



Department
for Education

Level 3 Vocational Qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds

**2016 School and College Performance
Tables:**

**Technical Guidance for Awarding
Organisations**

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Foreword

High quality vocational education is essential to future economic growth and ensures that we make the most of every young person's talents and abilities.

The reputation of vocational education as a high status route has suffered in recent years in England. Vocational qualifications have been perceived as too easily passed, and as being disconnected from the true requirements of industry. They have come to be seen by many as a poor second to an academic education.

We need to repair the broken link between the qualifications students take, and the training that British industry needs. As the Commission for Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning¹ concluded, students deserve vocational qualifications which provide 'a clear line of sight to work'. Employers, universities and the most able students must have confidence that vocational qualifications are of the very highest standard.

Two years ago the Government welcomed Professor Wolf's report into vocational education. All of the recommendations and proposed reforms featured in the report, including reform of vocational qualifications taught at 14, have now been implemented and are beginning to take effect.

Professor Alison Wolf found that at least 350,000 16-19 year olds were working towards vocational qualifications which were of very limited value, either to them or to employers. As a result, at 19, these students found themselves with very few employment or further training options. A series of radical and far-reaching reforms are being introduced to address this issue.

This guidance sets out rigorous new requirements that qualifications will need to meet if they are to count in future performance tables. Setting clear requirements in this way will mean that the qualifications available to students who want to excel in an occupation or occupational group will meet the highest standards.

We have recently announced details of the new Technical Baccalaureate measure, which will recognise the achievement of students that take the highest value Technical Level Qualifications, Level 3 maths and complete an extended project.

In September, major reforms to the way post-16 education is funded will give colleges greater freedom to work with employers, much clearer expectations on students taking substantial vocational or academic qualifications and being offered the opportunity to take part in post-16 work experience. Because of the importance placed by employers on numeracy and literacy and the direct link between these skills and employability, any student that has not achieved GCSE in maths and English by the age of 16 will also be expected continue to study those subjects.

¹ "It's about work... Excellent adult vocational teaching and learning", Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning, March 2013 <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/cavtl>

We are also considering similar changes for the reform of vocational qualifications offered to 16-19 year olds at Level 2. Details of these will follow in due course.

Together these reforms will fill a clear gap in our education system, finally providing a respected, high status vocational training route to enable students in England to compete in the global race and give them the skills that employers need.

Matthew Hancock MP
Minister for Skills

Level 3 Vocational Qualifications for 16-19 Year Olds: 2016 School and College Performance Tables

Technical guidance for awarding organisations

Summary

In line with Professor Wolf's recommendations, in future only high value Level 3 vocational qualifications which meet pre-defined characteristics will be recognised in performance tables for 16-19 year olds.

The Government will introduce an annual process to identify these high value vocational qualifications, and will publish a list of these qualifications each autumn. The first list, which will include vocational qualifications that count in the 2016 performance tables, will be made available in November 2013.

In Spring 2013, the Government consulted on proposals to reform Level 3 vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds. The proposals set out in the consultation were widely supported but a number of more detailed comments and suggestions received by the DfE has helped us refine how the categories of Technical Level and Applied General Qualifications will be defined and then assessed for inclusion in performance tables. The Government response to this consultation is published as a separate document, alongside this technical guidance.

The reforms proposed within the consultation will now proceed in two stages.

By 13 September 2013, awarding organisations will be required to submit qualifications which they consider meet the DfE's interim requirements for inclusion within the 2016 performance tables. Submissions from awarding organisations should:

- propose which category they wish the qualifications to be considered for
- provide evidence on how each qualification meets the interim requirement
- provide a statement on how each qualification will be developed to meet the full requirement.

In the case of Early Years Educator qualifications only, awarding organisations will have an extension until Spring 2014. Further information can be found on page 6.

Qualifications that are judged to meet these interim requirements will start be taught from September 2014, and reported in the 2016 performance tables.

By September 2015 awarding organisations will be required to submit qualifications which they consider meet the DfE's full requirements for inclusion within the 2018 performance tables. New and redeveloped qualifications will be considered for inclusion in the 2017 performance tables if they are submitted by mid-September 2014.

Introduction

This document seeks to provide awarding organisations with the technical detail they need in order to submit Level 3 qualifications for approval for the 2016 performance tables.

