Department for Education

Technical awards for 14 to 16 year olds

2017 and 2018 performance tables: technical guidance for awarding organisations

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Summary

About this technical guidance

Technical Awards for 14-16 year olds, 2017 and 2018 performance tables: technical guidance for awarding organisations, describes the characteristics of Technical Awards, a new category of non-GCSE qualifications that will be recognised in the key stage 4 performance tables. It sets out the processes for awarding organisations to submit qualifications to the Department for Education (DfE) for approval as Technical Awards. These qualifications will be recognised in the 2017 performance tables (for teaching from September 2015) and 2018 performance tables (for teaching from September 2016).

Who is this technical guidance for?

This technical guidance is primarily for awarding organisations, but may also be of interest to anyone involved in the education of 14-16 year olds.

Key points

- Technical Awards are broad, high-quality level 1 and level 2 qualifications that equip students with applied knowledge and associated practical skills, not usually acquired through general education. They focus on the applied study of an industry sector or occupational area, or the acquisition of practical and technical skills. Technical Awards will fulfil entry requirements for both academic and vocational study post-16, alongside GCSEs. Qualifications that focus on a particular occupation and, as a result, could limit a 16 year old's progression opportunities, will not be approved as Technical Awards.
- Over the last three years, poor quality qualifications and those covering specialist vocational content that was inappropriate for 14-16 year olds, have been excluded from the list of non-GCSE qualifications recognised in the key stage 4 performance tables.
- DfE is now excluding from the list of qualifications included in key stage 4 performance tables, non-GCSE qualifications whose content is similar to those of English Baccalaureate (EBacc) subjects, namely maths, English, science (including computer science), geography, history and languages. At the same time, DfE is extending the scope of Technical Awards to include new qualifications covering the acquisition of practical and technical skills that will be valuable to most students, as a part of their general education. This document sets out the characteristic requirements for Technical Awards, a new category of high-quality, practical and technical qualifications offered alongside GCSEs.

- There is a separate process for approving level 2 and 3 vocational qualifications for 16-19 year olds. Please see *Vocational Qualifications for 16-19 year olds, 2017 and 2018 performance tables: technical guidance for awarding organisations*.

Foreword

A successful economy needs qualifications that are of a high quality, benefit the young people that take them and, most important of all, are valued by employers. We are reforming the education system to link it much more closely to the world of work and we have asked employers to tell us the qualifications they respect and find relevant. Sadly, in the past, too many qualifications have been offered that failed to teach the skills young people need to start their careers. Skills gaps have appeared in vital areas of the economy. This technical guidance takes important further steps to put this right.

In March we released 'Getting the Job Done: The Government's Reform Plan for Vocational Qualifications'. This set out the importance of high quality vocational qualifications in contributing to a vibrant and growing economy and an education and skills system that helps people to acquire new competences and abilities.

In issuing this technical guidance, I'm calling on awarding organisations to advance the progress made over the last two years in developing vocational qualifications that meet the high standards needed to make qualifications more rigorous and responsive.

The introduction of Technical Awards marks the final stage of reform for 14- to 16-year-olds at key stage 4. Developed in partnership with employers, they will inject rigour and depth into practical, technical and more skills-based qualifications. Technical Awards will give students the opportunity to develop a hands-on skill, whether or not they choose to pursue this as a career. These highly valued qualifications, equivalent to GCSEs, will give students the confidence of learning real-life practical skills, at the same time as they study reformed GCSEs in academic subjects. Many of the industries students will eventually join do not yet exist. Our reforms therefore provide a flexible combination of knowledge and practical skills that are essential in our growing economy.

We are also changing the rules so that every single young person has to keep studying maths and English to at least a grade C at GCSE. This means the wider education system will guarantee all a strong grasp of the basic skills that underpin all careers.

