



Department  
for Education

# **Technical and applied qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds**

**Key stage 4 and 16 to 18 performance  
tables from 2020: technical guidance for  
awarding organisations**

**November 2017**

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## Summary

This publication sets out the requirements of qualifications submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) for consideration as Technical Awards, Technical Certificates, Tech Levels or Applied General qualifications for inclusion in the key stage 4 and 16 to 18 performance tables from 2020.

## Expiry or review date

This guidance will be reviewed before July 2018.

## Whom is this technical guidance for?

This technical guidance is primarily for awarding organisations, but will also be of interest to anyone involved in the education of 14 to 19 year olds.

## Main points

- Only those technical and applied qualifications that meet stretching requirements (as outlined in this guidance), and have been approved by DfE, will be recognised in key stage 4 and 16 to 18 performance tables alongside academic qualifications.
- Details of technical and applied qualifications approved for inclusion in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 tables<sup>1</sup> are available online. This guidance sets out the arrangements for qualifications to be recognised from 2020.
- A qualification may remain on the approved list as long as it continues to meet the relevant requirements and the awarding organisation has confirmed that they wish the qualification to remain on the list.
- Lists of qualifications approved for inclusion in the 2020 tables will be published in early 2018 and updated on a regular basis until first teaching starts in September 2018. The lists of qualifications for future performance tables will be updated on a similar timescale in subsequent years.
- For students aged 19 to 23 who are undertaking their first level 2 and level 3 qualifications, only Technical Certificates, Tech Levels and Applied General qualifications approved by DfE will be added by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) to the 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019 level 2 and level 3 legal entitlement list of funded qualifications. These will be alongside academic qualifications and Access to Higher Education Diplomas.

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<sup>1</sup> Performance tables lists for 2017, 2018 and 2019

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/performance-tables-technical-and-vocational-qualifications>

## Section 1: Introduction

1. Young people have had access to a wide range of qualifications, with little clarity about which would help them get a job or a place in higher education. To address this, the Government announced a number of reforms in its response to the 2011 Wolf Report<sup>2</sup>; including that only those vocational qualifications that are the most valuable for young people – in terms of their content, assessment and progression – would be recognised in performance tables.

2. Four categories of qualification have been developed:

**Technical Awards** – high quality level 1 and 2 qualifications that equip 14 to 16 year olds with applied knowledge and practical skills.

**Technical Certificates** and **Tech Levels** – level 2 and 3 qualifications that equip post-16 students with the knowledge and skills they need for skilled employment or for further technical study.

**Applied General qualifications** – level 3 qualifications for post-16 students who wish to continue their education through applied learning.

3. The qualifications listed above and the associated requirements are described in more detail in sections 2 and 3 of this document. Awarding organisations wishing to deliver them must be able to demonstrate that the qualifications meet demanding criteria in terms of their content and assessment, and that they support progress to further study or employment.

4. This technical guidance provides awarding organisations with the information they need to submit technical and applied qualifications to DfE to be considered for inclusion in key stage 4 or 16 to 18 performance tables from 2020 and the 19 to 23 level 2 and level 3 legal entitlement list to 2019. Submissions for the Tech Level and Technical Certificate categories in occupational areas that are not represented on the 2019 lists would be particularly welcomed.

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<sup>2</sup> Wolf Review of Vocational Education, Government Response  
<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/w/wolf%20review%20of%20vocational%20education%20%20%20government%20response.pdf>

## Changes to the arrangements for submitting new qualifications

5. The headline characteristics against which qualifications will be assessed for performance tables are the same as those published in the technical guidance for qualifications to be reported in the 2017, 2018 and 2019 performance tables.
6. However, awarding organisations should note that in addition, for the 2020 performance tables, some requirements have been clarified in light of experience from the last two approvals rounds and changes to Ofqual's regulatory approach.
7. This guidance also offers awarding organisations advice on what it is helpful to consider and to include in a qualification specification or other documentation before submitting to DfE for consideration. These are not part of the requirements but are designed to be helpful.
8. Qualifications will be considered for approval on a rolling basis with two submission windows. Information about the process and timeline for submission of qualifications for inclusion in the performance tables is published separately<sup>3</sup>.

## Qualifications already approved for inclusion in performance tables

9. A qualification is eligible to remain on the approved list until it is amended, withdrawn or no longer meets DfE's requirements. Awarding organisations must inform DfE that they wish a qualification to remain on the list using the online form. Awarding organisations must also inform DfE if any qualification that has been approved is no longer available.
10. If any changes have been made to a qualification since its approval for the performance tables against the full requirements, the awarding organisation should email [technical.education@education.gov.uk](mailto:technical.education@education.gov.uk) with details of the changes. Depending on the extent of the changes, the DfE will then ask the awarding organisation to submit the qualification via the online form, indicating when prompted one of the following:
  - no changes have been made since its approval for the performance tables (as agreed with DfE by email exchange, as referenced above)
  - changes have been made since its approval for the performance tables, and providing details of the changes in order that a full review can be undertaken

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<sup>3</sup> Technical and applied qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds: Key stage 4 and 16 to 18 performance tables: 2020 – process for submitting qualifications.

11. Any enquiries about the approvals process should be made to [technical.education@education.gov.uk](mailto:technical.education@education.gov.uk).

## Role of Ofqual

12. Ofqual is the independent qualifications regulator for England, recognising more than 150 awarding organisations to design and deliver qualifications. The awarding organisations are held to account by Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition<sup>4</sup> and the qualifications they develop are referenced against the Regulated Qualifications Framework, which puts in place a consistent approach to determining qualification level and size.

13. Awarding organisations must assure themselves that they have met the requirements set out in the General Conditions of Recognition before they upload a qualification to the Register of Regulated Qualifications.

14. Ofqual will undertake a rolling programme of evaluation of qualifications against its General Conditions of Recognition on qualifications that are submitted for, and included in, performance tables. This programme will involve testing aspects such as the demand and quality of assessments.

15. Ofqual and DfE will share information so that the necessary assurance is provided on qualifications. Where risks are identified, Ofqual will seek assurance from awarding organisations.

16. There is a requirement that all regulated qualifications have a clear objective and support from stakeholders. Ofqual recognises the important part that awarding organisations must play in regulated qualifications achieving those objectives, and they must keep their approach to development, delivery and award under review in the light of any information received to assure themselves that regulated qualifications remain valid. Ofqual has a range of regulatory powers, including the ability to impose sanctions where appropriate, when regulated qualifications are not meeting expected standards.

## Role of DfE

17. A qualification will only be considered by DfE for inclusion in performance tables if it is regulated by Ofqual and has section 96 approval for the relevant age group.

18. The DfE approvals process builds on the regulatory arrangements above, by setting additional requirements and minimum standards that a qualification must meet if it is to

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<sup>4</sup> General Conditions of Recognition, Ofqual, June 2016  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/general-conditions-of-recognition>

be included in performance tables. These aim to ensure that all technical and applied qualifications offer a respected and rigorous alternative to GCSEs and A levels and that they support progression to learning at the next level or to skilled employment.

