

Technical Education Programme

‘Update on Qualifications Reform’ webinar (27/11/25) – Q&A

Many thanks to colleagues from the Department for Education (DfE) and the Gatsby Foundation for their input to the answers below.

Disclaimer: Please note that the information in this document reflects the policy situation at the time of the webinar recorded in November 2025 and is subject to change over time.

Q: Will V Levels replace existing level 3 qualifications?

A: Yes, eventually V Levels will replace AAQs (Advanced Academic Qualifications) and AGQs (Advanced General Qualifications) such as BTECs and other similar qualifications. V Levels are being introduced as a ‘third pathway’ alongside A levels and T Levels, to simplify and streamline the level 3 post-16 landscape. It is proposed that V Levels will be available from 2027 and will be introduced on a route-by-route basis. Qualifications will remain in place until the routes in which they are available are reformed into V Levels.

Q: Will V Levels attract UCAS points?

A: Yes, V Levels are proposed to be equivalent in size to A levels (360 Guided Learning Hours each) and will attract UCAS points in the same way that other level 3 courses such as A levels and T Levels do. Students who have studied V Levels will be able to progress to higher education, higher apprenticeships or skilled employment. The DfE is currently consulting on the size of V Levels in the [Post-16 pathways at level 3 and below consultation](#) which was published in October and will close on 12 January 2026.

Q: Do V Levels have a compulsory industry placement?

A: An industry placement will not be a requirement of V Levels, as the qualification is intended to provide a broad insight into an industry. However, whilst not a requirement, providers can offer work experience in the wider study programme, if it is in the interest of the student. For those students who would prefer a more specialised study programme linked to an industrial area, a T Level course may be more appropriate.

Q: Will V Levels be assessed mainly by coursework similar to BTECs?

Ofqual will be responsible for designing the rules of structure, assessment and grading for V Levels and will run a consultation on their plans in due course.

One key difference between V Levels and AGQs is that V Levels are proposed to be 360 Guided Learning Hours (GLH), to support simplifying the system, whereas AGQs are available in a range of sizes. In addition, the DfE is proposing to introduce nationally set content for V Levels. This will mean that instead of students learning different content for the same subject depending on the awarding organisation, V Levels will have nationally set content so that all students study broadly the same material - the same approach used for A levels. This will drive greater consistency, clarity, and quality across qualifications and will ensure all students studying a subject, regardless of what, where or how they study, are equipped with comparable knowledge and skills. As well as ensuring more certainty about what students have studied, linking content to Skills England's employer-set occupational standards in a systematic way will also give employers confidence that each qualification is kept up-to-date and will meet their needs.

Q: Will students be able to take one large 'V' Level subject that has a qualification equivalent to three A levels or a T Level?

A: No, as V Levels are proposed to be equivalent in size to one A level (360 Guided Learning Hours). The DfE is currently consulting on the size of V Levels in the [Post-16 pathways at level 3 and below consultation](#) which was published in October and will close on 12 January 2026. V Levels are designed to be studied alongside A levels or on their own. Students will be able to study either 3 V Levels or a mix of V Levels and A levels. The content for V Levels will be set nationally, so all students will study broadly the same material. V Levels are vocational qualifications for students who wish to explore a range of sectors without focusing on a single occupation, with applied learning and practical assessment. T Levels are aligned to employer-based standards and are suited to students who know which broad career area they want to pursue and prefer a single, large qualification equivalent to three A levels.

Q: Who will design the new V Levels? Will employers be consulted?

A: Ofqual will be responsible for designing the rules of structure, assessment and grading for V Levels and will run a consultation on their plans in due course.

Skills England are tasked with identifying the skills needs in the economy and what employers need. They also identify and develop the most relevant occupational standards on which to base new qualifications.

The DfE will also work closely with awarding organisations, providers, higher education providers and employers at each stage of the qualification development process. The work with employers is essential to ensure qualifications provide clear progression routes to employment, apprenticeships and higher-level study.

Q: What is being done to support providers to ensure they are ready to deliver V Levels from 2027?

A: Providers will have access to a range of resources and guidance to ensure a smooth transition to V Levels. Dedicated online information will provide timely updates and practical materials to help prepare for delivery. Clear guidance will set out the structure and requirements of the new qualifications, supporting staff understanding and effective implementation. Exemplar pathway documents will assist providers in planning learner routes, while study programme guidance will explain how V Levels can be used to develop meaningful programmes of study. In addition, DfE expect awarding organisations to supply specifications, sample assessments and training materials to support accurate delivery and assessment.

[Information and guidance on qualifications reform](#) has already been developed to support providers delivering reformed post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below.

[Study programme guidance](#) will demonstrate where the new qualifications fit within broader programmes of study, including rules of combinations and funding considerations.

Q: What support will be available to educate Higher Education Institutions about V Levels?

A: Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been invited to participate in the government consultation into V levels and the process is structured to ensure they are part of shaping and recognising these new qualifications.

Ofqual will also consult with higher education providers to ensure V Levels support progression. As V Levels will carry UCAS points, they are directly relevant to university admissions. The DfE is working with universities to ensure they understand V Levels and include them in entry requirements.

Q: What will students study if they have a specific trade in mind (e.g. plumbing or hairdressing) but are not quite ready for an apprenticeship. Will they need to take a mixture of 3 subjects, too?

A: Currently students can choose an appropriate level 1 or Level 2 course (as these have not yet been reformed), with the aim of progressing into employment, an apprenticeship or a level 3 qualification. The DfE is currently consulting on proposed subjects of level 2 pathways and V Levels in the [Post-16 pathways at level 3 and below consultation](#) which was published in October and will close on 12 January 2026.

