



Department
for Education

Reforming Higher Technical Education

Government consultation response

July 2020

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Foreword by the Secretary of State for Education

For too long we have been training people for the jobs of yesterday instead of the jobs of today and tomorrow. To transform our economy and people's lives for the better, that must change.

We are already taking action to build a world class technical education system and to level up our skills system across the country. We are rolling out T Levels from this September, giving people a credible, technical alternative to A levels. We are raising the quality of apprenticeships, so they better meet the skills needs of employers. We have announced a £2.5 billion National Skills Fund for England, to support adults and employers to access the training they need. We are backing our further education colleges, with nearly £2 billion to upgrade the FE estate, and we are investing up to £290 million in flagship Institutes of Technology. This action is essential, but there's much more to do to establish a skills system that is fit for the future.

As set out in the Augar Review of Post-18 Education, take-up of higher technical education at levels 4 and 5 in England has been falling, leading to skills shortages. It is low compared with other levels of education and with many of our more productive international competitors. From data analysts to construction site supervisors to healthcare practitioners, employers are struggling to find the skilled workers they need. Moreover, learners of all ages are missing out on the high skill, high wage jobs that higher technical education can lead to.

To create a fairer, more prosperous and more productive country, we need to reverse the generational decline in higher technical education. We will be establishing a system of higher technical education where learners and employers can have confidence in high-quality courses that provide the skills they need to succeed, whether they are taught in a further education college, a university or an independent training provider.

The reforms set out in this document are a vital first step in achieving this, by setting out how we will be creating a new system of approved, high quality qualifications linked to employer-led standards. We want to deliver:

- **Prestigious qualifications that meet employer needs** – we will work with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to introduce a new national approval scheme that recognises and clearly signals which level 4-5 qualifications provide the knowledge, skills and behaviours employers want. This will provide a high-quality option for young people looking to progress from T Levels or apprenticeships, and for those looking to upskill or retrain. By working with education providers, employers and leading technology centres, we will galvanise the development and provision of the cutting-edge skills that are crucial for boosting productivity. And where level 4-5 technical qualifications fail to meet these standards we will take action. From 2023 we will move to reduce the

funding available for them, working through future spending decisions, so public money is focused on qualifications that lead to great jobs.

- **High-quality courses and providers** – we want providers offering high-quality higher technical courses to have access to industry standard facilities and equipment, teachers with relevant industrial experience and pedagogical expertise, and close links to employers. At the heart of this are our Institutes of Technology, flagship providers in higher technical STEM skills, and our National Colleges, which are at the forefront of delivering nationally important skills.
- **A more popular and prestigious choice** – we will raise the profile and understanding of the best higher technical education courses through a government-backed brand, a communications campaign and improvements to information, advice and guidance. We will give adults looking to upskill and retrain, and young people deciding what to do post-18, the confidence and opportunity to choose high-quality higher technical education.

These reforms have only become more pressing as we reckon with the impacts of COVID-19 now and in the years to come. It has never been clearer that we need a skills system that can respond to economic shocks and provide high-quality training routes for those working in industry and across our digital, science, health and social care sectors. That's why it's essential that we meet our ambition for the first newly approved higher technical qualifications to be available from September 2022.

In the first year, the focus will be exclusively on digital qualifications, leading to jobs like network engineer, cyber-security technologist and software developer. This addresses important skills gaps and gives a clear line of sight for the first digital T Level students starting this September. If you are an awarding body for digital qualifications at levels 4 or 5, I strongly encourage you to develop your qualifications and submit them for approval when the window opens in September. We will follow the Digital route with the Construction route and the Health and science route in September 2023.

Reforming and growing higher technical education is a long-term endeavour. I believe our economic future depends on it. We want to see our great further education colleges expanding their higher technical provision, and for universities to end their preoccupation with bachelors' degrees and offer more higher technical qualifications or apprenticeships, which are a more focused and better targeted route for students, employers and the economy.

The continued contributions of employers, providers, professional bodies, awarding bodies, teachers, learners, and so many others, will be crucial. We know this may be challenging in the context of COVID-19, but we commit to working with you as we roll out these reforms and invite you to play your part where you can. Together we can transform higher technical education for the better, level up the nation's skills and unleash Britain's potential.

Executive summary

- There is clear and growing employer demand for the skills that higher technical education (HTE) provides, and there are good economic outcomes for students completing higher technical courses. Despite this participation is low compared to other levels of education and many of our international competitors. In England, only 1 in 10 people has a level 4 or 5 qualification as their highest qualification; in Germany it's double that¹. As the Augar report set out "*England needs a stronger technical and vocational education system at sub-degree levels to meet the structural skills shortages that are in all probability contributing to the UK's weak productivity performance*"².
- From 8 July to 29 September 2019, the government held an online public consultation on its proposals to address these issues and reform classroom-based HTE in England. This was supplemented by six consultation events across the country and a user insights project carried out in autumn 2019. We would like to thank everyone who participated for their insights and ideas. A high-level summary of the government's response to the consultation and its plans going forward is set out below. These plans are one part of the government's reform agenda. We will be bringing forward a FE white paper in the autumn and are also considering our response to the Augar report as part of the Spending Review.

Prestigious qualifications that meet employer needs

- From September 2022 there will be high quality, nationally recognised approved higher technical qualifications (approved HTQs) that meet employer needs and are clearly signalled to learners and employers. This will be implemented through a new national scheme to approve level 4-5 qualifications that provide the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that employers need and that signal clear technical competence and skills. The scheme will be led by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education ("the Institute") with employers at the heart of the approvals process. Awarding bodies will need to be regulated by either Ofqual or the OfS to have their qualifications approved by the Institute.
- This will be an opt-in system with clear incentives for awarding bodies to submit their qualifications for approval, including a government-backed brand and quality mark to clearly identify approved qualifications and a clear and straightforward approvals

¹ [Higher technical education: the current system and the case for change, July 2019](#)

² [Independent panel report: post-18 review of education and funding, May 2019](#)

process with supporting information, advice and guidance. We recognise that financial incentives are also essential and will be considering a targeted package through the Spending Review.

- The approvals criteria will allow approved HTQs to be tailored to local and sectoral needs. Approved HTQs will be able to include a substantial amount of additional occupationally relevant content, and awarding bodies will be able to submit qualifications against more than one employer-led occupational standard where they are broad in scope. We will consider how we can support a more modular system and explore how to better encourage the development and provision of the cutting-edge skills that can boost productivity and economic growth now and in the future.
- The first approved HTQs will be rolled out through the Digital route starting in 2022. The Institute will provide further guidance for awarding bodies on the approvals process by September and the approval window will open shortly afterwards. Approved HTQs will be rolled out for 2023 through the Construction route and Health and science route.

High quality courses and providers

- Qualifications approved through the Digital route will be taught in a range of providers from September 2022. These providers will include leaders in technical education, like our flagship Institutes of Technology (IoTs), National Colleges, and T Level and other providers. We will work with providers to ensure approved HTQ courses are delivered flexibly, particularly building on the approaches many providers are deploying successfully in response to COVID-19, with a blend of classroom and online learning.
- We will use the existing quality assurance mechanisms of OfS registration to quality assure these providers. This will ensure we can provide approved HTQs from 2022 in a way that minimises burdens on providers while the HTE market is developing, particularly considering the ongoing pressures they are facing in relation to COVID-19. We will engage with providers over the coming months in preparation for launching the first approved HTQs in the Digital route in 2022.
- Beyond 2022, we want to build on the success of FE and HE providers already delivering excellent HTE, with further education colleges expanding their higher technical education provision, and more higher education providers considering whether an approved HTQ or higher-level apprenticeship might be the best option for some of their learners. We will work with OfS and Ofsted, drawing on their regulatory expertise, to ensure that HTE best meets the needs of learners and employers and provides value for money.

- We know funding will be important to support and incentivise providers to grow high-quality approved HTQ provision. We are already investing in providers, with £1.5 billion to upgrade the existing FE estate, £290 million to back up to 20 flagship IoTs, £133 million to improve 2020 and 2021 T Level providers' facilities and £24 million to develop the FE workforce this year. Through the Spending Review we will explore:
 - The potential for targeted funding to further support HTE providers to grow their high-quality provision.
 - How the student finance system can incentivise providers to offer approved HTQs, including differentiating the public funding for qualifications not approved by the Institute in the longer-term.

A more popular choice for learners and employers

- We want to inspire young people and adults to pursue the opportunities HTE can bring. We will implement a comprehensive strategy to increase uptake of HTE. It will fill the large gaps in information about HTE for young people, adults and employers, and boost prestige and confidence. To do this we will build on crucial work that is already underway, such as the implementation of the careers strategy and Gatsby Benchmarks, and work in partnership with providers, employers, professional bodies, Local Enterprise Partnerships, Mayoral Combined Authorities and others.
- First, we will improve overall awareness and perceptions of HTE in general and, within that, build a well-known and prestigious brand for approved HTQs. Work to develop the brand is already under way, and it will be available for the HTQ approval window later this year. A public communications campaign will follow in 2021 to support applications from individuals for the first approved HTQs. To complement this, we will engage with employers to raise awareness and use strategic partnerships with national organisations to build awareness and support.
- Second, we will make information on HTE and approved HTQ courses clearer and more consistent by improving information, advice and guidance for people of all ages. This needs to start at the beginning of secondary school, through into post-16 education and beyond. We will work with organisations such as the Careers & Enterprise Company, UCAS and the National Careers Service to enable learners and employers to make informed choices in education and in their working lives.
- It is also important we recognise the need to improve access to HTE, particularly for adults in work. Through the Spending Review we will consider what type of financial support can enable and incentivise learners of all ages to undertake an approved HTQ. The government will also be consulting on a £2.5 billion National Skills Fund, which will help individuals and businesses access the training and skills they need.

Next steps

We are continuing to develop our implementation plans for the 2022 Digital route and beyond. The following section sets out in more detail what happens next for awarding bodies, providers, employers, and learners. We will continue to keep this under review and closely monitor the impacts of COVID-19 on awarding bodies, providers, employers and learners as we implement these reforms.

Summer 2020

- We will continue working with a specialist communications company to finalise a brand for approved HTQs.
- We will also engage further with awarding bodies and providers to build understanding of our reforms. We welcome their support in using existing networks to build wider awareness among learners, employers and schools.

Autumn 2020

- In advance of the launch of the approval system, the Institute will engage with awarding bodies around the approval process.
- In September, the Institute will publish guidance for awarding bodies on the approvals process.
- Shortly afterwards the Institute will launch the approval process and invite awarding bodies to submit digital level 4-5 qualifications for approval against national employer-led occupational standards.
- We will engage with stakeholders in target groups, including learners, providers, employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, to help promote and raise awareness of HTE. We will join existing T Level provider events and networks to expand our reach and roll out a phased sectoral employer engagement strategy, initially targeting digital employers and organisations.

Spring/summer 2021

- The approvals window for the Construction route and Health and science route will open.

Autumn/winter 2021

- The list of digital HTQs approved by the Institute will be published.
- We will launch a high-profile, national campaign aimed at raising awareness and promoting approved HTQs. We will work with strategic partners to amplify the campaign.
- Providers will prepare for teaching the first approved HTQs over autumn/winter 2021 and summer/spring 2022.

Autumn/winter 2022

- First teaching of approved digital HTQs.

The future HTE system and what this means for you

Classroom-based HTE is one part of a wider education system. It consists of qualifications at levels 4 and 5, of which around 90% are technical. 'Technical' means that they focus on progression into skilled employment and require the acquisition of a substantial body of technical knowledge and a set of practical skills valued by industry. Level 4-5 qualifications include Higher National Certificates, Higher National Diplomas, Foundation Degrees and Certificates/Diplomas of Higher Education. Studying a level 4-5 technical qualification will benefit learners in the labour market and can also lead to further study³.

There are four broad groups for whom these reforms will be most relevant:

Awarding bodies This includes awarding organisations as well as providers such as some higher education institutions that have degree or foundation degree awarding powers.

Providers: Level 4-5 technical qualifications are currently taught in a mix of provider types, with the majority in further education colleges and higher education providers. Providers delivering approved HTQs from 2022 are likely to include National Colleges, T Level providers and flagship IoTs that deliver high-quality digital courses.

