# Frequently Asked Questions

## 1.0 Programmes Of Learning

For information on study programmes for 16-19 year olds please see page 14 of the [Guide to the post-16 qualifications landscape at level 3 and below for 2025 and beyond](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1128144/Guide_to_the_post-16_qualifications_landscape_at_level_3_and_below_for_2025_and_beyond.pdf). We will publish detailed information, advice and guidance in relation to 16-19 study programmes as we build towards 2025 when the reforms to the qualifications system take effect.

### 1.1 Will students be able to have a mixed study programme of two alternative academic qualifications (AAQs) and one A level?

* We would not expect that studying more than one AAQ would be the best route to progression for most students. However, we have also said that we will allow for exceptions. Therefore, taking two AAQs and one A level is not what we would expect for the majority of students.
* Students who want to progress to higher education will be able to choose a mixed study programme consisting of two A levels plus a small AAQ in a subject such as engineering or health and social care.

### 1.2 Will students be able to take a mixed programme of academic and technical qualifications?

* Yes. We would expect that an A level could be taken, for example, alongside a technical occupational entry qualification.
* However, we will develop specific rules that prevent 16-19 study programmes made up of two small AAQs and a small technical qualification. This is due to our evidence that suggests this type of mixed programme would not provide the best progression outcomes for students.

## 2.0 Qualification Size

For information on Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) regarding qualification size please see the relevant chapter from page 11 of the [Guide to the post-16 qualifications landscape at level 3 and below for 2025 and beyond](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1128144/Guide_to_the_post-16_qualifications_landscape_at_level_3_and_below_for_2025_and_beyond.pdf) and the [Qualifications funding approval manual: 2025 to 2026](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/qualifications-funding-approval-manual-2025-to-2026/qualification-type-funding-approval-criteria-alternative-academic-qualifications).

### 2.1 Will qualifications equivalent to an AS level in size be considered for funding approval as a small AAQ?

* Small AAQs can be between 150 and 420 guided learning hours.

### 2.2 Will you consider for funding medium sized quals that are between 420 and 720 GLH?

* We will not approve for funding AAQs that are between 420 and 720 GLH.
* For **technical** qualificationsthe main factor determining the appropriate size for each qualification is that qualifications align to as many outcomes within an [occupational standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/occupational-standards/) as is possible for a learner to achieve in a course of education and training.

### 2.3 Will there be any qualifications larger than 1080GLH?

* There are no large AAQs that are in scope for cycle 1. Large AAQs will be considered in cycle 2 the final criteria will be confirmed when we publish the 2026 to 2027 Qualification Funding Approval Manual in due course.
* We expect that large AAQs will have between 720 to 1080 GLH as this is the equivalent of 2-3 A levels?
* For **technical** qualificationsthe main factor determining the appropriate size for each qualification is that qualifications align to as many outcomes within an [occupational standard](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/occupational-standards/) as is possible for a learner to achieve in a course of education and training.

## 3.0 Nested Qualifications

Nested qualifications is a term used for a suite of qualifications where a smaller qualification is included within a larger qualification.

### 3.1 Can I develop nested qualifications in the same subject for alternative academic qualifications (AAQs)?

* We recognise that awarding organisations will be considering submitting qualifications of different sizes in the same subject – for example performing arts qualifications that are equivalent in size to one, two and three A levels. Where you are thinking of developing a suite of qualifications like this, please be aware that the qualifications will need to:
	+ Meet Ofqual qualification level conditions for AAQs
	+ Have a clear purpose and deliver meaningful outcomes as a standalone qualification. For example, each qualification in the suite will need to support entry to HE to be approved as an AAQ.
* Where providers are delivering nested qualifications, we would expect them to be ensuring that students choose the right qualification based on the student’s ability and what they want to achieve. We would not expect students to be repeating learning that they have already completed.

### 3.2 What about nested qualifications for technical qualifications?

* In the technical space, we do not expect a large degree of nesting to take place. Our requirements, in the main, are for qualifications to align to as many outcomes within an occupational standard as is possible for a learner to achieve in a course of education and training. We would therefore not look to approve any qualifications (for example, an award sized qualification) which did not align to as many outcomes as is possible within a standard.

