



Department
for Education

Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England: Second Stage

Government consultation

Launch date 23 October 2020

Respond by 15 January 2021

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Foreword by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Apprenticeships and Skills

Our education system must equip all students to fulfil their ambition, whatever route they choose. Our further education reforms will mean more students can benefit from a world class technical education. For too long, students have been able to take qualifications that do not give them the skills they need to get the skilled job they want, or progress to further study at a higher level. This cannot continue. It is unfair on students and unhelpful to employers.



We already have an ambitious programme of reform through the development of T Levels, new high-quality apprenticeships and our review of higher technical education. Alongside this, our Lifetime Skills Guarantee will mean those who left school without level 3 qualifications will be able to get funding for technical courses to help them learn new skills, but we must go further. The unprecedented challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic means this has never been more important than it is now. We must put employers at the heart of every technical qualification. Only by doing this can we level up opportunities across the nation, create high quality jobs, and increase productivity.

This qualifications review is a vital part of securing this transformation. There are more than 12,000 different qualifications funded in England at level 3 and below¹ – that is a ridiculously large number. Students and employers face a bewildering choice over which is right for them and which will increase their employment opportunities. We have already started reducing this number, removing qualifications that nobody takes. Our aim is to simplify the system so that young people and adults have clearer choices, with improved lines of sight to skilled employment or further study, and so that employers and students can have confidence that every single qualification offered is high quality.

This second stage consultation focuses on level 3 qualifications. We said in our March 2019 consultation that T Levels and A levels should be the programmes of choice for 16 to 19 year olds taking level 3 qualifications. We still believe this is right. T Levels have been developed with employers to give young people the skills they need. A levels have consistently prepared students well for higher education. In this consultation, we set out proposals about the qualifications we believe are needed alongside T Levels and A levels and how we will ensure they meet the consistently high levels of quality that are needed to support students to fill their potential and meet the needs of employers.

¹ ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding, as of May 2019.

Social mobility is about getting people into good jobs, whether that be through an apprenticeship, through further education or through university.

Our proposals are bold – the qualifications available for 16 to 19 year olds will be different to those available today – but they are the right thing to do, for young people and for our society. Tinkering around the edges will not be enough. If we are to improve outcomes for 16 to 19 year olds and make sure adults taking advantage of our Lifetime Skills Guarantee get the skills they need, we need enhanced quality measures and a more focused system that everyone understands and has confidence in.

We hope you will take the opportunity to tell us what you think, and to work alongside us in transforming the opportunities for post-16 learning that will help unlock our country's potential and prepare us for a flourishing future.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Gillian', with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

Gillian Keegan MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Skills and Apprenticeships

Who this is for

The consultation 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 is technical detail aimed at professionals working in the post-16 education sector. It is important that we consult on this technical detail, but it is also important to gather the views of others – including potential students and parents or carers. To highlight the technical detail, we have used the heading ‘Technical implementation of proposals’ throughout the consultation document.

We are particularly keen to hear the views of young people so that we can better understand the impacts of our proposals on individual young people.

Issue date

The consultation was issued on 23 October 2020.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team by email Post16Level3andBelowReview.consultation@education.gov.uk.

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: Consultations.Coordinator@education.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

The response

The results of the consultation and the Department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in 2021.

Respond online

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit www.education.gov.uk/consultations to submit your response.

Other ways to respond

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email it or post it.

By email

Post16Level3andBelowReview.consultation@education.gov.uk

By post

Post-16 Qualifications Review Team
Department for Education
2 St Pauls Place, 125 Norfolk Street
Sheffield S1 2JF

Deadline

The consultation closes on 15 January 2021.

Executive summary and summary of proposals

Background

1. Last year we launched our review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below and held our first stage consultation. We received 538 responses. Our response to the first stage consultation is on [GOV.uk](https://www.gov.uk). This consultation builds on the first stage and sets out our proposals for level 3 qualifications that will exist in future (we refer to this as the level 3 landscape).
2. We have chosen to focus this second stage of consultation on level 3. We will shortly publish a call for evidence on level 2 and below study which will help us understand what and who classroom-based study at level 2 and below is for. In particular we want to explore how it fits into the rest of the further education (FE) landscape and can support a reformed level 3 landscape.
3. We have continued to secure early progress as set out in the first stage consultation. We have: confirmed the removal of public funding for 163 qualifications where reformed versions already existed; implemented 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 guidance²; and started the process to remove approval for public funding from qualifications with low or no publicly funded enrolments.

Putting employers at the heart of technical education

4. The highest performing countries, like Germany and the Netherlands, have clear and coherent skills systems, backed by employers, which give young people and adults a clear route to rewarding careers. They identify the requirements for specific occupations, have a leading role in the design and development of qualifications, and provide corresponding opportunities for skills development in workplace settings.
5. That is why our reformed skills system will have employers at the centre. We are transforming the skills system in this country by strengthening the links between the classroom and the workplace, basing provision on employer-led standards. These are the occupational standards which are developed by employers and approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) and form the basis of apprenticeships. The Institute ensures that employer-led standards are

² [Qualification Funding Approval: funding year 2020 to 2021](#)

current by working with employers to update them when necessary and by reviewing them at regular intervals. Our reforms will make sure everyone has the opportunity to gain the skills needed to enter employment, progress in their careers, or enter higher levels of education. This will be the case for 16 to 19 year olds and for adults looking to upskill.

6. These reforms are already in progress with the introduction of T Levels and higher technical qualifications, both of which will be aligned with employer-led standards. The proposals in this consultation for level 3 qualifications are the next step in building a fully coherent technical education system with clear pathways for progression to specific occupations. Employers need confidence that a young person entering employment with a technical qualification or an apprenticeship has developed the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) that they need to be a success in their chosen occupation. Similarly, young people must have confidence that their courses and qualifications are relevant and meaningful and will allow them to thrive in the workplace or to progress to higher levels of technical education.
7. Through our reforms to apprenticeships, we have seen how aligning the significant majority of post-16 technical qualifications to employer-led standards will deliver a coherent and high-quality technical offer to young people and adults. Therefore, we are proposing to extend this approach to a wider range of level 3 technical qualifications than T Levels.
8. Our reforms will create clearer routes for students to progress onto higher technical qualifications at levels 4 and 5 and higher apprenticeships. This will support work³ to raise the profile and understanding of the best higher technical courses, with a government backed brand and a communications campaign offering students the opportunity and confidence to choose a progression route post-18 that achieves their career aspirations.

Level 3 technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds

9. T Levels will be the right choice for most 16 to 19 year olds who want to progress into skilled employment or onto higher levels of technical education. They have been developed with employers and are based on employer-led standards. As such they will provide clear and high quality routes into skilled occupations as well as the best preparation for subsequent future careers. T Levels will be available in 24 subjects such as Digital Production, Design & Development, Health and Onsite Construction. From 2024, all Providers who are funded to deliver study programmes to 16 to 19

³ DfE (2020). [‘Reforming Higher Technical Education: Government consultation response’](#).

year olds will be able to offer all 24 T Levels. More information on T Levels can be found online at <https://www.tlevels.gov.uk/>.

Proposals in summary

- 16 to 19 year olds who want a classroom-based route to employment will be able to choose either a T Level or high quality technical qualifications that are necessary for progression into occupational areas where there is no relevant T Level. Additional specialist qualifications will also be available to be studied alongside these for students to build on and enhance their skills.
- To ensure all technical qualifications offer the firm prospect of a sustainable job and career, employers will be at the heart of the qualification approval process through aligning qualifications to employer-led standards wherever possible.
- To ensure proposals are introduced in a manageable way, we propose reviewing technical qualifications in the routes featuring wave 1 and 2 T Levels ready for 2023⁴ and qualifications in the routes featuring wave 3 and 4 T Levels ready for 2024⁵. This will involve removing funding from overlapping qualifications and approving qualifications that offer specialist competence or do not overlap with T Levels.

Level 3 academic qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds

10. We also propose to reduce the range of academic qualifications on offer, so students only study qualifications that offer the best preparation to progress onto and successfully complete high quality HE courses.

11. We know that A levels offer excellent preparation for HE. However, the first stage consultation confirmed that, in some subjects, qualifications with different delivery models to A levels provide real value for students seeking to progress to HE. So, we propose to keep additional academic qualifications, where they are high quality and have a distinct purpose, enabling progression to HE courses that could not be accessed through A levels alone.

Proposals in summary

- Simplified choices for young people taking academic qualifications.

⁴ Digital, Education and Childcare, Construction and Health and Science.

⁵ Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care, Business and Administration, Catering and Hospitality, Creative and Design, Engineering and Manufacturing, Hair and Beauty, and Legal Finance and Accounting.

- To fund **alternatives** to A levels where they enable progression to specialist HE courses, such as our providers of world leading arts education. We expect these will be limited in number.
- To fund qualifications designed to be taken **alongside** A levels where they support progression to high quality HE courses and provide content distinct from A levels, such as core maths.
- To have reformed academic qualifications available for first teaching in September 2024. This will ensure that the proposed reforms are implemented at a pace the system can accommodate, with sufficient notice of our final proposals before they are implemented so that awarding organisations, providers, students and other stakeholders are able to plan and respond accordingly.

Supporting 16 to 19 year olds to attain the new high quality offer

12. Our ambition is for everyone to achieve their full potential and have access to the best quality education, with technical education provision available in areas that meet the needs of the economy. We recognise that the proposals we are setting out in this second stage consultation represent significant change. We believe this change is necessary to ensure young people are receiving relevant, high quality qualifications. Currently, too many young people are being let down by poor quality qualifications and the landscape is complex to navigate, with over 12,000 qualifications⁶. The opportunities available for young people should always meet their needs and provide the best preparation for employment or further study.
13. Some students will find themselves needing additional support to achieve the future level 3 offer. We intend to seek views on good practice to meet the differing needs of young people who need more support to progress to level 3 in our level 2 and below call for evidence. In particular, we will be exploring whether a new form of transition programme (alongside the T Level Transition Programme) could help students who wish to progress to a level 3 programme but do not plan to take a T Level. We will also want to understand what good outcomes look like for students who exit at level 2 to enter employment.

