

Employer Webinar – 7th April

**Industry Representatives:**

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**General Update:**

- The Government have announced that if apprentices are furloughed, they can continue to study, sit exams and stay on-programme. The ESFA has also confirmed this and suggest that the furlough period can be used to 'front-load' the 20% Off-The-Job learning requirement.
- It has also been confirmed that the minimum time an employee can be furloughed is three weeks. However, they can return to work and then be furloughed for further three-week periods if necessary.

**Impact of apprenticeships on FI:**

- Due to how qualifications and employers have embraced the apprenticeship scheme, apprentices have become a huge part of First Intuition's student population. September 2017, we had 10 registered apprentices, a year later to 600 and now roughly 2,500 apprentices.
- Apprenticeships have also changed our outlook of pastoral care such as safeguarding weaving that more into the whole company rather than just apprentices making it a priority that our students and staff are always safe.
- Since the beginning, our main mission has always been getting students to pass their accountancy exams whereas now with the growing numbers of apprentices this has broadened, shifting to building professional careers. **"We're not training accountants; we're developing future leaders" – Gareth John**

**How the last 4 weeks has impacted FI:**

- We understand that many students and apprentices have had their employment disrupted. If any apprentice has been made redundant with less than 6 months of their programme left, then they can carry on to complete their studies. If they have longer than 6 months of their programme left, we can help with job search for the apprentice to carry on with their studies.
- Being furloughed can raise the question of is it the same as a break in learning. The answer is no, we are actively encouraging those who have been furloughed to try and put all their efforts into their studies during this period. As well as the educational benefits of continuing to progress in their qualification the structure, sense of achievement and community that their studies will offer them will be important for their mental health. FI is also in the midst of putting together a package to help those keep their lives structured whilst being on furlough to maintain good mental health.
- If a break-in learning is needed A 4-week break is allowed without contacting the ESFA as it will have no impact on a training contract. A break over 4 weeks however the ESFA will have to be contacted. For those apprentices who are now ready to go through EPA, we are encouraging them to focus other elements such as the reflective assessment, portfolio and project reports whilst most computer-based exams are postponed.

### **AAT Updates:**

- AAT has currently suspended all on-demand exams and waiting for the government to lift current restrictions to get assessments going ahead again. In response to the current situation, they have relaxed conditions regarding the professional discussion for apprentices going through EPA allowing the discussion to take place at home.
- Since being part of the apprenticeship scheme AAT has now found more companies are now willing to embrace apprenticeships as perceptions of them have changed especially in comparison to a university degree.
- It seems more students now are deciding to go into an apprenticeship than university which is making some employers question the importance of a degree. The apprenticeship program has also encouraged more communication between the employer and the awarding body, encouraging qualifications to improve the support given.
- During the last four weeks, AAT main mission has been to support students' wellbeing and mental health during this difficult time and continue to promote online hubs for wellbeing and any new resources that can help aid learning.

### **ACCA Updates:**

- Acca has cancelled all June exams, however, they are investigating remote invigilation options that mean students will be able to sit exams at home. We are anticipating that September sittings will still go ahead and encouraging students if they were planning to sit one exam in June they should choose a second paper that complements the other (i.e. AA to go with FR) and sit both exams in September. ACCA is again encouraging apprentices to go through other objectives whilst waiting for exams to be available.
- They have also confirmed that if trainees are furloughed this will not change their training contract requirements and that 36 month of work experience is the minimum required to qualify.
- ACCA has always supported the apprenticeship program as it shares the same culture and equal opportunity values the ACCA have. A lot of line managers first questioned the amount of extra work the programme required however many now understand it's the additional skills and behaviours learnt which makes the programme worthwhile.
- Again, over the past four weeks, ACCA has been focused on keeping the mental health and wellbeing of their students high adding resources to their online hubs.

### **CIMA Updates:**

- CIMA has announced the great news that all exams will be able to be sat at home under remote proctored invigilation, we are currently waiting for booking and case study exam dates to be confirmed but OT exams will be available from 4<sup>th</sup> May.
- In regard to how furloughing will affect any apprentices training management CIMA have advised they will be making an announcement at the end of the week on how this may affect them.

- Since the apprenticeship scheme has been growing in popularity more knowledge has been clarified and the structure has been strengthened which has found more employers leaning towards the programme.
- Over the past four weeks, CIMA has been encouraging students to carry on with their studies as the exams will be able to start again in May for them to continue making progress.

#### **ICAEW Updates:**

- **Breaking news – since this webinar the ICAEW have announced that they have received regulatory approval to run Certificate Level/CFAB exams via remote proctoring invigilation. They hope to have this ready by the end of April.**
- ICAEW has currently stopped all exams running and are looking into remote invigilation for certificate exams however waiting for approval to do so. Professional June exam sittings have been cancelled, we are hoping September ones will be able to go ahead, all advanced exam July sittings have been postponed and are expected to run in August with dates to be confirmed **(this has now been confirmed as 24 to 26 August)**. The apprentice EPA's are to go ahead as normal, finalising dates now, encouraging those ready for EPA to focus on portfolio and reports.
- Whilst furloughing is going ahead the ICAEW have confirmed a minimum training period of 36 months with 450 days of practical experience must still be completed. A 12-week break from work is being allowed without altering the training contract to allow for furlough periods, these weeks do not have to be a single 12-week block. If all other requirements have been completed final exams are permitted to be sat outside the 36-month training agreement period.
- ICAEW continue to embrace the apprenticeship program advising it was a relatively small adjustment to the running of qualification due to many shared elements. However, they have now turned more focus on too school leaver programs. A vast number of ACA students are now on the Level 7 apprenticeship program.
- During this situation, they continue to encourage students to keep studying and are promoting other effective training they can be doing whilst working remotely. Directing students to ICAEW hub where there are free online units and courses such as "Finance in a digital world", excel and ethics training.

We and all qualifications understand the difficult time we are all currently going through and will continue to give as much support to students as we possibly can. Working together will ensure we all come out of this safe and having still achieved something positive.