

[Home](#) ▾ [Education, training and skills](#) ▾ [School curriculum](#) ▾ [Exam regulation and administration](#)  
▾ [Regulating post-16 vocational and technical qualifications at levels 2 and 3](#)



Open consultation

# Part 1 – Ofqual's regulatory approach

Published 23 April 2026

## Applies to England

Contents

[Recognition of awarding organisations](#)

[Setting Conditions, requirements and guidance](#)

[Accreditation of V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates](#)

[Assessment strategies](#)

Ofqual regulates qualifications taken by students in England that are offered by regulated awarding organisations. Ofqual performs this regulation in a range of ways:

- controlling entry of awarding organisations into the market
- reviewing the quality of qualifications and assessments
- creating general, qualification and subject-specific rules and guidance
- monitoring the application of those rules, supporting compliance and where necessary taking regulatory action
- engaging with a wide range of stakeholders to promote understanding

Ofqual has statutory duties not to impose or maintain unnecessary regulatory burden and to have regard to the desirability of facilitating innovation.

We explain in this section the ways in which we propose to regulate V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates.

## Recognition of awarding organisations

Recognition is the process through which awarding organisations become regulated. It requires an awarding organisation to demonstrate to Ofqual that it has the necessary expertise, systems, processes and resources to deliver qualifications. Awarding organisations offering qualifications that are publicly funded by DfE must be recognised by Ofqual to offer regulated qualifications, and this will be the case for V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates. Recognition provides confidence to qualification users that an awarding organisation has the capacity and competence to develop and offer high-quality qualifications and has demonstrated its ability to do this to Ofqual.

Ofqual has [recently consulted](#) on the criteria for recognition it proposes to apply to awarding organisations seeking to offer V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates in the first tranche of qualifications. This consultation set out our intention to require awarding organisations to apply to include each of V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates within their scope of recognition. We expect to publish our decisions in relation to our recognition consultation in June 2026.

## Setting Conditions, requirements and guidance

For the qualifications we regulate, we set general, qualification and subject-specific rules and guidance. Awarding organisations must comply with our rules on an ongoing basis and have regard to the guidance we publish.

## General Conditions of Recognition

Ofqual's General Conditions apply to all regulated awarding organisations and all regulated qualifications. They include 6 principles that awarding organisations must always demonstrate, and Conditions relating to the awarding organisation and its qualifications. In relation to the awarding organisation, they cover its governance, its interactions with Ofqual, and the arrangements it has in place with schools and colleges. In relation to an awarding organisation's qualifications, they cover:

- general requirements such as fitness for purpose, accessibility and complaints handling
- design and development of qualifications, including the size and level of a qualification and the need to publish a qualification specification,
- providing information about qualification fees to purchasers
- setting and delivering assessments, including requirements relating to registering students, reasonable adjustments, and the conditions for taking assessments
- marking and issuing results and oversight of centre-marking
- qualification certificates and arrangements for appealing against awarding organisation decisions

Further information about the General Conditions [is available here](#).

In line with other qualifications we regulate, awarding organisations offering V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates will need to comply with the General Conditions.

## Qualification Level Conditions

For some qualifications, we set additional qualification specific Conditions, requirements and guidance known as Qualification Level Conditions, requirements and guidance. We do this for qualifications including GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Technical Qualifications within T Levels.

Qualification Level Conditions set more specific expectations than those in the General Conditions. They may for example include requirements relating to the

methods of assessment used, or the number of assessment series each year. They can be used to ensure consistency between different awarding organisations offering the same qualification. They can also help ensure that approaches taken by awarding organisations lead to sufficiently valid assessments, and help mitigate risks, such as malpractice, which could exist due to the nature of the qualification or way it is used.

This consultation proposes to set Qualification Level Conditions, requirements and guidance for each of V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates.

## **Subject Level Conditions**

Ofqual may also set Conditions, requirements and guidance for individual subjects within a qualification type, known as Subject Level Conditions, requirements and guidance. We set Subject Level Conditions for subjects in GCSEs, AS and A Levels and Functional Skills qualifications. We use Subject Level Conditions to manage risks relating to a particular subject and to ensure consistent approaches between awarding organisations. This could be, for example, by requiring awarding organisations to comply with published subject content or setting assessment objectives which awarding organisations must design their qualifications to meet.

