



Department
for Education

Post-16 pathways resource pack

Supporting providers and careers information advice and guidance professionals to explain post-16 pathways to staff members, students, parents, employers and others

July 2026

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Ministerial foreword

Every young person deserves clear, high-quality choices after 16 that reflect their talents and ambitions. Yet, for too long, technical and vocational education has often been seen as a second choice rather than an equally valuable route to success. This government is determined to change that, as we continue driving forward our mission to ensure two-thirds of young people are in education, training or apprenticeships by 25.

These reforms are central to our ambition to widen opportunity and support economic growth. By making sure every qualification can lead to a skilled job or further study, we can help more young people stay engaged in education and training, develop the skills employers actually need, and progress to rewarding careers in valuable and growing industries.

From 2027, alongside A Levels and T Levels, young people will be able to study new V Levels, Foundation Certificates, and Occupational Certificates. These qualifications will make the choices after 16 clearer, giving students confidence that they can find the route that is right for them, whether that is further study or employment.

With a strong focus on applied and practical learning and assessment, they will help young people develop and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and behaviours they need. Including content linked to future skills needs, these qualifications will be underpinned by standards that are up-to-date and recognised nationally by employers.

We are committed to supporting schools, colleges, and training providers throughout the transition. This resource pack is part of that support. I recognise the vital role providers will play in making these qualifications a success and I hope this pack supports conversations with young people, parents, carers, and staff about helping every student to succeed, whether through academic, technical, or vocational routes.

Baroness Smith of Malvern

Minister for Skills

About the resource pack

We are designing post-16 pathways to provide clear, high-quality routes that support young people to progress into further study, apprenticeships and employment that help to meet future skills needs.

This resource pack has been created to support education and training providers, and careers information advice and guidance professionals to explain V Levels, Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates and how they fit alongside T Levels and A Levels. It will support conversations with staff members, students, parents and employers, including communications and engagement activities that increase awareness and understanding of these qualifications. On 20 May 2026, we published the [Implementation Plan](#) for post-16 technical and vocational qualifications, that sets out how we will move from policy intent to delivery.

This follows the publication on 20 March 2026 of the [Government response to the Post-16 pathways at level 3 and below consultation](#), which committed to the introduction of new V Levels, the expansion of T Levels, and clearer level 2 pathways. Together, these reforms represent the most significant transformation of vocational education in a generation.

Post-16 pathways

T Levels

[T Levels](#) are based on employer-designed occupational standards, to support entry into skilled technical roles, either directly or following further/higher study. They are equivalent in size to three A Levels, carry UCAS points and include a mandatory industry placement to give students the opportunity to apply their skills in a real work environment. T Levels will be the only large (1080 GLH) qualification available for students who want a sector-focussed post-16 choice.

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.

V Levels

V Levels will be a broad applied and vocational qualifications. They will be studied over two years, and a significant proportion of the qualification content will be applied in nature, supporting learning by doing. They will also be assessed in a way that reflects the applied and practical nature of the subject content, which will require the use of a range of other assessment methods, which may include more practical task-based assessments.

The first V Levels in Digital Systems and Data, Accounting and Finance, and Education will be available to teach from 2027/28. Additional subjects will be introduced through to 2030/31.

- V Levels have been designed to sit alongside T Levels (technical) and A Levels (academic) to provide a vocational option with applied learning, providing three clear pathways for students at level 3.
- It will give providers flexibility to build broad and balanced study programmes, which allow students to follow a full vocational study programme or to combine vocational and academic learning.
- They strengthen the clarity and credibility of vocational study by linking nationally set content to occupational standards - this means they have been designed around the skills and knowledge employers say young people need to succeed in the workplace. This helps ensure students are learning relevant, up-to-date skills that can support progression into employment or apprenticeships.
- They are aimed at giving students, parents, employers and higher education providers confidence in the quality of provision and in students' progression to positive outcomes.

- They support an applied approach to teaching, learning and assessment to help students develop practical, real-world skills alongside strong core knowledge, supporting progression to higher education or work-based training, including apprenticeships.
- Assessment will be designed to reflect the vocational nature of V Levels. It will use a balance of assessment methods, including externally set examinations with practical and task-based assessments. This will help students demonstrate both knowledge and practical skills, while maintaining rigorous national standards. Assessment will be modular, delivered across two years of study and designed to be manageable for students, schools and colleges.

Level 2

- The Foundation Certificate is designed for students who want to build knowledge, skills and confidence to support progression to level 3 options (such as V Levels, T Levels or A Levels), with time alongside for English and maths where needed.
- The Occupational Certificate offers a clear route for students who are ready for a more direct focus on work. It supports progression into relevant skilled employment through classroom-based learning, linked to employer needs.

By providing these qualifications, providers can create flexible, future-focused study programmes that reflect real lives and real careers. This will support students to feel motivated, supported and confident that their learning will lead to meaningful next steps into higher education, further training or skilled employment.

