



Department
for Education

Review of Qualifications Reform FAQ

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

Updated March 2025

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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 institutions. 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 second version of this FAQ document. The first version was published in December 2024.

We will keep these questions and answers under review and publish regular 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 [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, learners 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 learners 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, including at level 2. 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](#).

How is this different to the previous Government's plans?

The previous government had planned 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.

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](#).

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.

What about mandated qualifications in an assessment plan, as part of an apprenticeship?

The qualifications that we are approving in this process are not the same qualifications that are integrated or mandatory as part of an apprenticeship. There are some cases where an Awarding Organisation may offer two versions of a qualification. One version will be the mandatory qualification that a learner would take as part of an apprenticeship, the second version is the one that is approved through this process. They are separate versions, funded through different funding streams, and will be designed for their specific purpose and target learners.

Qualifications approved through the post-16 reforms must adhere to strict titling conventions, which distinguishes them from those that are funded through apprenticeships. In time, qualifications with titles such as 'Occupational entry' and 'Additional specialist' should become more recognisable, making it easier for students, parents, providers and higher education institutions to identify them.

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 an interim report in spring 2025, setting out the interim findings and confirming the key areas for further work. It will publish the final report 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 likely is it that some form of rules of combination will be put in place following the Curriculum and Assessment Review?

It would be premature to comment on policy changes that may take place as a result of the recommendations of the Curriculum and Assessment Review. The review is independent and has not yet published its findings.

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](#).

These outcomes provide certainty only until 2027. What is this governments overarching long term vision for technical education?

Skills are essential to this mission-led government. The skills system has a crucial role to play in training the workforce needed to deliver our green, health, and safer streets missions, as well as being a core component of our growth and opportunity missions.

We are developing a comprehensive strategy for post-16 education and skills, to break down barriers to opportunity, support the development of a skilled workforce, and drive economic growth through our Industrial Strategy.

The Minister for Skills keynote speech on 12 November at the Association of Colleges conference recommitted to this pledge, and to working collaboratively with the sector to bring forward this strategy.

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.

The knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) needed in the occupational standards can change rapidly and need regular reviewing. How will qualification approvals by government be able to react rapidly so that qualifications maintain relevance?

IfATE currently works with Awarding Organisations on a case-by-case basis to implement changes to approved qualifications when occupational standards are revised and updated. Conversely, if an Awarding Organisation has employer evidence that something should be updated in a qualification, they can submit a change request to IfATE. IfATE then works with the Awarding Organisation to facilitate the update. This process ensures that approved qualifications swiftly reflect any revisions to the occupational standards and maintain relevance. It is anticipated that these functions will be exercised by Skills England on behalf of the Secretary of State in the future, but further information will be provided in due course.

What about the future of occupational standards?

IfATE's commitment to working with employers, industry experts, and other stakeholders to develop and approve occupational standards remains as strong as ever. Skills England will continue to build on the strong foundation and excellent relationships that IfATE has cultivated over the years.

Will the Government lay out the processes for monitoring and reviewing the impact of changes until 2027?

The Government is committed to improving the quality of qualifications and ensuring that they provide good outcomes for learners. We will continue to monitor all qualifications in the landscape to ensure that they continue to deliver a skills system that better meets the needs of employers, individuals and the wider economy. As part of the announcement, we have also published an [Equality Impact Assessment](#) which sets out the direct impacts the changes we have made will have on learners.

Will there be clear milestone dates over the next 2 years of when 'new' or 'reformed' qualifications will be available?

The first of the 74 level 3 newly approved qualifications will be available to teach from August 2025 in Health and Science, Construction, Digital, Education and Early Years and Engineering and Manufacturing. We are inviting awarding organisations to submit any further qualifications in Health and Science, Adult Care, Construction, Digital and Education and Early Years for approval and delivery from 2026, to continue reforms in these key routes at level 3. Further reforms to Engineering and Manufacturing and all other routes and subjects are on pause until 2027, to allow for the conclusion of the Curriculum and Assessment Review which is also looking at the post-16 system, as well as the development of the Post-16 Skills Strategy.

When can we expect to see these changes on FALA and on the Ofqual register?

[FALA](#) was updated at the end of January 2025 to reflect the extension of qualifications into 2025/26.

The [Ofqual Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) shows information about regulated qualifications and is not impacted by funding decisions.

When is the deadline to finalise the list of funded qualifications (post appeal)?

The deadline for appeals has now passed. The outcomes will be published on the list of funded qualifications in March. These outcomes will be published on the [list of funded qualifications](#) in March.

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, considering the recommendations from the Curriculum and Assessment Review.

