



Guidance

Qualification funding approval principles: funding year 2019 to 2020

Updated 22 July 2019

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Summary

This guidance describes the principles and processes we use to approve qualifications for funding in England, in the 2019 to 2020 funding year. The 2019 to 2020 funding year runs from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020, and we apply these principles from 21 May 2019.

This guidance covers how qualifications are approved for funding under:

- the adult education budget (AEB) funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- the offer for students aged 14 to 19 (previously known as Section 96) – referred to as ‘14 to 19’ for the rest of this document
- the European Social Fund (ESF)

For 14 to 19, we approve qualifications for funding to students aged at least 14 but who are not yet 19. Not all of the qualifications on the [ESFA List of Qualifications approved for funding 14-19](#) will have funding validity for 16 to 19. Please see the [funding regulation guidance](#) for young people for more information.

This document does not cover:

- how qualifications are designated for advanced learner loans – please see the [advanced learner loans prospectus for 2019 to 2020](#)

[Annex A: ESF higher level skills offer](#)

[Annex B: review and download schedule](#)

[Annex C: qualification approval journey](#)

[Annex D: qualifications and courses in academies and maintained schools](#)

- study programmes for students aged 16 to 19, condition of funding, and core maths – please see the [funding regulation guidance for young people](#) and the [study programmes guidance for providers](#)
- student eligibility and funding rules for the ESFA funded adult education budget – please see the [adult education budget funding rules 2019 to 2020](#)
- student eligibility and funding rules for ESF – please see [ESF: funding and performance-management rules 2014 to 2020](#)
- our funding rates and formula for [ESFA funded AEB](#) and for [young people](#)

Expiry or review date

This guidance will expire on 31 July 2020.

Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for awarding organisations, but will also be of interest to providers of education and training.

Introduction

This document brings together all the approval principles and processes we use to approve qualifications for funding through the following funded offers.

- Legal entitlement for students aged 19 to 23 to be fully-funded if they study for a first qualification at level 2 and/or level 3, identified by the ESFA (funded through the AEB, both by the ESFA and devolved areas)
- Legal entitlement for students aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade C/grade 4 or higher, to be fully-funded if they study for an English and/or maths qualification up to and including level 2, identified by the ESFA (funded through the AEB, both by the ESFA and devolved areas)
- Local flexibility offer – qualifications and components up to and including level 2 for students aged 19 and over to respond to local skills and community needs, identified by the ESFA (funded by the ESFA through the AEB)
- 14 to 19 offer – qualifications up to and including level 6 for students aged at least 14 but who are not yet 19, identified by the ESFA (previously known as Section 96)
- ESF offer – qualifications and components up to and including level 4 identified by the ESFA (qualification and components at entry level to level 2 in ESF will be the same as those in the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer)

We have produced this single document so that:

- information about all our qualification approval principles and processes is in one place
- we can describe our approval principles in the same way, where they apply to all offers, and it is clearer why certain qualifications may be approved for certain ages only
- the monthly deadlines for asking us to approve qualifications for funding are aligned across all offers
- it is clearer when we will publish funding approval and funding validity information for approved qualifications

This document sets out:

- the common approval principles we apply to approve qualifications for funding
- where there are specific approval principles, and which offers we apply them to
- how and when we review qualifications for funding approval
- how we maintain the offers through the funding year

Qualifications reviews

The Department for Education (DfE) is carrying out the following reviews.

- [Post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England](#) – This review aims to streamline the number of qualifications approved for funding, and make sure all qualifications are high quality with a distinct purpose, are truly necessary, and support progression to successful outcomes.
- [Education at levels 4 and 5 in England](#) – This review looks at how classroom based higher technical education meets the needs of students and employers. Its scope includes students progressing from T Levels and other full-time education, and people in the workforce looking to upskill or retrain, spanning both Further Education and Higher Education.

Adult education budget devolution

The government has agreed a series of devolution deals between the central government and local areas (combined authorities) in England. Certain adult education functions, funded by the AEB, have been transferred to 6 mayoral combined authorities¹ and delegated to the Mayor of London. From the funding year 2019 to 2020, these 7 devolved authority areas will need to ensure that there is appropriate education and training available to students aged 19 and over in their area, who are eligible for funding.

The devolved authority areas will continue to offer the legal entitlement offers to students living in their areas, and will fund qualifications that appear on our lists of approved qualifications for:

- the legal entitlement for students aged 19 to 23 to be fully funded if they study for a first qualification at level 2 and/or level 3
- the legal entitlement for students aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade C/grade 4 or higher, to be fully funded if they study for an English or maths qualification up to and including level 2

The approval principles for all other qualification offers described in this guidance do not apply to areas of England where the AEB is devolved.

Funding approval and funding validity

We use the terms ‘approval for funding’ and ‘funding approval’ to show where we add a qualification to an offer. This is different from the term ‘funding validity’, which shows whether a qualification will receive funding from us within a particular qualification offer.

We show funding validity for a qualification by adding funding start date, last date for new starts, and funding end dates in our main online service for organisations working with us called [the Hub](#). You can find funding validity information in the Learning Aims section of the Hub.

