

# FederationOracle

The one source for all your Apprenticeship Certification information

## News in Brief

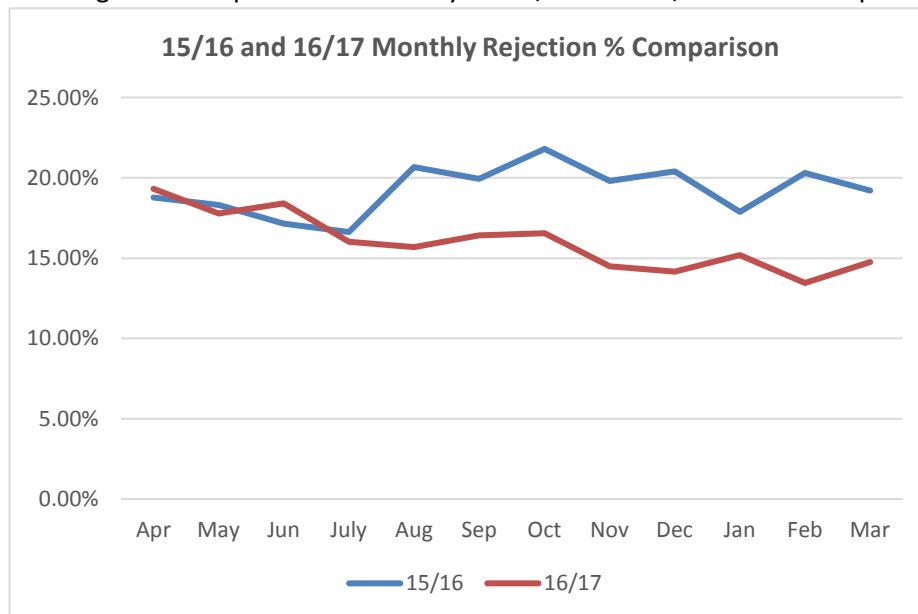
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## Snap, and all change

Nearly half way through the year and the months are flying by. We have the snap election in June which has initiated purdah which has effected SASE framework withdrawal amongst other things but we are into a new financial year so we have updates on rejections during 16/17 financial year and an update on our Customer Satisfaction Survey and of course, the new levy is now in place. It is all happening in Apprenticeships.

## Reducing rejections

Over recent years we have all been working hard to reduce rejections, we noted in the previous issue of the Oracle that the rejection rate has halved since the launch of ACE in 2012. Additionally the network saved approximately £30,000 by reducing rejections during 2016 when compared with 2015. Last month saw the new financial year start, allowing us to compare the financial year 15/16 with 16/17. When comparing the two years we can see that there



has been just over 3% reduction in the average, having been 19.24% in 15/16 the average for 16/17 was 16%. This is great news for everyone involved with ACE, this is a real achievement. Keeping on this hard work, April 17 saw a continuation of the low rejection rate at 14%, this is great news for all involved in Apprenticeship Certification.

We would like to continue this momentum and reduce rejections further, keep a look out for some new initiatives that we will roll out in the coming months.

## MAO Acceptable Evidence Launch

Following the successful launch of the ACE and ACW Acceptable Evidence Guidance we have received a number of queries around evidence which is acceptable within Scottish Modern Apprenticeships. We have therefore created guidance for MAOnline to assist in the certification process.

This new guide is fully integrated with the [MAOnline website](#) making it easy to navigate and find individual evidence examples. If you require any further information about the new Acceptable Evidence Guidance or you encounter evidence that is not specified and you would like to bring it to our attention for consideration, please contact the [MAOnline System Support Team](#).

## Customer Satisfaction Survey – A Thank You from Mark Froud, FISSS

A thank you to each and every one of you who completed our recent survey. I was able to tell the Federation Board in April that 98% of the 860 of you who responded to our certification survey thought that the certification network met or exceeded expectations. Will the new system deliver this?! I hope so. We have set a high bar and have offered our help to the ESFA.

I made it very clear at the Board that this success is down to the teams in the Training Providers and Certification Bodies. Not only because of the quality of the work you do, but also the positive way you work together. And you now have a rejection rate below 15% for the first time ever. When I started 4 years ago it was 36%. This is saving you £0.4m in time savings every year.

Thank you for not giving me sleepless nights. This is a team effort with you and all your colleagues pulling in the same direction. It does not happen because we want it to, it happens because you care.

Here's to certification with a smile.

In completing the Customer Satisfaction Survey you were entered into a competition to win a voucher, the prize winners are:

- Merle - Central Sussex College
- Josie - Citrus Training Solutions
- Heather - NECA Training Ltd

Congratulations to all of our winners.