The list of vocational qualifications that will count in 2016 performance tables will be made available on the DfE website in November 2013. These qualifications should be proven to provide progression to further learning or employment.

Until the list is finalised, we recommend that post-16 education and training providers exercise caution in making changes to their curriculums and timetables in anticipation of a particular qualification being approved.

We expect the great majority of students to study academic qualifications and those vocational qualifications which meet the requirements set out in this document. There may be students who find that the qualification which is most appropriate for their needs and interests has not yet been approved for reporting within performance tables. Where it is in a student's best interests, schools, colleges and training organisations are encouraged to teach qualifications that are not included on the list but which they consider being of value to the student in question.

In many cases we would expect awarding organisations to redevelop qualifications which fail to meet the new requirements. As long as the redeveloped qualification does meet the requirements this could then be included in future years' performance tables. Nevertheless all qualifications accredited by Ofqual and approved for this age group under section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 will still be available for teaching to 16-19 year olds.

This technical guidance concerns vocational qualifications at Level 3 only – achievement and progression relating to qualifications at Level 2 and below are not currently reported in the performance tables. The forthcoming consultation regarding 16-19 accountability arrangements will include proposals to address this.

Other Context

The Richard Review of Apprenticeships

Reform of Apprenticeship frameworks, and their under-pinning qualifications, is being considered separately through the Government's response to the Richard Review of Apprenticeships². These 16-19 reforms and the Richard Review recommendations share common principles, in particular the need to drive up quality and increase employer engagement with the design, delivery and assessment of vocational qualifications and apprenticeships.

A level reform

Awarding organisations are currently reviewing the content of A level qualifications with the involvement of Higher Education Institutions. The first new linear A levels are planned to be introduced for teaching in September 2015 and reported in performance tables from 2017. The AS will become a standalone qualification and will no longer count towards the A level result.

The 'declared purpose' characteristic in future publications of this Technical Guidance will seek evidence that any qualification being proposed for inclusion in performance tables does not have significant overlap with a reformed A level. This requirement will avoid qualifications being included in both DfE's annual list of Technical Level or Applied General qualifications and Academic qualifications, including A/AS levels (including double and applied versions), International Baccalaureate (including standard/higher components), Pre-U Principal/ short course, AQA Baccalaureate Core that will continue to count in performance tables.

This will also ensure that all qualifications counting towards performance tables – whether vocational or academic – are recognised as distinct and respected components of a 16-19 study programme. This clarity will help students, parents, post-16 education and training providers, higher education institutions and employers identify high value qualifications, and in doing so encourage students to take them and schools, colleges and other learning providers to offer them.

Reform of 16 -19 accountability arrangements

The DfE will also launch a consultation in the summer setting out proposed improvements to 16-19 education and training accountability arrangements. It seeks views on reforms relating to performance tables, minimum standards and accountability for the high-quality provision of courses leading to qualifications at Level 3 and below. This includes proposals to:

- Report achievement and progression at Level 2 and below in performance tables for 16-19 year olds.
- Report attainment and progress measures for academic and vocational (Technical Level and Applied General) qualifications separately.

² Richard. The Richard Review of Apprenticeships, November 2012.
<http://www.schoolforstartups.co.uk/richard-review/richard-review-full.pdf>

- Introduce minimum standards for each category of qualification to identify providers not enabling their students to make good progress in each of Academic, Applied General and Technical Level qualifications.
- Introduce a range of wider transparency measures, including the TechBacc measure.

Early Years Level 3 qualifications

Following publication of the Nutbrown Review in June 2012, the Government is reforming Early Years Educator qualifications. Later this month, the National College of Teaching and Leadership will publish new subject content criteria for Early Years Educator qualifications, to help build a stronger and more professional early years workforce. By establishing criteria for subject content, this will complement the DfE's overarching aim to ensure high quality, high value vocational qualification provision.

Meeting the new Early Years Educator content criteria will allow qualifications to be included on the Early Years Educator Qualification List. However, it will not lead to automatic inclusion in performance tables. To be included in performance tables from 2016, Early Years Educator qualifications must also demonstrate the characteristics of either Technical Level or Applied General qualifications as set out in this technical guidance.

In the case of Early Years Educator qualifications only, awarding organisations will have until Spring 2014 to submit completed forms providing evidence on how a qualification meets the interim requirement.

