

Review of Qualifications Reform FAQ

**Questions and answers linked to the
outcomes of the Review of Qualifications
Reform**

December 2024

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Summary

This publication answers questions we anticipate ESFA funded providers may have in response to our announcement of the outcomes of the Review of Qualifications Reform.

Who this publication is for

These questions and answers are for ESFA funded providers. They may also be useful to others, such as awarding organisations, parents/guardians, and learners.

Main points

The questions and answers are linked to the announcement of the outcome of the Review of Post 16 Qualifications Reform in December 2024.

We have anticipated questions that will be asked following the announcement. If you have a question that isn't answered in this document please email qualifications.reform@education.gov.uk

Document history

This is the first version of this FAQ document.

We will keep these questions and answers under review and publish any updates.

Questions and answers

Outcomes of the Review of Qualifications Reform

What is the context of the Review of Qualifications Reform and why was it launched?

The Department for Education has been implementing reforms to qualifications for post-16 learners at level 3 and below. Qualifications that overlapped with T Levels had been due to have public funding removed in either 2024 or 2025, with wider reforms at level 3 also taking place in 2025 in Health and Science; Construction and the Built Environment; Engineering and Manufacturing; Education and Early Years; and Digital. New qualifications which will become available in these routes for delivery from 1 August 2025 have been reformed either as technical qualifications based on employer-designed occupational standards, or alternative academic qualifications which offer applied learning, and which have clear links to related higher levels of study.

In July 2024, the Secretary of State for Education announced a review into the reform of post-16 qualifications. The review considered the level 3 qualifications due to have public funding removed by 31 July 2025. The review aimed to ensure that qualifications reform supports the missions of spreading opportunity and supporting economic growth, taking a pragmatic approach based on the needs of learners and the economy to see where qualifications need to be retained for longer, such as applied general qualifications or BTECs.

You can check which qualifications will be retained and for how long by [here](#).

What was the process for the Review of Qualifications Reform?

There were 9 routes in scope of the review: Legal, Finance and Accounting; Business and Administration; Health and Science (incl. Social Care); Education and Early Years; Engineering and Manufacturing; Construction and the Built Environment; Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care; Digital, and Creative and Design.

Firstly, we looked at qualifications with low and no enrolments in Health and Science (incl. social care); Education and Early Years; Engineering and Manufacturing; Construction and the Built Environment; and Digital. Where qualifications had less than 100, or no enrolments for three years, then those qualifications were judged not to be needed. Qualifications in the remaining four routes were not part of this process, because in these routes the only qualifications in scope of the review were those which had previously been assessed to overlap with T Levels. We worked closely with awarding organisations, and they have had the opportunity to appeal where necessary. This process identified over 200 qualifications that will continue to have funding removed on 31 July 2025.

We then considered which of the remaining qualifications in all of the nine routes needed to be retained for longer, based on learner need and employer demand, taking into account the reformed options that would be available (including the [74 new level 3 Alternative Academic Qualifications and Technical Qualifications](#) that will be available for delivery from 1 August 2025). We took a pragmatic, evidence-led approach, looking at the qualifications route by route and considering insights and perspectives gathered through our extensive stakeholder engagement activities.

You can find details of the qualifications that will be retained for longer in each route, and those which will continue to have funding removed as planned [here](#).

What did the Review of Qualifications Reform conclude?

The review identified over 200 qualifications with fewer than 100 enrolments in the last 3 years and confirmed these will have funding removed in 2025.

Of the qualifications that remained in scope, the review concluded that circa 70 per cent (157 qualifications) should have funding retained beyond 31 July 2025. You can find a route-by-route breakdown further down in this document.

The review also concluded that the government would not proceed with proposed rules of combination for mixed study programmes for 16 to 19 learners. It affirmed the government's commitment to T Levels as a high-quality qualification and that these should be the large qualifications of choice for 16 to 19 year olds wishing to study large qualifications. However, it has moved away from blanket rules such as removing funding from all technical qualifications that were assessed to overlap with T Levels and has set out clear timings for when qualifications are expected to be removed in each route.

