

Approval process and timelines for reformed post-16 qualifications confirmed January 2023

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Following its review of post-16 qualifications, the Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed its aim of developing a new 'streamlined' qualifications system for students aged 16 and over.

There will be two routes available for students. They will choose between:

- A Levels or a mixed curriculum of, typically, two A Levels alongside a vocational qualification, to be known as an alternative academic qualification (AAQ)
- T Levels or an apprenticeship.

Full details of the approval process and timelines have now been **published** for post-16 qualifications at Level 3 that will sit alongside A Levels and T Levels.

Following a slight delay whilst the new Department for Education (DfE) team signed off the next stages, new **criteria** that all Academic and Technical qualifications will need to meet in order to be approved for funding from 2025 is now available together with a new integrated **approval process**.

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) will take on responsibility for approving new and revised Technical Qualifications at Level 3. Academic qualifications will need to be approved by the DfE against quality and progression criteria and approved by Ofqual.

In the first cycle of approvals, the deadline for Awarding Organisations to register their intention to submit qualifications to be funded from 2025 onwards is 10 February 2023. Qualifications will be submitted for approval in July 2023 and the final list of approved qualifications for funding from September 2025 will be published in July 2024.

Level 3 academic qualifications that can be taken alongside A Levels are to be called Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs).

The first cycle of approvals includes Technical Qualifications and small Alternative Academic Qualifications at Level 3 which will be taught from 2025 in certain subjects, categories and routes.

The approvals cycle for qualifications taught from September 2026 will follow a year later. This will include large Alternative Academic Qualifications equivalent in size to at least 2 A Levels in a limited number of subjects.

The DfE has confirmed that overlap with A Levels and T Levels will be permitted for 16-19 funding but only in certain circumstances.

This is the next stage in the government's reform of post-16 qualifications which aims to streamline the qualifications landscape, create clear choices and pathways by funding "high-quality" qualifications that are "needed, in demand and lead to good progression outcomes".

Further **consultation** is taking place on post-16 qualifications at Level 2 and below.

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