Learners: Studying an approved HTQ can be a great step for both going directly into work or further study or apprenticeships. Learners include young people progressing through the skills system or starting their careers, as well as those later in life looking to upskill, change career and/or retrain. Currently, the average age of a level 4-5 learner is 30 and around 20% are below 25. Around 60% of all students at level 4-5 study part time⁵.

Employers: Employers looking to upskill their staff as well as those looking to employ people with the skills provided by approved HTQs both stand to benefit from these reforms.

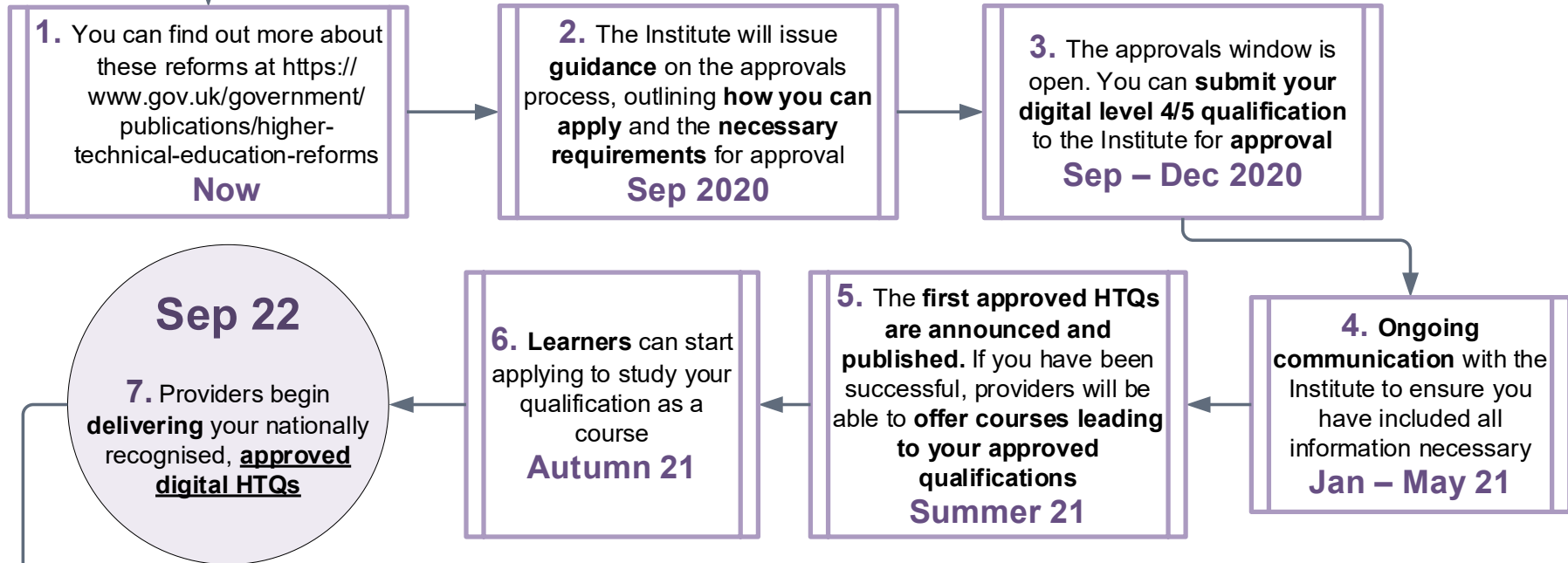
³ [Higher technical education: the current system and the case for change, July 2019](#)

⁴ Review of the Level 4-5 Qualification and Provider Market (DfE 2019)

⁵ Mapping the Higher Technical Landscape (RCU 2018)

You are an awarding body...

...what happens now?

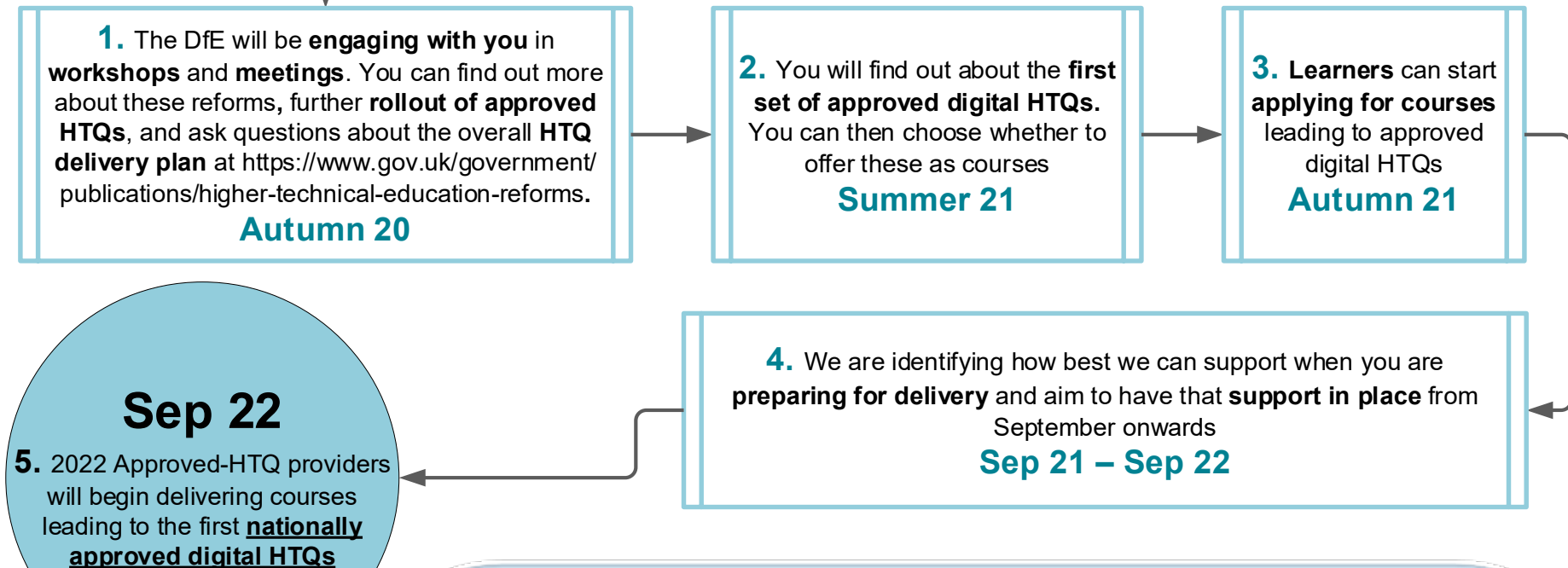


How will I benefit from these reforms?

- Higher demand for your qualification from a range of providers, students and employers looking for occupationally relevant content
 - Employer recognition and increased prestige of your qualification
 - Increased value of your qualification in a primed and competitive market
- Guarantee that your qualification will be delivered via high-quality provision, raising its prestige

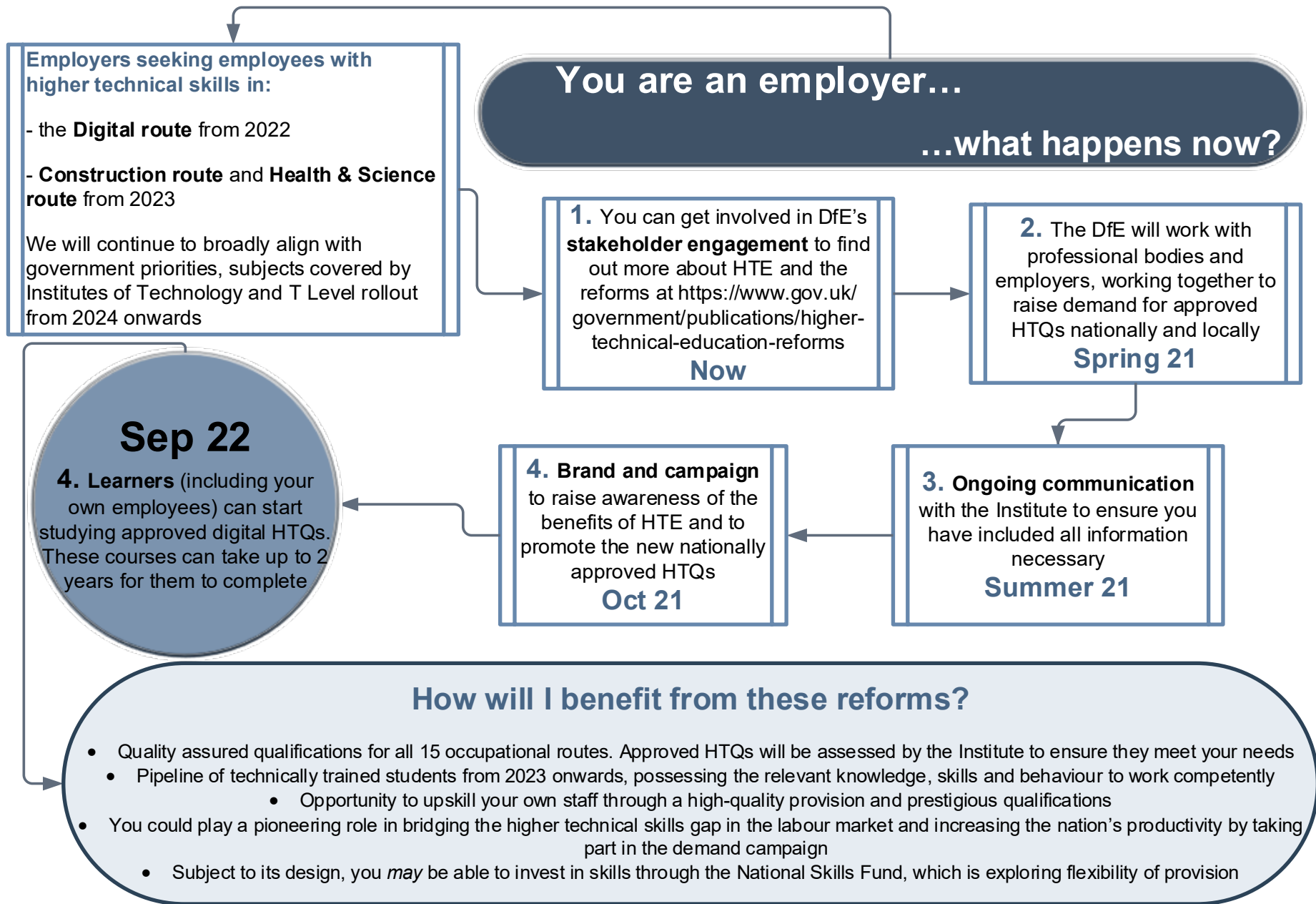
You are an HTE provider...