If a qualification has public funding removed on 31 July 2027, does this mean it will not be available to teach in September 2027?

If a qualification has public funding removed on 31 July 2027 then it will not be available for new enrolments after this date. Learners wishing to take the course will need to be enrolled by 31 July 2027.

If a learner has already started on a course of study which is then defunded from September 2025 or 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 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 (AAQs) and Technical Qualifications (TQs) 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 Occupation Entry Qualifications (TQs) 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 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.

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 learners and adults, which go beyond the contents of an occupational standard and allow a learner 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](#).

You've said you are retaining 18 Applied General Qualifications (AGQs) - how many of these do you expect to be replaced with reformed qualifications and which ones?

All 157 retained qualifications will be removed eventually once they are no longer needed, for example once reformed alternatives are available or if they are not sufficiently used. This includes the 18 retained AGQs. The 18 AGQs are nearly all in either Digital or Health and Science and will continue to be funded until 31 July 2026 when newly reformed qualifications will replace them.

The two AGQs in Engineering, will continue to be funded until at least 2027 this is to allow additional time for Engineering standards being revised and then for AOs to submit additional engineering qualifications once those revisions have been completed. We have also approved 3 new small AAQs in Engineering that will come on stream from 1 August 2025.

How do you define what is a large, medium and small qualification?

Large qualifications are defined as qualifications with guided learning hours (GLH) of between 720-1080 hours. Medium qualifications are between 420-719 GLH. Small qualifications are defined as between 150-419 GLH. You can read more about these definitions in the latest [A guide to post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below](#)

You say you expect T Levels to be the qualification of choice for large sized qualifications (720-1080 GLH). Will both large and medium (540 GLH) sized qualifications be defunded in favour of T Levels?

This Government remains committed to T Levels which provide an excellent qualification option, which should be available to more learners. Where learners wish to study a large qualification in a T Level route, the T Level should be the main option for them. Following the conclusion of our review into qualification reforms at level 3, we announced that existing large qualifications in T Level subject areas will continue to have funding removed, we have published a revised timetable for when those qualifications will now have funding removed which can be found [here](#). In terms of future reforms, the Curriculum and Assessment Review will take a view on qualifications in the long term, as part of its wider consideration of how we prepare all young people for life and work.

Looking forward, we also will not fund large Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) (720-1080 GLH) or technical occupational entry qualifications (TQs) in T Level areas. T Levels are one of the high-quality post 16 education and training options, equipping young people with essential skills to achieve and thrive. As they 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.

If large, non-T Level quals are having funding removed, will there be an option for 19+ learners to engage in a large level 3 qualification?

Yes, there will be level 3 technical qualifications available for adults. As adults are not eligible to study T Levels, new technical qualifications in T Level areas will start to become available from 2025. These qualifications have been developed by awarding organisations against the same occupational standards as T Levels and will support adult students to develop the skills needed to support them into those occupations. We will continue to provide opportunity for awarding organisations to submit new qualifications in technical areas covered by T Levels to ensure that adults also have the option to study a high-quality technical qualification.

Funding decisions related to existing qualifications made as part of our review into qualifications reforms at level 3, will apply across all post-16 funding 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](#).

If any learner needs to reduce their qualification size, for example if they leave the course after the first year, will they still be able to drop down to the smaller qualification?

Once a qualification has had public funding removed, it is not possible to enrol new learners on to the qualification. This means that providers need to enrol learners before the qualification has funding removed – for example – if the last date for public funding is 31 July 2025, then this is also the last day for new enrolments. If a college was considering enrolling a learner onto a larger qualification this year and then moving them on to the smaller one the year after, then enrolment onto the smaller qualification would need to take place before the funding approval end date.

We would also advise providers to get in touch with the relevant awarding organisation.

Are there any options for learners who may need to pick up a fast track qualification option- an AAQ in a year for example?

It is for colleges and sixth forms to plan a curriculum that best suits each individual learner. The Review of Qualifications Reform concluded that the government would not proceed with proposed rules of combination for mixed study programmes for 16 to 19 learners. By lifting the rules of combination, we have allowed colleges the freedom to create a curriculum that ensures individual learner needs can be met and leads to positive outcomes. As with A levels there are no restrictions with learners being able to do an AAQ in a year if that best serves the learner's needs. From 2025, learners will have options to take A levels, AAQs and a some AGQs which remain funded for longer.

With AAQs, will there be any option for learners to achieve a qualification after year 1 of a 2-year course?

Students that are enrolled on an AAQ will need to complete the full course of study in order to gain certification and UCAS points. AAQs are not designed to provide an option to gain accreditation halfway through the qualification.