19. Qualifications will be assessed by a team of independent education advisers against the characteristic requirements set out in sections 2 and 3 of this document. Advisers will look for evidence that the requirements have been met in full, drawing from both the qualification specification and other supporting documentation. Awarding organisations should ensure that these are sufficiently detailed to enable a judgement to be made, and should upload additional information with the submission where necessary. This might include, for example, the calculations to demonstrate how the minimum requirements for external assessment and mandatory content have been met.

20. As a result of the change in Ofqual's regulatory approach, DfE may also consider other aspects of a qualification to assure itself that all aspects of the qualification are valid and robust.

21. Awarding organisations will be notified of the outcomes for their qualifications in advance of publication of the performance tables lists. They will have the opportunity to request a review of a decision if they disagree with the assessment of the evidence submitted. The decision will be reviewed by an independent education adviser who was not involved in the original assessment.

22. The final decision on which qualifications should be included in performance tables lies with the Secretary of State for Education. DfE reserves the right to remove any qualification from the performance tables lists if it has evidence to indicate that a qualification does not meet the characteristics or if wider policy changes mean that a qualification is no longer eligible for inclusion in the performance tables.

23. Schools and colleges are able to offer any qualifications that have section 96 approval under the Learning and Skills Act (2000) for teaching to students in the relevant age group, even if these qualifications are not recognised in performance tables.

24. Lists of qualifications that have been approved for inclusion in performance tables will be published by DfE and included in the ESFA level 2 and level 3 legal entitlement offer.

## **Technical education reform**

25. On 8 July 2016, the government published the Post-16 Skills Plan, setting out the vision for a reformed skills system following recommendations made by an independent, expert panel, chaired by Lord Sainsbury. The reforms will mark a fundamental shift towards a simplified, employer-led system consisting of occupational routes that encompass all technical education, both college-based and apprenticeships.

26. The Post-16 technical education reforms: T level action plan<sup>5</sup>, published in October 2017, outlines the key principles underpinning the delivery of T levels and how they fit within the wider 16 to 19 offer. It also provides more detail on plans for implementation from September 2020. In time, T levels will replace most of the technical provision currently funded for 16 to 19 year olds, which will be covered in the consultation in late 2017. We therefore expect the existing qualification approvals process to be suspended at some future point. We will work closely with awarding organisations to agree how and when a moratorium is introduced.

## Technical and applied qualifications post-19

27. For students aged 19 to 23, the entitlement offer allows them to be fully-funded if they study for a first qualification at level 2 and/or level 3. Each funding year ESFA publishes a list of qualifications that can be delivered as part of the level 2 and level 3 entitlement offer.

28. Over the 2016 to 2017 funding year ESFA has been transitioning the level 2 and level 3 legal entitlement qualifications list to a single entitlement offer at level 2 and level 3, focused on technical and applied qualifications (Technical Certificates, Tech Levels and Applied General qualifications) in the 16 to 18 performance tables.

29. For **2017 to 2018 the level 2 and level 3 legal entitlement offer**<sup>6</sup> consists of:

- technical and applied qualifications in the 2018 and 2019 16 to 18 performance tables
- technical and applied qualifications in the 2017 performance tables that were included in the 2016 to 2017 legal entitlement list
- GCSEs
- A and AS levels
- Access to Higher Education Diplomas

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<sup>5</sup> Post-16 technical education reforms: T level action plan

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

<sup>6</sup> 2017 to 2018 level 2 and level 3 legal entitlement offer

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/qualifications-getting-approval-for-funding>

30. The 2018 to 2019 level 2 and level 3 entitlement offer will continue to focus on technical and applied qualifications alongside GCSEs, AS and A levels, and Access to HE Diplomas.

31. Technical and applied qualifications in the 2020 performance tables will be added to the 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019 level 2 and level 3 legal entitlement offer based on the funding year from which they are available to be delivered.

32. For qualifications to be included in the level 2 and level 3 legal entitlement offer, awarding organisations will need to continue regularly to upload achievement data to the Personal Learning Record (PLR) in line with the Awarding Organisation Agreement<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Awarding Organisation Agreement

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/learning-records-service-awarding-organisations>

## Section 2: Qualifications for 14 to 16 year olds

### Background

#### Technical Awards

33. Technical Awards are broad, high-quality level 1 and level 2 qualifications in non-English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects that equip students with applied knowledge not usually acquired through general education. They should focus on applied study of a sector or occupational group, including the acquisition of associated practical or technical skills where appropriate. Qualifications that focus on a particular occupation and, as a result, could limit a 16 year old's progression opportunities will not be approved as Technical Awards.

34. Technical Awards are distinct from GCSEs and they complement and supplement the academic offer. They must, however, offer an equivalent level of rigour and challenge as GCSEs if they are to be recognised as valuable, distinctive and respected qualifications. They will fulfil entry requirements for academic, technical and applied study post-16, alongside GCSEs.

35. For pupils in key stage 4, the government believes that the study of EBacc subjects (English, mathematics, sciences (including computer science), languages, history and geography) is best served through the teaching of reformed GCSEs. To avoid a proliferation of alternative qualifications in EBacc subjects, qualifications in these subjects, or applied versions of these subjects, will not be approved as Technical Awards.

36. All qualifications will be assessed on their own merits and must demonstrate all of the characteristics below to be approved as a Technical Award. It is no longer a requirement for a level 1 qualification to be linked to a Technical Award at level 2.

#### Key stage 4 performance tables

37. The headline measures of secondary education performance are designed to encourage schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum at key stage 4. The headline measures in 2017 are:

- progress across 8 qualifications (Progress 8)
- attainment across the same 8 qualifications (Attainment 8)
- percentage of pupils achieving a grade 5 or above in English and mathematics
- percentage of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate
- percentage of pupils at the school achieving the English Baccalaureate at a grade 5 or above for English and mathematics, and at a grade C or above in other subjects

- percentage of pupils staying in education or going into employment after key stage 4 (pupil destinations)

38. The Progress 8 and Attainment 8 performance measures count five academic GCSEs from the list of EBacc subjects - English, mathematics and three other EBacc qualifications. Up to three Technical Awards may be included as part of the 'open group' of subjects that fill the remaining three slots. Each Technical Award, regardless of size, will count as equivalent to one GCSE.

39. The Department has published guidance to help schools to understand the measures above<sup>8</sup>.

## Characteristics

40. All technical and applied qualifications for 14 to 16 year olds must demonstrate the characteristics set out below if they are to be approved for inclusion in the performance tables from 2020 onwards.

41. Before submitting a qualification for approval, awarding organisations must assure themselves that:

- there is coherence with each of the characteristics below
- there is coherence between the information submitted to DfE and the information submitted to Ofqual for regulatory purposes
- sufficient detail has been provided to enable DfE to make a judgement
- hyperlinks contained within the submission are correct and passwords have been provided where needed

### A. Declared purpose

42. The Purpose Statement sets out the aims, objectives and intended purpose of each qualification in order to help students make informed decisions about which qualification(s) to take.