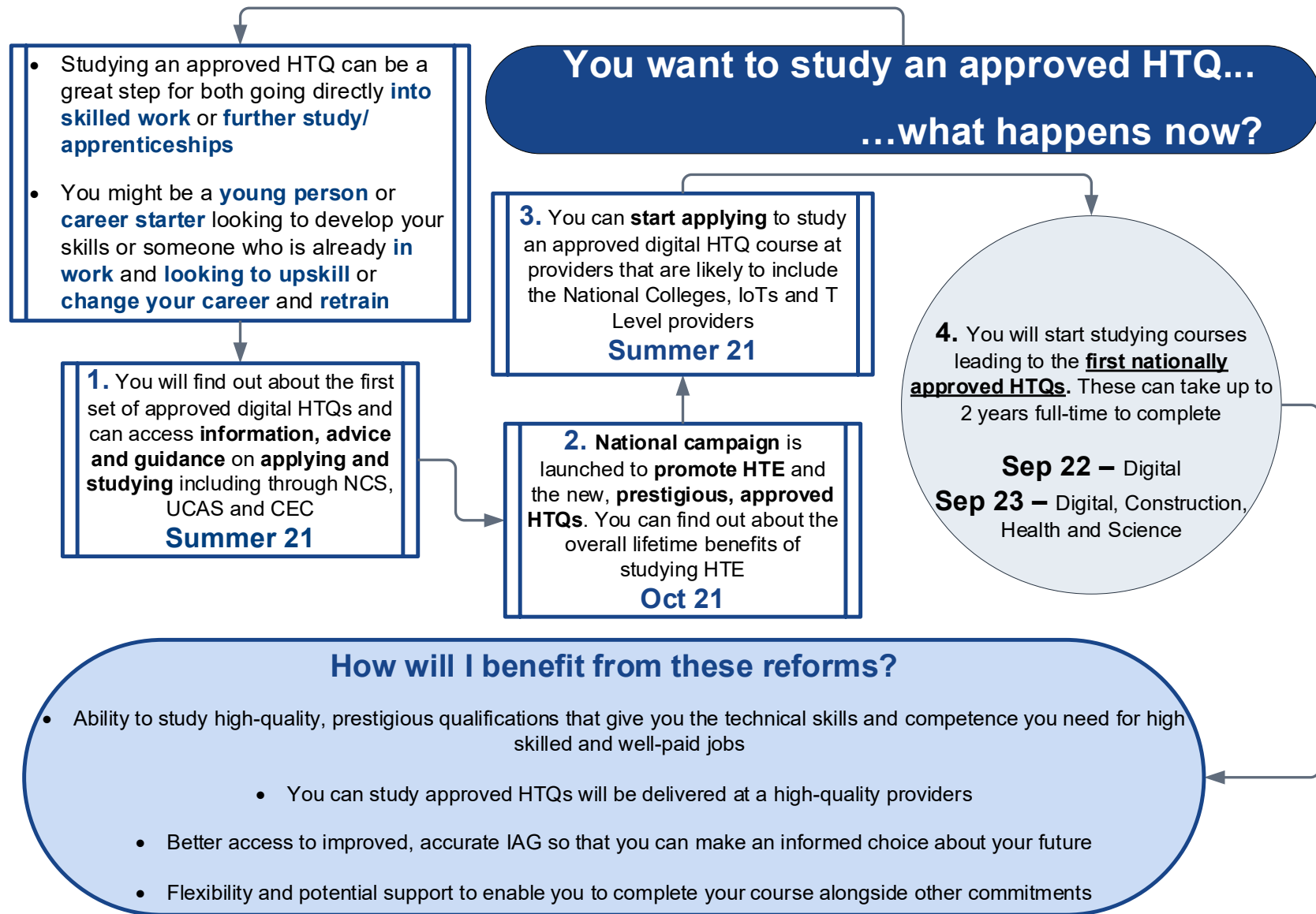
...what happens now?



How will I benefit from these reforms?

- Higher demand for your courses from learners seeking to benefit from an improved HTE system
- Market advantage of being able to deliver higher-quality qualifications with strong employer backing
- Potential for targeted funding to further support HTE providers to grow their high-quality provision will be explored through the Spending Review





Introduction

1. Uptake of higher technical education (HTE) is low compared to other levels of education in England and many of our international competitors. This does not reflect employer demand for higher technical skills, which is unmet and only expected to grow. The Augar report found that “[t]he country’s very small number of Level 4/5 students translates into persistent skill gaps at technician level and also severely reduces opportunities for people”⁶.
2. We want to address this by reforming the skills system in England, so it provides the higher technical skills that learners of all ages and employers need⁷. Education policy is devolved in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
3. Our vision is for HTE to be a prestigious choice that provides high levels of occupational competence, encourages more learners to continue to study after completing level 3 qualifications like A levels or T Levels and attracts workers of all ages looking to upskill and retrain. Establishing this prestigious higher technical skills system is just one part of our ambition to level up technical education over the next decade. We are reforming apprenticeships, rolling out T Levels and reviewing qualifications at level 3 and below, ensuring that there are high-quality qualifications and progression routes throughout the skills system. We are also exploring wider reforms to post-16 education, including bringing forward a FE white paper in the autumn and considering our response to the Augar report.
4. At the Budget we announced £1.5 billion of investment in the FE estate, on top of £95 million for 2021 T Level providers and investment in flagship providers, such as Institutes of Technology (IoTs). We also set out plans to consult on a £2.5 billion National Skills Fund to help individuals and businesses access the training and skills they need. This agenda is underpinned by a common goal: to transform people’s lives by making this country not only more prosperous, but fairer.
5. In 2017, we launched a comprehensive, evidence-led review into HTE. The review built on the department’s commitments in the Post-16 Skills Plan⁸, which responded to the recommendations in the Independent Panel on Technical Education (the Sainsbury Report)⁹. The review found no single reason to explain the low uptake of HTE, but identified varying quality, low awareness, understanding and prestige, and

⁶ [Independent panel report: post-18 review of education and funding, May 2019](#)

⁷ Further information on the case for reforming HTE can be found in: [Higher technical education: the current system and the case for change, July 2019](#)

⁸ [Post-16 Skills Plan](#)

⁹ [Independent Panel on Technical Education Report](#)

a lack of national assurance that qualifications meet employer needs as important factors¹⁰.

6. Last summer we consulted on proposals to address this through:
 - National recognition of prestigious level 4-5 technical qualifications that provide the skills that employers need.
 - More high-quality HTE courses being provided in the best FE and HE providers, including National Colleges and IoTs.
 - An incisive demand strategy to make HTE a positive and more popular choice, both for younger learners and for those upskilling and retraining in the workforce¹¹.
7. The public consultation ran from 8 July 2019 to 29 September 2019. We published our proposals online, alongside a survey for respondents to complete. The consultation generated 155 responses from a wide range of organisation types and individuals, spanning FE and HE providers, other education institutions, employers, awarding bodies and professional and business organisations. We also held a series of six consultation events around the country and conducted further user insights work with learners and employers to enhance the online responses. This document outlines the government's response to the consultation and our plans to reform HTE.
8. A full analysis of consultation responses by York Consulting has been published alongside this document. A summary of the findings from the consultation and user insights work and decisions relating to the consultation questions is included in Annex A. Details of the flexibilities and requirements of the Institute approval process are included in Annex B. A full list of the responding organisations is included in Annex C. A glossary of terms used is included in Annex D.

¹⁰[Higher technical education: the current system and the case for change, July 2019](#)

¹¹[Improving higher technical education, July 2019](#)

Prestigious qualifications that meet employer needs

Summary

- From September 2022 there will be high quality, nationally recognised higher technical qualifications (approved HTQs) that meet employer needs and can be clearly identified by learners and employers.
- These will be introduced through a new national scheme to approve level 4-5 qualifications that provide the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that employers need. The scheme will be led by the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (“the Institute”), advised by Ofqual and OfS. Employers will be at its heart, including through its employer route panels and occupational standards.
- The approvals process will allow some flexibility, so approved HTQs can be tailored to local and sector needs. We will work with organisations driving innovation, providers and industry on the adoption of cutting-edge skills.
- There will be clear incentives for awarding bodies to submit qualifications for approval, including a government-backed brand and quality mark and a straightforward approvals process with information, advice and guidance.
- The first approved HTQs will be in the Digital route, from September 2022. The approvals window for digital qualifications will open in September. The Construction route and Health and science route will be rolled out for 2023.

Approved HTQs

9. The current system has some highly respected qualifications, but it is complex and difficult to navigate. There are over 4,000 qualifications available at levels 4 and 5¹², around 90% of which are technical¹³. Our review of HTE found that this can make it confusing for learners to choose which course is right for them and for employers to identify which qualifications meet their needs. For example, there are around 100 qualifications in construction, including a number of different qualification types and brands. A learner looking to be a construction site supervisor would have no easy

¹² Review of the level 4-5 qualification and provider market (DfE 2019)

¹³ Mapping the higher technical landscape (RCU 2018)

way to know which of those offered locally would enable them to get the skills, and the job, that they want.

10. To address this, we will work with employers and the Institute to create a new category of approved HTQs that meet employer needs. Approved HTQs will be clearly identified through a government-backed brand and quality mark, so learners can find the right higher technical courses and employers can hire people with the right skills. These qualifications will:

- Provide the knowledge, skills and behaviours that are needed to enter occupation(s) across the country;
- Be understood and recognised as high-quality by employers and so have national labour market currency; and
- Give learners confidence that those qualifications are recognised by employers and are perceived to be a credible, prestigious, and distinct pathway.

11. 96% of respondents to the HTE consultation agreed that these should be the aims of the reformed qualifications, and they strongly align with the Augar report recommendation that *“if higher technical education is to fulfil its potential, the country needs a suite of qualifications whose quality is clear and assured, and which can be easily recognised by employers”*¹⁴.

The core approval process

12. The Institute will introduce a new national approval system where awarding bodies submit level 4-5 technical qualifications to the Institute for approval against employer-led occupational standards. These will be the same set of standards that are the foundation of apprenticeships and T Levels.

13. Awarding bodies will be able to choose whether to submit their existing or, in time, new qualifications for approval as part of an opt-in system. This reflects feedback from the consultation, where respondents saw a voluntary approach as a proportionate way of creating a flexible system. As part of this, more than one qualification will be able to be approved against a given occupational standard, to recognise and maintain a diverse and competitive market. Qualifications that can be put forward for approval include those currently funded through the HE student finance system and Advanced Learner Loan system.

¹⁴ [Independent panel report: post-18 review of education and funding, May 2019](#)

14. We want to encourage awarding bodies to submit qualifications for approval. We will offer an attractive package of incentives, including a government-backed brand and quality mark and a straightforward approval process, with supporting information, advice and guidance. We will explore financial incentives in the Spending Review.

The role of the Institute

15. The Institute has experience of working with employers and the right expertise to oversee the approval of HTQs. The Institute has developed an employer-led approval process including a membership of over 100 industry representatives across 15 sectors. It works with these employers to approve apprenticeships and T Levels based on the same framework of occupational standards that will be central to HTQ approval. Its main activities include:

- Working with [“trailblazer” groups](#) of employers to create and publish occupational standards that describe the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to be competent in an occupation.
- Supporting employers to develop their assessment plans, which are used to assess that apprentices are fully occupationally competent.
- Working with employer panels to develop the outline content that forms the basis of the T Level qualifications, as well as commissioning the development of T Level qualifications and approving them against occupational standards.
- Working with [“route panels”](#) of employers, as part of the approval approach.

16. The Institute is legally empowered to approve level 4-5 qualifications against occupational standards and its existing activities mean it is well placed to do so and ensure approved HTQs remain relevant over time. The Institute’s statutory role across T Levels, apprenticeships and approved HTQs will provide long-term coherence for England’s technical education system, which learners and employers have sought for some time.

Approving qualifications

17. For an awarding body to have its qualification approved it must be regulated by Ofqual or the OfS and the knowledge, skills and behaviours provided by that qualification must:

- Equip the learner to get a job in the relevant occupation; and
- Cover all the knowledge, skills, and behaviours described in the relevant occupational standard as may reasonably be expected to be attained by undertaking a course of education (for example, in a classroom-setting). We

acknowledge that there are limitations on how far it is possible to develop behaviours set out in occupational standards outside the workplace.

18. As discussed further in paragraph 25, where a qualification aligns with multiple occupational standards the above test must be met for each standard individually.
19. As the findings from the consultation made clear, the approval process must be well-defined, manageable, transparent, and work well for users. It should ensure that approved HTQs cover the right content and assess occupational competence through appropriate methods. Awarding bodies must be able to understand the requirements they need to meet and how decision will be made. We will work closely with the Institute as it develops a streamlined yet robust, employer-led approvals process that makes consistent and transparent decisions, to give awarding bodies and employers confidence. The Institute will continue to ensure that the insight of a diverse set of stakeholders is represented in the approvals process. The Institute will work with OfS and Ofqual to ensure their expertise is drawn in.
20. The Institute will provide guidance for awarding bodies in September, ahead of the approval process opening. It will work directly with awarding bodies to ensure they have sufficient information on how the process will work, what is required for an HTQ to be approved, and what approval will signal to learners and employers.

Copyright in approved HTQs

21. We understand how important copyright is to awarding bodies and we do not wish to create any disincentive to them putting forward qualifications for approval. The Institute will therefore develop and publish copyright transfer criteria and guidance which is proportionate and meets the needs of all parties. Transfer of copyright in course materials from an awarding body to the Institute is not likely to be necessary as part of the Institute approval process in most cases.

