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[Department
for Education](#)

Guidance

Post-16 pathways: implementation plan

Updated 17 July 2026

Applies to England

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Introduction

This publication is for everyone involved in the planning or delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes. It sets out the changes we are making to the technical and vocational qualifications a young person can choose from the age of 16. The implementation plan will be kept up to date throughout the 4-year reform period.

It should be read with the [Post-16 level 3 and below pathways: government consultation response](#).

We believe it is important that the principles of co-design and collaboration with the sector and employers continue to shape our reforms. We will continue to work closely with partners across the system on the delivery of these reforms and how they can support providers and young people through the transition to the new system.

If you would like to get involved in helping to develop subject content, email us at post16level2and3.delivery@education.gov.uk indicating the subject you would like to support.

Our ambitions

Our 16 to 19 pathway reforms are focused on 3 key principles:

- ensuring that students progress to positive outcomes
- qualifications are high quality and adapt to future skills needs
- pathways provide clear choices

We have set an ambition that, when all reformed qualifications are introduced, every student entering post-16 education will have a clear choice of high-quality pathways. At level 2, this means either a Foundation Certificate or an Occupational Certificate – and at level 3, between A Levels, V Levels and T Levels.

We are working with the sector to ensure that the reformed landscape meets the aspirations of all students for whatever they want to go on to do. This includes the option of apprenticeships for those young people who prefer to gain skills and knowledge while in the workplace.

Implementation timeline

This summarises our overall timeline for delivering our reformed qualifications. V Level, Foundation Certificate, Occupational Certificate, and new T Level subjects and subject titles for each year of rollout will be confirmed when content is published.

In this document, when we refer to subjects, we mean the name that will be used in the qualification title and the scope of content which relates to that title. Subjects are a subset of a subject area. The subject area is the broad route or occupational pathways which provides the basis for what a subject or multiple subjects are based on.

Early summer 2026

- Subject content consultation for 2028 T Levels will be open for 6 weeks

June 2026

- Subject content consultation for 2027 V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates closes

July 2026

- Subject content published for 2027 V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates
- Final list of 2027 V Levels, Foundation Certificate and Occupational Certificate

subjects and subject titles confirmed

- Ofqual consultation on regulation of V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates closes
- [strategic transition planning statements](#)

Autumn 2026

- Subject content published for 2028 T Levels
- Final list of 2028 T Level subjects and subject titles confirmed
- Accreditation and approval submissions to Ofqual and the Department for Education (DfE) for 2027 V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates
- Funding approval is extended into 2027 to 2028 for qualifications that continue to be eligible

September 2026

- Example progression pathways for 2027 V Levels published
- Ofqual publishes its regulations for V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates
- DfE publishes funding approval information for V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates, including where applicable technical qualification approval
- Draft qualification specifications start becoming available for 2027 V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates

November 2026

- Content consultation for 2028 V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates will launch

December 2026

- Content consultation for 2028 V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates closes

Early 2027

- Subject content for 2028 V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates due to be published
- Final list of 2028 V Level, Foundation Certificate and Occupational Certificate subjects and subject titles confirmed
- 2029 V Level, Foundation Certificate, Occupational Certificate and T Level subjects confirmed
- Publication of the list of qualifications due to have funding approval removed from 1 August 2028

Spring 2027

- Qualification materials become available for 2027 V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates

July 2027

- Funding for large legacy qualifications removed in existing T Level subject areas (apart from Health and Social Care)
- Funding for legacy qualifications in Education and Early years (levels 2 and 3), Digital (level 3) and Accounting and Finance (level 3) is removed
- strategic transition planning statements for 2027 teaching due

Autumn 2027

- Qualification materials become available for 2028 V Levels, Foundation Certificates, Occupational Certificates and T Levels

September 2027

- First new V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates begin to be taught – funding for related legacy qualifications removed
- 2030 V Level, Foundation Certificate, Occupational Certificate and T Level subjects confirmed
- T Level Foundation Year name will change to 'Foundation Year'

Early 2028

- Publication of the list of qualifications due to have funding approval removed from 1 August 2029

July 2028

- strategic transition planning statements for 2028 teaching due
- Funding for legacy qualifications in subject areas being rolled out from September 2028 is removed from 1 August 2028

September 2028

- Second year of new V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates begin to be taught, as well as new T Levels – funding for related legacy qualifications removed.

- Funding removed from large legacy qualifications in Health and Social Care

Early 2029

- Publication of the list of qualifications due to have funding approval removed from 1 August 2030

July 2029

- strategic transition planning statements for 2029 teaching due
- Funding for legacy qualifications in subject areas being rolled out in September 2029 is removed from 1 August

September 2029

- Third year of new V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates begin to be taught, as well as new T Levels – funding for related legacy qualifications removed

July 2030

- strategic transition planning statements for 2030 teaching due
- Funding for legacy qualifications in subject areas being rolled out from September 2030 and any areas not aligned to any years of rollout are removed from 1 August

September 2030

- Fourth year of new V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates begin to be taught, as well as new T Levels, and funding for related

legacy qualifications will be removed

Timeline of qualification rollout

This table summarises which qualifications will be rolled out and when, or the subject areas where they will be developed, building on the information set out in the consultation response.

Subjects and subject titles for 2027 are confirmed.

Beyond 2027, all of the subjects and subject areas listed here are indicative and final confirmation will be provided following further content development.

A list of existing T Levels on offer can be found on our [T Level website](#).

Rollout by academic year	Occupational Certificates	Foundation Certificates	V Levels	T Levels
2027 to 2028	Subjects	Subjects	Subjects	Subjects
	Education and Early Years	Digital Systems and Data	Accounting and Finance	
	Early Years Practitioner	Education	Digital Systems and Data	
	Catering and Hospitality		Education	
	Culinary Skills			
	Hospitality (Food and Beverage Team and Accommodation Team)			

2028 to 2029	Subjects (final list to be confirmed in early 2027)	Subjects (final list to be confirmed in early 2027)	Subjects (final list to be confirmed in early 2027)	Subjects
				Social Care
				Sport
	Business and Finance	Business, Administration and Law	Applied Research and Technology	
	Accounts and Finance Assistant			
	Assistant Administrator	Construction and the Built Environment	Construction Design	
	Digital Administration	Engineering and Manufacturing	Engineering Design	
	Health and Care Services	Health and Care Services	Engineering and Manufacturing	
	Adult Care Worker	Science	Health	
	Healthcare Support Worker	Sport, Fitness and Exercise Science	Healthcare and Clinical Technologies	
	Construction (On-site)		Legal Services	
	Bricklayer			
	Carpentry and Joinery		Leisure, Exercise and Sports	
	Stonemasonry		Management, Procurement and Supply Chains	
	Construction (Finishing Trades)		Marketing and Retail	
	Domestic Plumber			

