



Department
for Education

Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England

Appeal process for awarding
organisations to request retaining 16 to
19 funding approval from 1 August 2025
for a qualification provisionally assessed
as overlapping with wave 4 T Levels.

January 2024

Guidance for awarding organisations

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Summary

1. The review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below aims to develop a streamlined qualifications system for students aged 16 and over. Our key principles are quality, purpose, necessity, and progression, which will help lay the foundation as we move to introducing the Advanced British Standard. The review's [first stage consultation](#), published in March 2019, set out the government's intention to remove funding approval from qualifications at level 3 which overlap with T Levels. Our response to the first stage consultation was issued in October 2020 alongside a set of more detailed proposals in a [second stage consultation](#) on level 3.
2. In our [second stage consultation response](#), we confirmed the government's intention to remove funding approval for qualifications for young people aged 16 to 19 that overlap with T Levels. This is because the rigour of T Levels means they provide the best overall preparation for students to enter skilled employment for the first time and their subsequent future career, and are, therefore, the right choice for most 16 to 19 year olds who wish to pursue a technical route.
3. The provisional overlap list accompanying this publication covers wave 4 T Levels rolled out on or before 2024. Qualifications which overlap with wave 4 T Levels rolled out on or before 2024 will have 16-19 funding approval removed in August 2025. Funding of qualifications for post-19 will be subject to the new approval process and must be submitted for assessment in the appropriate cycle. Further information can be found in our [guide to the future landscape](#) and the [Qualifications funding approval manual: 2025 to 2026](#).

Methodology

4. We have defined qualifications that overlap with T Levels as those that are technical, where the content and outcomes are similar to those covered by a T Level and are aimed at supporting entry to the same occupation as a T Level. Qualifications were assessed for overlap by applying these principles in 3 tests. A qualification needed to meet all 3 tests for it to be deemed to 'overlap'. The tests are:
 - **Test 1:** Is the qualification technical - in that its primary purpose aims to support entry to employment in a specific occupational area(s)?
 - **Test 2:** Are the outcomes of the qualification similar to those set out in an occupational standard covered by a T Level? – in that at least a third of the content, learning and assessment outcomes needed to attain the qualification are also set out in an occupational standard covered by a T Level¹?

¹ Occupational standards covered by wave 4 T Levels are listed in Annex A.

- **Test 3:** Does the qualification aim to support entry to the same occupation as a T Level – in that it aims broadly to support entry into an occupation for which a T level provides occupational competence²?
5. We also considered whether a qualification meeting all 3 tests above should nevertheless retain funding approval. Funding approval was retained in a limited number of cases where the qualification was also determined be:
- **Exception A:** the qualification is primarily designed to support those already in a job role, as our criteria for withdrawing funding is aimed at qualifications that overlap with the content and purpose of T Levels, including *supporting entry* into the same occupation as a T Level.
6. We commissioned independent assessors to evaluate qualifications against these tests. This brought external qualification expertise to the assessment process. The assessors found that 71 qualifications currently approved for 16 to 19 overlapped with wave 4 T Levels. These are the qualifications on the [provisional list](#) of qualifications overlapping with wave 4 T Levels published alongside this guidance.

Appeals

7. We have confirmed these provisional overlap assessments to affected awarding organisations (AOs). If you, as an AO, wish to submit an appeal, this guidance describes the criteria, requirements, process, and timescales for submitting an appeal to retain funding approval for any of your qualifications on the [provisional list](#) of qualifications overlapping with T Levels.
8. The deadline for the receipt of appeals is **17:00 on TUESDAY 26 MARCH 2024**. Please follow the process indicated from paragraph 21 onwards.