Summary of changes for 2019 to 2020

We will not approve any new qualifications for funding if they run alongside other qualifications in the [16 to 18 performance tables](#) (as they stand on 15 March 2019), and are offered by the same awarding organisation (AO). We are doing this to support the withdrawal of funding approval from pre-existing qualifications from 1 August 2020, described in the consultation document for [post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England](#). This rule change applies across all funded offers from 1 August 2019, and will avoid a situation where pre-existing qualifications removed from funding (or replicas of pre-existing qualifications) come back into a funded offer at a later date.

For 14 to 19, we will no longer use a qualification’s review date to set dates for funding approval and funding validity. We will only use the operational end date to set these dates. We are doing this because we do not use the review date to run our other qualification offers. Please see the section [‘How we use dates in Ofqual’s data’](#) for more information.

For the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer, we will no longer make

components (units) of a redeveloped² qualification in the 16 to 18 performance tables available for standalone delivery outside of the qualification, if that qualification is included in the legal entitlement lists. This is because it is now not appropriate or practical to offer standalone units of the redeveloped qualifications. Units of other qualifications approved for local flexibility and ESF will continue to be made available where they meet approval principles.

For the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer, we will add approved qualifications for funding to the offer every month, instead of every three months. We will add components (units) of qualifications to the offer three times in 2019 to 2020, instead of four times. We will add components in August 2019, November 2019, and February 2020.

For the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer, legal entitlement offers, and the ESF offer, we have removed the requirement for an awarding organisation (AO) to sign the [Learning Records Service \(LRS\) awarding organisation agreement](#) before we approve a qualification for funding.

For the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer and the ESF offer, an AO must mark a qualification as both available to students in England and available for funding in England, before we approve that qualification for funding. We are doing this to bring these offers in line with the requirements in our other qualification offers. For the ESF higher level skills offer, qualifications and components must be less than 150 guided learning hours (GLH) in size. This replaces the previous requirement for qualifications and components to be less than 15 credits in size.

We have combined our processes for reviewing requests to consider changes to funding approval decisions, and for reviewing funding rates. We will now review both types of requests every three months. We will not review requests outside of this quarterly process.

Approval principles for qualifications

Where a qualification is part of a funded offer in 2018 to 2019, it will still be available in the 2019 to 2020 offer, as long as it does not have an operational end date before 1 August 2019.

We review each qualification against a series of approval principles, to decide whether or not to approve it for funding. These principles apply to:

- 14 to 19
- qualifications in the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer
- qualifications in the ESF offer at level 2 and below

Some principles apply to all qualification offers, and some apply to specific qualification offers. We will only approve a qualification for funding in an offer, if

the qualification meets all the common approval principles and any additional approval principles specific to that offer.

These principles do not apply to:

- [components of qualifications in the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer](#)
- [the legal entitlements](#)
- qualifications in the ESF offer at level 3 and level 4 – see [Annex A](#) for more information

Common approval principles

The following principles apply to all qualifications that we consider approving for funding.

1. Is the qualification regulated?

The awarding organisation offering the qualification must be recognised by the [Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation \(Ofqual\)](#). The qualification must be included in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#).

We may need to review your qualification's specification to check that the qualification meets the approval principles. Please make sure that you include a link to the qualification specification in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications.

If we cannot easily find a qualification's specification during a review, we will not approve that qualification for funding in that review.

2. Is the qualification available in England and available for funding?

The qualification must be flagged on Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) as both:

- available to students in England
- available for funding in England

We will only approve a qualification for funding in the 2019 to 2020 year, if it is available to students within that year, and has not passed its operational end date listed in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications.

3. Is it a prescribed Higher Education qualification?

The qualification must not be part of Higher Education (HE). For example, it must not be a degree, a foundation degree, a higher national qualification, or a level 5 diploma in education and training.

4. Is it an end-point assessment qualification for an apprenticeship?

The qualification must not be designed as the end-point assessment of an apprenticeship standard. If the end-point assessment of an apprenticeship standard is designed as a qualification and is subject to external quality assurance from Ofqual, students cannot undertake that qualification outside of that standard.

5. Is the qualification vendor specific?

The qualification must not be designed exclusively for a specific employer, or restrict a student to use a specific branded product or commercial system.

6. Is the qualification suitable for the student age groups?

The qualification must be suitable for the age groups you have indicated in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#):

- pre-16
- 16-18
- 18+
- 19+

We will use this information to consider the qualification for the age ranges that you have selected; and how suitable the qualification is for those specific age groups.

If you have selected the age ranges pre 16, 16-18 and/or 18+, we will consider the qualification for the 14 to 19 qualification offer, but only for the age ranges that you have selected. For example, if you only select the 16-18 age group, we will only consider the qualification for this age range, and not for pre 16 and 18+.

The table below describes what we consider when deciding if a qualification is suitable to be approved for funding.

Approval principal	Principles for pre-16 approved qualifications	Principles for 16-18 approved qualifications	Principles for 18+ approved qualifications
Suitability for age category	Any qualification approved must be suitable for pre-16 year olds taking into account their maturity, well-being, and any health and safety requirements.	Any qualification approved must be suitable for 16 to 18 year olds predominately taking into consideration health and safety requirements.	Any qualification will be approved on the understanding that awarding organisations, Ofqual, and appropriate representative organisations for a vocational sector have ensured health and safety and legal requirements are deemed appropriate for students aged 18 and above.
Legality	Any qualification approved must not contain an activity that is unlawful for the age group.		

If you have selected the 18+ and/or 19+ age range, we will consider the qualification for the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer and the ESF offer.

