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[Department
for Education](#)

Guidance

16 to 19 study programmes guidance: 2023 to 2024 academic year

Updated 11 July 2023

Applies to England

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Summary

This is non-statutory guidance and is intended to help recipients understand their obligations and duties in relation to the provision of 16 to 19 study programmes in their institution. [Further information on 16 to 19 funding](#) is available.

Expiry or review date

This advice is reviewed and updated annually.

Who is this advice for?

This guidance is for everyone involved in the planning or delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes.

It also covers:

- traineeships which started on or before the 31 July 2023
- traineeship type provision starting on or after 1 August 2023
- supported internships – such as senior leadership teams, curriculum planners and co-ordinators, teachers and trainers

16 to 19 study programmes are also relevant to 19 to 24 year olds with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Main points

All students funded through the 16 to 19 funding methodology must be enrolled on a study programme, or T Level programme, which typically combines qualifications and other activities, and is tailored to each student's prior attainment and career goals.

All study programmes must have a core aim.^{[[footnote 1](#)]} This will be tailored to the needs of the individual and typically include a substantial qualification (academic or technical) or preparation for employment. There is a separate new core aim for the [T Level Transition Programme](#) students, which reflects the T Level route that they're preparing for.

All study programmes should include work experience and non-qualification activities that complement the other elements of the programme and support the student to progress to further or higher education (HE) or to employment.

Study programmes are flexible programmes built around the needs of individual students. T Levels are different because their components are tailored to the occupational requirements of each T Level, such that they support entry to employment or to further related study. T Levels are therefore not covered by this guidance.^{[[footnote 2](#)]}

The Prime Minister has set a mission for all young people to study maths to age 18, equipping them with the skills they need for the modern economy. Given this future direction, providers should consider if early steps can be made to include maths in 16 to 19 study programmes which previously did not include this.

The 16 to 19 tuition fund is aimed at supporting small group tuition for students aged 16 to 19 in English, maths and other subjects that have been disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic to recover lost learning.

Section 1: Study programmes

Professor Alison Wolf, in her [review of vocational education \(2011\)](#), recommended

that DfE introduce study programmes to offer students breadth and depth, without limiting their options for future study or work. Professor Wolf also recommended that all young people should be able to gain real experience and knowledge of the workplace, in order to enhance their employability skills. Study programmes were introduced in September 2013.

The [Sainsbury Review](#), published in 2016, set out an ambitious vision for technical education for young people and adults. Its recommendations were accepted in full by the government in the [Post-16 Skills Plan](#), and further details of the reforms to 16 to 19 technical education were published in the government's consultation on the [implementation of T Level programmes](#).

T Levels were introduced from September 2020 onwards, along with the phased implementation of the T Level Transition Programme.

A and AS levels were reformed from 2015 to address concerns from higher and further education institutions and employers that the previous qualifications did not adequately prepare young people for the demands of higher study and the workplace.

More recently, the government has carried out a review of non-A level post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below. A [policy statement](#) setting out plans for reform of level 3 qualifications was published in July 2021. A [response to the government consultation](#) on reforms to post-16 qualifications at level 2 and below was published in October 2022 and sets out plans to reform qualifications at level 2, level 1 and entry level. This will ensure that all funded qualifications are good quality. Further details of the reforms to qualifications that will be taught from 2025 onwards can be found in the [Guide to post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England](#).

We will continue to update the study programme guidance in line with these reforms. We also welcome your feedback on how to make this guidance more useful – please email us with your comments and suggestions at Post16.Level3AndBelowReview@education.gov.uk.

Study programme principles

All 16 to 19 study programmes should be designed to provide students with a structured and challenging learning programme that supports their development and progression in line with their career plans. Study programmes should be individually tailored, but will typically combine the elements below:

1. substantial qualifications that stretch students and prepare them for education at the next level or for employment, although this is not a requirement for the [T Level Transition Programme Framework for Delivery](#)
2. English and maths, where students have not yet achieved a GCSE grade 4,
3. work experience to give students the opportunity to develop their career choices and to apply their skills in real working conditions, and
4. other non-qualification activity to develop students' character, broader skills, attitudes and confidence, and support progression

[Section 2](#) sets out broad programme characteristics for students taking different qualification pathways. [Section 3](#) offers further guidance on the principles above. The [further information](#) section offers hyperlinks to research, case studies and other information that providers can refer to.

Core aim of a study programme

Every study programme must have a core aim so that it can be recorded in the [Individualised Learner Record \(ILR\)](#) or school census. This is the principal activity or core purpose of a student's programme and it will usually be the component that has the largest number of planned hours. The core aim for most students will be either:

1. one or more substantial academic, applied or technical qualifications which have approved funding and appear on [DfE's list of approved qualifications for 16 to 19](#) and that they will prepare the student for further education (FE) or employment, or
2. a substantial work placement to prepare the student for an apprenticeship or other employment.

The core aim must be agreed between the student and the education provider. It will generally remain unchanged during the year, although exceptions may be made where, for example, a student

- finds they have made the wrong programme choice and transfers to an alternative programme, or
- transfers to a traineeship after an initial period of vocational training or employability support.

The remainder of the study programme should complement the core aim.

Planned hours

Each study programme will consist of a number of planned hours (meaning hours that have been timetabled and are supervised by the provider). Providers must ensure that the number of hours is realistic and deliverable.