Floor Layer

Painter and
Decorator

Plasterer

Wall and Floor
Tiler

Engineering and Manufacturing

Autocare
Technician

Engineering
Operative

Furniture Making

Welder

Healthcare and Science

Healthcare
Science Assistant

Pharmacy
Services
Assistant

Sports and Leisure

Community Sport
and Leisure
Operations

2029 to
2030

Subjects

**Agriculture,
Environmental
and Animal Care**

Animal Care

Dog Groomer

Equine Groom

General Farm
Worker

Land-based
Service Engineer

Hair and Beauty

Barbering
Professional

Beauty Therapist

Hairdressing

Nail Services
Technician

**Horticulture and
Floristry**

Floristry

Forestry and
Arboriculture

Horticulture or
Landscape
Construction

**Subject
areas (with
subjects to
be
confirmed)**

Agriculture,
Land
Management
and Animal
Care

Hair, Beauty
and
Aesthetics

Hospitality
and Catering

Protective
Services

**Subject
areas (with
subjects to
be
confirmed)**

Agriculture
and Land
Management

Animal Care
and
Management

Protective
Services

**Subject areas
(with subjects
to be
confirmed)**

Catering and
Hospitality

Expansion of
Agriculture,
Environment and
Animal Care

Expansion of
Creative and
Design

Hair and Beauty

Protective
Services

Operative

Land-based
Service Engineer

2030 to 2031	Subject	Subject areas	Subject areas	Subject areas
	Creative and Design			Art and Performing Arts
	CAD Technician (2D Design)	Creative Media and Design	Art and Performing Arts	Travel and Tourism
		Performing Arts	Creative Media and Design	
		Travel and Tourism	Travel and Tourism	

V Level implementation

What V Levels are

V Levels are a new vocational qualification for students who would like to explore a sector, or multiple sectors, without specialising. They will focus on applied learning and aim to cover the core knowledge and skills related to an employment sector.

V Levels are 360 guided learning hours (GLH) each the same size as an A Level. Students will be able to take V Levels in multiple subjects and in combination with other qualifications, such as other V levels, A Levels and, where required, level 2 and below English or Maths to form a broad study programme. To meet their purpose as broad, applied and vocational qualifications, their content will be linked to occupational standards to support workplace-relevant transferable skills.

More information on students' wider study programmes that V Levels will form part of is set out in the section on [student support and enrichment, employability and](#)

[pastoral \(EEP\)](#).

V Levels will not provide occupational competence. Students who wish to develop either occupational competence or threshold competence should consider a T Level or level 2 Occupational Certificate.

We have set 2 ambitions in relation to V Levels:

- in steady state, a student will be equally as likely to progress into level 4+ study whether they take A Levels or V Levels
- in steady state, a student who starts a course will be equally as likely to complete a V Level as an A Level

V Level subjects

As set out in the [Post-16 level 3 and below pathways consultation response](#), we have undertaken an in-depth review of responses to the consultation and further stakeholder engagement to determine viable V Level subjects.

Following this review and our engagement process, we are setting out the subjects that we are taking into content development for 2028. These are based on the subject areas set in the consultation document. This means that the main subjects for 2027 and 2028 have now been confirmed, although subject titles will be finalised following content development. The subjects for 2029 and 2030 will depend on further review, stakeholder engagement and content development.

We are also taking Management, Procurement and Supply Chains (as 'Procurement' and 'Supply Chains' were suggested by consultation respondents) into content development as V Level subjects. This list is subject to further content development work with the sector.

The first V Level subjects being taught in 2027 and 2028

The following subjects will be available to be taught as V Levels in 2027 and 2028:

2027

- Accounting and Finance
- Digital Systems and Data
- Education

2028

- Applied Research and Technology
- Construction Design
- Engineering Design
- Engineering and Manufacturing
- Health
- Healthcare and Clinical Technologies
- Legal Services
- Leisure, Exercise and Sports
- Management, Procurement and Supply Chains
- Marketing and Retail
- Social Care

A final list will be confirmed in early 2027 following the content development process.

Future subject rollout

V Level subjects to be rolled out in 2029 and 2030 are dependent on future development. We will confirm the full list of subjects for 2029 and 2030 following further subject testing and scoping, and when we know the full extent of occupational standards that will be available.

This will be by early 2027 for 2029 V Level subjects and by September 2027 for 2030 V Level subjects.

The following list sets out the current V Level subject areas in scope for content development to develop subjects for rollout in 2029 and 2030:

2029

- Agriculture and Land Management

- Animal Care and Management
- Protective Services

2030

- Art and Performing Arts
- Creative, Media and Design
- Travel and Tourism

Interactions with A Level reforms

As set out in last year's [government response to the Curriculum and Assessment Review](#), we will look to update AS and A Levels in national curriculum subjects to be ready to be taught from 2031 and 2032. This will follow on from reformed GCSEs, which should be ready to be taught from 2029 and 2030. To support coherence across the system, we will aim to reduce duplication where an A Level and a V Level cover similar content and share similar purposes.

Partnered V Levels

As set out in the consultation response, where specific criteria are met, we will consider whether a V Level may be 'partnered' with one other V Level.

This would work in a similar way to how A Levels in Maths and Further Maths can be delivered together. It would mean, in these cases, a maximum of 2 V Levels can be studied together, in the same subject area, for 720GLH. In these cases, partnering is necessary because content from one V Level must be learned to access the 'further' content from the additional V Level.

Partnering criteria

We will take the decision on which subjects will have partnered V Levels as we develop the national content.

We will consider partnered V Levels after we have explored other approaches to cover the content needed (for example, use of optionality so that the qualification offers a broader range of content from which teachers and students can choose).

We will consider this in line with the 2028 V Level content development timeline set out above. In making this decision, we will apply the following criteria for there to be partnered V Levels:

- it will significantly improve the student's ability to progress on to further study, so there is a need for that level of additional content
- it should still offer breadth for the student, so not focusing on a single sub-sector or occupation
- it will provide a distinct choice for students, in terms of potential destinations and content studied, compared to T Levels in the same route
- it will offer the same level of demand as 2 V Levels taken in different subjects, which are not partnered
- it will not offer an alternative large study programme which competes with T Levels

The criteria for partnered V Levels were developed as we considered content for subjects that will be taught from 2027. We believe that these criteria mean that V Levels will only be partnered in a very limited number of exceptional cases. None of the subjects in 2027 met these criteria, given the number of V Levels being introduced and the occupational routes they were in.

We will now apply these criteria when developing content for subjects for future years. We will consider if there is a need for partnered V Levels for 2028, as per the timetable set out in [Subject content and qualification development](#).

Rules of combination

For the 2027 to 2028 academic year, DfE will not implement any rules of combination on which qualifications can be combined to form the qualification element of a study programme. This will allow providers to combine new V Levels in Education, Accounting and Finance, and Digital Systems and Data with existing funded qualifications, such as:

- A Levels
- Alternative Academic qualifications (AAQs)
- Applied Generals
- Tech Levels
- Maths and English retakes

This will allow providers to enable more students to benefit from the new V Level subjects and ensure that students' study programmes enable them to progress.

We want to ensure that, in the reformed system, students are taking study programmes that meet their needs, support their progression to higher-level study or apprenticeships, and support local and national economic needs.

We also want to ensure study programmes that include V Levels provide breadth, enabling students to study multiple subjects while also supporting good progression outcomes. Where students want to take a large programme within a route, they should take a T Level rather than combining multiple qualifications, which will better support their progression.

As further V Levels are introduced, we will make an assessment as to whether rules are needed to ensure students are taking an appropriate combination of qualifications which supports them to achieve their intended outcomes, and do not create a large study programme similar to a T Level.

Discounting may still apply depending on the content of V Levels, as some sector areas may include V Levels that will need to cover similar content.

Assessment and grading

Ofqual is currently consulting on its proposed approach to the regulation of V Levels. We encourage you to provide your views via [Regulating post-16 vocational and technical qualifications at levels 2 and 3](#). The consultation closed on 2 July 2026.

Progression and recognition

In the Post-16 level 3 and below pathways consultation response, we set out our ambition that once all V Levels are introduced and in steady delivery, a student will be equally as likely to progress into level 4+ study whether they take A Levels or V Levels. This ambition includes Higher Technical Qualifications, higher-level apprenticeships and level 6 study programmes. Once those students have progressed, it is also key that they are successful at undertaking and completing higher-level study.

