OneFile on Trailblazers

In March 2015 at our annual OneFile Roadshow, Paul McGrail from Myerscough College spoke about his experience of being part of one of the first trailblazers (one of various employer-led groups that have developed the new apprenticeship standards). For many of our customers, this was their first experience of hearing from someone who had been directly involved in writing the standards. Since then, OneFile has been proactively working with customers to ensure our software is ready for the new apprenticeship standards.

As we understand it, each new apprenticeship standard is defined in two parts:

1) A two-page standard which identifies the job role the apprentice will be doing, along with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required by them.

2) An assessment plan that specifies how the apprentice will be assessed during the end-assessment, and if applicable, any qualifications that must be achieved prior to the end-assessment.

The apprentice's journey will start with a learning programme, conducted by a training provider and partly funded by the employer, whether or not through the levy. The journey will end with an end-point assessment which will be conducted by an independent organisation that does not have a vested interest in the apprentice.

As of July 2016, there are over 120 new apprenticeship standards ready to use. OneFile's e-portfolio software can be used to effectively deliver these new standards, just as it can with the existing frameworks.

In some cases, the purpose changes from being an assessment e-portfolio under the existing frameworks, to a learning and training e-portfolio under the new standards. However, this is not always the case. The new "Adult Care Worker" standard still uses the achievement of the existing QCF diploma and functional skills as part of the evidence, so the e-portfolio can be used in exactly the same way as before.

Regardless of its purpose, Ofsted and the SFA will still require visibility of the apprentice's progress and learning journey during the programme. Additionally, the training provider will also require a means of determining whether the apprentice is ready for end-point assessment towards the end of the programme. So, even where an e-portfolio is not required for end-point assessment, it will always be required to effectively manage and demonstrate the apprentice's progression through the learning programme.

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We should also assume that, since employers will be contributing towards the funding of the apprentice (whether or not through the levy), employers will be a lot more engaged with their apprentice's learning. Using an e-portfolio, the employer can contribute directly to the learning programme and track the journey the apprentice is making, facilitating better-informed interactions with the training provider.

As aforementioned, the e-portfolio provides the training provider with the means to identify when the apprentice is ready for their end-point assessment (a so-called 'gateway' which will gauge whether the apprentice is ready to take an end-point assessment). In any case, the end-point assessment process is carried out by an independent assessment body (not the training provider) and is an additional cost for the employer/ training provider.

At present, some independent assessment bodies are offering only one resit for this cost, so it is imperative the apprentice is absolutely ready to take the assessment.

The shift from the existing QCF frameworks to the new apprenticeship standards means that training providers will need to have detailed conversations with their customers (the employers). Not only will they need to understand the training requirements for the apprenticeship standard, they will also need to understand any specific training requirements from the employer.

At OneFile, a number of our customers are already using the new apprenticeship standards. To get them started, we consulted with each individual customer about their preferred setup. Some just wanted the standard inputting, some the standard and the plan, some also wanted the additional criteria required by the employer. Our consultative approach to this process, along with the flexibility of our software, has provided a tailor-made solution for each customer.

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