Study programmes are designed to be full-time with a minimum of 580 planned hours per academic year from the 2022 to 2023 academic year onwards. This is an increase of 40 hours, which is accompanied by an increase in funding and requirements as detailed [in the 16 to 19 funding regulations guidance](#). As per our funding guidance, we expect full-time study programmes for 16 and 17 year olds to be, on average, 640 hours. This allows sufficient time to deliver the principles above. Part-time study programmes may be agreed where, for example, a student

- combines part-time education with full-time employment,
- has a health issue that prevents them from being in education for more than a few hours a week, or
- needs a specific small qualification or period of work experience to progress to further education or employment

Any study programme of 150 hours or more must include English and maths where appropriate, work experience and other non-qualification activity. It is expected that programmes of less than 150 hours will also include these elements, although providers may make exceptions. Work experience, for example, may not be relevant to a student who is combining education with full-time employment.

[Annex A](#) sets out examples of study programmes.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities

We know that with the right preparation and support, the majority of young people with SEND are capable of sustained, paid employment. All professionals working with them should share that presumption. As such, the study programme principles apply equally to students with SEND. The [SEND Code of Practice](#) sets out the general responsibilities of post-16 providers for young people with SEND, both with and without an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

It is important that students with SEND are given the support they need to access their study programme. Providers should take particular care to tailor study

programmes to the individual aspirations and needs of students with SEND, in discussion with the student. Where students have an EHC plan, providers should also involve the local authority SEN team where appropriate. While some students with SEND should be on study programmes focused on helping them achieve stretching qualifications, others will gain more benefit from a traineeship, supported internship or other study programme that helps them prepare for employment and adult life. The last start on the standalone traineeship programme will be the 31 July 2023, from 1 August 2023 traineeships will be integrated into the Study Programme (16-19) or the Adult Education Budget.

Students with SEND may benefit from being exposed to a workplace setting during their preparation for adulthood and employment. Work experience may therefore be a particularly important element of their study programme to build their skills and confidence.

Providers should consider carefully how the work experience element of their study programme could enable them to develop and demonstrate the skills that will help them gain employment. They should also consider what additional support a student with SEND may need before, during and after the work experience, to fully benefit from it. Providers may find it helpful to visit the read [Preparing for Adulthood's short guide on work experience](#).

[Access to Work](#) (AtW) is a discretionary grant scheme delivered by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) that can assist in paying for practical support to enable disabled people or those with health conditions to overcome workplace barriers. Providers should communicate the existence of AtW to students and employers when they are setting up or supporting them to enrol in a supported internship, traineeship-style programme or apprenticeship.

When finding work placements for students with SEND, providers may find it helpful to refer to Disability Confident accreditation. Disability Confident encourages employers to take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop employees with a disability. A Disability Confident business will often display a badge on its website and company literature. Further information is available on the [Disability Confident](#) website.

Exceptionally, for students with severe and/or complex needs, a study programme to develop independent living skills may be appropriate. This would apply only to students for whom either substantial qualifications or preparation for employment are not, at this stage in their lives, a suitable option. The student's EHC plan should confirm that independent living is their primary aim.

Section 2: Broad programme characteristics

Technical and applied qualification routes

Students for whom a technical or applied qualification is the most appropriate route to their career goal are expected to study at least one substantial qualification. This should be of sufficient size and relevance to provide a route into a trade, profession or other form of employment, or access to education at the next level.

This guidance relates to the qualifications currently approved for funding. We are currently reviewing post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below, other than A levels, T Levels, GCSEs and Functional Skills qualifications. This will create a simpler system where every qualification has a clear purpose and meets rigorous quality criteria. All future technical qualifications will be based on IfATE occupational standards.

As set out in our July 2021 policy statement, the government will also recognise the need for other large and small academic qualifications at level 3. By “large” we mean the size of 2 or 3 A levels and by “small” we mean up to the size of 1 A level. Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) in areas less well served by A levels (including some subjects where there are A levels, reflecting feedback to our consultation about the value of alternative qualifications in certain subject areas, particularly in creative arts areas).

AAQs will compliment and enhance the A level offer and will ensure that as many students as possible benefit from A levels. In future, mixed programmes can be developed which should consist of a mix of A levels alongside smaller A level equivalent AAQs allowing a more flexible programme for students. The first of these new AAQs will be available for first teach in the 2025 to 2026 academic year. We know that students who take A levels as part of a mixed programme are more likely to progress in and remain in HE even when accounting for background than those who take non A level qualifications.

Information about the changes being made from 2025 are available in our [Guide to the post-16 qualifications landscape at level 3 and below for 2025 and beyond](#). We will provide further information as the 16 to 19 study programmes develop.

There are currently 3 groups of technical and applied qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds that are approved for inclusion in performance tables^{[footnote 3](#)}. To be included

in performance tables these qualifications must meet particular requirements in terms of their content, assessment and (for technical qualifications) employer involvement, as set out in the published technical guidance^[footnote 4]. The 3 qualification groups are as follows:

1. **Applied General qualifications** – level 3 qualifications that allow students to develop transferable knowledge and skills. They are for post-16 students who want to continue their education through applied learning and fulfil entry requirements for a range of HE courses, either by meeting the entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside and adding value to other qualifications at level 3 such as A levels.
2. **Tech Level qualifications** – level 3 technical qualifications on a par with A levels that are recognised by employers. They are for post-16 students wishing to specialise in a specific industry, occupation or technical role. They equip a student with specialist knowledge and skills, enabling entry to an apprenticeship or other employment, or progression to a related higher education course. In some cases, these qualifications provide a ‘licence to practise’ or exemption from professional exams ^[footnote 4].
3. **Technical Certificates** – level 2 qualifications for post-16 students wishing to specialise in a specific industry, occupation or technical role where employers recognise entry at level 2. Technical Certificates also provide access to Tech Levels or an apprenticeship. In some cases, a Technical Certificate can provide a ‘licence to practise’ or exemption from professional examinations.