This is to allow awarding organisations time to meet the new content criteria for Early Years Educator qualifications, seek National College confirmation that the qualifications meet the new content criteria, and then secure Ofqual accreditation. A supplementary list of Early Years Educator qualifications counting in the 2016 performance tables will be published in due course.

Because Early Years Educator qualifications will be uniquely subject to new content criteria, awarding organisations may submit entirely new qualifications for inclusion in 2016 performance tables. In all other subject areas, only existing or modified qualifications will be considered for the September 2013.

Section 1: New Level 3 vocational qualification categories for 16-19 year olds

- 1.1 Academic qualifications, including A/AS levels (including double and applied versions), International Baccalaureate (including standard / higher components), Pre-U Principal/ short course, AQA Baccalaureate Core will be counted in performance tables in future under the heading 'Academic'.
- 1.2 To be included in future performance tables all other qualifications accredited by Ofqual as suitable for 16-19 year olds will need to demonstrate either the characteristics sought of a Technical Level, or of an Applied General, qualification. The criteria for assessing the characteristics of each of these are set out in Section 2.
- 1.3 Qualifications that demonstrate these characteristics are those which provide most students with successful progression to the next stage of education, training or employment. Where a qualification contains a number of pathways or options, all possible combinations will be required to demonstrate all relevant characteristics.

Technical Level Qualifications

- 1.4 **Technical Level Qualifications are for students wishing to specialise in a technical occupation or occupational group. They will equip a student with specialist knowledge and skills, enabling entry to employment or an Apprenticeship in that occupational group or progression to a related further or higher education course. In some cases they can provide a 'licence to practise' or exemption from professional exams.**
- 1.5 The term 'technical occupation or occupational group' refers to 4-digit and 3-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) coding³, where 4-digit SOC codes relate to specific job titles e.g. laboratory technician and 3-digit SOC codes relate to the host 'minor group' e.g. Science, Engineering and Production Technicians. Technical Level Qualifications will feature as one of three components of the new Technical Baccalaureate performance table measure, which will be introduced for courses beginning in September 2014 and reported in performance tables from 2016.

Applied General Qualifications

- 1.6 **Applied General Qualifications are for students wishing to continue their general education at advanced level through applied learning. They equip a student with transferable knowledge and skills. They will fulfil entry requirements for a range of higher education courses, either by meeting entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other qualifications at the same level. They may also enable entry to employment or an Apprenticeship.**

³ For more information visit <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/classifications/current-standard-classifications/soc2010/index.html>

Section 2: Characteristics that Level 3 vocational qualifications must demonstrate to feature in performance tables from 2016

- 2.1 All Level 3 vocational qualifications accredited by Ofqual, and approved under section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 for use with 16-19 year olds, will need to demonstrate the characteristics of either Technical Level or Applied General qualifications to be included in performance tables. Each characteristic is described in detail below, including the justification for its use and the requirements that will need to be met when awarding organisations submit qualifications for consideration.
- 2.2 Given that some qualifications may require substantial redevelopment in order to achieve the full range of characteristics set out below, we will introduce an interim requirement which will apply for a 'grace period' of up to two years. This will provide time for awarding organisations to work with employers, professional and trade bodies, post-16 providers and higher education institutions (HEIs) ⁴ to redevelop qualifications to meet the full requirement, the details for which are also set out below.
- 2.3 Awarding organisations should submit evidence for the characteristics identified in the table below:

	Interim Requirement (for qualifications counting in 2016 performance tables)	Full Requirement⁵ (for qualifications counting in 2018 performance tables)
A. Declared Purpose	X	X
B. Size	X	X
C. Recognition	X	X
D. Synoptic Assessment		X
E. External Assessment		X
F. Grading		X
G. Employer involvement (Technical Level Qualifications only)		X
H. Progression		X
I. Proven Track Record		X

⁴ Throughout this guidance the term 'Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)' refers to English Higher Education institutions (HEIs) and Further Education colleges (FECs) funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England to fund higher education, research and related activities.

⁵ Awarding organisations can submit qualifications for consideration against the full requirement a year earlier should they decide to do so.

