



HM Government

Institute for
Apprenticeships and
Technical Education
(Transfer of Functions
etc) Act 2025 – Report
on exercise of the
Secretary of State's
functions



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Report on exercise of the Secretary of State’s relevant functions

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (Transfer of Functions etc) Act 2025 (the Act), placed a duty on the Secretary of State to publish and lay in Parliament a report on the exercise of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education’s (IfATE’s) relevant functions. The relevant functions being those conferred or imposed on the Secretary of State by sections 1 and 4 to 7 and Schedule 1 of the Act. The report must include information about:

- (a) which of the relevant functions are being exercised through an executive agency known as Skills England, and
- (b) the impact of the exercise of the relevant functions on apprenticeships and technical education in England

Skills England has been established as the national body for skills in England with a vision to create better skills for better jobs, enabling growth and opportunity across the country. It has a vital role to play in achieving the Government’s skills ambitions and delivering the Industrial Strategy. This is a much broader remit than the functions inherited from IfATE by the Secretary of State and described in this report. Government has set clear and ambitious priorities for Skills England’s work in 2025-26 in letters to its chief executives from the Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education, in June 2025, and from the Rt Hon Pat McFadden, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, in October 2025. These priorities reinforce the breadth of Skills England’s functions and are based around three core themes.

- Understanding our nation’s future skills needs and improving our skills offer. Working with partners across Government, the devolved administrations and beyond to provide the single authoritative voice on the country’s current and future skills needs. This will help improve and simplify the skills offer, allow Government to make informed decisions on labour market policy and ensure that employment and skills services are better tailored to support current and future needs.
- Simplifying access to skills. Working with employers to develop and maintain occupational standards so that technical training reflects the needs of employers and adapts to meet the changing needs of the economy and labour market.
- Mobilise and co-create. Taking a pro-employer approach and drawing on data and insights to bring greater coherence to the skills offer, making the system easier for employers to navigate. Working with business to identify the priorities for the Growth and Skills Levy and where to target investment. Delivering sector packages and boosting investment by developing public-private partnerships with industry to address sector skills gaps. As part of the Labour Market Evidence Group, working with the Migration Advisory Committee to boost the domestic pipeline of skilled workers in priority areas, reducing our reliance on migration. Mobilising local partners and employers to shape and deliver local training offers, ensuring employers can access a skilled workforce across the country.

The Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper outlines reforms to the post-16 education and skills system in England. The White Paper confirms Skills England’s important role in maintaining and updating the occupational standards that underpin apprenticeships and technical qualifications, and which, in future, V Levels will be based on. It also notes that Skills England will move towards a more strategic approach of harnessing artificial intelligence and data, alongside employer and stakeholder

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intelligence, to ensure that these occupational standards, and the apprenticeships and qualifications that are based on them, are responsive to changes in the economy and reflect industry needs.

The current tripartite system of Skills England, Ofqual, and the Department for Education in approving technical qualifications is complex, duplicative, and not as responsive as it could be to industry needs. The White Paper notes that this duplication will be removed, ensuring activities sit within the appropriate organisations, promoting agility whilst maintaining quality.

In line with this intention, IfATE’s previous functions related to T levels and approval, withdrawal and publication of technical qualifications will be carried out by the Department for Education. Some functions are already being exercised by the Department for Education, exclusively in relation to T Levels. Other functions that will be exercised by the Department for Education in future are identified in this report.

All other relevant functions that were exercised by IfATE are now being exercised by Skills England, on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Responsibilities for the exercise of the relevant functions

Functions exercised by Skills England

The following functions within the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009 are being exercised by the executive agency Skills England in relation to apprenticeships and technical qualifications:

- Occupational categories (sometimes referred to as “routes”) – s. ZA9
- Mapping of occupational groups – s. ZA10
- Standards – s. ZA11
- Apprenticeship assessment plans – s. A2
- Evaluation of quality of apprenticeship assessment – s. A2B
- Unsatisfactory apprenticeship assessments – s. A2C
- Reviews of published standards and assessment plans – s. A2E
- Revision or withdrawal of published standards and assessment plans – s. A2F
- Examinations by independent third parties – s. A2G
- List of published standards and assessment plans – s. A2H
- Transfer of copyright in standards and assessment plans – s. A2I

Functions exercised by the Department for Education

The following functions within the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, 2009 are being exercised by officials in the Department for Education on behalf of the Secretary of State, exclusively in relation to T Levels:

- Approved technical education qualifications: approval and withdrawal – s. A2D6 (to note this is exclusively activity around withdrawal, where the Secretary of State decides to stop a T Level).
- Approved technical education qualifications: publication and fees – s. A2D7
- Reviews of approval of technical education qualifications – s. A2D8
- Transfer of copyright relating to technical education qualifications – s. A2IA
- Availability of approved technical education qualifications outside England – s. A2IB

The following functions are currently being exercised by the executive agency Skills England in full or in relation to technical qualifications other than T Levels but will in future be exercised in full by officials in the Department for Education on behalf of the Secretary of State:

- Categories of technical education qualification – s. A2D2
- Technical education certificate: approval of technical education qualifications – s. A2D3

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- Additional steps towards occupational competence – s. A2D4
- Further powers to approve technical education qualifications – s. A2D5
- Approved technical education qualifications: approval and withdrawal – s. A2D6
- Approved technical education qualifications: publication and fees – s. A2D7
- Reviews of approval of technical education qualifications – s. A2D8
- Moratorium on further approvals under section A2D5 – s. A2D9
- List of technical education qualifications – s. A2HA

Impact of the exercise of the relevant functions

In exercising the relevant functions listed in this report, Skills England and the Department for Education have balanced stability in the system with seeking to improve upon existing practices. The impact of the exercise of the relevant functions on apprenticeships and technical education in England includes:

- 8 new standards published under s. ZA11
- 3 new apprenticeship assessment plans published under s. A2 – in addition to 7 foundation apprenticeship plans published when Skills England was in its shadow form, prior to the commencement of Section 3 of the Act
- 16 new Level 3 qualifications approved under s. A2D5
- 17 new HTQs approved and 10 HTQ change requests approved under s. A2D5
- 4 qualification approvals withdrawn under s. A2D6
- 15 apprenticeships withdrawn under s. A2F

No adverse impact has been identified on the exercise of the relevant functions following their transfer from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

Regular information will be published on the exercise of functions by Skills England and their impact. This includes information on Skills England’s functions outside of the scope of the relevant functions in this report, such as its skills assessments and its wider work with employers, strategic authorities and other partners to ensure employers can access a skilled workforce across the country. Skills England has published three skills reports to date: Skills England: skills for growth and opportunity, 3 July 2025; Assessment of priority skills to 2030, 12 August 2025; AI skills for the UK workforce, 29 October 2025. These reports have improved our understanding of the skills needs of priority sectors and helped inform decisions by Government and partners across the skills system.

The following types of publications will all be made available through Skills England’s webpages on GOV.UK:

- Letters from the Secretary of State to the chief executives of Skills England setting out the Secretary of State’s priorities for Skills England
- Skills England’s published research and statistics
- Skills England’s Annual Report and Accounts
- Skills England’s corporate plans and annual business plans
- Skills England’s guidance and notices to the sector on its functions
- The published minutes of Skills England’s board meetings

