



Department  
for Education

Consultation outcome

# Transition plan: to the reformed 16 to 19 qualifications landscape

Updated 10 March 2026

Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Reforms](#)

[Transition](#)

[Transition planning](#)

[Accountability](#)

[Adult qualifications](#)

## Introduction

This document is aimed at providers of 16 to 19 education in England, including further education colleges, sixth form colleges, independent training providers, and schools with sixth form provision who currently deliver technical or vocational qualifications or plan to do so in future, to support their transition to the new qualifications landscape.

The government is committed to delivering a clear and high-quality 16 to 19 qualifications system. These changes represent a once-in-a-generation shift in vocational education, transforming the vocational landscape for millions of 16 to 19-year-olds and supporting the Prime Minister's ambition for two-thirds of young people to study higher level learning – whether academic, vocational, or technical – by age 25.

Driving economic growth is the government's top priority. In October 2025, we published the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, which set out our reforms to the skills system in England that will develop the skilled workforce our economy needs. The challenge is huge – nearly 900,000 more skilled workers needed in our priority sectors to 2030, 1 million young people not in education, employment or training, and the ever-changing impact of technology and artificial intelligence.

We have published the [government response to the post-16 level 3 and below pathways consultation](#), which received over 750 contributions. Our response, building on the recommendations made in the Curriculum and Assessment

Review, sets out our vision for a reformed 16 to 19 qualifications system that ensures every young person has a clear choice of education pathways that support them to succeed in work and in life.

## Reforms

Our reforms are underpinned by 3 principles:

1. Progression – the qualifications that young people take between ages 16 to 19 must deliver positive outcomes, either enabling them to progress into further study at a higher level or into sustainable employment, linked where appropriate to the areas they studied.
2. Future proof – each qualification pathway must be high quality and adaptable to future skills needs. Each qualification should be equally prestigious, so that whichever pathway students take, it is valuable and respected.
3. Clarity of choice – the pathways for students aged 16 to 19 must be easy to navigate, so that young people are able to make the right choice for them. We want students to have the information they need to choose a pathway that works for them to achieve their desired progression outcomes. Students should be able to make informed choices, whether they want to specialise or study a broader portfolio. They should be able to mix and match academic and vocational qualifications, depending on their needs and plans for the future, so we can better support and retain students on the right pathway for them.

We are announcing 3 key changes to our 16 to 19 qualification system.

## V Levels

Firstly, we are introducing the V Level – our new flagship vocational qualification that will sit alongside A Levels (academic) and T Levels (technical). V Levels will be the same size as an A Level and can be taken alongside A Levels, or other V Levels, to create a broad study programme appropriate for a young person who wishes to progress to higher level study without specialising in one particular area. V Levels will feature engaging applied teaching, learning and assessment designed to develop real world skills. They will be linked to occupational standards, strengthening employer confidence in vocational qualifications and helping to meet the country's long-term skills needs.

The government aims to have only one V Level in a subject. Depending on the occupational route, there could be more than one V Level subject in a route. In a very limited number of exceptional cases, we will consider whether a V Level may be partnered with one other V Level from the same route (in a similar way to the model of maths and further maths A Level), which will enable depth of study whilst

retaining flexibility and study programme breadth. We will not allow V Levels to be combined in ways that recreate a large technical programme within a single route where a T Level exists, in order to avoid overlap.

## **T Levels**

Secondly, we are making further improvements to the T Level, the technical offer for students who want a sector-focused post-16 choice. The T Level will be the only large study programme in the reformed landscape. We will make changes to support the accessibility and scalability of T Levels, to give more young people the opportunity to benefit from them, while maintaining the high quality and positive progression outcomes for which T Levels are known.

Nearly all T Level students who completed their course in 2024 (92%) progressed into work or further study, with a similar proportion to the previous cohort working or studying in the same general field as their T Level (67%). Most completers reported their programme prepared them well for the workplace (66%). Among those progressing to further study or an apprenticeship, 75% said their course prepared them well for this activity.

We will introduce new T Levels in new subject areas that are designed with the understanding of sector needs and based on occupational standards to support progression into skilled technical occupations. Together, these changes will support more students to benefit from these qualifications and the strong progression opportunities they provide.

