



Department
for Education

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

REFORMED TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS AND ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

FOR PARENTS/CARERS AND LEARNERS

June 2025

Links to level 2 and level 3 newly approved qualifications for first teach 2025



Why is the government changing post-16 education?

The government is making changes to post-16 education to make it easier to navigate the qualifications system, to continue to improve the quality of qualifications and to make sure that learners are better prepared for either going into skilled work or further study. In September 2025, newly reformed qualifications at levels 2 and 3 will begin to be delivered, offering high quality, focused pathways into skilled work or higher education.

Subject areas include building and construction; child development and well-being; engineering; health & social care; ICT; nursing and allied medical fields; science; sport, leisure and recreation; and transport operations and maintenance.

What are Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs)?

AAQs are mainly designed to help learners enter Higher Education but can also prepare you for apprenticeships and work. AAQs are level 3 qualifications that you can study after GCSEs. They range in size from 150 to 450 guided learning hours (GLH), for comparison an A level is 360 GLH. AAQs combine academic and applied learning, using various assessment methods to support your individual needs.

AAQs are available in subjects not typically covered by A Levels, such as Engineering, Medical and Applied Science and Health and Social care, providing a broader range of study areas than purely studying A levels.

What are reformed Technical Qualifications?

Reformed Technical Qualifications are new qualifications designed to give you a head start towards the job you want. They are available for post-16 learners at level 2 (the same level as GCSEs) and level 3 (the same level as A levels).

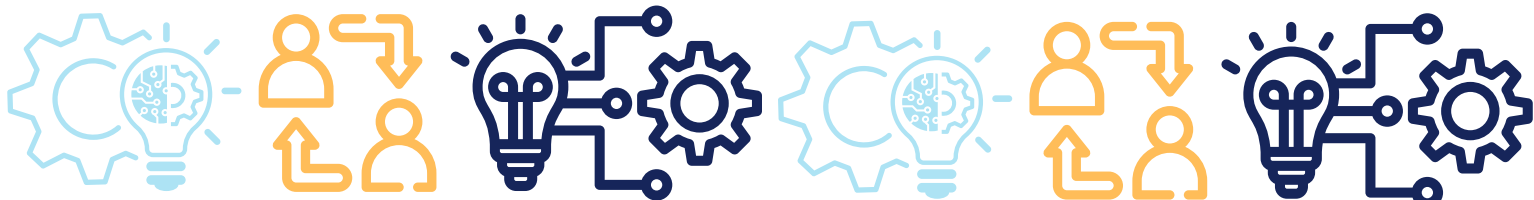
Reformed Technical Qualifications are available as **Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications** and **Additional Specialist Qualifications**.

Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications are based on employer led occupational standards, so they line up with the skills that employers say they need for specific jobs. Because if this you'll know you are studying the skills, knowledge and behaviours that employers have said they want.

Additional Specialist Qualifications build on the skills and knowledge in a work-related standard, allowing you to specialise further in a job. For example, a specialist qualification in early years nutrition might build on what you have learnt in a larger early years practitioner qualification.

For 16-19 learners, level 3 reformed Technical Qualifications are only available in non-T Level areas. T Levels are the large qualification of choice for 16-19 learners and are available in over 20 subject areas. For adults, reformed Technical Qualifications are available across all areas, including T Level subject areas.

[Find out more about Reformed Technical Qualifications and AAQs.](#)





What is a T Level, why should I consider one?

T Levels were first introduced in 2020, as a high quality, technical alternative to A levels for 16–19-year-olds. One T Level is equivalent to a 3 A level programme, and they are available in a range of subjects from Construction, Engineering & Manufacturing and Health, to Digital, Craft & Design and Animal Care. Nearly 60,000 learners have taken a T Level so far, and have gone onto positive destinations such as higher education, employment or apprenticeships (over 90% of the first and second T Level cohorts who completed their course were studying and/or working roughly a year later). Over 300 colleges and schools offer T Levels, you can find your nearest provider through a postcode search at www.tlevels.gov.uk and there is more information in our parents and carers leaflet using the [Amazing Apprenticeships Parents and Carers guide](#).

When do AAQs and reformed Technical Qualifications begin?

1 August 2025 onwards.

Will they be available in my area?

To find out if your local college is offering these qualifications, please contact them directly.

When can I apply?

Application timelines depend on the college or school you want to apply to. Please contact them directly to find out more.

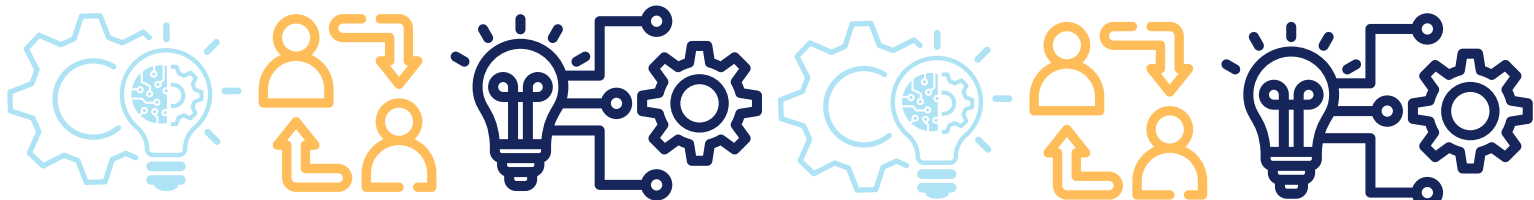
How long does an AAQ or reformed Technical Qualification take to study?

AAQs are designed to be studied alongside A levels, full time over one or two years. The time required to complete a reformed Technical Qualification varies, depending on how large or small the qualification is, as they can vary in size.

Both AAQs and reformed Technical Qualifications can be studied part-time or full-time, depending on your circumstances. Contact your local college directly to find out more.

What subjects can I study?

The subjects available from August 2025 include Building and construction, Child development and well-being, Engineering, Health & social care, ICT practitioners, Nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine, Science, Sport, leisure and recreation and Transport operations and maintenance.



Are reformed Technical Qualifications right for me?

If you know the occupation you'd like, then reformed Technical Qualifications could be the right qualification for you as they focus on real-world skills that employers value. You'll learn by doing, which is ideal if you prefer practical training over theoretical study. Because reformed Technical Qualifications are based on employer led occupational standards, they align with the skills that employers say they need for specific jobs.

Are AAQs right for me?

AAQs are mainly designed to help learners enter Higher Education. They combine academic and applied learning, and you would normally study an AAQ in a mixed study programme alongside A levels. If you are thinking of studying A levels, then these qualifications could be suitable for you.

Can I go to university after I have studied a level 3 Reformed Technical Qualification or an AAQ?

Yes, you can. Reformed Technical Qualifications are designed to get you work ready, but you can continue further studies, perhaps towards a Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ) or degree apprenticeship.

AAQs are designed to support entry into Higher Education and to be studied alongside A levels, so are the ideal qualification if you know you want progress to further study at university.

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. The latest UCAS tariff tables are available at UCAS Tariff – All You Need to Know, with background information and Frequently Asked Questions.

Why would I choose a reformed Technical Qualification over a paid apprenticeship?

Reformed Technical Qualifications give you the opportunity continue your studies in a practical, hands-on way. While gaining practical experience, you also achieve the qualifications needed to move into a higher level of study, if you choose to later. Apprenticeships are paid, work-based training for those who know what occupation they want to pursue.

What qualifications do I need to be able to study an AAQ or Reformed Technical Qualification?

Speak to the college/school to find out more about their specific entry requirements.

[Visit our pages for parents/ carers and learners to find out more](#)

