

Department
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Policy paper

2010 to 2015 government policy: further education and training

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This is a copy of a document that stated a policy of the 2010 to 2015 Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition government. The previous URL of this page was <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-quality-of-further-education-and-skills-training>. Current policies can be found at the GOV.UK [policies list](#).

Issue

The further education (FE) system – the colleges and training providers that teach vocational qualifications and skills – needs to guarantee students high quality teaching and courses to help students into jobs or university and create the skilled workforce employers need.

Actions

To improve quality and efficiency in FE and skills training, we are:

- reforming the funding and content of 16 to 19 provision through the introduction of [study programmes](#)
- making sure that students who haven't achieved at least a C in maths and English GCSEs continue studying qualifications in these subjects, as set out in the [conditions of post 16 funding](#).
- identifying the best vocational qualifications as either [‘tech level’](#) or

- '[applied general](#)', and asking employers and universities to endorse them, so young people know what courses have the best job prospects
- reforming 16 to 19 vocational qualifications, introducing the [Technical Baccalaureate \(TechBacc\) measure](#), and expanding the provision of work experience and [allowing colleges to enrol 14 to 16 year-olds](#)
 - [reforming the vocational qualifications system](#) to make qualifications rigorous and responsive to the needs of employers and learners
 - providing better careers advice through the [National Careers Service](#)
 - freeing colleges from central government control and making FE teacher training more professional
 - introducing a new [funding system](#) based on student loans: it's for people aged 24+, studying at levels 3 and 4, or for advanced and higher apprenticeships
 - introducing a new [traineeships programme](#) to support young people to develop skills for employment, including apprenticeships
 - improving [apprenticeships](#) and putting employers in control of them
 - encouraging greater [employer ownership to improve engineering skills in smaller companies](#)
 - setting up [national colleges](#) led by employers, to train people for careers where there are higher-level skills shortages, like high speed rail engineering or digital technology
 - making adult skills provision responsive to the needs of local economies by devolving skills capital funding to Local Enterprise Partnerships - and doing deals with Greater Manchester, Sheffield City Region, West Yorkshire and London to give them the lead in local skills provision

Background

Responsibility for funding post 16 learning in England is shared between the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

In November 2010 we published '[Skills for sustainable growth](#)', which sets out the national skills strategy for England

In March 2011, an independent review of education for 14 to 19 year olds, the [Review of vocational education](#) made many recommendations including that we:

- move to 'per-student' funding instead of 'per-qualification' funding, to make institutions more accountable to learners
- improve the quality of apprenticeships
- expand the teaching of useful vocational qualifications and the teaching of English and mathematics
- extend the provision of work experience

We also consulted on [study programmes for 16 to 19 year-olds](#).

The government carried out a public consultation on how to reform the FE and skills system - [New challenges, new chances: next steps in implementing the further education reform programme](#).

Using the responses to the consultation, the government published its reform plans, in December 2011, in [New challenges, new chances: further education system and skills reform plan](#). In July 2012, we published our plans for 16 to 18 provision.

In April 2013, we published [Rigour and responsiveness in skills](#). This explained the achievements we have made in reforming the further education and skills system. We have also published several reports and plans on aspects of the system, including:

- our [plan for further education](#)
- [Skills funding allocations to training providers 2015 to 2016](#), which contains our budget for skills
- Jason Holt's independent report on apprenticeships and small

businesses, [Making apprenticeships more accessible to small and medium-sized enterprises: a review by Jason Holt](#)

- Doug Richard's independent report for the government on the future of apprenticeships, [The Richard review of apprenticeships](#)
- the report by Lord Lingfield on how the further education sector can best serve its users' needs, [Professionalism in further education: final report of the Independent Review Panel](#)
- advice for further education colleges and training providers on 24+ Advanced Learning Loans, [24+ Advanced Learning Loans Student Loans Company learning provider services](#)
- [Skills Funding Agency loans - operational and policy information for further education providers](#)
- ours and our partners' plans to ensure that young people and adults get the advice they need on learning and work, [National Careers Service: the right advice at the right time](#)
- a detailed [evaluation community learning trusts approaches](#)
- our plans for engaging 16 to 24 year-olds in education, training and work, [Building engagement, building futures: our strategy to maximise the participation of 16 to 24 year-olds in education, training and work](#)
- a [framework for delivery of traineeships](#), which gives young people, employers and education and training providers information about how traineeships will work in practice

DfE launched a [consultation on changing accountability arrangements for providers of 16 to 19 education and training in England](#) in September 2013.

The response, published in March 2014, announced:

- more rigorous minimum standards
- clearer and more comprehensive performance information about schools and colleges
- a set of headline measures giving a clear overview of the performance of a school or college in academic and vocational programmes compared with other institutions nationally

Bills and legislation

The [Education Act 2011](#) makes it easier for colleges to make their own decisions. It means that FE colleges can now borrow money without needing permission from the government. Colleges can also change the way they govern themselves, and those rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted no longer have to face routine inspections.

Who we're working with

- [UK Commission for Employment and Skills](#)
- [National Apprenticeship Service](#)
- [Skills Funding Agency](#)
- [National Careers Service](#)
- [National Careers Council](#)

Appendix 1: Applied General qualifications

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

Applied General qualifications are for 16-year-old students who wish to continue their education by learning about a vocational area rather than a single occupation, for example applied science, business or sport.