We recognise that certainty is very important to education providers, students and their parents and guardians. Consequently, we have taken a series of decisions to make the position in the routes in scope of this review clear up to at least 2027. You can check which qualifications will be retained and for how long [here](#).

What are the outcomes for the Education and Early Years route?

In the Education and Early Years route, we heard strong support for the T Level, and so we will remove funding from existing large and medium qualifications (those with 421 or more guided learning hours) as planned in 2025. This will direct learners who want to study a large qualification in education and early years to the T Level as the highest quality option. The [T Level in this route](#) provides young people with the skills, knowledge and behaviours for skilled employment, higher level training or further study in the education and childcare sector. It includes two specialisms: Early Years Educator and Assisting Teaching, both combining classroom and practical learning.

Beyond this, we are also retaining funding for 6 smaller qualifications to support specific occupations such as teaching assistants, giving learners a smaller alternative which

could be combined with other qualifications. Retained qualifications in this route will remain funded in 2025-26, at which point the department's expectation is that the combination of A levels, T Levels and reformed qualifications will meet the needs of learners in this route. These qualifications can be viewed by clicking this [link](#).

What are the outcomes for the Digital route?

The [Digital Production, Design and Development](#) T Level provides young people with the core knowledge and skills for a career in software production and design. The T Level in [Digital Business Services](#) provides a technical route for young people wishing to progress to a career in IT, specifically in areas such as IT solutions or data analysis. The [Digital Support Services](#) is the ideal route for anyone wanting a career in digital infrastructure and support, leading to becoming an infrastructure technician or a role in IT support.

We are working with the T Level Awarding Organisation to make assessments more manageable, and plan to have the necessary changes in place for the next academic year. We are also introducing updated approaches for delivering T Level industry placements across the board, which will be particularly useful in supporting growth of the digital T Levels. This will be particularly important in the digital route.

We will therefore keep funding for the six existing large digital qualifications until 2026, to allow time to embed these key improvements.

Beyond this, we will also keep funding for 13 smaller digital qualifications with less than 720 guided learning hours so that learners have a range of choices. Retained qualifications in this route will remain funded in 2025-26, at which point the department's expectation is that the combination of A levels, T Levels and reformed qualifications will meet the needs of learners in this route. This approach allows colleges additional time to transition and embed key improvements. These qualifications can be viewed by clicking this [link](#).

What are the outcomes for the Health and Science route?

In the Health and Science route, all learners on [the Health T Level](#) develop the core knowledge and skills that are needed for entry to a range of health occupations, offering a structured pathway for learners. In the **Health and Science route**, we recognise that there is a need for qualifications that are aligned with the occupational standards in the Care Services route, and as a result, we will retain funding for 9 qualifications in health and social care until new qualifications in adult social care can be introduced.

Beyond this, we will also retain funding for 11 qualifications in science-related subjects (including Applied Science, Forensics and Dental Technology) to give learners more options until reformed qualifications can be introduced. Retained qualifications in this route will remain funded in 2025-26, at which point the department's expectation is that the combination of A levels, T Levels and reformed qualifications will meet the needs of learners in this route, with the exception of the large qualifications in Applied and

Forensic Science which may need to be retained for longer to allow for reformed options to be developed. These qualifications can be viewed by clicking this [link](#).

What are the outcomes for the Construction and the Built Environment route?

In the **Construction and the Built Environment route**, two of the construction T Levels ([Building Services Engineering for Construction](#) and [Designing, Surveying and Planning for Construction](#)) continue to grow and are meeting the needs of students and the sector. The Onsite Construction T Level is also providing valuable education, industry experience and a positive route into employment to those who take it. However, its success has been limited because of a lack of overall demand for a large qualification at level 3.

We have as a result concluded that the needs of learners and the economy are best met through apprenticeships and other classroom provision. We will, therefore, cease taking new enrolments for the Onsite Construction T Level, although those already taking it will be able to complete it as planned, and progress into positive destinations post-graduation.