The [list of qualifications approved for inclusion in the Department for Education’s schools and college performance tables](#) is reviewed annually. Other qualifications may be taught, providing they are on [ESFA’s list of approved qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds](#), but may not be reported in the performance tables.

A level courses

A level students are expected to follow a minimum of 3 A levels, or the equivalent, which count as substantial qualifications. A level study programmes should also include extension/development or non-qualification activity such as extended project qualifications, tutorials, work experience, personal or study skills, and support students to progress to employment or HE.

Some A level students may benefit from taking an additional AS level size qualification alongside 3 A levels. For example, providers may wish to particularly consider the benefits of a maths AS or core maths for those studying quantitative A

level subjects such as psychology, biology or geography.

T Level Transition Programme

The T Level Transition Programme is a type of 16 to 19 study programme, specifically designed to help students develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that will help them to progress to and succeed at a T Level. It is targeted at students who have the potential to progress onto a T Level with the extra support and preparation that the programme can provide. We expect the T Level Transition Programme to be a full-time study programme lasting up to a standard academic year in most cases.

The T Level Transition Programme consists of 6 inter-related components, to provide a broad foundation for T Levels:

- diagnostic, monitoring and guidance to determine students' learning and support needs, help them decide which T Level route to prepare for, provide ongoing monitoring of students' progress, and ensure students are well supported to decide their next steps after the programme
- English and maths for students without GCSE grade 4 in these subjects and basic digital skills where a student needs to develop them
- experience of the workplace to prepare students for a T Level industry placement
- technical knowledge and skills relevant to a student's chosen T Level route, which can be delivered using a qualification or non-qualification-based approach
- personal development and enrichment opportunities to support students to develop the study skills they will need for success at T Levels and the positive behaviours and key transferable skills for success in the workplace
- pastoral support that is responsive to individual student needs

The programme has its own core aim, which records the T Level route that students are preparing for.

The phased implementation of the T Level Transition Programme started in September 2020.

For further information and expectations for how this programme should be delivered refer to the [T Level Transition Programme Framework for Delivery](#), which should be read in conjunction with this 16 to 19 study guidance.

Students who are not ready for level 3 qualifications

Students who are not yet ready to begin a qualification at level 3 should be offered a tailored study programme at level 2 that supports them to progress to education at a higher level or to employment, or prepare for adult life.

The [government response to the review of post-16 qualifications at level 2 and below](#) was published in October 2022. It set out plans to introduce new technical qualifications supporting progression to employment as well as new progression qualifications at level 2 to support progression to higher levels for study.

Young people who are aiming at an apprenticeship or other employment, and who are capable of achieving this within 6 months, may be offered a traineeship style programme to support that progression.

Qualifications at level 1 and below

Progression rates from programmes below level 2 vary widely, depending on what and where young people study.

Research into effective practice identified a number of factors that combine to make an effective programme. These were used to develop a number of 'principles' set out in [annex B](#). Providers delivering qualifications at entry and level 1 are encouraged to follow these principles, and to make use of the [effective practice and case studies](#) available on GOV.UK.

The [government response to the review of post-16 qualifications at level 2 and below](#) was published in October 2022. It sets out plans to reform level 1 and entry level qualifications, with reformed qualifications being taught from September 2027 onwards. These qualifications will need to meet new criteria to ensure that all funded qualifications are high quality and lead to good outcomes for the students who take them.

Most young people who study at entry and level 1 attract additional funding through the disadvantage element of the 16 to 19 national funding formula. Providers are expected to use this funding to provide additional teaching and support for these students, including SEND support for those who need it.

Research has also shown the importance of taking account of local and demographic factors when choosing which programmes to offer at entry and level 1. Many providers review their provision each year to check that students are

completing their qualifications and progressing to further education or employment. All providers are encouraged to do this, working with local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), local authorities and employer organisations where appropriate. Links to this research are listed in the [further information](#) section of this guidance.

Traineeships

The last start on the standalone traineeship programme will be on the 31 July 2023, from 1 August 2023 traineeships will be integrated into the 16 to 19 study programme or the adult education budget, which will allow a traineeship style programme to be developed to support young people into apprenticeship or work. This guidance relates to traineeships that were started on or before the 31 July 2023 and would be completed during the 2023 to 2024 academic year.

Traineeships are study programmes for young people with qualifications up to and including level 3. They help prepare students for an apprenticeship, other sustainable employment where training is 'on the job' or further learning. Traineeships should last for a minimum of 6 weeks and a maximum of 12 months.

The core aim of a traineeship is a high-quality work placement of between 70 and 240 hours with an employer. For any young people receiving Universal Credit or Jobseeker's Allowance, however, placements can be between 70 and 240 hours (or extended up to 320 hours if an offer of an apprenticeship place is accepted).

The traineeship could also be undertaken as multiple shorter placements in different organisations, though this would need careful planning to ensure it adds up to the high quality work experience we expect for all learners. Longer placements may be necessary to prepare learners for work, but these would need to be based on clearly identified learner needs.

Providers and employers can bring together work preparation training, English, maths and digital skills, where required, in the best way that engages and supports individual learners. This should be integrated with other support and training, such as mentoring, careers guidance, job search support and sector-focused vocational learning that prepares the learner for an apprenticeship. The [Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#) has the responsibility for approving and publishing these occupational standards ([s.ZA11 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#)). This preparatory learning does not replace the 20% off the job training required when a learner starts an apprenticeship.

Supported internships

Supported internships are a structured, work-based study programme for 16 to 24 year olds with SEND who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The core aim of a supported internship study programme is a substantial work placement, facilitated by the support of an expert job coach. Alongside their time with the employer, supported interns complete a personalised study programme that includes appropriate English and maths, and the chance to study for relevant qualifications, where appropriate. Supported internships normally last for up to a year and include unpaid work placements of at least 6 months. The aim is to support the young person into paid employment at the end of the programme.