To meet this ambition, we have worked with Universities UK (UUK), UCAS and a range of higher education institutes (HEIs) as part of the content development process for the first tranche of V Levels that will be taught from September 2027.

This engagement has focused on ensuring content can meet HEIs' expectations to support access to HE for those with V Levels.

To further facilitate a smooth transition to the recognition of V Levels by HEIs, as well as continuing to drive HEI recognition of T Levels, we are establishing a Technical and Vocational Qualifications (TVQ) Higher Education (HE) Network. It will be made up of Universities UK, UCAS, HEIs and awarding organisations, and will meet quarterly to enable DfE to foresee issues and create effective solutions with the sector. Members of the HE Network currently include:

- Association of Colleges
- Birmingham City University
- City and Guilds
- De Montfort University
- Institute for Technical Skills and Strategy
- Linking London
- Middlesex University
- Million Plus
- NCFE
- Northumbria University
- Pearson
- Sheffield Hallam University
- The Career Development Institute
- The Gatsby Charitable Foundation
- UCAS
- University Alliance
- University of Bolton
- University of Leeds
- University of Nottingham
- University of the Arts London
- University of West London
- University of York
- Universities UK

We also seek to include additional representation from the FE sector in the network.

Throughout the consultation, we heard about the value of UCAS Tariff points to V levels. Once the Ofqual consultation on V Level grading is complete, we will work with UCAS to publish the tariff points for V Levels as soon as possible.

We recognise the importance of both students and providers understanding the pathway through to HE from a student's chosen V Levels, if that is the route they choose to pursue. We will therefore publish examples of progression pathways for the V Levels that will be taught from 2027 in September 2026.

We also recognise the fundamental role that assessment, grading and standards setting plays in ensuring that students who attain V Levels are well prepared for their next step and that their qualifications secure employer and HEI confidence.

The [Secretary of State's policy steers to Ofqual](#) sets out the need for these qualifications to underpin progression, including to HE. We are grateful to Ofqual for carrying this steer through to its consultation proposals. We will continue to work with Ofqual to ensure V Levels achieve our twin ambitions of strong completion rates and high-value progression.

While the qualification may be well designed by an awarding organisation and offer the potential for strong progression and high completion rates, this happening depends on the quality of curriculum planning and teaching offered by providers. We also plan to work closely with the Qualification Pioneers (see [Provider transition](#)), as well as Ofsted, to establish approaches to planning study programmes that will best help students to succeed.

Future T Level implementation

T Levels are the right choice for students who know what broad career area they want to pursue post-16. T Levels will, therefore, be the only large (1,080GLH) qualification available for students who want a sector-focused post-16 choice in the reformed system.

We will also be making T Levels available for young adults who do not already have a level 3 qualification from autumn 2027, and will provide further detail on eligibility and funding in the near future.

For both new and existing T Levels, we retain the principle that T Levels should be clearly based on occupational standards to support successful progression into a

skilled, technical occupation, either directly, or following further or higher-level study.

In both the design of new T Levels and considering improvements to existing T Levels, we will be guided by the needs of industry and in-delivery feedback from providers and students to refine and improve the qualification. This will include providing greater scope to providers to shape the placement experience for students on the programme.

New T Level subjects

As set out in the [consultation response](#), we have undertaken an in-depth review of responses to the consultation and stakeholder engagement to determine which subjects are suitable as future T Levels.

Based on this review and engagement process, we can confirm the planned introduction of the following new T Levels in 2028:

- Social Care
- Sport

We have produced outline content for these T Levels in consultation with industry bodies, providers, colleges, HEIs and employers. This will be open for public consultation in early summer 2026.

The T Level in Sport will draw from occupational standards including Sport Coach – High Performance Coach and Personal Trainer. The proposed occupational specialisms are to be determined based on subject consultation responses and further engagement.

The T Level in Social Care will be based upon the Lead Adult Care Worker occupational standard, with a specialism in Adult Social Care.

We will confirm subjects for 2029 and 2030 following further subject testing, scoping and when we know the full extent of occupational standards that will be available. This will be in early 2027 for 2029 T Levels and September 2027 for future years.

The following updated, list sets out T Level subject areas in scope for content development in 2029 and 2030:

2029

- Catering and Hospitality
- Expansion of Creative and Design
- Expansion of Agriculture and Land Management and Animal Care and Management
- Hair and Beauty
- Protective Services

2030

- Art and Performing Arts
- Travel and Tourism

Existing T Levels

We have also reviewed the existing T Level portfolio, taking account of employer and student views, and student and provider demand for large, classroom-based qualifications supporting direct entry into the finance sector.

Following this review and extensive stakeholder engagement, we have decided to withdraw the T Level in Finance, with the final cohort commencing from September 2026. T Levels in Accounting and Management and Administration both cover broad, relevant finance content, and will remain available, supporting students who want to progress to roles in the wider Finance sector. The introduction of the V Level in Accounting and Finance from September 2027 will also deliver a high-quality option, providing broader transferable knowledge to support student progression to higher levels of study.

Until then, the T Level in Finance remains in place, providing a high-quality qualification with valuable industry experience, supporting current students looking to build a career in finance.

Support for future rollout

New and existing T Levels will be supported by improvements to industry placements and assessments which were announced in the consultation response.

[Guidance for providers on new delivery approaches for industry placements from September 2026](#) sets out how providers can better shape placements based on local requirements, while continuing to ensure every placement is high quality and gives students a substantive opportunity to apply and embed their skills.

We are continuing to address issues with assessment manageability on a route-by-route basis. New specifications for [Health T Levels](#) and [Science T Levels](#) have been published to support students starting their courses from September 2026. This will result in a reduction in the staff time required to administer and deliver assessments. Redevelopments for T Levels in Engineering and Manufacturing, Accounting, and Management and Administration are also underway. We will share new specifications in early 2027 ahead of qualifications being taught from September 2027.

Ofqual is currently consulting on changes to T Levels that would allow students to resit core exam papers separately where needed.

To support the ongoing rollout of T Levels, we have also made over £11 million in capital funding available for providers delivering T Levels in a route for the first time in the 2026 to 2027 academic year. This is designed to help purchase industry standard equipment for courses in high-priority areas, including:

- Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care
- Construction
- Creative and Design
- Digital
- Engineering and Manufacturing
- Health and Science

As demonstrated in our latest [data publication on T Level entrants](#), the proportion of T Level students progressing without having achieved GCSE English and Maths at grade 4 or above has increased each year, demonstrating that T Levels are reaching a broader group of students. Our ongoing work to streamline T Level content, as well as the changes to the delivery model of industry placements and reduced assessment burden will enable even more students to benefit from T Levels, particularly those needing to retake their English or Maths GCSE, or both.

Ongoing stakeholder engagement and support

We are continuing to test outline content for new T Levels, including considering any further changes to T Level delivery that would be proportionate to meet the needs of sectors covered through the expanded portfolio.

To help DfE address these cross-cutting issues, we have brought together sector leaders and education experts in a task and finish T Level Delivery Group. The group will provide expert advice to DfE on further measures to improve the deliverability and appeal of T Levels – including on accessibility, progression and industry placement delivery.

Membership of the group includes representatives from Skills England, the T Level Ambassador Network, the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, Ofqual, Sixth Form Colleges Association, Federation of Awarding Bodies, Association of Colleges, West Nottinghamshire College, Wigan and Leigh College, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, Cirencester Sixth Form College, City of Sunderland College, East Norfolk Sixth Form College and Hartpury College.