We are also retaining funding for one large qualification in site carpentry, and 11 medium and small qualifications to meet the needs of this important sector and ensure that we can support government missions around building high quality housing until reformed qualifications can be introduced. Retained qualifications in this route will remain funded in 2025-26, at which point the department's expectation is that the combination of A levels, T Levels and reformed qualifications will meet the needs of learners in this route. These qualifications can be viewed by clicking this [link](#).

What are the outcomes for the Engineering and Manufacturing route?

We will retain qualifications in Engineering and Manufacturing previously identified for defunding, until 2027. This will allow time to update the occupational standards which are designed by employers which underpin this large and complex route, and for an additional two years for providers to transition to the [Engineering and Manufacturing T Levels](#). It will also allow time for new qualifications which meet the needs of learners, providers and employers to be established. In 2027 we expect to remove funding from large qualifications (those with 720 guided learning hours or more), to direct learners to the T Level(s) in this route. We will publish further information about wider reforms in this route in due course, considering the recommendations of the Curriculum and Assessment Review. These qualifications can be viewed by clicking this [link](#).

What are the outcomes for the Legal, Finance and Accounting route?

For the Legal, Finance and Accounting route, we will retain funding for all qualifications until at least 2027. In 2027 we expect to remove large qualifications (those with 720 guided learning hours or more), to direct learners to the T Level(s) in this route. We will publish further information about wider reforms in this route in due course, considering

the recommendations of the Curriculum and Assessment Review. These qualifications can be viewed by clicking this [link](#).

What are the outcomes for the Business and Administration route?

For the Business and Administration route, we will retain funding for all qualifications until at least 2027. In 2027 we expect to remove large qualifications (those with 720 guided learning hours or more), to direct learners to the T Level(s) in this route. We will publish further information about wider reforms in this route in due course, considering the recommendations of the Curriculum and Assessment Review. These qualifications can be viewed by clicking this [link](#).

What are the outcomes for the Creative and Design route?

For the Creative and Design route, we will retain funding for all qualifications until at least 2027. In 2027 we expect to remove large qualifications (those with 720 guided learning hours or more), to direct learners to the T Level(s) in this route. We will publish further information about wider reforms in this route in due course, considering the recommendations of the Curriculum and Assessment Review. These qualifications can be viewed by clicking this [link](#).

What are the outcomes for the Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care route?

For the Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care route, we will retain funding for all qualifications until 2027. In 2027 we expect to remove large qualifications (those with 720 guided learning hours or more), to direct learners to the T Level(s) in this route. We will publish further information about wider reforms in this route in due course, considering the recommendations of the Curriculum and Assessment Review. These qualifications can be viewed by clicking this [link](#).

What communications are being put in place to inform stakeholders about the outcomes of the review and where can I find out more?

We have planned a series of events to inform education providers and professionals working in educational settings about the outcomes of the review which can be accessed on our [upcoming events page](#).

We have also updated and brought all of our [information and support materials for providers](#) together into one place. This includes key information about the reforms, practical resources, access to support, upcoming events, frequently asked questions and a glossary of key terms. We also have a monthly Qualifications Reform Update which you can also access through the link above.

We recognise that tailored support for learners will be required. In addition to careers programmes in schools and colleges, we will publish further detailed information, advice, and guidance (IAG) in relation to 16 to 19 study programmes in due course. We are

working with the Career Development Institute (CDI) to ensure that careers professionals are up to date with the review outcomes.

You can find details of the qualifications that will be retained for longer in each route, and those which will continue to have funding removed as planned [here](#).

What does this mean for adult learners?

Funding decisions will apply across all post 16 funding offers, subject to the eligibility requirements of different offers. Where we have said qualifications will be retained, they will be retained for the offers in which they are currently funded. You can find details of the qualifications that will be retained for longer in each route, and those which will continue to have funding removed as planned [here](#). You can see the funding approval position of a qualification by looking it up on [Find a learning aim](#).

Will the removal of funding from qualifications identified through this review affect apprenticeships?