To be recognised as an Applied General qualification and be compared to others in official performance tables, a qualification must:

- be a level 3 qualification (ie, the same as A levels)
- provide broad study of a vocational area without being linked to a specific occupation
- have the official backing of 3 universities

[Applied General qualifications](#) will be ready for teaching from September 2014. They will be included in [school and college performance tables](#) from 2016, along with Tech Levels and A levels.

Appendix 2: education and skills training, research and statistics

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

You can read [research reports and surveys](#) related to further education and skills, including:

- latest research reports
- statistical first releases (SFR) showing information on learner participation and achievement in Skills Funding Agency/Young People's Learning Agency-funded further education, apprenticeships, Train to Gain and Adult and community learning, published 4 times per year in January, March, June and October
- National Learner Satisfaction Survey - a series of research papers on national learning, stemming from the National Learner Satisfaction Survey 2010
- the International Survey of Adult Skills - an international survey being conducted in countries around the world, including the United States, Japan and many countries across Europe, to establish the range of skills that adults are using in their daily lives

Appendix 3: technical level qualifications

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

Technical level qualifications (tech levels) are for 16-year-old students who have a clear idea about the occupation they wish to pursue. They are vocational and equip students with the specialist knowledge they need to for a specific recognised occupation, such as engineering, computing, accounting or hospitality.

To be recognised as a tech level and be compared to others in official performance tables, a qualification must:

- be a level 3 qualification (ie, the same as A levels)
- lead to a recognised occupation
- have public support from professional bodies or from 5 employers registered with [Companies House](#)

Students who take 1 or more [tech levels](#), a maths qualification at level 3, and undertake an extended project achieve the Technical Baccalaureate or [TechBacc standard](#).

Tech levels will be ready for teaching from September 2014. They will be included in [school and college performance tables](#) from 2016, along with applied general qualifications and A levels.

Appendix 4: traineeships

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

The traineeships programme supports young people to develop the skills they need to secure and succeed in employment, including apprenticeships.

We introduced traineeships in August 2013 for 16- to 23-year-olds (and young people with learning difficulty assessments up to the end of the academic year in which they turn 25). Further information is available from the [National Apprenticeship Service website](#).

Appendix 5: Technical Baccalaureate measure

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

The Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc) performance table measure records the number of students at a school or college who take:

- at least 1 approved [tech level](#) qualification
- a level 3 maths qualification (equivalent to [AS/A level](#))
- an extended research project relevant to their vocational programme

We introduced the TechBacc measure in September 2014. TechBacc results will be included in performance tables from September 2016.

You can find [more information on the TechBacc measure](#), including details of the additional funding available from the year 2016 to 2017 onwards.

Appendix 6: funding system for further education, 24+ advanced learning loans

This was a supporting detail page of the main policy document.

We've brought in a new type of student loan for learners aged 24 and over - the 24+ advanced learning loan.

We introduced 24+ advanced learning loans in April 2013.

Who's eligible?

These Loans are available to those aged 24 and over, studying at level 3 and level 4.

They originally included advanced and higher apprenticeships, but it became clear that this was not the preferred funding route for employers or prospective apprentices. Regulations came into force in March 2014 to remove apprenticeships from 24+ advanced learning loans.

What about repayment?

The loans will come from the Student Loan Company and be for course costs only. Repayments won't start before the learner is earning more than £21,000 a year, and will be 9% of any earnings over £21,000.

That means that if (for example) someone is earning £22,000, they'll pay back 9% of £1,000 - £90 a year.

Interest rates will reflect market rates and be linked to inflation. All loans will be written off after 30 years.

What if the learner goes on to higher education (HE)?

If a learner takes out a 24+ advanced learning loan and later gets a loan for higher education, the 2 loan repayments will be rolled into 1. There will only be 1 monthly repayment.

If a learner takes out a loan for an Access to HE diploma course and goes onto HE, the 24+ advanced learning loan will be written off once the HE course has been completed.

Extra help for learners

We've introduced extra help for learners aged 24 and over. This includes:

- more advice and guidance to support people considering learning
- more money - £50 million to help learners with costs, for example childcare

Background

In 2010, we set out how we thought the FE and skills learning system would need to reform. In December 2011 we published [New challenges, new chances.](#) This set out how we intended to support FE and the skills learning system for learners aged 19+ in England.

Research

We surveyed a cross-section of learners and 74% of people we spoke to said they'd consider doing a course after the new loans came in.

[‘Attitudes to further education loans’](#) also tells us that overall, people were positive about the 24+ advanced learning loan's terms and conditions.

Impact assessments

We've run the following impact assessments to see how our proposals will



affect further education:

- [24+ advanced learning loans: regulatory impact assessment](#)
- [24+ advanced learning loans: regulatory impact assessment - annex 2](#)
- [24+ advanced learning loans: regulatory impact assessment - underlying data](#)
- [24+ advanced learning loans: equality impact assessment](#)
- [24+ advanced learning loans: equality impact assessment - underlying data](#)

Monthly briefings









We’ve published a regular briefing on how we’ve achieved changes since April 2012. For the latest updates, see [24+ advanced loans monthly briefings](#). Earlier briefings are listed below:

- [Monthly briefing - April 2012](#) 
- [Monthly briefing - May 2012](#)
- [Monthly briefing - June 2012](#)
- [Monthly briefing - July 2012](#)
- [Monthly briefing - September 2012](#) 
- [Monthly briefing - October 2012](#)

Find out more

You can find out more about 24+ advanced learning loans from the [Skills Funding Agency](#) and the [Student Loans Company](#).

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