Level 2 pathways

Programmes on offer at level 2

Students at level 2 have two classroom-based choices: to take the Further Study pathway and Foundation Certificates, or to take the Occupational pathway and Occupational Certificates. We continue to support apprenticeships for those young people who prefer to gain skills and knowledge while in the workplace.

The Further Study pathway is for students who want to progress to level 3 (T Levels, V Levels or A Levels). Students study a one-year Foundation Certificate that provides broad vocational knowledge, with subjects formulated and mapped to V Levels and T Levels to support clear progression pathways.

The size of each Foundation Certificate will be set nationally and will be a single point within the 240GLH to 300GLH range with content set nationally to ensure quality and consistency. The Foundation Certificate is combined with:

- level 2 and below English or Maths, or both, as required
- enrichment, employability and pastoral support

- exposure to level 3 learning

The Occupational pathway is for students aiming for relevant skilled employment at level 2, or an apprenticeship. The Occupational Certificate will provide sector knowledge, transferable skills and occupation-specific content aligned to the occupational standards published by Skills England.

This alignment to Skills England's occupational standards means that the qualifications better meet the needs of employers and the economy, and better prepare young people to move into and progress in work.

The size of each Occupational Certificate will be set nationally to a narrow size band (or, in some cases, a single GLH) within the overall range of 540GLH to 720GLH.

Students will complete an Occupational Certificate within a 2-year programme, giving them the time and opportunity to build and hone the practical and technical skills needed to progress successfully into employment, alongside a solid understanding of their intended sector.

This will be combined with level 2 and below English or Maths, or both, as required, alongside enrichment, employability and pastoral (EEP) support, and participation in employment focused enrichment activities (see [Expectations around employability, enrichment and pastoral \(EEP\) support](#)).

What level 2 study programmes will look like

Within these pathways, students will take their own individual study programmes that reflect their specific subject interests and career goals, supported by strong information, advice and guidance. There will be a strong focus on preparing students for what they want to go on to, whether it is work or further study. This includes strengthened guidance at the start of programmes to support students to make an informed choice about which programme to take.

Existing funding flexibilities will continue to apply, including flexibility within the first 42 days of the funding eligibility period. This will enable providers to identify student needs, confirm the suitability of programme choices and support transfers to the pathway best aligned with students' ambitions and circumstances.

We expect students to study either a single Foundation or Occupational Certificate as part of their study programme. Where possible, we are developing the content for

both the Foundation Certificate and Occupational Certificate in parallel, enabling alignment and overlap in content where appropriate.

This could support co-teaching of both pathways by providers to help with delivery to students. As part of the [Post-16 level 2 and level 3 qualifications: 2027 proposed subject content](#), common content has been mapped across both certificates. This mapping will be published following the content consultation as part of the final subject certificate content in July 2026.

Accessibility of the further study and occupational pathways

Both pathways provide clear progression routes, including for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The GLH of both Occupational and Foundation Certificates enable students to access a full, engaging study programme, including pastoral support and enrichment opportunities, alongside their qualification. The size and structure of both qualifications allow providers to tailor support, adapt delivery and extend teaching time where necessary to meet individual student needs.

Foundation Certificates are specifically designed to support students with lower prior attainment to progress to level 3 study. As students with SEND and those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to have lower prior attainment, these reforms are likely to disproportionately benefit and support these groups to progress and achieve a level 3 qualification.

The GLH of the new level 2 qualifications also provides students with time in their study programme to study towards level 2 English or Maths, or both, where required, in line with the [Maths and English condition of funding](#).

The government is [consulting on new 16 to 19 level 1 English and Maths qualifications](#) for students with prior GCSE attainment of a grade 2 or below. These qualifications are intended to strengthen foundations, build confidence and prepare lower-prior-attaining students for success in their GCSE. These new qualifications may be particularly relevant to many students on level 2 or below study programmes.

Engagement in the development of the further study

and occupational pathways

We have set up a level 2 and below Working Group to provide a collaborative forum for exploring and shaping post-16 pathways at level 2. It brings together sector intelligence to support the development and implementation of the level 2 pathway reforms. This group includes sector representatives as well as providers to involve the whole sector in the ongoing development of the pathways, ensuring they are deliverable, viable and aligned with our ambitions.

The members of the working group are:

- Activate Learning
- Blackburn College
- Cambridge Regional College
- City of Bristol College
- EKC Group
- Hull College
- Middlesbrough College
- New City College
- Solihull College
- Association of Colleges
- Association of Employment and Learning Providers
- Natspec
- Federation of Awarding Bodies
- Holec
- Youth Futures Foundation

Foundation Certificate implementation

Foundation Certificate subjects

As set out in the consultation response, we have reviewed and considered which subjects are viable for teaching as Foundation Certificates.

For 2028, based on this analysis and engagement, we are taking all the subject areas set out in the consultation document into content development. The main subjects for 2027 and 2028 have now been confirmed, although there may be changes to subject titles following content development, while subjects for 2029 and 2030 will depend on further content development.

The following subjects will be available to be taught as Foundation certificates in 2027 and 2028:

2027

- Digital Systems and Data
- Education

2028

- Business, Administration and Law
- Construction and the Built Environment
- Engineering and Manufacturing
- Health and Care Services
- Science
- Sport, Fitness and Exercise Science

A final list of subjects and subject titles will be confirmed in early 2027, following the content development process.

Future subject rollout

Foundation Certificate subjects that will be rolled out in 2029 and 2030 are dependent on future development and decisions taken at level 3 reflecting our criteria for Foundation Certificate subjects. We will confirm 2029 subjects by early 2027 and 2030 subjects by September 2027.

This updated list sets out the Foundation Certificate subjects planned for content development in 2029 and 2030:

2029

- Agriculture, Land Management and Animal Care
- Hair, Beauty and Aesthetics
- Hospitality and Catering
- Protective Services

2030

- Creative, Media and Design
- Performing Arts
- Travel and Tourism

Assessment and grading

Ofqual is currently consulting on its proposed approach to the regulation of Foundation Certificate. We encourage you to provide your views via [Regulating post-16 vocational and technical qualifications at levels 2 and 3](#). The consultation closed on 2 July 2026.

Occupational Certificate implementation

Occupational Certificate structure and core content

Occupational Certificates will be designed using content specified by DfE, based on Skills England occupational standards. They will comprise 2 components:

- a broad introductory core which is normally shared across a range of qualifications in the same sector
- occupation-specific content that prepares students for a specific job

The introductory core will normally be up to 50% of the total GLH. It will be designed in collaboration with colleges, awarding organisations, employers and DfE. It will bring together content from a group of Skills England's occupational standards within a sector to ensure students achieve common learning outcomes across that sector.

For example, the same core content in Catering and Hospitality will be relevant across the Occupational Certificates in Culinary Skills and in Hospitality. It will include an introduction to the sector, organisational structures, roles and responsibilities, working with others and transferable skills related to the sector.

The remaining content in each Occupational Certificate will be occupationally specific, incorporating skills from the occupational standards which will be agreed during the collaborative design process and then mandated by DfE.

Awarding organisations will be required to use the occupational standards to identify the appropriate knowledge, understanding and associated behaviours needed to underpin these skills and should embed them in the final qualification. This approach allows awarding organisations some flexibility in developing the occupation-specific content as long as the mandatory skills are covered. For example, it will allow for specifications that respond to local labour market needs or include specialist content that might be of interest nationally.