## **Further or occupational study**

Thirdly, we are introducing 2 new pathways for young people who need to continue learning at a level equivalent to GCSE (level 2) at age 16. They will have a choice of 2 pathways:

- Further Study, which will help them to progress into a study programme of V Levels and/or A Levels, or a T Level
- Occupational, which is a 2-year programme that supports progression to a good skilled job, including an apprenticeship

These pathways will offer a clearer and more purposeful choice to students studying at level 2. [\[footnote 1\]](#)

## **When new qualifications will be introduced**

We have heard that rolling out the new qualifications by route will provide clarity of progression and make implementation more manageable. We therefore intend to rollout the reformed qualifications on a route-by-route basis. Below is an indication of the routes in which new qualifications will be introduced and an approximate timeline.

The list of qualification types for each route is indicative and subject to further testing. However, we know that early and clear messaging is important, which is why further guidance, and more detail about qualifications and planned timelines, will be set out in the Implementation Plan.

### **Academic year 2027 to 2028**

#### **Occupational Certificates:**

- Catering and hospitality
- Education and early years

#### **Foundation Certificates:**

- Digital
- Education and early years

#### **V Levels:**

- Digital
- Education and early years
- Finance and accounting (as part of legal, finance and accounting route)

### **Academic year 2028 to 2029**

#### **Occupational Certificates:**

- Business and administration
- Care services
- Construction and the built environment
- Digital<sup>[footnote 2]</sup>
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Finance and administration
- Health and science
- Sports and leisure

#### **Foundation Certificates:**

- Business, administration and law
- Care services

- Construction and the built environment
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Health and science
- Sports, fitness and exercise science

**V Levels:**

- Business and administration
- Care services
- Construction and the built environment
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Health and science
- Legal (as part of legal, finance and accounting route)
- Sales, marketing and procurement
- Sports, fitness and exercise science

**T Levels:**

- Care services
- Sports, fitness and exercise science

**Academic year 2029 to 2030**

**Occupational Certificates:**

- Agriculture, environmental and animal care
- Hair and beauty
- Horticulture and floristry

**Foundation Certificates:**

- Agriculture, environmental and animal care
- Catering and hospitality
- Hair and beauty
- Protective services

**V Levels:**

- Agriculture, environmental and animal care
- Catering and hospitality
- Hair and beauty
- Protective services

### **T Levels:**

- Catering and hospitality
- Expansion of creative and design
- Hair and beauty
- Protective services

### **Academic year 2030 to 2031**

#### **Foundation Certificates:**

- Art and performing arts
- Creative and design
- Travel and tourism

#### **V Levels:**

- Art and performing arts
- Creative and design
- Travel and tourism

#### **T Levels:**

- Art and performing arts
- Travel and tourism

## **Transition**

We expect providers to transition to delivering T Levels and, in due course, V Levels and reformed qualifications at level 2 once they are introduced from 2027. The government intends to carefully balance the introduction of new qualifications with removal of funding approval from unreformed qualifications to avoid gaps in provision. This is why we are setting a clear end state from the outset, so providers, students and employers can plan with confidence.

To maintain stability during this transition, and to give providers more time and scope to engage with the reforms, we will not remove funding from qualifications in academic year 2026 to 2027 (including in health and science and digital routes), as previously set out.

From academic year 2027 to 2028, funding approval will be removed from legacy vocational and technical level 3 qualifications with 1,080 GLH or more in existing T Level subject areas, except for large health and social care qualifications, which will be removed from academic year 2028 to 2029 to coincide with the

introduction of a T Level in social care. We have published the list of [qualifications due to have funding removed from August 2027](#). As more T Levels are introduced, funding approval for unreformed qualifications with 1,080 GLH or more in those subject areas will be removed in the same year.

Legacy level 3 vocational and technical qualifications below 1,080 GLH will have funding approval removed in the following subject areas in the following academic years.