Read our guidance on [providing supported internships for young people with an EHC plan](#). Further support to help providers develop their supported internship provision is available through the [Internships Work consortium](#).

Section 3: Delivering study programmes

Mode of delivery

During the COVID-19 pandemic, further education providers made extensive use of remote and online learning to maintain delivery, and, in doing so, have significantly increased their capability to deliver online and use education technology and digital resources to support delivery. As a result, many providers are now considering how they might make greater use of digital in the design and delivery of their curriculum.

The following guidelines aim to support providers in these decisions.

In all circumstances, quality should be the key criterion for determining the use of remote and online learning. Remote or online delivery should not replace face to face provision where the drivers for its deployment are primarily non-educational in nature – for example, cost savings or administrative efficiency.

The criteria for judging quality and sufficiency of provision as set out in the [Ofsted Education Inspection Framework](#) and [FE and Skills Handbook](#), apply to all ESFA funded provision regardless of the mode of delivery.

To ensure students are fully engaged and supported with their learning, it is

expected that the significant majority of planned hours of all 16 to 19 study programmes (and the constituent elements that make up a study programme – for example, substantive qualifications or English and maths) – are delivered face to face, with students attending on-site every week during term time.

Providers should not assume that all students can successfully study remotely and online. It is the responsibility of providers that decide to use online learning as part of their delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes that every student has access to a learning environment, device and connectivity suitable for learning online or remotely.

Where providers opt to use remote and online delivery, they must ensure that practitioners have access to relevant training, support and guidance to effectively teach remotely and online.

In making decisions concerning the use of remote and online delivery, providers should also be considerate of the wider socio-economic and wellbeing implications of remote and online learning – for example, parents and students may have legitimate reservations regarding the appropriateness of spending significant amounts of time studying from home (unless this is required through national or local restrictions [in response to an emergency or public health incident, such as COVID-19](#)).

English and maths

All students aged 16 to 19 studying 150 hours or more who do not hold at least a GCSE grade 4 are required to study English and maths as part of their study programme in each academic year. This requirement is a [condition of funding](#).

The condition of funding is focused on the continuing study of English and maths, as acquiring these basic skills will support a student to secure a job or an apprenticeship, or go on to further education. All full-time 16 to 19 year old students starting a new study programme with a GCSE grade 3 in English and/or maths must continue to study towards a GCSE.

Students with prior attainment of GCSE grade 2 or below can study towards level 2 Functional Skills or GCSE grade 9 to 4. Once students have achieved either of these, there is no requirement to undertake further English and maths qualifications to meet the condition of funding. This allows providers to support students with prior attainment of GCSE grade 2 and below to make an informed choice about which level 2 qualification is most appropriate for them.

Most young people starting a new study programme will be capable of studying English and maths qualifications such as Functional Skills or GCSEs. However, there are a small number of students who are not able to do so – for example, those with multiple and complex learning needs. These students can be exempt from studying standalone English and maths qualifications, but appropriate literacy and numeracy should still be included in their study programme. Students with overseas qualifications that have been established as being equivalent to GCSE grade 4 or higher are also exempt from the condition of funding.

The condition of funding is designed to give 16 to 19 education providers flexibility to tailor a study programme so that each student is enabled to improve in English and maths to the best of their ability and study for an appropriate qualification. For example, providers are free to determine

- how best to teach English and maths, and the extent to which teaching and learning are embedded and/or reinforced through technical tuition,
- the appropriate course duration, and
- when to enter students for exams – for example, in the case of GCSEs, a student could take an intensive course ahead of a November retake or a longer one or 2-year course.

Level 3 maths qualifications

Mathematical and quantitative skills are important for students' future study and career prospects. Higher levels of achievement in maths are associated with higher earnings for individuals, and many employers are looking for applicants with advanced mathematical and quantitative skills.

In January 2023, the Prime Minister set a new [mission for all young people to study maths to 18](#), equipping them with the skills they need for the modern economy. As we work towards delivering this new mission, our driving principle is to ensure all students have the right maths knowledge and skills to thrive, whatever their chosen pathway.

Given this future direction, providers should consider if early steps can be made to include maths in 16 to 19 study programmes which previously did not include this. Providers may wish to particularly consider the benefits of additional maths for those studying quantitative subjects such as psychology, biology or geography.

We would like to see providers offering a range of level 3 maths qualifications, and

the [advanced mathematics premium](#) will help education providers to increase participation here. As well as reformed AS and A levels in maths, statistics and further maths, we also have 'core maths' qualifications at level 3. The focus of core maths qualifications is on problem solving, reasoning and the practical application of maths and statistics. These qualifications have been designed with the help of employers and universities to suit students at a grade 4 or above in GCSE maths, and to provide them with the quantitative skills now needed in a wide range of jobs.

Work experience

Work experience is a key component of 16 to 19 study programmes. The term work experience refers to all forms of work-related activity, including work tasters, running a student enterprise, participation in a social action project, volunteering or a placement with an external employer. It aims to give young people the opportunity to develop their career choices, get a first taste of work, and develop those critical employability skills needed for real working conditions. All students are expected to undertake work experience or work-related training as part of their study programme, and for some students, it can be the core aim of the study programme.

Activities must be planned to take account of the student's needs and future plans. As such, the purpose and nature of work experience are likely to be different for a student who plans to apply for HE when compared with a student who is preparing for employment. This approach is consistent with the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, which are set out in the statutory guidance on [careers and access for education and training providers](#). Gatsby has also published an 'at a glance' [guide for colleges \(PDF - 279KB\)](#).