#### Requirement

43. A Purpose Statement must accurately reflect the qualification specification and describe clearly (where applicable):

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<sup>8</sup> School performance tables: About the data

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/school-performance-tables-about-the-data>

- who the qualification is for
- what the qualification covers, including the knowledge and skills that a student will develop
- what further study the qualification is designed to lead to
- which subjects might complement the qualification
- whether the qualification is part of a suite, and why a student would choose this qualification instead of others in the suite

44. The Purpose Statement must be expressed in plain English and in terms that are meaningful and relevant to students, parents and other intended users.

### **Evidence to be submitted to DfE**

45. Awarding organisations must publish a Purpose Statement for each qualification submitted for consideration for approval on their website, alongside or as part of the qualification specification. This must meet the requirements above in terms that are meaningful and relevant to students and parents considering key stage 4 options.

46. Annex A provides a template for use when preparing and publishing Purpose Statements for Technical Awards. It is not mandatory to use the template, but DfE recommends that awarding organisations do so as it will make it easier for students and their parents to compare qualifications, and provides assurance that the minimum requirements have been addressed.

### **What makes for strong evidence?**

47. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- make sure that the Purpose Statement is clearly signposted on their website and accessible to users
- address all of the points included in the template in annex A even if the template is not used
- ensure that claims made in the Purpose Statement are clearly supported by the content of the qualification
- clearly state the purpose of each pathway where these exist in a qualification
- be clear about the post-16 options the qualification would best prepare a student for
- explain how the qualification is complementary to a reformed GCSE, where appropriate

## **B. Size**

48. The size of a qualification must relate to its purpose, the level of study and the skills and knowledge that the student will develop. The size characteristic relates to its value in

terms of hours of guided learning, rather than the total qualification time. Ofqual has published guidance on activities that contribute to guided learning<sup>9</sup>.

### **Requirement**

49. Technical Awards must have at least 120 guided learning hours. A qualification may be larger than this.

### **Evidence to be submitted to DfE**

50. DfE will use the guided learning hours value held in the Register of Regulated Qualifications, but will also consider whether this is supported by the qualification's content. DfE will contact awarding organisations if they have any questions about the guided learning hours value attached to a qualification.

## **C. Appropriate content**

51. Technical Awards are broad, high-quality qualifications in non-EBacc subjects that sit alongside GCSEs in the key stage 4 curriculum.

### **Requirement**

52. Technical Awards must:

- only include content that is directly related to the qualification's purpose as set out in the Purpose Statement, and have a clear rationale for the weighting of each topic covered, where relevant
- focus on applied study of a sector or broad occupational group, with opportunities to acquire associated practical and technical skills where appropriate
- offer breadth and depth of study that will prepare students for study post-16
- incorporate a significant core of knowledge and theoretical content with broad-ranging applicability, equivalent to the challenge and rigour offered by GCSEs

53. A qualification that focuses on a particular occupation or skill, has limited applicability, relates to a specific occupational context or may limit a 16 year old's progression opportunities, will not be approved as a Technical Award.

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<sup>9</sup> Guidance to the General Conditions of Recognition, Ofqual, July 2016  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-the-general-conditions-of-recognition>

## **Evidence to be submitted to DfE**

54. Awarding organisations must demonstrate within the qualification specification that all qualification components meet the requirement above.

### **What makes for strong evidence?**

55. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- set out in the specification or supporting documentation clear information about the content of the qualification; this should be more than just the learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- make sure that the content of the qualification – particularly where it comprises a number of units or optional content – is coherent and links to the purpose of the qualification

## **D. Appropriate assessment**

56. Rigorous and appropriate assessment arrangements, including external assessment, help to ensure that Technical Awards offer a comparable level of challenge to GCSEs.

57. External assessment is a form of assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are specified by the awarding organisation, then taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marking or assessment judgements are made by the awarding organisation. It does not include moderation or verification of centre-based assessment undertaken by an awarding organisation.

58. External assessment need not be limited to paper or on-screen tests. It may include digital recordings of students, external examiners viewing and assessing artefacts made by students, assessed performance at an external assessment centre or other effective means made possible by developing technologies.

### **Requirement**

59. The external assessment must assess knowledge and understanding, provide stretch and challenge commensurate with the level of the qualification and be an appropriate amount for the size of the qualification.

60. The proportion of the qualification's content that is externally assessed, and the associated contribution to the overall grade, must be at least 40%. A qualification that was first approved for the 2017 tables on the basis of 25% external assessment, and that has not been amended, is not required to meet the 40% figure.

61. In setting a minimum expectation, DfE expects awarding organisations to ensure their chosen methods of assessment are the most suitable and appropriate for their

qualification. Where a greater proportion of external assessment is valid and represents the most robust approach, DfE expects a qualification to exceed the minimum requirement.

62. Students failing to reach the required standard or deemed to have underperformed, must be given the option of one retake opportunity. To ensure that external assessment provides sufficient challenge, the retake must be a new task or assignment different from the original assessment. Qualification specifications or associated assessment guidance must state that students cannot re-submit any work that has previously been assessed.

63. Internal assessment must be subject to appropriate controls by the awarding organisation, through external verification or moderation. External verification is the process by which an awarding organisation checks that the internal assessment processes, decisions and outcomes are valid and accurate. External moderation is the process by which assessment processes, decisions and outcomes are adjusted in order to maintain valid and consistent standards and outcomes. In both cases, awarding organisations may intervene to ensure that centres' assessment decisions are correct.

64. All assessments - both internal and external - must be suitably controlled to ensure that work submitted is authentic (that is, prepared and produced by students independently, without assistance from others and free of plagiarism) and assessed against clear and unambiguous criteria setting out how levels of attainment will be differentiated.

### **Evidence to be submitted to DfE**

65. The qualification specification must clearly explain the arrangements for both external and internal assessment, including the controls to be used. It must include information about the knowledge, skills and understanding that will be assessed, as well as details of the arrangements for the assessments. It must clearly set out the percentage of the qualification's content that is subject to external assessment. This is particularly important for linear or non-modular qualifications.

66. Links to a range of sample assessment materials and mark schemes must be provided with the submission.

### **What makes for strong evidence?**

67. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- show that the assessment method(s) used are appropriate for the content of the qualification and allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills across the full grade range - assessment based largely on multiple choice tests may not accurately reflect depth of knowledge
- set out in the specification or supporting documentation exactly which content or units are to be assessed, the assessment methods that will be used, and how this meets or exceeds the 40% requirement

- consider subjecting any mandatory content to external assessment
- avoid making unsupported claims about the contribution of external assessment to the overall grade - awarding organisations should explain how the proportion to be externally assessed has been calculated; and how it contributes to overall grade - consider appending a table to the submission to summarise this information
- explain how the method, amount and type of the external assessment are appropriate for the size and level of the qualification
- explain clearly how the remaining content is assessed (i.e. through internal assessment, external verification and/or moderation, and so on) and how this will ensure secure standards
- set out arrangements for re-takes including confirmation that any task or assignment that is subject to external assessment will be different from the original

68. Awarding organisations are advised against:

- basing assessments largely on multiple choice tests that do not accurately reflect the attainment of practical skills
- assessing assignments using a tick list for each criterion - this makes it difficult to identify work that is of an exceptionally high quality

## E. Synoptic assessment

69. Synoptic assessment helps demonstrate a student's appreciation and understanding of the connections between the different elements of a body of knowledge and skills.