**Academic year 2027 to 2028:**

- Finance and accounting
- Digital
- Education and early years

**Academic year 2028 to 2029:**

- Business and administration
- Care services
- Construction and the built environment
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Health and science
- Legal
- Sales, marketing and procurement
- Sports, fitness and exercise science

**Academic year 2029 to 2030:**

- Agriculture, environmental and animal care
- Catering and hospitality
- Hair and beauty
- Protective services

**Academic year 2030 to 2031:**

All remaining legacy level 3 vocational and technical qualifications will be removed in this year, including those in the following subject areas (some rare exceptions may apply):

- Art and performing arts
- Creative and design
- Travel and tourism

Legacy level 2 vocational and technical qualifications will have funding approval removed in the following subject areas in the following academic years.

**Academic year 2027 to 2028:**

- Education and early years

**Academic year 2028 to 2029:**

- Business and administration
- Care services
- Construction and the built environment
- Digital
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Health and science
- Legal, finance and accounting
- Sales, marketing and procurement
- Sports, fitness and exercise science

**Academic year 2029 to 2030:**

- Agriculture, environmental and animal care
- Hair and beauty
- Horticulture and floristry

**Academic year 2030 to 2031:**

All remaining legacy level 2 vocational and technical qualifications will be removed in this year, including those in the following subject areas (some rare exceptions may apply):

- Art and performing arts
- Creative and design
- Travel and tourism

The list of level 3 vocational and technical qualifications that are smaller than 1,080 GLH and level 2 vocational and technical qualifications that will have funding approval removed from academic year 2027 to 2028 will be set out as part of the Implementation Plan that we will publish by June 2026.

The removal of funding approval impacts new starts only. Learners who start a course ahead of the removal of funding approval will continue to be funded.

This will create a stable transition period, with less interim change, ensuring that pathways remain available for learners while awarding organisations develop new content and providers build the capacity needed for high-quality delivery.

# Transition planning

To ensure consistency across the sector, we expect every provider that currently delivers or plans to deliver technical and vocational qualifications to have a clear and credible strategic provider transition plan in place. This plan will cover the move to T Levels and, in due course, V Levels and the reformed level 2 pathways. Each plan will be owned by the institution's accounting officer. This reflects the scale of the government's ambition for reform and the need for strong strategic leadership in delivering it. These reforms represent a significant step forward in ensuring students across the country benefit from rigorous, coherent and employer-endorsed qualifications.

To support this, we are establishing a sector-led group of expert practitioners, known as our Qualification Pioneers. This group will play a core role in helping providers to develop individual provider transition plans, modelling effective practice, and advising on the support needed to help providers navigate this change. Their insight will help ensure provider transition plans are grounded in real operational experience and that providers' transition activity is practical, proportionate and achievable.

We will shortly request a strategic transition planning statement (which should reflect your institution's overall strategic plan), from all post-16 providers that deliver, or plan to deliver, T Levels and vocational qualifications. This statement will be submitted via an online form. It will be due by mid-June 2026 and will confirm your institution's high-level intentions for delivery from academic year 2027 to 2028. This response should be informed by the Implementation Plan, which is due to be published by June, and the upcoming consultation on core content for V Level delivery in 2027.

In October 2026, we will ask institutions to confirm whether they are on track to deliver the strategic intentions reported in June, and to note any material changes for delivery from 2027 onwards.

In future years, we will expect all post-16 providers that deliver technical and vocational qualifications to develop and submit annual provider transition plans ahead of the start of the academic year, in line with established planning cycles, illustrating how they will deliver ahead of these major qualification changes:

- by July 2027, for teaching in academic year 2027 to 2028 and high-level plan for subsequent years – this provider transition plan will focus on new T Levels, V Levels and level 2 qualifications
- by July 2028, for teaching in academic year 2028 to 2029 and high-level plan for future years – this provider transition plan will focus on the next tranche of T Levels, and V Levels and level 2 qualifications
- by July 2029, for teaching in academic year 2029 to 2030 and high-level plan for future years – this provider transition plan will focus on the next tranche of T Levels, and V Levels and level 2 qualifications

- by July 2030, for teaching in academic year 2030 to 2031 – our strong expectation is that by this point, all providers will be completing their transition to T Levels and V Levels, and to reformed level 2 qualifications

We expect provider transition plans to cover both the immediate academic year and the subsequent academic years, so institutions can sequence change in a manageable way.