⁶ ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding, as of May 2019

Supporting adults

14. Our Lifetime Skills Guarantee will fund level 3 technical courses for adults. We must ensure these give them the skills the country needs, so they are able to gain employment or to progress in the workplace. We believe that our proposals for technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds are the right starting point for adults, but recognise that adults will need a greater range of qualifications given their different needs.
15. Our proposal is therefore that T Levels are also available for adult learners alongside a range of technical qualifications backed by employers. These will meet adults' needs for flexibility and recognise their prior experience.
16. We believe the same academic route should be available for 16 to 19 year olds and adults because these qualifications offer the best preparation to progress onto and successfully complete high quality HE courses. The academic offer for adults should continue to include the Access to HE Diploma.

Proposals in summary

- Adults will generally need greater flexibility than 16 to 19 year olds and will also tend to have greater prior experience. So, our starting point for adults is that they have available to them a similar offer as 16 to 19 year olds but with some additional technical qualifications to meet their needs.
- Technical qualifications for adults should allow for modular delivery of content, recognise prior learning and have robust assessment of an adult's level of competence at the end of the course (summative assessment). As well as T Levels, adults should have access to:
 - Technical qualifications that are aligned with a level 3 employer-led standard and deliver a minimum of occupational entry-level competence (in both T Level and non-T Level areas).
 - Additional specialist qualifications to build on and enhance their skills – this will be the same as the 16 to 19 year old offer with some additional qualifications which are only suitable for adults (e.g. those essential to certain safety critical industries and with some age-restricted content).
 - Qualifications in some cross-sectoral skills where they lead to skilled employment
- Through employer-led standards, employers will be at the heart of the process through which qualifications are approved for funding. The Institute will have a leading role in determining whether technical qualifications put forward to be

approved alongside T Levels (including those designed for adults) are high quality and meet employer needs. Where a qualification does not align to an employer-led standard, but there is employer demand, we will put in place an approach to assess the value of these qualifications to employers. These qualifications will also be subject to ongoing regulation from Ofqual.

Ensuring level 3 qualifications are high quality

17. Independent approval and ongoing regulation are key to ensure confidence in the quality of qualifications. Technical qualifications should also have employer endorsement as an indicator of quality, as well as ensuring that they are up to date and of relevance to employers
18. Qualifications will have to meet new criteria to be approved for public funding. We are proposing that awarding organisations will have to put forward qualifications for future funding approval. The process will require awarding organisations to provide evidence on how their qualification(s) meet the new criteria, with greater scrutiny from Ofqual, the Institute and the Department for Education (the Department)⁷. Qualifications that are not considered as part of this approvals process or do not meet the new criteria will not be approved for funding. We expect this process will take place in a phased way from 2021/22, so that reformed technical qualifications are ready for teaching from 2023 onwards, with reformed academic qualifications ready for teaching from 2024.

Proposals in summary

- It will remain a requirement that all qualifications which are approved for funding should be subject to Ofqual regulation.
- For academic qualifications, Ofqual will ensure that there is appropriate scrutiny and regulation in place. Subject to consultation, this would involve setting additional conditions, as appropriate, for some academic qualifications.
- For technical qualifications, the Institute will lead a new process to align qualifications to employer-led standards or to provide employer validation, with employers at the heart of the process. This will ensure they keep pace with the needs of industry. Ofqual will also have a role in technical qualifications, providing advice to the Institute to ensure qualifications are valid.

⁷ References to the Department for Education should be taken to include its Executive Agency, the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

- We will introduce reformed technical and academic qualifications and remove funding for qualifications that do not have a place in the new 16 to 19 landscape from September 2023 (for technical qualifications), and September 2024 (for academic qualifications). Reformed adult qualifications will also be introduced from 2023.

Scope of the Consultation

19. This consultation covers 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.
20. We refer to 16 to 19 year old students as ‘young people’ and those aged 19 and over as ‘adults’ (to reflect the way these students are treated in qualification funding). We provide funding through the 16 to 19 funding formula for students up to the age of 25 when they have an education, health and care (EHC) plan.
21. 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 entitlement⁸. Therefore, qualifications in scope for the review may be offered in an MCA or GLA area. As we make decisions about our respective funded qualification offers, we will continue conversations with MCAs/GLA, so we have a mutual understanding of the impact across the country.
22. As previously announced, we will not be making any changes to T Levels, A levels and AS levels through this review 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 sector subject areas, serving academic and technical purposes. We do not propose to exclude any further level 3 qualifications from the scope of this consultation.

⁸ T Levels for adults will be funded at a national level.

Chapter 1: Putting employers at the heart of technical education

23. The proposals in this consultation form part of a broader set of reforms which aim to ensure that the skills system is responsive to the needs of employers, that we are producing the skills that the local and national economy needs, and that people can access the training they need to achieve their potential and get a good job.
24. The highest performing countries for technical education and training, like Germany and the Netherlands, have clear and coherent skills systems, backed by employers, which give young people and adults a clear route to excellence in their fields. They identify the requirements for specific occupations, have a leading role in the design and development of qualifications, and provide corresponding opportunities for skills development in workplace settings.
25. That is why our reformed skills system will have employers at the centre. We are transforming technical education in this country by strengthening the links between the classroom and the workplace, with employer-led standards driving content wherever possible. These are the occupational standards which are developed by employers and approved by the Institute and form the basis of apprenticeships, T Levels and reformed higher technical qualifications.
26. Many employers are struggling to find people with the skills that they need, and these gaps will be exacerbated as we look to the future – as the pace of technological change continues, our economy changes following the Covid-19 pandemic, and we build a green economy. For example, 22% of all vacancies in 2017 were due to skills shortages.⁹ By continuing to engage in updating and extending employer-led standards, employers can make sure that the skills gained upon completion match their needs.
27. Both the reforms to the apprenticeships programme and the introduction of new T Levels have been well-received by employers, young people and adults and we are already seeing them benefiting from apprenticeship reforms. As a result, we know what works: employer-led design and development of provision, with a focus on the competence needed for specific occupations. Two high-profile independent reviews have informed our approach. Firstly, the [Richard Review](#), which set out a vision for an apprenticeships system in which employer-led trailblazers develop standards across a range of occupational sectors. This approach was reinforced by the [Sainsbury Review](#) which recommended that this same set of employer-led standards should form the basis of classroom-based technical education for 16 to 19 year olds

⁹ DfE (2018), '[Employer Skills Survey 2017](#)'

– T levels. Throughout our reforms, we intend to build on this, to ensure that the significant majority of post-16 technical education is based on employer-led standards. We will match high-quality and relevant skills provision to the current and emerging needs of employers across the country.

28. We recently set out our ambitious reform plan to establish a system of higher technical education that students and employers have confidence in and delivers the skills they need. We are investing in the growth of higher technical education with FE settings expanding their offers alongside the introduction of nationally recognised higher technical qualifications at level 4 and 5 that inspire more young people and adults to pursue the opportunities these qualifications can bring.
29. Our proposals in this consultation for level 3 qualifications are the next step in building a fully coherent technical education system with clear pathways for progression to specific occupations. They will mean there are clearer, high quality progression routes to prestigious higher technical education that lead to skilled occupations with good economic outcomes.
30. For those pursuing technical qualifications for employment, we propose that the Institute plays a role in making sure employers are at the heart of the approvals process for level 3 technical qualifications, and that Ofqual continue to play a role as the independent qualifications regulator.
31. Aligning the significant majority of post-16 technical education to employer-led standards will deliver a coherent and high quality technical offer to young people and adults, with clear progression routes. We have seen how successful this model can be, with apprenticeships delivering excellent outcomes.

Chapter 2: Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds

32. Everyone should have high quality options which give them clear progression routes into the workplace or to continue their education. With the current system, where over 4,000 qualifications are approved for funding in England at level 3¹⁰, it is not clear enough which qualifications allow students to progress successfully. We must make decision making for young people easier, ensuring every option leads to good outcomes.
33. The first stage consultation set out the key principles for the qualifications on offer to 16 to 19 year olds alongside A levels and T Levels and apprenticeships. They should:
- have a clear and distinct purpose and be truly necessary;
 - support progression to successful outcomes – to higher levels of study or to skilled employment; and
 - be good quality.
34. To ensure that level 3 qualifications are truly necessary, have a clear and distinct purpose and have clear progression routes, we propose to make a clear distinction between funded qualifications that are designed to lead to skilled employment ('technical qualifications') and those designed to lead to higher education (HE) ('academic qualifications').
35. This does not rule out young people taking a T Level and using it as a springboard for further training or study, for example an apprenticeship, higher technical qualifications, or university study.
36. But our proposed distinction will mean that students will have a clear choice and can be confident - whether their aim at age 18 is progression to HE or to move into skilled employment - that the qualification they have chosen has been designed to offer the best possible support to achieve their chosen objective. For most young people that means taking A levels or a T Level.
37. While we want T Levels and A levels to be the qualifications of choice for classroom provision, we have listened to feedback from the first stage consultation and recognise the need for a smaller, high quality offer alongside, in areas not covered by T Levels or A levels. For those students who want to enter a career in occupational areas outside those covered by T Levels, or that require additional

¹⁰ ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding, as of May 2019

specialist skills, other technical qualifications will be available. Students will also be able to access a small range of high quality academic qualifications alongside or instead of A levels. A visual representation of the proposed landscape can be found in Figure 1.

