



Department
for Education

Post-16 qualifications reform at level 3 and below newsletter

July 2025

ACTION

WATCH our first support video, "What Qualifications Reform means to me" – with Cat Marin, Group Director of Strategy and Innovation at Activate Learning. In this video, Cat explains the thinking behind the reforms, the opportunities for innovation, and how Activate Learning are preparing learners to progress, whichever path they choose.

Watch the full video to learn more about:

- What's changing in September 2025
- How holistic curriculum design benefits learners

DOWNLOAD our NEW provider toolkit products to help you to explain Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and reformed Technical Qualifications as a new post-16 option to staff members, learners, parents and employers.

VISIT our provider webpages.

STAY INFORMED by signing up to our mailing list and share this link with colleagues so that they are up-to-date with news and information about qualifications reform.

CONTACT US via our email to make suggestions about what you would like to see in future newsletters.

NEW LEVEL 3
QUALIFICATIONS
AVAILABLE FROM
1 AUGUST 2025

[CLICK
HERE](#)

NEW LEVEL 2
QUALIFICATIONS
AVAILABLE FROM
1 AUGUST 2025

[CLICK
HERE](#)

NEWS



The Gatsby Charitable Foundation has launched an opportunity for colleges to join a **Curriculum Design Group**, in September 2025. This peer-led initiative brings senior leaders together to collaborate on curriculum reform.

Each group, consisting of up to eight colleges from across the country, will tackle a curriculum design challenge over six months.

Facilitated by experienced curriculum professionals, these groups provide structured, yet flexible support tailored to each institution's needs. Participants benefit from a supportive environment, sharing ideas, obstacles, opportunities, and best practices.

Over 40 colleges participated this academic year, reporting increased confidence in curriculum planning, access to shared resources, peer support, and the chance to test new ideas.

Participation is free, with colleges nominating a senior leader for three face-to-face sessions and committing key staff to virtual meetings.

Focus areas include shaping curriculum pathways for specific subjects and scaling up work aligned with institutional priorities. Use this [link](#) to find out more and contact Sue Clarke at sue.clarke@gatsby.org.uk if you have any questions or to join.



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HOT TOPIC– in this month, we're turning the spotlight on the Digital route, with a preview of the new qualifications launching in 2025. You can also explore a selection of curated resources and guidance to support your curriculum development and pathway planning.

The qualifications landscape in Digital offers a variety of pathways to pursue careers in this sector, giving learners the flexibility to choose what works best for their ambitions and learning style– whether that's through T Levels, A levels, Apprenticeships, Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) or reformed Technical Qualifications at level 3.

Through the Review of Qualifications Reform, we are retaining funding for 6 large qualifications in the Digital route until 2026, while we work with the awarding organisation delivering the three T Levels to roll out improvements, at which point these qualifications will have funding removed. This approach allows colleges additional time to transition to T Levels and embed key improvements.



We are also retaining funding for 2 medium and 11 small digital qualifications to support learner choice in areas identified as being of most importance, 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. You can see the full list of retained qualifications by clicking this [link](#).



Looking ahead, the government remains committed to T Levels, and the qualification reform process continues. Awarding organisations have submitted reformed level 3 qualifications in key areas, including the Digital route, with these new qualifications ready for teaching from 1 August 2026. We will publish a list of these qualifications in September 2025. The Curriculum and Assessment Review have also made clear that it wants to build on the work we have already done to simplify and improve the quality of the qualifications landscape– evolution not revolution. We are working with the Review panel on the approach to qualifications at level 2 and 3.





As part of our work to continuously improve T Levels and ensure that they are available to as many young people as possible, we have been reviewing the breadth of content and approach to assessment to ensure T Levels are manageable and to identify where improvements are needed. These include streamlining core content, improved support and guidance materials, and a reduction in assessment in specific T Levels. We are also rebranding the Digital T Levels from September 2025, so that their names are clearer to young people and wider stakeholders:

- Digital Production Design and Development will be renamed Digital Software Development.
- Digital Support Services will be renamed Digital Support and Security.
- Digital Business Services will be renamed Digital Data Analytics.

The first updates to content and assessment for the three Digital T Levels will roll out from September 2025, and are detailed in the revised specifications which have now been published on Pearson's website: [T Levels | Pearson qualifications](#). For example, assessment for the occupational specialism in the T Level in Digital Software Development the assessment for the occupational assessment has been reduced by nearly 20 hours.

Now is a great opportunity to consider delivering T Levels, or to grow your T Level provision, as they remain central to qualifications reform, forming the large qualification of choice at level 3 in the routes they are available. The three Digital T Levels and newly reformed qualifications are designed to help learners succeed- whether they're heading into skilled work or progressing to higher education- by providing clear, high-quality pathways into this important sector.

A career in the digital sector offers strong job prospects, competitive salaries, and a wide range of exciting roles, from software development to digital marketing. With demand for digital skills growing across all industries, learners can enjoy flexible career paths, opportunities for progression, and the chance to work in an innovative and fast-moving career.

Level 3 qualification pathways in Digital

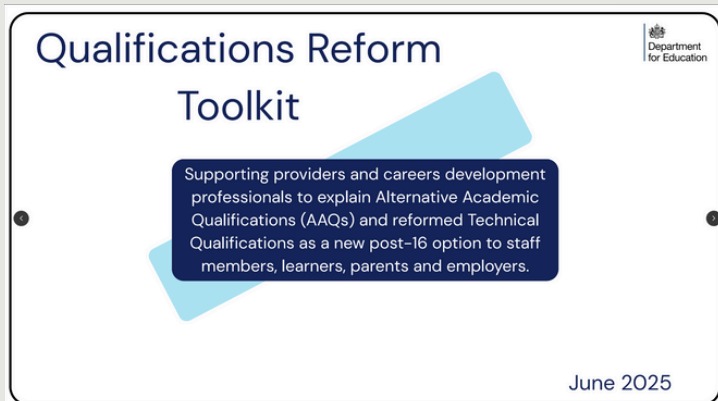
[Progression routes in Digital](#)

[Pathways in Digital](#)

[Learner journeys in Digital](#)

[Level 3 Digital pathways](#)





Qualifications Reform Toolkit

Supporting the promotion of reformed qualifications: a resource for providers and careers professionals.

This month we are pleased to share a new resource designed to support post-16 education and training providers and careers development professionals in effectively communicating Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and reformed Technical Qualifications.

This resource pack includes a range of materials that are designed to be integrated into your existing communication and engagement strategies. The aim is to support greater awareness and understanding of reformed qualifications among teachers, learners, parents, employers, and others across the education and skills sector, including careers professionals.

We encourage providers to use these assets to promote clear and consistent messaging around these qualifications and their place within the wider education landscape.

Resources include:

- Editable slide packs
- Explainer flyers, posters, FAQ and social media assets to use with parents, learners and employers:
- Resources for staff: explainers on Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and reformed Technical Qualifications, level 2 and 3 qualification landscape for 2025 and options for learners.
- Route-by-route downloads: curriculum pathways, progression options and learner journeys/pathways.
- Further support and guidance: support implementing T Levels, support from the Further Education Commissioner and more.
- Post-16 Qualifications Reform publications and key documents
- Qualifications reform video- 'What Qualifications Reform means to me'.

An accessible version of the Qualifications Reform is also available.