

Qualifications landscape Education and Early years– level 3 and above (Sept 2025–26)

LEVEL 3 APPRENTICESHIP (ADVANCED)

Designed with input from employers and aligned to an occupation that can be entered into at level 3. This will be employment with minimum 20% off the job training, ideally working with a mentor. Some will contain additional mandatory qualifications.

E.G. EARLY YEARS LEAD PRACTITIONER APPRENTICESHIP

REFORMED LEVEL 3 TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS*

May form all or part of the core aim of a study programme depending on size. Designed with input from employers, these qualifications are based on occupational standards and are intended to deliver the skills needed to enter or progress in the workplace.

E.G. L3 TECHNICAL OCCUPATIONAL ENTRY IN FOR THE EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE (EARLY YEARS EDUCATOR) (DIPLOMA) (ADULT ONLY, FIRST TEACH 2025)

T LEVELS

Designed with input from employers, T Levels are two-year technical programmes designed to give learners the skills that industry needs. They bring classroom learning and an extended industry placement together.

E.G. T LEVEL IN EDUCATION AND EARLY YEARS

LEVEL 3 ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS (AAQS)

Small (equivalent to 1 A level) academic qualifications in a limited range of subjects that are designed to lead to progression to further study.

E.G. SMALL AAQ IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (FIRST TEACH 2025)

A LEVELS

Academic qualifications that can lead to university, further study, training, or work. Post 16 providers may choose to offer A levels in a range of subjects.

APPLIED GENERAL QUALIFICATIONS (AGQS)

AGQs are designed for learners who want to continue their education through applied learning. AGQs use a variety of assessment to allow learners to apply their knowledge both through exams and practical, applied assessments.

Some AGQs in the Education and early years route will not be funded from 1 August 2025 onwards.

**Technical qualification categories*

Technical Occupational Entry: Covers all the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) in an occupational standard and leads to occupational competence in that area.

Technical Additional Specialist: Builds on the outcomes of an occupational standard. May be taken alongside other qualifications.

LEVEL 4/5 APPRENTICESHIP (HIGHER)

Designed with input from employers and aligned to an occupation that can be entered into at Level 4/5. This will be employment with minimum 20% off the job training, ideally working with a mentor. Some will contain additional mandatory qualifications.

HIGHER TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS (HTQS)

HTQs are level 4 or 5 qualifications that have been quality marked by IfATE, and developed with input from employers, to indicate their alignment to employer-led occupational standards. HTQs allow learners to enter their chosen profession or progress onto higher education.

DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

Designed with input from employers and aligned to an occupation. Allows a learner to gain a full undergraduate degree while working.

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE

Higher Education qualification achieved on completion of a course of study at University or College.

POSTGRADUATE DEGREE

Typically, level 7 or 8 qualifications allowing further specialisation in a chosen field. Requires completion of an undergraduate degree as a prerequisite to study