38. We will continue to build our understanding of the progression routes to high value occupations in priority areas, including science, and to assess how our proposals can best support young people to progress to these occupations.
39. In this chapter we set out types of level 3 qualifications that we propose should be eligible for funding in future, alongside A levels and T Levels. We propose that only qualifications meeting one of the sets of criteria described in this chapter, or specifically named in paragraphs 74 and 82 should be considered for funding for 16 to 19 year olds. Qualifications will also need to meet the quality requirements set out in the [Ensuring qualifications are high quality](#) chapter which starts on page 47.¹¹

Technical routes for 16 to 19 year olds

40. Our aim is to create a technical education system that equips young people with the skills, knowledge and occupational competence that employers need.
41. To ensure coherence with the wider system of technical education, we are proposing that wherever possible technical qualifications are also aligned to these employer-led standards. More detail on how these qualifications link to occupational competence can be found in the [Other technical qualifications we propose to fund for 16 to 19 year olds](#) section.
42. The new T Levels that are being taught from this September are already rigorously designed to align to employer-led standards, which set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours that employers need. They will develop occupational entry-level competence (or full competence)¹² through classroom-based training combined with

¹¹ All new qualifications will still need to satisfy ESFA funding criteria.

¹² In practice, the main difference between 'full competence' and 'entry-level competence' is largely contingent on the amount of practical, on-the-job experience that a student can acquire through completing the qualification. **Full occupational competence:** The learner demonstrates full coverage of the standard and can perform to a level needed to successfully undertake a skilled role relevant to the occupation without further training. Apprenticeships and some T Level technical qualifications will lead to this level. **Occupational entry-level competence:** The learner has achieved as many outcomes of the 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. The learner is well placed to reach full competence after a period of on-the-job experience.

an industry placement¹³. T Levels are much larger than most current technical qualifications and are designed to develop breadth of understanding through the underpinning core, as well as significant depth of knowledge and skills relating to a specific occupation. T Levels will also attract UCAS points in line with three A levels, allowing students to enter HE in a relevant subject. From 2024, all providers who are funded to deliver study programmes to 16 to 19 year olds will be able to offer all 24 T Levels.

43. Given the rigour and link to employer-led standards, we believe that T Levels will be the right choice for most 16 to 19 students who wish to pursue a technical route, and 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. Qualifications can be considered to overlap with T Levels in a number of different ways. The variety of responses to our first stage consultation highlighted the complexity of defining overlap, and the need to consider more than simply content. More detail can be found in the *Technical implementation of proposals: Technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds that overlap with T Levels* section below.

44. The responses to our first stage consultation confirmed the need for some technical qualifications alongside T Levels. We agree that some alternatives – provided they are aligned to, or build upon, employer-led standards and deliver occupational competence, and/or are specifically valued by employers and support young people into sustainable jobs and careers – should be considered for funding.

Other technical qualifications we propose to fund for 16 to 19 year olds

45. Alongside T Levels, we only propose approving qualifications for funding for 16 to 19 year olds where there is evidence demonstrating they fall in to one of the following two groups:

- **Qualifications providing occupational competence against employer-led standards which are not covered by T Levels¹⁴.** We propose to fund high quality technical qualifications that deliver occupational entry-level competence or full occupational competence in occupations suitable for 16 to

¹³ In the case of some T Levels like Education and Childcare, students will develop full occupational competence.

¹⁴ Part of the technical qualification focused on developing knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to an occupation. The content of each occupational specialism directly links to the corresponding occupational standard(s).

19 year olds which are not covered by T Levels. Like T Levels, these qualifications will be aligned to employer-led standards. Qualifications will be considered for funding if they meet the quality standard set by the Institute, and any additional criteria set by the Department. We would expect fewer qualifications to meet the high quality bar than are currently available.

- **Additional specialist qualifications**¹⁵. We propose to fund high quality qualifications that develop more specialist skills and knowledge than could be acquired through a T Level alone, helping to protect the skills supply in more specialist industries and adding value to the T Level offer. These qualifications should dive deeper into particular occupational areas, focusing on specialist skills that are valuable to employers. For example, a qualification in marine engineering, which builds on the Maintenance and Operations Engineering Technician standard covered by the Maintenance, Installation and Repair T Level.

46. These are the only level 3 technical qualifications we propose to fund in future alongside T Levels for 16 to 19 year olds (as illustrated in Figure 1).

Question 6¹⁶: Do you agree that the two groups of qualifications outlined in paragraph 45 are needed for 16 to 19 year olds choosing technical provision?

Technical implementation of proposals: Funding criteria for other groups of technical qualifications

47. To be eligible for funding, we propose that these qualifications would need to meet all of the characteristics set out below for that group and must be suitable for the age of the student, e.g. health and safety requirements. The terms in brackets are intended to highlight the links with the principles set out in our first

¹⁵ These qualifications will attest to a new category of competence: additional specialist competence. The qualifications will build on a more specific subset of skills and knowledge contained within a standard, and the content covered and level of proficiency demonstrated through the qualification will enhance a student's employability and progression, over and above that secured through entry or full competence in the occupation. The student will already be entry or fully competent (or undertaking qualifications intended to confer this level of competence) in the respective occupation, therefore, these qualifications will build on a qualification that does meet a standard.

¹⁶ Questions 1 to 5 are to provide identifying information that will help assess the responses. The full list of questions can also be found in Annex A.

consultation (see paragraph 33 for further detail). We have highlighted these links throughout this consultation document.

- **Qualifications providing occupational competence against employer-led standards which are not covered by T Levels:**

- These qualifications must be designed to lead to skilled employment (defined as being mapped to a level 3 employer-led standard by the Institute) (**Purpose**) in areas where there is no relevant T Level occupation specialism (**Necessity**).
- They must ensure students can demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours that will provide occupational entry-level (or full) competence on successful completion of the qualification (**Progression**).
- As part of its approval process for such qualifications, the Institute will consider whether a level 3 qualification is needed or whether an apprenticeship is the only appropriate means of gaining occupational competence (**Necessity**).
- The Institute will have a leading role in determining whether these qualifications are good quality and meet employer needs, with ongoing regulation from Ofqual (**Quality**).

- **Additional specialist qualifications:**

- These qualifications must be designed to lead to skilled employment and build on a subset of the content of a level 3 employer-led standard and go into greater depth (**Purpose**).
- They must cover recognisably specialist areas of skill and knowledge which go beyond those available in a T Level, or a related level 3 employer-led standard. We propose that this is demonstrated by giving participants 'additional specialist competence' in an occupation – as per the definition above. Because these qualifications will offer more specialist knowledge and skills, they may be in occupations where a T Level exists as well as those areas where a T Level does not (**Progression / Necessity**). Participants will need to already have occupational entry-level or full competence or be working towards competence. We would therefore only expect these qualifications to be appropriate for 16 to 19 year olds if they are also taking or have taken a linked qualification (for example a T Level or other technical

qualification) that will provide occupational entry-level or full competence.

- The Institute will have a leading role in determining whether these qualifications are good quality and meet employer needs, with ongoing regulation from Ofqual (**Quality**).

48. Technical qualifications that do not fit one of these categories, or which meet the definition of overlap with T Levels as set out from paragraph 54, will not be funded for 16 to 19 year olds. For example, a small technical qualification in a subject relating to construction (building service design for example) would not be approved for funding because it overlaps with the Design, Surveying & Planning T Level. The T level will better prepare students for their chosen occupation than a mix of small qualifications that may not give a young person the coherent breadth and depth of learning that they would gain from the Design, Surveying & Planning T Level.

49. Where an employer-led standard has not been published, the Institute will consider developing a standard, if it can be demonstrated that it would be appropriate to do so and that there is employer need. Once the standard has been developed, the Institute would consider the approval of the qualification against the standard in line with the process above.

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 standards which are not covered by T Levels and additional specialist qualifications)?

50. The occupational maps bring all the employer-led standards together, grouped by occupations, showing different routes for progression and how occupations at different levels fit together. As part of the Institute's future work on the occupational maps¹⁷ there will need to be a comprehensive review of the occupations included in each of the 15 routes.

51. In addition, we will also work with the Institute to consider whether there is a case for further T Levels (or occupational specialisms within a T Level) to be created. Where this is the case, we propose that other technical qualifications which

¹⁷ Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (2020). ['Occupational Maps'](#).

overlap with those T Levels and/or specialisms should no longer continue to attract funding for 16 to 19 year olds.

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.

Technical implementation of proposals: Technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds that overlap with T Levels

52. In the first stage consultation, we proposed to remove funding approval from technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds that overlap with T Levels in line with the rollout of T Levels. Paragraph 47 sets out the technical qualifications we propose should continue to be available for 16 to 19 year olds alongside T Levels.

53. We propose to implement the following process:

Qualifications designed to confer occupational entry-level/full competence where there is an existing standard

54. We will send awarding organisations (AOs) the list of employer-led standards covered by wave 1 and 2 T Levels in each route and the qualifications we have identified as aligning with these standards, and therefore considered to overlap with a T Level. We will remove funding approval from these qualifications in 2023.

55. We will only approve qualifications for funding where AOs can demonstrate that their qualification offers occupational entry-level (or full) competence, is aligned to a standard in an occupational area **not** covered by a T Level, and meets any other criteria the Institute and the Department put in place to be assured these qualifications are appropriate quality and meet employer demand.

56. If qualifications are to be approved for public funding, the relevant AO will have to submit their qualification, and any relevant evidence, for consideration. This evidence will be considered by the Institute. Once the Institute has considered the qualifications and appropriate evidence, the qualifications will then be considered for funding by the Department.