- 2.4 The DfE expects awarding organisations to demonstrate each of the relevant characteristics. Where a qualification contains a number of pathways or options, all possible combinations will be required to demonstrate all of the relevant characteristics:
- Technical Level and Applied General Qualifications will need to demonstrate characteristics A to C to be included on the 2016 list.
 - Applied General Qualifications will need to demonstrate characteristics A to I, with the exception of G (employer involvement) to be included on the 2018 list.
 - Technical Level Qualifications will need to demonstrate characteristics A to I to be included on the 2018 list.
- 2.5 The DfE and Ofqual plan to review their respective roles in assessing Level 2 and Level 3 vocational qualifications for inclusion in future performance tables with a view to identifying a simpler and more efficient process. Currently awarding organisations are first of all required to secure Ofqual accreditation and then approach DfE to secure approval for the qualification to be taught at 14-16 and/or 16-19 and to be counted in performance tables. One option would be Ofqual adopting DfE's role in approving qualification characteristics as a part of their regulatory remit.

Characteristics that qualifications must demonstrate to meet the interim and full requirements

A. Declared Purpose

Detail

- 2.6 Awarding organisations must declare the purpose of a qualification in terms that will be meaningful and relevant to students, parents, employers, post-16 providers and higher education institutions. Statements of purpose must clearly explain whether the qualification is primarily Technical Level or Applied General in nature.

Justification for this characteristic

- 2.7 A clear statement of purpose will help students make informed decisions about which qualification(s) to take, ensuring that they are fully aware of where a qualification could lead e.g. entry to employment in a particular occupation or occupational group, an Apprenticeship or progression to further or higher education.
- 2.8 There has been significant growth in the number of vocational qualifications developed and offered by awarding organisations. There are currently over 3,700 vocational qualifications accredited by Ofqual and approved by DfE (under section 96 legislation) for use with 16-19 year olds. Many of these qualifications were developed for the adult market and do not provide appropriate content or assessment methods for 16-19 year olds.

How judgement will be reached

- 2.9 In order to meet the interim requirement, the awarding organisation should publish a statement of purpose on their website alongside the qualification specification. Reaccreditation of the qualification by Ofqual will not be required.
- 2.10 In order to meet the full requirement, the statement of purpose should be included in the qualification specification. This will require the revised qualification to be reaccredited by Ofqual.
- 2.11 The DfE will require awarding organisations to provide evidence that the content of the qualification and its assessment methodology are appropriate for a Level 3 qualification and aligned to its stated purpose.
- 2.12 Where a qualification was originally developed for the adult market, in particular, the awarding organisation will need to demonstrate its suitability for students aged 16-19.

B. Size

Detail

2.13 In order to count in the 2016 performance tables:

- A Technical Level Qualification must be at least 300 Guided Learning Hours (GLH).
- An Applied General Qualification must be at least 150 Guided Learning Hours (GLH).

2.14 The minimum size requirements will be reviewed following publication of the list of qualifications that will count in the 2016 performance tables.

2.15 Ofqual intends to introduce new conditions on GLH. Until that time, and for the purposes of the 16-19 performance tables, we will continue to use the GLH measure.

Justification for this characteristic

2.16 Qualifications should have currency with employers, schools, post-16 providers and higher education institutions (HEIs). The size characteristic will prevent young people amassing small qualifications that are not widely valued and which do not provide a sound basis for progression to a job or to further study.

2.17 Technical Level Qualifications must be at least 300 GLH in size to provide sufficient time for meaningful skills development that equips a student to follow a particular trade or profession. Applied General Qualifications have a lower size requirement to enable students to take one AS-sized Applied General Qualification alongside one or two substantial qualifications within a 16-19 study programme⁶.

How judgement will be reached

2.18 Awarding organisations identify the GLH value when a qualification is submitted for accreditation by Ofqual. The GLH value for accredited qualifications is publicly available in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications.

2.19 Awarding organisations need to provide detail on how the total GLH is reached, including the breakdown across units. For qualifications that have a range of total GLH dependent on the combination of units studied, the minimum overall size should be no less than the minimum size requirement.

⁶ Study programmes for 16-19 year olds- Government response to consultation and plans for implementation. <http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/curriculum/a00210755/16-19-study-programmes>

C. Recognition

Detail

- 2.20 Vocational qualifications counting in performance tables should be publicly recognised by employers, recognised professional or trade bodies and/or higher education institutions (HEIs) as fit for purpose:
- Technical Level Qualifications need to be recognised by employers (and HEIs where appropriate) as:
 - developing and confirming specialist knowledge and skills relevant to an occupation or occupational group to a standard that can be reasonably expected of an 18 year old in full time education.
 - giving students an advantage when applying for related jobs, apprenticeships, training or higher education courses.
 - Applied General Qualifications need to be recognised by HEIs as fulfilling entry requirements to higher education courses, either by meeting entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other qualifications at the same level.