## 4.0 Scope Of The Review

This process is for level 3 qualifications that are funded by DfE for post 16 students in England. There will be a similar process for level 2 and below. For exemptions to this review please see page 6 of the [Guide to the post-16 qualifications landscape at level 3 and below for 2025 and beyond](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1128144/Guide_to_the_post-16_qualifications_landscape_at_level_3_and_below_for_2025_and_beyond.pdf).

### 4.1 Will my qualification in (subject x) be eligible for funding?

* For lists of subjects please see the [Guide to the post-16 qualifications landscape at level 3 and below for 2025 and beyond](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1128144/Guide_to_the_post-16_qualifications_landscape_at_level_3_and_below_for_2025_and_beyond.pdf).
* Information on what [categories and standards are in scope for cycle 1](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/qualifications/post-16-technical-qualifications/standards-in-scope/), along with timelines are included in content published on IfATE’s website.

###  What will be the effect on full cost recovery qualifications?

* Qualifications that are delivered on a full cost recovery basis are not impacted by the review. This process applies only to qualifications which an awarding organisation wishes to be approved for public funding for post 16 learners in England.
* Awarding organisations can still develop and providers can still offer qualifications on a privately funded or a cost recovery basis.
* Regulation by Ofqual is not dependent on funding decisions and they will continue to regulate qualifications where they are within an awarding organisations scope of recognition and they appear on the Register of Regulated Qualifications.

## 5.0 Registration And Submission

If you are an awarding organisation and intend to submit a qualification for funding approval please register on our [website](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/qualifications-funding-approval-manual-2025-to-2026/registration-forms) now. This will allow us assist awarding organisations by providing tailored support to awarding organisations in areas that they intend to develop their qualifications.

### 5.1 Do qualifications in different categories need different submissions?

* Yes each unique qualification requires a separate entry at submission stage. This is also true of the Registration of Interest form.
* Information on key documentation to submit for each category can be found in the relevant [category criteria and guidance documents](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/qualifications/post-16-technical-qualifications/approvals-categories-and-associated-criteria-and-guidance/) and in the [Qualifications funding manual](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/qualifications-funding-approval-manual-2025-to-2026/alternative-academic-qualifications-funding-approval-process).

### 5.2 Are we committed to submit once registered or can we change?

* Awarding organisations are not bound to submit qualifications in the main submission window (3rd to 31st July 2023) that they have indicated in their registration of interest forms.

**5.3 Can you clarify what the requirement for the qualification to be within our scope of recognition means in this context?**

* For both alternative academic and technical occupation qualifications, awarding organisations must ensure that they are recognised by Ofqual to offer qualifications at level 3 in the associated sector subject area (SSA) for any qualification submitted.
* If a qualification is not within an awarding organisation’s scope of recognition it will not be considered for funding approval until the awarding organisation has expanded its scope of recognition to include level 3 qualifications in the relevant SSA.
* Technical Occupation Qualifications are to be based on occupational standards set by IfATE, but these have been mapped to the relevant SSA for funding purposes and details of this mapping can be found on the [single access point](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/awarding-organisations-submitting-qualifications-for-approval).
* As an awarding organisation you can check your current scope of recognition via the Portal or on the GOV.UK [scope of recognition](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/awarding-organisations-scope-of-recognition) page.

**5.4 Do awarding organisations need to submit sample assessment materials (SAMs) for each unit in each qualification, or can we send a sample of different types (e.g. an Exam Assessment and a Non Exam Assessment SAM)**

* SAMs are one way in which an awarding organisation can demonstrate the approach set out in its assessment strategy. Therefore, it is important that the SAMs submitted sufficiently demonstrate the awarding organisation's approach. Given the comprehensive nature of the assessment strategy, we would anticipate SAMs covering all assessments would be submitted for review.
* For **technical** qualifications SAMs must be no more than 2 years old and assess mapped knowledge, skills, and behaviours within the occupational standard(s). For qualifications with a single pathway, IfATE only requires one complete set of SAMs per qualification. Where a qualification contains multiple pathways, applicants are required to submit additional SAMs for each pathway.
* For alternative **academic** qualifications it is equally important that the SAMs submitted sufficiently demonstrate the awarding organisation’s approach to all assessments including, where relevant, any optional routes through the qualification.

## 6.0 Process For Submitting Qualifications After 2025

For current funding guidance please see the [Funding guidance for young people 2022 to 2023 rates and formula](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/funding-rates-and-formula/funding-guidance-for-young-people-2022-to-2023-rates-and-formula#scope-of-the-16-to-19-funding-model).