Qualifications designed to confer occupational entry-level/full competence where there is not an existing standard

57. Where an awarding organisation believes their qualification(s) confers occupational entry-level competence, or full competence, for an occupation in the same route as wave 1 and 2 T Levels but there is no standard on the occupational map (and so is considered to not overlap with a T Level), awarding organisations will be required to submit evidence on the need for the occupation and standard for which their qualification will confer occupational entry-level competence. They will also need to demonstrate that their qualification offers occupational entry-level (or full) competence and meets any other quality criteria.
58. Working with employers, the Institute will consider this evidence and whether a standard is needed. A standard will need to be developed by employers before the qualification can be considered for funding approval for 16 to 19 year olds. We expect that proposals for new standards, and any relevant qualifications, in the same routes as wave 1 and 2 T Levels will be submitted and accepted by the Institute in the approvals round for waves 1 and 2 T levels in 2023, with new standards and qualifications approved ready for first teaching in 2024. We will confirm timings for this in due course.

Qualifications designed to confer additional specialist competence

59. Qualifications which are considered to be additional specialist qualifications and deliver skills over and above the requirements for an occupation will also be assessed. These would build on existing qualifications aligned to employer-led standards¹⁸, but are designed to offer additional knowledge, skills and behaviours and competence which further support the student's employability.
60. As above, AOs would need to submit evidence which sets out the details of the additional KSBs, how the qualification will support employability over and above that which is conferred by occupational entry-level or full competence in the standard, and demand from employers. This evidence will be considered, and will inform whether the Department approve the qualification for funding. The final list of qualifications approved for funding will be published online, as they are now.
61. In all scenarios set out above, awarding organisations have to put their qualification forward to be considered for funding approval. If existing qualifications are not submitted for approval, they will no longer be approved for public funding.

¹⁸ These include occupational 'standards' suggested by AOs in an occupation not covered by a map.

62. Implementation of the proposed process will be sequenced so that from August 2023:

- qualifications which are considered to overlap with T Levels in waves 1 and 2 are not approved for public funding;
- qualifications in wave 1 and 2 routes which align with employer-led standards not covered by T Levels, and meet other criteria determined by the Institute and Department, are approved for public funding;
- additional specialist qualifications in these routes are also approved for public funding; and
- proposals for new standards are agreed by the Institute and are in development.

63. We will review qualifications in the same routes as T Levels in waves 3 and 4 so that qualifications which overlap with T Levels have funding removed and other technical qualifications (as per paragraphs 45-47) will be available for first teaching in August 2024.

64. If a situation arises where a technical qualification overlaps with a T Level in wave 1 or wave 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.

Qualifications out of scope of overlap consideration in 2023

65. We are not proposing to remove funding approval from **academic qualifications that overlap with T Levels** in 2023 because academic qualifications are not specifically designed to give occupational entry-level or full competence, and so it is not possible to measure them against employer-led standards. A different process will be needed for these qualifications to ensure they 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. More information on the proposals for academic qualifications are detailed in the [Academic routes for 16 to 19 year olds](#) section.

66. We recognise that T Levels may not meet all adult needs, and therefore are not proposing to remove public funding for **qualifications for adults that overlap with T Levels** in 2023. Instead, we propose that adult qualifications which overlap with T Levels are reviewed and approved so that they are available for teaching from 2024. Further information regarding our proposals regarding qualifications for adults can be found in the [Supporting adults](#) chapter.

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?

Academic routes for 16 to 19 year olds

67. The primary purpose of level 3 academic qualifications is to prepare young people for undergraduate study at a HE provider. We must sharpen the range of qualifications on offer, so that students study the qualifications that offer the best preparation for HE, and help them achieve high quality outcomes.
68. Recently reformed A levels – of which there are 555 individual A or AS levels¹⁹ covering a wide range of subject areas – are a well-established, popular, and world-class choice. They are central to progression to HE for most students. We believe A levels provide the best preparation for HE in most academic subject areas, and opportunities for progression to high value courses at the broadest range of HE providers²⁰.
69. With some limited exceptions, we propose to remove funding for qualifications that offer an applied or alternative form of study in an A level subject area. As a result, we expect that where a qualification overlaps in its content and purpose with A levels, it will not meet our criteria for public funding.
70. However, we recognise A levels alone do not cover all the skills, knowledge and understanding needed for every student to thrive at HE. We therefore propose to fund a small range of academic qualifications to be taken alongside or as an alternative to A levels where there is a clear need for skills and knowledge that A levels alone cannot deliver.

¹⁹ DfE (2020), [‘16 to 18 qualifications, discount codes and point scores performance table qualifications’](#).

²⁰ Centre for Vocational Education Research (2019), [‘BTECs, higher education and labour market outcomes using the Longitudinal Education Outcome \(LEO\) dataset’](#). Recent analysis by CVER, found that earnings benefits for those obtaining a first degree with A Levels were generally higher than for those obtaining a first degree with BTECs, even after controlling for background characteristics.

Academic qualifications taken alongside A levels and AS levels

71. We propose to fund a small range of qualifications that should typically be taken alongside A levels (as illustrated in Figure 1). We expect that these qualifications would be small in size, meaning at most equivalent to one A level in the number of guided learning hours. This will enable students to take them alongside A levels and AS levels.

72. Examples might include:

- Small qualifications in health and social care which can be taken alongside A levels in biology or sociology to access a degree in Nursing, or qualifications in engineering which can be taken alongside physics and mathematics and be valued by universities as good preparation for engineering degrees. Some overlap in content with T Levels would be permissible in this instance because the qualifications have a clear purpose that is different to that of a T Level in that they are designed to support progression to HE rather than employment.
- Small qualifications in performing or creative arts (with the exception of performing arts graded qualifications – see paragraph 74 below) 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. They will need to be valued by specialist HE providers as providing excellent preparation for study in the allied subject. For example, a qualification in performing and production arts might allow entry to undergraduate degree in Acting Studies.

73. We are not proposing to fund:

- Qualifications which do not provide any added value for HE progression over and above an overlapping A level (i.e. those that do not deliver any additional beneficial preparation for HE study). For example, qualifications in business or science are unlikely to be funded since the A level equivalents will provide the best preparation for relevant HE courses.

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?

Other qualifications that can be taken alongside A levels

74. We also propose continuing to fund a specific, limited group of well-recognised, small qualifications that offer additional and complementary skills to support progression to HE. These are limited to qualifications that are designed to be taken alongside a student's main study programme and do not form the core aim. For the reasons outlined below, we propose to exclude these qualifications from further consideration for defunding. These qualifications will still be subject to ongoing regulation by Ofqual.

- **Performing arts graded qualifications:** these are small, performance-focused qualifications. They must be in the area of music, dance, drama & communication, and musical theatre. These qualifications confer a mastery of practical performance skill in defined stages²¹ that is recognised by specialist institutions in the fields of music, dance, drama & communication, and musical theatre. High-quality arts education should not be the preserve of the elite, but the entitlement of every single child. Maintaining the availability of these qualifications will support a broad and balanced education that will help young people to learn creative skills, widening their horizons.
- **Core maths:** these are qualifications that are approved by DfE against core maths criteria²². They are aimed at students not taking mathematics at AS or A level and are designed to strengthen and build on student's existing maths skills obtained at level 2. They focus on the use and application of mathematics and statistics in real life scenarios. They are intended to prepare students for HE study with a mathematical and statistical element e.g. degrees in psychology, geography or business management.
- **Advanced extension awards (AEAs):** these are small qualifications that develop skills and knowledge beyond the corresponding A level. They should stretch and challenge the most able students. They aim to prepare students for and support progression to further study at HE which requires skills and knowledge to distinguish themselves at the highest level. These are currently only available in maths. If any future AEA qualifications were proposed in different subject areas, we would expect these to also be able to demonstrate

²¹ These are grade 6 to 8 for music, dance, drama, music theatre, and intermediate and advanced foundation in dance.

²² For further detail on core maths qualifications, please see <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/core-maths-qualifications-technical-guidance>.

demand by HE providers. AEA must meet the Qualification Level Conditions specified by Ofqual²³.

- **Extended Project qualifications (EPQs):** these develop additional skills, outside of A levels, that are valued by HE providers. EPQs do not form the core aim of study, but enhance the main study programme by allowing students to extend their depth of knowledge of a particular topic. Students will also develop independent self-directed study, reflection and/or academic research skills in preparation for HE. EPQs must meet the Qualification Level Conditions specified by Ofqual.²⁴

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?

Question 12: Are there any other types of qualifications that we should continue to fund to be taken alongside A levels?

Technical implementation of proposals: Funding criteria for qualifications to be taken alongside A levels

75. To be approved for public funding, qualifications submitted for approval will need to provide evidence that they meet the following criteria:

- Academic qualifications, typically equivalent in size to an A or AS level.
- When taken alongside A levels, will support progression to high quality HE courses that deliver strong graduate outcomes. Allocation of UCAS points alone will not be sufficient to convey quality of qualifications. There must be evidence that high quality HE providers (those with high completion rates and progression rates into further study or employment and which meet the Office for Students' (OFS) other quality-related conditions of registration) consider the qualification would enable entry to a course in a related subject at their institution. HE providers are likely to value qualifications which demonstrate

²³ To see Qualification Level Conditions set by Ofqual for AEA, please see '<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/advanced-extension-awards-requirements>'.

²⁴ To see Qualification Level Conditions set by Ofqual for EPQs, please see '<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/project-qualification-level-conditions-and-requirements>'.

accurate assessment of the student's ability and readiness for related HE study (**Progression/Purpose**).

- Overlap with A levels will only be permitted when there is evidence that they will provide students with a breadth and / or depth of practical or performance skills that is not available from the equivalent A level. (**Necessity**).

76. We also propose that Ofqual will play a leading role in ensuring these awarding organisations offer qualifications that are well designed and appropriate quality. (**Quality**). See [Ensuring qualifications are high quality](#) chapter for further information.

77. We recognise that some of these qualifications may overlap with T Levels because they are specifically designed to support progression to an HE course in a related subject, rather than aimed at developing occupational competence.

Qualifications taken as alternative programmes of study to A levels and AS levels

78. The previous section talks about the qualifications that might complement A levels as part of a broader study programme. We recognise that for a small number of specialist HE courses, there will be a justification in allowing students to specialise during their 16 to 19 study.

