



Policy Paper for Consultation –

Government proposals to reform vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds

Introduction

The purpose of this consultation is to seek views on proposals to reform vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds.

The consultation seeks views on proposals to:

- i) Establish a process and set of characteristics by which vocational qualifications could be judged for inclusion in 16-19 performance tables;
- ii) Introduce two separate categories of vocational qualification – ‘Applied General’ and ‘Occupational’, in addition to academic qualifications; and
- iii) Only include Applied General and Occupational qualifications that meet pre-defined standards in future performance tables.

It also seeks views on whether the Government should fund learners who are over 19 to take vocational qualifications that meet the new characteristics but do not conform to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

Qualifications at Levels 1 and 2 are outside the scope of this consultation.

Context

The Wolf Review of Vocational Education

The proposed reform of 16-19 vocational qualifications supports wider changes to funding and curriculum provision for this age group arising from Professor Alison Wolf’s Review of Vocational Education¹. The Review found that the current practice of funding 16-19 education on the basis of ‘qualifications passed’ discouraged institutions from investing in more challenging vocational qualifications and work-based learning, including work experience.

As a result, it was announced last July that from September 2012 all 16-19 provision

¹ Wolf. Review of Vocational Education- The Wolf Report, 2011.
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00031-2011>

would transition to a 'per student' basis for funding². From September 2013, all students will be offered a 16-19 Study Programme that reflects their ambitions and prior attainment.

This will mean that:

- All 16-19 year olds will be offered a high quality Study Programme aimed at giving them the best opportunity to move into higher education or secure skilled employment.
- All students who are able will take A levels and/or substantial vocational qualifications that are recognised by employers and/or higher education as being of real benefit in securing work or a university place.
- Where appropriate, students will also take part in work experience.
- Students who do not have GCSEs in English and mathematics at 16 will continue to study these subjects after 16.
- Students who are not able to study a substantial qualification will take a programme of work experience focusing on developing their employability skills, along with work to develop numeracy, literacy and other core education skills³.

To support the introduction of 16-19 Study Programmes and encourage teaching of substantial vocational qualifications:

- Ofsted will inspect the suitability of the programmes developed for students as a part of demonstrating progress and progression standards under the Common Inspection Framework; and
- The Education Funding Agency will monitor whether qualifications taken are 'substantial' – the size of the qualifications, their approval for teaching post-16 and whether they will be reported in performance tables.

The Richard Review of Apprenticeships

This consultation is focused on the substantial vocational qualifications at Level 3 that are provided for 16-19 year olds in England enrolled at a school, college or training provider. Reform of Apprenticeship frameworks, and their under-pinning qualifications, is being considered separately through the Government's response to the Richard Review of Apprenticeships⁴.

² Department for Education. 16-19 Funding formula review, July 2012.
<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/youngpeople/studentsupport/funding/a00210682/funding-formula-review>

³ Department for Education. Study Programmes for 16-19 year olds - Government response to consultation and plans for implementation, June 2012.
<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00069-2012>

⁴ Richard. The Richard Review of Apprenticeships, November 2012.
<http://www.schoolforstartups.co.uk/richard-review/richard-review-full.pdf>

These 16-19 reform proposals and the Richard Review recommendations share common principles, in particular the need to drive up quality and increase employer engagement with the design, delivery and assessment of vocational qualifications and apprenticeships.

Reform of school accountability measures

The Government recently launched a consultation seeking views on how to improve the accountability measures for secondary schools in England⁵. The accountability system for primary schools and post-16 providers will be considered in separate consultation documents, which will be published later this year. The secondary school measures will reflect the significant reform to GCSEs with the improved qualifications being taught from 2015, and first exams taken in 2017.

Regulation of qualifications

Awarding organisations are responsible for quality assuring assessments undertaken by providers, to ensure they meet the standards set out for the qualification. Ofqual, the independent regulator, monitors awarding organisations to make sure those standards are maintained, using a risk-based approach.

The proposals set out in this consultation document have been discussed with Ofqual. They will not duplicate Ofqual's regulatory role, but are intended to use school and college accountability arrangements to incentivise the take-up of qualifications that the Government decides are the most appropriate for students aged 16-19. They also aim to remove some of the perverse incentives in the current accountability system which could lead to qualifications being offered for reasons other than their value to students.