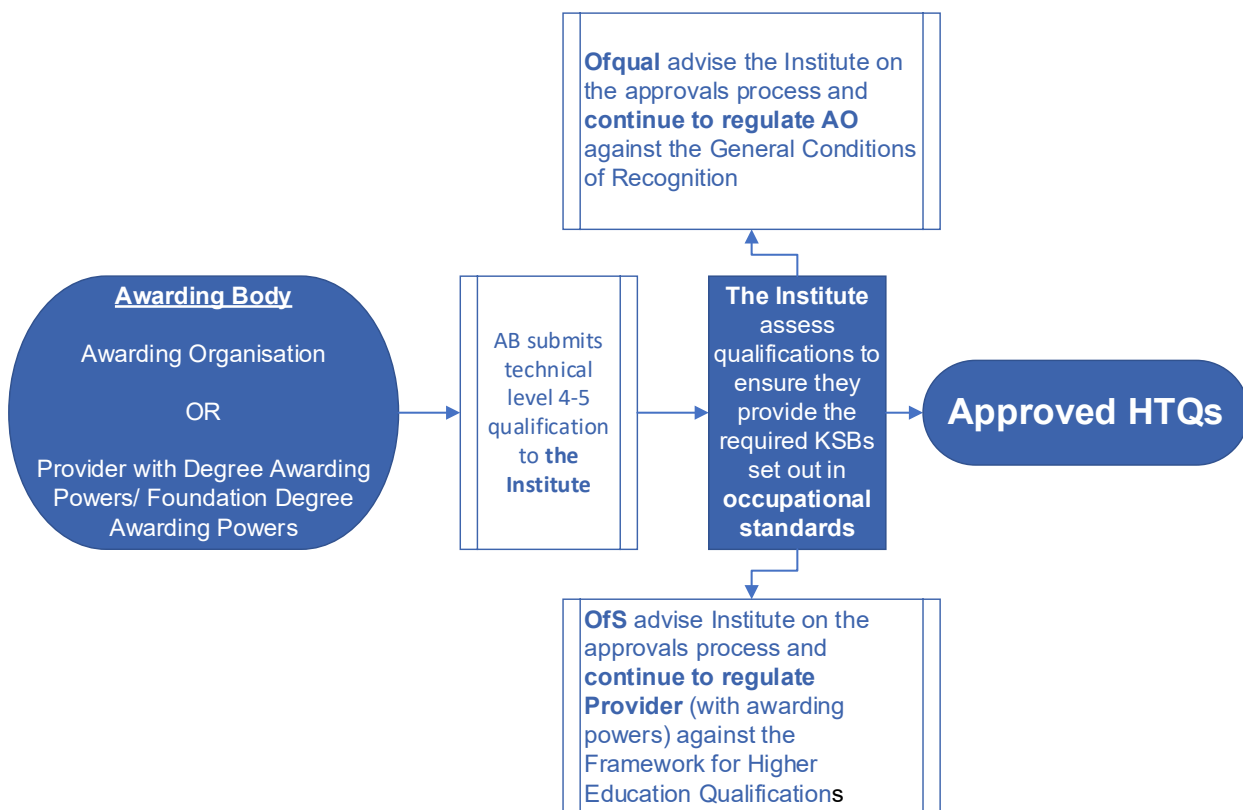
Addressing gaps in the market

22. The Institute's occupational maps group together occupations with similar knowledge and skills. These have been developed with substantial employer input and are kept under review as the labour market changes. Nonetheless, there will be some occupations that have not yet been incorporated into occupational maps and do not have an occupational standard developed. It is important there is a mechanism to identify and address any such gaps, so qualifications specific to these occupations can be submitted for approval against a relevant occupational standard. Similarly, we also want to identify where there may be gaps in qualifications, where there are occupational standards but no relevant qualifications.
23. Awarding bodies will be able to submit information to the Institute where they believe an occupational standard gap exists. Where a gap is identified, the Institute will seek

the views of employers to determine if the occupation exists, whether it should be added to the occupational map (if it is not included already) and if an occupational standard should be developed. There will be instances where a qualification does not have an occupation associated with it. For example, some qualifications may not align directly to an occupation. Others may provide only incremental steps towards occupational competence. These will not be in scope for Institute approval.

Wider regulation

24. We want to ensure that the new approvals process does not add unnecessary complexity and change to the regulatory system. There are currently two separate regulatory regimes operating at level 4 and 5 (Ofqual and OfS). Their regulatory intentions are broadly aligned. We will therefore retain the existing Ofqual and OfS framework for regulating awarding bodies. As above, awarding bodies must be regulated by Ofqual or the OfS to have HTQs approved by the Institute and the Institute will draw on the expertise of Ofqual and OfS in the approvals process. Ofqual will have an important role contributing to the development and ongoing evaluation of the approvals process, and will be considering its regulatory approach to ensure that approved HTQs meet the expected quality standards.



Additional features: flexibilities and requirements

25. The Institute approval process will enable approved HTQs to be tailored to local and sectoral needs, while offering confidence that they provide the learner with the occupational competence they need to get a job. This will help approved HTQs meet the needs of a wide range of employers and learners, and reflects the strong support in the consultation for allowing some flexibility in their structure, content and approval. The features of the approvals process mean:

- Approved HTQs will be free to include a substantial element of wider, additional content, provided that this is occupationally relevant, and that the qualification as a whole meets the requirements of the occupational standard.
- Qualifications can be approved against multiple occupational standards, provided that they meet the requirements of each standard.
- The Institute will not be setting additional requirements for English, maths and digital skills beyond what is required in the occupational standard itself, nor will it set requirements for work-based learning.
- Approved HTQs will be free to follow a modular structure, and many level 4 and 5 qualifications already do. As the approvals process develops, we and the Institute will consider how smaller qualifications and modules could be recognised on more of a standalone basis and how modules might link together to form larger qualifications.
- As the approvals process develops, we and the Institute will also consider how to approach qualifications already aligned to a professional, statutory or regulatory body standard.

26. These flexibilities are discussed further in Annex B.

27. The flexibility to allow additional content is important for the inclusion of cutting-edge skills in approved HTQs, but more action is needed to speed up the adoption of these skills. Working with the Gatsby Foundation, we are exploring opportunities for greater provision, scaling-up and diffusion of HTE to boost the adoption of Industrial Digital Technologies. This builds on the work of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (a group of manufacturing research centres) in predicting future skills needs. We will explore further opportunities to support the development, provision and diffusion of cutting-edge HTE by organisations promoting innovation, providers and industry.

Roll-out of approved qualifications

28. There is a clear and pressing need to level up higher technical skills across the country. At the same time, we recognise that this will be the first time that level 4-5 technical qualifications have been subject to Institute approval in a competitive market that spans FE and HE. This is complex, and it's important that we get it right. As we roll out these reforms, we want to learn lessons and give the Institute the opportunity to adapt its approvals approach as needed. We also recognise the need for a proportionate approach, given the impact of wider reforms and COVID-19.
29. We therefore plan to have a phased, multi-year roll-out of approved HTQs, with different occupational routes coming on stream over a 4 year period. This will begin with the Digital route in 2022, followed by the Construction route and Health and science route in 2023. The future roll-out pattern will continue to broadly align with government priorities and early T Level waves.
30. Focussing on digital courses initially aims to address an important skills gap in our economy, provides a clear line of sight for the first digital T Level students and builds on the expertise of providers such as our flagship IoTs and the National College for Digital. The approval window for digital qualifications will open in September 2020 and we encourage all awarding bodies with digital level 4-5 qualifications to put them forward for approval. The approval window for the Construction route and the Health and science route is expected to open in spring/summer 2021.

Next steps

- We will work closely with the Institute as it develops and launches a streamlined yet robust approvals process.
- The Institute will develop a proportionate approach to copyright that meets the needs of all parties.
- The Institute will publish further guidance on the approvals process in September ahead of the approvals window for the Digital route opening shortly afterwards.
- The application window for the Construction route and the Health and science route is expected to open in spring/summer 2021.

High-quality courses and providers

Summary of proposals

- We will work with providers delivering HTE so they can offer high-quality courses with close links to employers, access to industry-standard facilities and teachers with relevant industry experience and pedagogical expertise.
- For 2022, we will work within existing regulatory regimes to ensure the quality of providers teaching approved HTQs in the Digital route. These providers will include leaders in technical education, like our flagship Institutes of Technology (IoTs), National Colleges and T Level and other providers.
- In the longer term, we will work with Ofsted and OfS, drawing on their regulatory expertise, to ensure that HTE best meets the needs of learners and employers and delivers value for money.
- We will work with providers and their representative bodies to understand how best to support provider readiness and will consider upfront and ongoing financial support as part of the Spending Review. Over time, we will explore how we can shape the market to reflect the higher quality of approved HTQs by differentiating public funding for qualifications not approved by the Institute.

Provider quality

31. We are reforming HTE to offer a world-class system that gives learners the occupationally-relevant skills they need for a successful, rewarding career, and meets the skills needs of employers. Approving qualifications that will provide these skills is crucial, but for our reforms to succeed, it is vital that those qualifications are taught by high-quality providers. As set out in the Augar report, *“growth in higher technical education also requires more high quality provision”*¹⁵.
32. We are already investing to create a world-class network of providers at the heart of every community, with almost £2 billion to upgrade the FE estate, up to £290 million to back up to 20 IoTs, £133 million of capital investment to support T Level providers and a further £15 million for the T Level professional development offer this year. We want to build on that investment by working with providers and regulators to grow and assure high-quality HTE.

¹⁵ [Independent panel report: post-18 review of education and funding, May 2019](#)

Digital route

33. We recognise the need to make rapid progress on reforming HTE, as well as the pressures the sector is facing due to COVID-19. We will therefore take an approach which seeks to minimise the burden on providers in the short term. From 2022, when the first approved HTQs will be available, and while the HTE market is developing, we will continue using the existing regulatory regime, in which providers register with the OfS, and the OfS oversees the quality of providers and their provision. This approach offers the most rapid prospect of implementation whilst providing a way of regulating approved HTQ provision where there are quality concerns.
34. Using this approach, approved HTQs in the Digital route will be taught in a range of providers from September 2022. These providers will be leaders in technical education and are likely to include our flagship Institutes of Technology (IoTs), National Colleges, and T Level and other providers. In collaboration with providers, we will learn the lessons from their responses to COVID-19 and how that can help to deliver approved HTQ courses flexibly, blending classroom and online learning. We will also work with providers to understand what we can do to prime them to deliver the new qualifications and ensure quality remains high in the longer-term.

Longer term assurance

35. In the longer term, we will work with Ofsted and OfS, drawing on their regulatory expertise, to ensure that learners can be confident that no matter where a course is taught, it will be at the high standard they deserve. In working with Ofsted and OfS we will continue to be guided by the following principles:

- There should be employer-focused, national standards for technical qualifications.
- The system should work well for learners and employers, including enabling them to identify the best quality courses and providers.
- Public funding should progressively tilt towards Institute-approved higher technical qualifications that provide the knowledge, skills and behaviours employers need.
- The HTE system should deliver value for money.

Local and regional skills needs

36. National Colleges and IoTs have been set up to provide the specialist higher technical provision needed to meet national and regional employer skills needs,

through a distinctive and complementary learning offer, and with new cutting-edge equipment and facilities.

37. They are well placed to play an important role as providers of the newly approved HTQs, but we want all providers to consider and understand the right mix of provision needed locally, regionally, and nationally. This will help to ensure that we have a national skills infrastructure that is sustainable, relevant to, and valued by, the regions, localities and employers it serves.
38. At a national level, we are setting up the Skills and Productivity Board, to bring together experts to analyse skills gaps and identify new and emerging skills needs. At the regional level, we have been working with Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships to create 36 Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) across England. These newly formed partnerships of employers, skills providers and local government help resolve mismatches between skills supply and employer demand at a local level. SAPs have already started conducting analysis and identifying skills priorities and sharing them with providers in their areas. We are working closely with SAPs to ensure that the intelligence they produce is accessible and useful to a range of audiences, including those running HTE provision.
39. It is important that HTE providers continue to work closely with the newly established SAPs to help shape their HTE provision and ensure that it works for both learners and employers. Working closely with SAPs will help individual providers to offer a range of qualifications that meet local and regional skills priorities and demonstrate this as part of their evidence for future Ofsted inspections.
40. As part of its inspection framework, Ofsted considers data and analysis on local and national skills shortages and gaps, including work produced by SAPs. Inspectors discuss with providers how they understand and address these skills needs, as part of their judgement of how each provider is meeting the needs of learners, employers and the local and national economy in their curriculum offer. Ofsted is working with SAPs to make best use of their latest local skills data to inform inspections.

