**Script accompanying the Provider Toolkit slide deck**

**Slide 2- Overview of the presentation**

This presentation covers:

* Background
* Purpose and approach
* Outcomes (incl. by route)
* Key figures (incl. by route)
* Next steps

**Slide 3- Background**

* Over the last decade, there have been a number of reviews looking at post-16 vocational education (Wolf, 2011; Whitehead, 2013; Sainsbury, 2016; and Augar, 2019).
* They expressed concern about whether post-16 education supports people to enter good jobs and provides effective support for skills. The reviews found that many qualifications were not valued by employers, offered little value to students and had few routes to further education or meaningful employment.
* Qualifications reform aims to simplify the landscape and improve quality of the qualifications available and progression outcomes for students.
* Under the previous Government, in 2022, funding was removed from approximately 5,500 qualifications at level 3 and below due to no or low enrolments. The Department for Education (DfE) were in the process of further reforming the landscape when the election was called last year.
* One of the first actions the Labour Government took when they came to power was to announce a short review of qualifications reform and paused the defunding of qualifications that had been due to happen in July 2024.

**Slide 4- Purpose**

* Launching the review of qualifications reform was one of the very first things that the Government did after the conclusion of the general election last year. The purpose of the review was to look at the qualifications that were set for defunding in July 2024/ 2025.
* The Government was elected to deliver on a series of missions. These missions relate to spreading opportunity and supporting economic growth and include post-16 qualifications.
* Ministers have been clear that qualifications must be high quality, and that learners should be able to make simpler choices about the qualifications they need.
* The Secretary of State committed to a collaborative approach and to work with the sector. Baroness Smith reiterated this approach and set out her intent for a more pragmatic approach to qualifications reform based on the needs of learners and our economy, and not on blanket restrictions and rules.

**Slide 5- Approach**

The review focused on qualifications at level 3 because this is where most of the policy tensions have been in the past, i.e. the previous Government’s approach to T Levels and dealing with overlapping qualifications.

The review also considered where alternative qualifications may need to be retained such as applied general qualifications.

Ministers agreed that qualifications at level 2 and below would be considered as part of the wider Curriculum and Assessment Review. This would provide the Curriculum and Assessment Review with the space needed to conduct the review as well as reflect that the previous Government had not removed funding from any of the level 2 qualifications.

There were 9 routes in scope of the review of qualifications reform:

* 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.
* Creative and Design.

Qualifications at level 3 in other subjects, not included in the Review of Qualifications Reform, will continue to be funded as before. These include subjects such as Criminology, Uniformed Public Services amongst others. No decisions have been made currently to defund these qualifications, and the DfE will look at how these should be reformed, considering the recommendations from the Curriculum and Assessment Review once they are published in autumn 2025.

Firstly, the DfE 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 fewer 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.

Awarding organisations (AOs) 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.

The DfE took a pragmatic, evidence-led approach to considering the other qualifications in scope of the review – this meant:

* Considering both practitioner insights and expertise through stakeholder engagement activities
* Determining the need for qualifications (after no and low removed) reflecting on what learners and the economy needs.

The DfE took account of a variety of information such as what learners are studying, the outcomes achieved, what qualifications are supporting employer needs, where there are skills gaps and what other qualifications, particularly reformed qualifications, were already in the system meeting those needs. It was those latter factors that were particularly important in supporting decisions-making because if there were reformed qualifications already in the system doing the job, then the old qualifications wouldn’t be needed.

The stakeholder engagement 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. The DfE spoke to over 250 people through more than 40 hours of engagement, including over 100 teachers, practitioners, and college leaders.

**Slide 6- Outcomes**

* The DfE needs analysis identified 157 qualifications where funding should be retained. The length of time those qualifications will be needed differs by route. Where qualifications are needed in the longer-term, Ministers are determined that they will need to be reformed to improve their quality.
* The government is seeking to bring a more pragmatic approach to qualifications reform, based on the needs of learners and our economy, and not on blanket restrictions and rules. That is why the DfE will not be applying the rules of combination proposed by the previous government. This is an area where Ministers are determined that colleges should decide on how to combine qualifications in study programmes to best meet the needs of their learners.
* This approach enables the DfE to provide as much certainty as possible – until at least 2027. Further clarity will be provided after the conclusion of the wider curriculum and assessment review.
* The Government has given a clear commitment to T levels. The government believes that T Levels provide an excellent qualification option which should be available to more learners. Three new T Levels were launched last September and a further T Level in Marketing is to be introduced from September 2025. The industry placement is a key feature of the T Level, providing valuable workplace experience for learners that they are unlikely to get from current qualifications.
* Because T Levels are based on the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers need, they are the government’s large qualification of choice. This is why the DfE are only retaining large qualifications for a specific period of time. It provides additional time for the sector to make the transition to T Levels. It provides greater choice for learners, and it provides greater capacity to plan study programmes that meet the needs of students.
* The DfE also removed funding from 216 qualifications that had low and no enrolments.