79. We propose that qualifications supporting progression to these specialist HE courses should be available as alternative programmes of study to A levels. We expect that only a small number of qualifications will meet these criteria and these will continue to be subject to regulation by Ofqual.

80. Examples might include:

- Performing arts or sport qualifications. They will have a strong practical focus and offer breadth and depth that is valued at HE for study in an allied subject. For example, a qualification in sports and exercise science.

81. We are not proposing to fund:

- Large qualifications for which there is an overlapping T Level, for example in IT or science.
- Large qualifications that aim to be applied or alternative versions of A levels, unless we have evidence that they will meet the criteria above.

International Baccalaureate Diploma

82. Consistent with evidence offered in favour of the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma by respondents to the first stage consultation, we propose to exclude it from further consideration for defunding and to continue to fund students taking this programme. It will continue to be subject to regulation by Ofqual. This is because the IB Diploma offers a unique combination of advantages and therefore merits exceptional treatment. The IB Diploma offers a level of academic challenge broadly comparable to A levels and equally fulfils the purpose of preparing students for HE. This is evidenced by the breadth of subject areas it covers (which is broader than that covered by the typical A level programme), and HE providers' reports that the curriculum offers skills and knowledge which provide good preparation for undergraduate study, as well as high rates of progression into and achievement at HE. The programme also has value in an international context and is recognised as supporting international progression to HE. Continuing to fund the IB Diploma would also ensure we continue to facilitate access to a well-established, internationally recognised programme which has a track record of providing access to high tariff HE destinations for state school 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?

Question 14: Do you agree with our proposal the IB Diploma should continue to be funded?

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?

Technical implementation of proposals: Funding criteria for qualifications to be taken as an alternative programme of study to A levels

83. To be approved for public funding awarding organisations will be required to provide evidence on how their qualification(s) meet the following characteristics:

- Large qualifications that could typically be taken as an alternative to an A level programme to access specialist HE courses. One of these qualifications should be large enough to form the core aim of a student's programme of study, taken with an A level, AS level or other complementary qualification.

They would typically have a practical focus but their primary purpose is to access HE rather than employment. **(Purpose)**

- Qualifications should be recognised by high quality HE providers²⁵ as of equal or greater value than A levels for accessing specialist FE or HE provision. **(Necessity / Progression)**
- Ofqual will play a leading role in ensuring these qualifications are well designed and appropriate quality. **(Quality)**

16 to 19 study programmes

84. We intend to continue to publish detailed information, advice, and guidance in relation to 16 to 19 study programmes as the reforms to the qualifications system we are proposing take effect. This will enable students and providers to make sense of our reforms and ensure that every student undertakes a high quality study programme that is appropriate to their career and study aspirations and which meets the expectations in place for entry to HE and HTE providers. We expect 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.

85. We will continue to work with Ofsted and providers in the future to ensure all 16 to 19 year olds in classroom based provision undertake coherent study programmes that offer them the best possible preparation to achieve their future learning and career aims. In addition, we intend to continue the discounting process currently used for performance tables to ensure overly similar qualifications taken together do not each attract performance table points. We will monitor progress over time as the reforms implemented by the review take effect.

²⁵ Those with high completion rates and progression rates into further study or employment and which meet the OFS' other quality-related conditions of registration.

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

86. It is important that students are given the support they need to achieve their potential, which for many will involve them progressing to level 3 and above. As we set out in the first stage consultation, there are clear benefits to students achieving at level 3, particularly those who achieve a full level 3 (equivalent to 2 A levels), who will on average benefit from a 9% wage premium²⁶. We want as many students as possible to achieve at level 3 or above during their time in post-16 education.
87. We recognise that our proposals will mean that some students will need to study more stretching level 3 qualifications in future. This may include students who would have taken an applied general qualification or other applied or vocational qualifications as an alternative to an A level, as these alternatives are currently disproportionately taken by students with lower prior attainment on average than A level students.
88. There will also be some students who will need to study in different ways in future. This includes students who otherwise would have taken a number of smaller technical qualifications and those who may have taken a combination of academic and technical qualifications.
89. We believe the future landscape will serve these students better, provided we get the right support in place.
90. To ensure this happens it will be absolutely vital that these students receive the right information, advice and guidance so that they are able to choose the right option to meet their career and learning aims. The Government's 2017 careers strategy²⁷ laid the foundations for improvements to the quality of careers guidance. The Gatsby Benchmarks²⁸, based on rigorous national and international research, are recognised as the gold standard for careers provision and have been adopted widely by schools and colleges across England. The Careers & Enterprise Company is providing training for a new pool of Careers Leaders and establishing a national network of Careers Hubs so that schools and colleges can work together to improve careers support for young people in their area. We are beginning to see the impact of these changes with improvements

²⁶ BIS (2015). [‘Measuring the Net Present Value of Further Education in England’](#)

²⁷ DfE (2017). [‘Careers strategy: making the most of everyone’s skills and talents’](#).

²⁸ The Careers & Enterprise Company (2019). [‘Gatsby Benchmarks’](#).

across every element of careers guidance, including 3 million young people now benefitting from regular employer encounters.

91. We are also taking steps to address particular barriers that some students may face that prevent them from starting a T Level immediately. For those students who have the potential to progress to a T Level we have introduced the T Level Transition Programme, a tailored preparatory programme that is being rolled-out in phases from September 2020.
92. Other students may choose to take the work-based training route, including through an apprenticeship; and for those who need additional preparatory support, a traineeship. Young people with an EHC plan are able to access supported internships, which offer them the opportunity to develop the skills, experience and confidence they need for employment.
93. In the level 2 and below call for evidence we intend to explore how classroom-based provision can better support young people who face barriers to starting a level 3 programme immediately. We are exploring effective practice in supporting progression to level 3 and what new programmes may be needed at level 2, including new potential forms of transition support, through our forthcoming call for evidence. We also intend to explore how we can improve outcomes for students whose highest educational achievement is level 2.
94. Figure 2 illustrates possible routes through the future system for different groups of students. We will continue to assess carefully how any proposals may affect disadvantaged groups. Through the consultation, we would welcome views highlighting the needs of specific groups.

Question 16: What additional support might students need to achieve the new high quality offer at level 3?

Figure 2: Possible illustrative routes through the system for different groups of students

Type of student and typical level 3 study programme now



Student taking large technical qualification, aiming at entry to employment or higher technical study

- Large Tech Level in plumbing



Student taking mixture of AGQs, aimed at entry to further or higher education

- Large AGQ in health and social care
- Small AGQ in adult social care



Student taking suite of smaller technical qualifications, aimed at entry to employment

- Technical qualifications in building & construction and plastering



Student taking A level/AGQ mixed programme aimed at entry to further or higher education

- Small AGQs in engineering and Computer Aided Design (CAD)
- A level in maths



Student taking mixed academic programme including large applied qualification with T Level and A level overlap

- Large AGQ in business studies
- A level maths



Student taking a more specialist technical qualification aimed at entry to a specific industry outside of the current T Level framework

- Tech Level in constructing a sustainable built environment
- Specialist technical qualification in stonemasonry



- Maintenance, installation, and repair T Level; or
- Transition Programme; or
- High quality level 2 followed by exit to employment



- Health and social care qualification alongside A levels in biology and sociology; or
- Healthcare science T Level



- Building and construction T Level; or
- Transition Programme; or
- High quality level 2 followed by exit to employment



- Engineering and manufacturing T Level; or
- Engineering qualification alongside A levels in maths and physics



- A levels in business, maths, and economics; or
- Business T Level



- Apprenticeship; or
- Onsite Construction T Level

Level 2 and below

95. Getting level 2 and below right is key to making sure that students have clear lines of sight to level 3 qualifications, apprenticeships, traineeships, and for some, directly into employment.
96. We want our further education system to be much clearer about who and what classroom-based study at level 2 and below is for. All programmes and qualifications at these levels should have clear purposes, target cohorts and progression routes. It is also important to understand better how level 2 supports progression to level 3 and beyond. Because of this and the fact that we are transforming the level 3 landscape, we want to gather more evidence on study and the full range of issues at level 2 before we bring forward firm proposals for reform. We intend to do so through the call for evidence.

Making sure the review works for those with special educational needs and disabilities

97. The impact assessment published alongside this consultation suggests that students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are more likely than their peers to take qualifications that could be defunded as a result of these reforms. It is our firm intention that this review 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.
98. Everyone, regardless of their background or needs, should be able to achieve their potential, gaining the skills, experience and confidence they need for life and work. For most, gaining qualifications will be key, but it is only one element of their studies. Work experience and other non-qualification activity can also be crucial to independence, employment opportunities and making a successful transition to adulthood. We know that for some SEND students, a focus on developing personal, social and employability skills can be an important part of their post-16 study. In response to the first stage consultation there was strong support for developing these skills through the delivery of a robust personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) curriculum rather than through level 3 qualifications.
99. In areas outside of the PSHE curriculum we expect qualifications to play a key part of post-16 study for SEND students, and it is vital that qualifications available

in the new landscape are accessible to these students. We will work with Ofqual to ensure that new strengthened qualifications meet accessibility requirements. In addition to complying with equalities law for each of their qualifications, Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition require awarding organisations 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 protected characteristic. Awarding organisations 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.

100. These accessibility requirements have been built into T Level design. For the technical qualification element of a T Level, awarding organisations 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.

Question 17: What additional support might SEND students need to achieve the new high quality offer at level 3?

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?