Occupational Certificate subjects

We consulted on a broad list of subjects that we considered suitable for Occupational Certificates. We have since further considered each subject, looking at demand and use of existing qualifications within study programmes, where occupations are in demand and listened to the views and needs of employers.

We have used this approach to refine the list of subjects and are suggesting combining occupations into a single qualification where there is overlap in the occupational standard.

Combining multiple occupational standards within a single qualification ensures subjects have enough content to create exciting qualifications that will be attractive to students and sustainable for providers to deliver while offering a solid grounding in the skills and knowledge needed to move into employment.

We believe it is important that the principles of co-design with the sector and employers continue to shape both the content and the final list of subjects, so Occupational Certificates meet the needs of students and employers.

We will keep the list of subjects under review as content development and engagement with the sector and employers continue, including how we approach subjects where no level 2 standard currently exists. This may result in changes, such

as further combinations of occupational standards into a single qualification or adjustments to the groupings used for the purpose of developing core content.

As part of this process, we will consider how best to meet the needs of students wishing to study particular subjects. This will include considering whether an Occupational Certificate is the most appropriate approach, or whether another approach (such as an apprenticeship) would better meet their needs, meaning that an Occupational Certificate would not be required.

This is the list of subjects that we will use to begin content development. Content development of subjects for 2027 has already started. More information on the content for 2027 can be found in the [content consultation](#) for Culinary Skills, Hospitality and Early Years Practitioner, which closed on 4 June 2026.

As content development begins for subjects from 2028 onwards, we will continue to review the necessity and viability of subjects. This means the list of subjects for introduction from 2028 is not final and may change until the content of each qualification is consulted on. We will consult on any further changes as part of the content consultations.

2027

Education and Early Years

- Early Years Practitioner

Catering and Hospitality

- Culinary Skills
- Hospitality

2028

Business and Administration

- Accounts and Finance Assistant
- Assistant Administrator
- Digital Administration

Health and Care Services

- Adult Care Worker
- Healthcare Support Worker

Construction (On-site)

- Bricklayer
- Carpentry and Joinery

- Stonemasonry

Construction (Finishing Trades)

- Domestic Plumber
- Floor Layer
- Painter and Decorator
- Plasterer
- Wall and Floor Tiler

Engineering and Manufacturing

- Autocare Technician
- Engineering Operative
- Furniture Maker
- Welder

Healthcare and Science

- Healthcare Science Assistant
- Pharmacy Services Assistant

Sports and Leisure

- Community Sport and Leisure Operations

2029

Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care

- Animal Care
- Dog Groomer
- Equine Groom
- General Farm Worker
- Land-based Service Engineer

Hair and Beauty

- Barbering Professional
- Hairdressing
- Beauty Therapist
- Nail Services Technician

Horticulture and Floristry

- Floristry
- Forestry and Arboriculture
- Horticulture or Landscape Construction Operative
- Land-based Service Engineer

2030

Creative and Design

- CAD Technician (2D Design)

Occupational Certificate size and duration

We expect Occupational Certificates to be delivered within a 540GLH to 720GLH range, over 2 years. We will set a narrower GLH range for each subject, or in some cases, a single GLH, during content development.

This approach will enable the individual qualifications to reflect the size and scale of the underpinning occupational standards while also ensuring that they remain proportionate and deliverable for providers.

A narrow range of GLH (or a single point) will ensure national consistency and quality while also providing an opportunity for awarding organisations to respond to local or regional variation or to reflect their particular specialist expertise.

This approach will allow qualifications studied in a school- or college-based setting to prepare students to progress into employment in a relevant level 2 role while also providing sufficient time for a significant number of balanced and rewarding study programme. This will include time for level 2 and below English and Maths as required, as well as time for enrichment and employability activities and pastoral support.

We recognise that in some subject areas, such as those with hand skills requirements (Construction or Hair and Beauty, for example), a substantial number of students have historically started at level 1 before moving into level 2 qualifications with a view to progressing to employment in that sector.

The 2-year duration of Occupational Certificates allows providers to give these students the time and opportunity to develop and hone the hand skills needed to move into and thrive in employment, along with additional preparation for moving into

work. We are working with employers and the sector to ensure that new level 2 pathways deliver the skills employers need.

The 2-year duration also provides the opportunity for students to receive wider enrichment and pastoral support, including English or Maths, or both, where required. This will better prepare young people for future progression or study opportunities when building their career. We will engage with the sector and use the content development process to explore this further.

Assessment and grading

Ofqual is currently consulting on its proposed approach to the regulation of Occupational Certificate. We encourage you to provide your views via [Regulating post-16 vocational and technical qualifications at levels 2 and 3](#). The consultation closed on 2 July 2026.

Transition from T Level Foundation Year (TLFY)

The TLFY is a level 2, one-year study programme to support and prepare students for progression to level 3, specifically T Levels, but also other positive destinations.

The [TLFY guidance framework for delivery \(FfD\)](#) sets out the expectations and principles for the programme to providers.

The TLFY will continue in its current form for the 2026 to 2027 academic year.

From September 2027, the TLFY's name will change to 'Foundation Year'. This will better reflect its broader role in progressing students to the various level 3 options (V Levels, T Levels and A Levels) during the period in which Foundation Certificates are being rolled out (up until the 2030 to 2031 academic year).

The Foundation Year will continue to provide high-quality support and preparation, so that students benefit from an enriching and rewarding study programme, as set out in updated study programme guidance.

Once the Foundation Certificate pathway has been rolled out in a particular subject,

the Foundation Year will no longer run in that subject. The intention is that the Foundation Year will be entirely replaced by the new further study pathway and Foundation Certificates by the 2030 to 2031 academic year.

We will publish guidance to support providers in delivering the 'Foundation Year' ahead of the 2027 to 2028 academic year.

We will also make any necessary changes to the study programme funding guidance and the Individualised Learner Record (ILR), DfE's national data collection, which captures the learning undertaken and outcomes achieved.

Subject content and qualification development

We have developed subject content for new qualifications being taught from the 2027 to 2028 academic year in collaboration with awarding organisations, providers, employers, professional bodies and HEIs.

In April 2026 we launched a consultation on post-16 level 2 and level 3 qualifications: 2027 proposed subject content, and the [government response](#) to this consultation was published in July 2026.

Final 2027 subject content has now been published for:

- [V levels](#)
- [foundation certificates](#)
- [occupational certificates](#)

Ofqual has consulted on the [regulatory arrangements that will govern how awarding organisations design qualification specifications and assessments](#) and will publish their response later this year.

Ofqual expects the accreditation process for recognised awarding organisations to begin in autumn 2026.

We will provide more details on when draft and final qualification specifications for the first subjects will be available to providers in the autumn.

Content development for V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational

Certificates to be taught in the 2028 to 2029 academic year will start in July 2026. The content consultation will launch in November 2026 and subject content is due to be published in early 2027. Further information on accreditation timelines for these qualifications will be provided later this year.

If you would like to get involved in helping to develop subject content, email us at post16level2and3.delivery@education.gov.uk indicating the subject you would like to support.

We developed design principles that have been used throughout the content development process. We will review these in light of the feedback we receive as part of the subject content consultations.

Accessibility is included in the core design principles of our reformed qualifications. We have specified explicit quality criteria on accessibility and inclusion, which we use when developing the content. We are consulting on how well the content meets the criteria. We will also produce an equality impact assessment (EQIA) for content once it is published.

Ofqual will also work with awarding organisations to ensure, as far as possible, that assessment is accessible, securing fair access to attainment.

