



Department
for Education

Post-16 qualifications reform at level 3 and below newsletter

October 2025

Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper Public consultation on Post-16 level 3 and below pathways

The Government published the new [Post-16 Education and Skills Strategy White Paper](#) which sets out our vision for a world-leading skills system, and launched the [public consultation](#) on 20 October to gather views on the proposed changes to level 2 and level 3 qualifications. The consultation closes on 12 January 2026.

The strategy sets out the government's vision to break down barriers to opportunity, meet student and employers' needs; widen access to high-quality education and training; support innovation, research, and development; and improve people's lives. The skills system is critical to supporting the development of the skilled workforce our economy needs – delivering on the Industrial Strategy, our Plan for Change and driving national renewal.

The strategy sets out a comprehensive package of proposals designed to:

- Engage students who want to explore different industries by introducing new 'V Levels' – a new vocational option that sits alongside A levels and T Levels. These will feature nationally set content linked to job standards, giving students clear, industry relevant choices.
- Strengthen post-16 level 2 options by creating two new dedicated pathways:
A one year Further study pathway to prepare students to study at Level 3.
A two-year Occupational pathway for students aiming for employment at Level 2.
Both pathways will include tailored employability, enrichment, pastoral provision, and targeted English and maths provision.
- Break the cycle of unnecessary English and maths resits, by offering students new level 1 'preparation for GCSE' qualifications that better support students to get the grades they need to progress. These new qualifications will consolidate foundational skills and knowledge, preparing students with lower prior attainment for successful GCSE resits. Rather than repeated exam entries, students will receive structured support to build confidence and competency before progressing to GCSE the following year.
- We will also make changes to the current accountability framework to recognise providers' efforts to progress all students toward level 2 and consult on changes to our performance metrics to incentivise providers to enter students into exams only when they are ready to make progress. This is on top of increased funding for providers and support through training and sharing of effective practice.

We are keeping funding for most existing qualifications in place until new V levels and other qualifications come in. The Government is clear that, where a person wishes to study a large qualification in a T Level area, this should be the T Level, and defunding of large qualifications will continue in T Level areas. T Levels are out-performing other qualifications. After completion, T Level students who progress into work are more likely to work in a field related to their course than students from comparable level 3 qualifications (approximately 7 out of 10).

T Levels offer the best option for learners who know what career they want to pursue, and we will be looking to grow the T Level offer to cover more subject areas, so more students benefit from their strong outcomes (91% pass rate in 2025, 97% of applicants receiving a university offer, and high employer confidence and positive learner feedback). Increasing numbers of education providers are choosing to offer T Levels and learner numbers are rising rapidly.

We are hosting a [webinar](#) on Tuesday 4 November from 15:45 to 16:45, which will provide information about the consultation document. Further details about this and future events will be available on our [webpages](#).

This consultation is your opportunity to help shape these reforms. We're seeking your views to ensure the new pathways are relevant, credible, and supportive of all learners and strongly encourage you to participate.