To use with parents/carers, students and employers:
explainer flyers, branding, posters, social media assets and
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- [Download](#) - Why the Government is reforming post-16 qualifications for parents/carers and students.
- [Explainer posters, leaflets and asset pack, including new V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates logos for branding.](#)
- [Template letter to local employers explaining post-16 pathways.](#)

- [FAQs for students and parents/carers.](#)
- [T Levels – a guide for parents and carers](#)
- [T Levels – animated explainer film](#)
- [T Levels – industry placements film](#)

Student pathway examples:

- [Level 3 - V Levels in Accounting and Finance, Digital Systems and Data and Education, T Levels and A Levels](#)
- [Level 2 Foundation Certificate in Digital Systems and Data and Education and Early Years.](#)
- [Level 2 Occupational Certificate in Culinary Skills, Early Years Practitioner and Hospitality.](#)

Resources for staff: explainers on post-16 pathways, level 2 and 3 qualification landscape and options for students

- A [download](#) explaining why the Government is reforming post-16 qualifications.
- [Link to webinar on the Government Response to the Post-16 pathways at level 3 and below consultation.](#)
- [Link to webinar on the Post-16 pathways implementation plan and Strategic Transition planning statement.](#)
- [Link to slides on the Post-16 pathways implementation plan and Strategic Transition planning statement.](#)
- [T Levels – a guide for teachers and careers professionals](#)
- [T Levels – assembly slides designed to share information about T Levels, including presenter scripts and practical delivery tips](#)
- [T Levels posters](#)
- [Explainers, posters and leaflets about V Levels, T Levels and level 2 pathways.](#)
- A [download](#) showing an overview of new post-16 pathways.
- [Downloads](#) demonstrating the pathways of programmes leading to destinations as graphics.

- A download demonstrating the new 16-19 system vision at level 3 including pathways of programmes with a clear line of sight to destinations.
- A download comparing different level 2 and 3 qualification options available to post-16 students from 2031.
- A download showing the national policy environment.
- A download showing the post-16 qualification pathways implementation timeline.
- Glossary of Terms

Progression and student pathway documents

To support providers in understanding and communicating the new qualification landscape, we have developed a range of illustrative student pathway examples. These include simplified study programme models, showing linked progression routes for each technical and vocational qualification within the new system that may be useful to use with parents/carers and students.

Simplified student pathway examples:

- **Level 3 - V Levels in Accounting and Finance, Digital Systems and Data and Education, T Levels and A Levels**
- **Level 2 Foundation Certificate** in Digital Systems and Data and Education and Early Years.
- **Level 2 Occupational Certificate** in Culinary Skills, Early Years Practitioner and Hospitality.

Alongside these simplified examples, we have produced more detailed pathway exemplars aimed primarily at teachers, curriculum leaders and careers professionals. The exemplars are illustrative rather than formal guidance. These are designed to help providers visualise how a full study programme could be structured in 2027. They offer a detailed view of programme design and delivery, particularly for those responsible for planning, delivering and explaining qualifications. They demonstrate how different elements of a study programme might come together, including qualifications, employment-related activity, enrichment opportunities and pastoral support. Every student's programme will be unique, so examples will naturally vary according to individual needs, interests and aspirations.

The current suite includes examples covering 2027 V Levels and level 2 pathways, alongside current T Levels and A Levels. At this stage, the V Level examples do not represent a complete programme comprising three V Levels. We intend to build on these materials, with further development planned for the 2028 subjects.

Detailed student pathway examples

- **Level 3 student pathway examples:** V Levels in Accounting and Finance, Digital Systems and Data and Education, T Levels and A Levels.
- **Level 2 student pathway examples:** Level 2 Foundation Certificate in Digital Systems and Data and Education and Early Years and Level 2 Occupational Certificate in Culinary Skills, Early Years Practitioner and Hospitality.

We have also created flexible, editable templates that providers can adapt to reflect their own context and student profile. If an example does not fully meet local needs, it can be modified and personalised accordingly.

- **Editable downloads of student pathways:** [Link to editable detailed pathway example.](#)

To use with Higher Education Institutions (HEI): explainer leaflet and student journeys

- [Download](#) - why the Government is reforming post-16 qualifications.
- [Explainer leaflet for HEI admissions tutors and lecturers on V Levels.](#)
- [Template newsletter draft to colleagues explaining post-16 pathways.](#)
- [Supporting higher education providers to understand T Levels.](#)
- [Resources](#) showing student journeys using the first V Levels in Digital Systems and Data, Education and Accounting and Finance.
- [A download showing the national policy environment.](#)
- [A download showing the post-16 qualification pathways implementation timeline.](#)

Further support and guidance

- [Implementation plan.](#)
- [Industry Placement Guidance.](#)
- [Strategic Transition Planning Statement.](#)
- [Strategic Transition Planning Statement guidance.](#)
- [Further Education Commissioner Support.](#)
- [T Level support offer.](#)
- [T Levels and industry placement support for employers.](#)
- [Occupational Maps.](#)
- [Skills for careers website](#)
- [Higher Technical Qualifications \(HTQs\) Provider Toolkit.](#)
- [Explore careers | National Careers Service](#)
- [Technical Education Networks Materials](#)

Post-16 Qualifications Reform publications and key documents

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.

- [Implementation plan](#)
- [Government response: Post-16 pathways at level 3 and below consultation.](#)
- [Post-16 Level 3 and below pathways consultation.](#)
- [Post-16 Education and Skills White paper.](#)
- [The outcomes of the Curriculum and Assessment Review.](#)
- [The outcomes of the Review of Qualifications Reform](#)
- [Post-16 consultations](#)

Want to find out more?

If you want to request any additional information, please contact:

qualifications.reform@education.gov.uk.

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

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