**Slide 8- Agriculture, Environment and Animal care**

* Starting with agriculture, environment and animal care, legal, finance and accounting, business and administration, and creative and design.
* These are the last four routes where T Levels were rolled out.
* In relation to the previous defunding in these routes, the DfE had only got as far as identifying the qualifications that overlapped with T Levels. However, throughout the review, Ministers were clear that they wanted to examine qualifications route by route, and they did not want to apply a blanket approach and remove funding from qualifications simply because they overlap with the T Level.
* Qualifications in these routes therefore have been returned to funding, and they won't be reformed before 31 July 2027. In 2027 the DfE expect that large qualifications in these routes will still have funding removed but will confirm how those routes will be treated in due course.
* Ministers also reserve the right to do another low and no exercise in these routes.

**Slide 9- Engineering and manufacturing**

* In Engineering and manufacturing, funding will be retained until 2027 for the qualifications previously identified for defunding until, unless they were identified in the low and no exercise.
* This will allow time to update the occupational standards which are designed by employers, and which underpin this large and complex route.
* This is an incredibly innovative and fast-moving sector and this is what is driving the need to update the occupational standards.
* By retaining funding until 2027 this will also allow time for any changes in the occupational standards to be brought through into all the qualifications in this route, and allow time for the reformed qualifications to be established.

**Slide 10- Digital**

* The DfE will retain six large qualifications in digital until 2026.
* This reflects the really great progress that have been made on the three digital T levels. The digital T Levels have been codesigned with leading employers, setting up students with up-to-date industry practice they can take into the workplace.
* The Awarding Organisation (Pearson) is working with the DfE to address issues around the assessment burden of digital T Levels, which are expected to be completed for the beginning of the next academic year 2025/26.
* Therefore, the DfE are allowing that academic year for those changes to bed in. The six large qualifications in digital will be defunded, in 2026 rather than 2024 and 2025 as planned.
* T Level placements can also be more flexible, expanding the option for remote placements. This will be particularly important in the digital route.
* 13 smaller digital qualifications are being returned to funding, including 2 medium sized qualifications. These returned qualifications look give support to particular digital occupations that weren't well covered by the qualifications in the system. They also provide some additional capacity to the T Level for those who don't want to study a large qualification.
* The selection is limited because there are also have a number of AAQs in the digital space available for first teach in August 2025. The returned qualifications will provide an excellent alternative for those who are wishing to study digital as part of a mixed study programme.

**Slide 11- Health and science**

* For health and science, and social care, the legacy qualifications tend to cover Health and social care. The newer qualifications, designed against the routes and the standards, actually reflect the fact that the care services route is different from the health route, as reflected in the T Level.
* As the division of routes created problems, the large health and social care qualifications have been returned to the system until 2026. This is when it is expected reformed technical care qualifications will be available.
* 11 qualifications in science-related subjects such as applied and forensic science and dental technology are also being retained.
* There are also have new level 3 Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) in health and social care and new level 2 qualifications available for funding from 1 August 2025.

**Slide 12-Education and childcare**

* On education and childcare, funding from existing large and medium qualifications will be removed 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.
* Funding will also be retained for 6 smaller qualifications to support specific occupations, such as teaching assistants, giving learners a smaller alternative which could be combined with other qualifications.

**Slide 13- Construction and the built environment**

* Two of the construction T Levels continue to grow and offer high-quality options for learners.
* To meet the economic needs of this important sector and ensure that the missions around high-quality housing are met, one large qualification in Site Carpentry, and 11 other medium and small qualifications will retain funding.
* 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. Because of this it has been decided that the needs of learners and the economy are best met through apprenticeships and other classroom provision, new enrolments for the Onsite Construction T Level will cease. Those already taking it will be able to complete it as planned, and progress into positive destinations post-graduation.

**Slide 14- Route breakdown**

To give a quick overview of the qualifications –157 qualifications in the system will be retained that were due to lose public funding.

* + - Engineering and manufacturing: retaining all 37 qualifications until 2027
    - Legal, finance, and accounting: retaining all 6 qualifications in scope until 2027
    - Business and administration: retaining all 10 qualifications in scope until 2027
    - Creative and design: retaining all 12 qualifications in scope until 2027
    - Health and science: retaining 9 qualifications in health and social care and 11 qualifications of varying sizes in science-related subjects until 2026.
    - Education and early years: retaining 6 small qualifications until 2026
    - Construction and the built environment: retaining 1 large and 6 medium and small qualifications until 2026
    - Digital: all 6 large qualifications and 13 medium and small qualifications until 2026

Proposed T Levels in Catering and Beauty Therapy are being considered to see if they meet the needs of learners and the economy, and the DfE will update the sector in due course. Any new T Levels in these areas would not be rolled out until at least 2026.

**Slide 15- Next steps**

The DfE have invited awarding organisations to submit further new level 3 qualifications in health and science, construction and the built environment, 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 these new qualifications to be available for first teaching in September 2026.

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