Funding and support

41. We know that implementing these reforms will be challenging and that providers will play a pivotal role in their success, helping to build a prestigious brand and positioning HTE as a source of high-value relevant qualifications, for both employers and learners. Providers will need support to successfully achieve this. We will work closely with the sector to understand how the support from other programmes such as T Levels, IoTs, and the investment to upgrade the FE estate, will help with the provision of high-quality HTE. Workforce considerations will be an important part of

this. We also want to understand the extent of the gap between the current capacity and capability to teach levels 4 and 5 and other levels of provision.

42. Under the current student finance regime access to student finance for HE courses is restricted to only those providers, including both universities and FE colleges, who are registered with OfS. If a provider does not have OfS registration (or is delivering a non-recognised qualification) they can access Advanced Learner Loan funding for certain level 4 and 5 courses.

43. The Augar report¹⁶ recommended that approved HTQs should be entitled to the same tuition fee support and teaching grant, and equivalent maintenance support, as level 6 qualifications, with non-approved qualifications receiving lower funding. The panel report also recommended that additional support and capital funding should be provided to grow capacity for, and ensure, high-quality technical provision.

44. Through the Spending Review we will explore:

- How the student finance system can incentivise providers to offer approved HTQs. As part of this, in the longer-term, we will consider legislative changes to differentiate the public funding available for Institute approved HTQs and other level 4-5 qualifications, including those currently funded through the Advanced Learner Loan system. We will implement any changes on a phased basis to support the development of the HTE market.
- The potential for targeted funding to further support HTE providers to grow high-quality provision.

Empowering learners

45. To ensure the quality of approved HTQs, it is vital that learners are empowered to complain to an independent body when they are not satisfied with their experience. Empowering learners will encourage providers to maintain high standards and hold them to account where provision falls below an acceptable level.

46. The Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) already runs an independent statutory student complaints scheme which covers all providers eligible for the HE student finance package. All OfS-registered higher education providers must be members of this scheme and therefore must comply with their rules and guidance, including recommendations made by the OIA on individual student complaints.

¹⁶ [Independent panel report: post 18 review of education and funding, May 2019](#)

47. We will expect all awarding bodies and providers which own an approved HTQ to join the scheme. So, should a student have a complaint which an awarding body or provider is unable to resolve, the student will be able to complain to the OIA.

Next steps

- We will engage with providers to encourage and support their participation in the reforms from this autumn.
- We will work with OfS and Ofsted to develop longer-term provider quality assurance arrangements.
- We will work with providers and their representatives to understand the support that providers will need to successfully provide approved HTQs.
- We will explore the potential for further funding options through the Spending Review.

A more popular choice for learners and employers

Summary

- We want to inspire people of all ages and employers to seize the opportunities that high-quality HTE can bring.
- From this autumn we will engage with stakeholders in target groups, including learners, providers, employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), to help promote and raise awareness of HTE.
- In 2021 we will launch a high-profile, national campaign aimed at raising awareness and promoting approved HTQs. We will work with strategic partners to build wider support and amplify the campaign
- We will roll out a phased sectoral employer engagement strategy. From late 2020, we will therefore be initially engaging with digital employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.
- We will improve information, advice and guidance for young people and adults in the workplace by working with important organisations such as the National Careers Service, Careers & Enterprise Company, CDI and UCAS. In doing so, we will build on the government's careers strategy in 11-18 schools and colleges and the introduction of the Baker Clause, centred around the Gatsby Benchmarks.

Who we want to reach

48. HTE can give employers the skills they need and lead to high skill, high wage jobs for young people and adults looking to upskill and retrain. For HTE to be a positive and more popular choice for learners and employers, we need to raise awareness of the skills and opportunities that HTE can offer, as well as improve the perception, understanding and access to HTE for three important groups:

- Young people in school/college – what young people choose to do when they leave compulsory education is an important first step on their career journey. HTE offers those that are interested in specific occupations and aspire to highly skilled roles an opportunity to progress early in their career. Young people's choices are heavily influenced by the information, advice and guidance they receive during their schooling and from their parents/carers and teachers, and it is important we seek to reach students early in the education process and inspire them through encounters with employers.

- Adults looking to upskill and retrain – only 10% of all adults in England aged 18-65 hold a level 4 or 5 qualification as their highest qualification¹⁷, meaning a substantial proportion of our current workforce do not have a higher-level qualification. These individuals may want or need to upskill or retrain as they navigate longer, more changeable working lives. New technologies and new working practices will create more demand in some sectors more than others. HTE offers vital opportunities for adults to continue progressing on their career journeys, but participation is often dependent on support from employers and/or constrained by family and financial responsibilities.
- Employers – employers need effective ways to recruit talent to higher technical roles, confidence in the quality of approved HTQs, and straightforward access to relevant, high-quality training for their workforce. Recruitment expertise tends to reside in HR professionals and hiring managers in large organisations, but may be more distributed in SMEs.

49. HTE is one part of wider reforms to technical education. The first T Levels will be taught from this September, we are investing in IoTs and we are raising the quality of apprenticeships. As we build awareness and understanding of HTE it is important that we communicate a coherent range of technical education opportunities across the country and the progression links between them.

Raising awareness and building prestige

50. Our first objective is to improve overall awareness and perceptions of HTE in England and build a well-known and prestigious brand for approved HTQs.

51. Changing awareness and perceptions of HTE will require a major cultural shift towards a more positive view of technical education, which consultation respondents strongly supported. HTE needs to start being seen as a prestigious first choice for ambitious learners. We want to do this through a brand, a public campaign, strategic partnerships and direct employer engagement.

National campaign promoting HTE and approved HTQs

52. There are already several well-known qualifications at this level in certain sectors, with clear occupational relevance and widespread recognition across employers. We do not want to undermine this existing awareness or brand recognition. Nor do we want to add further complexity and confusion for employers, parents and learners.

¹⁷ Skills beyond school - synthesis report (OECD 2013)

53. However, evidence and consultation feedback suggest there is still an overwhelming need to raise the profile of HTE overall in a way that commands the confidence of learners and employers. We will do this by:

- Early stakeholder engagement with target groups, including learners, providers, teachers, employers and PSRBs to help promote and raise awareness of HTE in general. This will aim to increase understanding of HTE and the jobs it leads to.
- Clearly badging approved HTQs with a government-backed brand so they are readily identifiable and signal high quality to learners and employers alike.
- A high-profile, national campaign aimed at raising awareness and promoting interest in approved HTQs among young people in schools and colleges, as well as adults looking to upskill and retrain.
- Materials to support local and regional promotional activity, led by flagship HTE providers (such as IoTs) and working with and through local skills architecture including Mayoral Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships and their Skills Advisory Panels.

54. We are working with a specialist communications agency to develop a brand strategy and comprehensive communications plan for HTE and approved HTQs, which is aligned with wider DfE led technical education reforms. We are aiming to complete this by summer 2020, before the Institute approvals window opens. We will carry out further brand development in 2021. We have also set up a gov.uk page to establish a web presence, providing information on our reforms¹⁸. We will also consider the need for a separate campaign site with information on HTE courses.

Strategic partnerships

55. We will work with strategic partners to build an umbrella of HTE supporters across the country and extend the reach and impact of the campaign, including:

- The Gatsby Foundation¹⁹ who through their ‘Technicians Make it Happen’ campaign will source and develop case studies of those working and learning in higher technical occupations.
- WorldSkills UK²⁰, whose regional, national and international competitions and

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-technical-education-reforms>

¹⁹ Gatsby Foundation Technicians Make it Happen campaign <https://www.technicians.org.uk/>

²⁰ WorldSkills UK is a partnership between businesses, education and government that accelerates young people’s careers giving them the best start in work and life <https://www.worldskillsuk.org/>

Skills Champions raise awareness and celebrate the best of apprenticeships and technical skills. We will use WorldSkills UK activities and events to promote HTE.

- IoTs, who will provide HTE with cutting-edge equipment and in partnership with a range of employers.
- PSRBs, Chambers of Commerce and SAPs who can help expand our reach with employers by endorsing our campaign.

Sustained employer engagement

56. We will continue working in partnership with the Institute to engage employers in the development, provision and promotion of approved HTQs. Employer involvement will help ensure approved HTQs meet their needs, add weight to approved HTQs and help create demand for them.

57. The Institute's Digital route panel includes representatives from Burberry, Deloitte, Ernst and Young, the Metropolitan Police Service, PPG Consulting, The Spectator, PA Consulting and Flicker Games. These employers will play a crucial role in approving digital HTQs against occupational standards and providing credibility for the approved qualifications.

58. Next, we will be rolling out a phased sectoral employer engagement strategy that mirrors the phased rollout of approved HTQs. From late 2020, we will therefore be engaging with digital employers and PSRBs first, as part of the Digital route for September 2022. We will work with the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), LEPs, MCAs and other government departments to engage directly with employers, including through the NAS database of employers. We will also develop case studies of employers who have found HTE a useful way to get the skills they need, for which consultation responses suggested there is real appetite.

59. We want our reforms to enable employers to find and develop the talent they need. We will work with national organisations like the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development to ensure those in charge of recruitment and development in organisations understand the value of approved HTQs. We will also explore how LEPs and MCAs can broker relationships between employers and HTE providers and identify where there is – or will be – a skills need that risks being unmet.

Information, advice and guidance on HTE

60. Our user insights work with learners and employers and the responses to the consultation highlighted that information on HTE can be confusing and come from multiple sources. They also identified the lack of clarity around career pathways, terminology, occupational routes and qualification levels as barriers to uptake. The

second important objective of our strategy to increase uptake of HTE is to improve information, advice and guidance, so people can better understand and evaluate the full range of options available to them.

Young people

61. The implementation of the government's careers strategy in 11-18 schools and colleges²¹, centred around the Gatsby Benchmarks²², and introduction of the Baker Clause have already established good infrastructure through which we can build better information, advice and guidance for young people. In doing so, we will seek to build upon existing engagement on T Levels, apprenticeships and other initiatives.
62. We will work with trusted information providers and careers advisers – including UCAS, Career Development Institute (CDI), Discover Uni and the National Careers Service – to develop a shared approach to promoting HTE and approved HTQs. This will provide a consistent approach on course information, entry requirements and how to apply for courses.
63. We will work closely with The Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) who are supporting schools and colleges to provide world class careers education as outlined in the government's careers strategy. Specifically, we will look to raise awareness of HTE and approved HTQs through the CEC's three core strands of work:
- **Building Networks:** Working through the Careers Hubs and the Enterprise Adviser Network to ensure schools and colleges, as well as employers and wider business networks, understand the benefits of HTE/approved HTQs and can engage pupils and students on these routes.
 - **Supporting Careers Leaders:** Working with the CEC to ensure Careers Leader training and CPD support includes the latest information on HTE and support on how to include good-quality information, advice and guidance on HTE as part of their school/college wide careers programme.
 - **Supporting the Gatsby Benchmarks:** Working with CEC to support schools to achieve the Gatsby Benchmarks, particularly on encounters with HE providers.
64. The Institute is developing its digital occupational maps to make them more readily accessible. These maps show the occupations that are available through technical education, grouped across 15 routes and, in the future, will show users which

²¹ [Careers strategy: making the most of everyone's skills and talents, December 2017](#)

²² Gatsby Benchmarks, <https://www.gatsby.org.uk/education/focus-areas/good-career-guidance>

occupations can be accessed through an approved HTQ. The Institute is planning to share the data behind the occupational maps, so providers of information, advice and guidance can better understand and explain the options available to students and potentially develop tools to support them.

