

NTP Electronic Signature Webinar

Questions and Answers

Thursday 30th June 2022

1. Background

The Webinar was developed based on feedback from Providers wanting to learn more about electronic signatures. Three MA Providers generously offered to share their experiences of three different systems.

The systems demonstrated during the Webinar were [DocuSign, Eversign](#) (with [HelloSign](#) used as a backup) and [Adobe DC](#).

Electronic signatures have been accepted by SDS for some time (see [MA Specification](#) 3.9). We are unable to endorse a particular software system. It is the Providers choice how they wish to meet the signature requirements.

SDS introduced temporary emergency COVID Interim Measures in April 2020 to assist Providers to maintain momentum during unprecedented circumstances. These [COVID interim measures](#) were not designed to be a long term solution and are regularly reviewed and some (e.g. alternative to signatures) are still in place currently until 30th September 2022.

The [MA Specification](#) and [MA Conditions](#) are regularly reviewed and include a version history to assist Providers in tracking any in year amendments. They outline the SDS requirements for MA Providers. The [MA Conditions and Specification Frequently Asked Questions](#) are collated and published and regularly updated to assist MA Providers.

In section 2 we have reviewed and collated the Questions and Answers from the Webinar for your information and reference. Providers leading the webinar shared good practice on the information they used to decide which system suited their business. In Section 3 we have collated some of the questions they were asked that elicited software system specific answers. These may help you if you are considering introducing electronic signature software to your business.

2. Questions and Answers

Q1. Are typed fonts acceptable as signatures?

A1. Signatures gathered using electronic signature software are acceptable (see [MA Specification](#) 3.9). If it isn't the actual signature i.e., where these are typed or tick box controlled, you must provide an audit trail as generated by the software.

Q2. Has there been any issues with validity and/or quality when a stylus, mouse or touchscreen has been used?

A2. This would be audited the same way as a wet signature.

Q3. If it is a wet signature or stylus/mouse/touchscreen signature can the Print Name and Date be typed?

A3. Yes.

Q4. What are the benefit of electronic signatures for APRs?

A4. Electronic signatures are not a mandatory requirement, but they are an option for Providers to explore which may be beneficial to their business. For reference the delivery of APRs should be appropriate to the apprentice and employer and you must ensure that all 3 parties are involved, engaged, and contribute to the process, regardless of whether the review is completed remotely or in person.

Q5. Are all the systems demonstrated web based?

A5. Yes. For all the systems demonstrated, the Provider has the licence(s). The Apprentices and Employers do not require licences or specific software/apps. In many cases Apprentices and Employers reply using their smartphones.

Q6. Have the SDS documents been uploaded to these systems or recreated within the system?

A6. For all the systems demonstrated, the Provider has uploaded the SDS MA forms available on the [SDS website](#).

Q7. If you are recreating a SDS form within a system do you need to have it approved by SDS before going live?

A7. No (see [MA Conditions](#) 15.1). It is the Providers responsibility to ensure that any forms, processes or systems conform fully at all times with the minimum requirements or mandatory information set out in the [MA Specification](#) and [MA Conditions](#) published at the time you are required to complete the process. The onus is on the Provider to ensure any information that is being transferred to a system is wholly accurate, is at all up to date and conforms to the relevant MA Specification and MA Conditions .

Q8. Who in SDS would a Provider discuss the software and process that we are looking at using?

A8. You do not need to discuss the software and process with SDS if it meets the requirements as per what is published in the [MA Specification](#) and [MA Conditions](#). If it does not meet the requirements, then any requests should go via your SIA.

Q9. Do Providers have to password protect documents sent electronically to the Apprentice and/or Employer?

A9. It is the Providers responsibility to ensure that they meet GDPR legislation whatever way they choose to transfer and store personal data (including equalities monitoring information). This needs to be considered when choosing an electronic system.

Q10. Can the Equality Monitoring Form be completed, signed, and transferred electronically?

A10. The Provider would have to ensure that they comply with the [Equality Monitoring Form Guidance](#). Section A must be completed by the Apprentice but securely destroyed once the Provider has input the information to FIPS. The Provider must ensure that the sensitive information provided in Section A is not stored in any electronic system. Section B must be signed and retained for audit purposes.

Q11. If you capture wet signatures and then upload to a digital case management system can the original be destroyed from a compliance point of view?

A11. Yes (see [MA Conditions](#) 28.5), however if the Apprentice is tagged for ESF then those electronic copies stored must show a declaration that it is a true copy of the original (see [MA Specification Appendix 7 ESF List of Audit Evidence Requirements](#)).

Q12. Is there any plan for SDS to create an import to FIPS so that providers who use a learner management system to collect signed forms electronically can import the new learner start details?

A12. SDS is committed to continuous improvement of FIPS and maximising best value for public funds. The security of the data is paramount and there are no current plans to create an import to FIPS.

Q13. SDS SOAR document

A13. There were questions regarding the implementation of electronic signatures within the cumulative SOAR document. SDS has acknowledged Provider feedback on this and has agreed to review the document.

Q14. What are the costs?

A14. There were numerous questions regarding the cost of purchasing the different systems. We would recommend you research several systems prior to deciding, each will have different packages to choose from dependent on your specific requirements.

Thanks again to the presenters and to all those who attended.

If you have any further questions, please direct them to your Skills Investment Adviser in the first instance.

3. Software system specific questions

Here are some of the questions that were asked of the presenters by the MA Providers attending the Webinar where the answers varied between software systems and presenters requirements. They may be useful to you when considering the range of suitable electronic signature software available to meet your specific needs.

The number of signatures (or envelopes*) that you need to gather on a monthly and annual basis for each Apprentice?

How do you overcome firewall issues with employers?

How does it capture more than one remote signature in the same form?

The cost?

Is the price negotiable?

The number of licences you would need?

Does it integrate with other IT systems to allow for download and retention of documents elsewhere?

Is it easy to have documents previously signed re-signed?

Data security in relation to GDPR regulations. Are passwords required?

Does the system store documents once completed?

What ongoing support/training is available?

Is it possible to see documents that others in your team have also sent, or can you only view documents sent by yourself?

Does the system accommodate a mixture of wet/stylus signatures and electronic signatures?

**In DocuSign, an envelope is a container for documents that you send to a recipient to sign. An envelope can have one document or many documents, and one signer or many signers. If you are using the email confirmation COVID interim measure, you could compare it to the covering email that you send out with the documents attached for signature*