



Department
for Education

Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England

Government consultation response

July 2021

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Introduction

In 2019 we launched our review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below and held our first stage consultation. We received 538 responses and the government consultation response was issued in October 2020. We have made progress on the actions set out in the first stage consultation through:

- the removal of public funding for 163 qualifications where reformed versions already existed;
- implementing a moratorium so that no new regulated qualifications are approved for funding for students aged 16 and over (including 19 plus), unless they can be classified as exceptions as defined in the online guidance¹; and
- starting the process to remove approval for public funding from qualifications with low or no publicly funded enrolments.

The second consultation built on the first stage and set out our proposals for level 3 qualifications that will exist in future (we refer to this as the level 3 landscape). The proposals built on wider government reforms in technical education such as the review of higher technical education, the Sainsbury Review² and the consultation on T Levels³. They also complement the reforms set out in the *Skills for Jobs* White Paper⁴.

The proposals focused on qualifications at level 3 that are approved for funding for providers in England for their students aged 16 and over. This includes qualifications funded for adults through the Adult Education Budget or through Advanced Learner Loans. As previously announced, we are not proposing changes to T Levels, A levels and AS levels through this review and government response as they have recently been subject to, or are undergoing, development or reform. The remaining qualifications approved for funding for post-16 at level 3 cover a broad and diverse range of subjects, serving academic and technical purposes.

The consultation sought views on proposals aimed at simplifying the level 3 landscape and ensuring that qualifications within the new landscape are high-quality and will lead to strong outcomes for every student in terms of further study and employment. The

¹ ESFA (2020). [Qualifications funding approval: funding year 2020 to 2021 – Reviewing qualifications and components during the moratorium](#)

² The Independent Panel on Technical Education (2016). [Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education](#).

³ DfE (2017). [Implementation of T Level programmes – Consultation outcome](#)

⁴ DfE (2021). [Skills for jobs: lifelong learning for opportunity and growth](#)

consultation gathered views via an online survey, via email and through a range of consultation events. In total, 1,345 responses were received. Of these 1,311 were via the online questionnaire and 34 were received by email.

Summary

This document sets out the government's response to the consultation on the review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England. It supports the [policy statement](#) on the future of level 3 qualifications. This document should be read alongside the policy statement for the complete view of the consultation response and the reforms to the qualifications landscape.

The consultation ran from 23 October 2020 to 31 January 2021 and was the second stage of consultation on the review of post-16 qualifications, focussing on level 3⁵. The first stage consultation was conducted between 19 March and 10 June 2019 and we responded in October 2020⁶.

In this government response we summarise the responses received to each question via the online questionnaire, email responses, and stakeholder consultation events provided through the second stage consultation. The percentages of those agreeing or disagreeing with specific proposals are drawn from the response to the online questionnaire. We then confirm our final policy decisions and arrangements for reform. Each of the consultation questions, responses and key changes relate to ESFA-approved technical and academic qualifications at level 3.

The final arrangements set out in the policy statement and in this government response follow the broad structure set in the second stage consultation. Changes and further detail that did not feature in the consultation document are highlighted against the relevant question in the form of grey text boxes within the main body of the response.

The review of post-16 qualifications also encompasses level 2 and below. Alongside the consultation at level 3, we held a call for evidence on level 2 and below. This ran from 10 November 2020 to 14 February 2021. We are currently considering this evidence and developing proposals for reform which will be published for consultation later in 2021.

Who this is for

This consultation response is for anyone with an interest in post-16 education and training for young people and adults in England. Some of the content of the consultation response is technical detail aimed at professionals working in the post-16 education

⁵ DfE (2020). [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England: Second Stage – Government Consultation](#)

⁶ DfE (2020). [Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England – Government consultation response](#)

sector. It is important that we include this technical detail to demonstrate how the changes associated with the new qualifications landscape will be implemented. However, the summary of changes provided within the policy statement and covered in more detail within this government response are relevant to a wide range of individuals and groups. The broad groups for whom these reforms will be most relevant include potential students, parents or carers, awarding organisations (AOs), providers and employers.

List of questions

Number	Question (paragraphs in this table refer to the second stage consultation document)
6	Do you agree that the two groups of qualifications outlined in paragraph 45 are needed for 16 to 19 year olds choosing technical provision?
7	Do you agree with the funding criteria described in paragraph 47 for the other technical qualifications we propose to fund for 16 to 19 year olds (qualifications providing occupational competence against employer-led standards which are not covered by T Levels and additional specialist qualifications)?
8	Should the Institute create additional T Levels for pathways or occupations featured on the occupational maps? If so, please indicate the pathway(s)/occupation(s) and explain why.
9	Do you agree with our approach to removing funding approval for qualifications that overlap with T Levels, described in paragraphs 52 to 66? Are there any other factors we should consider when deciding whether a qualification overlaps with T Levels?
10	Do you agree that the types of small qualifications described in paragraphs 71 to 73, that should typically be taken alongside A levels, should be funded?
11	Do you agree with our proposal that performing arts graded qualifications, core maths, advanced extension awards and Extended Project qualifications should continue to be funded?
12	Are there any other types of qualifications that we should continue to fund to be taken alongside A levels?
13	Do you agree that the group of qualifications described in paragraphs 79 to 80 should be funded to be taken as alternative programmes of study to A levels?
14	Do you agree with our proposal the IB Diploma should continue to be funded?
15	Do our proposals for academic qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds (set out in paragraphs 67 to 82) provide opportunities to progress to a broad range of high quality higher education?
16	What additional support might students need to achieve the new high quality offer at level 3?
17	What additional support might SEND students need to achieve the new high quality offer at level 3?
18	Are there level 3 qualifications that serve the needs of SEND students that cannot be met by the proposed qualification groups in the new 16 to 19 landscape?
19	Do you agree with our proposal to fund the same academic options for adults as 16 to 19 year olds?

Number	Question (paragraphs in this table refer to the second stage consultation document)
20	Do you agree with our proposal to fund the Access to HE Diploma for adults (as well as for 16 to 19 year olds in exceptional circumstances)?
21	Do you agree that the principles described in paragraph 104 are the right ones to ensure qualifications meet the needs of adults?
22	Do you agree with our proposed approach to making T Levels available to adults?
23	Do you agree with our proposal that T Level Occupational Specialisms should be offered as separate standalone qualifications for adults?
24	Do you agree that the groups of qualifications for adults outlined in this chapter should continue to be funded?
25	What occupations fall outside the scope of the occupational maps but are in demand by employers (as described in paragraph 116 above)?
26	Do you agree with our proposed approach to reforming technical qualifications?
27	Is there anything else we should consider when implementing our proposed approach?
28	Do you agree with the proposed approach to qualifications in apprenticeship standards?
29	Do you agree with our proposed approach to reforming academic qualifications?
30	Is there anything else we should consider when implementing our proposed approach?
31	What support is needed to smooth the implementation of the proposed reforms?

Question analysis

This section provides a summary of the responses to each of the consultation questions. It should be read alongside the consultation document (available at GOV.uk) given some of the questions relate to specific paragraphs of the consultation. The percentages are based on the responses to the online questionnaire while the other information summarises feedback from the online questionnaire, email responses and from the consultation events. During the consultation analysis we became aware of a number of ‘campaign’ responses which gave identical or very similar answers to several questions. These were analysed no differently from other responses.

Questions 1 to 5 of the consultation included standard questions capturing respondent details, including name and capacity in which they were responding. A summary of respondent categories (role) is included in Annex A.

Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds

Question 6

Do you agree that the two groups of qualifications outlined in paragraph 45⁷ are needed for 16 to 19 year olds choosing technical provision?

Summary of responses

- 94% of consultation respondents answered question 6. Of those, 41% agreed with the two groups of qualifications compared with 59% who did not agree with the two groups.
- Whilst there was some support for simplification and streamlining of qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds, concerns focused on whether the groups will create a binary system that would narrow down options offering less choice than is provided by existing qualifications. For example, respondents questioned whether students have a strong sense of career direction when deciding their options at age 16 and they believed that the proposed groups would remove the opportunity to “keep options open” by taking a combination of qualifications and subjects.

⁷ Paragraphs referred to in the question and Summary of response relate to the questions included in the second consultation document. Paragraphs referred to elsewhere in the Government responses relate to content in this document.

- Concerns about the perceived narrowing of options were also raised by participants in stakeholder consultation events, many of whom felt T Levels would be too specialised.
- Respondents also said they thought T Level design was too focused on specialist skills and knowledge and that students wouldn't gain transferable skills that would be applicable across different occupations and industries.

Question 7

Do you agree with the funding criteria described in paragraph 47 for the other technical qualifications we propose to fund for 16 to 19 year olds (qualifications providing occupational competence against employer-led occupational standards which are not covered by T Levels and additional specialist qualifications)?

Summary of responses

- 91% of consultation respondents answered question 7. Of those, 33% agreed with the funding criteria described in paragraph 47. Reasons cited included the benefits of the technical qualifications for students wishing to pursue their identified area of specialism.
- 67% of respondents to question 7 did not agree, with reasons cited including:
 - Concerns that the other technical qualifications may not offer an adequate alternative for students who cannot access the academic route.
 - Many students may not have decided on their intended career path when they are making their post-16 choices.
 - T Levels are large programmes of study so it is harder for students to take other qualifications alongside.

Government response to questions 6 and 7

As students may not be clear about their career aspirations at 16, many respondents to the consultation had concerns about a 16 to 19 year old technical qualifications landscape that is tightly centred around T Levels.

Our view, based on what works internationally, is that a streamlined system focused on quality not quantity still offers sufficient variety of options and flexibility to meet students' needs and is much better at ensuring each option leads to good outcomes. The

Netherlands⁸, Germany⁹ and Switzerland¹⁰, widely regarded as having high performing technical education systems, have around 500 or fewer technical qualifications each at levels equivalent to Level 3 and below in England.

We also think that there are some misconceptions about T Level programmes, including that they lack the broad, transferable skills needed to support students to progress. T Levels are designed to ensure young people have:

- the breadth of core knowledge and transferable skills needed to prepare them to enter skilled employment for the first time; providing a solid platform for a variety of roles.
- the depth of requisite technical knowledge and skills that they need to progress in their chosen occupation.

T Level students do not always need to decide at the outset what their occupational specialism will be. Although timings vary, many students will have covered the breadth of the T Level pathway and potentially had the chance to experience what different occupations have to offer before they make a decision. For example, the Digital T Level's core is relevant to a wide range of occupations including software design, network cabling, data management and IT support.

T Levels will also set students up well to progress into higher education (HE) in a related area if they choose not to go directly into employment. T Levels have a UCAS tariff in line with three A levels, reflecting the size and breadth of the T Level programme. This means that in most cases T Levels will support progression without the need for additional level 3 qualifications. However, in some instances, depending on the particular HE course, it may be appropriate for a student to take another qualification alongside their T Level. Where this additional qualification is an AS or A level, for instance in maths, the large programme uplift¹¹ for 16 to 19 year olds may apply.

Choosing a large technical programme at age 16 is a big decision and we understand that it could appear more restrictive than current programmes where students might pick mixed technical and vocational courses or qualifications that are primarily neither academic nor technical. We have set out throughout this review why we think that approach doesn't lead to the best outcomes. We believe that supporting students to make an earlier choice between an excellent academic or an excellent technical route will

⁸ KiesMBO (accessed 7 July 2021). [Opleidingen overzicht](#)

⁹ Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (2020). [Liste der zugeordneten Qualifikationen](#)

¹⁰ Staatssekretariat für Bildung, Forschung und Innovation (accessed 7 July 2021). [Berufliche Grundbildung](#)

¹¹ DfE (2020). [16 to 19 funding: large programme uplift](#)

prepare students better for the next phase of their lives. This is more important than ever as the economic downturn brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting opportunities for young people and we need to support them to get ahead in their careers and achieve their full potential. High-quality careers guidance that shows where different routes lead to is vital to help them make these choices. We also need to show where there is breadth of outcomes within routes, such as the opportunity to progress to relevant HE courses through T Levels.

Actions we are taking through the Careers Strategy should support this. Over 80% of schools and colleges are now using the Gatsby Benchmarks of Good Career Guidance to develop their careers programmes, resulting in improvements in every dimension of careers support. As part of their Careers Guidance programme schools and academies are also required to ensure that there are opportunities for providers of technical education and apprenticeships to visit schools for the purpose of informing year 8 to 13 pupils about the range of approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships that are available, supporting more informed choices. As set out in the *Skills for Jobs White Paper*, we will develop Interactive Careers Maps which will support young people in making well-informed career choices.

A key facet of our reformed technical education system is the link between the vast majority of technical qualifications and employer-led occupational standards ('standards')¹², putting employers at the heart of our technical education reforms. By ensuring alignment between technical qualifications and employer-led occupational standards, we are confident that these qualifications will provide the right knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) to prepare students to enter skilled employment.

Finally, respondents also highlighted issues with narrowing the choice and scope of the technical qualifications offer. However, we believe that everyone should have high-quality options which give them clear progression routes into the workplace or to continue their education. The current system has over 4,000 qualifications approved for funding in England at level 3, which makes it difficult for students to know which qualifications will allow them to progress successfully and for employers to know which qualifications are high-quality. Although post-16 providers have more limited offers, the technical landscape remains complex and difficult to navigate due to many subtly different

¹² Employer-led occupational standards, approved and published by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, describe the 'knowledge, skills and behaviours' needed for someone to be competent in a particular occupation's duties.

