

Qualifications Reform

Toolkit

Supporting providers and careers development professionals to explain Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and reformed Technical Qualifications as a new post-16 option to staff members, learners, parents and employers.

About the toolkit



Department
for Education

In 2024, The Department for Education published newly reformed level 2 and level 3 post-16 qualifications that will be available to teach from 1 August 2025 and August 2026.

This resource has been created to help education and training providers, and careers development professionals, explain Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and reformed Technical Qualifications as new post-16 options to staff members, learners, parents and employers.

We ask that you use the assets and resources as intended– to help improve understanding of these qualifications– and for no other purpose.

[Click here for a welcome from our AI hosts.](#)



Why use reformed qualifications?

Newly reformed qualifications will be available from 1 August 2025 and 2026, alongside A levels, T Levels and other level 2 and 3 qualifications. The new qualifications include Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and reformed Technical Qualifications.

They offer:

- **Focused learning:** AAQs offer academic qualifications with applied learning, ensuring learners gain practical skills alongside theoretical knowledge.
- **Progression to Higher Education:** AAQs are designed to support progression to related higher education courses, backed by universities. Both AAQs and reformed Technical Qualifications attract UCAS tariff points, so they can be used for university applications.
- **Varied subjects:** 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.
- **Industry-relevant skills:** reformed Technical Qualifications are based on employer-designed standards, providing the knowledge, skills, and behaviours employers say are needed for specific occupations.

Learners can be confident in high quality qualifications that will support progression to higher education or into skilled employment.



T Levels



Department
for Education



T Levels are high-quality qualifications which provide young people with a firm foundation for their future, designed with employers to meet rigorous standards. They are substantial, with longer teaching hours, and include an industry placement element giving work experience. Students spend around 80% of their time in a learning environment and 20% on the placement. One T Level is roughly equivalent in size to 3 A levels and T Levels are assigned UCAS points to support progression to higher education. T Levels are designed to prepare students for skilled employment, apprenticeships and higher education. Where learners wish to study a large qualification in a T Level route, the T Level should be the main option for them.

T Levels are made up of 3 separate components:

- a core component (400 to 600 guided learning hours) that assesses underpinning knowledge, understanding and core skills relevant to the occupations covered by the T Level
- one or more occupational specialist components (more than 600 guided learning hours) focussed on assessing occupationally specific knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to an occupation within the relevant T Level pathway
- a high-quality industry placement focussed on developing practical and technical skills required for the profession or trade that the student is studying for (minimum of 315 hours)

Find out more about [support provided](#) if you are planning to deliver T Levels in your setting.

Contents

Click on
each link to
take you to
the content.

1. To use with teachers, parents/carers and learners: Editable slide packs.
2. To use with parents, learners and employers: Explainer flyers, posters, FAQ and social media assets.
3. To use with Higher Education Institutions (HEI): explainer leaflet and student learner journeys.
4. For teachers/ careers professionals: Explainers on Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) and downloads on reformed Technical Qualifications, including comparisons of different level 2 and 3 qualification options available, the level 2 and 3 qualification landscape for 2025, and a timeline of Qualifications reform.
5. Route-by-route downloads for teaching staff and careers professionals including; curriculum pathways, progression options and learner journeys/pathways in; Health and Science (including social care), Education and Early years, Construction and the Built Environment and Digital.
6. Further support including: support for implementing T Levels and support available from the Further Education Commissioner.
7. Key documents and publications: Post-16 qualifications reform.
8. Qualifications Reform videos
9. Want to know more?