The time spent by students on work experience is funded at the same level as qualifications taught in the classroom. This offers schools and providers the flexibility to assign staff to engage employers and secure high-quality work experience opportunities for their students.

Planned hours should normally be delivered within the provider's normal working pattern. Work placements may include evening, weekend and college holiday hours if that would give students a more realistic experience. The provider must have scheduled and agreed the student's hours in advance of the activity and the hours must be reasonable for a student of that age. Issues such as late-night transport should also be addressed, and the student should know who to contact if a problem emerges while the college is closed.

More detailed information on the [funding requirements of work experience](#), as part of a study programme, is available.

Although work experience that includes training in a simulated work environment or social action project can help students develop 'softer' skills, providers are expected, wherever possible, to offer a work placement with an external employer.

Work placements are often an integral part of students' qualification hours and will be undertaken in a workplace that is relevant to their course, to build on their employability skills in a practical setting. They can also form a part of the students' non-qualification hours and can be related to the course towards which they are studying and/or help them gain experience to progress along their chosen career path.

The requirement for providers to arrange placements with an external employer enables students to experience the real demands of the working environment, independent of their peers and tutors, and put into practice the transferable and sector-specific skills they have learned. Students can often obtain employer references for their performance that provide evidence for their CV, or the offer of a job on completion of their course.

Common principles of a high-quality work placement are that it

- is purposeful, offers challenge and is relevant to the young person's study programme and career aspirations.
- allows the student to apply the technical and practical skills learned in the classroom/workshop,
- is managed under the direction of a supervisor to ensure the young person obtains a genuine learning experience suited to their needs,
- has a structured plan for the duration of the placement that provides tangible outcomes for the student and employer,
- has clear roles, responsibilities and expectations for the student and employer, and
- is followed by some form of reference or feedback from the employer based on the young person's performance.

Integrating work placements into study programmes

There is no single 'correct' way of planning work experience and work placements – this will depend on the employers' capacity and could vary considerably by sector.

Employers are more likely to respond favourably to providers that are willing to be flexible and work with them to organise placements to suit their requirements. For example, placements could follow a pattern of once a week for the duration of the term, longer block placements, or a rotation of shorter placements at different employers, so that students can experience different aspects of a sector.

Students who have a work placement as the core aim of their study programme must spend a large proportion of their time with an external employer to ensure they develop the employability skills, attitudes and behaviours that are expected in the workplace and progress successfully into paid employment.

The length of placements for other study programmes will vary according to course type and employer preferences. Providers' assessment of students' abilities, prior attainment, career goals and work readiness should also determine the level and nature of work experience needed to prepare for progression to employment.

In all instances, education providers should agree the following with both the student and employer:

- the education and training goals of the placement,
- reasonable expectations about student conduct, and
- the role of the employer in providing supervision and training.

This agreement can take the form of a short note or email from the education institution to the student and the employer. This is in line with good practice in the provision of work experience as part of a 16 to 19 study programme and to meet ESFA audit requirements for the provision of work experience.

In setting up placements, providers must consider, in discussion with the student and the employer, whether a young person with SEND needs more support in the workplace than their peers if they are to benefit from the experience.

Providers should work with local employers to plan placement opportunities, as appropriate and where it is safe to do so. Providers should prioritise students for whom work experience is their core aim and for those who would benefit most from spending time developing their employability skills in a physical workplace.

Youth social action

Providers are encouraged to incorporate youth social action into study programmes alongside other work experience. Youth social action involves young people taking

practical action in the service of others to create positive change.

In a work experience context, social action can take the form of young people improving their work-related skills and behaviours to have a positive community impact. Evidence shows^[footnote 7] that young people who participate in social action show robust improvements in the skills and behaviours that employers are calling for, including resilience, problem solving and a sense of community. Young people participating in social action projects have stronger personal networks, higher life satisfaction and reduced anxiety.

The common principles of a high-quality youth social action project are that it is:

- youth-led: led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision making,
- socially impactful: has clear and intended benefits to a community, cause or social problem,
- challenging: stretching and ambitious as well as enjoyable and enabling,
- embedded: accessible to all, and well integrated into existing pathways to become a habit for life,
- progressive: sustained and providing links to other activities and opportunities, and
- reflective: recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning.

Activities can include volunteering, campaigning, fundraising and mentoring, where the activity has a 'double benefit' to both the young people participating and the community they are serving.

National Minimum Wage

Young people undertaking work experience or a work placement are not in employment and are therefore not entitled to the National Minimum Wage. We encourage but do not require employers to meet students' expenses such as travel or meal costs.

Providers may also make financial support from the 16 to 19 bursary fund available to students if the cost of attending work experience would be a barrier to their participation.

Health and safety

The employer has the primary responsibility for the health and safety of students while they are on work experience or a placement. While education or training providers must satisfy themselves that an employer has assessed the associated risks to workers aged under 18 on their premises, and has suitable and sufficient risk management arrangements in place, checks must be kept in proportion with the risk environment. For low risk environments, assurance can be gained through a conversation with the employer. A physical inspection by an education provider, or requiring the employer to complete lengthy forms, is not necessary.

The Health and Safety Executive has published [guidance for work experience placements](#) and providers should refer to this when making arrangements.

Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance

The insurance industry has agreed that students on work experience placements should be treated as employees for the purposes of insurance.

An employer or voluntary sector organisation that already has Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance cover does not need to buy additional cover.

If a voluntary organisation has only Public Liability Insurance, it will need to obtain temporary Employer Liability Compulsory Insurance for the duration of the placement.

The Association of British Insurers has published [guidance for employers](#) planning to take on work experience students.