¹³ Applied General qualifications are level 3 qualifications for post-16 students. They allow entry to a range of HE courses, either by meeting the entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other level 3 qualifications such as A levels. Applied General qualifications are included in DfE's 16 to 18 school and college performance tables.

qualifications covering similar subject areas. Streamlining the system is therefore important to making decisions easier, ensuring every option will allow students to thrive in the workplace or to progress to higher levels of technical education. It is also key to ensuring employers have confidence that qualifications meet their needs and are of high-quality.

We therefore remain confident that the categories of technical qualifications that were proposed in the consultation meet the needs of both 16 to 19 year old students and employers, recognising that qualifications which are not covered by T Levels or which are in more specialist areas should still remain options for students. In addition to T Levels, we can confirm that we will approve funding for technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds as follows:

- **Technical qualifications enabling entry into occupations ('occupational-entry qualifications') that are not served by T Levels.** These qualifications support occupational entry in that they will allow individuals to develop a level of competence that will enable them to enter employment against employer-led occupational standards (occupational competence), in areas not covered by T Levels. They will allow 16 to 19 year olds to access knowledge, skills and behaviours in occupations we know are valued by employers.
- **Specialist qualifications** covering specialist skill areas. These qualifications build on and go beyond a standard, enabling students to develop more specialist skills and knowledge than could be acquired through a T Level or occupational-entry qualification alone, helping to protect the skills supply into more specialist industries or occupations.

After considering feedback from the consultation, we think there may be a small number of instances where we need qualifications aligned to standards even when occupational competence cannot be attained in an education setting. This may be the case where qualifications offer a valuable progression pathway to particular industries and the occupation is not covered by other technical qualifications. We will therefore also approve funding for 16 to 19 year olds for:

- **Other technical qualifications** which deliver against standards (not covered by a T Level) in which occupational competence cannot be attained in an education setting. AOs will need to demonstrate the qualification is high-quality, supports progression into a particular industry and delivers the best outcomes for students, and there is clear demand from employers. These qualifications should support students in developing knowledge of an occupational area and associated technical skills, enabling progression through further technical study or work-based training into particular industries. Qualifications will be approved where there is evidence that:

- The technical qualification is in an occupational area which is not covered by any other technical qualifications (e.g. T Level or other) and where occupational competence cannot be obtained in an education setting.
- There is strong employer demand for these qualifications and justification from industry that these qualifications are needed and would support progression into that industry.
- As much of the standard as is possible to be covered in an education setting is included in the qualification.

Funding other technical qualifications with progression value

For a small number of occupations, it may not be possible to deliver occupational competence through a qualification in an education setting. However, where there is clear demand for qualifications in these areas, and specific evidence can be provided that the qualification is high-quality and supports progression into a particular industry, then it will be considered for funding approval. This is a change from the consultation, which proposed that all technical qualifications must deliver occupational competence against a standard.

For all of these categories of qualifications, AOs must obtain approval for their qualifications from the Institute in order to then be considered for funding approval. No other technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds will be funded and existing qualifications that do not meet the new approval criteria for these categories (or for other qualification categories in the level 3 landscape described elsewhere) will have their funding eligibility removed.

More detailed approval and funding criteria for categories of technical qualifications will be published by the Institute and ESFA respectively in advance of the start of the new approvals process. Provision has been made in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill that will, subject to Parliament passing the Bill, allow the Institute to approve qualifications that meet the requirements of the new categories of technical qualification.

Some respondents were also concerned that the technical qualification offer did not provide sufficient options for 16 to 19 year olds who do not wish to pursue A levels, in particular in areas such as performing arts and creative arts industries. We can confirm that we have made provision in the academic landscape for large and small qualifications that cover these industries (see questions 11 and 12).

Different needs of 16 to 19 year old students and adults

Following feedback from our first stage consultation, we proposed a wider range of technical qualifications for adults in addition to those available for 16 to 19 year olds.

This was to meet adults' different learning aims and needs. While some 19 to 23 year olds could benefit from a full T Level, the majority of 19+ learners will be unable to commit to a two-year programme and will have existing learning and experience that might make some of the broader T Level content unnecessary. However, we want adults taking alternatives to T Levels to still develop and demonstrate occupational competence, just as they would if taking the T Level. For further detail on qualifications for adults, please see the government responses to questions 19 to 24.

Why T Levels

For too long, post-16 technical education has been seen as a backwater – not a positive aspirational choice for young people. T Levels will change this, offering a highly prestigious and credible technical and practical alternative to A levels – based on the best technical education systems in the world.

Designed with industry, T Levels provide the long-needed step-change in the quality of technical education. They will be offered under exclusive licence by AOs and are, rightly, more rigorous than existing technical qualifications, designed to have currency with employers so that young people from all backgrounds can progress directly into employment and access good careers. As the UCAS tariff for T Levels is equivalent to 3 A levels, we expect many T Level graduates to be able to progress onto higher level training including apprenticeships and degrees.

T Levels are being rolled out across the country gradually in stages. This gives providers time to get ready and means we can share practice as more providers start teaching the course. So far, despite the pandemic, T Levels have got off to a good start. This is what students say:

“I think T Levels go beyond A levels. They take you into the real world so you understand how to get where you want to. It would have been easy to take the safe option and go to sixth form at my school. It would have felt protected because I knew the place and the people so well. But that’s not always the right thing. I’m happy to be going for something new; something that represents the future.”

Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction Student.

“I think employers will be attracted to this qualification. At school I wasn’t sure what I wanted to do at first and this is more of a direct route. It’s brand new so it’s completely up to date. The placement is a very good opportunity to get a feel for what a job will be like and they might offer trainee jobs or apprenticeships after the T Level.”

Digital Production, Development and Design Student.

Respondents to the consultation raised concerns regarding accessibility; some commenting that T Levels would not be appropriate for all students currently studying at level 3.

It is right that we are ambitious in raising the standard of technical education for young people and T Levels are more rigorous than existing technical qualifications at level 3. For students who need further support to succeed in a T Level we have:

- introduced the T Level Transition Programme for students who are not ready to start a T Level but have the potential to progress onto one following a tailored preparation programme.
- focused on upskilling teachers, including specific training on supporting students to attain maths and English at level 2.
- set the maths and English exit requirement at Entry Level 3 for students with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, statement of special educational needs or learning difficulty assessment.
- made sure AOs:
 - make reasonable adjustments to assessments for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to support fair access to attainment.
 - grade core theory and knowledge using a wide range of grades (A*-E) so students of all abilities at level 3 are credited for their learning.
 - grade occupational specialisms separately to the core, so students with stronger practical skills can have their performance recognised separately on their T Level certificate.

This has helped education providers, such as Bishop Burton College, to take an inclusive approach to T Level learner recruitment.

“We want our T Levels to be accessible, either directly or through our Transition Programme. That is why our entry criteria and interview process not only assesses a student’s previous academic achievements but also other factors in their life, to ensure that we make educated and well informed decisions about a student’s true potential to successfully complete a T Level.”

Assistant Principal, Bishop Burton College.

Respondents to the consultation said they thought that T Levels may reduce flexibility and choice for students.

If a student knows which occupation they want to work in, an apprenticeship is likely to be a fantastic option. Other students may know what kind of industry interests them e.g. Digital, Construction or Health but may not have settled on a specific job. This is where the T Level comes in.

The core curriculum of a T Level is broad, designed to allow students to start off (as many full-time technical two-year courses do now), learning about their chosen industry as a whole. This breadth of knowledge and understanding, combined with core transferable skills relevant to all occupations in the route; like problem solving, teamwork or communication skills, provides a firm foundation for a variety of roles.

Students do not always need to decide at the outset what their occupational specialism will be, for example a software designer or trainee surveyor. Providers have a key role to play in this, designing courses to help students make a choice right for them, perhaps using 35 hours from the industry placement available in the first year to offer ‘taster days’ and other experiences to help inform their students’ decisions.

At the end of a T Level a student will be competent to start entry roles in their chosen occupational area, but they have other options too. They can decide to move onto an apprenticeship or employment in a related or different field or go into further training. Given T Levels attract the same UCAS points as three A levels, they could study for a related degree at university. For more on T Levels read about [the introduction of T Levels](#) or go to the [T Levels website](#).

Question 8

Should the Institute create additional T Levels for pathways or occupations featured on the occupational maps? If so, please indicate the pathway(s)/occupation(s) and explain why.

Summary of responses

- 85% of consultation respondents answered question 8. Of those, 59% thought the Institute should create additional T Levels for pathways or occupations featured on occupational maps at level 3. Pathways mentioned included performing arts, sport, public services, hospitality, and travel and tourism.
- Those who did not agree that T Levels should be offered in additional pathways (41% of respondents) highlighted the high-quality of existing provision and general concerns (as raised in response to other questions) about T Levels such as their breadth and access to industry placements.

Government response to question 8

Well over half of respondents welcomed additional T Levels in occupational pathways currently served by apprenticeships or other existing vocational qualifications. Those that did not agree highlighted general concerns about limiting career choice, the quality of existing qualification provision and difficulty in finding work placements. These concerns were expressed by respondents to other questions and are addressed in our response to questions 6 and 7 above and question 16 below.

To ensure decisions about whether to develop new T Levels are evidence-based and right for students, we have asked the Institute to consult employers and test the suitability of occupational pathways currently without T Levels. These include pathways proposed

by respondents such, as Community Exercise; Physical Activity, Sport and Health (Sport); and Hospitality.

Where new T Levels are proposed in pathways or occupations which currently don't feature on the occupational maps at level 3, the Institute has mechanisms to engage with employers to develop new employer-led occupational standards. As part of this, we will ask the Institute to consult employers and a new T Level will only be developed if there is strong evidence of employer support and it will be right for potential T Level students.

Where new T Levels are taken forward, qualifications which overlap with them would have funding approval removed – in the same way for existing T Levels as set out in this response to the consultation. To ensure providers and AOs are given as much notice as possible, we will announce any intentions to develop new T Levels and the arrangements for defunding overlapping qualifications, before the end of this year. Throughout the qualifications approval process, consideration will also be given to whether there is a need for any new T Levels to be developed to ensure the system remains future-proofed. Further detail on the approach to defunding overlapping qualifications can be found in response to question 9 below.

Question 9

Do you agree with our approach to removing funding approval for qualifications that overlap with T Levels, described in paragraphs 52 to 66? Are there any other factors we should consider when deciding whether a qualification overlaps with T Levels?

Summary of responses

- 93% of consultation respondents answered question 9. Of those, 86% disagreed with the approach to removing funding approval for qualifications that overlap with T Levels.
- Those disagreeing with the approach typically raised concerns around the accessibility of T Levels, as opposed to the approach to overlap, citing that T Levels may reduce flexibility and choice for students. This was a concern raised by a number of participants in consultation events, including some who felt that smaller, more modular qualifications would be more appropriate for some young people at age 16 than a full T Level programme.
- Many respondents to the online questionnaire suggested that the breadth and stretch of T Levels would not be appropriate for all students and levels of achievement and, therefore, called for the retention of Applied General

qualifications (AGQs)¹³. This included calls for continued funding approval for some smaller qualifications to be taken alongside A levels to offer mixed programmes of study in terms of content and assessment methods which they argued particularly benefit those from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with SEND.

- Other respondents were concerned that established pathways for further study and employment would be removed under the proposals.
- Many respondents also asked for a clear definition of overlap and clarity about how existing qualifications will be classified.

Government response to question 9

Technical Qualifications

Many responses to this question focused on the range of technical qualifications that should be approved for funding in the future alongside T Levels. We have responded to these points in questions 6 and 7 above. The principle underpinning our approach is that there is alignment between technical qualifications and employer-led occupational standards. This will give us confidence that all technical qualifications approved for funding will deliver the skills that employers need and ensure students are equipped to progress into skilled employment.

Given the rigour of T Levels, we believe they provide the best overall preparation for students to enter skilled employment for the first time and their subsequent future career, and therefore are the right choice for most 16 to 19 year olds who wish to pursue a technical route. That is why we propose to remove funding for the majority of current qualifications that overlap with T Levels for 16 to 19 year olds. Further detail on this and the response to concerns regarding the breadth and stretch of T Levels can be found in the box on Why T Levels? above. In addition, the T Level Transition Programme provides a stepping stone for students who are not ready to start a T Level but have the potential to progress onto one following a tailored preparation programme.

Respondents were clear that we should consider a number of factors to determine overlap, including the purpose of the qualification, rather than just reviewing the content.

¹³ Applied General qualifications are level 3 qualifications for post-16 students. They allow entry to a range of HE courses, either by meeting the entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other level 3 qualifications such as A levels. Applied General qualifications are included in DfE's 16 to 18 school and college performance tables.