Adults looking to upskill and retrain

65. We will work with the National Careers Service²³ to ensure their website, bulletins and course directory contains up-to-date information on HTE, including approved HTQs, as well as compelling case studies of higher technical jobs.
66. The department will consult on a £2.5 billion National Skills Fund. This will consider how we can support individuals to maximise their potential in the labour market, and how we can support businesses to find and hire the workers they need.

Accessibility

67. We recognise that accessibility is important to improve uptake of HTE courses. That means ensuring a pipeline of students from level 3, offering flexible modes of provision and the right funding and support.
68. As set out above, for implementation in 2022, we will continue using the existing regulatory framework to assure the quality of providers of approved HTQs. Those providers that charge higher level HE tuition fees are required by the OfS to develop an access and participation plan which commits them to ensuring that students from areas of low higher education participation, low household income and/or low socio-economic status, can access, participate and succeed at their institution. The OfS has recently agreed challenging 5-year plans with these providers for the period 2020/21–2024/25, which aim to ensure that everyone with the talent and capability to succeed in higher education has the opportunity to do so.

Pipeline of students from level 3

69. Reforms are already under way to improve the pathways through the technical education system. From September this year, the first T Levels will be available, with the remainder rolled out by September 2024. T Levels will prepare students for skilled employment or higher levels of technical education, such as approved HTQs.

²³ <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/>

70. To meet our commitment of making T Levels accessible, we have made changes to the English and maths exit requirement for students with SEND (special educational needs and disabilities). The Institute has also required awarding organisations to work with SEND organisations to ensure T Levels content and assessment supports fair access. We are also developing the T Level Transition programme for students who are not ready to start a T Level but have the potential to progress onto one, following a tailored preparation programme. These measures will support access to T Levels and, beyond that, approved HTQs.

71. Providing a clear line of sight for T Level students is important, but it is just one possible route into an approved HTQ. The department is raising the quality of apprenticeships, and its review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below will simplify the qualifications landscape, so all qualifications are clearly understood and have clear links to further study or employment. These measures build on the government's offer of traineeships and establishment of Maths Centres for Excellence, which will support adults to study English and maths if they require it.

Flexible learning

72. Consultation responses and user insights findings highlighted that employers and many learners, particularly adults in work, need to access learning in a more flexible way - to fit study around work, family and personal commitments. As a result of COVID-19, the demand for moving learning online has increased.

73. Earlier this year, and in response to COVID-19, we launched the Skills Toolkit²⁴ online platform to help individuals access skills training. Awarding bodies and providers have also been looking at how existing qualifications, assessment and courses can be better provided online. This builds on the work already underway through the Flexible Learning Fund and the EdTech Strategy²⁵.

- The £11.4 million Flexible Learning Fund supported education and training providers and other organisations to develop innovative and online approaches. Many of these projects are focussed on developing online approaches to engage students, allow for more flexible learning, and support learners with jobs.
- The EdTech Strategy, published last year, sets out the steps the department is taking to support and enable the education sector in England to develop, embed

²⁴ [Skills Toolkit](#)

²⁵ [EdTech Strategy, April 2019](#)

and use technology. The strategy also includes a range of other measures to tackle barriers facing providers seeking to use technology effectively.

Funding and support

74. Financial concerns can play an important role in determining whether someone can access HTE, particularly for adults, part-time learners and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Currently, government has a mixture of support packages available to students on HTE courses, including the HE student finance package and Advanced Learner Loans. As set out above, the government will also be consulting on a £2.5 billion National Skills Fund to support adults and employers to access the training they need. Subject to the fund design and consultation this could support adults to access higher level skills.
75. We will explore how we can further support young people and adults to undertake an approved HTQ through the Spending Review, including considering an appropriate finance package for approved HTQ learners.

Next steps

- Early stakeholder engagement to help promote and raise awareness of HTE in general, followed by a high-profile, national campaign in 2021 to raise awareness and promote interest in approved HTQs among young people in schools and colleges, as well as adults looking to upskill and retrain.
- Sustained engagement with higher technical employers across all sectors, starting with the Digital route for 2022.
- Use strategic partnerships with national organisations to build an umbrella of HTE supporters across the country and amplify the national campaign.
- Improving information, advice and guidance for young people and adults in the workplace by working with important organisations such as the National Careers Service, Careers & Enterprise Company, CDI and UCAS.

Equality Act 2010

76. Alongside the consultation document, we published interim general and equalities impact assessments²⁶. We continue to keep our impact assessments under close review, including the impact of our reforms on individuals who share protected characteristics. We will update these further as the reforms progress, including reflecting further policy or funding decisions.
77. In relation to the impacts on individuals who share specific protected characteristics, respondents to the consultation were keen to highlight that adequate support for SEND students and students struggling with mental health problems is an important consideration.
78. The government expects all HTE providers to fulfil their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010²⁷, including making reasonable adjustments for all SEND learners, not just those in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).
79. The DfE also supports several initiatives that encourage best practice in mental health provision across colleges and universities such as the University Mental Health Charter (2018)²⁸, the Education Transitions Network²⁹, and the Step Change: Mental Healthy Universities programme (2020)³⁰.

²⁶ [Higher technical education interim impact assessments, July 2019](#)

²⁷ Equality Act 2010, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

²⁸ The University Mental Health Charter, announced in June 2018, is backed by the Government and led by the sector. <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/charter.html>

²⁹ The Education Transitions Network includes leading sector groups such as UCAS, the National Union of Students, Student Minds, Universities UK (UUK), the Association of Colleges and the OfS. It aims to help students deal with the pressures that starting university can include and help to prevent mental health problems developing as a result.

³⁰ The Step Change: Mentally Healthy Universities framework, which was launched in March 2020, calls on HE Leaders to adopt mental health as a strategic priority and take a whole-institution approach, embedding it across all policies, cultures, curricula and practice.

Annex A: Summary of findings and decisions

1. We commissioned York Consulting to conduct an analysis of the 155 responses we received. Their report is published alongside this government response³¹. The consultation generated 132 responses via the online questionnaire and 23 responses via email. Respondents included a range of individuals and organisations and participation in the consultation was on a self-selecting basis. A breakdown of respondents by sub-group is presented in the table below. In view of the relatively small numbers in certain groups and the self-selecting nature of the responses, we have been cautious in interpreting these results as wholly representative. There were 9 email responses that were not coded to an organisation sub-type.

Table of consultation respondents by sub-group

Organisation sub-type	Number	Percentage
Awarding body	13	9%
Education ³²	18	12%
Employer	7	5%
Professional/Business Organisation ³³	47	32%
Provider (FE)	23	16%
Provider (HE)	31	21%
Other	7	5%
Total	146	100%

Source: York Consulting quantitative analysis, 2020

2. The majority of responses to the consultation were from organisations or representatives of institutions (for example, awarding bodies and providers). We recognise that the views of learners and employers are also critical to making HTE reforms a success. Accordingly, in addition to outreach during the consultation

³¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-technical-education-consultation-analysis>

³² Education sub-type includes: school responses, education consultants and teachers.

³³ Professional/business organisations includes: professional associations or institutions, business partnerships or organisations, education associations and regional bodies/skills organisations.

period, we conducted user insights work with 85 students and employers from across the North West and South East of England, throughout October and November 2019. This work included direct engagement, via focus groups and interviews, with students and others who have engaged in educational levels 3-6. The opinions of teachers and career-advisors were also considered. The work helped identify the various facilitators and barriers present for different users and have been used to help to refine and develop the proposals contained in this government response.

3. We have considered the responses and insights and are reflecting them in our design and implementation strategy. The table below summarises the findings from the consultation and user insights work by consultation question, including how we are responding to the proposals in the consultation. Alongside the Institute and our other partners, we will work closely with stakeholders to ensure we are implementing an ambitious and practical system that works well for all users.

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
<p>Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the proposed aims of HTQs set out in paragraph 9 of the HTE consultation document?</p>	<p>96% of consultation respondents support the proposed aims for a national scheme to approve level 4-5 qualifications that meet employer needs and become a prestigious choice.</p>	<p>To achieve the proposed aims we will introduce a new national scheme to approve level 4-5 technical qualifications that meet employer needs set out in occupational standards. This will be led by the Institute and will clearly signal approved qualifications to learners and employers.</p>
<p>Q2. Are there any points you would like to raise regarding our proposal for Awarding Bodies to voluntarily submit qualifications for approval by the Institute against occupational standards?</p>	<p>A voluntary, opt in system is a more proportionate and flexible approach, but it risks potentially causing confusion where there are different categories of qualification.</p>	<p>Awarding bodies will be able to choose whether to submit their existing or new qualifications for approval as part of an opt-in system. More than one qualification will be able to be approved against a given occupational standard, ensuring a diverse and competitive market. Approved HTQs will be clearly signalled to avoid confusion.</p>
<p>Q3. What is your view on our proposal that, upon approval of a higher technical qualification, there should generally be no transfer of copyright? What are your views about the circumstances in which it could be appropriate for the transfer of copyright to apply?</p>	<p>61% of consultation respondents agree that there should generally be no transfer of copyright upon approval of an HTQ (37% neither agreed nor disagreed). Exceptions they cited to this general rule included preventing market failure and protecting students.</p>	<p>The Institute will develop and publish copyright transfer criteria and guidance which is proportionate and meets the needs of all parties. Transfer of copyright in course materials from an awarding body to the Institute is not likely to be necessary as part of the Institute approval process in most cases.</p>

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
<p>Q4. As Awarding Organisations and Higher Education providers, how important are the following as incentives to encourage the submission of your qualifications for Institute approval?</p> <p>a. A clear mark of labour market relevance</p> <p>b. A competitive funding package (which could include higher tuition fee support, maintenance funding, or better loan terms for students)</p> <p>c. Enhanced support for potential students through information, advice and guidance (e.g. careers advice)</p> <p>d. A swift and straightforward process for submission, appraisal and decision-making</p> <p>e. Other (please specify)</p>	<p>Each of the proposed incentive for awarding bodies to submit their qualifications for approval is important, with a competitive funding package the most important of the proposed incentives for awarding bodies.</p>	<p>There will be clear incentives for awarding bodies to submit qualifications for approval, including a government-backed brand and quality mark for approved qualifications and a clear and straightforward approvals process with supporting information, advice and guidance. We will explore financial incentives in the Spending Review.</p>
<p>Q5. Would you support incorporating the flexibilities/requirements set out in paragraph 35 of the HTE consultation document in the Institute approval process, and are there any</p>	<p>Incorporating various flexibilities and requirements could help approved HTQs respond to employer and sector needs, including reflecting cutting-edge skills.</p>	<p>The Institute's approval process will include certain flexibilities.</p>

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
<p>specific points you would like to raise in relation to the above?</p>	<p>Consultation respondents strongly support including additional content (95% agreement), broader qualifications (85% agreement), smaller qualifications and modules (75% agreement), flexible learning (92% agreement), digital skills (70% agreement), transferrable and employability skills (81%) alignment with professional body standards (85% agreement).</p> <p>There is less support among consultation respondents for including work-based learning (60% agreement) and additional English and maths skills (57% agreement).</p>	<p>It will allow a substantial amount of an approved HTQ to be “additional content” that is occupationally relevant.</p> <p>The Institute’s approval process will allow awarding bodies to submit a qualification for approval against more than one occupational standard</p> <p>As the approvals process develops:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will consider whether, where a PSRB standard very closely aligns to an occupational standard and a qualification meets the PSRB standard, that can be reflected in the approvals process. • We will learn from the approval of qualifications for the Digital route and consider how smaller qualifications and modules can be effectively recognised by the Institute on more of a standalone basis and how modules might link together to form larger qualifications.