7. Is the qualification at the correct level?

The qualification must be at the appropriate level for the qualification offer. Each offer has its own qualification level approval principles, and these are summarised in the table below.

Qualification level	14 to 19: pre-16	14 to 19: 16-18	14 to 19: 19: 18+	English and maths	Level 2 / level 3	ESFA funded AEB local flexibility	ESF
Entry level	X	X	X	X		X	X
Level 1	X	X	X	X		X	X
Level 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Level 3	X ³	X	X		X		X ⁴
Level 4		X	X				X ⁴
Level 5		X	X				
Level 6			X				

For 14 to 19, we will also approve qualifications at level 4 and above for students of high ability on dance, drama, and musical theatre courses.

Other approval principles: 14 to 19

The following approval principles only apply to qualifications in the 14 to 19 offer.

Personal effectiveness

If a qualification at level 3 or above only focuses on personal development or transferable personal skills, we will not approve it for funding for students aged 16-18 and 18+. This includes qualifications that only aim to develop skills such as:

- career planning
- employment and work skills
- learning and thinking skills
- personal or general skills development
- character or citizenship

Providers should teach transferable personal skills as part of a student's study programme, without recognising those skills as a qualification in their own right.

Other approval principles: ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer and ESF offer at level 2 and below

The following approval principles only apply to qualifications in the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer, and qualifications at level 2 and below in the ESF offer.

Licence to practise and/or standalone qualifications

The qualification must not link to statutory employer requirements, and must not link to a licence to practise.

We define licence to practise as a legal (or statutory) requirement for people with a specific occupation to have a licence, which confirms that the licence holder meets prescribed standards of knowledge and skills. This includes situations where it is unlawful to carry out a specific range of activities for pay, without first having obtained a licence.

Certain qualifications that meet statutory employer requirements or a licence to practise are eligible for certain unemployed students. We define this in the

'Eligible qualifications' section of the [adult education budget funding rules 2019 to 2020](#).

These qualifications are:

- forklift truck, food hygiene and health and safety
- security guarding, door supervision and CCTV operations (public space surveillance), needed to obtain a Security Industry Authority (SIA) licence

These qualifications are shown in [the Hub](#) under the 'Standalone and Licence to Practise' category.

We will only fund the security qualifications if one of the following commits to funding the SIA licence, which allows the students to enter a job:

- a local employer
- an individual person
- a work programme provider
- Jobcentre Plus

UK visa requirements

The qualification must not link to [UK visa requirements](#), such as the International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

This does not apply to ESOL Skills for Life. We recognise these qualifications support students, whose first language is not English, to undertake other qualifications. We will only approve ESOL Skills for Life qualifications for funding if they are modular, and if their titles include the term 'ESOL Skills for Life' in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#).

Non-qualification activity

At level 2 and below, the qualification must not be used to recognise any activity that might already be part of a student's experience, or that is better delivered as a non-qualification activity. For example, we will not approve qualifications that are records of completing activities such as:

- work experience or placements
- induction for college, or for other learning and training
- CV writing
- job search activities
- participating in interviews

- parenting skills
- babysitting
- study skills

Level 2 qualifications

At level 2, qualifications in the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer must support the student to acquire subject specific or occupational skills to help them progress into employment and/or further education.

We will not approve qualifications for funding at level 2 if they focus on independent living, personal well-being, personal or social development or related areas. We will approve these qualifications at entry level and level 1, but we expect these to focus on progression in education and into employment.

Within the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer, we have included a number of competence-based qualifications where delivery and/or assessment may require a workplace setting. ESFA funded AEB providers must deliver these qualifications in line with the adult education budget funding rules. This is set out in the 'Learning in the workplace' and 'What we will not fund' sections of the [adult education budget funding rules 2019 to 2020](#).

Legal entitlements

We have a single offer at level 2 and level 3, and a single list of English and maths qualifications. By single offer, we mean that (as far as possible and where appropriate):

- there is one list of qualifications for all students undertaking English and maths
- for all students undertaking their first level 2 or level 3 qualification, there is one list focused on technical and applied qualifications appearing in the [16 to 18 performance tables](#)

We have already added qualifications in the 16 to 18 performance tables 2021 to the legal entitlement offers for 2019 to 2020. We will not add any more technical certificates, tech levels or applied general qualifications to the offers in 2019 to 2020, because the approvals process for the 2020 performance tables was the last of the annual approval rounds for at least two years. This will allow DfE to carry out its review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England.

Qualifications that were approved for the 2018 to 2019 legal entitlements offers are also approved for funding in 2019 to 2020, as long as each qualification:

- has not passed its operational end date

- is still regulated:
 - by Ofqual and appears in the [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#), or
 - by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Access to HE qualifications

We will add qualifications to the legal entitlements every three months, in our [scheduled updates](#).

The new legal entitlement to digital skills will start from 1 August 2020. During the 2019 to 2020 funding year, we will publish further information about how we will approve qualifications for this entitlement.

Qualifications in scope for the 2019 to 2020 English and maths and level 2 and level 3 legal entitlements

To be approved for funding through the entitlements for the funding year 2019 to 2020, a qualification must be:

- a regulated qualification offered by an awarding organisation that is recognised by Ofqual or the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)
- available for students in England
- available for students aged 19 and over

The table below shows the specific types of qualifications that we will approve in each entitlement offer.