Justification for this characteristic

- 2.21 Industry and HEIs, rather than the Government, are best placed to decide which vocational qualifications meet their needs.
- 2.22 Technical Level Qualifications, taught on a full time basis, should provide the opportunity for students to develop practical skills. However because professional competence and mastery can only be achieved over a period of time in the workplace this is likely to be limited. Awarding organisations need to agree with employers the standard of knowledge and skills that can be reasonably expected of an 18 year old in full time education.

How judgement will be reached

- 2.23 For Technical Level Qualifications, awarding organisations are required to provide a minimum of one letter of support from a relevant professional or trade body, and/or letters of support from at least five employers registered with Companies House which are representative of the industry sector or occupation/ occupational group to which the qualification relates. Letters should refer to the specific qualification, as opposed to a generic qualification type, and confirm that it is fit for purpose (see paragraph 2.20). Awarding organisations may also provide letters of support from HEIs, however this is not mandatory.
- 2.24 For Applied General Qualifications, awarding organisations are required to provide a minimum of three letters of support from HEIs that recognise the qualification as fulfilling entry requirements to a range of higher education courses, either in their own right or alongside other Level 3 qualifications.

Awarding organisations may also provide letters of support from employers and a relevant professional or trade body. This is not mandatory but if provided it will be recorded within DfE's annual list of qualifications approved for reporting within performance tables.

- 2.25 Where an awarding organisation is an arm of a professional or trade body, recognition of the qualification will be accepted alongside letters of support from employers.
- 2.26 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) have had significant involvement in the development of most existing vocational qualifications and in many cases supported their original accreditation by Ofqual. For this reason their further endorsement will not be required.
- 2.27 All statements of support must be public and available on the awarding organisation's website so that students, employers, post-16 providers and HEIs can view them as required. The DfE will also indicate when publishing the annual list of qualifications, whether a qualification is recognised by:
- professional or trade bodies
 - at least five employers
 - at least three Higher Education Institutions

Additional characteristics that qualifications must demonstrate to meet the full requirement

- 2.28 To be included in the 2018 performance tables (or from 2017 for a new or redeveloped qualification available from September 2015), a qualification needs to also demonstrate the characteristics set out below. The details of these characteristics are subject to amendment in the light of further development work and research undertaken by the DfE and Ofqual.

D. Synoptic Assessment

Detail

- 2.29 Qualifications should include assessment which requires a candidate to identify and use effectively in an integrated way an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories, and knowledge from across the course content.
- 2.30 In the case of Technical Level Qualifications, awarding organisations need to provide evidence that synoptic assessment plays a significant role in confirming that a student has achieved the standards required by employers e.g. what a student should be able to know and do, in order to pass the qualification.

Justification for this characteristic

- 2.31 Synoptic assessment is vital to increase the level of challenge for students as it requires breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding, in combination. This will help ensure that vocational qualifications are as challenging as academic ones.
- 2.32 Taken with the minimum size requirement, the synoptic assessment requirement will ensure coherence across a qualification and prevent qualifications from being treated as a series of disconnected components.

How judgement will be reached

- 2.33 The contribution that synoptic assessment provides to the final award has not been specified. DfE seeks evidence that it is of sufficient size to cover meaningfully the full range of the qualification's content. For some qualifications, the synoptic assessment will be externally assessed, but we recognise that for some vocational awards this may be impracticable.
- 2.34 For Technical Level Qualifications, the award of the qualification should be subject to achievement of standards required by employers e.g. what a student should be able to know and do, in order to pass the qualification. For existing unit-based Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) qualifications, an additional unit or assessment component could be developed to provide synoptic assessment.

E. External Assessment

Detail

2.35 Safeguarding standards of qualification assessment is the responsibility of Ofqual, the Independent Regulator. Awarding organisations must ensure that assessment is fit for purpose, appropriate and consistent with the specification of that qualification. Ofqual's definition of external assessment, against which all qualifications will be considered, is:

“A form of independent assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are set by the awarding organisation, taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marked by the awarding organisation.”⁷

2.36 Awarding organisations should ensure that the assessment of each qualification, and the balance of knowledge, understanding and skills-based content, is appropriate for the qualification in question. However, as a minimum, for both Technical Level and Applied General Qualifications, we would expect:

- all knowledge and understanding to be subject to external assessment (for Applied General Qualifications this should make up the majority of the qualification's content)
- all internal assessments of skills-based content to be subject to external moderation.

