

Government proposals to reform vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds in England

A consultation published by the Department for Education (DfE) on 7th March 2013



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Summary of the consultation

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What reforms does the consultation propose?

On 7th March 2013, the DfE published a consultation proposing reforms to vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds. The DfE is asking for views on their proposals to:

Performance tables

Change the:

- process and
- set of characteristics

by which level 3 vocational qualifications are judged for inclusion in 16-19 performance tables.



Categories for vocational qualifications

Introduce two separate categories of vocational qualification:

- 'Applied General' and
- 'Occupational'

in addition to academic qualifications.



Funding

Establish whether 19+ learners should be funded to take vocational qualifications that:

- meet the new characteristics but
- do not conform to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).



What is the proposed timeframe for implementation?

When will the new policies come into effect?

The DfE proposes that any policy announcements following this consultation will come into effect in full for the 16-19 performance tables from 2018.

What are the interim measures?

There will be interim criteria which existing qualifications will be required to meet during a 'Grace period' for the 2016 and 2017 performance tables. [Learn more.](#)

What about learners starting in September 2013?

This consultation does not impact 2015 performance tables, so learners starting a 2-year course in September 2013 will not be affected.

You can see more detailed timelines [here](#).



How can I contribute my view on the consultation proposals?

At this stage, the DfE is running a public consultation and none of these proposals has become policy.

The DfE is requesting feedback on the consultation by **10th May 2013**, and is due to announce its response in **June 2013**, at which point they will confirm any changes to policy.

You can:

- **view** the consultation document and **respond** directly to the DfE [here](#)
- **join the debate** and submit your views in the [Pearson Co-Creation Hub](#), where your opinions will help inform Pearson's response to the consultation.



Timelines for the consultation and the reforms

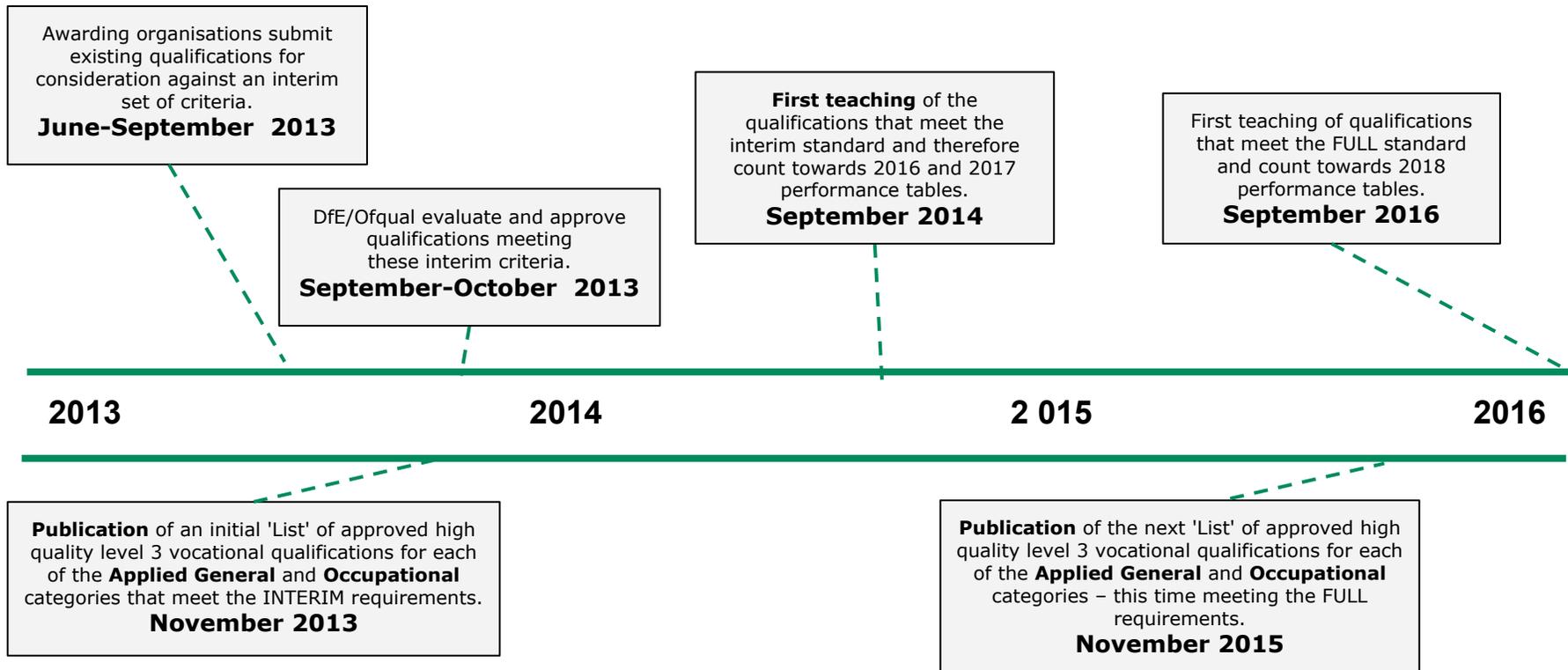
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What is the timeline for the consultation?



