



Department  
for Education

# New, reformed level 3 qualifications

[Link to the 74  
new approved  
qualifications  
for first teach  
2025](#)

## Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications

TQs are new qualifications delivering competence against an occupational standard not covered by T Levels at level 3 for 16–19-year-olds and all occupational standards for adults. These qualifications aim to support a learner to enter, or to progress within, a role. At level 3, these can be any size.

## Technical Occupational Additional Specialist Qualifications

These are specialist level 3 technical qualifications for post 16 learners and adults, which go beyond the contents of an occupational standard and allows a learner to develop additional knowledge and competencies and specialise within a sector. These qualifications will build on knowledge covered by a T Level or other occupational entry 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. AAQs also attract UCAS tariff points.





### How are these qualifications different to the qualifications that they are replacing?

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.

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

TQs are based on employer-designed occupational standards [SA1] that provide learners with the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to enter into, or progress in skilled employment in specific occupations.

### Quality

Before AAQs and TQs 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 TQs, learners can be confident in high quality qualifications that will support progression to higher education or into skilled employment.



### SUBJECTS:

- CONSTRUCTION AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
- DIGITAL
- EDUCATION & EARLY YEARS
- ENGINEERING AND MANUFACTURING
- HEALTH AND SCIENCE

### Next steps

We are inviting awarding organisations to submit further new level 3 qualifications in spring this year 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 share more information about further reforms of other level 3 qualifications, and level 2 and below qualifications, in due course.





# PROGRESSION

## HIGHER EDUCATION

An academic study programme at level 3 should support progression to higher education (HE), although some learners may choose to go into employment, including Apprenticeships. Learners on technical study programmes, including T Levels, can also progress to higher education as their next step. UCAS We know that acceptance of the new qualifications by UCAS and the points allocated to them will be a key factor in preparation for their delivery. We are working with UCAS and universities to ensure that they understand the new qualifications landscape. All level 3 qualifications on the Ofqual register are included in the UCAS Tariff, including the new qualifications.

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) – level 4 and level 5 qualifications, such as Foundation Degrees, Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND) – may be a progression option for some learners.

## SKILLED WORK

Technical qualifications provide clear pathways to employment because they are based on the knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) outlined in employer-designed occupational standards. These standards are directly applicable to specific job roles. Technical qualifications often highlight practical, hands-on training, which is essential for acquiring the technical skills needed for particular occupations.



## APPRENTICESHIPS

Higher and degree apprenticeships are a training option that could be the next step after completing a level 3 qualification, allowing individuals to attain a Higher National Certificate (HNC), Higher National Diploma (HND), foundation or undergraduate degree. These apprenticeships function similarly to other apprenticeships, with individuals spending up to 80% of their time on-the-job training, while the remaining 20% is dedicated to training with a college, university, or registered training provider.