These proposals do not affect the ability of schools, colleges or training providers to offer any qualification that is regulated by Ofqual and approved under section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000. It is right that a wide range of qualifications remain available to meet an equally wide range of student and employer needs, and that institutions can continue to offer other qualifications where they are most suited to their students' interests and abilities.

This consultation applies to qualifications awarded to students studying in England. Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish educational reform is a devolved administration responsibility.

⁵ Department for Education. Secondary School Accountability Consultation, February 2013. <http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/secondary%20school%20accountability%20consultationdocument.pdf>

Summary of key proposed changes

There will be two categories of vocational qualification – those specialist qualifications which equip a young person for a skilled trade or occupation, either directly or through progression to a higher education qualification ('Occupational Qualifications'); and more general vocational qualifications whose primary purpose is to enable progression to further study, including higher education ('Applied General Qualifications'). Applied General Qualifications will not prepare students directly for a specific occupation.

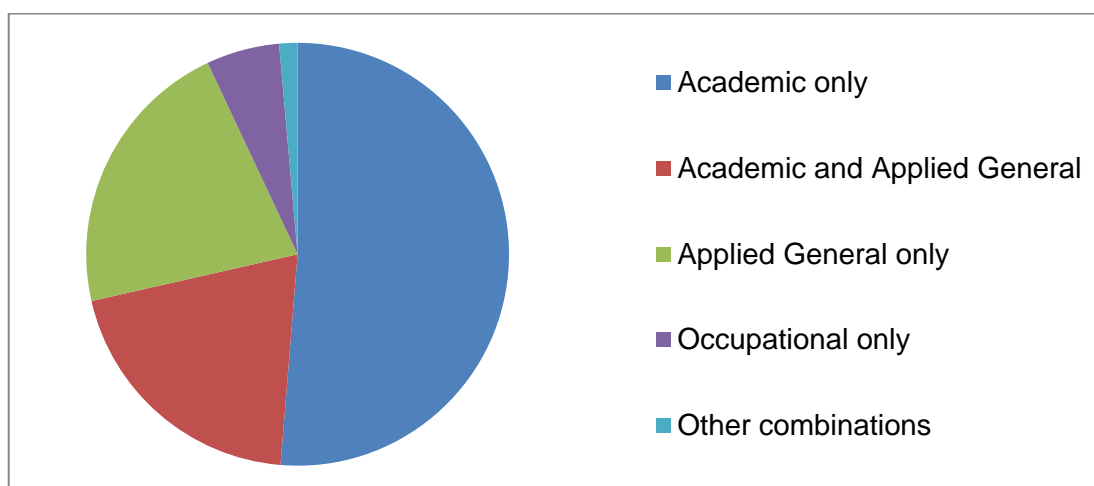
The consultation proposes to end the practice of counting all vocational qualifications as 'equivalent' in school and college performance tables. Since 2012, A levels and vocational qualifications have been reported separately. From 2016, vocational qualifications will be reported as Applied General Qualifications and Occupational Qualifications, to ensure a proper understanding of how vocational qualifications measure up against each other, and to provide a clear picture of how institutions are performing in different areas of their provision.

Awarding organisations who wish their qualification to continue to be reported in school performance tables will be required to identify the category in which they are seeking a qualification to be placed. Each qualification will then be judged against a series of characteristics to ensure only qualifications that are of demonstrably high value, which support progression to further study or a good job, count in performance tables. The Government will publish a list of high value 16-19 vocational qualifications from autumn 2013 and annually thereafter, as we have done for 14-16 year olds since 2011.

Section 1: The case for change

- 1.1. 59% of 16-18 year olds in 2011 were in full-time education (excluding HE), with the majority of those (78%) studying courses at Level 3. The number of students taking A levels has risen from 530,900 in 1995 to 628,200 in 2011 – an increase of 18%. Over the same period, the number of students taking Level 3 vocational qualifications has risen from 93,800 to 278,200 – an increase of 197%⁶.
- 1.2. An increasingly common choice is for students to combine A levels with vocational qualifications. In 2011, students following a purely academic programme of A levels or similar qualifications (i.e. International Baccalaureate, Pre-U, AQA Baccalaureate) represented 54% of 16-18 year olds studying full-time at Level 3, with 28% taking only vocational courses, and 21% taking a mix of academic and vocational qualifications. Separate data on exam entries shows that the proportion of students entered for purely academic qualifications has been in steady decline in recent years – from 70% in 2008 to 51% in 2012.⁷

Qualifications achieved by 16-18 year-olds in 2012



Level 3 Qualification Type	Number	Percent
Academic only	203,729	51.3
Academic and Applied General	80,059	20.2
Academic and Occupational	1,505	0.4
All three	780	0.2
Applied General only	85,621	21.6
Applied General and Occupational	3,168	0.8
Occupational only	22,209	5.6
Total	397,071	100.0

Source: National Pupils Database. Data is based on 2012 provisional figures.