1. Editable slide packs

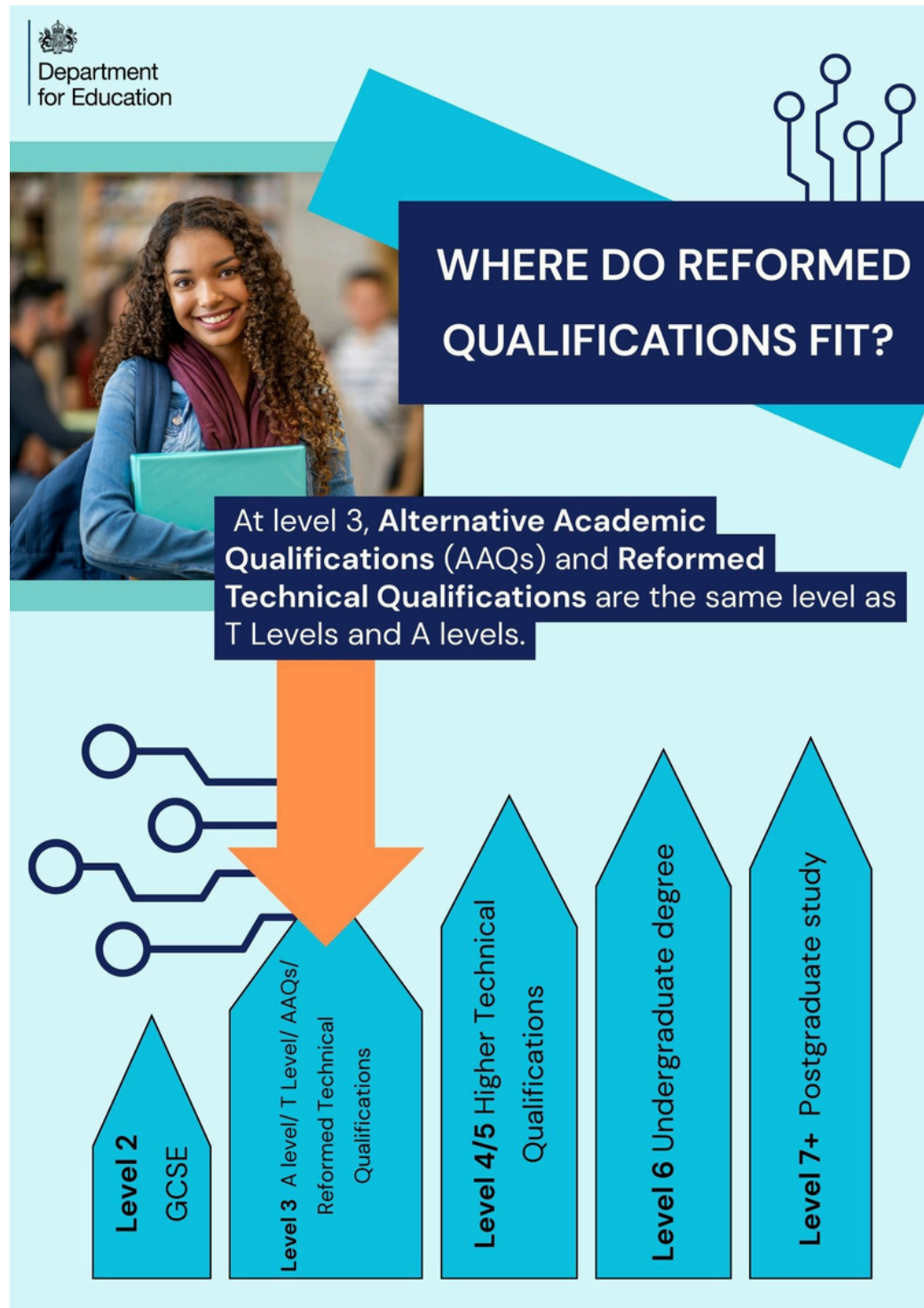
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- An editable [slide pack](#) and [script](#) to use with teachers, parents and other interested parties on the Outcomes of the Review of Qualifications Reform.
- An editable [slide pack](#) and [script](#) explaining the reformed qualifications with examples of how they can be combined in study pathways for learners.
- An editable [slide pack](#) for a careers advice presentation about AAQs and reformed Technical Qualifications.



2. Social media, explainers, posters and copy

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- Explainer leaflets for parents/carers on AAQs and level 2 and level 3 reformed Technical Qualifications.
- Social media assets, posters and draft copy that you can use to promote your offer of AAQs and reformed Technical Qualifications.
- Template letter to local employers explaining Qualifications Reform.
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for learners and parents/carers.



3. To use with Higher Education Institutions (HEI)

- Explainer leaflet for HEI admissions tutors and lecturers on AAQs.
- Template newsletter draft to colleagues explaining Qualifications Reform.
- Route-by-route resources showing student learner journeys using AAQs.