We have taken these views on board and agree that the purpose of the qualification and whether it is aiming to support entry into the same occupation(s) as the T Level should be important considerations in determining overlap. Building on this, we also recognise respondents' views that content is expressed in different ways, given different weightings and subject to different assessment methods, and therefore that a full review of each qualification will be required to establish overlap. In light of this, when considering the removal of funding in 2023/24 or 2024/45 due to overlap with T Levels, we now think that there should be 3 tests that all need to be applied to indicate overlap:

1. **Is it a technical qualification, in that it primarily aims to support entry to employment in a specific occupational area(s)?** This is in contrast to academic qualifications which are primarily aimed at supporting progression to further study, namely HE.
2. **Are the outcomes that must be attained by a person taking the qualification similar to those set out in a standard covered by a T Level?** We will establish if this is the case by comparing the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and behaviours) set out in the qualification materials with the employer-led occupational standards on which T Levels are based.
3. **Does the qualification aim to support entry to the same occupation(s) as a T Level?** We will do this by adopting a holistic approach whereby the whole qualification is considered, including the purpose of the qualification and its intended outcomes. Specialist qualifications would not be deemed to overlap with T Levels as they enhance competence in specialist areas of an occupation, as opposed to supporting entry into that occupation generally.

We will review qualifications in the same routes as T Levels in waves 1 and 2 through this process and further guidance on this will be published later this year. It is our intention that technical qualifications which overlap with T Levels in these waves will have funding approval removed from the start of the 2023/24 academic year. As set out in the consultation, we will send AOs the list of employer-led occupational standards covered by wave 1 and 2 T Levels in each route and the technical qualifications we have identified as aligning with these standards, and therefore considered to overlap with a T Level, in autumn 2021. Further detailed guidance will also be provided at this point. AOs will have the opportunity to appeal the inclusion of their qualification on this list, with a confirmed list of qualifications which will no longer continue to attract funding due to T Level overlap being published before the end of the academic year. We will then remove funding approval from these qualifications for new starts from 2023.

Following this, we will also review qualifications in the same routes as T Levels in waves 3 and 4. Technical qualifications that overlap with the T Levels in these waves will have funding removed from the start of the 2024/25 academic year. As proposed in the consultation, if a situation arises where a technical qualification overlaps with a T Level in

wave 1 or 2 and a T Level in wave 3 or 4, this qualification will not have funding removed until 2024, when the wave 3 or 4 T Level becomes nationally available.

Existing technical qualifications that do not have funding approval removed because of T Level overlap will need to be submitted (alongside any new qualifications) for future funding approval through a new approvals process. This will check the necessity of the qualification and assess against new criteria on quality, as well as approving against the relevant statutory tests. If they are not approved through this process, their funding approval will be removed. More detail on the approval process can be found in the response to questions 26 and 27 below.

It should be noted that technical qualifications that are defunded on the basis of overlap with T Levels for 16 to 19 year olds may retain funding approval for adults. These will be subject to future quality criteria and more information about these categories of qualifications can be found in the response to question 24.

Identifying technical qualifications that overlap with T Levels

Respondents asked for further clarity on how overlap with T Levels would be defined. A separate process will be run for determining whether technical qualifications overlap with T Levels. We will begin removing funding approval for qualifications found to overlap through this process from 2023. The tests for determining whether a technical qualification overlaps with a T Level will be based on the following principles:

- It is a technical qualification, in that it primarily aims to support entry to employment in a specific occupational area(s).
- The outcomes that must be attained by a person taking the qualification are similar to those set out in a standard covered by a T Level.
- It aims to support entry to the same occupation as a T Level.

Academic Qualifications

As outlined in the consultation, the process outlined above will not consider academic qualifications (i.e. those whose primary purpose is to support progression to HE), because they are not specifically designed to give KSBs relevant to occupations, and so it is not possible or appropriate to measure them against employer-led occupational standards. Qualifications will have funding approval removed in 2024 if they overlap with T Levels and do not meet our criteria for academic qualifications that can be taken alongside A levels.

Academic qualifications will be considered as part of the separate approval process from 2024. To be approved for funding through that process, qualifications will need to fit in to one of the categories of qualifications described in the response to questions 10 to 12

and question 13. Small academic qualifications (equivalent in size to one A level or smaller) will be considered for approval in subjects covered by T Levels. They will also need to meet the other criteria for approval as an academic qualification. Large academic qualifications (including large AGQs) will not be funded in T Level areas.

We recognise that in reality the purpose of many current large applied qualifications (for example AGQs in applied science above the size of an A level) is to facilitate progression to HE. Where this is the case, the qualification may be classed as academic, but it will still only be funded if it does not overlap with a T Level. Where a qualification does not overlap with a T Level, and is designed to support progression to HE rather than deliver occupational competence these will be subject to approval criteria which apply to academic qualifications. We will publish further detail about the tests to be applied for academic qualifications in the approval criteria.

Identifying academic qualifications that overlap with T Levels

Respondents asked for further clarity on how academic qualifications in T Level areas would be treated (for example AGQs in engineering). Academic qualifications will be considered as part of the approvals process for 2024, with funding approval being removed for academic qualifications where relevant through this process from 2024. Overlap with T Levels will only be allowed for small academic qualifications (equivalent in size to one A level or smaller). They will also need to meet the other criteria for approval as an academic qualification. Large academic qualifications (including AGQs larger than one A level) will not be funded if they overlap with a T Level.

We will publish further detail about the tests to be applied for academic qualifications in the approval criteria.

Question 10

Do you agree that the types of small qualifications described in paragraphs 71 to 73, that should typically be taken alongside A levels, should be funded?

Summary of responses

- 93% of consultation respondents answered question 10. Of those, 73% agreed with the types of small qualifications described in paragraphs 71 to 73 that should typically be taken alongside A levels, largely on the basis that these qualifications offer opportunities for mixed programmes of study to accommodate different learning and assessment styles.

- Respondents requested a definition of the small range of qualifications to be funded. Respondents also called for the retention of breadth of choice that they believe is offered through additional qualifications, particularly via programmes of study combining AGQs (e.g. some BTECs) with A levels to provide progression opportunities for the widest range of students.

Question 11

Do you agree with our proposal that performing arts graded qualifications, core maths, advanced extension awards and Extended Project qualifications should continue to be funded?

Summary of responses

- 92% of consultation respondents answered question 11. Of those, 97% agreed with the continued funding of the four qualifications listed under paragraph 74.
- Reasons cited were that these qualifications offer valuable preparation, particularly for progression onto further study, offering breadth of study and development of highly valued skills.

Question 12

Are there any other types of qualifications that we should continue to fund to be taken alongside A levels?

Summary of responses

- 89% of consultation respondents answered question 12. Of those, 87% agreed there are other types of qualifications that should continue to be funded alongside A levels. The remaining 13% of respondents agreed with the proposals and did not think there are other types of qualifications that should be funded alongside A levels.
- Other types of qualifications put forward by those agreeing that other qualifications should be funded alongside A levels, including some participants in stakeholder consultation events, included AGQs, such as some BTECs, and Cambridge Technicals.

Government response to questions 10 to 12

At present, 16 to 19 year olds study a range of alternative qualifications that can be taken on their own, or alongside A levels. The benefits of taking different combinations of those qualifications vary, but the evidence that A levels lead to better outcomes for students is

much more consistent. That is why we proposed to streamline the academic qualifications on offer alongside A levels.

Our consultation proposals reflected feedback received in our 2019 consultation. We recognised the need respondents highlighted for small qualifications to be taken as part of a study programme alongside A levels. We proposed they were necessary either because they lead to specialist HE not well served by A levels, or they have a more practical element that enables progression to high-quality HE while being accessible to a broader range of students than a pure A level curriculum. The consultation set out the evidence for A levels providing the best preparation for HE in most academic subject areas, and opportunities for progression to high value courses at the broadest range of HE providers. This was supported by data showing that students entering HE with A levels had better outcomes than those taking non-A level alternatives. Our proposals allowed for a limited range of high-quality alternatives to A levels – including subjects such as health or engineering, where there are no A levels – even if they overlap with T Levels. This recognised that a small academic qualification would serve a different purpose, being specifically designed to support progression to a related HE subject as part of a study programme alongside A levels.

Consultation respondents strongly supported the types of small qualifications we proposed to approve for funding in future, but some asked us to consider funding them as part of a wider range of qualifications. This theme was prevalent in responses to most of the questions in the consultation, with respondents highlighting the significant numbers of young people currently taking AGQs. To support this view, a number of respondents cited the growth in the number of young people entering university with AGQs over the past decade. Some respondents, including some who published campaign responses from representative bodies within the education sector, argued that these qualifications should be retained because they increase social mobility. They cited the fact that AGQs are currently more likely to be taken by students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with SEND as evidence that such students would be unable to achieve in the future landscape proposed in the consultation document. These are important concerns, but we do not believe the data – as set out in the following paragraphs – supports the views expressed.

We recognise that outside of A levels, AGQs are one of the most common routes into HE. It is also true that AGQs have a higher proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, or with SEND. However the evidence suggests that after controlling for background characteristics and prior attainment, students who followed an A level-only route, generally experience better outcomes in terms of attainment and future

employment impacts¹⁴. Recent analysis considering access to HE and reformed AGQ qualifications, found that across different prior attainment bandings, students with A levels were consistently more likely to enter HE than those holding just AGQs. There was some evidence to suggest that amongst those with the lowest prior attainment, mixed A level – AGQ programmes were slightly more likely to lead to HE than for those with a study programme consisting only of A levels¹⁵. We will therefore fund small qualifications designed to be taken alongside A levels, if they meet other approval criteria.

We believe that by focusing on a smaller range of qualifications, this will lead to better outcomes for students and most effectively meet their reasonable needs. A levels provide the best preparation for HE in most academic subject areas, and provide access to the best opportunities at the broadest range of HE providers. Too many current qualifications lead to students' options for HE progression being narrowed, both in terms of the choice of subjects available to them and the type of provider. In the future qualifications system, students will be able to clearly see where each qualification will lead and have the confidence that it will support their progression. Students will also benefit from a more rigorous qualifications landscape as the qualifications will be higher quality, and better equip them for progression into employment or further study. The impact assessment published alongside this response highlights that students from SEND backgrounds, Asian ethnic backgrounds, disadvantaged backgrounds, and males are disproportionately likely to be affected by the changes. This is because students from these backgrounds are disproportionately highly represented on qualifications likely to no longer be available in future. We expect the long-term impact to be generally positive, as those students will see the biggest improvement in the quality of qualifications they would be studying at level 3, and better outcomes thereafter. While some students may be disadvantaged by the proposals, we expect this to be the minority, and to be justified by the overall benefits to students as described in this paragraph and the accompanying Impact Assessment. We are committed to working with the sector to explore how best to support students to progress to and achieve level 3, or to exit directly to sustained employment at level 2 where this may be a more appropriate pathway.

We recognise that students have a wide range of specific individual needs, and for a minority of students a move towards the future landscape outlined could present difficulties in terms of level 3 attainment and HE progression. That is why we are taking action to support these students. We are improving transition provision for those who might typically take 3 years to achieve level 3 so they are more likely to succeed, and will

¹⁴ Centre for Vocational Education and Research (2019). [BTECs, higher education and labour market outcomes using the Longitudinal Education Outcome \(LEO\) dataset. This analysis is based on older style BTEC qualifications.](#)

¹⁵ Sixth Form College Association (2019). [Chapter Five: Saving General Applied](#)

be bringing forward proposals to improve both employment and progression outcomes at level 2. We expect that the benefits and mitigations discussed will help to ensure the overall benefits to students will outweigh the potential negative impacts. We are confident these measures along with reformed landscape of high-quality qualifications will lead to more students achieving better outcomes overall.

Respondents also gave more focused feedback about the effect that our reformed landscape might have on post-16 take-up and HE entry in particular subjects, some of which are government priorities, such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). Respondents were concerned about particularly valuable routes that would be removed if we took a very strict approach to identifying overlap with A levels. We recognise this concern and have amended our proposals to ensure we protect the pipeline to further study in these priority areas as set out below.

As we proposed in the consultation we will approve for funding a small range of qualifications that should typically be taken alongside A levels. These qualifications will be small in size, meaning at most equivalent to one A level. This will enable students to take them alongside A levels and AS levels. In our proposal we said we would not fund subjects where an A level exists (though some overlap with T Levels would be permissible). After considering feedback on this point in the responses received to the consultation we recognised that in order to preserve the pipeline to priority HE areas, we may also need to approve for funding a small number of qualifications in A level areas in the future landscape. We have therefore revised our criteria and will allow A level overlap, if they will complement the A level offer and lead to defined progression routes. These qualifications will need to demonstrate that they add value to A level study and will support progression to high-quality HE courses that deliver strong graduate outcomes in priority areas.

Funding small qualifications to be taken alongside A levels

We have listened to the feedback in the consultation. To ensure there are sufficient routes to HE in government priority subjects we will consider qualifications where there are A levels available in the same broad subject area for funding in the “alongside A levels” category of qualifications. This means that there is the potential to have small qualifications in STEM subjects and those which align with the Plan for Growth¹⁶, such as engineering, IT or applied science. This is a change from the consultation proposals which said that overlap with A levels would not be allowed.

As part of the approval process, we will consider whether a qualification is necessary. We will require strong evidence of the value of having an additional subject in the range, particularly if they overlap with A levels.

This does not mean we expect to approve qualifications for funding in all subject areas currently covered by AGQs, as some respondents requested. As part of the approval process, we will consider whether a qualification is necessary. Qualifications that overlap with A levels will only be approved for funding if they support students to access HE provision that gives the best outcomes students, society and the economy - A levels do this for most subjects. We will require strong evidence that demonstrates the value of having an additional qualification or subject, particularly if it overlaps with an A level. This will include looking at outcomes for students taking those subjects at the moment.

