

First V Levels subjects revealed as part of landmark reforms

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First students to do V Levels from 2027 as part of ambitious reforms to post-16 system that will prepare them for future jobs.

Young people will be able to take the very first V Levels in education, finance, and digital in 2027, under landmark reforms to help young people secure well-paid jobs.

Too many young people have been held back by a system that didn't value every route to success. That's why the government has introduced V Levels, which offer transformational new qualifications - equivalent to an A level - with learning designed around real jobs and the skills employers actually need.

They are central to the Prime Minister's ambition to ensure two-thirds of young people are in a gold-standard apprenticeship, higher training or university by the age of 25, helping to close skills gaps, cut the number of young people not in education, employment or training, and drive economic growth as part of our national renewal.

Students who want to specialise in technical, sector-focused studies will also have more options, as T Levels - which combine study and real-world work experience - will be expanded to include subjects such as Sports, Fitness and Exercise Science, along with Care Services.

New qualifications will be introduced next year for 16-year-olds, providing a year of study before progressing to V Levels, T Levels or A levels, with initial subjects in Education and Early Years, and Digital. A separate two-year, employment-focused route will also be available for those aiming to move straight into work or an apprenticeship, starting in Catering and Hospitality, and Education and Early Years.

It comes as a new poll of over 1,120 parents of 14 to 18-year-olds show that a quarter (24%) don't feel confident that their child understands the options available beyond GCSEs and nearly half (45%) overwhelmingly prefer a mix of academic and work-based or technical training for their children after GCSEs to better prepare them for the future.

The government's landmark reforms to post-16 education will do exactly this - provide clearer options for young people, allowing them to mix and match academic and vocational subjects, and setting them up for the jobs of tomorrow.

Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson said:

Our bold reforms will end the snobbery in post-16 education, supporting young people with real choice and real opportunity to build secure, future-proof careers.

Not only that, but it will give parents much-needed confidence in a system that values every route to success - academic, technical or vocational - as we continuing driving forward our mission to ensure two-thirds of young people are in education, training or apprenticeships by 25.

The government's response to a consultation on the new qualifications announced in the transformative Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper has been published today.

It gives young people and providers information on which subjects areas the first set of new qualifications will be available in for the following new qualifications:

- V Levels which will sit alongside A Levels and T Levels, and will be equivalent to one A Level, allowing students to mix and match academic and vocational subjects if they are unsure where to specialise.
- The Further Study pathway, which provides a year of study to support students who want to go on to do V Levels, T Levels or A levels but aren't ready to progress beyond GCSE-equivalent study due to lower attainment. It will be supported by a new Foundation Certificate qualification.
- The Occupational pathway, which is a two-year programme to provide extra support to lower attainers while developing the skills to go into employment or an apprenticeship. It will be supported by a new Occupational Certificate qualification.

Further changes to T Levels will refine content and assessment, and allow providers more scope to tailor industry placements, to ensure that more young people can access them.

A consultation has also been launched on new qualifications that will be targeted at students with lower attainment in English or Maths as a stepping stone to better prepare them to resit their GCSEs the following year. This will support around a third of 16-year-olds who do not achieve a GCSE grade 4 or above in English and/or maths by the time they leave Year 11.

These reforms are backed by nearly £800 million extra for 16-19 education in 2026-27, with average per student funding increasing to £6,874 in the next academic year, from £6,762 in 2025/26.

Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, David Hughes, said:

I'm pleased to see this announcement today. For many years, we have had a lack of certainty and stability about the future qualification landscape which this package of measures addresses.

I am very optimistic that by working together and through co-design with college experts, we can make this work. The proposed complete framework for qualifications offers the prospect of a system which offers all young people the learning and training which excites and engages them and helps them progress into work and onto further learning and a system that is viable and deliverable for colleges and schools.

The simplicity of an agile, adaptable system with only V, A and T levels at level 3 and with a new set of level 2 qualifications is a good one. Now we need to work through the inevitable list of implementation and detailed issues that will require evidenced and grounded knowledge and understanding. I am confident that colleges will step in and help make this new system a success.

Chief Executive of the Sixth Form Colleges Association, Bill Watkin, said:

Our members will warmly welcome the government's decision to retain existing qualifications while the new suite of V level qualifications is phased in.

Colleges and schools can now make the most of this period of stability and certainty to ensure that tens of thousands of young people have an uninterrupted educational experience, while also engaging constructively and with focus in the design and rollout of V levels.

We are pleased that a third qualification pathway will sit alongside A levels and T levels in the future. The changes announced to T levels today are also very welcome and should make it easier for more young people to study a T level and for schools and colleges to offer them.

Chief Regulator at Ofqual, Sir Ian Bauckham, said:

All young people should have a post 16 pathway that is ambitious and prepares them for their future.

Ofqual will ensure that the new post 16 qualifications announced by the government are well designed and will be valued by students, schools and colleges, universities and employers.

They will provide high-quality pathways for young people making decisions about their futures.

Chief Exec of UUK, Vivienne Stern MBE, said:

There is no single route into university and students should feel confident that when they get there, their previous qualifications will equip them with the academic and practical skills needed to go on to enter and thrive in the workforce.

We look forward to working with the government to ensure V Levels open doors for young people.

Through our Future Jobs programme, universities across the UK are listening to business leaders to ensure their offering continues to deliver real opportunity and prepares young people for the jobs of tomorrow.

The consultation response also includes details for providers on how to move to a reformed system. There will be a phased, sustainable approach for providers to transition to the reformed system. Legacy Level 3 qualifications that are equivalent to the size of around two A Levels, including BTECs, or smaller will have funding approval removed where T Levels exist. V Levels will be introduced in those areas.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-v-levels-subjects-revealed-as-part-of-landmark-reforms>