No – the removal of funding will not affect apprenticeships. Where providers choose to use qualifications as part of delivering the knowledge, skills and behaviours in line with the apprenticeship standards, they can continue to do so.

How is this different to what the previous Government were intending?

The previous government had a blanket rule of removing funding from technical qualifications that overlapped with T Levels. They also planned to introduce rules of combination for 16 to 19 study programmes from 2025 that would restrict learner and provider choice around combinations of qualifications. We have taken pragmatic decisions through this review based on the needs of learners and the economy to retain 157 qualifications in the system for longer where they are needed, including in T Level routes, and to not introduce rules of combination. This will allow providers greater flexibility to create study programmes that best suit their learners and their local economy.

This government has confirmed that T Levels will remain one of the high-quality post 16 education and training options, equipping young people with essential skills to achieve and thrive. As T Levels are based on employer-led occupational standards and include high-quality industry placements, it is right that the long-term direction of travel is to grow their provision, and that learners who want to study large qualifications should do so where one is available. Where alternatives to T Levels are needed, these are being retained and we will raise their quality where they are needed in the longer-term.

What will happen to the new technical qualifications now that Skills England is being set up and IfATE will no longer exist?

The functions that IfATE currently carry out related to technical qualifications, including the review and approval of qualifications, will be transferred to the Secretary of State for

Education by the IfATE Bill, which is currently making its way through parliament. Where appropriate, Skills England will take these functions on, and more information about the role that Skills England will play will be available in due course. The new level 2 and 3 qualifications that have already been approved by IfATE will remain; the establishment of Skills England will not render existing approvals void.

How many of the Applied General Qualifications in scope of the review will be retained?

Funding will be retained for 18 Applied General Qualifications. They can be found on the list of qualifications having funding retained for longer [here](#).

I am interested in a specialist qualification that has low enrolments but is important to the economy- how did you make decisions around specialist qualifications with low and no enrolments?

When we looked at qualifications with low and no enrolments, we took the approach that if there were low or no enrolments over a period of three years, then those qualifications are not needed. However, awarding organisations have had the opportunity to appeal where necessary, so that specialist qualifications could be retained if it was demonstrated that they were needed.

How will the outcomes of the Review of Qualifications Reform be reflected in the Curriculum and Assessment review announced on 19th July 2024?

The Curriculum and Assessment review is a broader piece of work than the Review of Qualifications Reform. The Curriculum and Assessment review seeks to address the key problems and hard to overcome barriers to achievement in the curriculum and assessment system from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4 and 16-19 education. It will publish recommendations in autumn 2025, including on how to ensure rigorous and high-value qualification pathways are available for all at 16 to 19. The outcomes from the Review of Qualifications Reform have been shared with the Curriculum and Assessment Review panel.

How did you engage with stakeholders as part of the review?

We undertook extensive stakeholder engagement throughout the review to ensure we heard a wide range of views. Stakeholders included chief executive officers and principals of FE and sixth form colleges, senior and curriculum leaders and subject specialists in FE, employer representative bodies, awarding organisations, mayoral combined authorities, other government departments, provider representative bodies and unions, industry leaders, and schools and academies. We spoke to over 250 people through more than 40 hours of engagement, including over 100 teachers, practitioners, and college leaders. The Association of Colleges (AoC), the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA), the Association of School Leaders (ASCL) and Landex have also contributed and engaged with the review.

What was the process for the review focus groups and how did you decide on the providers who were invited?

The focus groups covered each of the routes that were in scope of the review; Finance, Accounting and Legal; Business and Administration; Health and Science (incl. Social Care); Education and Early Years; Engineering and Manufacturing; Construction and the Built Environment; Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care; Digital and Creative and Design.

We invited a representative sample of providers to each focus group based on curriculum offer, geography, size, and specialism, so that we heard a cross-section of views. Over 50% of the college sector were invited to take part in the focus groups and over 100 college leaders and teachers fed in their views throughout the whole process, as well as the Association of Colleges (AoC) and the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA).

What will happen from 2026 onwards and will there be further reform of qualifications?