Core Maths qualifications, Extended Project qualifications, Advanced Extension Awards and performing arts graded examinations will continue to be approved for funding. As with the qualifications to be taken alongside A levels mentioned above, these qualifications will continue to be regulated by Ofqual. Consultation respondents strongly supported the continued funding approval of these four qualification types as they agree they offer invaluable progression into HE.

Core Maths qualifications also play a key role in enabling more students to study maths to an advanced level, including for students who are on the technical pathway. We remain committed to expanding participation in these qualifications.

In the consultation, we set out our expectation that A levels and T Levels will play a central role in the new qualifications landscape, and that study programmes consisting entirely of alternative qualifications will be the exception to the rule. There is evidence that students who take programmes consisting of A levels alone generally have better

¹⁶ HM Treasury (2021). [Build Back Better: our plan for growth](#)

earnings and employment outcomes than those pursuing non-A level or mixed programmes, after controlling for background characteristics¹⁷. Recent evidence comparing entry rates to HE, found that after controlling for prior attainment, those studying A levels were more likely to progress to HE than those holding AGQs – although amongst the lowest prior attainment groups those who studied a combination of AGQs and A levels were more likely to progress to HE than those holding A levels alone¹⁸. A levels will therefore remain at the core of the academic pathway for 16 to 19 year olds, unless students are taking the IB Diploma or a large qualification approved for funding because it leads to specialist HE in an area not well served by A levels (see government response to question 13 for further detail). It will be important to prevent students taking combinations of small qualifications designed to be taken alongside A levels that would effectively replicate large AGQ programmes of study. This would be less likely to give students coherent programmes of study that will open up the best possible progression option. We will consider whether specific rules need to be set for combinations of qualifications in the “alongside A level” category to support better outcomes for students.

Question 13

Do you agree that the group of qualifications described in paragraphs 79 to 80 should be funded to be taken as alternative programmes of study to A levels?

Summary of responses

- 88% of consultation respondents answered question 13. Of those, 71% agreed with the groups of qualifications described in paragraphs 79 to 80 to be taken as alternatives to A levels.
- These respondents agreed with the examples provided of performing arts and sport qualifications which have a strong practical focus and offer breadth and depth that is valued at HE for study in an allied subject, citing that these qualifications contribute to the development of specialist skills for further study and for relevant professions.
- 29% of respondents did not agree with the groups of qualifications described to be taken as alternatives to A levels.
- Caution is noted across the responses around the narrowing of options for alternative programmes of study and of pathways into HE. Some respondents call

¹⁷ Centre for Vocational Education and Research (2019). [BTECs, higher education and labour market outcomes using the Longitudinal Education Outcome \(LEO\) dataset](#)

¹⁸ Sixth Form College Association (2019). [Chapter Five: Saving General Applied](#)

for a wider range of alternative programmes to be considered e.g. AGQs such as BTEC in Science.

Government response to question 13

Having considered consultation responses, we will give funding approval to qualifications supporting progression to specialist HE courses in areas which are not covered by T Levels and not well-served by A levels as alternative programmes of study to A levels, such as those in performing and creative arts. These qualifications will need to meet strict criteria such as having a strong practical focus and offer breadth and depth that is valued at HE.

Larger academic qualifications (including AGQs larger than one A level) will not be funded if they overlap with T Levels or A levels (with exceptions outlined in the previous paragraph). They will also need to meet the other criteria for approval as an academic qualification. These qualifications will be subject to regulation by Ofqual. See the government response to question 9 for further details.

Respondents raised concerns that the smaller range of qualifications we proposed to approve for funding as alternatives to A levels is 'too narrow' and there was a strong desire for large AGQs such as extended diplomas in applied science to continue to be funded. Respondents argued that large AGQs are essential to keep students in education, arguing that they are a pathway into HE for students whose talents do not lie in traditional academic study routes such as A levels. However, research published by UCAS¹⁹ confirms that young people who study these programmes are far less likely to attend university. Those who do are likely to have their options for HE progression narrowed, both in terms of the choice of subjects available to them and the type of provider, thus they are not meeting our aims of all students studying high-value, high-quality HE leading to positive outcomes and career pathways for students. Please see the response to questions 10 to 12 for further detail.

Qualifications that neither adequately prepare students to enter the workplace, nor prepare them well for HE are not in students' best interests. Our new system is designed to either give young people the skills employers need or to prepare them well for further study. Students will still have a range of destinations – we have designed T Levels so they may also serve as a path to HE – and they will also have the option to take mixed programmes of small qualifications with A levels.

¹⁹ UCAS (2021). [Where next? What influences the choices school leavers make?](#)

Question 14

Do you agree with our proposal the IB Diploma should continue to be funded?

Summary of responses

- 89% of consultation respondents answered question 14. Of those, 71% agreed with the proposal to continue funding the IB Diploma, citing that it is a high-quality, academically robust qualification leading to high tariff HE destinations and offering international recognition.
- 29% of respondents did not agree that the IB Diploma should continue to be funded, with some recommending that it should not be treated any differently to AGQs.

Government response to question 14

We will continue to approve the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma for funding. It will continue to be subject to regulation by Ofqual. Overall, 29% of respondents did not agree with our proposal, with some arguing the IB Diploma should be treated in the same way as AGQs. We do not agree, as these are very different types of qualification. The IB offers a breadth of subject areas (which is broader than that typically covered by an A level or mixed programme) that prepares students well for undergraduate study. As such we believe the IB should be treated as an alternative study programme to an A level or mixed programme. We have explained our approach on AGQs as qualifications that can be studied alongside A levels in the questions considered above.

As highlighted by some of the 71% of consultation respondents who agreed with our proposal, the IB Diploma is academically robust and leads to a broad range of courses at high-quality universities. We remain convinced of the need for this well-established, internationally recognised programme which has a track record of providing access to high tariff HE destinations for state school students. Whilst we will continue to approve the IB Diploma for funding, this does not include the IB Career Programme.

Question 15

Do our proposals for academic qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds (set out in paragraphs 67 to 82) provide opportunities to progress to a broad range of high-quality higher education?

Summary of responses

- 91% of consultation respondents answered question 15. Of those, 67% of respondents did not agree, suggesting that the reforms could restrict progression

to HE. Some argued that the proposed academic route would not cater for students needing to re-sit GCSEs (e.g. in English or maths) or allow for the combination of qualifications in a mixed programme e.g. of A levels with AGQs.

- Concerns raised by respondents also included the potential for impacts on students from disadvantaged backgrounds and on access to HE. Responses included recommendations that consideration should be given to catering for different capabilities and preferred learning styles across the student population.
- 33% of respondents agreed with the proposals, particularly where some opportunity to combine other qualifications, such as AGQs, with A levels is possible.

Government response to question 15

We recognise that the future academic landscape is different from the current qualifications available to students and that there are strong feelings about the future of AGQs, with many respondents citing that these qualifications are currently taken by a higher proportion of students with SEND and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We want as many students as possible to achieve a level 3 qualification to allow them to progress to high-quality HE. This means supporting students to achieve through a high quality qualifications offer. As noted in the impact assessment and in the response to questions 10 to 12, while students with SEND and from disadvantaged backgrounds are disproportionately highly represented on qualifications unlikely to be available in future, including many AGQs, we expect the overall impact to be generally positive, as those students will see the biggest improvement in the quality of qualifications that they would be studying at level 3, and their outcomes thereafter. While some students may be disadvantaged by the proposals, we expect this to be the minority, and to be justified by the overall benefits, as outlined in the government response to questions 10 to 12 and our accompanying Impact Assessment, to students more broadly. We are committed to working with the sector to explore how best to support students to progress to and achieve level 3, or to exit directly to sustained employment at level 2 where this may be a more appropriate pathway.

As noted above, young people whose study programmes do not include any general qualifications (such as A levels or the IB) are less likely to attend university. Those who do are likely to have their options for HE progression narrowed, both in terms of the choice of subjects available to them and the type of provider.²⁰

²⁰ UCAS (2021). [“Where next? What influences the choices school leavers make?”](#)

Complementing a high-quality technical landscape for 16 to 19 year olds with T Levels front and centre, A levels will sit at the heart of the future academic landscape. But as we have explained above, other high-quality qualifications will exist alongside, or as alternatives, that will prepare students well for HE. It will be critical that we support students to make good decisions about their choice of qualifications through providing impartial advice and guidance, as set out in the *Skills for Jobs* White Paper. T Levels have also been designed to provide a route to HE, as well as to skilled employment.

For some students to achieve in the new landscape it may take longer than 2 years (as is currently the case where 8% of students take 3 years to achieve level 3²¹). We are working with providers to explore how we can best support these students to achieve at level 3.

Whilst we want as many students as possible to progress to level 3 and beyond, for some students, level 3 may not be an appropriate aim, or the best route into their chosen career. We want these students to move into the best possible employment opportunity, including via an apprenticeship, traineeship or supported internship – one that is skilled, sustainable, and allows for career progression through a system of employer-led occupational standards.

We are also aware that some stakeholders were concerned by our use of the word “academic”, and that not all qualifications leading to further study are academic in the traditional sense. Whilst we only want qualifications that will prepare students well for HE, and will require robust evidence to demonstrate the qualification is necessary, we recognise that some of these qualifications will look different to A levels. This does not prevent them from having a place in the academic path in our broad categorisation. To use an example given in the consultation, we recognise that high-quality qualifications in performing or creative arts would be funded on the basis that they provide students with a breadth and / or depth of practical or performance skills that are not available from the equivalent A level.

²¹ DfE (2020). [“Qualifications at Level 3 and below: contextual information on enrolments and students”](#)

Supporting students to attain the new high-quality offer at level 3

Question 16

What additional support might students need to achieve the new high-quality offer at level 3?

Summary of responses

Respondents put forward the following suggestions and considerations:

- Lower achieving students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds may need additional support throughout primary and secondary education to ensure they attain the new high-quality level 3 offer. In the short to medium term, transitional support or bridging programmes will be required. Other support, particularly in the form of career guidance, will be important.
- Funding is required to support providers in transitioning to T Level programmes. This includes funding for training teachers and employers, and capital funding for facilities in centres providing T Levels.
- Ensuring high-quality qualifications and courses at level 1 and 2 to facilitate progression to level 3 will be important. Maths, English, and core skills required in industry are required at level 2 to enable progression to technical qualifications at level 3, including T Levels.

Support is needed for providers to secure access to high-quality placements for all students and to facilitate sustained relationships between providers and employers. This includes support for the co-ordination and administration of work placements. Concerns about support for the delivery of T Level industry placements were also raised by several participants in stakeholder consultation events.

Government response to question 16

We have invested heavily in supporting providers, teachers, and employers with the implementation of T Levels.

We have made £268 million of capital funding available for the first three waves of T Level delivery, starting in 2020, 2021 and 2022. The funding is being used to improve the quality of facilities and purchase industry standard equipment, which will ensure students are ready to contribute on their industry placements and support progression to the workplace or further study. Additionally, £500 million will be available each year for T Levels, once fully rolled out, to support the increase in learning hours.

We have provided approximately £15 million to providers who are delivering the first two waves of T Levels so they are resourced to work with us to develop T Levels, to develop strong plans to deliver, and to share their experience and best practice with providers in later waves. We have also provided £40 million to support teachers and leaders with the delivery of T Levels through the T Level Professional Development offer, which offers no charge support for T Level providers.

Since 2018/19, we have also allocated nearly £165 million to providers through the Capacity and Delivery Fund, to help them prepare for industry placements.

We want as many students as possible to progress to level 3 and beyond. There are clear benefits to students achieving at level 3, particularly those who achieve a full level 3 (equivalent to two A levels), who will on average benefit from 16% earnings premium and a 4% increase in the chance of employment²².

A common concern among respondents was a perception that the proposed reform to level 3 qualifications would create a binary pathway, making it more difficult for young people to progress to level 3 in the future if they lacked the entry criteria set by providers for A levels or T Levels. Our proposals do not constitute a “binary choice between T Levels and A levels”. We have recognised the need for additional qualifications alongside A levels and T Levels, including small qualifications designed to be taken as part of a study programme including A levels. However, we recognise that students who traditionally take AGQs and mixed-programmes tend to have achieved lower GCSE grades than their peers who progress onto A level study. They are also more likely to be Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students, have SEND and have received free school meals. The impact assessment accompanying this response identifies the students that are disproportionately likely to be affected by the reforms, relating specifically to those who are more likely to be studying qualifications not expected to be available in future. For those identified, we expect the impact to be generally positive, particularly over the medium term and beyond, as those students will see the biggest improvement in the quality of qualifications they would be studying at level 3, and better outcomes thereafter. However, we recognise that by ensuring the qualifications offer at level 3 is consistently high-quality and leads to positive outcomes for all students who take them, will inevitably mean that some students may find it more challenging to achieve level 3 in the future. As such while some students may be disadvantaged by the proposals, we expect this to be the minority, and to be justified by the overall benefits, as outlined in the government response to questions 10 to 12 and our accompanying Impact Assessment, to students more broadly. We are committed to working with the sector to explore how best to

²² DfE (2021). [‘Measuring the net present value of further education in England 2018 to 2019’](#)

support students to progress to and achieve level 3, or to exit directly to sustained employment at level 2 where this may be a more appropriate pathway.