Our most disadvantaged learners often enrol onto large Applied General Qualifications (AGQs) and achieve very highly with good destinations. What do you anticipate will happen in the future to these learners who do not meet the entry requirements for T Levels?

We are confident that the decision to retain 157 qualifications in the system for longer, including not reforming some routes until at least 2027 to give T Levels in those routes longer to embed in the system, will ensure that learners have access to a range of level 3 qualifications.

Large AGQs in many subjects will still be funded until 2026 or 2027 meaning that learners can still be enrolled on these courses while they are funded. We expect providers to do everything they can to support access to T Levels for the widest range of learners. We have also approved 66 level 2 and 74 level 3 qualifications that will be available to teach from August 2025. These qualifications will be available to incorporate into 2025-26 study programmes alongside the 157 qualifications being retained through this review.

We're working with awarding organisations to approve additional level 3 qualifications in health and science, construction, digital, and education and early years. We will also accept qualifications in the care services route. These qualifications, if approved, will become available for delivery from 1 August 2026.

We will also not be implementing the previous government's intention to restrict rules of combination for 16-19 study programmes. This will mean that providers can select combinations of qualifications that best suit individual learners.

In addition to this, The T Level Foundation Year (TLFY) provides holistic preparation for a T Level, including the national technical outcomes that provide relevant content aligned to T Levels and developed in collaboration with employers. We would expect this to be the appropriate choice for learners who are looking to progress onto a T Level.

Why are the government intending that there will be no large qualifications in T Level routes other than T Levels?

This Government remains committed to T Levels being the best large qualification in routes where they are available. T Levels are based on occupational standards with the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers need, whereas existing large qualifications are not designed in this way. We will therefore continue to remove funding from existing large qualifications of 720 guided learning hours and above in T Level

areas. In some routes, however, such as Business and Administration, Engineering and Manufacturing and Environmental and Animal Care, this won't take place until 2027.

Can you explain why you're only going to allow Awarding Organisations to submit smaller Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs), and not large AAQs this spring?

The Secretary of State has asked Professor Becky Francis to conduct the external Curriculum and Assessment Review, and we must allow this independent review to conclude and publish its recommendations for government before making further changes to as yet unreformed routes and subjects. This is to create stability in the system while that review takes place. We are therefore not inviting large AAQs to be submitted for funding approval at this time but are instead continuing with reforms in routes already underway, where we are inviting small AAQs and technical qualifications for submission in spring. The recommendations from the Curriculum and Assessment Review will be published in the autumn, after which we will be able to provide more information on future reforms and post-16 pathways and programmes.

When will the discount codes for the AAQs approved for September 2025 be published?

We can confirm that discount codes for AAQs will be available prior to them being included in performance tables and we will confirm arrangements for the publication of discount codes in due course.

Questions on specific Level 3 routes

Level 3 Engineering and Manufacturing

Does the decision to retain engineering qualifications include smaller current qualifications, such as certificates or extended certificates, or will only larger qualifications remain funded until 2027?

We will retain all 37 qualifications in Engineering and Manufacturing previously identified for defunding until 2027. In 2027 we expect to at least 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](#).

Level 3 Health and Science

Some level 3 sports courses are set to be defunded because personal training routes are linked to the health pathways, however the Health T Level doesn't

enable learners to practice personal training or gym instruction. What is the rationale for removing these sports courses?

Qualifications are having public funding removed either where learning is covered by a T Level or an alternative qualification, including a new, reformed qualification that will become available for delivery from 1 August 2025. This includes 12 new qualifications in sport, leisure and recreation, and you can find these qualifications [here](#).

Will the defunding of large health and care qualifications take effect at the beginning or the end of the 2026 academic year? Specifically, will learners be able to start these programmes in September 2026?

If a qualification is defunded in 2026, it will not be available for new enrolments from 1 August 2026 onwards. We expect the currently funded qualifications in health and social care to have public funding removed on 31 July 2026 and new reformed qualifications covering social care to come on stream from 1 August 2026. Please note there are also new small AAQs covering Health and Social Care that will come on stream from 1 August 2025.

How does the plan to defund large qualifications (1080 GLH), for example in health and social care in 2026, fit with the mission to break down barriers to opportunity?

This government is committed to T Levels in available routes being the best quality large qualification of choice. In 2026, learners will be able to study the Health T Level as they can now, plus choose from small Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) in Health and Social Care that will come on stream from 1 August 2025. The department will also shortly invite awarding organisations to submit new reformed technical qualifications in the Care Services route, which will also become available for teaching from 1 August 2026.