We have announced that we will invite awarding organisations to submit further new level 3 qualifications in the spring in health and science, construction, digital, and education and early years, and in the care services route. This will continue the process of reforming these routes whilst the Curriculum and Assessment Review looks at the curriculum more broadly and will allow more newly reformed qualifications to be available for first teaching in September 2026. We will provide more information on the timetable for this process as soon as we can in the new year.

With regards to the reform of other level 3 qualifications, and level 2 and below qualifications, we will provide more information on this in due course.

Is there an equality impact assessment for the review?

Yes, the equality impact assessment for the review is published [here](#).

Qualifications at Level 3

Where can I find out which level 3 qualifications are available for teaching in 2025?

We have published a list of the qualifications which will be retained in 2025/26 [here](#).

Please note that some of the outcomes of the review are still subject to appeals from Awarding Organisations, which may mean some later additions to the list above.

You can also find the list of new level 3 alternative academic and technical qualifications that have been approved for public funding in England from 1 August 2025 in our [information and support for providers on qualifications reform](#).

You will also be able to find all the qualifications funded in 2025-26 in our [List of Qualifications approved for funding](#). This website has funding approval information for all of the qualifications that are approved for public funding in England by the Department for Education. You can search for qualifications or download a list.

You can find a list of level 3 qualifications, [What qualification levels mean: England, Wales and Northern Ireland - GOV.UK](#) but they include **academic** qualifications like A levels, AS levels, Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs), Core Maths, and Extended Project Qualification (EPQ); **technical qualifications** like T Levels, Technical Occupation Entry Qualifications, and tech levels; **Applied General Qualifications** and **Access to HE diplomas**.

Are the new level 3 Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and Technical Qualifications (TQs) still approved for first teach in 2025?

Yes, the 74 level 3 AAQs and TQs that were approved in May 2024 will be available to teach from August 2025. You can find the list here. [New qualifications Approved for funding at level 3 in England from 1 August 2025 – T Levels support for schools and colleges](#). These will be available to incorporate into 2025-26 study programmes alongside the 157 qualifications being retained through this review. We have also approved level 2 qualifications that will be available from 2025.

How does this affect qualifications in particular subjects, especially Travel and Tourism, E-Sports, Games Design, Criminology, or Uniformed Public Services?

The routes in scope of this review were Health and Science; Education and Early Years; Construction and the Built Environment; Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care; Digital; Engineering and Manufacturing; Creative and Design; Legal, Finance and Accounting; and Business and Administration. Qualifications at level 3 in other subjects will continue to be funded as before. No decisions have been made currently to defund these qualifications.

We will consider how these are reformed, reflecting the recommendations from the Curriculum and Assessment Review.

When do you anticipate new qualifications in social care will be available?

We know that existing social care qualifications at level 3 are generally linked to health and are not providing learners with a focused route into social care which is based on employer-led occupational standards. We have listened to representations made by the sector about issues in the health and social care routes. Allowing these qualifications to be submitted and to be approved for first teaching in 2026, will address these issues and improve the quality of qualifications in this high priority area.

If a learner has already started on a course of study which is then defunded from September 2025, will they be funded for the second year of their study?

Where a qualification is due to have public funding removed it is for new starts only, those that have already started on a qualification will remain funded until the learner has completed the qualification. So, if a qualification is defunded in 2025, it will not be available for new enrolments from 1 August 2025 onwards.

If a learner starts on a 2 year course of study in September 2025, which is then defunded from September 2026, will they be funded for the second year of their study?

Where a qualification is due to have public funding removed it is for new starts only, those that have already started on a qualification will remain funded until the learner has completed the qualification. So, if a qualification is defunded in 2026, it will not be available for new enrolments from 1 August 2026 onwards.

Can a college enrol a learner on a 1 year level 3 qualification in September 2025 and then top up to an extended qualification in 2026, if that qualification is defunded for 2026?

Once a qualification has been defunded it is not possible for a person to be enrolled on it. This means that a college would need to have enrolled the learner before the date of the defund. For example, if a qualification was to be defunded from 1 August 2026, then the college would need to have completed the enrolment by 31 July 2026.