Students aged 16- to 19-years-old can now be confident that the qualifications they take are genuinely valued by employers, universities or both. Tech Levels and Applied General Qualifications offer an equally respected and rigorous alternative to A Levels. Substantial Vocational Qualifications at level 2 are also being introduced for 16- to 19-year-olds, for entry to a range of other trade or skilled occupations, and these will be offered nationally from September 2015. Meanwhile, more than 400 employers are helping to design new world-class Apprenticeship standards to meet the needs of modern business, while a new programme of Traineeships will deliver the skills needed to secure Apprenticeships.

Together these reforms provide young people with a broad range of options to secure a good job, a place at university, or an Apprenticeship.

Matthew Hancock

Minister for Enterprise and Skills

Section 1: Introduction

1. This technical guidance provides awarding organisations with the information they need to submit non-GCSE qualifications to be considered for approval as Technical Awards and recognised in the 2017 and 2018 key stage 4 performance tables. Awarding organisations should note that this is an annual process. Qualifications submitted to DfE will be assessed to ensure they meet the characteristic requirements of Technical Awards, set out in section 2 of this document. The process for submitting and approving qualifications is explained in section 3.

2. The list of Technical Awards that will be recognised in the key stage 4 performance tables in 2017 will be published on the gov.uk website in late autumn 2014. The list that will be recognised in the 2018 performance tables will be published on the gov.uk website in autumn 2015.

3. Wider reforms to vocational qualifications, GCSEs, performance tables and the qualifications eligible to be recognised in performance tables are explained below.

4. Awarding organisations should note that, since publication of the 2016 technical guidance, some changes have been made to the characteristic requirements. These are explained in section 2 of this document.

Background

5. In her 2011 review of vocational education, Professor Wolf found that 14-16 year olds were spending too much time studying poor quality and/or excessively large vocational qualifications at the expense of their general education.

6. Professor Wolf reported that, because many of these qualifications counted as equivalent to a number of GCSEs in performance tables, schools were effectively encouraged to steer students away from core academic study towards low-quality vocational qualifications, which failed to promote progression to further education or employment.

7. She recommended that vocational studies should be limited to 20% of a pupil's timetable; key stage 4 curricula should include practical as well as academic qualifications; and practical qualifications should meet the same overarching standards as academic ones.

Reform of vocational qualifications

8. In light of Professor Wolf's recommendations, DfE now ensures that all qualifications recognised in performance tables meet rigorous quality requirements. Those that are now recognised in the key stage 4 performance tables:

- are appropriate for study at 14-16;
- enable progression to a wide range of academic and vocational post-16 study options;
- meet requirements for external assessment;
- meet requirements for synoptic assessment;
- are graded;
- and, for those existing qualifications that have already been awarded to students, meet the additional requirement of track record in terms of the number of students completing the qualification.

9. All Technical Awards, regardless of size, will count as equivalent to no more than one GCSE in the key stage 4 performance tables.

10. The first stage of vocational education reform led to 96% of non-GCSE/IGSCE qualifications (taught from September 2012) no longer being recognised within the key stage 4 performance tables. Only 140 of the qualifications available to 14-16 year olds met the requirements to be recognised in the 2014 performance tables. Since September 2012, many of these qualifications have been redeveloped to include more rigorous assessment and grading and the number of non-GCSE qualifications recognised in key stage 4 performance tables has increased.

11. In March 2014, DfE confirmed the qualifications taught from September 2014 that will be recognised in the key stage 4 performance tables in 2016. The published list contains 186 qualifications, including new qualifications in engineering and construction that are backed by professional bodies. DfE also published the first lists of approved level 3 qualifications for 16-19 year olds that meet the Tech Level and Applied General qualifications requirements. These will be taught from September 2014.

12. Academic and vocational pathways for 14-19 year olds, following DfE's qualification and accountability reforms, are illustrated in Annex A. These reforms provide high status vocational pathways alongside the traditional A level route and will lead to employment, university or an Apprenticeship at age 18/19.

13. Schools and colleges remain free to offer any qualifications that have approval under section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act (2000) for teaching to pre-16 students, even if they are not recognised in key stage 4 performance tables. DfE publishes achievement data for all qualifications taken by 14-16 year olds on an annual basis.