### 6.1 Will approved qualifications be reassessed in a couple of years?

* The current approval process is every year but we will be moving to a 3 year approval process from 2025. The aim of this is to give AOs and providers greater certainty and stability in terms of knowing that a qualification will have more time to establish itself in the publicly funded market.
* For technical qualifications further information can be found on [IfATE’s website](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/qualifications/post-16-technical-qualifications/requirements-for-qualifications-in-delivery/change-requests-for-level-3-technical-qualifications/).

### 6.2 Are there changes to the amounts of funding that qualifications will draw down? Where can I find information on the amounts of funding that will be available?

* For 16 to 19 funding is not attached to individual qualifications, but to the learner. Information on how 16 to 19 funding works can be found at [16 to 19 funding: how it works - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/16-to-19-funding-how-it-works)
* For adults, funding bands are attached to individual qualifications and information on what a qualification currently approved for funding can be found by searching [Find a Learning Aim](https://submit-learner-data.service.gov.uk/find-a-learning-aim/) at [Find a learning aim (submit-learner-data.service.gov.uk)](https://submit-learner-data.service.gov.uk/find-a-learning-aim/)
* The funding approach for adults is subject to change, details on the changes impacting the current ESFA funded Adult Education Budget from 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 can be found at [Further education adult skills funding rates and funding for innovative provision - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/further-education-adult-skills-funding-rates-and-funding-for-innovative-provision)
* It is important to point out, however, that funding rates are only applied once a qualification is approved for funding. Current funding rates may not be applicable to new or reformed qualifications approved for funding.

## 7.0 Assessments

Applicants **must** submit an assessment strategy and sample assessment materials which substantiate their approach to the assessment design, delivery and awarding of the qualification. Further information on assessment criteria can be found in the relevant [category criteria and guidance documents](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/qualifications/post-16-technical-qualifications/approvals-categories-and-associated-criteria-and-guidance/) published on IfATE's website.

**7.1 Is there a maximum assessment by exam requirement for alternative academic qualifications (AAQs)?**

* We do not specify a maximum proportion of assessment by examination. Awarding organisations should explain the approach they are proposing to take in their assessment strategy.

**7.2 Can the 40% assessment by examination be split over 2 years for the large AAQs or does it have to be one pass?**

* We do not specify that the 40% assessment by examination needs to be in a single assessment.
* Awarding organisations are required to provide up to two assessment series on set dates in each academic year during which learners can complete the assessment(s) by examination. It is for awarding organisations to determine how these assessments are structured and when they are available to be taken. Awarding organisations should explain their approach in their assessment strategy.

**7.3 Must AAQs contain 40% assessment by examination, or will judgements be made on evidence / validity dependent on content / subject etc.?**

* There is a requirement for at least 40% of the contribution to the overall qualification grade to be through assessment by examination.
* While many assessments by examination take the form of a written test, this is not a requirement. Some practical assessments or performance assessments may also meet this definition. Please see [Ofqual guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-academic-and-alternative-technical-qualifications-qualification-level-conditions-requirements-and-guidance) for more information.

**7.4 What expectations are there for synoptic assessment in AAQs?**

* Our [regulations for level 3 alternative academic qualifications](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/regulating-alternative-academic-and-alternative-technical-qualifications-at-level-3) set out a range of considerations in relation to assessment design, but do not mandate the inclusion of synoptic assessment.
* An awarding organisation’s explanation of assessment design in its assessment strategy might therefore include – as appropriate to the qualification purpose, subject domain, modes of assessment and content to be assessed – information and rationale regarding any proposed use of synoptic assessment.

## 8.0 Higher Education

### 8.1 How are you going to ensure that universities have confidence in new qualifications, so that young people don’t lose out on going to HE?

* We continue to engage with Higher Education Institutions to ensure that they understand the breadth and depth of T Levels, which carry UCAS points equivalent to 3 A levels.
* We have drawn on research about success indicators for students in higher education, alongside other studies, and mapped these against elements of the T Level specification to identify what skills T Level students gain that will support them in higher education.
* To be approved for funding, all academic qualifications will need to meet new criteria, ensuring they are necessary alongside A levels and will support progression to HE.
* We will set out further detail shortly about the tests to be applied for academic qualifications when we publish the approval criteria.