How will this picture look after 2027?

Occupational pathways (including an Occupational Certificate qualification) are for students who want to study for a particular occupation and need to develop their skills in a classroom-based setting, with the aim of progressing into employment in relevant level 2 roles.

Further study pathways (including a Foundation Certificate) are for students who want to pursue further level 3 study, whether on T Levels, V Levels or A levels, but did not meet the entry requirement to progress directly, usually because they did not achieve five grade 4s at GCSE, including English and maths, at age 16. They therefore require more time to develop their knowledge and skills before moving up to the next level.

At each level, apprenticeships will also be available for young people who are ready for work and want to enter a particular role. This includes the new foundation apprenticeships, which are jobs with training at level 2, providing a broad curriculum focusing on the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for the job. They are an employment-based training offer that give young people a route into careers in critical sectors, enabling them to earn a wage while developing employability skills to support the transition from full time education to work, providing entry-level competence.

Q: Will there be funding for students who complete a post-16 level 2 further study course and then go on to level 3?

A: [16-19 funding](#) would cover the students for the 3 years of their study.

Q: Is there any information on vocational options pre-16 as pathways into post 16 V Levels?

Pre-16 pathways are not in scope of this consultation.

Q: Are level 1 and entry level qualifications under reform?

A: DfE is committed to ensuring that students at entry level and level 1 have access to high-quality qualifications that support progression – whether into further study, employment, or the development of essential life and work skills. They will, in due course, consider whether reforms to qualifications at entry level and level 1 are required.

Q: With a national trend in the rise of NEET figures, what is being done to support young people who are struggling to achieve Maths and English at level 2?

A: As detailed in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, the DfE will transform their approach to supporting young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET by reforming how they are identified, tracked and supported. The Youth Guarantee will guarantee young people aged 18-21 access to education, training and/or help to get into work.

Q: Do you have any tips for finding suitable companies to deliver talks to younger students in line with [Provider Access Legislation](#)?

A: It is worth making links with local colleges and your local Careers Hub to identify supportive employers and providers, e.g. those who already offer T Levels. Local Studio Schools, Engineering Academies, [Institutes of Technology](#) or [STEM Ambassador Hubs](#) may be able to provide support. The [T Level Ambassador Network](#) may also be able to signpost to local employers.

Q: What support is available currently for employers wishing to offer T Level industry placements?

A: The T Level Ambassador network has over 1000 members and helps to support employers. The [T Level Industry Placement Support for Employers](#) site provides support and guidance for employers, including case studies. For T Level placements linked to Health and Construction and those in small and medium sized companies, the [Employer Support Fund](#) is available. This offers financial assistance towards the costs of hosting a student placement.

Q: Are T Levels suitable for students at all levels of attainment?

T Levels are high quality qualifications, and the DfE want to extend the opportunity they provide to as many young people as possible. However, the DfE acknowledges that T Levels are large programmes of study and cannot always meet the needs of all learners who want to study in the occupations they cover. So, for T Levels to thrive, the DfE need to assess the wider qualifications landscape and ensure that alternative qualifications in the system align with T Levels on offer.

The DfE continue to listen to feedback about barriers to T Level delivery and know that some aspects need refining to ensure that more young people have the opportunity to take them up. There is an ongoing process of reviewing the content and assessment of the first T Levels to ensure they provide the best possible opportunities for a wide range of students, whilst maintaining quality.

Q: Will there be a pre-T Level pathway to make the qualification more accessible?

A: The current T Level Foundation Year will run as normal in 2026/27. The consultation proposes that from 2027/28, it will broaden into a wider 'Foundation Year' supporting progression to level 3, during a transition period, and will gradually be replaced by the new Further Study pathway and Foundation Certificates. Once the Foundation Study pathway has been rolled out in a particular subject, the Foundation Year would no longer run in that subject.

Occupational Certificates (Occupational pathway) are for students who want to study for a particular occupation and need to develop their skills in a classroom-based setting, with the aim of progressing into employment in relevant level 2 roles.

Foundation Certificates (Further Study pathway) are for students who want to pursue further level 3 study, whether on T Levels, V Levels or A levels, but did not meet the entry requirement to progress directly, usually because they did not achieve five grade 4s at GCSE, including English and maths, at age 16. They therefore require more time to develop their knowledge and skills before moving up to the next level. Setting out clear qualification options in this way should help students to understand their options and support teachers and careers professionals in giving good advice.

Q: What support is in place for students with SEND who undertake a T Level?

A: A variety of flexibilities are in place for T Level industry placements for students with SEND, as well as the usual support offered by providers. You can find out more information here: [Hosting students with SEND](#)

Q: Are T levels widely recognised by Universities?

A: The DfE has created a [list of higher education providers that accept T Level for entry](#) and are working with providers to help them understand more about T levels and to encourage them to be explicit in their entry requirements about their acceptance of T Levels. They have also produced specific [guidance for higher education providers](#) outlining how T Levels can support students to progress to Higher Education.

Q: How can I put forward my views about qualifications reform?

A: The DfE [Post-16 pathways at level 3 and below consultation](#) is open until 12 January 2026. Feedback is sought on the planned design and implementation of the new pathways for 16-19 year olds including V Levels and new pathways at level 2. The [Consultation FAQ](#) is useful advance reading.

Q: What is the best way to keep up to date with qualifications reform?

A: Please sign up to the DfE's [Qualifications Reform mailing list](#) and visit the [CDI Technical Education Resource Hub](#)

The two most recent policy announcements include the [Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper](#) and the [Curriculum and Assessment Review](#)