Chapter 4: Supporting adults

Academic qualifications for adults

101. We believe the qualifications that will be available for 16 to 19 year olds on the academic route also provide a positive offer for adults to access HE. Therefore, the core offer for all would comprise A levels; a limited number of alternative qualifications to A levels in subject areas either not covered by A levels or whose subject area is not so well served by A levels; and a small group of qualifications often taken as complements to A levels. This is because these qualifications offer the best preparation to progress onto and successfully complete high quality HE courses. These groups are set out in more detail at paragraphs 67 to 83.
102. We also recognise the role that Access to HE Diplomas play in supporting adults who do not have traditional qualifications to progress into HE as well as to reskill. Therefore, we propose to continue to fund the Access to HE Diploma for adults taking this programme (as well as for 16 to 19 students in exceptional circumstances²⁹). This is also based on their key role in widening participation in HE for under-represented groups (e.g. Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), students with special needs or disabilities, students from a disadvantaged background). They also support local and national skills needs by ensuring local provision can respond quickly to the changing economic climate, including the needs of local areas and key industry skills gaps.

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

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)?

Technical qualifications for Adults

103. Feedback from the first stage consultation strongly supported having a range of qualifications available that meet different adult learning aims and needs. Many consultees said that adults need flexible and modular delivery of qualifications that they can fit around existing responsibilities such as work or caring, and that recognise their prior learning. We also know from research undertaken to inform the development of the National Skills Fund that for training to be effective for adults and

²⁹ The Access to HE Diploma will continue to be regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

their employers, there are specific barriers to overcome. We have listened to this and recognise different types of technical qualifications are also likely to be needed for adults, building on the offer for 16 to 19 year olds. We have illustrated the range of technical qualifications we propose to be available for 16 to 19 year olds and adults in figure 3.

104. We are proposing three key principles for technical qualifications for adults. Generally, these principles should apply to all adult technical qualifications, although we recognise that some qualifications may be too small to be delivered in these ways. Providers would be empowered to take greater ownership of the delivery of these qualifications to meet these principles. We recognise that some of the terms below may be interpreted differently so we have set out what we mean by each principle below. These are:

- **Modular delivery of content:** a qualifications offer that can be delivered in a modular way so adults can study at a pace that suits them. This flexibility would allow adults to undertake different modules of learning at different times, stepping on and off until they are ready to demonstrate occupational competence at the end of their study. Providers would be empowered to take greater ownership of curriculum design and delivery in a way that maximises its flexibility, enabling them to deliver this provision in a more innovative and responsive way.
- **A robust system which recognises prior learning and experience:** some adults already have some of the knowledge and skills contained in an employer-led standard – they should be exempt from studying some content if providers are satisfied that it would not leave any gaps in their knowledge and skills and this prior learning and/or experience can be evidenced (e.g. through diagnostic assessment);
- **Assessing a student’s competence at the end of a course (‘summative assessment’):** assessment will provide reliable assurance that a student has the requisite level of occupational competence, allowing for all necessary qualification content to be covered even if some adults are exempted from undertaking some learning, as described above. Assessment would focus on the knowledge, skills and behaviours contained within the qualification (aligned to the employer-led standard) once all relevant learning has been completed. This would prevent a tick box style system where the student is recorded as slowly ‘achieving competence’ over a long period, but in fact is not competent to do the job after attaining all the ‘parts’. For this reason, we do not propose a central system of assessment units and credits (or similar) which can be accumulated over time as this would not allow for effective assessment of competence.

Question 21: Do you agree that the principles described in paragraph 104 are the right ones to ensure qualifications meet the needs of adults?

T Levels for Adults³⁰

105. We recognise that some adult learners, in particular 19 to 23 year olds without level 3 qualifications, could benefit from the same T Level programme as 16 to 19 year olds. Where a full-time two-year T Level is the right choice for an adult, the programme should be no different to the one taken by 16 to 19 year olds.
106. However, most adults will not be able to commit to a full-time two-year course, and so modular delivery of content and recognition of prior learning will be essential to support accessibility of T Levels for adults. As mentioned above, we do not propose a central system of units and credits (or similar) which can be accumulated over time and which eventually ‘adds up’ to a T Level. We think this would not allow for effective assessment of competence - which would undermine the currency of T Levels.
107. Instead we think that providers are best placed to design their own curricula, including learning modules, which suit their specific context and student needs.
108. The starting point in offering industry placements for an adult should be the same as for 16 to 19 year olds, with the employer and provider agreeing development goals for the student to achieve whilst on their placement. However, although the industry placement should always be offered to adults taking T Levels, the more generic workplace behaviours and skills (such as good timekeeping), which will be a development focus for the 16 to 19 year old student, may already have been acquired by an adult. This means the development goals may need to focus more on honing technical skills – although this will be a matter for the provider.
109. In terms of industry placement flexibilities, as is the case for 16 to 19 year old T Level students, the time adults are in part-time work should count as industry placement ‘time’ as long as the student is working towards achieving specified development goals agreed by their employer. However, to recognise adults’ prior learning, we also propose that the time on placement may be reduced by up to 50%, depending on the degree to which, in providers’ judgement, the development goals typically set for placements in the occupation/pathway, have already been met by the adult.

³⁰ By adults we mean students who are 19+ at the commencement of the course.

Question 22: Do you agree with our proposed approach to making T Levels available to adults?

Technical implementation of proposals: Detail of proposals for T Levels taken by adults

110. Providers are also well placed to determine, including through initial and diagnostic assessment, an adult's level of prior learning and industry experience. We therefore propose that:

- the technical qualification (TQ) specification is not broken down into separately assessed units for adults by awarding organisations; instead providers take the lead in developing learning modules, determining adults' level of prior learning and what delivery model will best suit them e.g. part-time.
- as both core and occupational specialism assessments are provided by awarding organisations each academic year, adults could take assessments for both components in the same year. In theory this means a one year T Level could be made available (only for adults).
- to support a consistently high-quality offer for adults, we would provide training and continuing professional development to T Level providers to support development of curricula for adults, conducting initial and diagnostic assessment and recognising prior learning.

111. To secure the currency of T Levels, even where adults' prior learning has been recognised and a one-year course offered, we think the level of performance required to achieve T Level grades should be the same for adults and 16 to 19 year olds. We propose that:

- The same grading and certification approach is used so that all students (irrespective of age) receive an overall Pass, Merit, Distinction and Distinction* grade, and to achieve a T Level Pass an adult (like a 16 to 19 year old) must:
 - Achieve at least an E on the Technical Qualification Core and a Pass on the TQ occupational specialism;
 - Successfully complete the industry placement;
 - Attain level 2 maths and English;
 - Meet any other requirements specified by the Institute.

- The same qualification specifications and assessments developed by TQ awarding organisations should be used by providers for all students irrespective of age.
- As all the TQ assessments are marked and each contribute marks to overall grades, adults cannot be exempt from any assessments, as this would mean their grades are based on less information about what they know and can do than 16 to 19 year olds.

Standalone T Level Occupational Specialisms

112. T Level Occupational Specialisms are one part of T Levels for 16 to 19 year olds. They are designed to assess whether a student has the knowledge, skills and behaviours to enter into an occupation. We propose that Occupational Specialisms (OS) should be offered as separate stand-alone qualifications for adults.

Question 23: Do you agree with our proposal that T Level Occupational Specialisms should be offered as separate standalone qualifications for adults?

Technical implementation of proposals: Structure of standalone T Level occupational specialisms

113. Adults who choose to take a standalone OS would not be required to complete the other elements of a T Level that 16 to 19 year olds require (i.e. TQ core, industry placement, separate English and maths qualifications or other requirements set by the T Level panel). We propose that:

- The separate OS would be assessed through the same summative assessment set by the same AO as those students undertaking the TQ specialism as part of the full T Level.
- Providers would need to take the lead in determining, through initial/diagnostic assessment, whether an adult's prior learning would be more suitable for them to pass the OS as a standalone qualification.

114. In some instances, it may be that an OS cannot be offered as a standalone qualification - as too much of the T Level core component would need to be studied for it to be accessible on its own. The Institute would take the lead in determining whether a T Level OS could be offered as a standalone qualification.

Other Technical qualifications for adults

115. As well as T Levels and the standalone T Level occupational specialisms, we propose that the groups of qualifications proposed for 16 to 19 students as set out at paragraph 45, are also funded for adults:

- **Qualifications providing occupational competence against employer-led standards which are not covered by T Levels.**
- **Additional Specialist Qualifications that build on qualifications aligned to employer-led standards.**

116. We also propose that to meet the needs of adults for whom a T Level (or standalone T Level OS) is not the right choice, the following additional types of qualifications should also be approved for funding:

- **Qualifications that provide occupational competence against employer-led standards which are covered by T Level Occupational Specialisms.** These qualifications should confer occupational entry-level (or full competence) and must conform to the general principles for all adult technical qualifications as outlined above. These could include Painter and Decorator, Data Technician, or Senior Production Chef. For 16 to 19 year olds, we believe the T Level provides the best overall preparation to enter skilled employment for the first time and their subsequent future career. However, for adults, we think these additional technical qualifications should be available 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. It is likely that many adults will be studying qualifications in order to upskill or reskill, and therefore only require a technical qualification to focus on achieving competence to do a particular occupation, rather than more general preparation for entering skilled employment / their career as is done in a T Level.
- **Qualifications that are aligned to occupations outside the current scope of the occupational maps but are in demand by employers.** We also recognise that it is likely there will be some provision we may wish to continue to fund where either (i) the related occupation is not currently included in the maps or (ii) the occupation is included but a standard has not yet been developed. As set out in paragraphs 50-51, there will need to be a comprehensive review of the occupations and standards included in the occupational maps³¹. However, there may be limits to how far the occupational maps can be extended. For example,

³¹ Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (2020), '[Occupational Maps](#)'.

there may be qualifications we wish to fund in occupations that are not recorded on the maps.

