainly in one specialist area and a short course might provide the same benefits. The learner's own statement and their line manager's comments on why this route was chosen must be considered.
47. Training through an apprenticeship is one of a number of options that the College can offer an applicant. Where other options are identified, this

discussion will take place with the employer and the learner, led by the BDM as part of the INA follow-up meeting. The BDM will then support the employer and the learner to pursue alternative routes.

48. Where other routes are indicated, the DOA and BDM must agree how to proceed with the employer and the learner. The Director Apprenticeships will make the final decision.
49. The DOA will review the applicant's overall responses and, where prior learning is indicated, the INA and documentation will be placed in the central store for the PD to assess and complete the INA Prior Learning Assessment.
50. The PD is responsible for reviewing the vocational INA, assessing the range of responses the applicant has provided, and, using the apprenticeship standard as the guide, assessing whether prior qualifications or experience wider learning meet what is required by the apprenticeship and end-point assessment. Where this is the case, the PD must exempt the learner from learning in the apprenticeship:
 - 50.1. Where prior learning is only part of the course, the PD must assess whether the learner would be capable of passing the assignment and meeting the requirements in the end-point assessment successfully. If not, then the full course must be completed and may be funded from the levy/co-funding.
 - 50.2. The PD may exempt from a full course but still require the learner to complete the assessments in order to confirm that the learner has the necessary skills in order to successfully complete the apprenticeship. This time to administer and support the assessment may be funded from the levy/co-funding.
 - 50.3. The PD may also recommend not exempting an learner from the course or the element where prior learning is clearly indicated. The College may not drawdown funding where prior learning is clearly indicated. Employers must pay for this course outside their levy or co-funding.
51. The PD must also consider the commentary and views of the applicant's line manager to ensure that a balanced judgment on the learner's knowledge and experience forms part of the assessment.
52. Where the information in the INA is incomplete, or in insufficient detail to form a clear judgment, or contradictory, the PD MUST contact the learner and request all relevant information, for example. about the content of a potentially relevant degree or qualification.
53. Where INAs indicate that there is relevant experiential learning, the PD may request written statements from the learner and their line manager or other sources to corroborate and confirm that there is sufficient evidence of meeting the apprenticeship standard knowledge, skills and behaviours.
54. If the PD choose to contact learners by phone, the PD must document the content and outcome of any conversation and include this as part of their course rationale evidence for any decisions. Records of all additional

information required must be kept and submitted to the central source and circulated to the learner and their line manager. Where relevant, either or both parties must confirm that this is an accurate representation of the learner's experience and ability before this may be used as evidence for prior learning through experience.

55. All conversations must be documented and dated and retained as evidence to support the INA prior learning assessment. All emails or scanned documentation must be retained as evidence. All evidence must be compiled and returned to the DOA with the completed details of the Prior Learning Rationale Assessment.

COMPLETING THE INA RATIONALE ASSESSMENT

56. The PD must review the INA and complete the Rationale within five working days of notification that the INA documents have been submitted and recorded as received. The INA is the building block for the whole of the apprenticeship contracting process and must be returned to the DOA to allow the remaining contracting and mandatory processes to be completed.
57. This assessment must consider all the evidence in the learner INA when reaching a judgment and must take particular care to seek further information as evidence when the impact of prior learning is unclear.
58. The PD must provide a robust written assessment and set of evidence from learner, line manager and other sources for all INA Assessment recommendations to the timescale indicated by the DOA. The PD must complete and sign an Assessment of Prior Learning Rationale form, attach relevant evidence and:
 - 58.1. Include a full explanation for the judgment, making direct reference to the evidence underpinning the assessment.
 - 58.2. Quantify the hours reduction in content, assignments and other related off the job learning that the prior learning exemption confers.
 - 58.3. Recommend any reduction in duration and specify the course by name and code, with the dates where a learner is not required to take part in the study or assignments.
 - 58.4. Make a clear recommendation for the exemptions or otherwise for the learner.
59. The DOA will confirm the reduction in price, and the BDM will conduct a post INA discussion with the employer and the learner setting out the impact of the INA and the Individual Learning Plan that is proposed. Where needed, the Employer Specification must be updated to reflect the final programme, price, and duration agreed.
60. Until the INA rationale is completed and held, with evidence in the student information system, no further processing of employer contracts and other documentation can progress.
61. The Director Apprenticeships will make the final decision on all prior learning decisions.

THE COMMITMENT STATEMENT AND INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLAN

62. The Individual Learning Plan (ILP) is a summary of the learning objectives and content schedule arising from the TNA and all elements of the INA. The ILP provides the learner with a road map of their apprenticeship, setting out their path of learning objectives, how this will be delivered and how progress will be made and measured.
63. From the resulting INA outcomes, alongside the English and maths INA, and the Additional Learning Support INA, the DOA will prepare a tailored ILP for each learner as part of their Commitment Statement.
64. The Commitment Statement will also set out the name, contact details and role of any subcontractors engaged in delivering this element of the apprenticeship, and will specify the level of funding that the College will draw down from the ESFA for the cost of this training. Every aspect of the delivery planned for the apprenticeship will be described in detail within the Commitment Statement.