Level 2 and level 3 qualifications	English and maths
Technical and applied qualifications in the 16 to 18 performance tables for 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 (tech levels, applied general qualifications, technical certificates), A-levels, AS-levels, Access to Higher Education (HE), and GCSEs.	GCSE English language and maths, Functional Skills in English and maths at entry level to level 2 (from 1 September 2019, these must be reformed Functional Skills qualifications in English and maths).
Certain qualifications in the 16 to 18 performance tables for 2017 that were available in the funding year 2016 to 2017.	In addition, a limited number of other English and maths qualifications from the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) at entry level to level 1.

English and maths

The [English and maths legal entitlement list](#) includes qualifications from entry level to level 2.

This includes certain modular (unitised) qualifications (also known as ‘stepping stone’ qualifications) drawn from the RQF at entry level and level 1. These

modular qualifications focus on particular aspects of English and maths, which a student may need to address to progress to GCSE or Functional Skills at level 2. Not all of these qualifications are on the 16 to 19 condition of funding list. We have kept them on the English and maths legal entitlement list because they serve the needs of particular adult students. We will not add any further modular qualifications to the English and maths legal entitlement list.

We make components (units) of the modular qualifications available to all eligible students, to support their progress towards a GCSE and/or Functional Skills qualification at level 2. For 2019 to 2020, we will not approve components at level 2 for funding, if they are part of a modular qualification in the English and maths entitlement offer.

We will continue to automatically add any newly regulated GCSEs or Functional Skills qualifications to the [English and maths legal entitlement list](#) in 2019 to 2020. We will add these qualifications in our [scheduled updates](#).

We identify approved English and maths qualifications in [the Hub](#) using the category 'legal entitlement – English and maths'.

Functional Skills reform

From 1 September 2019, ESFA funded providers will have to deliver new [reformed Functional Skills qualifications](#). We will approve them for funding in the English and maths entitlement, as they are added to Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#).

Current Functional Skills qualifications in English and maths will be available for new starts until 31 August 2019. In April 2019, we updated [the Hub](#) to show the last date for new starts (LDNS) on these qualifications as 31 August 2019. This LDNS also applies to apprenticeships.

To support these new qualifications, we will update the English and maths entitlement list between our [scheduled quarterly reviews](#) for this offer.

You can find more information about Functional Skills reform on [Ofqual's website](#).

English and maths in apprenticeships

We publish a list of qualifications that are acceptable equivalents for the minimum English and maths requirements in apprenticeships. You can find this list on the [GOV.UK website](#).

The list identifies acceptable equivalent English and maths qualifications for apprenticeships at level 2 and level 3. For apprenticeships above level 3 (higher apprenticeships and degree apprenticeships), please use the list of acceptable equivalents for apprenticeships at level 3.

We will review this list and add any updates every three months where applicable. You can tell us if we have not included a qualification in the list, which you believe is an acceptable equivalent for the minimum English and maths requirements in an

apprenticeship. Please send an email to Qualifications.ESFA@education.gov.uk, and include the qualification's full title and reference number, with evidence for why you believe it is an acceptable equivalent. We will only accept these notifications from the awarding organisation that owns the qualification.

ESFA funded apprenticeship providers must make sure that there is verifiable evidence of the apprentice's achievement in English and/or maths. For apprenticeship standards, providers must do this as soon as possible, and before the gateway to end-point assessment. The main types of acceptable evidence will be a certificate of qualification achievement from the awarding organisation or a formal notification of results from the awarding organisation.

If an apprentice does not have a certificate and/or a notification of results, the provider can ask the apprentice to get a replacement certificate from the relevant awarding organisation (there will be a cost for this). If this is not possible, providers can accept one of the following as evidence of achievement in English and/or maths.

- A report generated from the apprentice's [Personal Learning Record \(PLR\)](#)
- A report from the school information management system (SIMS) or Candidate Management Information System (CMIS), which must be authenticated with a stamp from the relevant school/college or provider, and signed by the examinations officer or other equivalent authority
- A National Record of Achievement (NRA), which must contain relevant awarding organisation verifiable achievement

These types of evidence must contain: the apprentice's full name, date of birth, the full name of qualification (including awarding organisation name and qualification accreditation number), the grade awarded, and the date of achievement.

A statement of results on headed paper from a school, college, or other provider is not acceptable evidence of achievement in English and/or maths.

ESFA funded apprenticeship providers must satisfy themselves that the apprentice can practically demonstrate the appropriate level of English and maths.

Levels 2 and 3

You can find a list of level 2 and level 3 legal entitlement qualifications on the [GOV.UK website](#).

You will also be able to identify qualifications that are part of the level 2 and 3 entitlements in [the Hub](#) using the following categories:

- legal entitlement – level 2
- only for legal entitlement at level 3

Components of qualifications

Where a qualification is approved for ESFA funded AEB local flexibility, its components (units) may also be approved. We will approve a component for funding in the local flexibility offer if meets all of the following requirements.

- The component must be part of a regulated qualification in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) (parent qualification)
- You must enter information about the component (including information about the qualification that it belongs to, its sector subject area, regulated GLH value, and learning outcome of the component) in Ofqual's awarding organisation portal
- We must have already approved the parent qualification for funding through the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer
- The component level must be at level 2 or below
- The component must not be part of a redeveloped² qualification in the 16 to 18 performance tables, that is already included in the legal entitlement lists
- The component must not be [vendor specific](#)
- The component must not be linked to a [licence to practise](#)
- The component must not link to [UK visa requirements](#)
- If the component is at level 2, it must [support the student to gain subject specific or occupational skills](#)
- The component must not be [non-qualification activity](#)
- You must confirm to us there is a facility for students to register on the component and achieve the component in a standalone context, or as part of accumulating and transferring achievement towards a qualification

We do not add components to the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer automatically. You must ask us to review individual components.