In September 2020 we began phasing in the T Level Transition Programme²³ to support young people who are not ready to start a T Level but have the potential to progress onto one following a tailored preparation programme. The T Level Transition Programme is a new type of 16 to 19 study programme, specifically designed to develop the skills, experience, knowledge and behaviours to support progression onto and successful achievement of a T Level. It provides a rounded package of preparation including English and maths, relevant technical knowledge and skills, work experience and preparation to develop the skills, behaviours, attitude and confidence that will be needed to support access to a T Level industry placement, and wider support and development to help students prepare for a T Level.

However, not all students will want to follow a T Level pathway and students who do not want to take T Levels will also need high-quality level 2 provision to help them reach level 3. We are exploring through the call for evidence on qualifications at level 2 and below, and through direct engagement with providers, how best to support these students.

The biggest gap in provision is for students who need additional support before they are ready for A levels and other academic qualifications that sit alongside them, although there are examples of effective practice among providers. We will continue to work with providers to explore how we can best prepare these students for academic study at level 3.

Whilst we want as many students as possible to progress to level 3 and beyond, we know that for some students level 3 may not be an appropriate or desired aim, or the best route into their chosen career. We want these students to move into the best possible employment, including via an apprenticeship, traineeship or supported internship – one that is skilled, sustainable and allows for career progression through a system of employer-led occupational standards.

We are currently exploring a potential model for 16 to 19 year olds, which aims to better prepare individuals for entry into the labour market at level 2 and provides the core transferable skills individuals need to unlock successful careers or upskill later in life. We will set out further proposals on reforming level 2 qualifications and study leading to employment later this year.

²³ ESFA (2020). [T Level transition programme framework for delivery 2020 to 2021](#)

Question 17

What additional support might SEND students need to achieve the new high-quality offer at level 3?

Summary of responses

Respondents put forward the following suggestions:

- Provide extra support that focuses on increased contact time, in-class support, one to one guidance and emotional and wellbeing support (for example via personal, social and health education (PSHE)).
- Put in place reasonable adjustments so that students have access to adapted and alternative methods of assessment and learning styles.
- Make available small qualifications, such as vocational or AGQs, and qualification options that combine different modes of learning and assessment with the flexibility to progress in smaller steps.
- Ensure accessible pathways to level 3, with support and preparation at prior levels of study.

Government response to question 17

The impact assessment published alongside this consultation response suggests that students with SEND are more likely than their peers to take qualifications that could be defunded as a result of the reforms. However, these changes are expected to deliver better employment outcomes compared with students who currently take these qualifications because the alignment with occupational standards should mean they are better equipped with skills demanded by employers. Raising the quality of qualifications may mean that some students will take 3 years (with transition support) to achieve a more stretching, high value course, rather than spending two years on a lower value programme. For some students, we recognise that level 3 may not be achievable in future, which is why we are also looking to reform level 2 so that students at these levels get high-quality provision that leads to positive outcomes, with a clearer line of sight to employment. While some students may be disadvantaged by the proposals, we expect this to be the minority of students, and to be justified by the overall benefits, as outlined in the government response to questions 10 to 12 and our accompanying Impact Assessment, to students more broadly.

It is our firm intention that the reforms will have a positive effect on students with SEND, by making sure every available option is a good one and that each qualification supports progression. As we set out above, we are developing a range of support programmes

which will benefit these students and ensure that their needs are met. We welcome the suggestions for additional support from respondents as set out above.

Schools and colleges are required to identify and address the special educational needs (SEN) of the pupils and students they support and to use their best endeavours to make sure that a child or young person who has SEN gets the support they need, including any reasonable adjustments they may need.

Professionals working with young people with SEN or a disability must have regard to the SEND Code of Practice, and they should involve the young person, and parents/carers, at every stage of planning and reviewing what additional support is needed, and take account of their wishes, feelings and perspectives. If a child or young person has an EHC plan, this should set out exactly what support they should be receiving.

The Department for Education is considering measures, through the SEND Review, to make sure the SEND system is consistent, high-quality, and integrated across education, health and care, with the aim of ensuring better outcomes for children and young people with SEND. Our ambition is to publish proposals for public consultation as soon as possible, working with children, young people, their families and experts across education, health and care to deliver our common goal of improving the SEND system. We have already started to explore, through the call for evidence on study at level 2 and below²⁴, the role and purpose of qualifications for post-16 students with SEND, many of whom take qualifications below level 3. We will set out proposals for consultation on study at level 2 and below later this year.

Question 18

Are there level 3 qualifications that serve the needs of SEND students that cannot be met by the proposed qualification groups in the new 16 to 19 landscape?

Summary of responses

- 73% of consultation respondents answered question 18. Of those, 78% believe other level 3 qualifications serve the needs of SEND students that cannot be met by the proposed qualification groups. 22% of respondents believe the proposed qualification groups can serve the needs of SEND students.

²⁴ DfE (2020). [Post-16 level 2 and below study and qualifications in England – A Government call for evidence](#)

- Respondents stated that the following level 3 qualifications and programmes of study support SEND students as they include appropriate levels of flexibility afforded by modular design, different methods of assessment, including coursework, and retain a variety in terms of subject content:
 - AGQs, particularly small, shorter vocational qualifications.
 - Combining small, shorter vocational qualifications and AGQs alongside A level study or with qualifications focused towards development of personal, social and employability skills.
- Some respondents also noted that creative subjects can support SEND students due to the nature of their curriculum and methods of delivery and assessment.

Government response to question 18

As we have noted in our Impact Assessment and as the consultation responses have highlighted, the qualifications that are more at risk of being defunded are more likely to be taken by students with SEND and those with lower prior attainment. It is important that students are supported to achieve their potential regardless of their background or needs, and gain the skills, experience, and confidence they need for life and work. It is also important that we fund high-quality options for all students, including those who are most vulnerable. In the new landscape, this may mean completing with a high-quality level 2 qualification rather than a lower quality level 3 qualification.

We welcome the suggestions provided through the consultation, and the fact that many of the points highlighted were already included in our proposals. Respondents highlighted the importance of small qualifications that can be taken as part of a mixed programme by students. In the academic path we will continue to approve for funding a small range of qualifications with a practical or occupational component, where there is evidence that they lead to high-quality HE. We will also continue to approve qualifications that allow students to develop practical and creative skills, including performing arts qualifications.

In combination with the importance of PSHE for students with SEND noted in the responses to question 17, qualifications at level 3 will play a key part of post-16 study for SEND students and we are committed to ensuring the qualifications in the new landscape are accessible to students whilst ensuring safety considerations are also accounted for. We will work with Ofqual to ensure that new strengthened qualifications meet accessibility requirements. In addition to complying with equalities legislation for each of their qualifications, Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition require AOs to ensure their qualifications are designed, delivered and awarded in such a way that no feature should unjustifiably disadvantage a group of students who share a particular characteristic. AOs are expected to take into account how different groups might be affected by particular features in their qualifications and must ensure that they allow for

reasonable adjustments to be made for relevant students, while minimising the need for them.

Accessibility requirements have been built into T Level design. For the technical qualification element of a T Level, AOs are expected to ensure access arrangements are made available for students with SEND, and to allow for reasonable adjustments to ensure SEND students can access the content. Onsite facilities can be used by SEND students for up to a third of the industry placement requirement, and SEND students with an EHC plan (in respect of a learning disability) are required to achieve entry level 3 maths and English rather than level 2.

Our T Level Transition Programme is a new high-quality level 2 study programme designed to develop the skills, experience, knowledge and behaviours to support progression onto and success on a T Level. It provides a rounded package of preparation including English and maths, relevant technical knowledge and skills, work experience and preparation to support access to a T Level industry placement, and wider support and development to help students prepare for a T Level.

As noted in response to question 16, we are also exploring how we can best prepare students who, with additional support, have the potential to progress to academic study at level 3. We will also be consulting later this year on our proposals to improve level 2 and below study and qualifications, which will be crucial in meeting the needs of students with SEND who are overrepresented at these levels compared with level 3.

Supporting adults

Question 19

Do you agree with our proposal to fund the same academic options for adults as 16 to 19 year olds?

Summary of responses

- 86% of consultation respondents answered question 19. Of those, 79% agreed with the proposal to fund the same academic options for adults as 16 to 19 year olds. Reasons cited include these options being beneficial for those aiming to upskill or retrain, with the academic qualifications supporting adults with changes in employment, specialisation in particular sectors and progression to HE.
- The intention of providing another, genuine opportunity for adults to access level 3 study was welcomed by those agreeing with the proposal.
- 21% of respondents did not agree with the proposal with reasons cited including adults having a different set of needs, commitments and time / availability to 16 to

19 year olds. Some respondents also noted similar concerns to those raised in response to question 6 about the potential narrowing of choices along academic and technical lines.

- Some respondents noted that adults may face barriers in accessing the level 3 qualifications and some may require preparation and support at level 2 to help bridge potential skills gaps.

Question 20

Do you agree with our proposal to fund the Access to HE Diploma for adults (as well as for 16 to 19 year olds in exceptional circumstances)?

Summary of responses

- 85% of consultation respondents answered question 20. Of those, 95% agreed with the proposal to fund the Access to HE Diploma for adults.
- Those agreeing with the proposal noted that this qualification provides a high-quality option that:
 - Increases accessibility for adults wishing to study at a higher level.
 - Provides opportunities for adults to upskill for progression in employment or to assist in a change of employment or sector.
 - Provides opportunities for students from under-represented groups and disadvantaged groups to enter HE.

Government response to questions 19 and 20

We have already committed to delivering the Lifelong Loan Entitlement as part of the Prime Minister's Lifetime Skills Guarantee. Access to HE Diplomas play a significant role in supporting adults who do not have traditional qualifications to progress into HE as well as to reskill, and we will continue to approve these for funding (as well as for 16 to 19 year olds in exceptional circumstances). Adults who want to take a level 3 qualification to progress into further study will also have access to the same range of academic qualifications as 16 to 19 year olds. As set out above, we recognise the reforms being undertaken will mean funding approval being removed from many qualifications currently taken by adults. However, it is important the remaining qualifications offer the best preparation to progress onto and successfully complete high-quality HE courses. Of the 242 respondents who answered "no" to question 19, 85 gave near identical comments – that adults have a different set of needs and commitments. We agree with this and say more in our response to question 21 below.

Question 21

Do you agree that the principles described in paragraph 104 are the right ones to ensure qualifications meet the needs of adults?

Summary of responses

- 76% of consultation respondents answered question 21. Of those, 61% of respondents agreed that the principles described in paragraph 104 are the right ones to ensure qualifications meet the needs of adults. Reasons provided were that these principles recognise prior learning and experience to assist in tailoring programmes of study for adults and to focus on gaps in skills and knowledge. Respondents also stated that they value modular approaches to learning as they believe they cater for the flexibility required for adults, given their differing levels of experience and commitments.
- 39% of respondents did not agree with the principles set out in paragraph 104 with reasons focussing on the reliance on summative assessment. These respondents noted that a variety of assessment methods should be employed to accommodate the range of skills, experience and learning backgrounds that adults will present, as well as offering the opportunity for adults to develop the relevant competencies for their chosen sector of employment or HE courses. These respondents also noted that there are benefits or professional requirements to demonstrating progress through assessments in certain industries, for example in the healthcare sector where the external professional regulation necessitates on-the-job assessments to progress through incremental training.

Government response to question 21

Principles of technical qualifications for adults

We continue to believe that, in order to ensure they are accessible to all adults, adult technical qualifications should be able to be taught in a modular way and prior learning should be recognised.

Respondents highlighted concerns around the principle that all qualifications should be assessed at the end of the course. We recognise that there may be circumstances where this may not be appropriate. We will therefore work with Ofqual and the Institute to ensure the content of these qualifications is assessed in an appropriate way, and engage with relevant stakeholders to ensure qualification design and assessment reflects the requirements of different industries and occupations.

In the consultation we proposed three principles for adult qualifications: modular delivery of content, recognition of prior learning, and summative assessment. The majority of respondents to question 21 broadly agreed with these principles, and we believe these different delivery methods, i.e. modular delivery of content and recognition of prior learning and experience, are crucial to supporting adults to reskill and upskill whilst allowing them to fit study around existing responsibilities such as work or caring. Qualifications designed to deliver occupational competence against standards will be expected to meet these principles, and we will work closely with AOs and providers to establish further details on appropriate qualification design and how we can support the implementation of these principles.

Providers will play an important part in delivering these principles and we will empower them to ensure these principles are delivered in a way that meets the needs of adults whilst being sustainable for them. We will also consider how the wider funding and performance system can support post-16 providers to implement these principles.

We want to avoid repeating previous issues associated with gradual accumulation of credit and individual skills being assessed discretely and in isolation, such that occupational competence could not be assured. However, some respondents had concerns around the appropriateness of assessment at the end of the course for all qualifications. Therefore, taking this on board, we will work with Ofqual and the Institute to ensure that the content of these qualifications are assessed in an appropriate way, and that students are able to demonstrate their learning so that overall competence in the occupation can be assured. We will also engage with relevant stakeholders, including sector experts and employers, to ensure qualification design and assessment reflects the requirements of different industries and occupations.

Question 22

Do you agree with our proposed approach to making T Levels available to adults?