- **Additional Specialist qualifications that build on qualifications aligned to employer-led standards which are more appropriate for 19+ students** (such as those that are essential to certain safety critical industries). The qualification must be suitable for the age of the student, e.g. health and safety requirements, as any qualification approved must not contain any activity that is unlawful for the age group.
- **Qualifications focused on some cross-sectoral skills where they lead to skilled employment**³². We propose that a small range of qualifications that focus on developing knowledge and skills covering aspects of multiple employer-led standards and which may be transferrable to multiple occupations are eligible to attract funding for adults. For example, standalone qualifications focusing on skills such as management, leadership, and digital proficiency.

117. We propose that we do not fund qualifications for adults that:

- Do not meet any of these criteria, such as introductory vocational qualifications that are not designed to deliver occupational competence and do not provide clear routes for progression through the system and into employment.
- Do not have a clear link to one or more occupations. We propose technical qualifications for adults should be linked to the relevant occupational area that will give them access to further study or employment.

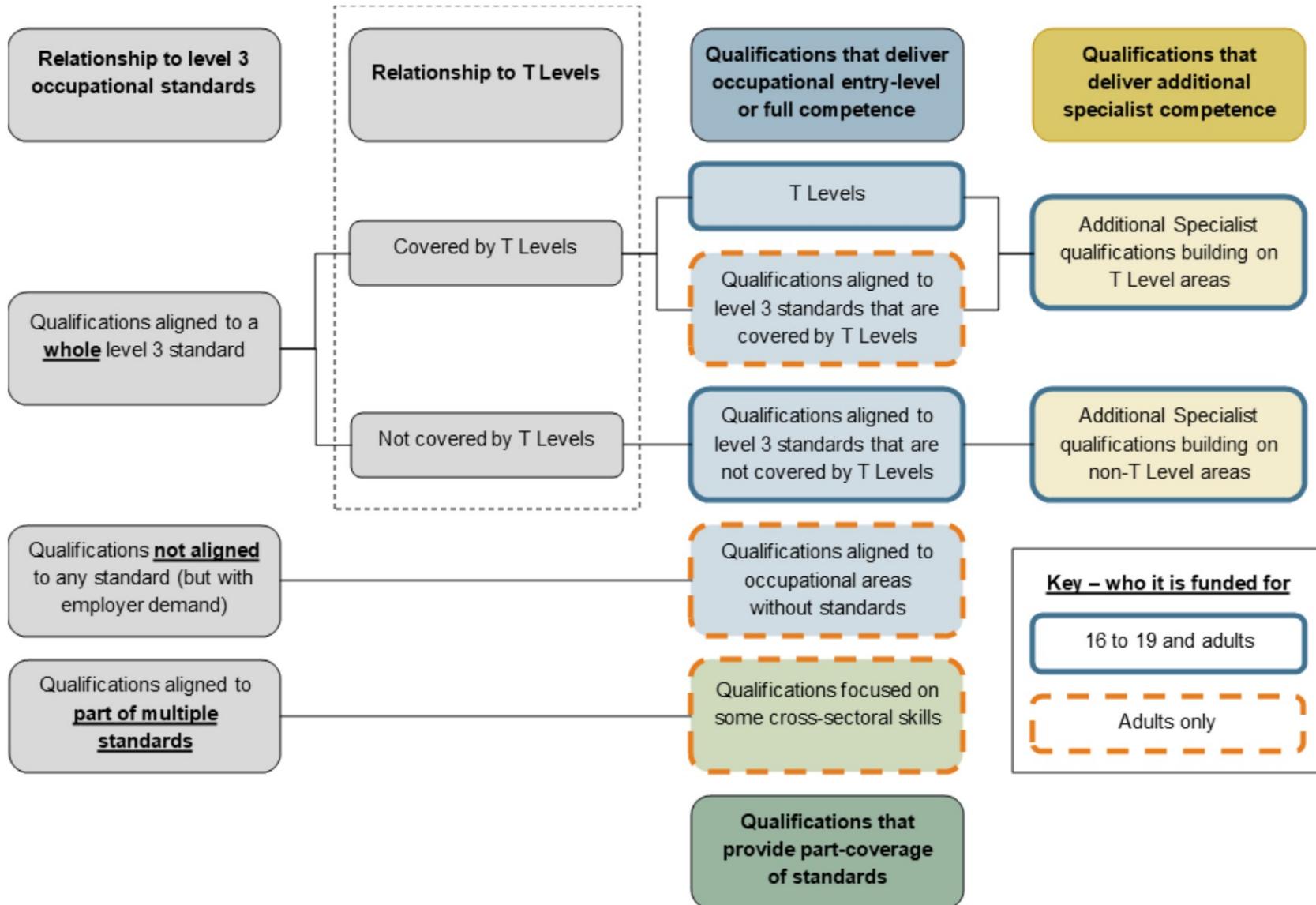
118. The Institute and the Department are considering the specific role the Institute might play in approving of all these qualifications, but in principle, we propose that the Institute will play a key role in approving the majority of these qualifications against a standard, so that they are ready for first teaching in 2024. Where qualifications cannot be aligned to standards but are valued by employers, a robust process will also be put in place to ensure appropriate validation of these qualifications by employers. Further information is contained in the [Ensuring qualifications are high quality](#) chapter and the [Delivery process and timetable](#) chapter.

³² We expect these qualifications will only cover part of a standard or part of multiple standards. They will enable adults to demonstrate some elements of a standard, or elements of multiple standards, but they won't enable the student to demonstrate occupational entry-level or full competence. We expect these qualifications to allow the learner to add to an existing skill-set, potentially allowing them to transfer learning to different occupations. A robust process will be put in place to ensure appropriate validation of these qualifications by employers to ensure they are high quality and valued by industry.

Question 24: Do you agree that the groups of qualifications for adults outlined in this chapter should continue to be funded?

Question 25: What occupations fall outside the scope of the occupational maps but are in demand by employers (as described in paragraph 116 above)?

Figure 3: Visual representation of the proposed adult and 16 to 19 level 3 technical landscape



Chapter 5: Ensuring qualifications are high quality

119. We believe that all students have the right to access high quality qualifications. A levels and T Levels already have strict quality control. We are proposing to implement new processes that will ensure all other level 3 qualifications approved for public funding are high quality from 2023.
120. We will work with the Institute and Ofqual to develop approaches to ensure technical and academic qualifications are appropriate quality, which will enable the Department to consider approving qualifications for funding against its funding approval criteria.
121. We expect that AOs will want to review and may need to change their qualifications, or even develop new qualifications, in line with these new criteria, before they are considered for public funding in future. In order to ensure every funded qualification is high quality, awarding organisations will need to opt into the proposed new process for their qualification(s) to be considered for public funding. If an awarding organisation does not opt in, their qualification will not be considered for public funding. We will work with Ofqual and the Institute to ensure that any new processes are coherent and do not place unjustifiable additional burdens on AOs.
122. We set out here, at a high level, how this will work and how the process will be implemented over the coming years. Subject to the outcome of the consultation, we will publish further details on the process, including the specific criteria and evidence required.

Technical implementation of proposals: quality reforms to technical qualifications

123. We already have a process for developing T Levels which is centred around co-design with employers, and we want to see the same indicators of quality, employer endorsement of content and performance standards, alignment to occupational standards and securing occupational competence) replicated across all technical qualifications. The Institute is the organisation responsible for maintenance of the occupational maps³³ which outline the 15 technical education routes and group occupations within them. It also approves employer-led standards, T Levels, apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications to ensure they meet employer needs. Therefore, we propose that the Institute should also have the lead role in determining whether technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds and adults are good quality and meet employer needs. This would mean the Institute has a similar role for all qualifications that are intended to lead to employment.

³³ Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (2020). [‘Occupational Maps’](#).

124. As set out in the [*Putting employers at the heart of technical education*](#) chapter, we propose that the future technical education system should wherever possible be aligned to the employer-led standards contained within the occupational maps, to ensure that training is high quality and meets employer needs. This includes qualifications for both 16 to 19 year olds and adults. We are working with the Institute to develop a more comprehensive framework to allow for the recognition of provision delivering competence at different levels³⁴.
125. Technical qualifications that we expect to fund in future, and which align to an employer-led standard already published by the Institute, will be subject to an approvals process led by the Institute. AOs will put forward their qualifications to be reviewed through this process, which will include input from panels of employers. These panels will play a role in reviewing qualifications against the relevant occupational standards. Ofqual are working with the Institute to finalise an appropriate approach to reviewing the qualifications submitted and will provide advice to the Institute to ensure qualifications are valid and the assessment is robust.
126. Where an employer-led standard has not been published, the Institute will consider developing a standard, if it can be demonstrated that it would be appropriate to do so and that there is employer need. Once the standard has been developed, the Institute would consider the approval of the qualification against the standard in line with the process above.
127. However, as set out above at paragraph 116, we recognise that there may be provision we want to continue to fund as it is in demand by employers but cannot be brought into scope of the occupational maps. We will work to develop a robust process for approving these qualifications which provide assurance that these qualifications are in demand by employers, valued by industry and are high quality.
128. The process set out above applies to all technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds, and all technical qualifications for adults. Qualifications for adults will also need to adhere to the core principles set out at paragraph 104.
129. Subject to the outcome of this consultation, the Institute will provide technical guidance to AOs with details of evidence submission and process.

³⁴ Further information on the proposed new competence levels is contained within footnotes 12, 15 and 32.

Question 26: Do you agree with our proposed approach to reforming technical qualifications?

Question 27: Is there anything else we should consider when implementing our proposed approach?