To do this, you must complete the [2019 to 2020 local flexibility component form](#) and list the eligible qualifications with components that can be delivered in a standalone context. Where some of those components cannot be delivered in a standalone context, you must also identify them using the form. Once we have received this information, we will apply the [common approval principles](#) and the component approval principles listed above.

We will add the initial 2019 to 2020 ESFA funded AEB local flexibility component offer to [the Hub](#) in May 2019. In the 2019 to 2020 funding year, we will update the local flexibility offer with new components three times. You must submit the 2019 to 2020 local flexibility component form by:

- 18 June 2019, to be considered for the Hub update in early August 2019
- 17 September 2019 to be considered for the Hub update in early November 2019
- 24 December 2019 to be considered for the Hub update in early February

How we review qualifications and components

We use the following process when we consider approving qualifications for funding, in all of the offers covered by this guidance.

You can find a flow diagram showing the whole qualification approval journey in [Annex C](#).

Stage 1: download qualification data from Ofqual

We use information recorded in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) to approve qualifications for funding. We will take a download from the Register of Regulated Qualifications on the last but one Tuesday of each month. You can find a full list of scheduled data download dates at [Annex B](#).

We will review the data in the download during the following month (referred to as the 'review month' for the rest of this document).

Stage 2: identify qualifications for review

For all qualification offers (except components in the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer and qualifications at level 3 and level 4 in the ESF offer), we will review specific subsets of qualifications from the download, to decide whether to approve them for funding. This means identifying:

- qualifications that have become regulated since our last scheduled review for a particular offer
- qualifications that have been amended since our last scheduled review for a particular offer, which now makes them eligible for review

We will use entries in the following data fields in Ofqual's Register:

- offered in England
- funded in England
- age groups

To review the qualifications for funding, we also use information in these fields:

- awarding organisation name
- qualification title
- qualification level
- qualification type
- sector subject area at tier 2
- qualification GLH value
- operational start and end dates
- hyperlink to the qualification specification on your website

Please see the section on components in the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer and [Annex A](#), for more information about how we identify subsets of data to review for these offers.

Stage 3: apply approval principles

We will review the newly-regulated and amended qualifications against the approval principles for each qualification offer.

If we decide not to approve a qualification for funding, we will tell you why. We will use our known [named contacts in awarding organisations](#) to do this.

Academies and maintained schools can ask us if they can deliver a non-regulated qualification to their students. Please see [Annex D](#) for more information about this.

Stage 4: publish qualification lists

We will re-publish any lists of qualifications in our offers on the GOV.UK website. The re-published lists will include the qualifications that we approved for funding in the review month.

Stage 5: Add approved qualifications to the offers

After we have published qualification lists, we will add funding validity information to [the Hub](#) for qualifications that meet the approval principles.

For 14 to 19, we approve qualifications for funding to students aged at least 14 but who are not yet 19. This means that academies and maintained schools can deliver qualifications on the [ESFA List of Qualifications approved for funding 14-19](#) to their students. Not all of the qualifications will have 16 to 19 funding validity from us. Please see the [funding regulation guidance for young people for more information](#).

We will also add category codes for qualifications in the legal entitlements and ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offers. You can find a full list of scheduled updates to the Hub on the [GOV.UK website](#).

How we use dates in Ofqual's data

We use date information in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) to approve qualifications for funding. For 2019 to 2020, we will use the date information in the same way for all qualification offers (except for 14 to 19, where we may use a default date if you have not listed an operation end date or certification end date).

The table below shows a summary of the relationships between the date fields in the list of approved qualifications, Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications, and [the Hub](#).

ESFA use of date information			
Field in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications	ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19	Funding validity in the Hub for 16 to 19 (where applicable)	Funding validity in the Hub for Adult Skills and ESF
Operational start date	Approval start date – this will be 1 August 2019, unless the operational start date is after this date	Validity start date – this will be 1 August 2019, unless the operational start date is after this date	Validity start date – this will be 1 August 2019, unless the operational start date is after this date
Operational end date	Approval archive date – this will be 31 December 2099 unless you set an operational end date	Last date for new starts (LDNS) – this will be 31 December 2099 unless you set an operational end date	Last date for new starts (LDNS) – this will be 31 July 2020, unless operational end date is before this date
Certification end date	Certification end date – if there is no certification end date, we will use a dummy certification end date of 31 December 2099	Validity end date – this will be blank if you don't set a certification end date	Validity end date – this will be three years after the LDNS, unless you have specified an earlier certification end date

The LDNS in the Hub shows the last date that students can be recorded as starting on a qualification in the current funding year and be eligible for funding from us.

14 to 19

From 2019 to 2020, we will no longer use a qualification's review date to set the approval archive date in the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19. We will only use a qualification's operational end date to set the approval archive date and the corresponding 16 to 19 validity LDNS field in [the Hub](#). If a qualification does not have an operational end date, we will set the archive date and LDNS as 31 December 2099.

