



Department
for Education

Post-16 qualifications reform at level 3 and below newsletter

August 2025

ACTION

WATCH our new support videos to learn more about what's changing in September 2025, including explainers on [Alternative Academic Qualifications \(AAQs\)](#) and [reformed Technical Qualifications](#). You can also watch our "[What Qualifications Reform means to me](#)" video featuring Cat Marin from 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.

DOWNLOAD our updated provider toolkit 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.

READ the recently published Study Programme Guidance for 2025-26. This guidance is for everyone involved in the planning or delivery of 16-to-19 study programmes.

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](#)





Employer Support Fund for T Level industry placements

An Employer Support Fund is available for the 2025–2026 financial year to support employers with the essential costs of hosting T Level industry placement students. For the Engineering and Manufacturing sector, this funding is specifically targeted at supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) hosting placements. Employers can claim funding for placements that start between 23rd April 2025 and 31 March 2026– you will want to enquire with your local T Level providers if you are interested in this fund. More information is available [here](#).

Study Programme Guidance

Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and reformed Technical Qualifications for post-16 learners will be taught for the first time in September 2025. They are designed to better align education with the needs of employers, higher education, and learners themselves. There are multiple key benefits for post-16 learners including:

- **Clearer pathways to employment and higher education:** the reforms will streamline qualification routes making them easier to understand and navigate.
- **Higher quality and relevance:** only qualifications that meet new quality and relevance criteria will be approved for public funding. This ensures that learners are studying courses that are valued by employers and universities, therefore increasing their chances of success.
- **Flexibility for learners:** the introduction of AAQs allows for more flexible academic learning options, especially for those who may not wish to follow traditional academic routes.

We have updated the **16-to-19 study programme guide** and this confirms that outcomes from AAQs will be included in the 16–18 performance measures in time (as part of data for the 2027/28 academic year at the earliest). We will provide more information on reformed Technical Qualifications in due course, along with full details of the process for adding qualifications to the performance tables, performance points and the approach to discounting.

Curriculum Design Groups



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.



Department
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HOT TOPIC

This month, we're turning the spotlight on the Engineering 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 Engineering 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 levels 2 and 3.



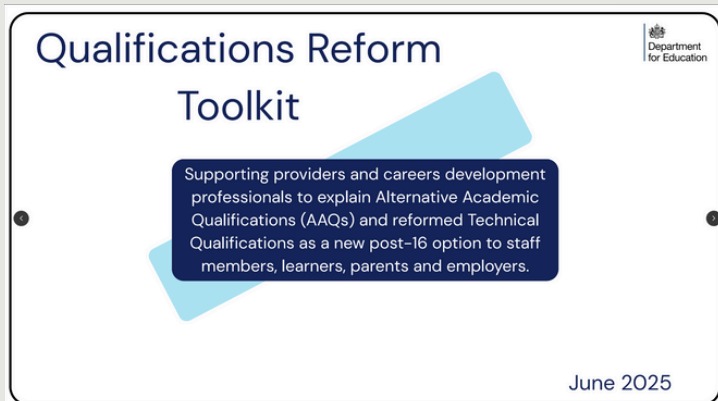
Through the Review of Qualifications Reform, we are retaining funding all current qualifications until at least 2027, giving an additional two years for providers to transition to the **Engineering and Manufacturing T Levels**. This approach gives colleges more time to transition and allows us to implement important changes, including those from the review of the Engineering Technician standards, which underpin the T Level qualifications. 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. 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.

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 Engineering and Manufacturing 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.



Engineering and Manufacturing route-by-route resources.



Qualifications Reform Toolkit update

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

This month we are pleased to share our updated toolkit, 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 videos- 'What Qualifications Reform means to me', 'What is an AAQ?' and 'What is a reformed Technical Qualification?' are available now.

An accessible version of the Qualifications Reform is also available.