70. In consultation with awarding organisations, the following definition for synoptic assessment has been agreed:

*“A form of assessment which requires a candidate to demonstrate that s/he can identify and use effectively in an integrated way an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories, and knowledge from across the whole vocational area, which are relevant to a key task.”*

### Requirement

71. DfE has not set a minimum contribution to the final grade that synoptic assessment must provide. However, the awarding organisation must be able to demonstrate that it is of sufficient size to cover meaningfully the full range of the qualification's content and that it requires the student to identify and use an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories and knowledge from across the qualification's content effectively and in an integrated way. Synoptic assessment does not necessarily have to involve external assessment.

## **Evidence to be submitted to DfE**

72. Awarding organisations must demonstrate how the requirement for synoptic assessment will be met. This is particularly important for a qualification that does not have an explicit synoptic assessment or where synoptic assessment is deemed to be present in a number of assessments. Awarding organisations may decide on the most appropriate format for incorporating this information into the specification, but it must be sufficiently detailed for a judgement to be made.

## **What makes for strong evidence?**

73. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- show which assessment(s) are synoptic and how they contribute to the overall grade
- provide sample synoptic assessment materials
- ensure that the synoptic assessment requires the student to demonstrate their understanding across the qualification's content, with a specific focus on any mandatory elements
- consider basing the synoptic assessment on an assignment or portfolio which tests the student's ability to respond to a 'real life' situation
- demonstrate the connection and coherence between different elements of the qualification
- develop synoptic assessment materials in a way that encourages students to select and apply the content that is most relevant to the task they have been set
- avoid focussing the synoptic assessment exclusively on either skills or knowledge, but reflect the knowledge and any skills that the qualification develops
- demonstrate how the synoptic assessment requirement will be met when development and/or assessment of any tasks is delegated to centres

## **F. Grading**

74. Grading differentiates students' performance and provides motivation and ambition by differentiating achievement and recognising high achievement. Grading also helps to raise the confidence of education providers in Technical Awards.

### **Requirement**

75. A Technical Award must have a distinction, merit, pass, fail structure or a more detailed grading scale.

76. Grading must apply to the overall qualification and reflect a student's attainment across the qualification's content. The difference between each grade and how a student would demonstrate achievement at each grade must be detailed and clear.

77. The degree of stretch and amount of assessment that contributes to the overall grade must be appropriate for the level and size of the qualification.

### **Evidence to be submitted to DfE**

78. The approach to grading must be set out in the qualification specification in terms that students and teachers would understand. The specification must explain clearly how final grades are derived from individual units and assessments, particularly where not all individual units or assessments are graded.

### **What makes for strong evidence?**

79. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- explain their methodology for calculating the overall grade, clarifying the contribution of individual assessments, as well as those that do not contribute to the grade - where units and/or assessments are weighted, show how each unit and/or assessment is reflected in the overall grade
- explain the contribution that key components such as any mandatory content, the external assessment and synoptic assessment, make to the overall grade, especially where a compensatory grading model is used
- explain how the attainment of individual students will be identified in a group task
- provide marking and grading criteria that clearly show how a student can demonstrate achievement across the grading scale

80. Awarding organisations are advised to avoid:

- basing grades solely on the percentage of questions that a student answers correctly in a test - a more qualitative approach, which recognises the relative size and importance of some questions, provides a better option
- using a pass/fail, binary or 'tick box' approach which does not allow students to demonstrate higher levels of understanding
- a disconnect between the overall grade and the grade descriptors - for example, if achieving a distinction was deemed to show an exceptional all round knowledge of a subject, then it would be reasonable to expect students achieving a distinction to have passed all elements of the qualification

## **Additional evidence requirements after a qualification is awarded**

81. Following approval for inclusion in performance tables and having been awarded to a full cohort, a qualification needs to demonstrate characteristics G (Progression) and H (Track Record). For example, a Technical Award that was awarded for the first time to students completing key stage 4 in 2016 will need to meet the Progression and Track

Record requirements if it is to be included in the 2020 performance tables. The online form will alert awarding organisations where this evidence is required.

82. All Technical Awards will be subject to periodic reviews of the Progression and Track Record characteristics.

83. Awarding organisations that have already provided evidence and had confirmation from DfE that both the Progression and Track Record requirements have been met, do not need to provide further evidence until requested to do so as part of the periodic review.

## **G. Progression**

84. Technical Awards must be recognised and valued by post-16 education and training providers as beneficial to students' general education at key stage 4, alongside GCSEs, if they are to remain on the approved list.

### **Requirement**

85. A Technical Award that has been completed by a cohort of students since first being approved for inclusion in performance tables must demonstrate that it has been accepted alongside GCSEs for a range of post-16 options.

### **Evidence to be submitted**

86. Awarding organisations must provide formal evidence that post-16 providers have accepted Technical Awards alongside GCSEs as an integral and equally regarded part of a student's wider suite of qualifications in fulfilling the entry requirements for a range of courses.

87. Awarding organisations are required to provide evidence from at least five post-16 providers. The evidence must clearly show the full title and qualification number (QN) of the qualification under consideration, as well as the full name and job title of the individual, and name and contact details of the organisation supplying the evidence where applicable. The person providing the evidence must be in a position to give assurances on entry requirements to a range of courses - for example, head of sixth form, head of admissions, and so on.

### **What makes for strong evidence?**

88. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- provide evidence that clearly states that the provider accepts the Technical Award as enabling entry to a range of academic and technical post-16 options
- show that the provider has considered the Technical Award equally alongside GCSEs for entry to post-16 courses - for example, a Technical Award might

count as part of a sixth-form college's requirement for students to have five GCSEs with a good pass

- where possible use public-facing evidence such as a college prospectus or information on a college website - evidence such as email correspondence between an awarding organisation and a provider will not be considered as strong

## **H. Track record**

89. Low take-up demonstrates that students and providers do not, in general, see a qualification as a strong route to an apprenticeship or other employment or a higher level course/qualification.

### **Requirement**

90. Technical Awards must have been awarded to at least 100 key stage 4 students in the same year group, across at least five schools or colleges in England, in one of the first two years following approval for recognition in performance tables.

### **Evidence to be submitted**

91. Awarding organisations will not be asked to provide evidence to show that a qualification has met the track record requirement as DfE will use completion data to make a judgement.

