



The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP

Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education

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Robin Walker MP
Chair of the Education Committee
House of Commons
London
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12 January 2023

Dear Robin,

2025 APPROVAL PROCESS AND CRITERIA FOR LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATIONS

I am writing to inform you of the next stage in the government's review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England. Today, my department is publishing details of a new approval process for future academic and technical qualifications at level 3, including new quality criteria that qualifications must meet in order to be publicly funded from 2025. This is the next and most significant phase of the post-16 qualifications review.

In our response to the second stage consultation published in July 2021, we made clear our intentions to streamline the qualifications landscape, simplify choices for students and only fund qualifications that are high quality and lead to good progression outcomes.

By July 2022, we completed the first phase of our reforms by removing funding approval from around 5,500 qualifications at level 3 and below with low or no enrolments in England.

We are putting A levels and T Levels at the heart of academic and technical study at 16-19 which will ensure the highest quality routes for our young people. The second stage of the reforms is to remove funding approval from qualifications which overlap with T Levels. In October 2022, we published details of the first 106 qualifications that will have funding approval removed from 1 August 2024 because they overlap with a T Level in Education and Childcare, Digital, or Construction and the Built Environment. Funding approval will also be removed from 1 August 2024 from qualifications which overlap with the Health and Science T Levels and we will publish this list once the review of the outline content of those T Levels has concluded. Funding approval will be removed in August 2025 for qualifications which overlap with T Levels in waves 3 and 4 (Legal; Finance and Accounting; Engineering and Manufacturing; Business and

Administration; Hair and Beauty; Catering and Hospitality; Creative and Design; and Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care). A provisional list of these qualifications will be published in spring 2023.

Our reforms do not constitute a binary choice between T Levels and A levels. We have listened to feedback and recognise the need for additional qualifications that will sit alongside A levels and T Levels. So long as alternative qualifications meet our new criteria, students will be able to take alternative qualifications, including some BTECs, either on their own, or as part of a mixed study programme in combination with A levels. In addition, the T Level Transition Programme provides a high-quality route onto T Levels, for students who would benefit from the additional study time and preparation that it will give them before they start their T Level.

For academic qualifications, the criteria include progression to higher education, evidence of demand and a clear statement of why the qualification is needed. Technical qualifications will be required to meet new occupational relevance and employer demand tests developed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). This will ensure that technical qualifications deliver the content and assessment that truly matters to employers, and that the skills system is simpler for learners, training providers and employers to navigate. All qualifications must also meet regulatory requirements set by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).

These additional qualifications are an important part of how we will support diverse student needs, and deliver skills required by employers for a productive future economy.

This announcement marks the start of the final stage of the reforms to post-16 qualifications at level 3 and will give the education sector clarity on the shape of the future qualifications landscape.

I look forward to engaging with you and other parliamentarians with an interest in these important reforms.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Halfon', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
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