2.37 For both categories of vocational qualification, repeat submission of written coursework that is subject to summative assessment is not allowed. However it is permissible for students to re-submit written coursework once if it relates to a different topic or assignment, as opposed to a corrected version of the original coursework submission.

2.38 For a small number of qualifications, in highly practical subjects such as art and design, external assessment may not be the most appropriate method of assessment. These qualifications will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Awarding organisations should clearly identify any such qualifications and provide a clear rationale for any exception, stating what (if any) proportion of external assessment will be incorporated.

Justification for this characteristic

2.39 Assessment benefits the student and the teacher. It informs students about their progress and helps teachers make informed decisions at different stages of the learning process. Vocational qualifications are typified by a broad range of approaches to assessment, and the guiding principle should be that the assessment is fit for purpose by being valid and reliable.

⁷ Ofqual. Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies, March 2010 <http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/diploma-operating-rules/part-2/operating-rules-for-principal-learning-and-project-component-awarding-bodies/section-3-assessment-of-principal-learning-and-the-project>

However, vocational qualifications that count towards performance tables should demonstrate rigour and a comparable level of challenge to academic qualifications, and should therefore have an appropriate amount of content that is subject to external assessment. External assessment also provides an additional check that standards are consistent across centres.

- 2.40 The nature of applied and occupational study means that coursework will continue to play a significant role in the assessment and award of qualifications. To ensure that the submission of written coursework provides sufficient challenge, repeat submission will not be allowed. Candidates who fail to reach the required standard when submitting coursework will be given the option of undertaking one further, but entirely, different piece of coursework.
- 2.41 Technical Level Qualifications are likely to have a greater emphasis on development of specialist and practical skills. Externally moderated teacher⁸ assessment of these will remain an important and valid way for many skills to be assessed.

How judgement will be reached

- 2.42 Awarding organisations need to ensure that the specification contains sufficient detail for a judgement to be made. This should include information about the knowledge, understanding and skills that will be assessed, as well as details of the arrangement for assessment. The total proportion of the qualification's content that is subject to external assessment should match the contribution made to the overall grade.

F. Grading

Detail

- 2.43 Qualifications must be graded i.e. qualifications will have a pass, merit, distinction structure or a more detailed scale. Grading must apply to the overall qualification, but individual units may also be graded.

Justification for this characteristic

- 2.44 Many vocational qualifications traditionally use grading. This is important for student motivation, to differentiate between the results of different candidates and to ensure there is sufficient rigour in the qualification assessment in order to provide confidence for students, employers, post-16 providers and HEIs.

⁸ Throughout this guidance, the term teacher describes anyone in a teaching role and includes trainer, tutor, lecturer and instructor.

How judgement will be reached

- 2.45 The grading/mark scheme must be set out in the qualification specification submitted to Ofqual for accreditation. It must explain how final grades are derived from assessments, particularly where not all individual units or assessments are graded.

G. Employer involvement (Technical Level Qualifications only)

Detail

- 2.46 The qualification specification should stipulate the direct involvement of employers in delivery and/or assessment.

Justification for this characteristic

- 2.47 To provide a 'clear line of sight' to work, to enrich the curriculum and ensure 'realism', the active involvement of employers is required in the delivery of Technical Level Qualifications.
- 2.48 DfE and Ofqual will consider how to encourage the sharing of effective practice in the involvement of local employers in a Technical Level Qualification's delivery.
- 2.49 Awarding organisations will have up to two years to redevelop Technical Level Qualifications to meet the requirement for employer involvement. The reform of 16-19 funding, and clearer expectations that students take part in work experience as part of their study programme, are being introduced from September 2013 to support these changes.

How judgement will be reached

- 2.50 Technical Level Qualification specification and assessment criteria should detail expectations such as:
- Work experience being an integral part of the qualification. We would expect most Technical Level Qualifications to include work-based placements, projects or other activities organised with and involving local employers, although we recognise that some qualifications, and types of training, may not lend themselves to work-based practice.
 - Projects or vivas⁹ designed to test the full breadth of the knowledge and skills required.
 - Students learning and receiving feedback from skilled practitioners from whom they may be later seeking employment.