When a qualification on the [ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19](#) reaches its approval archive date, we will move that qualification to the archive list, until you set a new operational end date. If a student is registered on a qualification before it moves to the approval archive list, they can complete their qualification up to the certification end date (or funding end date).

When we review and add qualifications and components

We will review qualifications for the 14 to 19 offer and the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer (including the ESF offer at level 2 and below) every month. We will publish the results of these reviews in the second Hub update of the review month.

We will review qualifications for legal entitlements every three months, in:

- August 2019, with the results published in the Hub in September 2019
- November 2019, with the results published in the Hub in December 2019
- February 2020, with the results published in the Hub in March 2020
- May 2020, with the results published in the Hub in June 2020

We will review qualifications and components for the [ESF higher level skills](#) offer and [components for the ESFA funded AEB local flexibility offer](#) three times in the 2019 to 2020 year.

We will do this in:

- July 2019, with the results published in the Hub in August 2019
- October 2019, with the results published in the Hub in November 2019
- January 2020, with the results published in the Hub in February 2020

You can find the schedule of reviews for each qualification offer at [Annex B](#).

You can find a list of planned updates to the Hub in the data collection maintenance schedule on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Managing the offers

Changes to key data fields

We will assume that you no longer want funding approval for a qualification, if you make any of the following changes to data fields for that qualification in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#):

- Offered in England – from Yes (ticked) to No (unticked)
- Funding in England – from Yes (ticked) to No (unticked)
- Age group – from Yes (ticked) to No (unticked), where No makes the qualification out of scope for the relevant qualification offer
- Qualification level – from its current value to a value that is out of scope for the relevant qualification offer

Operational end date changes

We monitor any changes you may make to a qualification's operational end date on Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#). We do this so we can tell ESFA funded providers about changes to the approval and LDNS through [the Hub](#). We use the operational end date and certification end date to manage approval and funding validity dates for new and continuing students.

If you set the operational end date for a qualification to be in the past, we will change its LDNS in the Hub to be the date of the next scheduled update to the Hub. For 14 to 19, we will also change its funding validity end date to be the next scheduled update to the Hub.

Funding rates for ESFA funded AEB

We do not automatically change the funding rate of a qualification if you significantly change its content, outcomes or size (increasing or decreasing). You must make sure that you have entered information about qualifications correctly in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#). This includes information about sector subject areas, and any other detail that might increase or decrease the funding rate.

Where two very similar qualifications have different funding rates, the most likely reason for the difference will be that the rates were calculated using different funding formulas. Qualifications approved for funding before 1 August 2016 have rates based on their credit value. Qualifications approved for funding after 1

August 2016 have rates based on their regulated GLH value. For more information about how we calculate funding rates for ESFA funded AEB, please see [adult education budget \(AEB\) funding rates and formula 2019 to 2020](#).

Review requests

For 2019 to 2020, we will run a single process for reviewing qualifications. You can use this process if:

- we decide not to approve your qualification for funding
- we decide to withdraw our funding approval for your qualification
- you want us to review the ESFA funded AEB funding rate for a qualification

Funding rate reviews

If you make significant changes to a qualification that may affect its ESFA funded AEB funding rate, you can ask us to review the funding rate.

To review your qualification, we need the following information:

- the full title and reference number for the qualification
- confirmation of what the change is and when you made the change
- why you want us to review the qualification
- your reasons for making the change
- supporting evidence (from colleges, training organisations, professional bodies, employers, students) for why the change is necessary

You must give us advance notice of any significant changes that you will make to a qualification, which will affect its funding rate.

If we agree to change a funding rate, we may decide to not change the funding rate within the same funding year. We reserve the right not to change a qualification's funding rate.

Approval decisions

If we decide not to approve a qualification for funding or withdraw funding approval for a qualification, you can ask us to review it again.

To review your qualification, we need the following information:

- the full title and reference number of the qualification
- why you want us to review the qualification
- which qualification offer(s) you believe the qualification should be approved for
- why you believe the qualification meets all of the approval principles for the offer(s)

- any additional evidence to support your challenge

This process also applies when we decide not to approve a qualification for funding for certain age groups. This is because when we review a qualification for funding approval, we will review it for all age groups in Ofqual's Register at the same time. If you indicate that a qualification is not available for a particular age group, we will not approve it for that age group. If you change entries about age groups after our approval decision, you will need to follow this challenge process.

How we review requests

We will review requests through a governance group. The group meets every three months, in: July 2019, October 2019, January 2020, and April 2020.

The deadline for us to receive requests is the first working day of the month that the group is meeting. For example, to review an approval decision or a funding rate in July 2019, your request must reach us by 1 July 2019.

To request a review, please send an email to Qualifications.ESFA@education.gov.uk. You must include all of the information and evidence that we ask for.

Our review process does not apply to areas of England where the AEB is devolved. AEB providers with devolved AEB funding will use the funding rates, formula, and eligibility criteria set by that devolved authority area (except for legal entitlements).

This process does not affect your ability to raise an official complaint to us. You can read more about the complaints process on the [GOV.UK website](#).

Uploading to the Personal Learning Record

For 2019 to 2020, we have removed the requirement for you to sign the [LRS awarding organisation agreement](#) before we approve a qualification for funding. But we still strongly encourage you to maintain the Personal Learning Record (PLR) and continue uploading student achievement data. The data helps ESFA funded providers and students to make the best decisions for their learning.