Technical implementation of proposals: mandatory qualifications in apprenticeship standards

130. All apprenticeship standards are assessed through independent and holistic End Point Assessment (EPA). Completion of the EPA confirms that the apprentice is occupationally competent. In some cases, apprenticeships also currently require the successful completion of additional qualifications. These qualifications are included within apprenticeships where they convey especially strong labour market signals, over and above the occupational competence the apprenticeship secures.
131. We are working closely with the Institute to identify where this occurs and to review whether these qualifications continue to meet the criteria for inclusion in the apprenticeship. Where the Institute's review identifies a qualification does not meet the criteria for inclusion in an apprenticeship (the 'mandatory qualifications policy'), the Institute will take forward revisions to remove it from the standard as part of its usual work to ensure all apprentices experience a relevant, high quality apprenticeship. The qualification will then be subject to consideration for defunding in line with the review.
132. In the unlikely event that the Institute identifies a qualification that meets the criteria for inclusion in an apprenticeship but which does not meet the funding approval criteria for technical qualifications set by the review, we will work with the Institute to review the evidence to understand what value employers place on the qualification. Where the evidence suggests there is a clear need for the qualification to remain in the apprenticeship, it will be approved by the Institute and subject to ongoing regulation by Ofqual in line with normal practice. This same qualification may or may not continue to be available as a separate standalone qualification through other funding streams, including 16 to 19 and adult funding, subject to consideration of the wider criteria set by the review (including the roles of qualifications in addition to T Levels and A levels).
133. The Institute will continue to review the inclusion of qualifications in apprenticeships, at all levels, as part of its revision processes and commitment to offering high quality apprenticeship standards that meet the needs of employers and apprentices.

Question 28: Do you agree with the proposed approach to qualifications in apprenticeship standards?

Technical implementation of proposals: quality reforms to academic qualifications

134. Paragraphs 67 to 83 set out the proposed academic qualifications that should be available alongside A levels. These are the qualifications that support progress to specialist HE that are taken as alternative programmes of study to A levels, and the qualifications that offer complementary and additional skills to support progression to HE when taken alongside A levels. These are shown in green in Figure 1 on page 18 above.
135. Ofqual has been working with awarding organisations to strengthen its regulatory approach and secure greater assurance of the validity and reliability of some qualifications used in school and college accountability measures. Currently this work is focused on key stage 4 qualifications used in performance tables.
136. We intend to build on the process developed for key stage 4 qualifications³⁵ and will work closely with Ofqual as it seeks to strengthen its scrutiny and regulation of post-16 qualifications. We will also make our criteria for funding approval more robust, ensuring the process is coherent, and the requirements placed on qualifications and awarding organisations align and do not result in unjustifiable additional burdens. We think this approach most effectively balances our objectives of raising quality in a proportionate way, whilst delivering timely improvements, and not exceeding the system's capacity.
137. Under these proposals, subject to further consultation, Ofqual would set new rules, as appropriate, for the academic qualifications set out at paragraphs 67 - 83, detailing the features and characteristics they must demonstrate to be considered for funding approval. Qualifications will need to be reviewed against Ofqual's rules, as appropriate, before being considered for final funding approval. For the qualifications set out at paragraphs 74 and 82, we propose to exclude existing versions of these qualifications from further consideration for removal of funding. In instances where awarding organisations develop new qualifications in these groups, we are considering the appropriate approvals process and will confirm at a later date.

³⁵ Ofqual (2020). [‘Ofqual Handbook: Performance Table Qualifications’](#).

Question 29: Do you agree with our proposed approach to reforming academic qualifications?

Question 30: Is there anything else we should consider when implementing our proposed approach?

Approval for public funding

138. Ofqual and the Institute will play a part in the approvals process to ensure that qualifications are of a high standard of quality and (for technical qualifications) meet employers' needs, and awarding organisations offering publicly-funded qualifications will need to continue to meet Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition. However, the Secretary of State will continue to be responsible for all decisions regarding which qualifications should receive public funding, to ensure that all qualifications align with government's ambitions for the post-16 education system. As such, we anticipate that there will be some funding approval criteria that qualifications will have to meet, over and above Ofqual's and the Institute's requirements.
139. Scrutiny from Ofqual and the Institute would be a pre-requisite for funding approval, but review by Ofqual and the Institute does not automatically confer funding. The Secretary of State would reserve the right to fund qualifications not reviewed by Ofqual or the Institute such as to ensure continued coverage of provision or to ensure qualifications align with government priorities. The proposals in this consultation do not impact on overall funding rates.
140. We have described above the types of qualifications we propose to approve for funding and the descriptions of these groups of qualifications will form a core part of the final funding approval criteria, but we expect final criteria to be based on, but not necessarily limited to these descriptions. The exact split of responsibilities between Ofqual, the Institute and the Department and which organisation will assess each feature will be developed in response to this consultation.
141. We will work with Ofqual and the Institute to confirm the detail of the process and requirements, including the final Departmental funding criteria. We may need to conduct further technical consultations and will publish further details on the evidence required in due course. We will work together to ensure that any approvals process is coherent and as streamlined as possible.
142. Having invested in improving the quality of post-16 qualifications, it is essential that the quality of these qualifications is maintained in the long-term so that students and employers can rely on them with confidence. The Department, Ofqual and the

Institute are together considering roles and responsibilities in the longer-term, and will publish further detail shortly.

Approval for inclusion in School and College Performance Tables³⁶

143. There has been a moratorium on additional qualifications being added to the approved list of qualifications for inclusion in performance table measures since 2018, when the final lists of technical and applied qualifications approved for inclusion in 2020 performance tables for schools and colleges were published.
144. The intention is that the post-16 qualifications review will result in qualifications that are well-designed, fit for purpose, fulfil a clear need and will lead either directly or through further or higher education routes to high-quality job opportunities with good economic outcomes. Our proposals intend to put in place stronger processes up-front, ensuring that all qualifications approved for funding meet our principles of purpose, progression, necessity and high quality. Subject to the responses to this consultation, we will consider how the approvals process will be implemented, and how the process for decisions on whether a qualification can count in performance tables will work. We will set out detail on this in our response to this consultation.

³⁶ DfE (2020). '[Search for schools and colleges to compare](#)'. The Government has announced that it will not publish any school or college level education performances data bases on tests, assessments or exams for 2020.

Chapter 6: Delivery process and timetable

145. In considering our approach to reform, we recognise the importance of introducing our reforms at a pace that will allow for orderly consolidation of the market, and at a pace the system as a whole can accommodate. We will seek to defund and approve qualifications in line with T Level roll out, from 2023.

146. We will:

- Roll out T Levels in four waves, with wave 1 being taught in selected providers, from September 2020
- Remove funding approval from qualifications with no enrolments in August 2021, and subsequently implemented on an annual basis.
- Remove funding approval from qualifications with low enrolments in August 2022, and subsequently implemented on an annual basis.
- Remove funding approval from existing qualifications that overlap with wave 1 and 2 T Levels; and approve for funding those technical qualifications which have been approved through the new approvals process from 1 August 2023.
- Remove funding approval from existing qualifications that overlap with wave 3 and 4 T Levels; and approve for funding those technical qualifications which have been approved through the new approvals process from 1 August 2024.
- Make available to adults technical qualifications which have been approved against employer-led standards as part of the 16 to 19 strengthened approvals process from 1 August 2023; with other additional adult technical qualifications to follow from 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 September 2024.

147. Our ambition to reform the qualifications offer, including the introduction of T Levels, is a key part of the Government's priority to level up opportunities across the nation, create high quality jobs, and increase productivity. However, we recognise that these proposals could represent significant change for some and would welcome views on what support will be needed to smooth the transition as we remove funding approval from some qualifications and introduce new, high quality T Levels and other alternative qualifications.

Question 31: What support is needed to smooth the implementation of the proposed reforms?

Annex A: List of consultation questions

Heading	Question
Introduction	Q1 – What is your name?
Introduction	Q2 – What is your email address?
Introduction	Q3 – What is your role, or in what capacity are you responding?
Introduction	Q4 – If you are responding on behalf of an organisation please tell us the full name of your organisation, and what type of organisation it is?
Introduction	Q5 – Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q6 – Do you agree that the two groups of qualifications outlined in paragraph 45 are needed for 16 to 19 year olds choosing technical provision?
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q7 – 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)?
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q8 – 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.
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q9 – 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?
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q10 – 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?
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q11 – 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?

Heading	Question
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q12 – Are there any other types of qualifications that we should continue to fund to be taken alongside A levels?
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q13 – 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?
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q14 – Do you agree with our proposal the IB Diploma should continue to be funded?
Level 3 qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds	Q15 – 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?
Supporting students to attain the new high quality offer at level 3	Q16 – What additional support might students need to achieve the new high quality offer at level 3?
Supporting students to attain the new high quality offer at level 3	Q17 – What additional support might SEND students need to achieve the new high quality offer at level 3?
Supporting students to attain the new high quality offer at level 3	Q18 – 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?
Supporting adults	Q19 – Do you agree with our proposal to fund the same academic options for adults as 16 to 19 year olds?
Supporting adults	Q20 – 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)?
Supporting adults	Q21 – Do you agree that the principles described in paragraph 104 are the right ones to ensure qualifications meet the needs of adults?
Supporting adults	Q22 – Do you agree with our proposed approach to making T Levels available to adults?
Supporting adults	Q23 – Do you agree with our proposal that T Level Occupational Specialisms should be offered as separate standalone qualifications for adults?

Heading	Question
Supporting adults	Q24 – Do you agree that the groups of qualifications for adults outlined in this chapter should continue to be funded?
Supporting adults	Q25 – What occupations fall outside the scope of the occupational maps but are in demand by employers (as described in paragraph 116 above)?
Ensuring qualifications are high quality	Q26 – Do you agree with our proposed approach to reforming technical qualifications?
Ensuring qualifications are high quality	Q27 – Is there anything else we should consider when implementing our proposed approach?
Ensuring qualifications are high quality	Q28 – Do you agree with the proposed approach to qualifications in apprenticeship standards?
Ensuring qualifications are high quality	Q29 – Do you agree with our proposed approach to reforming academic qualifications?
Ensuring qualifications are high quality	Q30 – Is there anything else we should consider when implementing our proposed approach?
Delivery process and timetable	Q31 – What support is needed to smooth the implementation of the proposed reforms?



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