What is the proposed timeline for the reforms?

The DfE is proposing a similar process for these reforms as for the 14-16 high quality non-GCSE qualifications:



The DfE is proposing a **2 year transition - or 'Grace' - period** for implementing this set of reforms, similar to the 1 year 'Grace period' schools will be familiar with from the Key Stage 4 reforms. The DfE will identify existing qualifications which only partially meet the full set of characteristics as long as the awarding organisation has committed to redeveloping them to meet the full set of characteristics by 2016. The DfE will then publish a list of these qualifications which meet the 'interim standard' in November 2013. These qualifications will be eligible for performance tables in 2016 and 2017. [Learn more.](#)

Qualifications in scope

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What is the scope of the consultation?

This consultation is focusing on establishing criteria for 16-19 vocational qualifications that will count in performance tables in the future.



In Scope

- All level 3 Vocational qualifications



Out of scope

- A/AS Levels (including double and applied versions)
- International Baccalaureate (including standard/higher components)
- Pre-U Principal/short course
- AQA Baccalaureate Core
- All level 1 qualifications
- All level 2 qualifications

The DfE has confirmed that a separate consultation on 16-19 accountability measures will follow 'later in the year'.

How is the DfE defining 'Applied General' and 'Occupational' within the consultation?

Applied General

- Intended for **young people who wish to continue their general education** and learn in an applied way.
- **Combine theory and some practice** for a sector subject area, e.g.
 - manufacturing technologies
 - retailing and wholesaling
 - travel and tourism.
- **Do not directly prepare students for a specific occupation.**
- Intended to:
 - provide **broad progression opportunities**, and
 - are **often taken alongside A levels** where they may satisfy an entry requirement for HE institutions.

Occupational

- Intended for **young people who have a clear idea about an occupation they want to pursue** and are ready to specialise.
- **May prepare students for a specific job role** by confirming occupational competence.
- **Could form part of a related apprenticeship framework.**
- **May confer occupational competence** ('licence to practise') e.g. gas installation or veterinary nursing.
- **May offer exemption from professional exams** e.g: accountancy or engineering.
- **May support progression to a specialist degree or higher education** qualification that qualifies entry to an occupation eg: many health professionals.

Performance tables recognition

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What are the proposed criteria for inclusion in 16-19 performance tables?

Please refer to the full consultation document on the [DfE website](#) for more detail.

Applied General	Occupational
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Size – at least 150 GLH per year.• Grading – Pass/Fail not acceptable.• External assessment<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 'significant amount' required, but no further specification of what this amount should be.• Synoptic assessment• Appropriate content• Progression – specifically to further study.• Proven track record	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Size – at least 150 GLH per year.• Employer endorsement• Assessment<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ external assessment is not mandatory, nor is grading.○ Strong emphasis on employer involvement in assessment.• Progression – to employment or further study.

What does the 'interim standard' mean in the timeline?

The DfE is proposing a **2 year transition - or 'Grace' - period** for implementing this set of reforms, similar to the 1 year 'Grace period' schools will be familiar with from the Key Stage 4 reforms. The DfE will identify existing qualifications which only partially meet the full set of characteristics as long as the awarding organisation has committed to redeveloping them to meet the full set of characteristics by 2016. The DfE will then publish a list of these qualifications which meet the 'interim standard' in November 2013. These qualifications will be eligible for performance tables in 2016 and 2017.

Courses starting in:

There is **no impact** on courses starting from September 2013.

- **September 2013**
-

Courses starting in:

For **2-year courses starting September 2014 and September 2015**, it is proposed that:

- **September 2014**
- **September 2015**
- only those **'Applied General' qualifications which meet the size and content requirements**, and
- those **'Occupational' qualifications which meet the size and employer endorsement requirements**

referred to as the **'interim standard'** will be recognised in performance measures.

BTEC Nationals

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PEARSON

Which of the proposed new categories do the current BTEC Nationals fall into?



Which category do BTEC Nationals fall into?

The level of information supplied in the consultation is not sufficient to make any accurate assumptions about which category we should submit BTEC Nationals into under these proposed classifications.

When can you tell us more?

We will be working with Ofqual and the DfE during the consultation period to:

- **seek clarification** on the attributes of these classifications
- **understand the implications** of these proposals for our ongoing work on the redevelopment of the BTEC Nationals suite.