## Certification Body (CB) customer service in 2017

The survey questions relating to the level of customer service provided by the Certification Bodies (CBs) have remained the same since 2015 so we now have three years' worth of comparable data for this part of the survey. More than 80% of ACE users now rate the CBs Excellent or Good across every service level indicator. The greatest increase in satisfaction was in the speed of printing and despatching certificates. These indicators increased by 19 and 14 percentage points respectively. Eighty one per cent of respondents now report that both the speed of printing and despatching certificates is excellent or good. This compares to 62% and 67% respectively in 2016. In response to CBs' requests to manage expectations around printing, we reminded respondents this year that CBs work within an agreed Service Level Agreement (SLA) of 10 working days to action a submission on ACE i.e. approve certification or make a rejection.



When asked how satisfied providers had been with the service and support provided by the CBs, satisfaction levels had increased considerably over the last 12 months, a good news story for the CBs. Twenty one per cent said their expectations had been exceeded (compared to 13% in 2015), 76% said their expectations had been met (compared to 81% in 2016), while only three per cent said they were somewhat disappointed (compared to six per cent in 2016). In 2017, no users described their experiences as 'Very disappointing'.

Providers were asked to name any CBs that had provided particularly good or poor service. These responses were used to compile a short report for the individual CBs on their level of service. The responses received were therefore indicative of the performance of individual CBs. Those CBs who were delivering outstanding customer service were clearly identifiable from our analysis of the survey responses, as were those that were perceived as delivering less than satisfactory performance. If no mentions of the CB or CB's staff appeared in the text responses, the CB was considered to be performing at an adequate level of service. Two people from the Federation's Quality Team independently graded customer service for each CB, taking results for 2016 into account.

Nine CBs achieved the top accolade (Grade one), compared to eight in 2016. A further nine achieved a Grade two (compared to 11 in 2016). No CBs fell into the lowest Grade three category and two managed to improve their overall levels of customer service. The customer service grades reported for 2017 will feed into the CBs' next audit by The Federation.

We would like to thank all those who responded to the 2017 survey. By participating in the survey we are able to collect valuable feedback which provides evidence to improve overall service year on year.

### **Policy Round Up**

Well the big news that won't have escaped your attention is that a general election has been called for the 8<sup>th</sup> June. What this means in practical terms is that when purdah kicks in, government officials are unlikely to engage in public meetings or announcements so the business of government publically slows down, but behind closed doors the process, for example on approving Apprenticeship Standards, still goes on. So expect a quiet month in May – but a series of announcements from mid - June onwards when the business of government including any policy changes or announcements on skills will be made.

Also the Institute for Apprenticeships formally opened for business on the 1<sup>st</sup> April and had its launch event on the 18<sup>th</sup> April at Mansion House in London. On the same day the IfA published its response to the consultation on their operational plan, and the operational plan itself. Then they published their 'How to Guide' for Trailblazers and 2 days later announced the 15 route panel chairs. All of the documents and press announcements can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/institute-for-apprenticeships>

In the meantime the delivery of the Apprenticeship programme from the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017 via the levy payers Apprenticeship Service and the allocation to training providers for non-levy paying employers has had a few hiccups along the way. Firstly the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers opened, closed and then re-opened again when some key providers didn't make it onto the list. Then there were delays to the allocations being in place to support the delivery to the non-levy paying employers. The confusion in the system might mean that we see a dip in starts on Apprenticeships over the summer until the levy beds down. Additionally we are now seeing the merger of the Education Funding Agency and the Skills Funding Agency to create the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). All of these changes combined with the levy coming into force on the 6<sup>th</sup> April will make for a challenging landscape for training providers and FE Colleges over the coming year.

### **Inspiring Governance – Inspiring Communities: Why not be the inspiration!**

Make your business the business that supports your community.

Employers who support their employees to volunteer as school governors are making a huge difference to their communities and the lives of young people, and schools urgently need volunteers with workplace skills.

Employees who volunteer also bring extra benefits for their employers in terms of their own professional development, as they develop transferrable skills in strategic leadership, budgeting, team working, communication and more.

Good governance of our schools is vital to the economic sustainability of our local economies, including your business.

Governors support the strategic leadership of schools and ultimately work to deliver better outcomes for children and young people. School governing boards are most effective when made up of individuals with a diverse range of skills, interests and involvement in the community. Inspiring Governance is a DfE funded, free service with resources and information to help. We provide free training and support to employees who volunteer, and we help match them with a school in their area. We need your support to help us develop your community.

Find out why you should get involved and what's in it for you as an employer or as an employee.

You can help by circulating this message to your networks and employees.

For details, visit [www.inspiringgovernance.org](http://www.inspiringgovernance.org) or email [michael.roy@educationandemployers.org](mailto:michael.roy@educationandemployers.org)