⁶ Department for Education. National Pupil Database, 2011
<http://www.education.gov.uk/researchandstatistics/national-pupil-database>

⁷ Department for Education. Statistical First Release- Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England, 2011
<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001072/index.shtml>

- 1.3. The growth of vocational qualifications has driven increasing rates of participation amongst this age group: at the end of 1994, 57% of 16-18 year olds were in full-time education, and by 2011 this had risen to 68%.⁸ However, despite the ever-increasing number of young people opting for vocational pathways post-16, there are well-documented – and growing – skills shortages in areas which depend on high-quality occupational training. At a time when 649,000 people aged 16 to 24 (9%) are out of work⁹, one in three vacancies in skilled trades (e.g. electricians, carpenters, chefs) and one in five vacancies in associate professional roles (e.g. science and engineering technicians, IT technicians, paramedics) are due to skills shortages¹⁰.
- 1.4. Whilst the popularity of vocational courses is growing, too few students take genuinely occupational qualifications and apprenticeships, instead enrolling on more general vocational qualifications that are less likely to provide a direct route into skilled employment. Provisional data for 2012 shows that only around 7% of 16-18 year old students studying at Level 3 are taking occupational qualifications, compared to 42% who are taking general vocational qualifications¹¹. Without clarity about the types of vocational qualification on offer, and where they can lead, it is very difficult for a student to make an informed choice about which qualifications best match their career goals.
- 1.5. High quality vocational education which delivers the knowledge and skills that employers and the labour market need is essential to a healthy economy. Some vocational qualifications are robust, challenging, and held in very high esteem by employers and Higher Education institutions. Yet too many students are being guided to spend time and effort working towards other vocational qualifications with limited value, only to find themselves with few options for moving onto employment or further training at the age of 19¹².
- 1.6. There are currently over 4,000 Level 3 vocational qualifications regulated by Ofqual and approved by DfE for use with students aged 16-19. It is important that there is flexibility and variety in the qualifications market to meet the needs of a wide range of sectors and specialist professional roles. Nevertheless studies of employers, sector organisations and HE institutions suggest that they find the range of qualifications confusing, and have a limited understanding of the relative value of vocational qualifications in their sector or subject area.
- 1.7. The current performance table system at 16-19 may have contributed to this. By counting all Level 3 qualifications as ‘equivalent’ to A levels, it hinders students and institutions from differentiating between qualifications which have different purposes. It may also create a perverse incentive for institutions to guide students into ‘easier to pass’ qualifications in order to boost their ranking in performance tables.

⁸ Department for Education. Statistical First Release- Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16-18 Year Olds in England, 2011

<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s001072/index.shtml>

⁹ Office of National Statistics, 20 February 2013.

¹⁰ UKCES. Employer Skills Survey 2011: England Results.

¹¹ Department for Education. National Pupil Database, 2012 (provisional figures)

¹² The Wolf Report concluded, “at least 350,000 young people in a given 16-19 cohort are poorly served by current arrangements. Their programmes... fail to promote progression into either stable, paid employment or higher level education and training in a consistent or an effective way.” (p.21)

Section 2: How should we describe and categorise post-16 qualifications?

- 2.1. This consultation proposes reforming post-16 performance table headline indicators to split Level 3 qualifications into three distinct categories. Categorising qualifications in terms of their purpose and progression routes will help students identify where a qualification is likely to lead. The first relates to Academic qualifications, the second and third to different types of Vocational qualifications:
- a. 'Academic Qualifications' including A/AS levels (including double and applied versions), International Baccalaureate (including standard/higher components), Pre-U Principal/short course, AQA Baccalaureate Core, and other similar high quality academic qualifications that may be introduced in the future. The primary purpose of these qualifications is to secure entry to Higher Education;
 - b. 'Applied General Qualifications' intended for young people who wish to continue their general education and learn in an applied way. These qualifications will combine theory and some practice for a sector subject area¹³ (e.g. manufacturing technologies, retailing and wholesaling or travel and tourism) but do not directly prepare students for a specific occupation. These qualifications are intended to provide broad progression opportunities and are often taken alongside A levels, where they may satisfy an entry requirement for HE institutions; and
 - c. 'Occupational Qualifications' intended for young people who have a clear idea about an occupation they want to pursue and are ready to specialise. These qualifications may prepare students for a specific job role by confirming occupational competence and could form part of a related apprenticeship framework. They may provide a 'licence to practise', as required for some occupations (e.g. gas installation or veterinary nursing) or offer exemption from professional exams (e.g. engineering or accountancy). Alternatively, they may support progression to a specialist degree or higher education qualification that qualifies entry to an occupation (many health professions, for example).