Subject areas where we will provide future updates

Subject testing has found that some subject areas were not viable with V Level design principles. We are not currently planning to develop these further. These include:

- Catering
- Construction – Onsite Construction
- Hair, Beauty and Aesthetics

Our testing showed that students wishing to work within these sectors would be best served by other qualification types in the system, which provide the progression routes required by these sectors.

The T Level in Onsite Construction did not prove viable, and further testing has

surfaced design questions with introducing full T Levels in Hair and Beauty and Catering.

We will explore T Levels in Hair, Beauty and Catering. As part of this work, we will consider how students build the necessary hand skills in these subjects and how this interacts with level 2 study programmes. We are planning to work closely with providers and employers as we consider how best to support students to progress on this pathway. We are also exploring options for the following subject areas currently covered by technical and vocational qualifications at level 2 and level 3. More information on these subject areas will be included by early 2027:

- Blacksmithing (levels 2 and 3)
- British Sign Language (levels 2 and 3)
- Criminology (level 3)
- Equine Care (level 3)
- First Aid (levels 2 and 3)
- Motorsport Vehicle Maintenance (level 3)
- Theology and Religious Studies (level 3)
- Preparation for Life and Work (levels 2 and 3)
- Saddlery (level 3)
- Transport and Logistics (levels 2 and 3)

We are also reviewing the role of level 2 additional specialist qualifications in supporting high-quality, coherent study programmes for students in the future landscape. We will set out further information by early 2027.

Removal of qualifications approved for public funding

As new qualifications are rolled out, we will remove public funding from existing 16 to 19 qualifications. In planning how the system will transition, we are aiming to reduce complexity while ensuring that students move to new, better-quality qualifications as soon as possible.

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.

We intend 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 the 2026 to 2027 academic year (including in Health and Science and Digital routes), as previously set out. We will also retain funding for qualifications in Foundation for Learning and Life, and Preparation for Life, until we have updated our approach to employability, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) provision.

This means that as the first new V Levels and level 2 qualifications are introduced in 2027, funding approval will be removed from the majority of legacy vocational and technical level 3 qualifications in the Digital, and Accounting and Finance sector subject areas.

In addition, funding approval will be removed from the majority of legacy vocational and technical level 2 and 3 qualifications in Child Development and Wellbeing, Teaching and Lecturing, and Direct Learning Support sector subject areas.

While we are introducing level 2 qualifications in Catering and Hospitality in 2027, legacy qualifications in these subject areas will not have funding approvals removed before the 2029 to 2030 academic year.

We have published the list of [qualifications due to have funding removed from August 2027](#), and guidance and a notification form for appeals against the removal of funding. We have also published [Updates to outcomes of the review of qualifications reform at level 3: equality impact assessment](#).

From the 2027 to 2028 academic year, funding approval will be removed from legacy vocational and technical level 3 qualifications with 1,080GLH or more in existing T Level subject areas, except for large Health and Social Care qualifications, which will be removed from the 2028 to 2029 academic year to coincide with the introduction of a T Level in Social Care.

As more T Levels are introduced, funding approval for unreformed qualifications with 1,080GLH or more in those subject areas will be removed in the same year.

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

From 2028 to 2029 academic year onwards, funding approvals will be removed by subject area:

- at level 2, when planned Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates both come on stream
- at level 3, 1,080 and above guided learning hours once a T level is available
- at level 3, below 1,080 guided learning hours once a V level is available

Where funding approvals for a legacy qualification is currently showing as expired before the reformed alternatives in the same subject area are introduced, funding approvals will be rolled over until the corresponding reformed qualification is in live delivery, assuming those qualifications remain operational and eligible.

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

Student support

Expectations around employability, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) support

Students' whole study programmes, and not just their specific qualifications, are important to their confidence that they can progress to their chosen destination. Providers, therefore, have a key role in supporting students to develop their skills beyond the general curriculum, such as teamwork and communication, alongside providing high-quality qualifications.

EEP support is an important element of students' study programmes. To further support providers in the delivery of EEP, DfE will work with the sector to update the study programme guidance ahead of September 2027. In the guidance, we will set out expectations for the core knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) that students should develop as part of their 16 to 19 study programme. As part of this, we will also consider any specific EEP requirements relating to V Levels, Foundation Certificates and the Occupational Certificates.

In June 2026, we published [The enrichment framework for schools and colleges](#). This non-statutory guidance for providers sets out a framework for high-quality enrichment offers, alongside case studies and additional resources. We will work with providers to ensure that future updates of the framework continue to meet the needs of the post-16 pathways.

The non-statutory [16 to 19 study programmes guidance](#) also helps providers understand their obligations and duties in relation to the provision of 16 to 19 study programmes. It sets out that all students are expected to undertake work experience or work-related training as part of their study programme. Employers expect providers to support young people to develop skills that will ease their transition into the labour market [\[footnote 1\]](#). Therefore, where providers are supporting students with work experience, this should be related to the qualifications within their study programme to support the student's progression.

More generally, pastoral support is a core expectation embedded [within the Ofsted safeguarding, wellbeing and inspection frameworks](#). Providers are additionally expected to deliver effective safeguarding and to promote the welfare of children and young people through compliance with the [Keeping children safe in education \(KCSIE\)](#) statutory guidance.

In addition, we have made a commitment to identify the most effective and deliverable route to making Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) mandatory in further education. To support this, DfE's FE support champion has developed [the Relationship Sex Education Toolkit for the post 16 sector](#).

Support for students at risk of becoming NEET

Supporting students to achieve at level 2 and above is vital for reducing the risk of becoming NEET, given that low educational attainment is one of the most significant drivers of being NEET.

Our approach to reforming the 16 to 18 qualification landscape should help reduce the risk of students becoming NEET:

Changes to level 2 pathways give students more clarity about the purpose of their studies, including strengthened guidance at the start of programmes to support informed decision-making. We are continuing to enable providers to support transfers to the pathways best aligned to the students' ambitions and circumstances, within the first 42 days of the funding eligibility period. The size of these

programmes will allow providers to tailor support, adapt delivery and extend teaching time within the wider study programme, where this is necessary to support specific student needs.

The size of V Levels will allow students to take them as part of mixed study programmes. This will give students flexibility and variety, allowing them to have V Level-only programmes, programmes including V Levels and A Levels, and programmes that enable continued study of English or Maths, or both as part of their study programme.

We are reviewing the amount of content in T Levels with the aim to reduce the GLH, where possible, giving students more time to access enrichment and pastoral support offers. We are also reviewing T Levels to reduce the assessment burden, where possible.

DfE is committed to ensuring that students at entry level and level 1 have access to high-quality qualifications that support progression – whether into further study, employment, or the development of essential life and work skills. We will, in due course, consider whether reforms to qualifications at entry level and level 1 are required.

These reforms will sit alongside the wider NEET prevention package set out in the Autumn 2025 [Post-16 education skills white paper](#), which forms part of the cross-government Youth Guarantee. This includes:

- strengthening the role of schools to support pupils to have a planned post-16 destination
- piloting an auto-enrolment backstop for all 16-year-olds that guarantees them a suitable place in further education
- working with all 16 to 19 providers to track student attendance and intervene early
- working with local authorities, Strategic Authorities, schools and FE providers to update local oversight and accountability for young people who are NEET
- improved data sharing between local authorities and education providers to track and support young people

Plans for information, advice and guidance

In the consultation response, we set out the ambition that, in steady state, every

student entering post-16 education will have a clear choice of high-quality pathways. The simplification of the system into A, T, and V Levels and Occupational and Further Study pathways will provide students with this clarity of choice. It will allow them to choose a study programme that they are enthused about and want to remain on.