## Section 3: 16 to 19 year olds

### Background

#### Technical and applied qualifications

92. There are three categories of technical and applied qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds:

- **Technical Certificates** are rigorous intermediate (level 2) technical qualifications for post-16 students wishing to specialise in a specific industry, occupation or technical role. They cover occupations where employers recognise entry at level 2 or where a level 2 qualification is required before students can progress to a Tech Level. They equip students with specialist knowledge and skills, enabling entry to an apprenticeship, employment or progression to a Tech Level. In some cases, they provide a 'licence to practise' or exemption from professional exams.
- **Tech Levels** are rigorous advanced (level 3) technical qualifications, on a par with A levels and recognised by employers. They are for post-16 students wishing to specialise in a specific industry, occupation<sup>10</sup> or technical role. They equip a student with specialist knowledge and skills, enabling entry to an apprenticeship or other employment, or progression to a related higher education course. In some cases, these qualifications provide a 'licence to practise' or exemption from professional exams. Tech Levels are one of three components of the new Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc) performance table measure.
- **Applied General qualifications** are rigorous advanced (level 3) qualifications that allow 16 to 19 year old students to develop transferable knowledge and skills. They are for students who want to continue their education through applied learning. Applied General qualifications allow entry to a range of higher education courses, either by meeting the entry requirements in their own right or by being accepted alongside and adding value to other qualifications at level 3 such as A levels.

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<sup>10</sup> The term 'occupation' encompasses a number of related roles that are characterised by a set of common knowledge and skill requirements. 'Technical role' refers to an individual role within an occupation. Qualifications should prepare a student either for direct entry to a relevant workplace, including as an apprentice, or for higher study in the chosen specialist area. The underpinning knowledge and skills developed should also prepare the student for progression within the broader occupational area.

## 16 to 18 performance tables

93. Five headline measures are published in the 16 to 18 performance tables. They are:

- progress (a value added progress measure for academic and Applied General qualifications, and a combined attainment / completion measure for Tech Levels and Technical Certificates)
- attainment
- English and mathematics progress measure (for those students who have not achieved a GCSE grade C or above or GCSE grade 4 or above at the end of key stage 4)
- retention
- destinations

94. DfE also publishes the number of students at each school and college who achieve the Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc). The TechBacc is a performance table measure that reports the number of students achieving a Tech Level, an approved level 3 mathematics qualification and an Extended Project qualification. The measure was introduced for courses starting in September 2014 and reported in school and college performance tables from 2016<sup>11</sup>.

95. DfE has published guidance to help schools and colleges understand how measures are reported<sup>12</sup>.

## Characteristics

96. All technical and applied qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds must demonstrate the characteristics set out below if they are to be approved for inclusion in performance tables from 2020 onwards.

97. Before submitting a qualification for consideration for approval, awarding organisations must assure themselves that:

- there is coherence with each of the characteristics below
- there is coherence between the information submitted to DfE and the information submitted to Ofqual for regulatory purposes

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<sup>11</sup> Technical Baccalaureate measure for 16- to 19-year-olds  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-baccalaureate-measure-for-16-to-19-year-olds>

<sup>12</sup> 16 to 19 accountability headline measures: technical guide  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/16-to-19-accountability-headline-measures-technical-guide>

- sufficient detail has been provided to enable DfE to make a judgement
- hyperlinks contained within the submission are correct and passwords have been provided where needed

## A. Declared purpose

98. The Purpose Statement sets out the aims, objectives and intended purpose of each qualification in order to help students make informed decisions about which qualification(s) to take.

### Requirement

99. A Purpose Statement must accurately reflect the qualification specification and describe clearly:

- who the qualification is for
- what the qualification covers, including the knowledge and skills that a student will develop
- what further study and/or employment the qualification is designed to lead to: a Purpose Statement for a **Tech Level** or a **Technical Certificate** must explicitly state which industry, occupation or technical role they prepare the student for; a Purpose Statement for an **Applied General** qualification must explicitly state that the qualification supports progression to a range of subjects at a higher level of learning
- which subjects might complement this qualification
- whether the qualification is part of a suite and why a student would choose this qualification instead of others in the suite
- who supports the qualification, drawing from the letters of support provided as evidence for the Recognition characteristic

100. Where a qualification is part of a suite, the Purpose Statement must explain the other sizes of qualification that are available, and describe the 'added value' of larger sized qualifications. For example, a larger qualification may prepare the student for different job roles, or a licence to practise, that a smaller qualification does not. Students need to know this if they are to make an informed decision about which size of qualification is right for them.

101. The Purpose Statement must be expressed in plain English, and in terms that are meaningful and relevant to students, parents and other intended users.

### Evidence to be submitted to DfE

102. Awarding organisations must publish a Purpose Statement for each qualification submitted for consideration for approval on their website, alongside or as part of the

qualification specification. This must meet the requirements above, in terms that are meaningful and relevant to students and parents considering post-16 options.

103. Annex B provides a template for use when preparing and publishing Purpose Statements. It is not mandatory to use the template, but DfE recommends that awarding organisations do so, as it will make it easier for students and their parents to compare qualifications and provides assurance that the minimum requirements have been addressed.

### What makes for strong evidence?

104. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- make sure that the Purpose Statement is clearly signposted on their website and accessible to users
- address all of the points included in the template in annex B even if the template is not used
- ensure that claims made in the Purpose Statement are clearly supported by the content of the qualification
- clearly state the purpose of each pathway where these exist in a qualification
- be clear about the specific options the qualification would best prepare a student for

## B. Size

105. The size of a qualification must relate to its purpose, the level of study and the skills and knowledge that the student will develop. The size characteristic relates to its value in terms of hours of guided learning, rather than the total qualification time. Ofqual has published guidance on activities that contribute to guided learning<sup>13</sup>.

### Requirement

106. A qualification must meet or exceed the following minimum size requirements to be recognised in performance tables from 2020:

- **a Tech Level** must have at least 300 guided learning hours to provide sufficient time for meaningful skills development that will equip a student to follow a specific occupation or technical role

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<sup>13</sup> Guidance to the General Conditions of Recognition, Ofqual, July 2016  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-the-general-conditions-of-recognition>

- **an Applied General qualification** must have at least 150 guided learning hours - a lower minimum size requirement that enables students to take one of these qualifications alongside one or more other substantial qualifications within a 16 to 19 study programme
- **a Technical Certificate** must have at least 150 guided learning hours to enable a student to complete their qualification within a one-year study programme before progressing to a Tech Level, apprenticeship or employment

107. These are minimum requirements. It is expected that the majority of qualifications will be larger than these minimum requirements if they are to meet the purpose of preparing students for further education or employment. However, it is recognised that some qualifications will have content that falls outside the definition of guided learning.

### Evidence to be submitted to DfE

108. DfE will use the guided learning hours value held in the Register of Regulated Qualifications, but will also consider whether this is supported by the qualification's content. DfE will contact awarding organisations if they have any questions about the guided learning hours value attached to a qualification.

## C. Recognition

109. Young people, their parents and teachers need to know which qualifications are valued by employers and HEIs. Further guidance and the definitions which apply to this characteristic are given in annex C.

### Requirement

110. For a **Tech Level** and **Technical Certificate**, awarding organisations must provide evidence to comply with at least one of the following:

- a minimum of one letter of support from a recognised and relevant UK professional or trade body representing the industry, occupation(s) or technical role covered by the content of the qualification
- letters of support from at least five employers that are representative of the industry, occupation or technical role group to which the qualification relates; no more than two letters from sole traders and micro-businesses (employing fewer than ten members of staff) will be accepted as evidence of employer support; if the qualification covers more than one occupation, endorsement is required from employers to cover all occupations
- a letter indicating that the qualification is accepted by a national licensed professional registration scheme

No more than two letters of support can come from employers that are also approved centres for an awarding organisation.