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
		<p>There will not be additional requirements for maths, English, digital or wider transferable skills over and above what is already required by occupational standards. Such additional requirements would be unnecessary for occupational competence.</p> <p>The Institute does not intend to require specific work-based learning to be included in approved HTQs.</p>
<p>Q6. Are there any points you would like to raise regarding our approach to retaining existing Ofqual and OfS regulatory arrangements?</p>	<p>Retaining existing OfS and Ofqual regulatory arrangements for awarding bodies has majority support among consultation respondents. Some consultation respondents noted that this was an opportunity to clarify the regulatory landscape.</p>	<p>We will retain the existing Ofqual and OfS framework for the regulation of awarding bodies. We have set out in this document how the regulation of approved HTQs will work and the different and complementary roles of the Institute, Ofqual and the OfS.</p>
<p>Q7 Are the criteria suggested at paragraph 61 of the HTE consultation document suitable markers of high-quality technical provision?</p>	<p>95% of consultation respondents agree that the markers of high-quality technical education set out in the HTE consultation are suitable.</p>	<p>We will work with providers so they can grow high-quality HTE courses with close links to employers, access to industry-standard facilities and teachers with</p>

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
		relevant industry experience and pedagogical expertise.
<p>Q8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the principle of the OfS applying technical ongoing registration conditions that a provider would be required to meet to indicate the high quality of their HTE provision? If you disagree, what could an alternative approach be?</p>	<p>Quality assuring HTE providers is an important part of improving HTE. While 56% of consultation respondents agree with this proposal, there are concerns that applying technical ongoing registration conditions could become overly bureaucratic and duplicate existing regulation.</p>	<p>We will not seek to take forward the principle of OfS applying technical ongoing registration conditions to assure the quality of all HTE. From 2022, provider quality assurance arrangements for the Digital route will work within existing regulatory regimes to ensure the quality of approved HTQ providers.</p> <p>In the longer term, we will develop a streamlined quality assurance framework for approved HTQ provision. This future regulatory regime will be planned using bespoke design principles, identified with both Ofsted and OfS and will be consulted on where appropriate.</p>
<p>Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that linking grant or capital funding to meeting the technical ongoing registration conditions</p>	<p>71% of consultation respondents agree with this proposal. Providers consider both additional upfront and ongoing capital and resource funding necessary to</p>	<p>We will not seek to take forward the principle of OfS applying technical ongoing registration conditions to assure the quality of all HTE. We will explore further financial support to encourage providers to deliver</p>

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
<p>would encourage providers to deliver high-quality provision?</p> <p>a. How might this work to ensure provision best meets local skills needs?</p> <p>b. What specifically would additional funding support?</p> <p>c. Would additional costs be a barrier to delivering high-quality HTQs? Why?</p> <p>d. Which would be a greater priority for providers: 'capital' or 'recurrent grant' funding? Why?</p>	<p>enable them to grow high-quality HTE provision.</p>	<p>high-quality HTE through the Spending Review.</p>
<p>Q10. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should explore how providers that meet the ongoing registration conditions specific to Higher Technical Education could have access to a more competitive student finance package for courses leading to approved HTQs than those who do not meet the technical conditions? Why?</p>	<p>64% of consultation respondents agree with this proposal. Where respondents disagree, they cite concerns that gaps in provision could disadvantage learners in certain areas.</p>	<p>We will not seek to take forward the principle of OfS applying technical ongoing registration conditions to assure the quality of all HTE Through the upcoming Spending Review, we will explore financial measures to incentivise learners to take approved HTQs and providers to offer approved HTQs, including differentiating public funding for qualifications not approved by the Institute in the longer-term. We will implement any differentiation of funding on</p>

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
		a phased basis to support the development of the HTE market.
<p>Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that additional non-financial support will be needed to enable providers to develop their workforce and engage fully with employers? What might examples of non-financial support be?</p>	<p>87% of consultation respondents agree that additional non-financial support will be needed. Examples of non-financial support include building links between providers and between providers and employers, as well as promotion and profile raising and addressing skills needs.</p>	<p>It is important that providers continue to work closely with SAPs to help to shape future decision making on the availability of HTE provision, and ensure that provision works for both learners and employers. This will help providers to: offer a range of qualifications that meet local and regional skills priorities, to understand how they can specialise and provide best value for money.</p> <p>Plans to raise the profile of HTE and promote it to learners and employers are discussed at question 14 below.</p>
<p>Q12. We welcome ideas from respondents on:</p> <p>a. How providers could best allocate their existing resources to build and support capacity and delivery of approved HTQs;</p>	<p>Providers and others need to build strong networks across the HTE landscape and align provision with existing high-quality provision and frameworks.</p> <p>Access to equipment and facilities, assistance with long-term employer</p>	<p>We will work closely with the sector to understand how the support from other programmes such as T Levels; IoTs; and the investment to upgrade the existing FE estate, will help with the provision of high-quality HTE. We also want to understand the extent of the gap between the current</p>

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
<p>b. Where additional help may be needed; and</p> <p>c. What providers think should be prioritised in terms of any future funding allocation. If you have any further comments that are not covered in the above, please include here.</p>	<p>engagement and, recruiting and retaining teaching staff will help providers deliver high-quality HTE.</p> <p>Priorities for future funding include, growth; establishing technical infrastructure and then providing recurring funding; testing pilot initiatives; ensuring an equitable distribution of funding; reducing the impact on potential costs to learners; raising the profile and prestige of HTQs; and, upskilling the existing workforce.</p>	<p>capacity and capability to teach levels 4 and 5 and other levels of provision.</p> <p>As set out above, working with SAPs will help providers to understand how they can specialise and provide best value for money.</p>
<p>Q13. To what extent do you agree that there is a need and opportunity for more young people and adults (including those who need to upskill/retrain) to be undertaking HTE in the future? Please provide examples from your own experience.</p>	<p>93% of consultation respondents agree that there is a need and opportunity for more young people and adults to undertake HTE.</p>	<p>There is a clear need for more young people and adults to undertake HTE in the future. We will introduce a comprehensive strategy to increase uptake among young people continuing in education, adults in work and employers.</p>
<p>Q14. To what extent do you agree with the measures set out in paragraphs 90 to 97 of the HTE consultation document to improve the profile of HTE?</p>	<p>General awareness of HTE courses is low among young people and their parents and teachers, adult learners and employers.</p>	<p>We will seek to change awareness and perceptions of HTE through a national campaign promoting HTE, working with strategic partners and direct employer engagement.</p>

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
	<p>HTE is often perceived to be a backup option, rather than a positive pathway or a prestigious choice. Students reported that they were encouraged to follow the A level to University route at school.</p> <p>95% of consultation respondents support the measures in the consultation for boosting the profile and awareness of HTE.</p>	
<p>Q15. To what extent do you agree with the measures set out in paragraphs 100 to 112 to improve information, advice and guidance for young people, adults and employers?</p> <p>Please give further thoughts on other ways we could help fill the HTE information gap for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people and their teachers considering their options after completing a level 3 • Adults in the workplace who need to upskill/retrain • Employers who have skills shortages at higher technical level 	<p>91% of consultation respondents support the proposals in the consultation to improve the information, advice and guidance relating to HTE.</p> <p>Providers of information, advice and guidance should ensure that they offer clear and coherent career pathways for a wide range of learners. When exploring options around HTE, the complex terminology and multiple sources of information can be barriers for learners, making it difficult for them to understand the full range of choices available and to evaluate the best option.</p>	<p>We will make information on HTE courses and how to apply more consistent so learners can make more informed choices. We will target young people and adults looking to upskill and retrain.</p>

Proposal question	Summary findings	Summary of decision
<p>Q16. Do you have any further evidence on what enables students to study and complete a HTQ and what more government can do to improve access and help support students to undertake and complete a HTQ?</p>	<p>Support and finances (or lack of) can be a large facilitator (or barrier) to different individuals.</p> <p>Employers and learners want flexibility from HTE providers, for example, distance learning, part-time learning, and for courses to have start dates throughout the year.</p>	<p>We will look to improve the accessibility of HTE courses, including reducing barriers to students who want to enter HTE, encouraging more flexible modes of teaching and exploring funding and support through the Spending Review.</p>
<p>Q17. With reference to the impact assessments published alongside this consultation - Do you have any comments about the potential impact the proposals outlined in this consultation may have on individuals with a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010? Please give reasons for your answer.</p>	<p>Barriers to access, in particular lack of funding, may have an impact on those with protected characteristics.</p>	<p>We continue to keep our impact assessments under close review and will update these as the reforms progress, including reflecting further policy or funding decisions.</p> <p>We will explore funding and support through the Spending Review.</p>

Annex B: Flexibilities and requirements in the approvals process

1. This annex sets out further details on the flexibility and requirements in the approvals process. The diagram at the end of the annex illustrates how the flexibilities and requirements in the approval process work together.

Additional content and cutting-edge skills

2. Occupational standards describe the common knowledge, skills and behaviours required for an occupation, but we know that individual job roles can require other skills. This can include skills that are vital to meeting local and sectoral needs, or cutting-edge skills to support the adoption of new technologies and exploit the opportunities offered by Industry 4.0.
3. The Institute approval process will therefore allow an approved HTQ to include additional content, provided it is occupationally relevant, and the qualification is predominantly focused on delivering the requirements of the occupational standard. However, qualifications should not include content that is unlikely to add value to the learner in their chosen field or support progression from/to a related higher-level occupation. The Institute will set out further detail on how additional content will be judged in its guidance for awarding bodies ahead of the launch of the approvals process.

Broader qualifications

4. We know there are qualifications that provide skills relating to more than one occupation. This could be because of the breadth of the qualification, or the ability of the learner to choose between options or modules that lead to competence in different occupations. Therefore, the Institute's approval process will allow qualifications to be approved against more than one occupational standard, provided they satisfy the requirements set out in paragraph 17 of this document in relation to each of those standards.

Professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) standards

5. Many PSRBs set PSRB standards and accredit, approve or award qualifications at level 4 and 5 against them. These are often considered to represent the industry standard and can be treated as prerequisites for access to particular jobs or sectors. Where this is the case, they would usually be integrated into occupational standards. PSRB standards are not always, however, aimed at setting out requirements for competence in a single occupation. Nevertheless, where a qualification meets a PSRB standard that aligns with an occupational standard, this may already indicate a level of occupational competence. As the approvals process develops, the Institute

will consider whether, where this is the case, it can be reflected in the approvals process for those qualifications, while ensuring legal requirements are met.