We will set out further details on the support we will provide for the development of provider transition plans. We know that many providers will already have transition plans in place and we will work with the Qualification Pioneers to share best practice across the sector and minimise the burden on providers when sharing these plans with us. We will co-create support materials which may include example provider transition plans and a practical template for providers to use. Where we identify that a provider would benefit from additional support, this will be provided through established channels. Our expectations for on-going planning, support and scrutiny of these plans will be outlined in the Implementation Plan.

Alongside this, we will provide targeted, practical support to help providers deliver high-quality reformed programmes that include the existing [T Levels support for schools and colleges](#). This will include:

- workforce development, including CPD for teachers and leaders delivering the new qualifications
- strengthening careers information, advice and guidance (CIAG) so students understand the new pathways and the opportunities they unlock
- guidance on making best use of capital support, including how to align investment with specialist facilities required for T Level and V Level delivery
- continued access to the T Level support programme resources
- making £11 million available for eligible providers to buy industry-standard equipment to introduce T Levels in high priority areas from September 2026

We will not ask for student-level data in these returns. We will use the information to target support for providers and support a stable transition.

## Accountability

We will introduce clear accountability expectations for post-16 providers. These expectations will focus on ensuring that all providers have a:

- robust provider transition plan, signed by an institution's accounting officer
- clear timeline for implementation
- strategy for supporting staff, students and employers through the change

The Qualification Pioneers group, which will include providers that plan to

transition fully to T Levels where they are available in 2026, will help shape what these provider accountability expectations should look like in practice, including what constitutes a strong individual provider transition plan, and how providers can evidence readiness. We are also exploring how best to use existing accountability structures, to minimise additional burden on providers.

Providers will be encouraged to share their provider transition plans with exemplar, or more experienced peers, enabling mutual review, challenge and support. This peer-led model reflects our commitment to building collective capability and our aim to balance proportionate accountability with meaningful support, ensuring that providers are held to clear expectations, without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.

We expect to share further detail on the proposed accountability approach as part of our Implementation Plan.

## Adult qualifications

The reforms outlined in this document apply only to 16 to 19 provision. We recognise that adults will continue to need different skills training to meet the needs of the economy and to progress into, and within, work at both level 2 and level 3. We have recently introduced new qualifications for adults and there is a wide range of existing qualifications available. We will consider whether the new qualification pathways announced today may also support the needs of adults as well as 16 to 19 learners in the future.

Adult qualifications will continue to be funded as they are today. The Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper published in October 2025 includes a commitment to review our adult essential skills offer.

- 
1. On 10 March 2026, the government also launched a [consultation on new 16 to 19 level 1 English and maths qualifications](#) for students with prior GCSE attainment of a grade 2 or below. ↵
  2. As there is no level 2 occupational standard in digital, we are exploring whether this qualification could align with the assistant administrator standard leading to a digital administration role. ↵

[↑ Back to top](#)

To help us improve GOV.UK, we'd like to know more about your visit today. [Please fill in this survey \(opens in a new tab\)](#).



## Services and information

---

[Benefits](#)

[Births, death, marriages and care](#)

[Business and self-employed](#)

[Childcare and parenting](#)

[Citizenship and living in the UK](#)

[Crime, justice and the law](#)

[Disabled people](#)

[Driving and transport](#)

[Education and learning](#)

[Employing people](#)

[Environment and countryside](#)

[Housing and local services](#)

[Money and tax](#)

[Passports, travel and living abroad](#)

[Visas and immigration](#)

[Working, jobs and pensions](#)

---

## Government activity

---

[Departments](#)

[News](#)

[Guidance and regulation](#)

[Research and statistics](#)

[Policy papers and consultations](#)

[Transparency](#)

[How government works](#)

[Get involved](#)

[Help](#) [Privacy](#) [Cookies](#) [Accessibility statement](#) [Contact](#) [Terms and conditions](#)

[Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg](#) [Government Digital Service](#)

**OGI** All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



© Crown copyright