⁹ Viva voce is an oral examination (usually referred to as a viva). They assess a candidate's subject knowledge and are generally conducted by an external assessor and an internal assessor.

- Employers playing a role in assessor teams – alongside a qualified assessor and operating within a specified assessment framework – and in all cases ensuring that assessment is mindful of current industry and occupational requirements.

H. Progression (required within the first two years of a qualification being first awarded)

Detail

- 2.51 Within the first two years of a qualification being awarded, awarding organisations should provide clear evidence of:
- Students passing Applied General Qualifications going on to study at a higher level, or secure employment or an Apprenticeship.
 - Students passing Technical Level Qualifications going on to secure related employment, apprenticeships, or places on related training or post-19 courses.

Justification for this characteristic

- 2.52 Post-16 providers should only offer courses that provide strong progression opportunities for their students.
- 2.53 Awarding organisations should collect quantitative and qualitative information concerning student progression and use this to inform future qualification design.

How judgement will be reached

- 2.54 The DfE requires quantitative and qualitative evidence from awarding organisations that the qualification enables progression. Evidence could include written statements or published information demonstrating that a qualification is recognised and acceptable for entry to a range of post-19 options, endorsements from students confirming a qualification has helped them progress, and results of destination surveys.
- 2.55 The DfE will consider how awarding organisations, industry, post-16 providers and HEI representatives can better demonstrate how a qualification supports progression to a range of destinations.

I. Proven Track Record (based on the first two years of awards for a new qualification)

Detail

- 2.56 Qualifications need to be completed by at least 100 students aged 16-19, in at least five centres, in at least one of the first two years that they are awarded.

- 2.57 Where low take-up of a Technical Level Qualification is due to its content relating to a niche industry sector, technology or process, the awarding organisation is invited to seek exemption from this requirement by providing evidence that removing the qualification from performance tables would leave a gap in vocational provision and disadvantage economic growth.

Justification for this characteristic

- 2.58 A low number of completions demonstrate that students and providers do not, in general, see the qualification as a strong route to progression post-19, either to employment, apprenticeships or higher education.
- 2.59 In recent years there has been significant growth in the number of students taking vocational qualifications and the number of very similar qualifications available. Restricting the qualifications reported in performance tables to those with a reasonable track record will help students identify qualifications which are recognised and accorded greater value by employers.
- 2.60 We have been careful not to set the threshold too high as we recognise there are some circumstances in which a lower take-up may reflect, for example, the specialist nature of a particular Technical Level Qualification.

How judgement will be reached

- 2.61 The DfE will use its records of completion data. Awarding organisations are invited to provide evidence of the take-up of their qualifications in their submissions, but this is not essential as the DfE data will be used to make the final judgement.
- 2.62 For qualifications that are first awarded in 2013 or later, which demonstrate all other required characteristics, awarding organisations are permitted to provide evidence on proven track record and progression following the first or second year's awarding of the qualification.

Section 3: The process for approving accredited qualifications for inclusion in the 2016 performance tables

- 3.1 Qualifications that are not deemed 'Academic' will need to demonstrate the characteristics described in Section 1 in order to be included in the 2016 performance tables. The process for approving Technical Level and Applied General Qualifications for inclusion is set out below.
- 3.2 Qualifications are eligible to be considered for inclusion in the 2016 performance tables if they are:
- existing Level 3 qualifications accredited by Ofqual before 31st July 2013¹⁰; or
 - redeveloped versions of existing qualifications, accredited by Ofqual by 13 September 2013¹¹.
- 3.3 In the case of Early Years Educator qualifications only, awarding organisations will have until Spring 2014 to secure Ofqual accreditation and submit completed forms providing evidence on how a qualification meets the interim requirement.
- 3.4 Any qualification that will no longer be available to new students from September 2014 (including Principal Learning qualifications) will not be included in the 2016 performance tables. Awarding organisations should notify the DfE of any change to the status of such qualifications by 13 September 2013.