This change applies to all qualifications regulated by Ofqual on or after 21 May 2019.

If you have a qualification that was regulated before 21 May 2019, which we have previously not approved for funding because of the LRS approval principle, you can ask us to [review that qualification again](#).

Withdrawing qualifications

To make sure students are not disadvantaged, you should change operational and certification end date in Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) far enough in advance to give students and providers plenty of notice. You should also not make multiple date changes to the same qualification in a short period of time.

You should make sure you tell your centres when you are withdrawing a qualification, and give them details of the replacement qualification if that is applicable.

If we find evidence that a qualification no longer meets our approval principles, then we will change its LDNS to be the date of the next scheduled update to the Hub.

We will tell you why we are withdrawing our approval. You can ask us to [review our decision again](#).

You can find a list of planned updates to the Hub in the data collection maintenance schedule on the GOV.UK website.

You can also ask us to remove approval for funding from a qualification. Please email Qualifications.ESFA@education.gov.uk with details of the qualification. If we agree to remove approval, please make sure that you tell your centres about this decision.

14 to 19

Once a qualification is on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19, it will stay on the approved list, unless we find evidence that it no longer meets our approval principles. In that case, we will withdraw our approval for funding. We will change the qualification's approval archive date and its LDNS for 16 to 19 funding validity to be the date that we withdraw our approval.

We will tell you why we are withdrawing our approval. You can ask us to [review our decision again](#).

If we withdraw our approval for a qualification, its archive date may not be the same as the operational end date in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications. We will move the qualification from the approved list to the archive list.

Awarding organisation contacts

For 2019 to 2020, we will send messages to all our known named contacts for an awarding organisation. This will include messages about our reasons for not approving a qualification for funding and the outcomes from [reviewing challenges](#).

You can check who your named contact is and/or change your named contact by sending an email to Qualifications.ESFA@education.gov.uk.

Contact us

If you are a college or training organisation and have any queries, please use the [ESFA enquiry form](#).

If you are an awarding organisation and have any queries on the process, please email Qualifications.ESFA@education.gov.uk.

If you want more information about the school census, please see the [DfE school census webpages](#), or you can contact the Data Collection Helpdesk service using the [service request form](#).

If you want to find the correct qualification reference number for a qualification approved for the 14 to 19 offer, you can search for this on the [DfE QAN website](#).

If you want more information about funding for students aged 16 to 19, please see the [16 to 19 education webpages](#), or you can use the [contact form on the GOV.UK website](#).

If a qualification is on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19, this does not mean that it will be included in the key stage 4 performance tables. If you have any queries about key stage 4 performance tables, please [contact the DfE](#).

Annex A: ESF higher level skills offer

The European Social Fund (ESF) is part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme for England in 2014-2020. The Programme's priorities are to increase labour market participation, promote social inclusion, and develop the skills of the potential and existing workforce.

Colleges and training organisations that deliver higher level skills training through the ESF can ask us to include qualifications and/or their components in the European Social Fund (ESF) qualification offer. These qualifications and/or units must be in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications, and must be at level 3 or level 4.

We will not accept requests from awarding organisations to included qualifications and/or components in the ESF higher level skills offer. We are describing the request process in this document for your information only.

Qualifications in the offer

We have included a broad offer of regulated qualifications and their components for ESF, from entry level to level 4.

At entry level to level 2, regulated qualifications and components that are part of the ESFA funded AEB [local flexibility offer](#) are automatically added into the ESF offer. We will update the ESF offer with these qualifications in line with the timetable in this document.

At level 3 and at level 4, we have already made a range of regulated qualifications and their components available to support higher level skills delivery through ESF. We will not be making any further qualifications or components available, unless college and training organisations ask us to consider a regulated qualification and/or components for the offer.

This document does not cover non-regulated learning at entry level to level 4, which we have already made available. For further information about non-regulated learning available as part of ESF, please see [the Hub](#).

Higher levels skills offer - regulated qualifications

We will approve a qualification for the ESF higher level skills offer if it meets all of the following requirements:

- The qualification must be at level 3 or level 4
- The qualification's size must be less than 150 guided learning hours (regulated GLH)
- The qualification must meet the [common approval principles](#) and the [approval principles for ESFA funded AEB local flexibility](#)

Higher level skills offer - components

We will approve a component for the ESF higher level skills offer if it meets all of the following requirements:

- The component must be part of a regulated qualification in Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications (parent qualification)
- We must have already either:
 - approved the parent qualification for the ESF higher level skills offer
 - designated the parent qualification for the advanced learner loans offer for 2019 to 2020
- The component level must be at level 3 or level 4

- The component must not be [vendor specific](#)
- The component must not be linked to a [licence to practise](#)
- The component must not link to [UK visa requirements](#)
- The component must [support the student to gain subject specific or occupational skills](#)
- The component must not be [non-qualification activity](#)
- You must enter information about the component (including information about the qualification that it belongs to, its sector subject area, regulated GLH value, and learning outcome of the component) in Ofqual's awarding organisation portal
- The training provider asking for component funding approval must have confirmation from the awarding organisation that there is a facility for students to register on the component and achieve the component in a standalone context, or as part of accumulating and transferring achievement towards a qualification

For the ESF offer in 2019 to 2020, we will no longer make components of a redeveloped² qualification in the 16 to 18 performance tables available for standalone delivery outside of the qualification, if that qualification is included in the legal entitlement lists.