Summary of responses

- 84% of consultation respondents answered question 22. Of those, 71% agreed with the proposed approach to making T Levels available to adults. Many agreed with the inclusion of adults within the technical education reforms as they stated that this will provide opportunities for progression for career returners, upskilling and specialist training for career changers.
- Many employers responded positively to the proposals, with one noting that they would enhance progression routes into the NHS.
- 29% of respondents did not agree with the proposals with some raising concerns that T Levels would not be flexible enough to meet the different needs of adults.

There was also some concern that expecting adults to commit to industry placement hours might be a barrier to participation and could impact on availability of placements for 16 to 19 year olds.

Government response to question 22

The findings of the consultation demonstrate that there is significant support in principle for flexibilities to make T Levels accessible to a wide range of adult learners. While some 19 to 23 year olds could benefit from a full T Level, the majority of 19+ learners will be unable to commit to a two-year programme and will have existing learning and experience that would contribute to their chosen T Level.

We think adults could benefit from accessing T Levels and believe that key to supporting this aim would be developing robust approaches for flexible delivery and recognising prior learning and experience.

We appreciate the concern that T Levels may not be flexible enough to meet the different needs of adults, but most consultation responses support our view that providers would be best placed to design their own curricula based on an adult's level of prior learning and experience.

We think it will be helpful to explore this in more detail. We and the Institute will work closely with providers and other key stakeholders to explore different approaches for how flexible T Levels could be delivered. Any flexibilities would not dilute the currency of T Levels and we expect that the same assessment requirements for 16 to 19 year olds will apply to adult learners.

We acknowledge the concerns regarding industry placement hours and the impact that adult T Levels could have on availability of placements for 16 to 19 year olds. We are committed to exploring what flexibilities could be made to industry placement hours to take account of an adult's prior experience. As outlined in the consultation, we think this could include up to a 50% reduction in placement time, where appropriate.

Making flexible T Levels available to adults is subject to further policy development and the outcomes of future Spending Reviews.

Question 23

Do you agree with our proposal that T Level Occupational Specialisms should be offered as separate standalone qualifications for adults?

Summary of responses

- 79% of consultation respondents answered question 23. Of those, 70% agreed with the proposal of making standalone T Level Occupational Specialisms

available to adults on the basis that it supports adults to develop skills in areas they need for progression or job changes and in the areas needed by employers.

- Respondents also welcomed the flexibility of allowing adults to gain specific occupational competence without completing all elements of a T Level.
- 30% did not agree with the proposals. In particular, some concerns were raised about the value of standalone T Level Occupational Specialisms without maths and English qualifications, placement experience and core T Level content.

Government response to question 23

Occupational Specialisms are designed to assess whether a student is sufficiently competent to enter into an occupation. Most consultation responses demonstrate in-principle support for our position that standalone Occupational Specialisms could play an important role in promoting an adult learner's progression into their chosen occupation.

Not all Occupational Specialisms may be suitable to be delivered as standalone components. We propose to explore this further by working with the Institute to identify which Occupational Specialisms could be suitable for standalone delivery. We will also work closely with other relevant bodies such as AOs and Ofqual to assess the feasibility of this approach. Provision of a standalone occupational specialism may include meeting certain criteria, for example:

- Learners (with appropriate prior learning) can achieve occupational competence without needing to study the core or complete an industry placement.
- There is potential demand from employers and adult learners.

Making standalone occupational specialisms available to adults will require further policy development and depend on the outcomes of future Spending Reviews.

Question 24

Do you agree that the groups of qualifications for adults outlined in this chapter should continue to be funded?

Summary of responses

- 82% of consultation respondents answered question 24. Of those, 92% agreed with the groups of qualifications set out for adults. They identified them as accommodating a broad range of study options, continued learning and progression for adults.

- 8% of respondents did not agree with the proposed groups and in particular, respondents called for funding of other “vocational” qualifications.

Government response to question 24

Following feedback from our first stage consultation, we proposed a wider range of technical qualifications for adults in addition to those available for 16 to 19 year olds. This was to meet adults’ different learning aims and needs. Consultation respondents broadly agreed with the proposals for technical qualifications for adults. Therefore, we will approve for funding the following categories of technical qualifications for adults as well as those we have confirmed will be available for 16 to 19 year olds²⁵:

- **Technical qualifications, of a smaller size to T Levels, that enable entry into occupations that are already served by T Levels.** This will give adults access to occupational-entry qualifications, aligned to standards, that are smaller than T Levels, without the additional T Level content that may be more appropriate for a 16 to 19 year old entering their first job / starting their career. These technical qualifications will continue to be available for adults to accommodate their differing needs, circumstances, and motivations for study which may not necessarily require them to study as broad a qualification as a T Level. These could include any occupations covered by T Levels, including Data Technician, or Senior Production Chef.
- **Technical qualifications enabling entry into occupations without employer-led occupational standards.** We want to ensure the availability of qualifications in occupations that are valuable to employers, but where an employer-led standard has not been developed. Identification of these qualifications may indicate the need for an occupation to be added to the Institute’s maps, ensuring the availability of qualifications in areas that are valuable to employers. In some cases, it may not be appropriate for an occupational standard to be developed. The Institute is exploring how this is implemented through the occupational maps and approval process.
- There may also be some **Specialist Qualifications** which are available to 19+ students due to safety restrictions on those aged 16 to 19 which prevent that age

²⁵ For adult residents of Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and the Greater London Authority (GLA) which have responsibility for adult education, the appropriate MCA or GLA can determine which qualifications they will fund apart from the statutory entitlement. T Levels for adults will be funded at a national level.

group from taking such qualifications, such as those that are essential to certain safety critical industries.

- We will also fund a small range of **qualifications focused on cross-sectoral skills**, where they are transferable across multiple occupations and offer a discrete set of knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are valuable in their own right. These would be designed to form a coherent set of discrete knowledge, skills, and behaviours which allow the student to perform a specific set of functions in the workplace and which may be transferable across multiple occupations e.g. management, leadership, and digital skills. Crucially, multiple qualifications should not be developed covering different parts of the same standard with the intention of being combined to accumulatively deliver occupational competence in a particular occupation. We will work closely with the Institute to mitigate this risk and ensure appropriate employer validation is in place to confirm the value of these qualifications.

For these qualifications, AOs must submit their qualifications to the approvals process in order to be considered for funding approval. Any remaining qualifications which are not submitted for approval, or are not approved by the Institute, will no longer be eligible for public funding.

Question 25

What occupations fall outside the scope of the occupational maps but are in demand by employers?

Summary of responses

- Respondents highlighted a range of industries which they felt fall outside of the occupational maps but which are in demand, including occupations in:
- Performance and Creative Arts industry
- Technical theatre
- Games industry
- Animation industry
- Film and TV

Government response to question 25

The Institute regularly reviews the occupational maps, which are owned by its employer route panels, to ensure that they cover all the occupations required by employers that

can be accessed through technical education. Some of the industries suggested by the respondents already feature occupations which are represented on the maps, for example under a different title or as part of a core and options standard (where a number of separate occupations with similar training needs are brought together in a single standard). We have shared the responses to this question with the Institute in order that they can consider the suggestions that were put forward.

In the future landscape, the vast majority of level 3 technical qualifications will need to demonstrate some alignment with a level 3 standard to be approved for funding. See question 6 and 7 above for more detail on what types of technical qualifications will be funded. We are aware that there are some existing qualifications that are aligned to employer-led occupational standards that are not at level 3. In advance of the approvals process, we will work with the Institute to identify these cases, gather evidence and develop a set of principles for how such qualifications may be managed. This will include seeking to engage with employers and AOs to understand the need or demand for any such qualifications at level 3. Further guidance on this will be published later in the year alongside criteria for approval of qualifications for delivery from 2023.

Existing level 3 qualifications which align primarily to non-level 3 standards

We will work with the Institute to identify where existing level 3 qualifications are aligned to employer-led occupational standards that are not at level 3, and to gather evidence and develop a set of principles for how such qualifications may be managed. This will include engaging with employers and AOs to understand the need or demand for any such qualifications at level 3.

Ensuring qualifications are high-quality

Questions 26 and 27

Do you agree with our proposed approach to reforming technical qualifications?

Summary of responses

- 84% of consultation respondents answered question 26. Of those, 29% supported our approach to technical qualifications reform. Some of the reasons cited by respondents more broadly were because it:
 - Offers a good standard alternative for those that choose not to study A levels.
 - Produces a much-needed simplification and streamline qualifications and funding available.

- Provides students with opportunities to progress into employment.
- Includes the input of employers to tailor qualifications towards skills and demands of the economic landscape.
- 71% of respondents answered no to question 26, with comments generally referencing the qualifications we propose to fund rather than the reform process itself:
 - They felt the technical qualification offer did not provide sufficient qualification and subject options for 16 to 19 year olds who do not wish to pursue A levels. Respondents also highlighted gaps in the occupational maps in performing arts and creative arts sectors. However, we have made provision in the academic landscape for large and small qualifications that cover these industries.
 - Replacing existing options with T Levels was considered a threat to successful and established qualifications.
 - Concern around T Levels with regards to availability of industry placements, suitability for all, and untested with regard to progression to HE.

Is there anything else we should consider when implementing our proposed approach?

Summary of responses

- 71% of consultation respondents answered question 27. Of those, 80% suggested that there were other considerations while 20% did not.
- Other considerations put forward included:
 - Further consultation with employers and education experts, particularly around potential support required for transitioning to T Levels.
 - How the reforms, including defunding of qualifications and the introduction of T Levels, may impact on the viability of AOs and current post-16 providers.
 - The introduction of T Levels and the removal of funding should be phased in and a review of timeframes for reform should be considered to allow more time for implementation given the impacts of the pandemic. This concern was also raised by a number of participants in consultation events.
 - T Levels require a sustained working relationship between providers and employers, which will demand training and resource.

Government response to questions 26 and 27

Approvals process for funding technical qualifications

Respondents had concerns about the pace of change and recommended that the removal of funding should be phased in to make the reforms more manageable for the post-16 sector. We have taken this on board and will phase the introduction of reformed qualifications, starting with focusing on technical qualifications which align to standards in the Digital route and enable entry into Digital occupations for delivery from 2023. The process will then be sequenced so that all other qualifications will be approved for teaching from 2024 or 2025.

The approvals process will be implemented by ESFA, the Institute and Ofqual. We are working closely with the Institute and Ofqual to develop an effective, coherent process. This will be tested with stakeholders to ensure it is fit for purpose.

AOs would need to offer robust employer evidence of the need for each qualification submitted for approval, including evidence that it will facilitate entry into skilled employment. They will also be required to submit qualification-related materials including specifications and assessment materials.

The Institute will lead on the approval of technical qualifications and Ofqual will provide advice to the Institute to support its decisions. For both technical and academic qualifications, ESFA will be responsible for conducting final checks, subject to Ministerial agreement, for confirming funding approval.

Any criteria relating to the approval of 2023 qualifications will be published later this year.

Many responses to this question focused on the range of technical qualifications that should be approved for funding in the future and the accessibility of T Levels, which we have responded to in questions 6 and 7, as well as the relevance of the occupational maps, which we have responded to in question 25 above. Some respondents were concerned that A levels alone were not sufficient for areas such as performing arts and sports, as well as highlighting gaps in the occupational maps in performing arts and creative arts industries. However, as outlined in the government response to questions 11 and 12 above, we can confirm that we have made provision in the academic landscape for large and small qualifications that cover these industries. Respondents also mentioned support for T Levels, which is responded to in question 31 below.

To ensure all qualifications are high-quality, the Institute, Ofqual, and ESFA will be implementing a new approvals process, establishing an approach that is coherent and ensures all level 3 qualifications that are approved for public funding for delivery from 2023 meet the principles set out in our consultation around quality, necessity and

progression. It is our intention to establish a system that is efficient and easy for the sector to work with.

For technical qualifications, the Institute will lead a process to approve qualifications, taking advice from Ofqual. For academic qualifications, Ofqual will lead the review process, and will provide advice to ESFA on the quality of qualifications submitted for review. The ESFA will continue to have overall responsibility for funding decisions; these decisions will be taken once the Institute and Ofqual have completed their review processes.

The Institute, Ofqual and ESFA will publish criteria relating to approvals ahead of opening their approvals processes. We have asked the Institute and Ofqual to work together with the ESFA to develop processes that are streamlined and coherent.

The new approvals process will take a blank slate approach, meaning that no qualification is automatically approved for funding – including any that are currently funded - unless it has passed the new approvals process which will check the necessity of the qualification, check for T Level overlap (where relevant), and assess against new criteria on quality, including in particular that the Institute's relevant statutory tests²⁶ have been met for technical qualifications. This process will ensure funded level 3 qualifications:

- have a distinct purpose and are truly necessary in the new simplified system;
- support progression to skilled employment; and
- are high-quality.

Part of our vision is for a technical education offer that places employers at the heart of the system. As such, we believe that the Institute, as an employer-led organisation, is best placed to make decisions on the necessity of technical qualifications.

Any technical qualifications already identified as overlapping with T Levels will not be part of the new technical qualifications approvals process as they will have been defunded through a separate process. Further detail on this can be found in the response to question 9 above.