Safeguarding

An employer may request a DBS check (also referred to as a disclosure check). These checks are processed by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS). As such, young people (note that the minimum age at which someone can be asked to apply for a DBS check is 16) intending to undertake work experience should be prepared to undergo a relevant DBS check if it is applicable to the role. The type of work the young person will be doing will determine the level of DBS check, if any, that is asked for. The levels of DBS check are as follows:

- A basic check, which shows unspent convictions and conditional cautions.
- A standard check, which shows spent and unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands and final warnings.
- An enhanced check, which shows the same as a standard check plus any information held by local police that's considered relevant to the role.
- An enhanced check with a check of the barred lists, which shows the same as an enhanced check plus whether the applicant is on the adults' barred list, children's barred list or both.

The employer will need to explain the process of how to obtain the DBS check and the costs associated with it to the young person.

Providers will also need to factor in any costs to the total programme cost and also plan for the time it takes to complete an application, which could be up to 4 weeks.

Providers should note that the rules on DBS checks for those supervising 16 and 17 year olds are complicated. They should speak to the employer about the arrangements that will be in place to supervise 16 to 17 year olds and the level of DBS check that supervision staff will have had.

More detailed DBS guidance is available.

Education and training providers should also refer to the statutory framework and guidance for safeguarding that is relevant to the setting in which the student will be working or on a placement:

- [Keeping children safe in education](#)
- [Early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#)
- [Working together to safeguard children](#)

In addition to the statutory guidance above, there is also non-statutory guidance for out-of-school settings providers:

- [Keeping children safe in out-of-school settings](#)

Other non-qualification activity

All students are expected to take part in other meaningful non-qualification activity alongside work experience. This should take account of their needs and career plans, as well as preparation for adult life more generally. For example:

- activities to develop confidence, character and resilience,
- group work to develop team working, communications skills, leadership and problem solving – skills that employers often say are lacking in school and college leavers,
- tutorials and seminars, including careers education, and
- life skills, such as travelling independently, cooking and eating healthily, staying safe, making sustainable choices, managing personal finances, and preparing for adult or university life.

Such activities should also help students to build experience for their CV and personal statement. External programmes such as the [National Citizen Service](#) can be delivered alongside study programmes to offer students additional opportunities to develop their character, skills, attitudes and confidence, and to support progression.

DfE's Climate Leaders Award, which is due to be launched in autumn 2022, will complement classroom learning and allow students to develop their connection with nature and make a contribution to establishing a sustainable future. It will provide a structured route through existing awards in this area, such as the John Muir Award, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, the Junior Forester Award and others. Participation will enable children and young people to acquire credits towards the prestigious Climate Leaders Award, which will be designed to be recognised and valued in supporting progression to employment and further study.

Sexual and reproductive health

A survey for the 2021 [Ofsted review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges](#) found that 79% of girls and 38% of boys reported having experienced sexual assault. Therefore, providers may wish to focus some of their time on supporting students to understand what healthy, respectful relationships look like and develop their knowledge, confidence and attitudes around relationships and sex.

National and international evidence is clear that young people who receive effective sex and relationships education prior to becoming sexually active are more likely to have their first sexual experience at an older age, use contraception and condoms, and less likely to have an unplanned pregnancy either as a teenager or in later life ([Sex Education Forum, 2015](#))

Providers should support students to access the information and support they need to have positive relationships and sexual experiences and prevent future unwanted

outcomes such as sexually transmitted infections (STI) diagnoses or unplanned pregnancies. By working with local public health teams and voluntary organisations, providers can ensure that they maintain an up to date list of local Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) services, including Sexual Assault Referral Centres, where students can seek advice and support on SRH issues.

Providers are also encouraged to proactively signpost students to accurate and youth-friendly online SRH resources. Resources include the [Sexwise website](#), and the [NHS Sexual Health Service Finder](#) tool, where young people can find accurate information about sex and relationships, and young people's services in their area.

Young people can also be advised to call the national sexual health helpline for free on 0300 123 7123 from 9am to 8pm, Monday to Friday. Calls are treated with sensitivity and in the strictest confidence.

September Guarantee

The 'September Guarantee' entitles all year 11 students, and year 12 on one-year courses, to an offer of a place in education or training for the following September. It aims to ensure that all young people, regardless of what they achieved in school, understand the opportunities that will help them progress, and ensure they receive the advice and support they need to find a suitable place. This can include full-time education, an apprenticeship, T Level, Supported Internship or full-time employment or volunteering combined with part-time study.

The September Guarantee is crucial to ensuring that every young person has a suitable offer of a place in learning by the end of September. We are reviewing monitoring arrangements to ensure that local authorities track and support all young people to find a suitable place in education or training for the following September.

While local authorities are responsible for delivering the guarantee, they rely on support from providers to identify which students are expected to continue with a 2-year programme, and which are likely to leave or complete their current programme and need to find an alternative place for the following year.

[Statutory guidance on young people's participation in education and training](#) gives further information about the duties, including the role of education providers.

Diploma in Sporting Excellence

From the 2022 to 2023 academic year, the Diploma in Sporting Excellence is a Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) funded programme.

The diploma is for young people aged 16 to 18 who are on the talent pathway for their chosen sport and want to combine it with study towards academic or technical qualifications. This programme replaced the non-employed pathway of the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence and the Sporting Excellence Award.

The diploma is usually delivered at weekends or in school/college holidays, although participants are required to commit to regular training. Because the Diploma in Sporting Excellence is funded separately from the 16 to 19 funding formula, the hours spent working towards the diploma must not be included in the study programme's planned hours.

