

Mark Froud

Managing Director

Managing Director's Update

There is a lot going on here at the Federation. However, it is about focus and not getting attracted to new shiny things and not dropping the ball. Certification work continues to be delivered at its usual high level. The Federation and the Certification Bodies will continue to see our work through to the issue of the final English Apprenticeship Framework certificate (expected in 2023) at the high standard we have now. Supporting the Certification Bodies and the Training Providers is our primary focus. And we have not forgotten Wales and Scotland. We are working with the administrations in both countries to continue to deliver an excellent certification service, accommodating the way their national Apprenticeship systems are developing.

There are though some new and shiny things and despite comments from others, the implementation of the Apprenticeship reforms in England, is progressing with increasing numbers of Apprentices now close to End Point Assessment. Having been around for 18 months some are calling for radical changes. This is so not needed. The Government has set its policy direction. Our role is to help them deliver their ambition. The IfA now recognises the issues that it needs to tackle and has a plan. The ESFA are struggling with the seismic changes the reform programme has engendered, but its implementation of the Digital Apprenticeship Service to manage the levy system is exemplary.

The issues still on the 'to do' list are:

- Ensuring independence between training and assessment
- Ensuring high quality end point assessment and encouraging new end point assessors
- Ensuring that data is managed securely and efficiently.

Our recently announced closer working with the Federation of Awarding Bodies is designed to jointly address each of these issues. Like us, the IfA, the ESFA and DFE, FAB do not want to see independence compromised. They recognise that the single biggest challenge to the reforms now is the quality of end point assessment and we are working together to ensure the EPAOs (some of them existing awarding organisations and some new entrants) have the tools and mechanisms in place to ensure that organisationally and individually end point assessment is conducted professionally. The Assessors Guild provides part of this assurance mechanism.

The third issue on the 'to do' list is the way data is transferred in the new system. There is no ESFA system to do this and Training Providers are now working with multiple EPAOs (many have their own bespoke systems or use an existing Learner Management System) and this means working with multiple systems. Exactly the reason for the Federation being asked to develop ACE. Well we now have ACE360. It simplifies data exchange and is independent of and does not compete with the LMSs, in fact by February 2019 it will have integrated with them.

So, yes some challenges, but nothing that working together we cannot sort out. I look forward to continuing to work with you all and wish you a very happy Christmas.



Yvonne Ryan

ACE360 Product Manager

ACE360 is up and running!

We are delighted to announce our cost-effective Apprenticeship Management System is up and running. After many months of development, we are happy to welcome Providers and Employers onto the system and to connect with delivery partners.

ACE360 has been developed with Apprenticeship representatives from providers, EPAOs and External Quality Assurance Providers and in doing so this ensures that all users have a system that meets their needs while ensuring that the Apprentice data and achievement evidence remain safe and secure. As with its predecessor ACE, ACE360 is an evolving system that is continually developed in line with industry demand, so watch this space for our growing list of features.

If you have not heard of ACE360 or would like to know more information on the benefits for your organisations or you have already joined one of these webinars and would like to sign up, please send an email to info@ace360.org and we will be happy to arrange this for you.

Some of the recent developments include:

- Regional Office access – If you are an organisation with multiple centres that are responsible for their own Apprentices, you are able to set up a linked account for this very purpose.
- EPAO selection – One of the advantages of ACE360 is the forecast for EPA, this helps both providers and EPAOs to plan future workload and capacity. Within an Apprentice record you are able to select and amend links to EPAOs to ensure that the Apprentice is linked to the correct organisation to carry out the End Point Assessment.

We are now developing integration with the main management information systems. This will allow for the transfer of Apprentice information into ACE360 preventing double keying this information.



Ana Cavilla

Director of Policy

Hong Kong Delegation Meet with UK Skills Representatives

Whilst most of the focus of the Federation's work is on the UK, we do get the opportunity to feed into International work on behalf of our network. Recently we were invited to meet with a delegation from Hong Kong who wanted to learn more about the development, design and delivery of the UK's Vocational Education and Training system, including Apprenticeships.

The event jointly hosted by the British Council and Vocational Training Centre of Hong Kong, gave us a great opportunity to promote the work of our members around employer engagement in standard setting, both in terms of the ongoing work on National Occupational Standards and in relation to the new Apprenticeship standards. Key areas raised were around the need for 'effective and impactful employer engagement' to drive a high quality and implementable vocational education and training system.

The Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, attended this roundtable discussion along with VTC Executive Director, Mrs Carrie Yau; the Director-General of the Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office, London, Ms Priscilla To and the Special Representative for Hong Kong Economic and Trade Affairs to the European Union, Ms Shirley Lam. Representatives were there from the British Council, Department for Education, the Department for Industry and Trade, the AOC, City and Guilds, and Higher Education Institutions, as well as the National Skills Academy for Rail, and UK Skills Federation.



Alison Bucknell

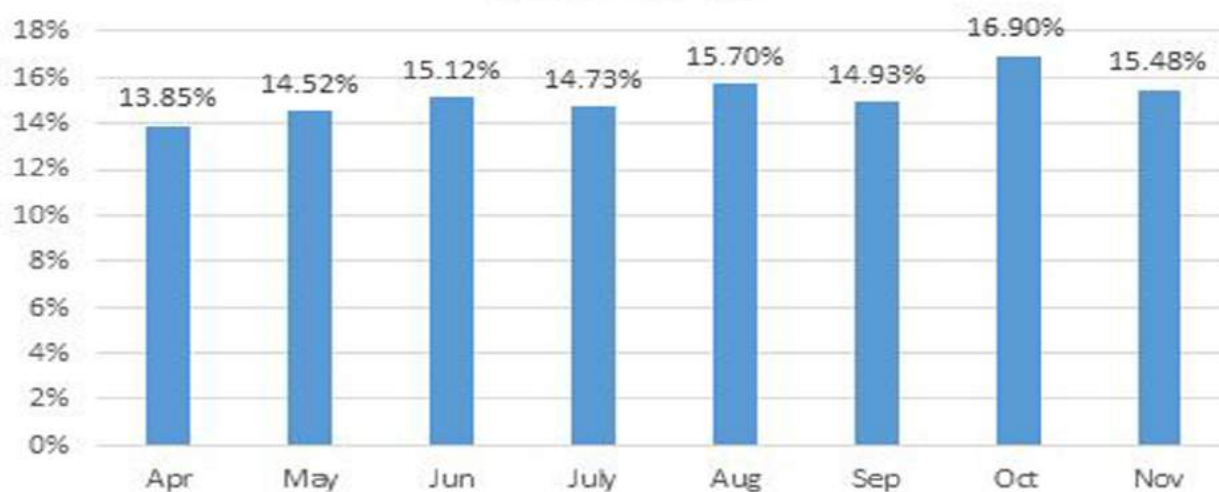
Support & Guidance Development Manager

ACE Rejection Rates- An Update

In the May edition of the Oracle this year, I was able to share with you the great news that average monthly rejection rates on ACE were on the decrease. During the financial year 2017/18, we achieved a monthly average rejection rate for ACE of 14.45% and I thought it would be a good time to give you an update on how things are going so far this financial year.

From the chart below you can see the average monthly rejection rates for the period 1st April – 30th Nov 2018 and the YTD average is currently 15.15%. However, we still have 4 months of the financial year to go so we need to all keep up the good work to ensure that we end the financial year with an average rejection figure of less than 15%. We did it last year so we can do it again!!

ACE Monthly Rejection Rates
1/4/18 - 30/11/18



As previously reported, the ongoing maintenance of keeping monthly rejection rates largely around 15% is a direct result of a number of factors- including updated and additional support and guidance materials produced by the Federation, the increased use of the automated link between ACE and the LRS database, some small system enhancements and last, but by no means least, the continued dedication and hard work from both Training Provider and Certification Body staff.

It is worth reminding you that the top 3 rejection reasons for each month YTD have pretty much remained consistent. These are:

- Errors with Apprentice basic information
- Incorrectly completed Apprentice Consent Forms
- Items of evidence either missing or illegible

Each of those individual reasons accounted for around 20% of all monthly rejections. So, over half of all monthly rejections can be assigned to one of the above 3 reasons. These are all things that are very easy to address and we are asking that these are areas that you pay special attention to ensure that you are avoiding the most common, and regular, reasons for rejection. Please refer to the range of guidance materials that are available on the ACE website.

Reducing rejections in these 3 areas alone would ensure that we meet our business target of an average annual rejection rate of under 15%.

For the remainder of 2018/19 we will be continuing to work with you all to address rejection reasons and if you feel that your organisation needs our assistance to address your current rejection rates then please contact the ACE Support Team.

Merry Christmas!

To all of our network of colleagues across the certification bodies, training providers and colleges across England, thank you all so much for all of your hard work this year. Since January 1st you have collectively issued 235,685 certificates through the ACE system. We have taken in excess of 10,000 calls to the helpdesk, and responded to over 15,000 emails. We've all worked through the numerous changes to the Specification for Apprentices Standards in England, again! But the network keeps rising to the challenge. Hope you all have a wonderful Christmas Break from all of us at The Federation.