We propose to put Subject Level Conditions, requirements and guidance in place for V Levels.

## **Accreditation of V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates**

Some qualifications Ofqual regulates are subject to an accreditation requirement, under Section 138(1) of the ASCL 2009 Act. Where this is the case, an awarding organisation may not award that qualification until it has been accredited by Ofqual. Qualifications which must currently be accredited are GCSEs and AS and A Levels. We have also recently consulted on applying an accreditation requirement to Technical Qualifications within T Levels.

For a qualification to be accredited, an awarding organisation must meet Ofqual's accreditation criterion, which is:

“An awarding organisation must demonstrate to Ofqual's satisfaction that it is capable of complying, on an on-going basis, with all of the General Conditions of Recognition that apply in respect of the qualification for which it is seeking accreditation, including all relevant Qualification Level Conditions and Subject Level Conditions.”

Ofqual typically determines whether a qualification meets the accreditation criterion by reviewing draft materials such as specifications, sample assessments and an awarding organisation's assessment strategy.

## Proposal

V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates are new qualifications, designed against common content, with a high degree of consistency and comparability expected between awarding organisations. We propose that each qualification must be accredited before it can be delivered, to ensure that only qualifications of the required quality can be delivered.

Ofqual's existing powers allow us to add V Levels and Foundation Certificates to the list of qualifications subject to an accreditation requirement. Occupational Certificates are covered by separate legislation which gives the Secretary of State power to allow Ofqual to determine whether they should be subject to an accreditation requirement. The Secretary of State has notified Ofqual that it may make such a determination to accredit Occupational Certificates, and we propose to do so.

### Question 1

Do you have any comments on the proposal to add the following qualifications to the list of qualifications subject to an accreditation requirement?

- V Levels
- Foundation Certificates
- Occupational Certificates

# Assessment strategies

Assessment strategies help Ofqual understand an awarding organisation's qualification and assessment design decisions. Awarding organisations use them to demonstrate the steps and approaches they will take to secure, on an ongoing basis, that the qualification and assessments are fit for purpose. Ofqual uses them as a basis against which to regulate qualifications in delivery, and as part of its accreditation process. We require assessment strategies in qualifications including GCSEs, A Levels and Technical Qualifications within T Levels.

## Proposal

Ofqual proposes to require an awarding organisation to develop, follow, and keep under review, an assessment strategy for V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates. We propose to require awarding organisations to:

- establish and maintain an assessment strategy
- ensure their assessment strategy sets out how they will comply, on an ongoing basis with our rules
- design, set, deliver and mark all assessments in line with their assessment strategy
- keep their assessment strategies under review, and notify us of any changes
- review their assessment strategy when we ask them to, and make any changes we request
- if we ask them to, show how they have complied with their assessment strategy (or explain why not) and follow any instructions we give them about complying with their assessment strategy

Ofqual proposes that the assessment strategy should cover key aspects of the design, development, delivery and award of these qualifications. This should include those which apply in general to a suite or qualification type, and those which relate to a specific qualification. We have included our proposed requirements for each qualification in the relevant annexes.

The proposed requirements follow, broadly, the key activities in a qualification's lifecycle:

- developing qualifications
- developing assessments
- delivering assessments
- monitoring qualifications and assessments

The intention of structuring the proposed requirements in this way is to support awarding organisations to produce the assessment strategies as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Our proposed Conditions and associated requirements are set out in [Annex A](#), [Annex B](#) and [Annex C](#) in Condition VL3, FC3 and OC3.

## Question 2

Do you have any comments on the proposed approach to require an awarding organisation to produce and comply with an assessment strategy for:

- V Levels
- Foundation Certificates
- Occupational Certificates?

[↑ Back to top](#)

## Help us improve GOV.UK

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

Cancel



## 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](#)

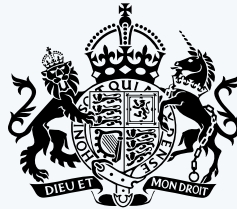
[Get involved](#)

Terms and conditions Rhestr o Wasanaethau Cymraeg

Government Digital Service

**OGL**

All content is available under the Open Government Licence v3.0, except where otherwise stated



© Crown copyright