



Department  
for Education

# **16-18 Performance Measures Qualifications: amendments for 2026**

## **Guidance**

**December 2023**

# Contents

Summary	3
Expiry date	3
Who is this publication for?	3
Background	3
Guidance	4
Amendments and qualifications in scope	4
Evidence	6
Withdrawing qualifications from the 2026 list	6
Future 16-18 performance measures process	6
2026 KS4 Qualifications	7
Contact	7

## Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to help awarding organisations to amend and update 16-18 qualifications which currently count towards 2025 performance measures, prior to inclusion within 2026 performance measures.

## Expiry date

This guidance expires on 30 April 2024

## Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- Awarding organisations

## Background

A moratorium has been in place since the 2020 performance table lists were published in 2018, which means that no new vocational or technical qualifications can be added to the list of 16-18 qualifications which count towards performance measures.

We are beginning the process of continuing ('rolling over') qualifications currently counting towards 2025 performance measures to be on the list of qualifications that will count towards 2026 performance measures (2026 list).

Before we publish the 2026 list, we are opening our usual annual process for awarding organisations to submit proposed amendments to their 16-18 Technical Certificates, Tech Levels and Applied General qualifications that already count towards the 2025 performance measures, for example where this is necessary to update content to reflect legislative change.

This process starts on 19 December 2023 and closes on 4 February 2024. We would welcome early submission of qualification amendments.

## Guidance

This guidance details the process by which any proposed amendments can be submitted by awarding organisation and how these will be reviewed by the department.

The awarding organisation must clearly identify:

- the qualifications they are amending
- the specific changes they propose
- how the qualifications remain compliant with the characteristics in the 2020 Technical Guidance.

The department will review all proposed amendments and decide whether the changes are within scope (see below) and if the qualification(s) continues to demonstrate all the characteristics of a performance measures qualification.

All proposed changes to qualifications should be submitted via e-mail to [Technical.EDUCATION@education.gov.uk](mailto:Technical.EDUCATION@education.gov.uk) by 5:00pm on 4 February 2024. Please ensure that your email subject title is: **16-18 2026 Performance measures qualifications amendments: [insert qualification number and title]**.

Please submit the amendments for each qualification or each suite of related qualifications on a separate email.

**To note: A nil return is required** if the awarding organisation does not intend to amend any qualifications currently counting for 2026 performance measures. Please ensure that your email subject title is: **16-18 2026 Performance measures qualifications amendments nil return: [insert awarding organisation name]**.

The department intends to inform awarding organisations of the initial outcomes of the review process in February 2024. Note that this date is dependent on the overall number of qualifications submitted by awarding organisations for review.

If the initial outcome is not to approve the amendments, details of the appeal process will be communicated to awarding organisations in the initial outcome letters. The department intends to inform awarding organisations of the outcomes of the appeal process in late spring 2024. Note that this date is dependent on the overall number of qualifications submitted by awarding organisations for review and appeal.

## Amendments and qualifications in scope

Any proposed amendments to a qualification should not be so extensive that it starts to become a new or substantially different qualification. Amendments considered to be too extensive or not compliant with the [2020 Technical Guidance](#) criteria will not normally be accepted, in which case the original qualification will remain on the department's performance measures list.

The baseline for qualifications to be included in 2026 performance measures is that they:

- were originally approved for inclusion in 2020 performance tables, and were subsequently extended into 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 performance measures approved lists.
- only contain amendments to those qualifications that were approved by the department as part of the annual amendments processes run since September 2018.
- do not contain any Covid-19 related adaptations.
- are not on the [final list of qualifications overlapping with T Levels in waves 1 and 2](#) which will have 16-19 funding approval removed from 1 August 2024.

Examples of amendments that will be considered are listed below. The list is not intended to be exhaustive, other reasonable proposed changes will be considered.

- **Update to content** – amendments incorporating changes in legislation, changes in trade standards/specifications, reacting to feedback from centres about the content.
- **New content** – the introduction of new units totalling not more than 20% of the number of units in the qualification, the guided learning hours of the new units do not total more than 20% of the qualification's guided learning hours.
- **Changes of assessment methodology** – amendments to bring assessment in line with that of other qualifications in a suite, increasing the percentage of external assessment beyond the minimum level set out in technical guidance, replacing some multiple-choice questions within an assessment with longer-response questions.
- **Name change** – changes to one or two words within the name, reacting to feedback from centres about the name of the qualification.
- **Technological advances** – such as introduction of online assessment or remote invigilation options, with necessary controls and conditions set out.

**Please note:** Decisions about amendments are within the department's discretion. Where a proposed amendment reflects one of the above listed examples, that will not guarantee that the amendment will be allowed. Each qualification will be reviewed to ensure that the proposed amendments are within scope and that the amended qualification still demonstrates the characteristics of a performance measures qualification, as set out in the 2020 Technical Guidance and in this guidance.

**Please note:** All Covid-19 related adaptations that have taken place in previous years have now ended.

## Evidence

For the department to assess the changes fully, please submit the following documentation, with all amendments clearly identified and highlighted through the use of 'tracked changes'.

- **Rationale for the proposed changes** – in particular the rationale for any amendments to the assessment scheme should be very clear.
- **Specification** - showing the amendments in 'tracked changes'.

Documentation that does not show the amendments in the format required will not be considered and the amendments will not be approved.

If your proposed changes necessitate any amendments to the purpose statement, sample assessment materials or recognition letters, please also submit those amended documents along with the rationale for the proposed changes and 'tracked changes' specification.

The department anticipates that it will take between six to eight weeks from the end of the submission window for the review and initial decisions to be communicated.

For clarification, the department does not provide advice and guidance on the development of assessments or amendments to any parts of an approved qualification. The department will only provide advice on, and clarification of, the required characteristics contained within the 2020 Technical Guidance, and advice on the process for awarding organisations to follow when proposing changes to approved qualifications.

## Withdrawing qualifications from the 2026 list

If you intend to withdraw a qualification and do not wish it to count towards performance measures in 2026 or appear on the **2026 performance measures list**, please send the details (Qualification Number and Title) to [Technical.EDUCATION@education.gov.uk](mailto:Technical.EDUCATION@education.gov.uk), so that the department can remove it when updating our list for publication. Please ensure that your email subject title is: **16-18 2026 Performance measures qualifications amendments withdrawals: [insert awarding organisation name]**.

## Future 16-18 performance measures process

Alternative academic and technical qualifications that are approved for funding to be taught from **1 August 2025** will be eligible for inclusion as part of the 16 to 18 performance measures in 2027. Full details of the process for adding qualifications to the list of those that count in 16 to 18 performance measures, performance points and approach to discounting will be published in due course.

## 2026 KS4 Qualifications

The department informed awarding organisations that the qualifications approved for 2025 performance measures would automatically be included for 2026 performance measures unless they have been substantially amended. KS4 colleagues will write to awarding organisations in due course regarding this. Please note the KS4 process is separate from the one described in this 16-18 guidance and is administered by a different team.

## Contact

Any enquiries about the submission process should be sent to:

[Technical.EDUCATION@education.gov.uk](mailto:Technical.EDUCATION@education.gov.uk). Please ensure that your email subject title is:

**16-18 2026 Performance measures qualifications amendments enquiry [insert awarding organisation name].**



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