Appeals upheld

9. A successful appeal does not pre-empt the outcome of the ongoing review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below. All qualifications in scope of the review must be resubmitted either as Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs), or Technical Occupational Qualifications (TOQs) for assessment and approval under this process, in the appropriate cycle.
10. If your appeal is upheld, your qualification's 16 to 19 funding approval will be retained for 2025 to 2026. For your qualification to retain funding beyond August 2026, it will need to be submitted to the new approval process, details of which can be found on the [guide to the future landscape](#) and the [Qualifications funding approval manual: 2025 to 2026](#).

² It is not necessary for qualifications to meet all the KSBs in the relevant standard in order to satisfy test 3. Test 3 aims to take a holistic approach to determine the intended (or likely) occupation in which it may be supporting entry into.

Appeals not upheld

11. If your appeal is **not upheld**, funding approval for **16 to 19 year olds** will be withdrawn from 1 August 2025, meaning the last date for new starts on these qualifications will be 31 July 2025.

- **To note:** Funding approval for 19+ will continue beyond 1 August 2026, as long as it meets the new criteria for approval.
- If your qualification is also taken by students aged 14 to 16 (at Key Stage 4), or in apprenticeships, current funding approval will remain unaffected within these offers.

Expiry or review date

15. This guidance will expire on 26 March 2024.

Who is this publication for?

16. This guidance is for awarding organisations.

Background

17. The appeals process set out in this guidance relates to withdrawing funding approval from qualifications overlapping with wave 4 T Levels rolled out on or before 2024 for 16 to 19, which will take effect from 1 August 2025.

Purpose

18. This guidance sets out the appeal process and timescales if you wish to challenge the overlap assessment for one of your qualifications.

19. If your appeal is upheld, paragraphs 9 and 10 above show the various next steps.

20. If an appeal is not upheld, public funding approval will be withdrawn for new starts for 16 to 19 from 1 August 2025, as outlined in paragraph 11 above.

Appeals

21. We have notified all AOs who have qualifications on the [provisional list](#) of qualifications overlapping with T Levels of the outcomes of the overlap assessment process. These qualifications are in scope to have funding approval removed from 1 August 2025.

22. If you wish to challenge the overlap assessment of one of your qualifications, **you must use this appeal process to indicate why funding approval should not be removed.**

23. **Please note that we will only accept appeals from you, as the AO** offering the qualification. We will not accept appeals from providers of education and training, or other organisations. You must provide us with a single appeal submission for each individual qualification assessment that you are appealing as well as a summary form if your appeal covers more than one qualification.

- The appeal form for each individual qualification's appeal is available at [Wave 4 T Levels: overlapping qualifications](#).
- The summary of appeals form for listing every qualification outcome you are appealing is also available [Wave 4 T Levels: overlapping qualifications](#).

24. The deadline for the receipt of appeals is **17:00 on 26 MARCH 2024**. Please follow the process indicated from paragraph 25 onwards.

Appeals against an overlap assessment

25. If you have a qualification on the published [provisional list](#) of qualifications overlapping with T Levels, you can submit an appeal against the overlap assessment decision.

26. Appeals will only be accepted on the grounds that **the qualification does not meet one or more of the 3 overlap tests**, or it meets the **exception**, as detailed below:

Test 1: the qualification is **academic** and **not technical**. A qualification is considered:

- **academic** if its primary purpose is assessed to support progression to higher education (HE) or other higher level study.
- **technical** if its primary purpose is assessed to support direct entry into a skilled job role.

To note: we focused on primary purpose, as dual purpose qualifications exist that support progression to both HE and skilled employment. Example: some qualifications that claim to be technical may only offer an introductory overview of a sector or occupation. These were considered to be academic.

Test 2: the qualification **does not partially overlap** with the outcomes of a T Level in that the content, learning, and assessment outcomes needed to attain the qualification are **not** set out in **an occupational standard covered** by a T Level.

- Qualifications only need to **partially cover** an occupational standard covered by a T Level in order to be assessed as overlapping. Qualifications may still align with the content and purpose of a T Level while not offering all the elements required by a standard.
- For the purposes of our criteria, we determined that a qualification may overlap with a T Level if **at least a third** of the content, learning, and assessment outcomes of the qualification were also set out in an occupational standard covered by a T Level.