Some NGBs deliver the award themselves, while others use providers to deliver it on their behalf. The provider delivering the Diploma in Sporting Excellence is required to:

- inform the student's study programme provider when a student enrolls on the diploma
- share information about the programme the student is following, including how, where and when the diploma is to be delivered
- share information well in advance about key dates such as competitions that might have an impact on the student's attendance at school/college
- avoid delivery of the diploma overlapping with education wherever possible, including key education dates such as the completion of assignments or educational trips, when the student should give priority to their education
- provide the student with a named contact whom they, or their education provider, can turn to if any issues arise

National Citizen Service

The National Citizen Service (NCS) is a government-backed, part-residential youth programme that develops the skills and confidence of young people. Young people work in diverse teams of 12 to 15 building skills for work and life, taking on exciting challenges, meeting people from different backgrounds and contributing to their local area. [National independent evaluations](#) have consistently shown the positive

impact the programme has on young people, particularly on team working, leadership, resilience, wellbeing and anxiety reduction.

NCS offers an autumn programme aimed at 16 and 17 year old students. Most providers deliver this during term time and devise a programme that complements the non-qualification element of the study programme by offering students further opportunities to develop character, skills, attitudes and confidence. Participants also develop a social action project that they put into action in their community.

NCS is managed locally and providers can tailor activities and materials to suit the student cohort and deliver the programme at a time that best meets their needs. There is no cost to a school or college to get involved and a young person will pay no more than £50 to take part, with bursaries also available. However, as NCS is government funded, the hours the student spends on the programme must not be recorded as planned hours.

DfE has published [guidance for schools and colleges on delivering NCS](#).

16 to 19 education recovery

16 to 19 additional hours

As part of the government's commitment to a long-term education recovery plan, from the 2022 to 2023 academic year, we are funding 40 additional learning hours for band 5 and T Level students, and a proportionate increase for those in lower bands. There is further [guidance on funding bands](#) and [additional hours in the study programme](#).

Additional hours have been introduced to aid education recovery. This, alongside other education recovery programmes such as the 16 to 19 tuition fund, will help ensure gaps in learning caused by disruption to education can be filled.

Prioritising maths

The pandemic has led to significant learning loss in maths, a subject with strong links to earnings and productivity. While there is no formal requirement to use additional hours for more maths for all students, we expect institutions to prioritise maths in the use of additional hours where there is an identified student need.

16 to 19 tuition fund

The 16 to 19 tuition fund is to support small group tuition for students aged 16 to 19 in English, maths and other subjects that have been disrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, including vocational and/or academic learning. Students aged 19 to 24 who have an education, health and care (EHC) plan are also eligible for support.

Funding is allocated on two proxy measures, which are:

- students who have not achieved a grade 4 in English and/or maths, and
- students from the 27% most economically deprived areas of the country based on the index of multiple deprivation

Eligibility for receiving tuition is wider than these proxy measure for funding. To receive tuition fund support all students must be on a 16 to 19 study programme or T Level. The funding should be used to support tuition above and beyond what is already set out in the planned educational activity of the programme. The following students are eligible for tuition via the 16 to 19 tuition fund:

- students who have not achieved a grade 6 in GCSE English or GCSE maths at age 16 and would need catch-up support
- students from the 27% most economically deprived areas of the country (based on the index of multiple deprivation) and would need catch-up support
- students who are economically disadvantaged who meet the 16 to 19 Bursary Fund eligibility criteria and would need catch-up support to reach their full potential will be eligible, even where their prior attainment is high
- students aged 19 to 24 who have an education, health, and care (EHC) plan are also eligible for support, subject to meeting the eligibility for the fund

Our [16 to 19 tuition fund guidance](#) contains more information.

Section 4: Funding and accountability

Funding of study programmes

Changes to the funding of 16 to 19 education were introduced to support the introduction of study programmes in August 2013. Funding is allocated on a per student and not a per qualification basis, so that providers are funded for all planned hours, including non-qualification activity such as work experience.

For more information on 16 to 19 funding, see the [funding rates and formula](#) and [funding regulations](#).

16 to 18 performance tables

Providers are accountable for the quality of the study programmes they offer their students through 16 to 18 performance tables. From 2016 onwards, school and college performance tables have provided clear and easily understood measures of student achievement. Further guidance on accountability and performance measures can be found at [16 to 18 accountability headline measures](#).

Most exams and assessments did not take place in the 2019 to 2020 or 2020 to 2021 academic years, due to COVID-19. We did not publish school or college level results data in performance tables in autumn 2020 or autumn 2021, and we have been clear that this data will not be used to hold schools and colleges to account. We also made clear that we will not use qualification grades achieved in 2020 or in the 2020 to 2021 academic year in future performance measures.

For 2022 to 2023, we will need to continue to adjust the way that we calculate some performance measures at 16 to 18 to take account of the fact that results of qualifications achieved in 2020 and the 2020 to 2021 academic year will not be included. We have published [information about the adjustments we will make to the way we calculate 16 to 18 performance measures](#), and which 16 to 18 measures we will be able to publish for 2022 to 2023.