3. For teachers/ careers professionals

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[Level 2 explainer about reformed Technical Qualifications.](#)

Level 2
New, reformed qualifications

Qualifications at level 2 and below are a vital part of our further education landscape – not just for their value to the economy but also for their potential to improve social mobility, inclusion, and lifelong learning.

- Diverse Cohort:** Learners at level 2 have varied backgrounds, prior achievements, needs, aspirations, and motivations and are more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds or have special educational needs or disabilities.
- High-Quality Education:** It is crucial that learners at level 2 have access to high-quality education that supports their needs and helps them unlock their potential.
- Progression Opportunities:** Level 2 pathways should offer excellent progression opportunities, including level 3 study programmes (like T Levels), skilled work, or a level 3 Apprenticeship.

There are 66 newly reformed qualifications at level 2

Level 2 Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications

At level 2 there are two types of occupational entry qualifications:

- Occupational entry qualifications are aligned to the occupational standard at level 2 and support progression to employment in a given route.
- Extended occupational entry qualifications are slightly larger. They will include the same technical content as the smaller occupational entry qualifications, but will also include additional introductory sector knowledge, to support wider contextual understanding of the route, and transferable employability skills. These will be available to 16-19 and adult learners and will include the word "Extended" in the qualification title.

Level 2 Technical specialist qualifications

A technical specialist qualification is another type of technical qualification. It allows a learner to develop additional knowledge and competencies and specialise within a sector. These qualifications will build on knowledge covered by another occupational entry qualification.

[Level 3 explainer about AAQs and reformed Technical Qualifications.](#)

New, reformed level 3 qualifications

Link to the 74 new approved qualifications for first teach 2025

Technical Occupational Entry Qualifications

TQs are new qualifications delivering competence against an occupational standard not covered by T Levels at level 3 for 16-19-year-olds and all occupational standards for adults. These qualifications aim to support a learner to enter, or to progress within, a role. At level 3, these can be any size.

Alternative Academic Qualifications

AAQs are new qualifications that will be available for delivery from 1 August 2025, offering an academic qualification with elements of applied learning in a range of subjects at level 3. AAQs also attract UCAS tariff points.

Technical Occupational Additional Specialist Qualifications

These are specialist level 3 technical qualifications for post-16 learners and adults, which go beyond the contents of an occupational standard and allows 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.

[List of Awarding Organisations offering newly reformed qualifications.](#)

AWARDING ORGANISATIONS

LIST OF AWARDING ORGANISATIONS OFFERING NEWLY APPROVED ALTERNATIVE ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS (AAQs) AND REFORMED TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR 2025

NEW LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM 1 AUGUST 2025

LEVEL 3

- Pearson AAQs
- Pearson Level 3 Reformed Technical qualifications
- City & Guilds
- EAL Awards
- NOCN
- NCFE
- AIM
- OCR
- Open Awards
- International Baccalaureate
- Edugas
- Active IQ
- BWYO – The British Wheel of Yoga Qualifications
- YIPOT Skills
- YMCA Awards
- Institute of The Motor Industry

NEW LEVEL 2 QUALIFICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM 1 AUGUST 2025

LEVEL 2

- Pearson City & Guilds
- EAL Awards
- NOCN
- NCFE
- Open Awards
- Active IQ
- YMCA Awards
- Institute of The Motor Industry
- ETC Awards

[Level 2 landscape document download.](#)

LEVEL 2 POST-16 QUALIFICATION LANDSCAPE 2025-2026 (Non-technical)

Route **Funding** **Level 2 qualification types**

Non-technical qualifications
Primarily to support progression to further study at level 3.

16-19 and adult

General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSEs) Grades 9-4 or A*-C.

Other level 2 qualifications: level 2 award, level 2 certificate, level 2 diploma, level 2 ESOL, level 2 essential skills, level 2 functional skills, level 2 national certificate, level 2 national diploma, level 2 NVQ, music grades 4 and 5.

Find out more about Level 2 qualifications available.

T Level Foundation Year (TFY): This is a study programme aimed at supporting progression to a T Level and is not a qualification type, however it may include a qualification.

The purpose of the T Level foundation year is to help students develop a broad range of knowledge, skills and behaviours that will help them to progress onto and succeed on a T Level in their chosen occupational route.

This diagram represents the landscape for the academic year 2025-26. The Curriculum Assessment Review is currently considering how to strengthen 16-19 provision and will report in Autumn 2025.

