**Slide 1**

**Slide 2**

To summarise the presentation:-

* the background to the development of reformed qualifications, including the review of qualifications reform.
* reformed qualifications, including linking to some learner pathways examples.
* the next steps for Qualifications reform.

**Slide 3**

Over the last decade or so, there have been a number of reviews looking at post-16 vocational education and 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 L3 and below due to no or low enrolments. The 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. The purpose of the review was to look at the qualifications that were set for defunding in July of last year and in 2025.

The government was elected to deliver on a series of missions. These missions relate to spreading opportunity and supporting economic growth, which includes post-16 qualifications.

In addition to delivering on the Government’s missions, 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.

**Slide 4**

This slide shows how the DfE approached the review of level 3 qualifications- the area with the most policy tension, especially with T Levels and overlapping qualifications.

The DfE also looked at where alternative qualifications, like Applied General qualifications, should be retained.

Level 2 and below qualifications were left to the wider Curriculum and Assessment Review, giving it the space needed and because funding for those qualifications hadn’t previously been removed.

The review covered nine routes:

Legal, finance and Accounting; Business and Administration; Health and Science (including Social Care); Education and Early Years; Engineering and Manufacturing; Construction and the Built Environment; Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care; Digital and Creative and Design.

Level 3 qualifications outside these routes- like Criminology or Uniformed Public Services- will continue to be funded as before. 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. The DfE 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.

The approach to reviewing the qualifications in scope was pragmatic and evidence led. Consideration was given to enrolments, outcomes, employer needs, skills gaps, and the existence of reformed qualifications. It was the latter factor that were particularly important in supporting decision making because if there were reformed qualifications already in the system doing the job, then the old qualifications wouldn’t be needed.

**Slide 5**

Turning to the outcomes of the review:

The needs analysis found 157 qualifications where funding should be retained in the short term and the length of time these qualifications are needed varies by route. Where longer term need is identified, qualifications must be reformed to improve quality.

This approach provides as much certainty as possible and clarity until at least 2027. Further clarity will be provided after the conclusion of the wider curriculum and assessment review in the Autumn.

The Government has given a clear commitment to T Levels.

Three new T Levels were introduced last September; another in Marketing is coming this September. 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 large qualifications are only going to be retained 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.

Lastly:

Funding from 216 qualifications with low or no enrolments will be removed on July 31, 2025.

**Slide 6**

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

Qualifications that have been retained and how long they will be retained for is illustrated on the slide.

**Slide 7**

Moving on to the newly reformed qualifications- 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.

New qualifications will be available in routes and subjects aligned to Construction and the Built environment, Digital, Education and early years, Engineering and manufacturing and Health and Science from 1 August this year. These qualifications are Alternative Academic Qualifications or AAQs and Reformed Technical Qualifications, which include Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications and Additional Specialist Qualifications.

In relation to the quality of these new qualifications, before they are approved for public funding, Ofqual regulates 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. Learners can therefore be confident in high quality qualifications that will support progression to higher education or into skilled employment.

**Slide 8**

Starting with AAQs

AAQs are designed primarily to support entry into Higher Education. A small AAQ can be between 150 and 420 GLH- to put this into context, one A Level is 360 GLH, and can be taken across one or two years. They are primarily designed to be taken as part of a mixed academic programme with A levels, in subjects that are strategically important and/or less served by A levels.

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.

60% of their content is mandated by the awarding organisation but this is often higher, sometimes up to 100%. Up to 40% can be made up of optional components, which could range from a simple choice of one from two or three optional units, up choosing a pathway of options. Students would choose what options they take based on their interests and aspirations, guided as appropriate by staff at their provider.

They contain space for applied learning as well as more traditional academic learning, and they provide scope for a variety of assessment methods. An awarding organisation must ensure that at least 40% of the contribution to the overall qualification grade ismade up of assessment by examination.

The non-examined assessments (NEA) are set and externally moderated by the awarding organisation, but marked by the provider. An assignment might, for example, consist of a project brief putting the learner in a scenario in which they have to complete tasks like research and options development and provide a report, presentation and bibliography for their research.

Approved AAQs that will be available for delivery from the 1 August 2025 include subjects such as Human Biology, Applied Science, Health and Social Care, Medical Science, Engineering and Computing.

**Slide 9**

Moving on to Reformed Technical Qualifications, these are available as Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications and Additional Specialist Qualifications.

So, at level 3- starting with Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications- these are generally smaller than T Levels. Their size is led by the requirement to deliver competence against an occupational standard and they aim to support a learner to enter, or to progress within a role.

The ones currently approved range in size from 187 to 864 GLH. For 16-19 year olds, level 3 Reformed Technical Qualifications are only available in non-T Level areas. [T Levels](https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/) are the gold standard, large qualification for 16-19 learners and are available in over 20 subject areas. For adults, Reformed Technical Qualifications are also available in T Level areas and can cover any occupational standards.

For level 3 they can be studied after GCSEs or other level 2 qualifications.

**Slide 10**

Level 3 Technical Occupational Additional Specialist qualifications 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 competencies and specialise within a sector.

These qualifications will build on knowledge covered by a T Level or other occupational entry qualification. For example, an Additional Specialist qualification in Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator in Early years, would build on the Early Years Educator Technical Occupation Entry qualification at level 3 or the T Level in Education and Early years.

**Slide 11**

On this slide you can see the qualifications available in 2025 and where the newly reformed qualifications sit- so you have technical and academic qualifications and the other qualifications available, including other level 3 qualifications and training through apprenticeships.

**Slide 12**

Examples of pathways available on the DfE Qualifications reform webspace that can be downloaded. These are available in the following routes Health and science; Education and early years; Construction and the built environment and Digital.

You can also download a timeline that summarises when new qualifications will be available from and when qualifications will be defunded.

**Slide 13**

This slide illustrates the key ‘next steps’.

Awarding organisations have submitted further new level 3 qualifications in health and science, construction, digital, and education and early years, and in the care services route which 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, more information will be provided in due course.

The C&A review published their interim report in March, it confirmed that the review is following the principle of evolution not revolution, and have made clear that they want to build on the reforms that have already been made, including support for the continued roll-out of T Levels.