111. For an **Applied General** qualification, awarding organisations are required to provide a minimum of three letters of support from HEIs. These must confirm that the HEI recognises the qualification as fulfilling entry requirements to higher education courses in a range of subjects, either by meeting entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other qualifications at the same level. At least one of the letters must be from an HEI in England.

112. Awarding organisations may also provide further letters of support beyond the minimum requirement. These will not be used by DfE as evidence when judging this requirement.

113. To demonstrate genuine support for a qualification, letters of support must:

- give the full title, qualification number and awarding organisation for each qualification, as opposed to a generic qualification type or suite of qualifications
- confirm the name, job title and organisation of the person providing support
- be dated - for new or redeveloped qualifications, the date should be no more than six months before the date of the submission
- be written in English

114. In seeking letters of support, awarding organisations should be clear with employers and HEIs that their letter:

- will be made publicly available
- must remain available unless they are informed that the employer or HEI no longer recognises that qualification

115. Should awarding organisations become aware that an employer or HEI has ceased to recognise their qualification, the letter of support must be removed from the website and an alternative sought.

### **Evidence to be submitted to DfE**

116. Letters of support must meet the requirements above, and be publicly available on the awarding organisation's website. These must be clearly signposted and accessible to users.

### **What makes for strong evidence?**

117. Awarding organisations are encouraged to publish letters of support that:

- represent the range of occupations covered by the qualification and set out in the Purpose Statement
- are meaningful to students and their parents/carers - this might include specific reference to skills or content that make the qualification suitable for an employer's or HEIs' requirements; there is no need for letters of support to state

that the qualification is acceptable for performance table purposes since, whilst that may be important to providers, it is meaningless to students and advisers

- make clear whether the qualification is sufficient in its own right or whether it will be considered alongside other qualifications in order to meet an HEI's entry requirements
- make clear which HE courses or disciplines, the qualification would prepare a student for; for example, Childcare qualifications may only be considered for HE courses in related disciplines

## D. Appropriate content

118. To provide further education providers, employers and HEIs with greater confidence in the knowledge and skills of a qualification holder, a significant proportion of the content of each qualification must be mandatory. The mandatory content should be directly linked to the purpose of the qualification.

### Requirement

119. A qualification specification must state the specific content that students must pass to achieve the qualification. Mandatory content and the associated contribution to the overall grade must make up at least:

- 40% of a **Technical Certificate**
- 40% of a **Tech Level** qualification
- 60% of an **Applied General** qualification

DfE expects the majority of approved technical and applied qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds to exceed these minimum requirements.

120. Where a qualification has more than one pathway and/or combinations in which the content can be studied, the mandatory content requirement should apply equally to these. All students following the same pathway must take the same mandatory content, although the mandatory content may differ between pathways. Awarding organisations will need to ensure that pathways are clear and understandable to students, employers and further and higher education providers.

### Evidence to be submitted to DfE

121. Awarding organisations must state clearly in the qualification specification which content is mandatory and the contribution that the mandatory content makes to the overall grade.

### What makes for strong evidence?

122. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- provide a table that sets out the qualification structure and demonstrates which content is mandatory and which is optional, and clarifies the contribution that mandatory content makes to the overall grade
- link the mandatory element of any qualification to its purpose - it is expected that the core skills and knowledge that underpin the remainder of the qualification should be mandatory; students should not be able to take a combination of units that do not clearly meet the qualification's purpose

## E. Appropriate assessment

123. Rigorous and appropriate assessment arrangements, including external assessment, help to ensure that technical and applied qualifications taken by 16 to 19 year olds have the confidence of industry and further and higher education providers.

124. External assessment is a form of assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are specified by the awarding organisation, then taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marking or assessment judgements are made by the awarding organisation. It does not include moderation or verification of centre-based assessment undertaken by an awarding organisation.

125. External assessment need not be limited to paper or on-screen tests. It may include digital recordings of students, external examiners viewing and assessing artefacts made by students, assessed performance at an external assessment centre or other effective means made possible by developing technologies.

### Requirement

126. The external assessment must assess knowledge and understanding, provide stretch and challenge commensurate with the level of the qualification and be of appropriate amount for the size of the qualification.

127. The proportion of a qualification's overall grade that is externally assessed should reflect the purpose and content of the qualification and must be at least:

- 25% of a **Technical Certificate**
- 30% of a **Tech Level** qualification
- 40% of an **Applied General** qualification

128. In setting a minimum expectation, DfE expects awarding organisations to ensure their chosen methods of assessment are the most suitable and appropriate for their qualification. Where a greater proportion of external assessment is valid and represents the most robust approach, DfE expects a qualification to exceed the minimum requirements.

129. Students failing to reach the required standard or deemed to have underperformed, must be given the option of one retake opportunity. To ensure that external assessment provides sufficient challenge, the retake must be a new task or assignment different from the original assessment. Qualification specifications or associated assessment guidance must state that students cannot re-submit any work that has previously been assessed.

130. Internal assessment must be subject to appropriate controls by the awarding organisation, through external verification or moderation. External verification is the process by which an awarding organisation checks that the internal assessment processes, decisions and outcomes are valid and accurate. External moderation is the process by which assessment processes, decisions and outcomes are adjusted in order to maintain valid and consistent standards and outcomes. In both cases, awarding organisations may intervene to ensure that centres' assessment decisions are correct.

131. All assessments - both internal and external - must be suitably controlled to ensure that work submitted is authentic (i.e. prepared and produced by students independently, without assistance from others and free of plagiarism) and assessed against clear and unambiguous criteria setting out how levels of attainment will be differentiated.

### **Evidence to be submitted to DfE**

132. The qualification specification must clearly explain the arrangements for both external and internal assessment, including the controls to be used. It must include information about the knowledge, skills and understanding that will be assessed, as well as details of the arrangements for the assessments. It must clearly set out the percentage of the qualification's content that is subject to external assessment. This is particularly important for linear or non-modular qualifications.

133. Links to a range of sample assessment materials and mark schemes must be provided with the submission.

### **What makes for strong evidence?**

134. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- show that the assessment method(s) used are appropriate for the content of the qualification, and which allow students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills across the full grade range - assessment based largely on multiple choice tests may not accurately reflect depth of knowledge or evidence of practical skills
- set out in the specification or supporting documentation exactly which content or units are to be assessed, the assessment methods that will be used, and how this meets or exceeds the minimum requirement
- consider subjecting the mandatory content to external assessment
- avoid making unsupported claims about the contribution of external assessment to the overall grade - awarding organisations should explain how the proportion to be assessed externally has been calculated and how it contributes to overall

grade; consider appending a table to the submission to summarise this information

- explain how the method, amount and type of the external assessment are appropriate for the size and level of the qualification
- explain clearly how the remaining content is assessed (that is, through internal assessment, external verification and/or moderation, and so on), and how this will ensure secure standards
- set out arrangements for re-takes including confirmation that any task or assignment subject to external assessment will be different from the original

135. Awarding organisations are advised against:

- basing assessments largely on multiple choice tests which do not accurately reflect the attainment of practical skills
- assessing assignments using a tick list for each criterion - this makes it difficult to identify work that is of an exceptionally high quality

## **F. Synoptic assessment**

136. Synoptic assessment helps demonstrate a student's appreciation and understanding of the connections between the different components of a body of knowledge and skills.