Test 3: the qualification **does not aim to support entry** to the same occupation(s) as a T Level but aims to **support entry** into a **different specific occupation NOT covered by a wave 1 to 4 T Levels rolled out on or before 2024**.

- In light of Test 3, we applied a more 'holistic' consideration of the qualification in this test to determine whether the qualification **aims to support entry into one of the occupations** offered by wave 4 T Levels based on the occupational standards they cover. This includes the occupations to which the qualification is most aligned

based on the content and learning outcomes, specific objective statements and whether it is accepted by relevant authorities to work in the occupation.

Exception A: the qualification meets the 3 overlap tests but is **aimed at those already in work**.

- **Example:** a qualification that is part of an employee's Continuous Professional Development or that an entry prerequisite for the qualification is that the student is already in work.

27. If you are able to provide sufficient evidence that your qualification **does not meet** one or more of the 3 tests, or your qualification meets the exception, then your appeal will be upheld and funding approval for 16 to 19 will be retained, as indicated above in paragraph 9 and 10 above.

28. A successful appeal does not pre-empt the outcome of the future funding approval decisions. If a qualification does not achieve approval through the relevant process, it will have funding approval withdrawn.

Evidence

29. Evidence submitted should directly address the ground(s) of the appeal. You will need to present evidence that shows the qualification does not meet the overlap test(s) assessment being challenged.

- To note: greater weight will be given to evidence relating to the qualification's specification, description and original design and intended purpose.
- To note: you should avoid the use of standardised templates to secure stakeholder support. Greater weight will be given to evidence that directly addresses the grounds on which you are appealing.

30. **Test 1:** You will need to show that the qualification mainly covers content that is knowledge-based and relevant to progression to HE or higher levels of study as its primary purpose, and that it is not designed to support entry into work.

- You should submit appropriate evidence in support such as an annotated **original** specification for the qualification indicating where and how it shows the qualification meets the criteria for being academic. You should also submit supporting evidence from **a minimum** of 6³ receiving institutions, e.g. **HEIs, or other receiving education and training providers**, specifying that the qualification by its formal title, is primarily used and accepted as a current entry requirement for progression **to relevant and named HE courses**.

³ We understand that some specialist qualifications may not be accepted to a wide range of HEIs. We will accept evidence from fewer institutions if there are clear reasons provided for this, for instance few courses in the relevant specific area are offered.

- Evidence that is **general in nature will not satisfy this requirement**. For example, that the qualification is accepted as meeting general entry requirements or meets the UCAS points requirements.
- We will not be able to consider letters of support for the qualification from providers who deliver the qualification as evidence in this test, as it is the **use of the qualification** as an HE **entry requirement for specific courses** that we expect to see.
- It is advised that you do not send links to websites as these are subject to change. Where you feel that the website is sufficient, you may print as pdf, the webpage. This must clearly show the receiving institution, and also satisfy the other requirement as stated above.

31. **Test 2:** You will need to show that the qualification does not partially cover the occupational standard. You will need to show that at least two thirds of the qualification's content, learning, as well as its outcomes, are **not included** on the relevant occupational standard for the appeal to succeed.

32. This means that a qualification will be deemed to have met test 2 and will have funding approval withdrawn if at least a third of the content, learning, and outcomes are included on the relevant occupational standard.

- You should submit appropriate evidence in support such as the **original** specification for the qualification and other supporting evidence related to the qualification's content, learning and assessment outcomes.
- We recognise that content is expressed in different ways, given different weightings and subject to different assessment methods. We acknowledge that similarity between the qualification's requirements and the requirements of an occupational standard will be different for each qualification.
- Qualifications with optional pathways through the qualification will be considered to overlap if a minimum of 1 optional pathway overlaps with an occupational standard covered by a T Level.
- **Annex A** lists the occupational standards that are covered by wave 3 T Levels.