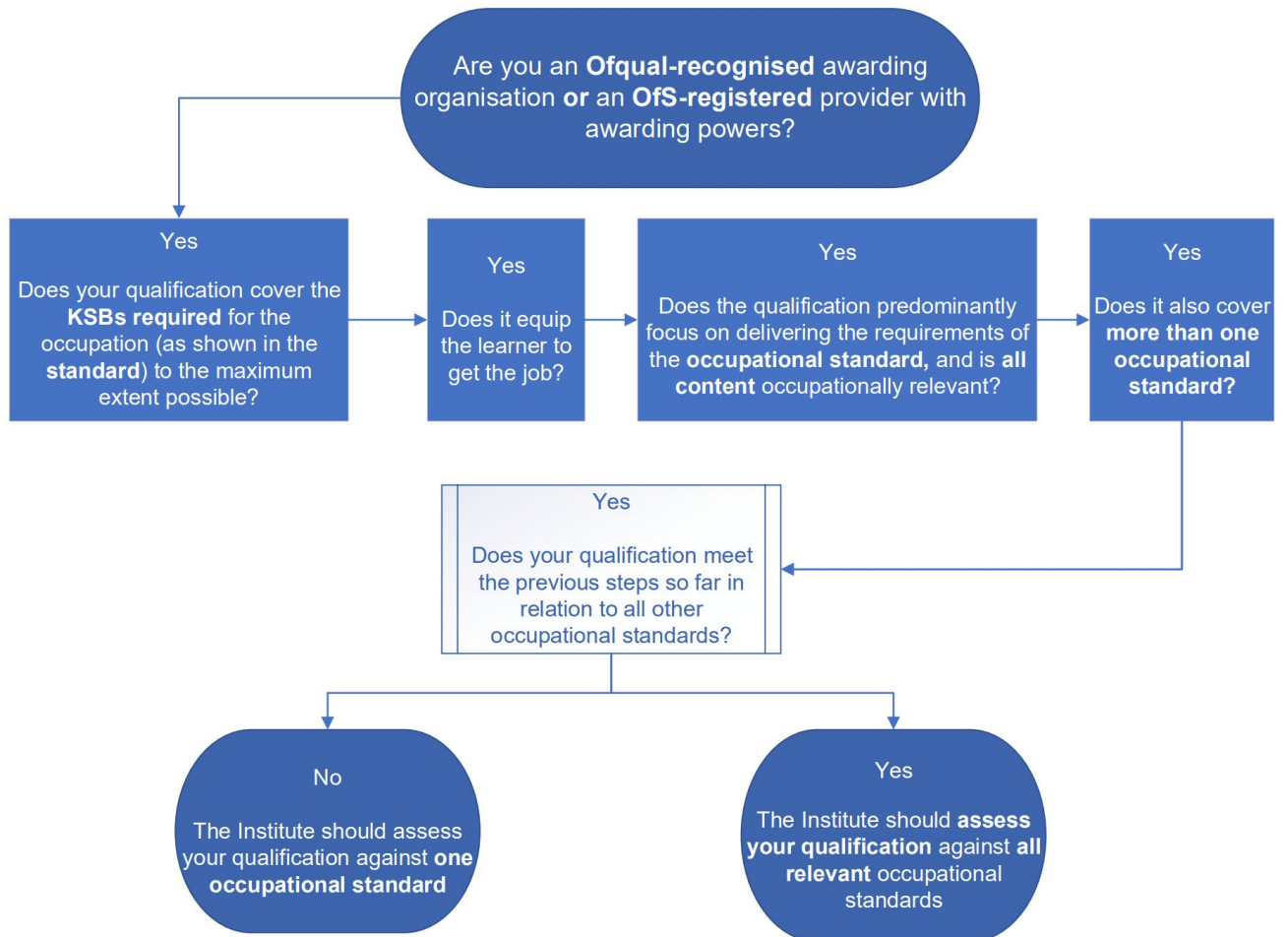
Smaller qualifications and modules

6. Modules and smaller qualifications that only partially provide the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in an occupational standard can be important for supporting personal and professional development, upskilling, retraining and ultimately, social mobility. Flexible and distance learning are particularly beneficial for adults in the workplace who might want to step back into education. Approved HTQs will be free to follow a modular structure, as many level 4 and 5 qualifications already do. We will learn from the approval of qualifications in the Digital route to consider how modules and smaller qualifications can be recognised on a more standalone basis and how modules might link together as larger qualifications.

Maths, English, digital and wider transferable skills

7. Occupational standards already set out where maths, English, digital or wider transferable skills are required to achieve occupational competence. Awarding bodies will need to ensure that their qualifications include such content if they are to be approved. The Institute will not set additional requirements for these skills over and above what is already required by occupational standards. Such additional requirements would be unnecessary for occupational competence. Providers will retain their discretion to set out additional requirements they believe are necessary for the successful completion of the course of study and the flexibility to include additional content could include these skills where occupationally relevant.
8. We know many providers already offer work-based learning, and we encourage awarding bodies to incorporate it into their qualifications where this is practical and accessible for the student. Work-based learning provides an opportunity to get a student even closer to full occupational competence. Many approved HTQ students will, however, already be working in industry and/or have experienced a work placement as part of earlier study. The Institute is not therefore intending to require specific work-based learning to be included in qualifications for them to be approved.

Is your qualification in scope for approval?



Annex C: List of organisations that responded to the consultation

This Annex sets out the organisations that responded to the consultation. It does not include individuals who responded in a personal capacity, responses where an organisation was not clearly identified, or organisations that requested their responses remain confidential. As such, the number of organisations listed below does not equal the total number of respondents.

- Association of employment and learning providers
- Association of School and College Leaders
- Barnsley College
- BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT
- British Association of Construction Heads
- British Chamber of Commerce
- CABWI Awarding Body
- Capital City College Group
- Capula Limited
- Careers and Enterprise Company
- Career Development Institute
- Chartered Association of Business Schools
- Confederation of British Industry
- CIPD
- City & Guilds
- Cornwall College
- Council for Dance, Drama and Musical Theatre
- Coventry University
- Darlington College
- Equestrian Qualifications Ltd
- Federation of Awarding Bodies
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Frimstone Limited
- Future Ready Skills Commission
- Gatsby Foundation
- Health Education England (NHS)
- Ilke Homes
- Independent Higher Education
- Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
- Institute of Physics
- Institution of Chemical Engineering
- Lancashire Skills and Employment Hub
- Landex 'Land Based Colleges Aspiring to Excellence'
- Leeds City College
- London Southbank University
- LTE Group t/a UCEN Manchester
- Make UK
- Middlesbrough College
- Middlesex University
- MillionPlus
- Mixed Economy Group of Colleges
- National Union of Students
- NCG
- New College Durham

- Newham College of Further Education
- National Open College Network
- Nottingham Trent University
- Office of Independent Adjudicators
- Ofqual
- Pearson
- Production Services Association
- Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)
- Royal Society of Chemistry
- Sassoon Academy
- Screen Skills
- Sheffield City Region
- South Devon College
- Teesside University College Partnership
- Tees Valley MCA
- The Education and Training Foundation
- The Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education
- The Institute of Conservation
- The Institution of Engineering and Technology
- The Open University
- The Phoenix Partnership (East) Ltd t/a Essex Work Skills
- The Royal Academy of Engineering
- The Sutton Trust
- The University of Derby
- The University of Leeds
- UKNEST
- Universities UK
- University Alliance
- University and College Union
- University College of Estate Management
- University of Bradford
- University of Brighton
- University of Greenwich
- University of Hertfordshire
- University of Portsmouth
- University of Salford
- University of the Arts London Awarding Body
- University of Wolverhampton
- University of Worcester
- University Vocational Awards Council
- Warwickshire College Group
- Weston College
- White Light
- World Association of Technology Teachers

Annex D: Glossary

Term	Definition
Advanced Learner Loan	<p>An Advanced Learner Loan helps eligible adults (aged 19 and above) with the costs of a course at a college or training provider in England. Further information can be found on GOV.UK.</p> <p>Qualifications for which an individual can take a loan out are known as qualifications approved for ALL. They can be found at: https://www.qualifications.education.gov.uk/</p>
Alternative providers	<p>Refers to providers that run higher education courses but did not receive direct annual public funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), and is not a further education college. Term is now defunct but is used here to delineate the types of institution that currently provide level 4 and 5 courses.</p>
Apprenticeship	<p>An apprenticeship is a job that combines practical training with study. See “A guide to apprenticeships” on GOV.UK for further information.</p>
Approved HTQ	<p>This refers to a level 4-5 qualification that gains approval from the Institute where its content aligns with Institute-approved occupational standards.</p>
Augar report	<p>The Post-18 review independent panel report published on 30 May 2019. See GOV.UK for more information.</p>
Awarding bodies	<p>Umbrella term referring to awarding organisations and higher education providers with degree awarding powers or foundation degree awarding powers.</p>
Awarding organisations	<p>Refers to individual organisations that design, develop, and provide qualifications but are not themselves education providers.</p>
Degree awarding powers	<p>Providers that wish to award their own degrees (as opposed to providing courses that lead to a degree from another provider) must first apply for and obtain degree awarding powers, commonly referred to as DAPs. It is an offence to offer degrees that are not awarded by or on behalf of a provider with DAPs. There are different types of</p>

	DAPs, which entitle the holder to award different types of degrees. For example, providers with foundation DAPs can only award foundation degrees, but not higher degrees, such as bachelor's degrees.
Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)	The ESFA is an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Education. It is accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. See the ESFA website for more information.
Foundation degree	Combined academic and vocational qualification in higher education, equivalent to two thirds of an honours bachelor's degree, introduced by the government in September 2001.
Further education college (FEC)	Refers to institutions conducted by further education corporations. Further education colleges offer a variety of courses from entry level through to higher level qualifications.
Higher education provider (HEP)	Refers to institutions that deliver higher education, including universities.
Higher technical education (HTE)	Refers to technical education provided at levels 4 and 5.
Information, advice and guidance	<p>Impartial, practical support provided to students enabling them to make suitable educational and employment decisions. This can help minimise potential costs associated with uninformed and unsuccessful choices.</p> <p>Information, advice and guidance to support employers in identifying appropriate training that matches their skills needs.</p>
Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Institute)	The Institute is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Education. It approves and publishes standards for occupations (and their associated apprenticeship assessment plans), approves technical education qualifications, and advises government on funding for each standard. See the Institute website for more information.

Institutes of Technology (IoT)	High-quality, employer-led institutions specialising in providing higher-level technical skills for employers.
Knowledge, skills and behaviours	These are the outcomes, as set out in occupational standards, that demonstrate competence in an occupation. For an approved HTQ, an individual will attain as many of the outcomes as may be reasonably expected from a course of education.
Level (L)	Refers to the 9 qualification levels in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. See GOV.UK for more information.
Level 4 and 5	Level 4 and 5 qualifications sit between level 3 (for example, A levels and T Levels, among others) and level 6 (for example, bachelor's degrees). They are typically, but not exclusively, technical in nature.
Level 4-5 technical qualifications	Qualifications at level 4-5 aimed at providing the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for a higher technical occupation. Higher technical occupations vary widely but include, for example, construction site supervisors, nuclear technicians, cybersecurity analysts, facilities managers, nursing associates and sales executives.
Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)	A legal relationship between two or more local authorities by way of partnership or otherwise, created for the purposes of identifying, determining and facilitating economic opportunities that generate economic growth, prosperity and job creation in a particular area.
Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA)	An authority established under section 103(1) of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 or an authority to which a delegation of the Secretary of State's functions has been made under section 39A of the Greater London Authority Act 1999.
National Colleges	National Colleges are institutions, created by employers to support high-level skills training in those sectors that are economically and strategically important to UK growth (i.e. High Speed Rail, Nuclear, Digital, Creative & Cultural). Courses are predominantly between levels 4 to 6, with employers involved in developing the curriculum, and

	industry professionals teaching the content in simulated workplaces.
Occupational standards	Occupational standards are developed by an employer (trailblazer) group and are approved and published by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. They set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for competence in an occupation.
Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)	The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. It was set up in April 2010 under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and is also covered by the Education Act 2011. Ofqual is a non-ministerial government department with jurisdiction in England. At level 4 and 5, Ofqual covers Awarding Organisations. See the Ofqual website for more information.
Office for Students (OfS)	The OfS is a non-departmental public body and is the independent regulator of higher education in England. See OfS website for more information.
OfS regulatory framework	The OfS regulatory framework for higher education in England is required under section 75 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA). See OfS Regulatory Framework for more information.
Post-16 Skills Plan	The government's plan to support young people and adults to secure skilled employment and meet the needs of the economy, including through bringing forward technical education reforms based on the work of Lord Sainsbury's independent panel. See GOV.UK for more information.
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)	The QAA safeguards standards and improves the quality of UK higher education. See QAA website for more information.
Review of Post-18 Education and Funding (Post-18 Review)	The Post-18 Review was announced by the Prime Minister on 19 February 2018. It is considering how government can ensure that the education system in England for those aged 18 years and over is: accessible to all; supported by a funding system that provides value for money and works for students and taxpayers; incentivises choice and

	competition across the sector; and encourages the development of the skills that we need as a country.
Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)	The RQF provides a single, simple system for cataloguing all qualifications regulated by Ofqual. Qualifications are indexed by their level and size. Ofqual maintains a register that provides more detail on each qualification. See the Register of Regulated Qualifications for more information.
Skills Advisory Panel (SAP)	Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships have created 36 SAPs which bring together employers, skills providers and local government to resolve mismatches between skills supply and employer demand at a local level.
Sainsbury Review	The Independent Panel on Technical Education, chaired by Lord Sainsbury, reported its findings in April 2016. The recommendations were accepted in the Post-16 Skills Plan and form the basis for technical education reforms. See the Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education for more information.
Technical education	Technical education encompasses any education or training, such as qualifications and apprenticeships, that focuses on progression into skilled employment and requires the acquisition of both a substantial body of technical knowledge and a set of practical skills valued by industry. Technical education covers provision from level 2 (the equivalent of GCSEs at A* to C or 9 to 4) to higher education (level 6), but it differs from A levels and other academic options in that it draws its purpose from the workplace rather than an academic discipline.
T Level	A T Level is a rigorous, stretching programme of study at level 3 based on recognised, employer-led standards. T Levels will offer a high quality, prestigious technical alternative to A levels and be aligned with work-based technical education also provided at level 3 through apprenticeships. T Levels will be introduced in phases from September 2020.

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