Adding to the ESF higher skills offer

We will publish the 2019 to 2020 ESF higher level skills offer in June 2019. In the 2019 to 2020 funding year, we will update the offer with new qualifications and components three times. Providers must send their requests to review qualifications and components by these deadlines:

- 18 June 2019, to be considered for the Hub update in early August 2019
- 17 September 2019 to be considered for the Hub update in early November 2019
- 24 December 2019 to be considered for the Hub update in early February 2020

Providers must send their requests to their ESF Management and Delivery Adviser.

Annex B: review and download schedule

We will take a download of data from Ofqual's [Register of Regulated Qualifications](#) on the last but one Tuesday in the month before the reviews scheduled for the following month.

The table below shows the deadline for each month's review, up to and including July 2020. It also shows which qualification offers we will review in each month.

The local flexibility offer refers to the ESFA funded AEB offer only.

Review month	Date of download	14 to 19	Legal entitlements	Qualifications in local flexibility⁵	Components in local flexibility	ESF higher levels
June 2019	21 May 2019	X		X		
July 2019	18 June 2019	X		X	X	X
August 2019	23 July 2019	X	X	X		
September 2019	20 August 2019	X		X		
October 2019	17 September 2019	X		X	X	X
November 2019	22 October 2019	X	X	X		
December 2019	19 November 2019	X		X		
January 2020	24 December 2019	X		X	X	X
February 2020	21 January 2020	X		X		
March 2020	18 February 2020	X		X		
April 2020	24 March 2020	X		X		
May 2020	21 April 2020	X	X	X		
June 2020	19 May 2020	X		X		
July 2020	23 June 2020	X		X		

Annex C: qualification approval journey

The diagram below describes the process that awarding organisations must follow to get funding approval in England for a qualification.

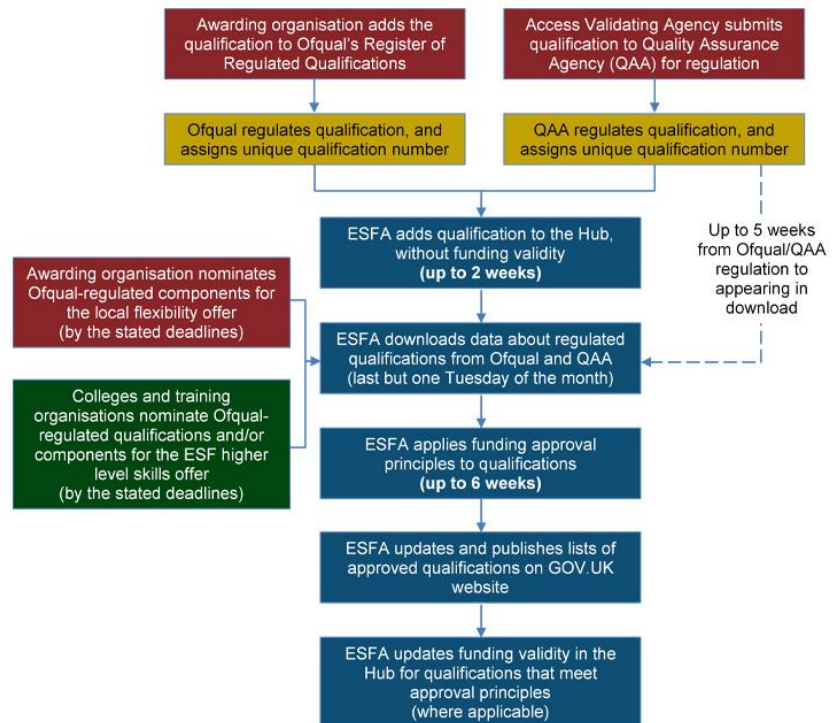


Figure 7: the qualification approval journey

Annex D: qualifications and courses in academies and maintained schools

Qualifications must be approved for funding for 14 to 19 before academies and maintained schools can offer them to young people.

In exceptional circumstances, individual academies may offer a course leading to a qualification that is not approved for funding for 14 to 19, under the terms of the model funding agreement.

In these circumstances, the academy or maintained school must send an email to Qualifications.ESFA@education.gov.uk, and tell us:

- the full title and reference number of the qualification
- why it wants us to consider its request
- any additional evidence to support its request

1. The current devolved authorities are: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough; Greater Manchester; Liverpool City Region; Tees Valley; West Midlands; West of England. North of Tyne Combined Authority and Sheffield City Region Combined Authority are due to take on the adult education functions from the funding year 2020 to 2021, subject to them being ready and meeting the statutory test. [↵](#)
2. Tech Levels and Applied General qualifications that meet the size, content, grading, and assessment criteria to be included in [16-18 performance tables](#) from 2018 onwards (level 3). Technical Certificates that meet the size, content, grading, and assessment criteria to be included in 16-18 performance tables from 2019 onwards (level 2). [↵](#) [↵2](#) [↵3](#)
3. We only approve qualifications at level 3 for funding for pre-16 students where they meet the [approval principle of being suitable for the pre-16 age group](#). [↵](#)
4. We consider approving qualifications and components at level 3 and level 4 for funding through ESF, when a college or training organisation asks us to review them. [↵](#) [↵2](#)
5. This process also covers qualifications in the ESF offer at level 2 and below. [↵](#)

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