33. **Test 3:** You will need to show that the qualification aims primarily to support students to work in a different occupation to the relevant wave 3 T Level.

- You should submit appropriate evidence in support. This must include confirmation from a **minimum of 5 current employers** that the qualification has been used regularly in the last 3 years⁴ to support entry to occupations **not supported** by a T Level. Employers should ideally be **medium-sized** and covering a **national or regional** area, although we will accept evidence from **other types of employers** alongside this. Letters should be specific in naming job

⁴ If your qualification has not been operational for this length of time, we will accept evidence from as many years as the qualification has been operational.

roles and occupations, that the qualification is regularly used to support entry into the stated job role / occupation and specify the formal qualification title.

- Generic letters of support or endorsement for a qualification will not be accepted as sufficient evidence.
- In addition, professional bodies as representatives of the relevant occupational areas and regional Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) are welcome to provide evidence to support **an appeal made by an awarding organisation**. We will consider all appeals submissions based on the standard of evidence, rather than weighting by who it was provided by. Evidence should be specific and relevant to the qualification in question.

34. **Exception A:** You will need to show that the qualification can only be completed by those **already in work**.

- You should submit appropriate evidence in support of your appeal, such as evidence that the qualification can only be properly assessed whilst the student is in work.
- You should evidence how its design and specification make it **inappropriate for students** that are **not employed or in a work-setting**. Requiring students to be taught or assessed in simulated work settings or realistic working environments **will not trigger this exception**.
- The evidence should clearly show that the qualification **cannot be completed within a classroom environment**. Evidence that the qualification can be taken as part of an apprenticeship will **not** be sufficient.

35. The specification and other guidance documents submitted in evidence must be those **current at the date of publication** of the [provisional list](#) of qualifications overlapping with T Levels. **Evidence derived from documentation updated after this date will not be accepted.**

36. If you submit an appeal against an overlap assessment, you must make sure it is clear **why** you are appealing, **how** your evidence supports the appeal grounds and the **qualification** in scope. Therefore, evidence must:

- Be **current**, as indicated in paragraph 35,
- **relate to the ground(s) of appeal** on which the appeal is being made,
- be **specific** to the qualification under appeal, **and**
- contain **details of the source**, e.g., if the evidence is from an employer or HEI or other receiving institution, it must contain the name, job role, relevant experience within the sector and contact details of the person offering the evidence. We will accept emails which contain this detail.

37. Evidence will only be considered against the tests and exceptions indicated on the form and for which evidence is submitted. Independent assessors not involved in the original decision will consider the appeal in order to maintain the objectivity and independence in the process.

Appeal outcomes

38. Once all appeals have been considered and the outcomes determined, we will publish a final list of qualifications overlapping with T Levels. We will also write to you individually to inform you of the final outcome for each of your appeals. We anticipate this will be in May 2024.
39. If an appeal is upheld, funding approval will be retained as outlined at paragraphs 9 and 10. Please note that a successful appeal does not pre-empt decisions that will be taken as part of the new funding approval process from 2025 onwards and awarding organisations must still submit qualifications that have been assessed as not overlapping with wave 4 T Levels in the relevant approval cycle.
40. For qualifications in other routes, for funding beyond August 2026, will need to be submitted and approved through cycle 2 of the new funding approval process. Further details on which routes and subjects are included in each cycle can be found in the [guide to the future landscape](#) and the [Qualifications funding approval manual: 2025 to 2026](#).
41. If an appeal is not upheld, funding approval for the relevant qualification will be withdrawn from 1 August 2025, meaning the last date for new funded starts on these qualifications will be 31 July 2025. This excludes funding approval for qualifications taken by students aged 14 to 16 (at Key Stage 4), adults, and apprenticeships.
42. At the point of notification about the appeal outcome, the appeal process will be complete; there are no further rights of appeal.

