

Post-16 qualifications boosted to help more people to progress

Thousands of qualifications are set to be transformed so that more people can gain the skills employers need and progress into work.

A consultation has been launched today seeking views on plans to reform post-16 qualifications at Level 2 and below so everyone has access to high-quality options that will lead to good outcomes whether that is going on to further study or into a job.

Qualifications will be streamlined and strengthened so that young people and adults have a clearer choice of options available to them and can be confident that they will set them on a path to a rewarding career.

Employers will play a key role by setting standards that will define the core knowledge, skills and behaviours expected for all technical qualifications at Level 2, so they deliver the skilled workforce businesses and the economy need to thrive.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special educational needs or disabilities, who are more likely to take these qualifications, will also benefit from higher-quality courses that provide the support they need to fulfil their potential, and help open the door to opportunities to progress.

Minister for Skills Alex Burghart said:

We are delivering qualifications designed with employers that give students the skills the economy needs. The consultation we are launching today is the next step in making that change a reality.

We are already rolling out T Levels and reviewing thousands of technical qualifications to make sure they are fit for purpose. We want to make sure all qualifications are high-quality and help people progress in life and work.

Thousands of young people and adults study for a Level 2, Level 1 and entry level qualification every year in subjects such as construction, healthcare and hair and beauty – often as a bridge to higher level study or to prepare them to enter the workplace.

The current qualifications landscape is confusing with around 8,000 qualifications available at these levels, many of which cover the same or similar subjects. For example, there are more than 650 building and construction qualifications at these levels, and nearly 560 in health and social care. This can make it difficult for people to identify the right qualifications that will help them to achieve their goals.

Both the [Wolf Review](#) and [Sainsbury Review of Technical Education](#) also underlined that many students entering the world of work lack the technical knowledge, transferable skills and behaviours required and expected by employers to perform successfully in occupations, despite holding a technical qualification. The plans announced today will ensure all qualifications meet a high bar before being approved for any public funding, and provide the skills employers and individuals need to get ahead.

David Hughes, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said:

Qualifications at Level 2 and below are vitally important for both young people and adults, so it is good that the DfE is reviewing how effectively they support people to progress in learning, in confidence, into work and as citizens.

Getting this level of learning right is doubly important because these qualifications also form the bedrock of all other higher levels of learning and need to encourage, enable and inspire learners to progress where they want to. We will be working with college leaders throughout the consultation to ensure their voice and that of teachers and students is heard.

Mark Reynolds, chief executive of Mace, said:

Demand for construction training remains largely concentrated on Level 1 and 2 qualifications. It is essential that these qualifications continue to be part of clear employer supported pathways that provide the knowledge, skills, and behaviours for learners to gain an apprenticeship or job in the construction industry.

The post-16 Level 2 and below review presents an opportunity to improve employment outcomes for learners who want to join construction. I'd encourage employers of all sizes to engage in the consultation process.

The move marks the next step in the government's transformation of technical education and the post-16 qualifications landscape, which has already seen action taken to streamline and boost the quality of the qualifications available at level 3 (A level equivalent) including rolling out new [T Levels](#), working with employers to boost apprenticeship opportunities and establishing 21 [Institutes of Technology](#) across the country.

As a first step towards streamlining the post-16 qualifications system, in [August 2021](#) the government confirmed that it would remove funding for more than 5,000 qualifications at Level 3 and below, including over 3,000 at Level 2 and below, that had no or low enrolments. Public funding for these qualifications will be removed later this year, making it easier for students to find a high-quality course.