137. In consultation with awarding organisations, the following definition for synoptic assessment has been agreed:

*“A form of assessment which requires a candidate to demonstrate that s/he can identify and use effectively in an integrated way an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories, and knowledge from across the whole vocational area, which are relevant to a key task.”*

### **Requirement**

138. DfE has not set a minimum contribution to the final grade that synoptic assessment must provide. However, the awarding organisation must be able to demonstrate that it is of sufficient size to cover meaningfully the full range of the qualification's content and that it requires the student to identify and use an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories and knowledge from across the qualification's content effectively and in an integrated way. Synoptic assessment does not necessarily have to involve external assessment.

### **Evidence to be submitted to DfE**

139. Awarding organisations must demonstrate how the requirement for synoptic assessment will be met. This is particularly important for a qualification that does not have an explicit synoptic assessment, or where synoptic assessment is deemed to be

present in a number of assessments. Awarding organisations may decide on the most appropriate format for incorporating this information into the specification, but it must be sufficiently detailed for a judgement to be made.

### **What makes for strong evidence?**

140. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- show which assessment(s) are synoptic and how they contribute to the overall grade
- provide sample synoptic assessment materials
- ensure that the synoptic assessment requires the student to demonstrate their understanding across the qualification's content, with a specific focus on the mandatory elements
- consider basing the synoptic assessment on an assignment or portfolio which tests the student's ability to respond to a 'real life' situation that they may face when they are in employment
- demonstrate the connection and coherence between different elements of the qualification
- develop synoptic assessment materials in a way that encourages students to select and apply the content that is most relevant to the task they have been set
- avoid focussing the synoptic assessment exclusively on either skills or knowledge, but reflect the knowledge and any skills that the qualification develops
- demonstrate how the synoptic assessment requirement will be met when development and/or assessment of any tasks is delegated to centres

## **G. Grading**

141. Grading differentiates students' performance and provides motivation and ambition by differentiating achievement and recognising high achievement. Grading also helps to raise the confidence of education providers and employers in technical and applied qualifications.

### **Requirement**

142. A technical or applied qualification must have a distinction, merit, pass, fail structure or a more detailed grading scale.

143. Grading must apply to the overall qualification and reflect a student's attainment across the qualification's content. The difference between each grade and how a student would demonstrate achievement at each grade must be detailed and clear.

144. The degree of stretch and amount of assessment that contributes to the overall grade must be appropriate for the level and size of the qualification.

## Evidence to be submitted to DfE

145. The approach to grading must be set out in the qualification specification in terms that students and teachers would understand. The specification must explain clearly how final grades are derived from individual units and assessments, particularly where not all individual units or assessments are graded.

### What makes for strong evidence?

146. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- explain their methodology for calculating the overall grade, clarifying the contribution of individual assessments, as well as those that do not contribute to the grade - where units and/or assessments are weighted, show how each unit and/or assessment is reflected in the overall grade
- explain the contribution that key components such as mandatory content, the external assessment and synoptic assessment, make to the overall grade, especially where a compensatory grading model is used
- explain how the attainment of individual students will be identified in a group task
- provide marking and grading criteria that clearly show how a student can demonstrate achievement across the grading scale

147. Awarding organisations are advised to avoid:

- basing grades solely on the percentage of questions that a student answers correctly in a test - a more qualitative approach, which recognises the relative size and importance of some questions, provides a better option
- using a pass/fail, binary or 'tick box' approach which does not allow students to demonstrate higher levels of attainment
- a disconnect between the grading process and grade descriptors: for example, if a distinction is described as showing a high all round knowledge of a subject, then it would be reasonable to expect students achieving a distinction to have passed all elements of the qualification

## H. Employer involvement

148. Employer involvement in the delivery and/or assessment of technical qualifications provides a clear 'line of sight' to work, enriches learning, raises the credibility of the qualification in the eyes of employers, parents and students and furthers collaboration between the learning and skills sector and industry.

149. **Applied General** qualifications are not required to demonstrate the employer involvement characteristic.

## Requirement

150. A qualification submitted for consideration as a **Tech Level** or **Technical Certificate** must set out how the awarding organisation will ensure that providers:

- require all students to undertake meaningful activity involving employers during their study
- are governed by quality assurance procedures run by the awarding organisation to confirm that providers have secured employer involvement for every student

151. No minimum duration or contribution to the overall qualification grade has been specified for the list of eligible activities, in order to give providers and employers flexibility in how they work together to support students' learning. However, the contribution that meaningful activities make to the qualification must be significant and relate to the qualification as a minimum.

152. Examples of 'meaningful activity' include:

- structured work experience or work placements that develop skills and knowledge relevant to the qualification
- project(s), exercise(s) and/or assessments/examination(s) set with input from industry practitioner(s)
- units delivered or co-delivered by an industry practitioner(s) - this could take the form of master classes or guest lectures
- industry practitioners operating as 'expert witnesses' that contribute to the assessment of a student's work or practice, operating within a specified assessment framework - this may be a specific project(s), exercise(s) or examination(s), or all assessments for a qualification

153. The following activities, whilst valuable, do not meet the requirement for meaningful employer involvement:

- employers' or industry practitioners' input to the initial design and content of a qualification
- employers hosting visits, providing premises, facilities or equipment
- employers or industry practitioners providing talks or contributing to delivery on employability, general careers advice, CV writing, interview training, and so on
- student attendance at career fairs, events or other networking opportunities
- simulated or provider-based working environments such as hairdressing salons, florists, restaurants, travel agents, small manufacturing units, or car servicing facilities
- employers providing students with job references

## **Evidence to be submitted**

154. The submission should include details of the activities that the awarding organisation expects the education provider to offer, and their contribution to the students' learning. The awarding organisation must also explain the arrangements it has put in place to satisfy itself that education providers understand, and have arranged, all the employer related activities covered by the specification. Qualification specifications or associated quality assurance documentation must describe the quality assurance arrangements that have been put in place, and the action that will be taken if an education provider does not secure the agreed levels of employer involvement.

## **What makes for strong evidence?**

155. Awarding organisations are encouraged to:

- provide evidence of how they will ensure that education providers have robust plans to meet this requirement for every learner
- be clear how the employer involvement relates to the content for qualification, and has been integrated into its delivery plan
- show how the employer involvement adds value to the qualification
- provide evidence of how they will monitor delivery to ensure that it is not possible for a student to reach the end of their course without the employer involvement requirement having been met, and of any sanctions that will be applied in cases of non-compliance
- put suitable processes in place to ensure that employer involvement activities are of a suitably high quality

## **Additional evidence requirements after a qualification is awarded**

156. Following approval for inclusion in performance tables against the full requirements, and having been awarded to a full cohort, a qualification needs to demonstrate characteristics I (Progression) and J (Track Record). For example, a Tech Level that has been awarded for the first time since meeting the full requirements to students completing key stage 5 in 2017 will need to meet the Track Record and Progression characteristics to be recognised in 2020. The online form will alert awarding organisations where this evidence is required.