If a college was considering enrolling a learner onto a smaller qualification this year and then moving them on to the larger one the year after, then enrolment would need to take place before the funding approval end date in both cases.

We would advise the college to get in touch with the awarding organisation, as they may also be making commercial decisions about the availability of qualifications.

How are new Alternative Academic Qualifications and Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications different to existing vocational and technical qualifications (VTQs)?

The current landscape of vocational and technical qualifications is mixed, with some qualifications providing a very broad range of content within a field or subject area. The varying levels of minimum mandatory content and external assessment also lead to variable quality and a confusing picture for both learners and others when trying to understand the knowledge a learner has gained by studying a particular qualification.

Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) are new qualifications that will be available for delivery from 1 August 2025, offering an academic qualification with elements of applied learning in a range of subjects at level 3. To be approved for public funding, AAQs must demonstrate that they support progression to related higher education courses, including through at least six letters of support for the qualification from Office

for Students-approved higher education institutions. AAQs must also have a minimum of 60% mandatory core content so that learners receive a high minimum level of standard learning, and 40% external assessment. AAQs also attract UCAS tariff points.

Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications (TOQs) are based on employer-designed occupational standards that provide learners with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to enter into, or progress in skilled employment in specific occupations.

Before AAQs and TOQs are approved for public funding, the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) reviews qualifications to provide feedback to inform funding decisions taken by the Department for Education. This is a key aspect of ensuring that the quality of qualifications improves.

Through the development of new AAQs and TOQs, learners can be confident in high quality qualifications that will support progression to higher education or into skilled employment.

What is a technical additional specialist qualification?

A technical additional specialist qualification is another type of technical qualification. These are specialist level 3 technical qualifications for post 16 students and adults, which go beyond the contents of an occupational standard and allow a student to develop additional knowledge and expertise to specialise within a sector. These qualifications build on knowledge covered by a T Level or other occupational entry qualifications. For example, low-carbon construction design building on the Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction T Level.

What is the UCAS points tariff for the new level 3 AAQs and TQs?

The new level 3 qualifications are now on UCAS' Tariff tables for the next academic year. We are working with UCAS and universities to ensure that they understand the new qualifications landscape. The latest UCAS tariff tables are available at [UCAS Tariff - All You Need to Know](#), with background information and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Where can I find more information on the new level 3 qualifications?

Awarding organisations have published information on the qualifications on their websites. We encourage you to contact awarding organisations directly if you have any questions about their qualifications.

Will the new level 3 qualifications be funded for both 16- to 19-year-olds and adults?

This depends on what the awarding organisation asked for when they proposed the qualification and what is possible under the different funding offers. You can see the funding approval position of a qualification by looking it up on [Find a learning aim](#).

Qualifications at Level 2 and below

What is happening at level 2 and below in the reform programme?

We understand that a high-quality offer at level 2 and below is particularly important. In September 2024 [we published new technical qualifications at level 2](#) that will support those who want to enter key level 2 occupations such as health or construction. In total, 66 new technical qualifications were approved for funding from August 2025, and these will continue to be introduced as planned.

Future decisions on level 2 and below qualifications reform will be taken, considering the Curriculum and Assessment Review.

What will happen to existing level 2 qualifications into 2025-2026?

We have approved 66 new reformed level 2 technical qualifications for funding from August 2025.

The only qualifications at level 2 that will have funding approval removed in 2025-26 are those which an awarding organisation has told us will be directly replaced by one of these reformed technical qualifications.

Keeping up to date

How can I keep up to date with the latest information or guidance you are sharing?

We will share everything, or a link to anything we publish elsewhere on GOV.UK, in our [information and support for providers on qualifications reform](#).

We publish a monthly update which you can find on the [Qualifications Reform news and updates](#). You can see the latest update there as well as past updates. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for the monthly update, send your request by signing up here [Post 16 Qualification Reform Updates](#).

You can also send a general query to qualifications.reform@education.gov.uk



Department
for Education

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