Evidence sought

- 3.5 Awarding organisations are invited to submit qualifications for consideration for the 2016 performance tables by:
- proposing a category for each qualification they wish to be considered for inclusion in future performance tables
 - providing evidence on how each qualification meets the interim requirements
 - providing a statement on how the qualification will be developed to meet the full requirement by 2016.
- 3.6 The deadline for submitting qualifications and evidence is 13 September 2013. Teaching of qualifications that meet the interim requirement will start in September 2014, and be reported in the 2016 performance tables.

¹⁰ The publication date of this Technical Guidance.

¹¹ Ofqual cannot guarantee that it will be able to complete the accreditation of submitted qualifications by that date as accreditation is subject to the awarding organisation's submissions being of sufficient quality to meet the regulatory requirements.

- 3.7 Qualifications must have been accredited by Ofqual prior to submission to the DfE for inclusion in performance tables.
- 3.8 Awarding Organisations should submit the relevant form for each qualification to be considered for inclusion in the 2016 performance tables. Awarding Organisations should clearly state in the form where the evidence of each of the required characteristics can be found. Where an awarding organisation's evidence is in the qualification specification, reference will need to be made to the specific location.
- 3.9 Qualifications awarded for the first time in 2016 will not be required to demonstrate the progression and track record characteristics. However they will be subject to review of the proven track record and progression characteristics within the first two years of awarding.
- 3.10 The submission deadline for assessment of qualifications against the full requirement, for reporting in the 2018 performance tables, is mid-September 2015.
- 3.11 Awarding organisations also have the option to submit qualifications for consideration against the full requirement by mid-September 2014. A supplementary list of qualifications that have met the full requirement will be published in November 2014. These qualifications will be taught from September 2015 and reported in the 2017 performance tables. Qualifications that are judged to meet the full standard in autumn 2014 will not need to be resubmitted the following year.

Notification of outcomes

- 3.12 Awarding organisations will be notified of outcomes for their qualifications in advance of publication of the 2016 performance tables list on or around 30 November 2013.
- 3.13 Awarding organisations will have the opportunity to request reviews of decisions if they disagree with the assessments of the evidence submitted. The deadline for doing this will be 6 December 2013. Evidence will be considered a second time by an independent reviewer who was not involved in the original assessment. Any subsequent amendments to the list of qualifications to be included in the 2016 performance tables will be made by the end of January 2014.

Key dates

4 July 2013	Publication of technical guidance for qualifications to be considered for the 2016 performance tables.
w/c 31 July 2013	Process opens for awarding organisations to submit qualifications for consideration for the 2016 performance tables.
13 September 2013	Deadline for awarding organisations to submit completed forms providing evidence on how each qualification meets the interim requirement.
30 November 2013	Publication of the list of 16-19 Level 3 vocational qualifications that will count in the 2016 performance tables.
6 December 2013	Deadline for awarding organisations to request a review of decisions about 2016 performance tables.
30 January 2014	Amendments to the list of qualifications, if required following the review process.
Spring 2014	Deadline for awarding organisations to submit completed forms for Early Years Educator qualifications, providing evidence on how each qualification meets the interim requirement.
Spring 2014	2013 performance tables published to include shadow data showing how institutions' results would have differed if the reformed list had been in effect.
September 2014	All Level 3 vocational qualifications taught from this date, which will be reported in the 2016 performance tables, meet the interim requirement.
September 2014	Optional deadline for awarding organisations to submit form for redeveloped qualifications for judgement against the full requirement.
November 2014	Publication of supplementary list of 16-19 Level 3 vocational qualifications which have met the full requirement a year early and will be reported in the 2017 Performance tables.

September 2015	First teaching of qualifications which have met the full requirement a year early.
September 2015	Deadline for awarding organisations to submit form for redeveloped qualifications for judgement against the full requirement.
November 2015	Publication of list of 16-19 Level 3 vocational qualifications that meet the full requirement and will count towards the 2018 performance tables.
September 2016	First teaching of qualifications that demonstrate the full requirement. All Level 3 vocational qualifications taught from this date, which will be reported in future performance tables, demonstrate the full requirement.
January 2017	First reporting of Technical Level and Applied General Qualifications which demonstrate the interim requirement (the 2016 performance tables).
January 2018	First reporting of Technical Level and Applied General Qualifications which demonstrate the full requirement a year earlier than required (the 2017 performance tables).
January 2019	First performance tables where all vocational qualifications demonstrate the full requirement for Technical Level and Applied General Qualifications (the 2018 performance tables).

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