THE INA AND ITS ROLE IN PROGRAMME PREPARATION

65. The INA is a documented record of the learner's prior learning skills and qualifications and experience, and the rationale and expected benefits from choosing apprenticeship as their route of learning, supported by the line manager's own views of the learner's strengths and development areas. The INA sets the starting point for each learner's learning and confirms their own learning objectives for their programme. The information on the INA also enables the PD, the DOA and faculty to adjust the delivery of the apprenticeship to respond to the individual objectives for each learner, and to respond to the pattern of existing skills and knowledge across a specific cohort.
66. As part of the INA, the PD must allocate an Apprenticeship Adviser (AA) to each learner. The AA must ensure that all three initial needs assessments (Additional Learning Support, English and maths, and vocational) are available to Apprenticeship Advisers before the apprenticeship commences to ensure that the learner's strengths and development areas are clear, and that the resulting ILP can be appropriately supported. AAs should consider even at this early stage whether stretch plans or development may be needed and make preparations.

ACTION AND ISSUES DURING PROGRAMME DELIVERY

SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS WHERE A SKILLS GAP IS IDENTIFIED DURING DELIVERY

67. Central to the College's mission, every student receives the support and guidance needed to achieve their full potential, be successful in their programme, and meet or exceed the competency standards for their job role. For this purpose, even when learners have achieved their English and maths at Level 2, either before or during their apprenticeship, the AA must track learner progress and seek feedback on progress, looking for

indications that the learner may not have sufficient English and maths skills to successfully carry out their role or achieve their apprenticeship.

68. If a skills gap is indicated, either from the AA's own monitoring or raised by the learner themselves, discussions with the learner and the line manager will take place and an Action Plan to address the gap will be agreed. This may take place either offline at an ad hoc tri-partite review or at a scheduled Tri-partite review, whichever can be arranged sooner.
69. Where a longer-term schedule or significant additional learning objectives are needed to respond to an action plan created during the apprenticeship, the Individual Learning Plan in the Commitment Statement MUST be updated to reflect changes to the learner's learning plan.
70. The AA must inform the DOA who will update and reissue the Commitment Statement to reflect the agreed activities and timelines indicated in the action plan. The updated Commitment Statement will be circulated for signature by learner, employer and the College. It must be returned to the DOA within two weeks. The BDM must chase the return where needed.
71. The AA must ensure that signed and dated Commitment Statement copies are circulated to the learner and the employer, and that the College's copy is held in the learner evidence pack, alongside any English and maths Initial Needs Assessment and Individual Learning Plan/action plans, certificates confirming achievement, and evidence of the delivery of the English and maths action plan by the subcontractor.

TRACKING AND MONITORING

72. The Individual Learning Plan sets the start point for all apprenticeship delivery, and the progress against the learning objectives in the plan is reviewed formally at termly tri-partite reviews. The AA, the employer and the learner will consider and agree progress made since the start of the programme and since the previous review, and whether the apprenticeship is on plan for a successful outcome.
73. The tri-partite review output includes agreeing any further development or further support needed to maintain progress, address areas for development or offer stretch. This is to support the learner to maintain or exceed their planned outcome and schedule set out in the Individual Learning Plan. This includes enhancement opportunities identified by the employer, faculty or learners; action plans to address development; or other further support needed for the learner. Progress against the off the job learning schedule will also be reviewed, to ensure that the learner is able to spend the scheduled time on their apprenticeship in their working paid hours.
74. At the tri-partite review, the AA will lead discussions on progress using feedback from the learner, their line manager, information from subcontractors where relevant, satisfaction survey comments and evidence of impact in the workplace to agree a formal view of progress made since the last meeting, and against the original gap and learning plan objectives identified at the start of the apprenticeship. A RAG status will be agreed, and an action plan developed if this status is amber or red.

INITIAL INDIVIDUAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE APPRENTICESHIP STANDARDS

75. The PD and the DOA must review the pattern of progress, achievement, timeliness and satisfaction for learners individually and at cohort and programme level.
76. The DOA must include KPI issues on the apprenticeship risk register. The Apprenticeship Management Board must monitor and take action to address overall programme risks.
77. The AA must include RED RAG rated progress on the Programme Risk Register and escalate this to the DOA and the PD. The Apprenticeships Team must monitor and take action to address individual, programme and cohort risks.

Title: Initial Individual Needs Assessment against the Apprenticeship Standards					
Approved by: Academic Board					
Version number	Date approved	Date published	Owner	Location	Proposed next review date
2.0	September 2020	September 2020	Head of Quality Assurance	Academic Handbook; Policies and Procedures; Apprenticeships Policies and procedures	September 2021
1.0	December 2019	December 2019	Head of Quality Assurance	Academic Handbook; Policies and Procedures; Apprenticeships Policies and procedures	December 2020
Referenced documents	Individual Learning Plan; Initial Contact Form; Employer Specification; and Recognition of Prior Learning.				
External Reference Point(s)	ESFA Funding Rules and Apprenticeship Standard.				