Evidence shows that information, advice and guidance is key for students' progression^{[\[footnote 2\]](#)} and relates positively with education, employment and training (EET) rates ^{[\[footnote 3\]](#)}, but that it could be strengthened^{[\[footnote 4\]](#)}. In addition, DfE heard about the need for consistent national messaging regarding the reformed landscape throughout the consultation exercise. This messaging is required for awareness of the reformed qualifications, and should set out clear progression pathways, including confirmation of higher education recognition.

Therefore, DfE will deliver targeted messaging on the new qualifications, with the support of Qualifications Pioneers, to ensure clarity and consistency. This messaging will include:

- what qualifications are available at level 2 and level 3
- how the reformed qualifications align with other funded qualifications and potential student destinations
- progression maps for V Levels (to be published in September 2026)

In the responses to the consultation, DfE also heard about the need for more training for those who provide careers advice in the responses to the consultation. The above messaging will, therefore, be accompanied with materials for providers and careers advisers.

We will work with the Career Development Institute, the [Careers and Enterprise Company](#) and the Gatsby Charitable Foundation to raise awareness of the reformed landscape among careers professionals, Careers Leaders, educational leaders and teachers. In addition, from September 2026, DfE will invest in professional development for careers advisers providing advice to young people, focusing on vulnerable groups who are most at risk of becoming not in education, employment or training (NEET).

To further support providers to deliver on their duty to provide clear information, advice and guidance to their students – including opportunities for students to understand options for undertaking technical and vocational education and apprenticeships – DfE will update the:

- [16 to 19 study programmes guidance: 2025 to 2026 academic year](#). The existing

guidance will be updated in summer 2026 for the 2026 to 2027 academic year. A more substantive update to the guidance will happen in good time for the first V Levels and Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates to be taught in September 2027.

- [careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#) to reflect our vision by June 2026. A substantial update will follow by spring 2027 for the 2027 to 2028 academic year, which will reflect the reformed landscape.

Overall, we are better preparing young people to choose and sustain the right pathway through our commitment to the Gatsby Benchmarks, improved careers and work experience offer, with the new Jobs and Careers Service and 2 weeks' worth of work experience for secondary school pupils.

Provider transition

Transition planning

We are working with the sector to support transition to the new system and raise awareness of our reforms. To ensure consistency across the sector and to help DfE's planning and targeting of support, we expect every provider that currently delivers, or plans to deliver technical and vocational qualifications to have a clear and credible strategic transition plan in place.

This plan will cover the move to T Levels and, in due course, V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates. Each plan will be owned by the institution's accounting officer (or equivalent responsible person). This reflects the scale of the government's ambition for reform and the need for strong strategic leadership in delivering it.

To support this, we have established a sector-led group of expert practitioners, known as Qualification Pioneers. This group will play an important role in helping providers to develop and implement transition plans, modelling effective practice, and identifying practical support needed to help providers navigate the transition to reformed qualifications. Their insight will help ensure the provider transition activity is informed by real operational experience and that implementation support is practical, proportionate and achievable. The role of the Qualification Pioneers is to support

implementation and sector readiness. Decisions relating to the overall architecture, pace and direction of reform remain matters for national policy and DfE governance.

Strategic transition planning statement

Post-16 providers that deliver, or plan to deliver, T Levels and vocational qualifications submitted a statement in July 2026 confirming their high-level intentions for delivery from the 2027 to 2028 academic year.

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 the following major changes:

- by July 2027, for teaching in the 2027 to 2028 academic year and the high-level plan for subsequent years – this provider transition plan will focus on new T Levels, V Levels, Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates
- by July 2028, for teaching in the 2028 to 2029 academic year and the high-level plan for future years – this provider transition plan will focus on the next rollout of T Levels, and V Levels, Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates
- by July 2029, for teaching in the 2029 to 2030 academic year and the high-level plan for future years – this provider transition plan will focus on the next rollout of T Levels, and V Levels, Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates
- by July 2030, for teaching in the 2030 to 2031 academic year – our strong expectation is that, by this point, all providers will be completing their transition to T Levels and V Levels, and to Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates. This provider transition plan will focus on the next rollout of T Levels, V Levels, Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates

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

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.

Alongside this, we will provide targeted, practical support to help providers deliver high-quality reformed programmes.

Where we identify that a provider would benefit from additional support, this will be provided through established channels. This will include:

- workforce development, including continuing professional development (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

Qualification Pioneers

The Qualification Pioneers bring together a diverse mix of 16 to 19 providers from across England, reflecting different regions, provider types, sizes and levels of readiness. They are:

Region	Further education institutions	School sector providers	Independent training providers
North East	EPNE (City of Sunderland College Group)	Macmillan Academy (Endeavour Academies Trust)	
	Education Training Collective		
North West	East Lancashire Learning Group	Altus Education Partnership	
	Cheshire College		

South and West

Yorkshire
and the
Humber

Luminate

Sheffield College

Thomas Rotherham
College

East
Midlands

Loughborough
College

Leicester College

West
Midlands

Heart of
Worcestershire
College

Newcastle and
Staffordshire College
Group

Three Spires Trust

East of
England

Harlow College

Suffolk New College

Saffron Walden County
High

London

Waltham Forest

Christ the King Sixth
Form College

Swanlea School

Education for
Industry Group

South East

South Hampshire
College Group

EKC Group

Bohunt School

South West

The Cornwall

Callywith College

Purpose and role

The Qualification Pioneers will act as a structured forum for engagement between DfE and providers during the transition period, supporting implementation planning and wider sector readiness. They will support us to develop guidance, tools and approaches that are operationally realistic and deliverable in practice, informed by provider experience.

In particular, the group will:

- support the development and testing of practical transition planning approaches, including sharing examples of effective provider implementation activity
- provide operational insight into curriculum planning and delivery models for reformed qualifications
- advise on workforce, financial, estates and delivery implications associated with transition
- help identify and operational risks and implementation challenges, including those relating to SEND and accessibility
- support the development of clear and consistent implementation guidance for providers
- support careers education, information, advice and guidance activity to help communicate reformed pathways to students, parents and employers
- act as champions for reformed qualifications, sharing emerging practice and learning to support wider sector readiness ahead of the first teaching of new qualifications in the 2027 to 2028 academic year

The group is advisory in nature and does not hold formal decision-making powers. Insights from the group will support implementation planning and provider readiness activity, with decisions relating to the overall reform architecture and accountability framework taken through established DfE governance.

The Qualification Pioneers will meet regularly, supported by our Sector Engagement

Team. Engagement will be complemented by regional sub-groups, convened by pioneer providers, to support wider engagement across local provider networks.

Wider engagement

While Qualification Pioneers play an important role in supporting implementation, they are not the sole route for provider engagement. We will continue to engage with the wider sector through consultations, transition planning workshops and ongoing stakeholder engagement. This will ensure that a broad range of views inform the delivery of reforms.

We have also established a technical and vocational qualifications (TVQ) stakeholder steering group bringing together senior leaders of representative organisations across the technical and vocational qualifications landscape to support successful delivery of 16 to 19 qualification reforms. This group includes the following organisations:

- Association of Colleges
- Association of Directors of Children's Services
- Association of Employment and Learning Providers
- Association of School and College Leaders
- Careers and Enterprise Company
- Confederation of School Trusts
- FE Commissioner
- Federation of Awarding Bodies
- Joint Council for Qualifications
- Landex
- National Association of Head Teachers
- Natspec
- Ofqual
- Skills England
- Sixth Form Colleges Association
- UCAS
- Universities UK

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 the additional burden on providers.