Although most respondents did not refer directly to the proposed approvals process, some highlighted the importance of considering the impact of the reforms on the viability

²⁶ The statutory tests are subject to Parliament passing the relevant provisions of the Skills and Post 16 Education Bill.

of AOs and current post-16 providers, and the benefits of phasing these changes in to allow more time for implementation. We have taken this on board and will phase the introduction of reformed qualifications, starting with focusing on technical qualifications which align to standards in the Digital route and enable entry into Digital occupations for delivery from 2023, followed by all remaining qualifications approved for teaching from 2024 or 2025. This will provide a smoother delivery profile that ensures more time for AOs to reform qualifications; providers to prepare; and the Institute, Ofqual and ESFA to review these qualifications.

The Skills Bill includes clauses that will underpin current arrangements between Ofqual and the Institute, and will confirm respective responsibilities. Ofqual will continue to recognise and regulate AOs in line with their statutory objectives and duties; the Institute will continue to bring an employer voice to bear across a significantly broader range of technical education qualifications through an expanded approval remit. Ofqual and the Institute will work in partnership with other public bodies as appropriate, to form an end-to-end system for the long-term assurance of technical qualifications. The Institute will begin to set out these arrangements in more detail shortly.

We are also proposing legislation in the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill that will allow the Institute to impose a moratorium on the approval of qualifications of a particular kind if it determines that there is an appropriate number and that approving further qualifications might result in proliferation. The Institute will be required to consult the Secretary of State when deciding to introduce or end a moratorium.

More detail on our approach to reforming technical qualifications is set out in the separate 'Approvals process for academic and technical qualifications' document.²⁷

Question 28

Do you agree with the proposed approach to qualifications in apprenticeship standards?

Summary of responses

- 71% of consultation respondents answered question 28. Of those, 53% agreed with the proposed approach to the treatment of qualifications that are mandatory requirements in apprenticeships. They agreed the Department should work closely

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-qualifications-at-level-3-guidance-for-awarding-bodies>

with the Institute to review qualifications within apprenticeships to ensure they are aligned with industry, employer, and learner needs.

- 47% of the respondents disagreed with the proposed approach. Concerns related to potential removal of qualifications which are currently part of the apprenticeship standard and which they feel help to ensure the apprenticeships remain high value and widely recognised by employers and for progression to higher level study. This concern was shared by some participants in stakeholder consultation events.
- Some respondents noted that End Point Assessment (EPA) alone is insufficient to provide evidence of apprentice progress and achievements.

Government response to question 28

We recognise the clear feedback received about the value of qualifications in apprenticeships where they convey especially strong labour market value in the eyes of employers. Therefore, we will continue to work with the Institute to ensure that the mandatory qualification policy and the outcome of the post-16 review align, to meet the needs of apprentices, employers, and industry.

The Institute will put in place consistent criteria and make judgements about qualifications in apprenticeships and for classroom based study. As part of this, how well a qualification meets employer needs is a critical consideration and the Institute will draw on all available evidence, from both the level 3 approvals process and the process to mandate qualifications in apprenticeships, as it works with employers on approvals decisions.

As per the Institute's usual processes, standards are reviewed as part of route reviews or specific revision requests. This process includes the review of any mandatory qualifications. Where a qualification does not meet the mandatory qualifications policy, the Institute will work with employers to ensure the apprenticeship meets their needs.

Questions 29 and 30

Do you agree with our proposed approach to reforming academic qualifications?

Summary of responses

- 86% of consultation respondents answered question 29. Of those, 69% disagreed with the proposed approach to reforming academic qualifications. Reasons noted were similar to those highlighted in response to question 6 and included:
 - Concerns relating to choice and lack of alternatives to A levels and T Levels.

- The value of other qualifications, mainly AGQs, which respondents believe provide a required alternative to A levels and T Levels.
- The academic reforms could limit access to HE for some students as A levels are not accessible qualifications for all students.
- 31% of respondents agreed with the proposed approach citing the robust approach and focus on high-quality as specific benefits.

Is there anything else we should consider when implementing our proposed approach?

Summary of responses

- 70% of consultation respondents answered question 30. Of those, 76% stated that other considerations should be taken into account when implementing the proposed approach for academic qualifications. 24% of respondents did not suggest other considerations needed to be accounted for.
- Other considerations put forward by respondents included:
 - Ensuring options are retained that allow for A levels to be completed alongside smaller qualifications to help provide a balanced approach that caters to students' different needs and aptitudes.
 - How the reforms will impact on students with specific learning needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds as they will lose access to the 'third route' into HE offered by alternative programmes of study, namely involving AGQs.
 - The proposed academic qualifications at level 3 must align with the curriculum as well as learning and assessment approaches, both at level 2 and HE to support transition and progression.

Government response to questions 29 and 30

The majority of respondents did not agree with the approach to reforming qualifications set out in the consultation. However, the comments provided suggest that respondents disagreed with our proposals for the types of qualifications that should be funded rather than the proposal to strengthen our funding approval criteria and to work closely with Ofqual as it seeks to strengthen its scrutiny and regulation of post-16 qualifications. We respond to the specific points highlighted in the bullet points here, before setting out further detail on the approval process for academic qualifications.

- Our proposals do not constitute a "binary choice between T Levels and A levels". We have recognised the need for additional qualifications alongside A levels and T

Levels, including small qualifications designed to be taken as part of a study programme including A levels. As set out in the government response to questions 10 to 12, this now allows for the possibility of qualifications in areas where an A level exists. However, we will set a high bar for demonstrating the value of having an additional subject in the range, particularly if they overlap with A levels, drawing on evidence of successful outcomes for students taking those subjects at the moment and links to further study in priority subjects.

- We recognise that many respondents value existing qualifications such as AGQs, and are concerned about changes that will lead to many current AGQs no longer being funded. **We set out the reasons for implementing these reforms in our response to questions 10 to 12 above.**
- We agree that level 3 qualifications cannot be viewed in isolation. That is why we are also reviewing study at level 2 and below. Following our call for evidence on level 2 and below, which ran from 10 November 2020 to 14 February 2021, we will set out further proposals on our approach to reform at these levels later in 2021.

Reform process for academic qualifications

The approvals process for academic qualifications will follow the staged approach set out in the separate ‘Approvals process for academic and technical qualifications’ document²⁸. The new approvals process will take a blank slate approach, meaning that no qualification will be approved for funding – including any that are currently funded - unless it has been specifically exempted²⁹ or has been through and passed the new approvals process which will check the necessity of the qualification and be subject to regulations set out by Ofqual.

ESFA will decide whether qualifications in the academic path are necessary, based on the qualification categories set out in the responses to questions 10 to 14. Large qualifications (including AGQs larger than one A level) will only be approved if there is clear evidence of links to specialist HE courses in areas not well served by A levels. They will also only be approved if they do not overlap with T Level areas. This could include

²⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-qualifications-at-level-3-guidance-for-awarding-bodies>

²⁹ As set out in the government responses to questions 10 to 12 and question 14, we will continue to approve for funding the IB Diploma, Core Maths and Extended Project qualifications, Advanced Extension Awards and performing arts graded examinations. Existing qualifications in these categories will not need to go through this approval process. Any new qualifications in these categories would need approval. We will publish further detail in the approval criteria.

qualifications in areas such as performing and creative arts. We will also set a high bar for demonstrating the value of having an additional subject in the range, particularly if they overlap with A levels, drawing on evidence of successful outcomes for students taking those subjects at the moment and links to further study in priority subjects. It does not mean allowing blanket approval for qualifications in all areas that currently have smaller sized AGQs. These qualifications will need to demonstrate that they add value to A level study and will support progression to high-quality HE courses that deliver strong graduate outcomes. They could include subjects with some overlap with A levels or T Levels, including STEM subjects such as engineering. We will set out further detail of the required evidence when we publish approval criteria.

Approvals process for funding academic qualifications

Ofqual will lead the review of qualification-related materials for academic qualifications, working with ESFA who will be reviewing qualifications for evidence relating to necessity. Large qualifications (including AGQs larger than one A level) will only be approved if there is clear evidence of links to specialist HE courses in areas not well served by A levels and they do not overlap with T Level areas. This could include qualifications in areas such as performing and creative arts.

AOs would need to demonstrate the value of having an additional subject in the range, particularly if they overlap with A levels, drawing on evidence of successful outcomes for students taking those subjects at the moment and links to further study in priority subjects. They will also be required to submit qualification-related materials including specifications and assessment materials.

For both technical and academic qualifications, ESFA will be responsible for conducting final checks, and for confirming funding approval (subject to Ministerial agreement).

Question 31

What support is needed to smooth the implementation of the proposed reforms?

Summary of responses

A range of considerations was put forward with regard to support required for the smooth implementation of the proposed reforms, including:

- The reforms should be managed carefully and phased in to monitor their success against the existing qualifications landscape.
- Clarity is needed around terms used in the consultation, such as overlap, employer-led standards and high-quality.

- Providing a list of the qualifications proposed for defunding will be an important next step.
- Further review and discussion with stakeholders is needed to further understand the impact of the changes and their ability to implement them.
- A clear timeline for reform and a review of the milestones for implementation is recommended to provide sufficient time for training and transitions, and to take account of the challenges caused by the unprecedented impacts of the pandemic.

Government response to question 31

Growing the success of T Levels

We are implementing T Levels in phases, starting with a relatively small number of high performing providers for the first years of delivery, so that they get the support they need and we can monitor the quality of delivery. As we move toward full national rollout, we will gradually increase the number of eligible providers and available T Levels, whilst continuing to offer support to maintain the quality of delivery. By 2024, all T Levels will have been delivered for at least a year and all 16 to 19 providers will be able to deliver them. This will serve to reinforce T Levels as a mainstream option at post-16 across the country.

Ensuring a manageable timeline

The findings of the consultation suggested concerns about the pace of change, with recommendations that the removal of funding should be phased in, and clear deadlines provided to ensure sufficient time for training and transitions. That is why, as mentioned in the response to questions 26 and 27 above, we will phase the introduction of reformed qualifications, starting with reviewing and approving technical qualifications which enable entry into occupations that align with employer-led occupational standards in the Digital route for delivery from 2023, followed by all remaining qualifications approved for teaching from 2024 or 2025. Phasing in this way should allow more time for the post-16 sector to prepare for and respond to these reforms.

We recognise that consultation respondents also requested further engagement on these proposed changes. Therefore, criteria for approval of technical qualifications for delivery from 2023 will be published later in the year following engagement and testing with AOs and employers by the Institute. Further to this, ESFA, Ofqual and the Institute will publish further guidance on approval criteria and rules for qualifications for delivery from 2024 for AOs to develop against, following consultation from Ofqual and further engagement and testing with stakeholders by the Institute.

Confirmation of timeline

We will:

- Roll out T Levels in 4 waves, with wave 1 already being taught in selected providers, and 10 T Levels on track to be available in over 100 providers **from September 2021**.
- Remove funding approval from qualifications with no publicly funded enrolments **from 1 August 2021**³⁰.
- Remove funding approval from qualifications with no or low publicly funded enrolments **from 1 August 2022**³¹.
- Remove funding approval from existing technical qualifications that overlap with wave 1 and 2 T Levels and we plan to publish a finalised list of these qualifications before the end of academic year 2021/22. We will also approve for funding technical qualifications which align to standards in the Digital route and enable entry into Digital occupations for both 16 – 19 and adults that have been approved through the new approvals process **from August 2023**.
- Remove funding approval from existing technical qualifications that overlap with wave 3 and 4 T Levels and we plan to publish a finalised list of these qualifications before the end of academic year 2022/23. We will also approve for funding the relevant technical qualifications (those aligning to remaining wave 1 and 2 routes, as well as Engineering and Manufacturing route) for both 16 to 19 year olds and adults that have been approved through the new approvals process **from 1 August 2024**.
- Make available reformed academic qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds and adults; and remove funding for qualifications that do not have a place in the new landscape **from 1 August 2024**.
- Approve remaining academic and technical qualifications which align to waves 3 and 4, and other outstanding qualifications for both 16 to 19 year olds and adults for funding through the new approvals process for delivery **from 1 August 2025**.

³⁰ These are qualifications which had been approved for funding and available for at least 3 years but which had no publicly funded enrolments. For those we plan to remove public funding from on 1 August 2021 these will have had zero enrolments in academic year 2015/16, 2016/17, and 2017/18.

