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Policy paper

Digital skills qualifications funding: entry level and level 1

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The Department for Education is reforming essential digital skills to ensure learners have access to high quality provision that will equip them with the digital skills they need for life and work. As part of our reforms, Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding approval is being removed from existing information and communication technology (ICT) and digital skills qualifications.

New national standards for essential digital skills

In April 2020, following extensive consultation, we published new [national standards for essential digital skills](#) which are informed by the [essential digital skills framework](#), developed based on consultation with employers and digital skills and inclusion partners. These replaced national ICT standards, published in 2006, that were out of date and did not reflect the digital, connected world we live in.

New essential digital skills qualifications, developed against our new national standards, are now available for post-16 learners.

We set out in our [improving adult basic digital skills consultation response \(2019\)](#) that only new entry level and level 1 qualifications based on our new national standards that meet our [qualification eligibility principles](#) would be eligible for adult education budget funding from August 2020. We also confirmed our intention to remove funding from functional skills qualifications in ICT at entry level and level 1.

We extended funding approval for existing ICT for Users qualifications for the 2020 to 2021 funding year. We also postponed the publication of our consultation response on new digital functional skills qualifications subject content. We will therefore extend funding approval for existing entry level and level 1 ICT functional skills qualifications until 1 August 2022.

We have reviewed all other ICT and digital skills qualifications at entry level and level 1 and identified those that will no longer be approved for ESFA post-16 funding.

Students who are already enrolled onto an existing ICT or digital skills qualification prior to the date that funding approval ends will be funded to complete their qualification or to the certification end date.

Qualifications that will no longer have post-16 funding approval

From 1 August 2021, ESFA post-16 funding approval will be removed for all ICT and digital qualifications at entry and level 1 in the sector subject area ICT for Users, except for essential digital skills qualifications. This will include IT User qualifications and other ICT and digital qualifications in this sector subject area. We will only approve for funding essential digital skills qualifications in this sector subject area.

From 1 August 2021, ESFA post-16 funding approval will also be removed for other ICT and digital skills qualifications at entry and level 1 in other sector subject areas where the purpose of the qualification is not linked to a specific occupational area or a specific entry level job role. If the awarding organisation has evidence that the qualification is linked to a specific occupational area or a specific entry level job role, there will be the facility to provide this evidence to ESFA. Further details can be found in the guidance on [qualification funding approval](#).

From 1 August 2022, ESFA post-16 funding approval will be removed for all existing ICT functional skills qualifications up to level 1.

Details of which [qualifications will no longer be approved for post-16 funding](#) are available.

ESFA post-16 funding approval will be removed for new starts only.

More information

For more information on funding approval, see the guidance on [qualification funding approval](#).

Further information on the development of essential digital skills qualifications by awarding organisations can be found at [essential digital skills qualifications: progress so far](#).

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