



ACCESS: INSIDE KNOWLEDGE

**CHANGES TO LEVEL 3 QUALIFICATIONS AFTER THE
POST-16 REVIEW – WHAT WE KNOW NOW AND THE
IMPACT ON ENTRY TO HIGHER EDUCATION**



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Outcomes of DfE review of post-16 qualifications at Level 3

Students at 16 will have the option to follow either an academic route or a technical route.

Academic route

- Dominant qualifications will be A Levels
- Funding will also be retained for others qualifications where applied qualifications are taken alongside A Levels to help provide progression to 'high quality' Higher Education
- Core Maths, the Extended Project and the International Baccalaureate will continue to be funded in the academic route

Technical route

- Dominated by apprenticeships and T Levels
- Reforms will lead to the removal of funding of a large number of existing qualifications
- Reforms will be introduced on a phased basis

Next steps

- Qualifications in both routes will need to meet new criteria to be approved for funding
- Consultation on approval criteria to follow
- Proposals for post-16 qualifications at Level 2 and below are expected this year

Adult provision

Rules for the funding of adult provision will be introduced



Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England

Government consultation response

Qualifications that will be used in Admissions to University

Students at 16 will have the option to follow either an academic route or a technical route.

Academic route

- A Levels
- IB
- Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs), previously Applied General Qualifications.
- Core Maths and the Extended Project.

Technical route

- T Levels
- Other smaller technical qualifications may gain UCAS points.

Sizes

- In the majority of subject areas, these will be equivalent in size to an A level (360GLH).
- DfE rules stipulate that only one AAQ can be studied, alongside 2 A levels.

Subject areas that will be approved for funding as AAQs

Subjects

First teach of approved AAQs in September 2025, which will appear on UCAS application forms from 2027.

Applied/Medical Science

Engineering

Health & Social Care

IT/Computing

Subjects supporting progression to degrees in healthcare, dentistry and medicine.

These are all small, one A level sized (360 GLH) qualifications and smaller half an A level qualifications (150-180 GLH).

Subject areas that will be approved for funding as AAQs

Subjects

First teach of approved AAQs in September 2026 which will appear on UCAS application forms from 2028.

Uniformed protective services/policing

Art & Design

Performing, production and creative arts

Music performance, production and technology

Creative digital media production.

Digital games, film and video production.

Sport, exercise science and physical activity

Sporting excellence and performance

These are all small, one A level sized (360 GLH) qualifications but those in **yellow** are allowed bigger sized qualifications (2 and 3 A level equivalent) – allowed as there is no T Level in these subject areas.

Support for AAQ approval from HEPs

- In order to gain approval from the Department for Education, each qualification needs to have a letter of support from 6 HEPs.
- The DfE have been very specific in what they want included in the letters, including either of the following statement:

“We would recognise this qualification as meeting our subject entry requirements”

“We would accept this for entry onto our related courses”

HEPs may also wish to provide additional notes about how this qualification may be used in their admissions arrangements – one assumes this would be any specific requirement about grades and whether HEPs require specific A levels to be taken alongside an AAQ....sometimes a requirement for A level Maths and/or an A level science.

To demonstrate support for the qualification, please explain in detail how and why the content and learning aims of the qualification provide an appropriate foundation for students to progress onto HE courses in related subjects. [500 word limit]

Impact on HE admissions....discussion

- Significantly less students with large sized (Extended Diplomas) applying to HE.
- Students applying with T Levels (DS confirm numbers)
- From 2027, students that are applying to HE with an AAQ s will generally also have two A levels.

To date, 80% of Russell Group Universities have made offers to students with a Cambridge Technical qualification:

- We are already having discussions with individual HEIs about the redevelopment of our qualifications at subject level. We would welcome conversations with you.

Thank you

[Post-16 Level 3 qualifications reform – quick reference guide \(ocr.org.uk\)](https://ocr.org.uk)

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