- Q1: Do the three categories of qualifications reflect the diversity of qualifications and study aims for the 16-19 cohort?
- Q2: Are there examples of vocational qualifications which cannot be effectively categorised in this way?
- Q3: How would these reforms impact on current apprenticeship frameworks?
- Q4: Do you agree the new categories of qualification should be called 'Academic', 'Occupational' and 'Applied General'?

¹³ Sector Subject Area Classification System, <http://www2.ofqual.gov.uk/standards/142-statistics-articles/429-sector-subject-area-classification-system-ssac>

Q5: Do awarding organisations need a two year grace period to redevelop current qualifications to meet the characteristics required for Applied General and Occupational Qualifications?
--

Section 3: How should we define high value vocational qualifications?

- 3.1. We want to incentivise the take up of qualifications that are of demonstrably high value and support progression to further study or a good job by only recognising those qualifications which meet pre-defined standards in the performance tables.
- 3.2. As we have done with 14-16 vocational qualifications, we intend to operate an easily understood and transparent way of selecting the qualifications which will be recognised in performance tables. Annex A provides a flow diagram illustrating how the process of selecting qualifications that will count in the tables could work.
- 3.3. All Level 3 qualifications will be subject to this process with the exception of A/AS levels, (including double and applied versions), International Baccalaureate (including standard/higher components), Pre-U Principal/short course, and AQA Baccalaureate Core.
- 3.4. In her review of Vocational Education, Professor Alison Wolf recommends that the prescription of qualification content introduced at 14-16 would not be appropriate post-16 because of the degree of specialisation in the qualifications that students take as they move nearer to the labour market¹⁴. The characteristics proposed for the two vocational qualification categories take this into account. They reflect the differing nature of specialist occupational qualifications as distinct to those which are applied but more general. This will not restrict the number or range of qualifications that can be offered but it will mean that students and employers can be confident that any qualifications reported in the performance tables has met one of these standards.
- 3.5. For Applied General Qualifications we propose seven characteristics – size, grading, external assessment, synoptic assessment, appropriate content, progression and proven track record. These broadly correspond to standards adopted for other general qualifications, including A levels, whilst taking into account the different kinds of study and assessment approaches these qualifications often employ.
- 3.6. Occupational Qualifications would need to meet four characteristics – size, employer endorsement, assessment and progression. These are more flexible and focus more on the precise needs of the occupation involved.

¹⁴ Wolf. Review of Vocational Education- The Wolf Report, 2011. p114

Proposed characteristics for Applied General Qualifications

A. Size

- 3.7. We want to avoid young people amassing small qualifications that are not valued by colleges, universities and employers and do not provide a sound basis to enable them to progress to a good job or further study. Therefore, in future, we propose that Applied General Qualifications equal to or greater than 150 Guided Learning Hours be counted in Tables and count as a 'substantial qualification' within a 16-19 Study Programme (students will be expected to spend at least 300 hours on one or more substantial qualifications).

B. Grading

- 3.8. Many vocational qualifications traditionally use grading. This is important for student motivation and distinguishing between different levels of student achievement. So we propose that in future performance tables only include those Applied General Qualifications that are graded – as opposed to pass/fail. Applied General Qualifications may have a pass, merit, distinction structure or a more detailed scale. This reflects the grading approach adopted by many existing Level 3 qualifications.

C. External assessment

- 3.9. To demonstrate rigour, we propose that qualifications that count towards performance tables should have a significant amount of content that is subject to external assessment. Ofqual's definition of external assessment is:

*"A form of independent assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are set by the awarding organisation, taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marked by the awarding organisation."*¹⁵

- 3.10. The nature of vocational study means that project and coursework play a greater role than examinations and the balance between the two will not be specified. By not allowing repeat submission of coursework, we will ensure that where coursework is used for assessment it will provide sufficient challenge.

