

# Qualification reform

**A guide for employers**

## NCFE and technical education

### Who is NCFE?

NCFE is an educational charity and leader in vocational and technical learning, which has been shaping smarter learning for over 175 years – from world-class qualifications, to new assessment methodologies, innovative education technology platforms and collaborations with sector experts.

### What is technical education?

Government-funded training and assessment for work (often for a specific job or occupation). It provides an alternative route to academic education such as A Levels, and includes classroom, work and online-based training including apprenticeships.

Technical qualifications are taught mainly away from the workplace (e.g. in classrooms or online) but may require some work experience.

NCFE's technical education portfolio supports young people aged 14-19, as well as adults. We aim to support learners to progress through a range of subject specialisms, equipping them with industry-relevant skills on their journey towards a brilliant career.

What's more, all our technical and vocational qualifications come with wraparound support and resources to support learners to success every step of the way.

Our current technical offer includes a range of qualification types, and levels, for a range of ages. You can view our [technical education brochure](#) for more information.

#### Level 2

Sits alongside academic options at Level 2 such as GCSE

#### Level 3

Sits alongside academic options at Level 3 such as A Level

For the current cycles of this reform, both levels are generally split into the following learner categories:

- 16-19 and adult
- Adult only

## Reform

- From 2025-2026, Level 2 and 3 qualifications must meet new criteria and all others will have funding approval withdrawn.
- With the intention of streamlining the choice of qualifications at Level 3 and below, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) has launched a new employer-led process for approving technical qualifications.
- In the majority of cases, the only qualifications which will receive approval are those which align with or build upon the [Occupational Standards](#) set out by IfATE. They must also be demonstrably useful to employers and meet employers' needs.
- All new and existing Level 2 and 3 qualifications will need to be redeveloped and approved for funding by Department for Education (DfE), IfATE and Ofqual, or they will no longer attract public funding.
- The first approved technical qualifications will be available to be taught from 2025, following the first approval submissions window this July.

## Get involved

We're calling on you as employers to support us by giving your views on Level 3 and below qualifications in your sector. We need employers just like you to contribute through:

- consultations on qualifications in your sector
- working alongside our development teams to write, review and scrutineer materials to be submitted for approval
- validating qualification and assessment materials to confirm they meet employer needs
- sharing letters of support for qualifications.

If you're interested in supporting, please get in touch via [jodiewade@ncfe.org.uk](mailto:jodiewade@ncfe.org.uk)

## Key links and further reading

- [Introduction to post-16 technical qualifications](#)
- [Guide to the post-16 qualifications landscape at Level 3 and below for 2025 and beyond](#)
- [Occupational Standard maps](#)
- [Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009](#)