Further information

Useful resources and external organisations

- The Education & Training Foundation (ETF) launched its [Traineeships Staff Support Programme](#) (TSSP) to support the development and dissemination of good practice
- Health and Safety Executive guidance: [Work experience](#)
- National Citizen Service: [About NCS](#) and information for providers about the [benefits for students](#). [Guidance for schools and colleges](#) on how best to engage

with NCS and case studies specifically for colleges wanting to deliver NCS in term time are also available

- [Ofsted](#)
- Handbook for Ofsted inspectors of further education and skills providers: [Further education and skills inspection handbook](#)
- Preparing for Adulthood: [Access to Work fund for supported internships and traineeships](#)

Research and practice

- [Effective practice in supporting entry/level 1 students in post-16 institutions](#)
- [Effective curriculum practice at below level 2 for 16 and 17 year olds](#) – report and case studies
- [Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges](#) includes good practice in providing effective placements
- [Young people in low-level vocational education: characteristics, trajectories and labour market outcomes](#)
- [Ofsted Level 2 Study Programmes Report](#)
- [Rapid evidence assessment on SEN and post-16 work experience](#)
- [Guide for employers and providers on work experience and SEND](#)

Other relevant DfE advice and statutory guidance

- [16 to 18 accountability headline measures: technical guide](#) – guide for schools, colleges and local authorities on measures in performance tables
- [16 to 19 education: funding guidance](#) – rules and guidance for using post-16 funding allocated by ESFA
- [16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding](#) information on English and maths condition of funding
- [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#) – statutory guidance for schools and colleges on providing careers guidance
- [ESFA post 16: intervention and accountability](#) – information about the intervention framework for post-16 education and skills providers
- Post-16 technical education reforms:
 - [Post-16 skills plan and independent report on technical education](#)

- [Introduction of T levels: information for education providers](#)
- [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England: policy statement](#)
- [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England – guidance for awarding organisations and providers](#)
- [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 2 and below](#)
- [ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice](#) – chapter 7 provides guidance relating to post-16 education and SEND support, and chapter 8 provides guidance relating to preparing for adulthood
- [Supported internships for young people with an EHC plan](#) – DfE advice on study programmes for supported internship providers
- [Technical and applied qualifications](#) approved for reporting in 16 to 18 performance tables
- [Traineeships: information for employers and education providers](#) (for traineeships that started on or before 31 July 2023) - documents about traineeships, who they are for, what they provide, and their funding
- Traineeships: [Delivering 16 to 18 traineeships through ESFA funding](#) (for traineeships that started on or before 31 July 2023)
- [T Level Transition Programme Framework for Delivery\[GN1\]](#) for providers delivering the T Level Transition Programme

Annex A: Examples of study programmes

Academic study programme (per academic year)

	Planned hours: qualification hours	Planned hours: non- qualification hours	Core aim?
A level 1	180		Core aim
A level 2	180		

A level 3	180	
Tutorials		40
Preparation for HE		10
Work experience		40
Social action project		30
Total	540	120

Technical study programme

	Planned hours: qualification hours	Planned hours: non-qualification hours	Core aim?
Tech level	280		Core aim
English GCSE	120		
Tutorials		40	
Employability skills		40	
Work experience		160	
Total	400	240	

Study programme to prepare for employment

	Planned hours: qualification hours	Planned hours: non- qualification hours	Core aim?
Work placement		240	Core aim
English	80		
Maths	80		
Employability skills		100	
Group activities		80	
Tutorials		60	
Total	160	480	

Annex B: Study programmes below level 2 – principles

1. **Assessment** – identify the student’s needs; plan their provision; and ensure that appropriate support is in place to meet these needs. While most students are currently assessed on entry, evidence shows that too many providers fail to make effective use of the assessment to plan the student’s learning programme.
2. **Support to make informed choices** – lower-achieving students typically arrive at college with unrealistic career plans and/or limited understanding of the opportunities available to them. If programmes are to be designed to maximise progression, students need realistic education and career plans. This should, in turn, reduce the number who ‘drop out’ because they find they have an inappropriate choice.
3. **Practical, hands-on teaching** in a workshop environment can enthuse a student who struggled in school. Basic skills can be embedded into vocational programmes, making them more appealing than separate classes. An introduction to their chosen occupational area will also help students progress to further learning, an apprenticeship, or employment at an elementary level.

4. **English and maths in line with DfE policy**, and which supports, where appropriate, the level the student needs to have achieved to progress to their chosen level 2 programme, apprenticeship or occupation.
 5. **Engagement with employers** and work-related activity to introduce students to the opportunities available and the behaviours that employers expect. A structured work placement may be right for some, but others working at entry/level 1 may benefit more from experiencing a variety of different employment-related activities.
 6. The programme must be **flexible** if it is to meet the needs of this diverse group, and to respond to some inevitable changes in the student's longer-term plans. As such, the balance between the elements above must be individually tailored to student needs.
 7. **Pastoral and specialist support** to help students to remain engaged and progress. A high proportion of students will have special educational needs or personal and social issues and will have received additional support when they were in school. Failure to provide sufficient support post-16 risks students 'dropping out' of education, so it is important that providers address any special education or other needs so these students can benefit fully from the study programme.
 8. All programmes must focus on **progression** to the next stage of education or employment. Students should be encouraged to move on in less than one year if they are ready and have been offered other training or employment.
-

1. The core aim is the principal or 'core' activity in a student's programme. It must be a learning aim so that it can be recorded in the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) or school census. Institutions returning the ILR identify the core aim for each programme. For the school census, institutions must only return the core aim for students studying vocational programmes, or mixed programmes with a vocational core. ↩
2. More information about T Levels can be found in [introduction of T Levels](#). ↩
3. The process for approving technical and applied qualifications for inclusion in performance tables has been suspended. No new qualifications will be accepted for consideration on performance tables for at least 2 years following the publication of the 2020 performance tables list (September 2018). Qualifications included in performance tables are still subject to the post-16 level 3 and below review of qualifications in England. DfE (2019). '[Reforms to post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England](#)'. ↩
4. [14 to 19 qualifications technical guidance: 2020 performance tables](#). For information on the impact of COVID-19 on performance tables, see page

29. [↩](#) [↩2](#)

5. DfE (2016). [‘Evaluating youth social action’](#). [↩](#)

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