Submitting an appeal

42. Each appeal must only relate to one qualification. To submit an appeal, you must complete one appeal form for each individual qualification, and a summary of appeals form listing every qualification subject to appeal.
43. The summary of appeals form must also be completed with the details of the appeals/qualifications submitted, so that we can ensure we have received all the relevant documentation from you for each qualification subject to appeal.
44. Please email the completed forms and your evidence to Overlap.APPEALS@education.gov.uk by **17:00 on TUESDAY 26 MARCH 2024**.
45. We will not accept late submission of forms, evidence, or other supporting information. Any late submission will not be considered and will mean the qualification will have funding approval removed from 1 August 2025.
46. We will send you an email confirming that we have received your appeal. Please note that emails may be rejected due to size restrictions (25 Mb maximum). If we have not told you that we have received your appeal within three working days, please email Overlap.APPEALS@education.gov.uk.
47. Once we receive your appeal, we will check to see if it is eligible for consideration. We will tell you if we require any further clarification regarding the appeal.
48. You must make sure that the number of individual appeals submitted matches the number on the summary of appeals form, and that all files and supporting evidence

are attached to your appeal form submission. Please do not send documents that are password protected.

Timetable for the process of retaining funding approval for qualifications provisionally considered to overlap with T Levels

Event	Date
Outcome of overlap assessment process communicated to individual awarding organisations.	30 JANUARY 2024
Deadline for submission of appeals.	26 MARCH 2024
Outcomes of appeals process communicated to individual awarding organisations and Anticipated publication of final list of qualifications from which public funding approval will be withdrawn in the academic year 2025 to 2026	May / June 2024

An appeal process flowchart is at Annex B.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the removal of public funding approval from qualifications overlapping with T Levels, or about the appeal process, please send them to Overlap.APPEALS@education.gov.uk.

Annex A – Occupational standards covered by wave 4 T Levels

Agriculture, environmental and animal care route

T Level Pathway	T Level occupational specialism	Standard(s)
Animal care and management	Animal management and behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0397 Animal care and welfare assistant • ST0789 Keeper and aquarist
	Animal management and Science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0343 Veterinary nurse • ST0789 Keeper and aquarist
Agriculture, Land Management and Production	Livestock production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0467 Poultry technician
	Tree woodland and management and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0223 Arborist
	Crop plant and production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0018 Crop technician
	Floristry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0538 Florist
	Ornamental horticulture and landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0226 Landscape horticulture supervisor
	Land-based engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0243 Land-based service engineering technician

Creative and design route

T Level Pathway	T Level occupational specialism	Standard(s) and option(s) where applicable
Media, broadcast and production	Events and Venues Technician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0106 Creative venue technician • ST0255 Live event technician
	Content Creation and Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0105 Junior content producer • ST0341 Broadcast production assistant
	Creative Media Technician	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0424 Broadcast and media systems technical operator
Craft and design	Jewellery Maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0439 Jewellery, silversmithing, and allied trades professional – Silversmithing option only
	Ceramics Maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0919 Craft assistant
	Furniture Maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0639 Bespoke furniture maker
	Textiles and Fashion Maker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ST0846 Garment maker

Legal, Finance and Accounting route

T Level Pathway	T Level occupational specialism	Standard(s)
Legal Services	Legal Services Assistant Business, Finance and Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ST0245 Paralegal
	Legal Services Assistant Crime, Criminal Justice and Social Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ST0245 Paralegal

Annex B – Appeal process flowchart

TUESDAY 30 JANUARY 2024

Outcome of overlap assessment process communicated to AOs and 6-week appeal window opens.



TUESDAY 26 MARCH 2024 17:00

Appeal submission window closes.



MARCH / APRIL 2024

Consideration of appeals.



MAY / JUNE 2024

Outcome of appeal process communicated to AOs.

Announcement of final list of qualifications that will have public funding removed.



Department
for Education

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