Performance measures

We plan to extend 16 to 18 performance measures to all reformed qualifications – including V Levels, Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates and new T Levels. This is critical for both parity of esteem and delivering the Prime Minister's ambition of two-thirds of young people entering higher-level learning – whether academic, technical or vocational.

In April 2026, we launched the [16 to 19 performance measures](#) consultation, which seeks views on how we include these reformed qualifications in performance measures. This is an important step in addressing the existing inconsistency in the system.

The post-16 workforce

We know that having a strong supply of high-quality teachers and leaders is key to the success of these new qualifications. The evidence is clear that no factor is more

important for securing the best possible outcomes for students than high-quality teaching. That is why the [Post-16 education and skills white paper](#) sets out a series of reforms to boost teacher recruitment and retention, and to support teachers to develop and improve throughout their careers.

Recruitment and retention

To support teacher recruitment and retention within the post-16 education sector, we are:

- investing nearly £800 million in additional funding for 16 to 19 education in the 2026 to 2027 financial year, helping to ensure that institutions can recruit and retain the staff they need
- making available FE Initial Teacher Education (ITE) bursaries of up to £31,000 to support pre-service trainee teachers. The programme aims to attract more candidates into further education teaching, particularly in the priority subject areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), SEND and English
- investing in targeted retention incentives (TRI) for teachers in the subjects and settings where they are needed the most (up to £6,000 post-tax for early career teachers), alongside strengthening the pipeline into FE through the Train Others in FE campaign

There are online resources which provide helpful information on all aspects of teaching in FE, from [qualifications and training](#) to what it is like to [teach in FE](#).

Teacher training and leadership

As well as securing a strong supply of teachers for the post-16 sector, we are committed to supporting our teachers to develop and improve their practice at all stages of their career, with access to high-quality, evidence-based training.

To lay solid foundations, we are implementing a programme of reform to ITE for the FE sector, based on new legislation that came into force in April 2026. From September 2026, all providers of specified ITE courses are required to have regard to statutory guidance on curriculum content and delivery standards, developed on the basis of the best available evidence – including work from the [Education Endowment Foundation](#) – and with the advice of leading experts from the teacher training sector. This will help to ensure that new teachers are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to unlock the full potential of all students.

We will also strengthen the early career experience of new FE teachers, drawing on support from our Expert Advisory Group on FE Teacher Training and Development,

chaired by Anna Dawe OBE, Principal of Wigan and Leigh College.

Building on the continuing success of Taking Teaching Further and the Teacher Mentoring Programme, we are working with the sector to identify, build on and spread evidence-based models that work, such as mentoring and structured guidance. This will ensure that new FE teachers are supported by proven approaches that foster professional growth and retention.

Strong and effective leadership is essential to manage change and continue to raise standards across the sector. We fund leadership and governance training delivered through the [Education and Training Foundation](#), which provides targeted continual professional development (CPD) for existing and future FE leaders and governors. In addition, the suite of evidence-based [National professional qualifications \(NPQs\)](#) offers an opportunity for FE teachers and leaders to engage in high-quality structured CPD, supporting a range of leadership roles including those leading the training and development of teaching staff in their organisation.

Many FE providers will be eligible for NPQ scholarship funding to meet the cost of the course. We have published guidance on [Funding for national professional qualifications](#).

On technical and vocational qualifications specifically, there will be continued support for teachers and organisations to upskill to deliver high-quality qualifications.

From September 2026, we will launch a new, expanded Technical and Vocational Professional Development Programme (TVPD), which will include support for teachers and providers for all technical and vocational qualifications. This programme will deliver evidence-based and high-quality support covering subject-specific, pedagogical and assessment support for teachers, alongside an emphasis on supporting providers to transition to the reformed qualifications. The offer will build on learning from previous programmes, with opportunities for teacher collaboration and peer learning across the workforce.

In addition to the TVPD programme, we expect awarding organisations to provide their own relevant training to support qualification delivery, including assessment.

We also recognise the importance of CPD for 16 to 19 English and Maths teachers and welcome college and school leaders' support to ensure these teachers have the capacity to access high-quality evidence-based CPD. We provide fully funded CPD for English and Maths teachers of level 2 and below.

To access this professional development, individuals can find the contact details of each organisation delivering the professional development via [2025 to 2026](#)

[academic year: 16 to 19 funding: Maths and English condition of funding](#).

In January 2026, we committed to [a £200 million package](#) for SEND CPD supporting FE, early years and schools teachers, leaders and support staff. In-house materials, for FE to use and adapt for their own training, will be available from autumn 2026 onwards and courses for teachers and leaders start from autumn 2027.

Market approach

As with General Qualifications, Ofqual regulation will determine which awarding organisations can deliver new T Levels, V Levels, Foundation Certificates and Occupational Certificates. Going forward, we do not intend to use contracted models, such as single licensing, and are confident that the market, regulated by Ofqual and DfE's nationally set subject content, will deliver high-quality qualifications in which students, teachers, employers and parents have confidence.

Under this model, awarding organisations that meet Ofqual's recognition criteria will be able to enter the market and offer qualifications. Ofqual's regulatory approach, nationally set subject content and common rules about assessment design and grading scales will ensure high quality and consistency across qualifications offered by different awarding organisations and support coherent progression between qualifications delivered by multiple providers.

DfE expects awarding organisations to deliver high-quality support for teachers, so that qualifications can be delivered effectively, including teaching and assessment materials and CPD, as well as advice on progression for students. This will be in addition to the DfE-funded Technical and Vocational Professional Development Programme for teachers launching in September 2026. In addition, specialist Technical Excellence Colleges, of which there are now 29, have a core objective to deliver high-quality teaching practice and curricula for priority courses.

The approach of Ofqual regulation, which is based on nationally set content, represents a significant shift in the way that post-16 vocational and technical qualifications will be managed, with quality, comparability and progression built in consistently throughout the system.

An Ofqual regulatory framework will ensure consistent standards are maintained. This is essential to ensure that students experiences are consistent and fair.

However, a regulated market system will also allow multiple awarding organisations to participate, recognising the thriving and diverse awarding organisation landscape we have. We would like to see awarding organisations focus on sectors, so they are building expertise and quality support across the range of qualifications available. Overall, this market approach promotes system resilience and improves choice and service quality.

Existing T Level provision will transition away from exclusive single licences and towards an Ofqual-regulated market model. The timing of this transition will respect contractual arrangements and will be managed to protect continuity for learners and providers. In the near term, we will market test awarding organisation interest in new T Levels, such as Social Care and Sport, planned for introduction from 2028, to confirm their suitability for delivery through a regulated market.

The market approach will be kept under active review. Working in partnership with Ofqual and sector stakeholders, we will monitor market health, awarding organisation capability and value for money, and will consider proportionate action only where there is clear and compelling evidence of a risk to the continued availability of qualifications.

Adult qualifications

V Levels, Foundation Certificates, Occupational Certificates and T Levels will be eligible for funding through the [Adult Skills Fund](#) in non-devolved areas. This will support integration of adult and 16 to 19 provision and progression opportunities for young adults in particular. As the majority of the Adult Skills Fund is devolved, we will work with Strategic Authorities to help them understand the reformed landscape and support their decisions on whether to fund these qualifications.

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.

Other 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 in future.

[Report](#). Funded by NCFE. ↵

2. [More insight than ever on the Careers System – on student outcomes and alignment with the needs of the labour market](#) ↵
3. [Independent review of careers guidance in schools and further education and skills providers](#) ↵
4. [Young people's experiences of careers information, advice and guidance](#) ↵

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