³¹ These are qualifications which had been approved for funding and available for at least 3 years but which had low (1-99) or no publicly funded enrolments. For those we plan to remove public funding from on 1

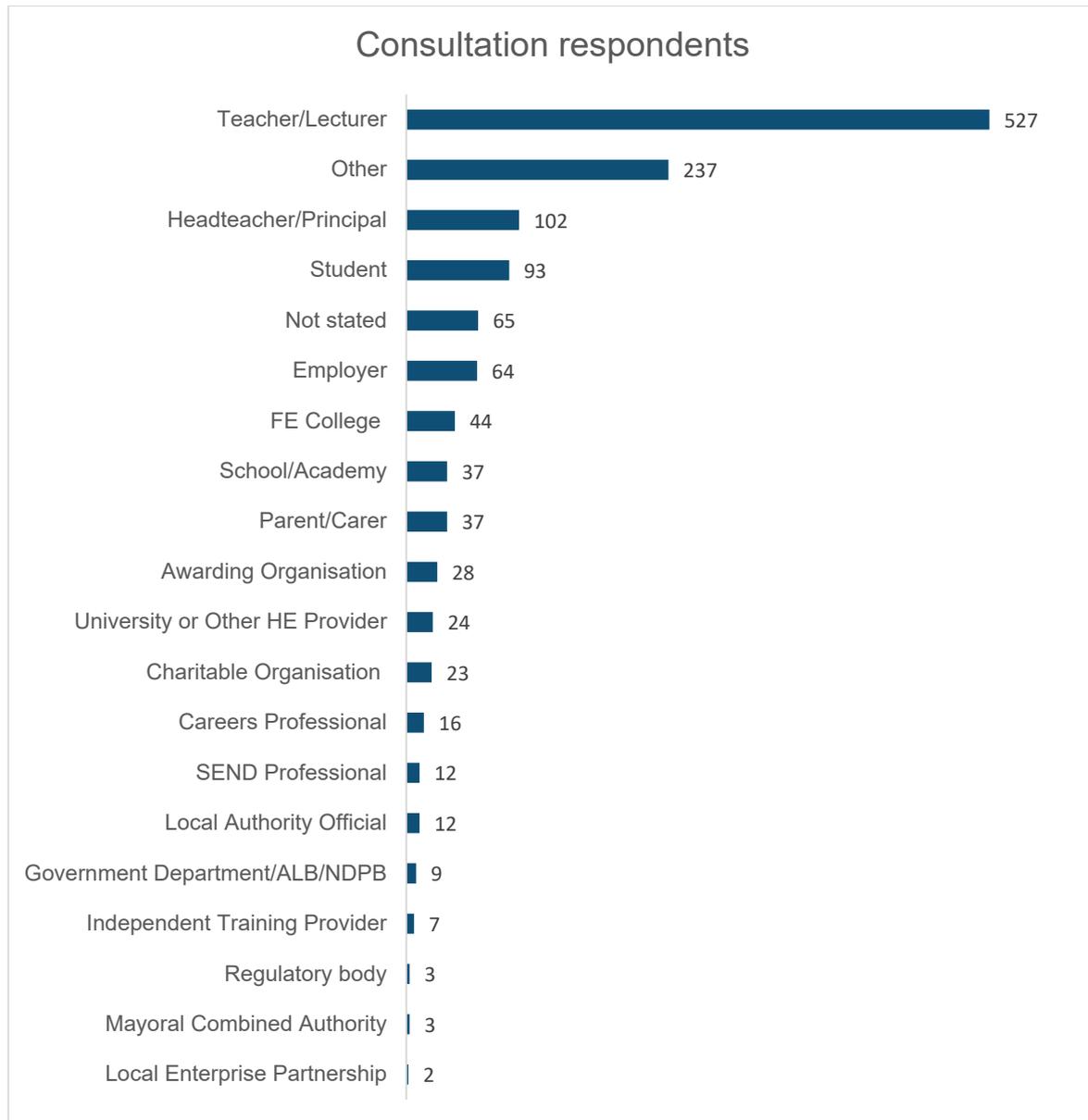
We recognise that some will consider aspects of this timeline ambitious, but we believe it is vital that we deliver the positive change the country needs as soon as possible. Our reforms will bring about substantive change, delivering a system that is coherent, valued by employers and post-16 providers, and offers clear progression pathways for students.

As we develop the arrangements for the new qualifications landscape we will work closely with Ofqual, the Institute, AOs, and providers and will consider where future support may be required.

August 2022 we will remove funding approval from qualifications which had low (1 to 99) or zero enrolments in 2016/17, 2017/18, and 2018/19.

Annex A: List of consultation respondents by category

The consultation received 1,345 responses in total. 1,311 of these were received in response to the online survey questionnaire, and 34 were received via email. The breakdown of respondents by category is set out below.



Annex B: Glossary of terms

Term	Definition
Adult Education Budget (AEB)	<p>The AEB aims to engage adults and provide the skills and learning they need to equip them for work, an apprenticeship or other learning.</p> <p>The national AEB supports three statutory entitlements to full funding for eligible adults (aged 19 and above). These are set out in the Apprenticeships, Skills and Children’s Learning Act 2009, and enable eligible adults to be fully funded for the following qualifications:</p> <p>English and mathematics, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade A* to C or grade 9 to 4, and/or</p> <p>first full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and/or</p> <p>first full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23</p> <p>Further information on AEB funding and performance can be found on Adult education budget funding and performance management rules 2018 to 2019.</p> <p>From August 2019, AEB is devolved. Further information can be found on Adult education budget (AEB) devolution.</p>
Advanced Learner Loan	<p>An Advanced Learner Loan helps eligible adults (aged 19 and above) with the costs of a course at a college or training provider in England. Further information can be found on Advanced Learner Loan.</p> <p>Qualifications for which an individual can take a loan out are known as qualifications that are designated for loans. These can be found in the Advanced Learner Loans qualifications catalogue.</p>
Applied General qualifications (AGQs)	<p>Applied General qualifications are level 3 qualifications for post-16 students. They allow entry to a range of higher education courses, either by meeting the entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other level 3 qualifications such as A levels. Applied General qualifications are included in DfE’s 16 to 18 school and college performance tables.</p>
Apprenticeship	<p>An apprenticeship is a job that combines practical training with study.</p>

Term	Definition
	See “A guide to apprenticeships” for further information.
Awarding Organisations (AOs)	Refers to individual organisations that design, develop, and assess qualifications but are not themselves education providers.
Careers guidance	The National Careers Service provides information, advice and guidance to help people make decisions on learning, training and work.
Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)	The ESFA is an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Education. It is accountable for funding education and skills for children, young people and adults. See the ESFA website for more information. In the consultation document, references to the Department for Education should be taken to include the ESFA.
Employer-led occupational standards (previously known as apprenticeship standards)	The employer-led occupational standards (also referred to as employer-led standards) set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) required for an occupation. Employer-led occupational standards make it possible to assess whether an individual has achieved the KSBs needed to be competent in an occupation. They are developed by groups of employers and approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. These currently form the basis of T Levels and apprenticeships.
Full level 3	A study programme consisting of two A levels, or other equivalent regulated level 3 qualifications, including Tech Levels and Applied General qualifications. Further information regarding what contributes towards a full level 3 can be found here .
Further Education (FE)	Further education (FE) includes any study after secondary education that’s not part of higher education (that is, not taken as part of an undergraduate or graduate degree). Courses range from basic English and maths to Higher National Diplomas (HNDs).
Guided Learning Hours	The activity of a student being taught or instructed by, or otherwise participating in education or training under the immediate guidance or supervision of a lecturer, supervisor, tutor or other appropriate provider of education or training.
Higher Education (HE) provider	An institution or training provider that provides HE courses. Note, some HE providers also deliver apprenticeships.

Term	Definition
Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (The Institute)	A Crown non-departmental public body, established in April 2017 as the Institute for Apprenticeships, responsible for, amongst other things, ensuring the quality of and approving standards and apprenticeships assessment plans, and ensuring that apprenticeships quality assurance for assessments is carried out. On 31 January 2019 it assumed responsibility for delivery of some technical education functions in England – at which point it became the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.
Large qualifications	When we refer to large qualifications in these reforms, we are referring to qualifications that would typically be a student’s full programme of study.
Level 2 and below	In the context of the qualifications review, this phrase refers to post-16 qualifications at levels 2, 1 and entry level. To find out more about qualification levels go to What qualification levels mean .
Level 3 and below	In the context of the qualifications review, this phrase refers to post-16 qualifications at levels 3, 2, 1 and entry level.
Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE)	As part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee, the Lifelong Loan Entitlement will be introduced from 2025, providing individuals with a loan entitlement to the equivalent of four years of post-18 education to use over their lifetime.
Lifetime Skills Guarantee	Adults in England who are 24 and over and do not yet have A levels, an advanced technical diploma or equivalent, can now take their first Level 3 qualification for free. They can choose from almost 400 free courses to gain new skills that will help them access opportunities and get a better job. The full list of courses available can be found online at Free courses for jobs .
National Skills Fund (NSF)	A £2.5 billion fund to help adults learn valuable skills and prepare for the economy of the future. £375 million from the overall investment has been allocated to cover the financial year from 2021 to 2022.
Occupation	A set of jobs whose main tasks and duties are characterised by a high degree of similarity. It is also an all-encompassing term for individuals’ employment and is not restricted to a particular workplace. In the UK, ‘job’ or ‘role’ is sometimes used interchangeably with ‘occupation’. However, the term ‘job’ or ‘role’ is much

Term	Definition
	more limited, implying connection to an employment contract in a workplace.
Occupational competence	The learner has achieved as many outcomes of an occupational standard as can reasonably be expected through a predominantly classroom-based course, and can perform to a level needed to successfully start an entry-level role relevant to the occupation.
Occupational Maps	Occupational maps group occupations with related knowledge, skills and behaviours into 15 technical routes, making it easier to see the opportunities for career progression within that particular route. Our technical education reforms would mean that competence in an occupation on the maps could be achieved through an apprenticeship, a T Level, a higher technical qualification or a reformed technical qualification. Most routes have been split into a number of pathways. The maps provide a useful guide to show the technical education options available for employers as well as individuals and training providers.
Ofqual	<p>The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) regulates qualifications, examinations and assessments in England. It was set up in April 2010 under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and is also covered by the Education Act 2011.</p> <p>Ofqual is a non-ministerial government department with jurisdiction in England. See the Ofqual website for further information.</p> <p>The Regulated Qualification Framework (RQF) provides a single, simple system for cataloguing all qualifications regulated by Ofqual. Qualifications are indexed by their level and size. Ofqual maintains a register that provides more detail on each qualification. See the Register of Regulated Qualifications for further information.</p>
Performance Tables	DfE's school and college performance tables are published annually, reporting key stage 2 results for primary schools in December; GCSE and equivalent results for secondary schools (provisional results in October and revised results in late January); and A levels and other 16 to 18 results for schools and colleges in late January and March. School and college performance tables provide a reliable, accessible

Term	Definition
	source of comparative information on pupil attainment and progress.
Provider	An education or training organisation that is approved to deliver education to students.
Sainsbury Review	The Independent Panel on Technical Education, chaired by Lord Sainsbury, reported its findings in April 2016. The recommendations were accepted in the Post-16 Skills Plan and form the basis for technical education reforms. See the Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education for more information.
Small qualifications	Qualifications small in size, meaning at most equivalent to one A level in the number of guided learning hours.
Study Programme	All students funded through the 16 to 19 funding methodology must be enrolled on a study programme, or T Level programme, which typically combines qualifications and other activities, and is tailored to each student's prior attainment and career goals. All study programmes must have a core aim. This will be tailored to the needs of the individual and typically include a substantial qualification (academic or technical) or preparation for employment. For further information see the study programmes guide for providers .
Supported Internship	A supported internship is a type of study programme specifically aimed at young people aged 16 to 24 who have a statement of special educational needs or education, health and care (EHC) plan, who want to move into employment and need extra support to do so.
T Level	A T Level is a rigorous, stretching programme of study at level 3 based on recognised, employer-led standards. T Levels offer a high quality, prestigious technical alternative to A levels and are aligned with work-based technical education also delivered at level 3 through apprenticeships. T Levels are being introduced in phases from September 2020.
T Level Transition Programme	This is a new type of 16 to 19 study programme tailored to support progression onto, and success on T Levels specifically. It provides a rounded package of preparation including English and maths, relevant technical knowledge and skills, preparation for the T Level Industry Placement and wider

Term	Definition
	<p>support and development to help students prepare for a T Level.</p> <p>There are five core components which are tailored to the needs of individual students:</p> <p>Diagnostic Period – To assess students’ capability and support needs in order to tailor their Transition Programme to address these needs and help students decide which T Level route they want to prepare for.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English and maths – For students who do not hold at least a GCSE grade 4 in English and/or maths and are required to do so as per the condition of funding. • Work Experience and preparation – To develop the skills, behaviours, attitude and confidence that will be needed for students to complete the T Level Industry Placement. • Introductory Technical Skills – Introductory skills and concepts to prepare students for the T Level route they wish to progress to. • Pastoral support and personal development – Relevant and meaningful support to address barriers to education, support emotional and/or mental health difficulties, support the development of study skills and reflective and resilience skills. <p>The core target group are students who are keen but not ready to start a T Level, and have the potential to progress onto one following a tailored preparation programme.</p>
Technical education	<p>Technical education encompasses any training, such as qualifications and apprenticeships, that focuses on progression into skilled employment and require the acquisition of both a substantial body of technical knowledge and a set of practical skills valued by industry. Technical education covers provision from level 2 (the equivalent of GCSEs at A* to C or 9 to 4) to higher education (level 6) but it differs from A levels and other academic options in that it draws its purpose from the workplace rather than an academic discipline.</p> <p>References to technical education also include qualifications that many would call “vocational”, especially qualifications at the lower levels of difficulty.</p>

Term	Definition
Technical routes	Employer-led occupational standards have been categorised into fifteen different technical routes, according to occupational specialism. T Levels will be available across eleven of those routes
Traineeship	A traineeship is a skills development programme that includes a work placement. Traineeships help 16 to 24 year olds - or 25 year olds with an education, health and care (EHC) plan - get ready for an apprenticeship or job if they don't have the appropriate skills or experience. It can last from 6 weeks up to 1 year.
Wolf Review	<p>The Secretary of State for Education commissioned Professor Alison Wolf of King's College London to carry out an independent review of vocational education. Professor Wolf's Review of Vocational Education (2011) is available on Review of vocational education: the Wolf report.</p> <p>The government's response to the Wolf Review can be found on Wolf review of vocational education: government response.</p>



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