[Level 3 landscape document download.](#)

LEVEL 3 POST-16 QUALIFICATION LANDSCAPE 2025-2026

Route **Funding** **Level 3 qualification types** **Route** **Funding** **Level 3 qualification types**

Technical qualifications
Primarily designed to support progression to employment.

16-19

T Levels

Occupational Entry: Covers the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) against an occupational standard not covered by a T Level and leads to occupational competence.

Additional Specialist: Specialist technical qualifications.

16-19 and adult

Academic qualifications
Primarily designed to support progression to further/higher education.

16-19 and adult

A/AS levels

Small Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) 1 x A level size. Designed primarily to support entry into Higher Education.

Adult only

Occupational Entry: Covers the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) in an occupational standard covered by T Levels and leads to occupational competence.

Other level 3 training and qualifications

Advanced Apprenticeship
For learners seeking practical, workplace-based training, apprenticeships offer an alternative. Level 3 apprenticeships are also known as advanced apprenticeships.

Other level 3 qualifications: IB Diploma, Access to HE Diploma, Core Maths, Extended Project Qualifications, Performing Arts Graded Examinations, Advanced Extension Awards, Level 3 NVQ, Level 3 ESOL and Applied General Qualifications (AGQs).*

*AGQs will continue to have funding removed and you should continue to check when qualifications are available.

This diagram represents the landscape for the academic year 2025-26. The Curriculum and Assessment Review is currently considering how to strengthen 16-19 provision and will report in Autumn 2025.

[Different qualification options available to post-16 learners.](#)

Comparing post-16 qualification and study programme options September 2025-2027*

	A levels (Level 3)	T Levels (Level 3)	Apprenticeship (Level 3)	Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) (Level 3)	Reformed Technical Qualifications (Level 3)	Applied General Qualifications (AGQs) (Level 3)	T Level Foundation Year (Level 2)
How would I study for this?	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	Work for an employer and part-time study.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.	At a post-16 college (FE or Sixth form) or school based sixth form provision.
Main focus	Academic study to support progression to higher education.	Employer-developed to prepare for skilled employment or further study.	Job-specific training in the workplace with part-time study.	Blend of academic and applied learning for HE entry. Designed to be taken alongside A levels in a mixed study programme.	Prepares for occupational roles.	Applied learning for HE or work, often taken with A levels for students who would benefit from additional to before a T Level.	Study programme providing a high quality route into Level 3 technical qualifications or Level 2 apprenticeship.
Assessment type	Primarily examination but some subjects include non-examined assessment (NEA).	Core typically 2 2hr written exams and externally set project in controlled conditions) and the Occupational Demonstration (externally set project style assessment).	End-point assessment.	40% exams. Non-examined assessment set by AQ.	Proportion of external assessment and method not mandated. Must meet additional criteria set by WTE, e.g. must meet employer needs.	Minimum 40% external assessment.	Flexible and holistic assessment.
Length of study	Usually 2 years full-time study.	2 Years full-time study.	Usually 1-2 years.	Usually 2 years full-time study.	This depends on the qualification size and part-time full-time study.	Usually 1-2 years full-time study.	Usually 1 year of time study.
Study setting focused	Classroom-based.	80% classroom-based, some with workshops, labs and specialist settings, 20% industry placement.	Work based, while studying for a qualification.	Classroom-based.	Classroom-based, some with workshops, labs and other specialist settings.	Classroom-based.	Classroom-based.
What could it lead to?	Progression to Higher Education (Undergraduate degree), employment or an apprenticeship.	Progression to skilled employment, higher education (Undergraduate degree HTD), or a higher-level apprenticeship.	Progression to skilled employment, higher education (Undergraduate degree HTD), or a higher-level apprenticeship.	Primarily progression to Higher Education (Undergraduate degree HTD), but also employment or an apprenticeship.	Primarily progression to skilled employment, but can also lead to Higher Education (Undergraduate degree HTD), or a higher-level apprenticeship.	Progression to employment, Higher Education (Undergraduate degree HTD), or a higher-level apprenticeship.	Progression to a Level 3 technical qualification or to a 2 apprenticeship.