D. Synoptic assessment

- 3.11. Applied General Qualifications should demonstrate synoptic assessment i.e. a candidate is able to show that they can use all of the skills, techniques, concepts, theories and knowledge they have learnt about a vocational area in an integrated way. This could take the form of an assessed end-of-course project, an examination or other activity.

¹⁵ Ofqual. Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies, March 2010 <http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/diploma-operating-rules/part-2/operating-rules-for-principal-learning-and-project-component-awarding-bodies/section-3-assessment-of-principal-learning-and-the-project>

For existing unit-based QCF qualifications, an additional unit may need to be developed to provide synoptic assessment.

E. Appropriate content

- 3.12. Qualifications should be able to demonstrate that they will support young people to acquire a significant core of knowledge which spans the vocational area or sector, as well as study skills that will support progression within the area of study and more broadly.
- 3.13. Significant content must be aligned to the broad curriculum area or vocational area or sector. The qualification should not be dominated by specialist or skills-based content, whilst recognising this is important where appropriate and in proportion to the core of the qualification.

F. Progression

- 3.14. Awarding organisations should provide evidence that young people who complete the qualification are able to go on to study at a higher level in the same field of study and more broadly. This could be demonstrated, for example, through evidence about the proportion of Higher Education Institutions recognising Applied General Qualifications for entry to higher education courses in related subject areas.

G. Proven Track Record

- 3.15. In order to demonstrate track record, a qualification will need to have been completed by at least 100 young people in at least five centres during the first year that it was awarded.

Q6:	Do you agree with these standards for Applied General Qualifications?
Q7:	What is the minimum proportion of the content of an Applied General Qualification that should be subject to external assessment?
Q8:	How can we best judge whether a qualification is valued by Higher Education Institutions?

Proposed characteristics for Occupational Qualifications

- 3.16. Occupational Qualifications prepare students to work in a particular job role. By definition, the qualification should confirm occupational competence to be considered an Occupational Qualification. For some occupations, qualifications may provide a 'licence to practise' or offer exemption from professional exams, or they may support progression to a degree or higher education qualification that secures entry to an occupation.

Size

- 3.17. Only Occupational Qualifications equal to or greater than 150 Guided Learning Hours will be counted in the Performance Tables, differentiating these qualifications from smaller specialist courses and ensuring that they will count as a 'substantial' qualification within a 16-19 Study Programme¹⁶.

A. Employer endorsement

- 3.18. Employers, rather than the Government, are best placed to decide which Occupational Qualifications meet their needs. Awarding organisations should therefore demonstrate employer endorsement of these qualifications. This could be evidenced by an Occupational Qualification being recognised or accredited by the relevant professional or trade body as confirming occupational competence.
- 3.19. To ensure that the course offered provides a genuine route into a particular occupation, we will require endorsement of the approach to involving local employers in a qualification's delivery, assessment and award.

B. Assessment

- 3.20. For an Occupational Qualification to have credibility with employers, assessment should be undertaken by assessors with recent industry experience and award of the qualification be subject to demonstration of mastery; i.e. that the student has proven they can take the knowledge and expertise they have gained through the course and apply it in a real world context.
- 3.21. Evidence that an Occupational Qualification can attest to occupational mastery could be evidenced by a qualification specification and assessment criteria detailing expectations (and where a qualification is already being delivered, evidence) such as:
- Employers playing a role in assessor teams, to ensure that assessment is mindful of current industry and occupational requirements;

¹⁶ Study Programmes for 16-19 year olds – Government response to consultation and plans for implementation. <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a00210755/16-19-study-programmes>

- Local assessor teams with industry experience working to a recognised national assessment framework to maintain standards;
 - Projects or vivas designed to test the full breadth of the relevant competencies required for an occupation; and
 - Students learning and receiving feedback from those skilled practitioners from whom they may later be seeking employment.
- 3.22. Where it is not possible to assess the learner in the workplace, simulations, case studies and other similar techniques could be used to provide a context appropriate to the assessment.
- 3.23. Current occupational qualifications use a wide variety of grading approaches. Most award on a pass/fail basis. A quarter of occupational qualifications use a more detailed scale of grades to distinguish between different levels of student achievement. The awarding organisation should explain and justify why it has chosen to grade or not grade an Occupational Qualification. The justification should include some account of how employers' use of the qualification has fed into that decision on grading.
- 3.24. Most unit-based QCF qualifications do not require synoptic assessment. This may be appropriate for adults re-skilling or up-skilling in a particular occupation. However, young people undertaking an Occupational Qualification in order to gain competence in a job role they wish to pursue need to be able to demonstrate that they can use all of the skills, techniques, concepts, theories and knowledge they have learnt about a vocational area in an integrated way. This may require an additional unit to provide synoptic assessment.