BTEC
NATIONAL

What are the implications of this for the current suite of BTEC Nationals?



Academic Year 2013-2014

September 2013-July 2014

At this stage, these are just proposals which the DfE is publishing as a consultation document and asking for feedback.

That means that there is no need to make any changes to your current BTEC Nationals provision.

There is no indication in these proposals of any requirement to make changes to your provision for September 2013.

Academic year 2014-2015

September 2014-July 2015

The government response to the consultation in June 2013 will confirm what will become policy in the future.

Should these proposals progress, we will let you know in **November 2013** which qualifications will count in the **2016 16-19 performance tables**.

At that stage, you can adjust your provision accordingly based on confirmed policy decisions.

We will be using the consultation period to understand how best to ensure continued provision for BTEC Nationals learners across all subjects throughout this reform period, and we will keep you in updated as soon as the final policy is decided.

2013

2014

2015

2016

Extensions

We are seeking extensions to our suites of BTEC National (QCF) qualifications from their current review dates (last registration dates) and working with Ofqual to confirm these new review dates. We will update them as soon as we have more news on this.

What are the implications of this for BTEC Nationals redevelopment?



Over the past year, we have started the process of understanding your needs - and sharing our initial ideas - for a new suite of level 3 BTEC Nationals.

As we finalise the design for our next generation BTEC Nationals, we will continue working closely with schools, colleges, employers and HE institutions to ensure we:

- **maintain the quality of progression opportunities**
- are best placed to **take full consideration of any new policy developments.**



We are currently planning to launch selected sectors for **first teaching in September 2015 (subject to Ofqual accreditation).**

We will keep you up to date on policy developments and our plans for next generation BTEC Nationals.

16-19 Study Programme

HE and UCAS

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How do these proposals relate to the 16-19 Study Programme?

The consultation document makes reference throughout to the Study Programme, and it is clear that the DfE has considered how these proposals will fit alongside Study Programmes.

We will be working with the DfE during the consultation period to seek clarification on the relationship between the Study Programmes and the proposed 16-19 vocational qualifications reforms.

How will this affect Study Programmes starting in September 2013?

Study Programmes have been through a full and thorough consultation process and are now a confirmed policy; the 16-19 vocational reforms are still in a consultation phase.

There is no indication in the consultation document that you need to make any changes at this stage to how you are implementing Study Programmes from September 2013.

What's the difference between the size required for the Study Programmes and for Performance Measures?

The consultation is proposing that a qualification must be at least 150 GLH in size to qualify for headline performance measures. The Study Programme stipulates a qualification 'of substantial size' - of at least 300 GLH - at the heart of the programme.

What about entry to HE Institutions and UCAS tariff points?

Do these proposals impact entry to HE institutions?

There is no indication that this consultation will have any impact on entry criteria to Higher Education (as defined by UCAS).

What is the relationship between 16-19 performance tables and UCAS tariff points?

There is **no** relationship between 16-19 performance tables and UCAS tariff points, and the DfE has no jurisdiction over the UCAS Tariff. The UCAS tariff system is also currently under review and we will keep you updated with any developments on this.



Post-19 learners and funding



What is the consultation proposing around post-19 funding of qualifications that meet the proposed new characteristics but are not on the Qualifications and Credit Framework? (1)

Section 4 of the consultation is devoted entirely to dealing with the support of learners who are over 19.

It acknowledges that the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) does not support synoptic, 'overall' assessment of the type that these reformed qualifications will be required to demonstrate.

This may mean that some new qualifications counting towards 16-19 performance tables will not fit the design criteria of the QCF, and would therefore not be eligible for funding from the Skills Funding Association (SFA) through the Entitlement under current rules.



What is the consultation proposing around post-19 funding of qualifications that meet the proposed new characteristics but are not on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)? (2)

The consultation proposes that **Occupational Qualifications** which count towards 16-19 performance tables should be approved for funding under the terms of the Adult Entitlement to Learning, whether or not they conform to the design principles of the QCF. This would however **exclude** qualifications which confer occupational competence ('licence to practise').

This is in line with the approach now taken at Key Stage 4 in schools.

The consultation is also seeking views on whether any **Applied General Qualifications** are likely to be suitable for funding.

We cannot confirm either way until the consultation has closed and the Government feeds back (scheduled for June 2013).

You have an opportunity to submit your views to the consultation on the [DfE website](#) before 10th May 2013.

Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland

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Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland



Only schools and colleges in England are affected by this consultation.

For more information on education policy in Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland contact:

- **Wales:**

- paul.montague@pearson.com (schools)
- jacqui.allen@pearson.com (colleges)
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- **Northern Ireland and Scotland:**

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