*This does not include other qualifications such as GCSEs, IB Diploma, Access to HE Diploma, Core Maths, Extended Project Qualifications, Performing Arts Graded Examinations, Advanced Extension Awards, Level 3 NVQ and Level 3 ESOL.
*AGQs will continue to have funding removed and you should continue to check when qualifications are available.

[Glossary of terms.](#)

4. Route-by-route resources

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Route-by-route downloads for teaching staff and careers professionals including curriculum pathways, progression options and student pathways in:

- [Construction and the Built Environment](#)
- [Digital](#)
- [Education and Early years](#)
- [Health and Science \(including social care\)](#)
- [Engineering and Manufacturing](#)

Learner journeys showing starting points, possible study programmes and progression for learners in:

- [Construction and the Built Environment](#)
- [Digital](#)
- [Education and Early years](#)
- [Health and Science \(including social care\)](#)

Department for Education Construction and the built environment Example pathways of progression into higher education or employment	Department for Education Digital Example pathways of progression into higher education or employment	Department for Education Education and Early Years Example pathways of progression into higher education or employment	Department for Education Health and Science Example pathways of progression into higher education or employment.
<p>Philip (16 years old) wants to follow his family in plumbing</p> <p>Philip enrolls on the Building Services Engineering for Construction T Level, taking the plumbing and heating engineering specialism</p> <p>Philip enters employment as a heating engineer for a large boiler company</p>	<p>Sandeep (16 years old) likes computers and information technology (IT) and would like to explore a career around this.</p> <p>Sandeep enrolls on the Digital Support Services T Level (* New name from September 2025 Digital Support and Security)</p> <p>Sandeep enters employment on a degree apprenticeship scheme at a local company.</p>	<p>Tasha (16 years old) aspires to work with young children in an education setting.</p> <p>Tasha enrolls on the Education and Early Years T Level, taking the Early years educator specialism.</p> <p>Tasha enters employment as a nursery worker at her local preschool.</p>	<p>Becky (16 years old) is interested in a career as a Midwife</p> <p>Becky enrolls on the Health T Level, taking the midwifery specialism</p> <p>Becky enrolls at university to continue studying to become a midwife</p>
<p>Yasmin (16 years old) would like to work in civil engineering but doesn't have the required GCSE grades for the T Level</p> <p>Yasmin enrolls on the T Level Foundation Year which could include: • GCSE maths and/or English resit • Level 2 qualification in construction • Additional enrichment, pastoral support and work experience</p> <p>Yasmin progresses onto the Construction T Level in Building Services Engineering for Construction</p>	<p>Maya (40 years old) would like to retrain to work in cyber security</p> <p>Maya enrolls on the level 3 Technical Occupational Entry for Cyber Security (Diploma)</p> <p>Maya enters employment as a security administrator</p>	<p>Chris (16 years old) wants to be a primary school teacher</p> <p>Chris enrolls on a level 3 study programme, which could include: • A levels e.g. English Language, Art and Design • Alternative Academic Qualification e.g. the AAQ in Early Childhood Development</p> <p>Chris enrolls at university to continue studying towards becoming a teacher</p>	<p>Simon (16 years old) would like to work as a Physiotherapist</p> <p>Simon enrolls on a L3 study programme, which could include: • A levels e.g. Biology, Physical Education • Alternative Academic Qualification e.g. AAQ in Health and Social Care</p> <p>Simon enrolls at university to study for a degree in Physiotherapy</p>

Department for Education Construction and the Built Environment Learner Journeys	Department for Education Digital Learner Journeys	Department for Education Education and Early years Learner Journeys	Department for Education Health and Science Learner Journeys
<p>We want every learner to study high quality qualifications which prepare them for their next step- whether this is entering skilled employment or progression onto higher levels of technical or academic study.</p> <p>Alongside T Levels and A levels, newly reformed qualifications will become available for delivery at level 3 at the start of the 2025 academic year. These are high-quality, aligned to occupational standards in technical routes, and offer learners clear routes to higher education or skilled employment.</p> <p>Reformed Technical Qualifications are also available at level 2, alongside the existing level 2 offer, including the T Level Foundation year.</p> <p>Alternative academic qualifications (AAQs) which are small AAQs (150-420 guided learning hours).</p> <p>Reformed technical qualifications which can be Technical Occupational Entry qualifications and Technical Additional Specialist qualifications.</p> <p>The new qualifications are in the following sector subject areas (SSAs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Transport operations and maintenance <p>You can review which qualifications at level 2 and level 3 are available in each SSA by accessing the lists of approved qualifications.</p> <p>The Construction and Built Environment Learner Journeys within this document have been developed to provide possible examples of the ways these new qualifications can be combined to create study programmes for 16-19-year-olds and adults. They also highlight progression opportunities as a result of studying the qualifications but are not formal guidance.</p> <p>You can find out more about study programmes by using the 16-19 study programme guidance.</p>	<p>We want every learner to study high quality qualifications which prepare them for their next step- whether this is entering skilled employment or progression onto higher levels of technical or academic study.</p> <p>Alongside T Levels and A levels, newly reformed qualifications will become available for delivery at level 3 at the start of the 2025 academic year. 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5. Further support