C. Progression

- 3.25. Only Occupational Qualifications that are supported by employers and providers of relevant HE courses and degrees should count in Performance Tables. A significant proportion of students achieving an Occupational Qualification should progress to employment or a relevant degree or higher education qualification that qualifies entry to the occupation or a related occupation. Awarding organisations will need to provide evidence that this has taken place within the first two years of a qualification being awarded.

Q9: Do you agree with these standards for Occupational Qualifications? Can they be applied across any sector or local area?

Q10: How can awarding organisations support providers in engaging local employers in delivering and assessing qualifications on the ground?

Q11: How should we evidence provider engagement with local employers in the delivery and assessment of Occupational Qualifications?

- 3.26. The skills requirements of the UK economy change and evolve over time. For this reason we want to encourage awarding organisations to work with employers and professional and trade bodies to develop new high value qualifications that . To do this awarding organisations will need to consider whether their qualification will meet the characteristics set out in this paper and then pilot it in order to provide evidence of this. We will use this evidence to judge whether the qualification achieve the standards required for inclusion in the performance tables. Where awarding organisations have agreed with us that a qualification can be piloted, it will count in the performance tables for a limited period.
- 3.27. There will be cases where awarding organisations wish to modify existing, well-established qualifications. We will examine these on a case-by-case basis; generally we would expect that only those qualifications than have been substantially revised will be treated as 'new' and therefore require a pilot.

Section 4: Supporting learners who are older than 19

- 4.1. Under the terms of the Adult Entitlement to Learning, from 2013/14 academic year the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) will provide full funding for learners who are at or over the age of 19 but less than 24 for their first full Level 3 qualification Details of the Entitlement are available on the Skills Funding Agency website¹⁷.
- 4.2. QCF qualifications are assembled from smaller units, which are combined to build up complete qualifications. They do not permit synoptic, 'overall' assessment of the type that 16-19 qualifications will be required to demonstrate. It is possible that some new qualifications counting towards 16-19 performance tables will therefore not fit the design criteria of the QCF, and would not be eligible for funding through the Entitlement under current rules.
- 4.3. There may be circumstances where a qualification counting towards 16-19 performance tables may be the most appropriate for a particular learner who is 19 or over. This will particularly be the case with learners who are at the younger end of the age range or where business involvement with the qualification is particularly strong.
- 4.4. We are therefore proposing that Occupational Qualifications which count towards 16-19 performance tables should be approved for funding under the terms of the Adult Entitlement to Learning, whether or not they conform to the design principles of the QCF. This would be in line with Key Stage 4 Performance Tables, where the Skills Funding Agency has confirmed that it will approve funding of vocational qualifications irrespective of the regulatory framework. We are also seeking views on whether any Applied General Qualifications are likely to be suitable for funding.
- 4.5. Currently the Skills Funding Agency does not approve funding of qualifications linked to an employer's statutory and/or legal responsibilities (with some specific exceptions for the unemployed). This includes qualifications linked to formal licence to practise. Therefore Occupational Qualifications which are linked to licence to practise would be excluded from public funding for learners who are older than 19. The Skills Funding Statement announced a review of the current policy around qualifications linked to licence to practise and this review will be taken forward alongside this consultation.

Q12: Should the Skills Funding Agency approve the funding of Occupational Qualifications (irrespective of whether they are on the QCF) if a learner is over the age of 18 and under 25 and entitled to funding under the terms of the Adult Entitlement to Learning?

Q13: Should the Skills Funding Agency consider funding certain Applied General Qualifications in the same way? If so, what criteria should be used to identify these?

