ofqual

Open consultation

Introduction

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Applies to England

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The Technical Qualification, or TQ, is the Ofqual-regulated qualification within a T Level. It is currently the part of the T Level regulated by Ofqual. A TQ consists of:

- a Core, which covers the knowledge and skills common to a T Level pathway (such as health) and is assessed through one or more exams and a project
- one or more Occupational Specialisms, which cover the knowledge and skills specific to a particular occupation (such as adult nursing), and is usually assessed through a series of tasks

A student receives a grade for the Core component and for each Occupational Specialism component. Ofqual regulates the TQ through its TQ Qualification Level Conditions (QLCs) and General Conditions of Recognition (GCR).

To achieve a T Level, students must also complete an Industry Placement. The Industry Placement is arranged by centres, and completion is reported by the centre to the Department for Education (DfE). DfE determines overall T Level results based on completion of the Industry Placement and the grades for the Core and Occupational Specialism assessments. DfE is responsible for issuing the overall T Level certificate. Students who achieve some but not all parts of the T Level can instead receive a Statement of Achievement, issued by DfE, recognising partial achievement.

Ofqual does not currently regulate any aspect of the Industry Placement nor is it responsible for overseeing T Level certification.

Why we are consulting

DfE has decided to open the T Level market to a wider range of suppliers and to simplify the oversight and regulation of T Levels. In future:

- T Levels will move from a single contracted supplier to a regulated market
- responsibility for aggregating T Level results and issuing certificates will transfer from DfE to awarding organisations
- confirmation of Industry Placement completion will now be reported by centres to awarding organisations, rather than to DfE

To allow for this approach, we need to amend our TQ QLCs. We propose to introduce new QLCs to require awarding organisations to:

- aggregate overall T Level results and issue certificates
- collect centre declarations of Industry Placement completion, and to take reasonable steps to assure themselves that declarations are supported by evidence; we will provide guidance to support this
- comply with DfE's published subject content

As these changes will result in all parts of the T Level falling within Ofqual's regulatory oversight, we propose to simplify our regulatory framework by removing the distinction between the TQ and the T Level, renaming the overall Ofqual regulated qualification as the T Level. In this document, we therefore use:

- 'Technical Qualification' or 'TQ' when describing the current position, and when

referring to our existing Conditions, because those are the Conditions as they stand today

- ‘T Level’ when describing the new Conditions we propose to introduce when all elements of the T Level – the Core, the Occupational Specialism and the Industry Placement – will be certificated by the awarding organisation

This consultation relates only to the specific regulatory changes Ofqual is proposing to enable DfE’s policy, and not the DfE policy itself. That means this consultation is focused on the steps Ofqual plans to take to respond to DfE’s policy changes and not the decisions DfE has taken about how T Levels are provided or the existing contractual arrangements between awarding organisations and DfE.

Timelines

Move to a regulated market

This change will take effect from September 2028, when new T Levels in sports, and in social care, become available for the first time through the regulated market, as well as in legal services, which will move into the regulated market from 2028. Other T Levels will move into the regulated market as their current contractual arrangements come to an end.

Industry Placement and certification

Ofqual’s Conditions, requirements and guidance in relation to the Industry Placement, results aggregation and certification will come into effect from summer 2029 in all T Levels. They will apply to all learners enrolled at that point on qualifications first taught from September 2027.

Scope of recognition

Until now Ofqual has recognised awarding organisations for TQs alongside the DfE's contracting process. We propose to amend our regulatory framework to incorporate all parts of the current T Level programme and rename our existing TQ QLCs to T Level QLCs. If this proposal is implemented, we will in future recognise awarding organisations for T Levels rather than TQs. Awarding organisations currently offering TQs under a DfE contract may have their scope of recognition updated to T Level while those contracts remain in place. This reflects a change in terminology rather than a change to the recognition itself.

Consultation details

This consultation is arranged in 3 parts:

- Part A – Proposed changes to the TQ Qualification Level Conditions, requirements and guidance
- Part B – Impact assessments
- Part C – Draft T Level Qualification Level Conditions, requirements and guidance

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