157. All qualifications will be subject to periodic reviews of the Progression and Track Record characteristics.

158. Awarding organisations that have already provided progression evidence, and had confirmation from DfE that both the Progression and Track Record requirements have been met, do not need to provide further evidence until requested to do so as part of the periodic review.

## I. Progression

### Requirement

159. Once a qualification has met the full requirements and been completed by a cohort of students the awarding organisation is required to demonstrate that:

- for a **Tech Level** or **Technical Certificate** – students have secured related employment, apprenticeships, related training or study at a higher level
- for an **Applied General** qualification – students have progressed to study at a higher level

### Evidence to be provided

160. Awarding organisations must provide formal quantitative and qualitative evidence that the qualification enables progression. Evidence could include:

- written statements or published information demonstrating that a qualification has been accepted for entry to a range of higher level courses or training programmes
- endorsements from students confirming that a qualification has helped them progress to employment, an apprenticeship or a higher level course
- results of destination surveys conducted by schools and colleges
- endorsements from employers and professional or trade bodies

161. Evidence from schools, further and higher education providers, training providers, employers, professional or trade bodies or students must clearly show:

- the full title and qualification number of the qualification being referred to
- the full name, address and job title of the individual supplying the evidence
- the contact details of the organisation they represent

162. References from schools, further and higher education providers or training providers must be from people in a position to provide evidence of progression or give assurance on entry requirements to a range of courses - for example, head of admissions.

## J. Track Record

163. Low take-up demonstrates that students and providers do not, in general, see a qualification as a strong route to employment, apprenticeships or a higher level course/qualification.

## **Requirement**

164. Technical and applied qualifications need to be achieved by at least 100 students aged 16 to 19, across at least three centres, in one of the first two years following approval against the full requirements for inclusion in performance tables.

165. Awarding organisations may seek exemption from this requirement by providing evidence within the online form that the low take-up of a Tech Level or Technical Certificate is due to it relating to a niche industry sector, technology or process, and that removing the qualification from performance tables would leave a gap in provision and disadvantage economic growth.

## **Evidence to be provided**

166. Awarding organisations will not be asked to provide evidence to show that a qualification has met the track record requirement as DfE will use completion data to make a judgement.

## Annex A: Purpose statement template for Technical Awards

Awarding organisations are strongly encouraged to use the template below when writing a Purpose Statement (characteristic A). They may devise their own if they wish to provide the information in a different format, but should make sure that **everything** below has been covered.

The Purpose Statement is for the student and should be written in plain English.

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

**Awarding Organisation Name and Logo:**

**Title of Regulated Qualification:** (including level and qualification number (QN)).

**Type of Qualification:** Technical Award

### OVERVIEW

Who is this qualification for?

*Who might be interested in taking this course?*

What will the student study as part of this qualification?

*Please describe, in summary terms, the key topics the student will study.*

What knowledge and skills will the student develop as part of this qualification and how might these be of use and value in further studies?

*Please give details of the knowledge, practical and technical skills that the student will develop by completing this course and how they might be of value to further studies.*

Which subjects will complement this course?

*Please give details of other subjects, both Technical Awards and GCSEs, which this course will supplement or that complement this qualification.*

### FURTHER INFORMATION

*Please provide a hyperlink to further information on the qualification.*

## Annex B: Purpose statement template for 16 to 19 qualifications

Awarding organisations are strongly encouraged to use the template below when writing a Purpose Statement (characteristic A). They may devise their own if they wish to provide the information in a different format, but should make sure that everything below has been covered.

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

#### Awarding Organisation Name and Logo

**Title of Regulated Qualification** (including level and qualification number (QN)).

**Type of qualification** (Tech Level, Technical Certificate, Applied General)

### OVERVIEW

Who is this qualification for?

*For example: it is for someone who wants to work in the xxx industry or envisages a career in xxx occupation(s) or xxx technical role. Please summarise any prior qualifications/levels of attainment a student needs in order to take this qualification.*

What does this qualification cover?

*Please describe in summary terms the key topics/skills/knowledge the student will need to successfully complete to gain the qualification, explaining which are mandatory and which are optional. For Tech Levels and Technical Certificates with employer involvement, please explain what this entails.*

### WHAT COULD THIS QUALIFICATION LEAD TO?

Will the qualification lead to employment, and if so, in which job role and at what level?

*Please give examples of a specific industry, occupation(s) or technical role that the qualification prepares the learner for or supports the learner in.*

Will the qualification lead to further learning?

*Please confirm the subjects/particular qualifications/apprenticeships students can go on to study at a higher level.*

If there are larger and/or smaller versions of this qualification or it is available at different skills levels, why should a student take this particular one?

*Please explain if the qualification is part of a larger suite and what the rationale is for the different sizes and levels of qualification to help the student make an informed decision on which qualification in the suite is right for them.*

## **WHO SUPPORTS THIS QUALIFICATION?**

### **i) Industry**

*Please indicate which professional or trade bodies and/or individual employers support this qualification, and provide hyperlinks to all letters of support.*

*If the qualification provides professional registration, please explain and provide a hyperlink to further information.*

### **ii) Further and Higher Education**

*Please indicate which HEIs or post-16 providers recognise this qualification for entry to a higher level course or qualification. Please provide hyperlinks to all letters of support.*

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The Purpose Statement may indicate that a qualification is intended as a Tech Level, Applied General qualification or Technical Certificate but should not suggest that approval has been given until this is confirmed by publication of the 16 to 18 performance table lists.

*Please provide a hyperlink to further information on the qualification.*

## Annex C: Recognition requirement: definitions and further guidance

An **employer** is a business based in the UK employing at least 10 members of staff. Employers providing endorsements may be from private, public or not-for-profit sectors.

A **professional body** is a UK-based organisation seeking to further a particular occupation, the interests of individuals engaged in that occupation, and the public interest. Typically this is done through the defining and maintenance of standards of education and training for their profession, and in some cases professional registers. They may hold a royal charter, or may not.

A **trade body** is an organisation founded and funded by businesses that operate in a specific industry within the UK. They may also be referred to as 'industry trade groups' or 'trade associations' or 'employer bodies'.

**Trade Unions** do not count as professional or trade bodies as they represent employees rather than employers.

Where an awarding organisation is an arm of a professional or trade body, recognition of the qualification will be accepted alongside letters of support from employers.

A **licensed professional registration scheme** is one run by a licensed professional institution deemed to have sufficient experience, procedures and resources to undertake the following tasks:

- assess the competence and commitment of candidates for registration
- monitor the continuing professional development of registrants
- monitor the conduct of registrants

Throughout this technical guidance the term '**Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**' refers to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education Colleges (FECs) funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Department of Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales or the Scottish Funding Council for higher education, research and related activities.

**Sector Skills Councils (SSCs)** have had significant involvement in the development of most existing technical and applied qualifications and in many cases supported their original accreditation by Ofqual. For this reason their further endorsement is not required.



Department  
for Education

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