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- [T Level support offer.](#)
- [Further Education Commissioner support.](#)
- [Support for Employers: template letter to local employers explaining Qualifications Reform.](#)
- [Curriculum Design Group opportunity.](#)
- [Occupational Maps.](#)
- [Higher Technical Qualifications \(HTQs\) Provider Toolkit.](#)
- [Technical Education Networks materials.](#)

Department for Education

T Level provider support materials

T Level Provider Support Contacts
Providers who register to deliver T Levels can access a free comprehensive support package delivered by our contractors. The T Level funded support is split into three contracts to support you throughout your journey from preparing to deliver, to maintaining successful delivery, upskilling your industry knowledge.

Support Materials
Implementation and Delivery
If you would like to share information with parents/carers, learners and employers then this can also be found on the T Levels website:
• For parents/carers
• For learners
• For employers
[LEARN MORE](#)

Preparing to deliver
The AoC (Association of Colleges) delivers preparatory support. This provides one-to-one support with planning a high-quality T Level offer for the two years in the lead up to delivering a T Level.
The offer includes opportunities for networking, mentoring and buddying and hearing from providers who have expertise in specific areas of T Level delivery.
There are **guidance resources** to help with implementing industry replacements including 'how to' guides, tools and templates, workshops and video case studies.
For more information on the support available please contact the AoC on tlevelsupport@aoe.co.uk.

CPD training for teachers to upskill to deliver T Level qualifications
The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) have been contracted to provide free CPD training for teachers to prepare to teach T Levels via the **T Level Professional Development (TLPD) Programme**.
The programme offers online and face-to-face workshops, e-learning courses, mentoring, networking and industry upskilling. At the core of the offer there is a range of generic and subject specific training which provides practical instruction to help everyone involved in the planning and delivery of T Levels.
In addition, TLPD has a range of quality assured T Level teaching resources produced by T Level Providers collaborating in T Level Resource Improvement Projects (TRIPs). These teaching resources have been built based on provider need and can be freely accessed and easily adapted to be used in your teaching.

Further Education Commissioner (FEC)

LINKS TO FURTHER SUPPORT

- [Further Education Commissioner](#)
- [Further Education Commissioner annual report](#)
- [Help and support for colleges](#)
- [Effective practice in curriculum planning](#)
- [Powerful Pedagogy](#)
- [Curriculum efficiency and financial sustainability support](#)
- [Further Education Estates Planning Guide](#)
- [Guide to effective FE governance](#)
- [Management Accounts: Guide to effective practice](#)

6. Post-16 Qualifications Reform publications and key documents

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This includes current policy, guidance and information on qualifications in the new landscape, reviews that informed the case for reform and consultation documents. It also includes some key publications by Ofqual for further guidance and information.

- [The Post-16 Pathways Consultation](#)
- [The outcomes of the Review of Qualifications Reform.](#)
- [Current policy and guidance.](#)
- [Post-16 consultations.](#)
- [Post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below for the 2025 to 2026 academic year.](#)

7. Qualifications Reform videos

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Videos to support understanding and explain more about qualifications reform and the newly reformed qualifications.

- [Welcome from your hosts](#)
- [Watch our support video- 'What Qualifications Reform means to me'- Cat Marin, Activate Learning.](#)
- [What is an AAQ?](#)
- [What are reformed Technical Qualifications?](#)



Want to know more?

If you want to request any additional information, please email:
qualifications.reform@education.gov.uk

To find out more visit: [Qualifications Reform webpages](#)

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