

Technical Education Programme

‘Update on Qualifications Reform (V Levels and Level 2 pathways)’ webinar (24/06/26) – Q&A

Many thanks to colleagues from the Department for Education (DfE) 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 June 2026 and is subject to change over time.

Q: What are the entry requirements for the new Level 2 pathways (Occupational pathway and Further Study pathway)?

A: The DfE do not set national entry requirements for either pathway; providers have flexibility to create a study programme that is best suited to the learner. The Further Study pathway is designed to prepare learners for Level 3 study, so it likely that providers will want evidence that learners can succeed at that level and be ready for progression.

The Occupational pathway is designed for learners wishing to progress to employment or an apprenticeship, so providers will require learners to demonstrate an interest in a specific occupational area. The pathway is designed to be employment-focused and accessible for most students.

Q: What will be available for students who don’t meet the entry requirements for Level 2 programmes?

A: The 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.

New Level 1 English and maths qualifications are being introduced to support learners who are not yet ready to retake GCSEs. They are designed to provide a ‘stepping stone’ to GCSE resits and can sit alongside the new Level 2 pathways.

Q: Will Independent Training Providers (ITPs) offer the Level 2 Occupational Certificates from 2027?

A: The government will encourage all providers to consider offering the Occupational Certificates, to make them as accessible and available as possible for students. As new qualifications are rolled out, public funding approval will be removed from existing 16-19 qualifications. In planning

how the system will transition, the DfE is aiming to reduce complexity whilst ensuring students move to new, better-quality qualifications as soon as possible.

Q: Will it be possible for students to change from an Occupational pathway to a Further Study pathway?

A: Funding flexibilities will continue to allow students to change pathways where appropriate, such as moving from Further Study to Occupational at Level 2, or progressing to Level 3 or an apprenticeship. This flexibility supports learners whose goals or circumstances change. Alongside this, the DfE is focused on helping students choose the right pathway from the start by strengthening information, advice and guidance, with clear messaging on Level 2 options and progression routes.

The DfE is also improving support through better training and resources for careers professionals, updated study programme guidance, and more work experience opportunities.

Together, these measures give students flexibility to change direction if needed, while helping them make informed choices and succeed from the outset.

Q: Will Level 2 functional skills in Maths and English be accepted as an alternative to GCSEs?

A: It is up to the provider to set their own entry requirements but functional skills may still be accepted by many providers for entry to the new Level 2 pathways, as it is not mandatory to have GCSEs for entry to either the Further Study or Occupational pathway.

Q: Will the new 16-19 Level 1 English and maths qualifications be studied as part of, or alongside, the new Level 2 post-16 pathways?

A: The Government consultation on the new 16-19 Level 1 English and maths qualifications closed on 2 June and responses are now being analysed. The two-year length of the Occupational pathway will allow sufficient time for students to take a substantial technical qualification as well as important non-qualification activity to help prepare them for entering the workplace. For lower prior attaining students, it will also allow for them to study the new Level 1 English and maths qualifications in the first year, before progressing onto the GCSE in the second year.

Q: Are the new Qualification Pioneers volunteers, or have they been selected?

A: The government has worked with sector representative bodies and regional teams in DfE on the proposed membership for the sector-led group of Qualification Pioneers. They used their nominations, alongside self-nominations from providers keen to support the transition to reformed qualifications, to ensure a diverse mix of providers by region, type, size and experience of delivering reformed qualifications, with strong strategic leadership. They also ensured that there is representation from school sixth-forms and sixth-forms within the academy sector.

Q: Will work experience be embedded into V Levels?

A: Work experience will not be a compulsory element of a V Level qualification itself but is encouraged as part of the broader study programme.

V Levels are small qualifications (360 Guided Learning Hours). If students are sure of the career area they wish to pursue, they may want to consider a T Level, as it offers a broad sector-based qualification, with a 45 day industry placement.

Q: Can a student choose to study three V Levels?

A: Yes, students can choose three V Levels, or a combination of V Levels and A Levels. V Levels will be for students who are still deciding which career path to take and who want to keep their options open. Where students are less sure of their career choice, they should be encouraged to take a broader study programme, encompassing a range of subjects. To support the development of broader study programmes, V Levels will be equivalent in size to A Levels, so students are able to take multiple qualifications and have more options.

Q: Will AAQs be defunded once V Levels are launched?

A: Yes, once V Levels are introduced, existing qualifications will have public funding removed for 16-19 year olds, which includes AAQs (Advanced Academic Qualifications) and AGQs (Advanced General Qualifications).

Q: Will Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) accept V Levels? What work is being done with HEIs prior to the launch of V Levels?

A: In the Post-16 Level 3 and below pathways consultation response, the DfE set out their ambition that once all V Levels are introduced and in steady delivery, a student will be equally as likely to progress into Level 4+ study whether they take A Levels or V Levels. This ambition includes Higher Technical Qualifications, higher-level apprenticeships and Level 6 study programmes.

To meet this ambition, the DfE has worked with Universities UK (UUK), UCAS and a range of higher education institutes (HEIs) as part of the content development process for the first tranche of V Levels that will be taught from September 2027. This engagement has focused on ensuring content can meet HEIs' expectations to support access to HE for those with V Levels.

To further facilitate a smooth transition to the recognition of V Levels by HEIs, as well as continuing to drive HEI recognition of T Levels, the DfE is establishing a Technical and Vocational Qualifications (TVQ) Higher Education (HE) Network. It will be made up of Universities UK, UCAS, HEIs and awarding organisations, and will meet quarterly to enable DfE to foresee issues and create effective solutions with the sector.

V levels will carry UCAS points, to support progression to University. Once the Ofqual consultation on V Level grading is complete, the DfE will work with UCAS to publish the tariff points for V Levels as soon as possible.

Q: What resources are available to support young people and their parents/carers to help them navigate these changes?

A: Providers will receive a comprehensive package of support from the DfE to help them understand, deliver and communicate the new qualifications effectively. This will include clear guidance on qualification requirements, exemplar learner pathways, study programme materials and dedicated online resources that provide practical tools and up-to-date information throughout the transition period.

The DfE is also working closely with the sector through their Qualification Pioneers group, bringing together experienced practitioners from a diverse range of providers to test approaches, share practical insight and help shape transition support. This will ensure that guidance and implementation materials are informed by real-world experience and reflect the needs of providers on the ground.

A strong professional development offer will further support successful implementation. From Autumn 2026, the Association of Colleges will lead a new, fully funded Technical and Vocational Professional Development programme, building on the strengths of the existing T Level Professional Development programme. The programme will provide subject-specific training, industry-relevant professional development, peer networking opportunities and targeted support for leaders managing qualification transition and curriculum change.

A useful source of information is Ofqual's [Qualification Reform Hub](#), which explains V Levels, Occupational Certificates, Foundation Certificates and the new Level 1 English and maths qualifications.

The CDI Technical Education Programme has created two useful resources on Post-16 reforms: a Post-16 pathways presentation and a Post-16 option handout. These resources and further information can be accessed on the [CDI Technical Education Resource Hub](#)

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](#)

Please note that all of these resources are free and can be accessed by non-CDI members.