¹⁷ <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/training/Adult+Entitlement+to+Learning.htm>

Section 5: Timing

- 5.1. Given that some qualifications may require substantial redevelopment in order to achieve the full range of characteristics set out above, we plan to introduce a lower 'interim' standard for a 'grace period' of two years. This would provide awarding organisations time to work with employers and professional and trade bodies to redevelop qualifications which meet the full standard.
- 5.2. Qualifications which do not meet the interim standard would be excluded from future performance tables. Awarding organisations will be required to submit evidence as follows:

	Interim (applicable to qualifications counting in 2016 performance tables)	Full (applicable to qualifications counting in 2018 performance tables)
Applied General Qualifications		
A. Size	X	X
B. Grading		X
C. External assessment		X
D. Synoptic assessment		X
E. Appropriate content	X	X
F. Progression		X
G. Proven track record		X
Occupational Qualifications		
A. Size	X	X
B. Employer Endorsement	X	X
C. Assessment		X
D. Progression		X

- 5.3. When submitting qualifications for inclusion in the performance tables, awarding organisations will be required to provide a written commitment stating how they plan to develop the qualification to meet the 'full standard' at a later date.
- 5.4. Ofqual is the regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. In 2013, the Department for Education and Ofqual will review their respective roles in assessing how qualifications meet the required characteristics. Currently awarding organisations are required to secure Ofqual accreditation and then seek confirmation from the Department for Education that a qualification demonstrates the required characteristics to count in 14-16 and 16-19 performance tables. In future, Ofqual could adopt DfE characteristic requirements and check they are met as part of their regulatory remit, resulting in a simpler and more efficient process.

Date	Stage
Early March – end May 2013	Consultation
June 2013	Publish response to consultation, Equality Impact Assessment and technical guidance
June – September 2013	Awarding organisations submit qualifications and completed proforma providing evidence on how the qualifications meet interim characteristics
September – October 2013	Department for Education/Ofqual review qualifications and evidence
November 2013	Publication of list of 16-19 Level 3 qualifications that will count towards 2016 performance tables (meeting interim standard).
Spring 2014	2013 performance tables published to include shadow data showing how institutions' results would have differed if the list had been in effect.
June 2013 to September 2014	Awarding organisations redevelop qualifications to meet the full standard for the two new categories of vocational qualifications
September 2014	First teaching of qualifications that meet the interim standard and count towards 2016 and 2017 performance tables.
November 2015	Publication of list of 16-19 Level 3 qualifications that will count towards 2018 Performance tables (meeting full standard).
September 2016	First teaching of qualifications that meet the full standard and count towards 2018 performance tables.
January 2017	Fully reformed 16-19 tables published (in January 2017) which report the two new categories of vocational qualifications separately and alongside the results for A levels.

5.5. The proposed reforms would affect courses taught from September 2014, examined in 2016 and reported in the 2016 performance tables. The following student cohorts would be affected:

Current Year 12	Not affected
Current Year 11	Not affected
Current Year 10	Affected by first stage of reform when reaching Year 12
Current Year 9	Affected by first stage of reform when reaching Year 12
Current Year 8	Affected by second stage of reform when reaching Year 12
Current Year 7	Affected by second stage of reform when reaching Year 12

Section 6: Conclusion and next steps

- 6.1. We believe that these proposed reforms will lead to a significant increase in the value of vocational qualifications and help students choose courses which offer them genuine opportunities to progress post-19. The proposed timings are intended to maximise the benefit to students by acting as quickly as possible whilst minimising the risk that qualifications will not be available to students while they are being redeveloped.
- 6.2. To ensure we are taking on board views from those who have an interest in these changes, we are also meeting and consulting with key groups and representatives from schools, colleges, universities, employers, awarding organisations and Ofqual during the spring.
- 6.3. In June as part of the response to this consultation we will publish the final process under which qualifications will be assessed, and invite awarding organisations to submit the necessary information.
- 6.4. To ensure that institutions have sufficient time to adjust to these changes, and to help them with their planning, in November we intend to publish the list of qualifications which meet the standard and will count for courses starting in the following academic year. We will also publish experimental data in 2014, to show institutions how their 2013 results would have been different if the list had been in effect.
- 6.5. The accountability system for post-16 providers will be considered in a separate consultation, which will be published later this year. It will focus on reform of 16-19 performance tables and minimum standards, and the separate measurement of performance in each of the three categories of qualification proposed in this consultation.

If you have any comments on how we could improve the proposals in this document please email us: 16-19vq.CONSULTATION@education.gsi.gov.uk

The closing date for comments is **10th May 2013**.

Level 3 Vocational Qualifications Flowchart

Annex A