Technical qualifications are based on occupational standards with the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) that employers need, whereas existing health and social care qualifications are not designed in this way. With the introduction of new technical qualifications in Care Services from 2026, you and your learners can be confident they are studying KSBs that employers need. The qualifications available will provide a good range of choice for learners wishing to study health related subjects or pursue a career in social care.

When do you anticipate new qualifications in social care will be available and what size will they be?

Awarding Organisations will be able to submit new level 3 qualifications against occupational standards in the care services route in the spring submission round, approved qualifications will be available for first teaching in 2026.

Technical qualifications can be any size if they meet the requirements of the occupational standard for the duration of the course of study. It will be for awarding organisations to

design these qualifications based on the knowledge, skills and behaviours employers have built into the design of the standards in this route.

In addition to these future technical qualifications, we have also approved 4 new small AAQs in Health and Social Care that will come on stream from 1 August 2025.

We currently have small numbers of learners on T Levels, but more than two classes in the large AGQ in Health & Social Care. Our local hospital has limited us to 8 placements for midwifery and nursing. How will those learners find a course, if we can't provide placements for them in our local hospital?

With learner satisfaction rates at 78% and placement completion rates above 95%, industry placements are a unique selling point of T Levels. We have comprehensive support in place to help providers develop employer engagement strategies, supported by guidance and other practical resources. Over 800 members of our T Level Ambassadors Network are raising awareness and championing the benefits of placements in their industries. We also have a digital service available to help employers to find T Level providers. Health placements can be offered at a range of employers and are not limited to hospitals. These can include a wide range of settings such as care homes, primary care providers, specialist health services - providing learners with a chance to develop an understanding of the breadth and depth of roles available, including in social care, wider healthcare roles and in hospital settings.

The current large AGQs in these subjects do not offer industry placements. As an alternative to the T Level, there will also be a range of AAQs on offer at level 3 that will sit alongside A levels that learners wanting to pursue careers in nursing and midwifery could take. Large AGQs in Health and Social Care will also remain in the system for 2025. Alternatively, students can also take a mixed programme that includes a small AAQ in Health and Social Care which supports progression to university and on to nursing and Midwifery degree course

When will we receive more information about medium (540 GLH) and large (720-1080 GLH) AAQ qualifications in health and science? Will large AAQs be considered in the future?

We have announced that we will invite awarding organisations to submit further small AAQs and technical qualifications in the spring in health and science, to be funded from 2026 in addition to those new qualifications already approved for delivery from 2025. We will publish information on further reforms, including information on plans for medium and large qualifications following the conclusions of the Curriculum and Assessment Review. The government has, however, been clear that we will not fund large qualifications of 720 GLH and above in T Level routes.

Can you confirm that small AAQs will be the only Applied Science option for the 2025/26 academic year)?

We know that applied science is a popular route for learners to take at level 3, in the health and science route. In addition to the new AAQs in applied science and medical science we have also extended funding for existing qualifications in applied science both 720 and 1080 GLH in size for the 2025/26 academic year.

Level 3 Digital

Are you intending that from 2026 there will be no large qualifications in digital other than T Levels?

The government has been clear in its commitment to T Levels. This means that where learners aged 16-19 wish to study a large qualification in a T Level route, the T Level should be the main option for them. Through the conclusions of the review of post-16 qualifications reform at level 3, we confirmed that the large qualifications in Digital would have public funding extended until 31 July 2026 to allow for important changes to the T Levels to take effect. After this they will have public funding removed so that the large options available to 16-19 learners are the three T Levels. Where awarding organisations are being invited to submit qualifications in the digital route, these will either be small Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) of between 150-420 GLH, Technical Qualifications (TQs) based on occupational standards not covered by the T Level for 16-19 learners, or Technical Additional Specialist Qualifications that provide more advanced learning in a specialist occupational area that goes beyond the occupational standard.

Awarding organisations can also submit technical qualifications for adults in T Level areas. These reformed TQs are based on employer led occupational standards which will give learners the knowledge skills and behaviours that employers need.

Technical qualifications can be any size if they meet the requirements of the occupational standard for the duration of the course of study. It will be for awarding organisations to design these qualifications based on the knowledge, skills and behaviours employers have built into the design of the standards in this route. In addition to the social care qualifications that can be submitted and approved for first teaching in 2026, we have approved 4 new small AAQs in Health and Social Care that will come on stream from 1 August 2025.

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.

At level 2 will there still be restrictions around the rules of combination which require students who are taking two technical qualifications to do so in different routes?

There will be no additional rules beyond those set out in the study programme guidance and funding rules on how qualifications are combined in study programmes for the time being.

This will allow providers greater flexibility to create study programmes that best suit their learners and their local economy. We will look to the Curriculum and Assessment Review to determine what, if any, rules of combination should be introduced.

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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