14. This year, DfE has been more explicit about its high expectations for all vocational qualifications for 14-19 year olds. Awarding organisations are encouraged to exceed the minimum requirements (set out in section 2 of this document for 14-16 qualifications and in the parallel document for 16-19 qualifications) wherever such an approach would lead to higher quality qualifications.

15. As the purposes of key stage 4 and post-16 education are different, a level 2 qualification can only be considered for approval as either a Technical Award in key stage 4 performance tables or a Substantial Vocational Qualification at level 2 (see paragraph 21) in the school and college performance tables.

16. DfE also expects that, in future, qualification specifications should explain restrictions on re-sits. These restrictions should be appropriate and in line with reformed GCSEs wherever possible. This sends a strong message that Technical Awards are equally as robust as GCSEs.

17. In addition, all internal and external assessments must be suitably controlled to ensure that work submitted is authentic (i.e. prepared and produced by students independently without assistance from others and free of plagiarism) and assessed against clear and unambiguous criteria, setting out how levels of attainment will be differentiated.

Key stage 4: Technical Awards

18. Technical Awards are broad, high-quality level 1 and level 2 qualifications that equip students with applied knowledge and associated practical skills not usually acquired through general education. Technical Awards may focus on applied study of an industry sector or occupational group, or the acquisition of practical and technical skills. These qualifications will fulfil entry requirements for both academic and vocational study post-16, alongside GCSEs.

19. Qualifications that focus on a particular occupation and, as a result, could limit a 16 year old's progression opportunities, will not be approved as Technical Awards.

20. At key stage 4, students are encouraged to take five academic GCSEs from the list of EBacc subjects. Up to three Technical Awards will count towards Progress 8 and Attainment 8 performance measures in the schools performance tables (see paragraphs 25–28).

16-19: Level 2 and 3 vocational qualifications

21. At 16, students may choose to study via academic, vocational or combined routes. In addition to A levels qualifications, there are three vocational options at key stage 5:

- **Applied General qualifications** – these are rigorous advanced (level 3) qualifications that equip students with transferable knowledge and skills. They are for post-16 students wanting to continue their education through applied learning. They fulfil entry requirements for a range of higher education courses, either by meeting entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside and adding value to other qualifications at the same level.

- **Tech Levels** – these are rigorous level 3 qualifications, on a par with A levels and recognised by employers. They are for post-16 students wishing to specialise in a specific industry, occupation or occupational group[1]. They equip a student with specialist knowledge and skills, enabling entry to an Apprenticeship or other employment, or progression to a related higher education course. In some cases, these qualifications provide a 'licence to practise' or exemption from professional exams. Tech Levels are one of three components of the new Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc) performance table measure, which is being introduced for courses starting in September 2014 and reported in performance tables from 2016.
- **Substantial Vocational Qualifications at level 2** – these are rigorous, intermediate (level 2) qualifications for post-16 students wishing to specialise in a specific industry, occupation or occupational group[1]. They cover occupations where employers recognise entry at level 2 or where a level 2 qualification is required before students can progress to a Tech Level. They equip students with specialist knowledge and skills, enabling entry to employment, an Apprenticeship or progression to a Tech Level. In some cases, they provide a 'licence to practise' or exemption from professional exams.

Reform of GCSEs

22. The reform of GCSEs will ensure that students receive a standard of general education equal to that in the most successful school systems in the world. Their reform will create qualifications in which students, higher and further education institutions and employers can have the highest confidence. Technical Awards are distinct from GCSEs and will complement and supplement the academic offer. This will safeguard against duplication and ensure that all qualifications recognised in performance tables have genuine currency and recognition as valuable, distinctive and respected components of the secondary education curriculum.

23. The study of EBacc subjects at the age of 14-16 is best served through the teaching of reformed GCSEs. To avoid a proliferation of alternative qualifications in EBacc subjects (English, mathematics, sciences (including computer science), languages, history and geography), qualifications in these subjects, or applied versions of these subjects, will not be approved as Technical Awards.

[1] The term 'occupation and occupational group' refers to 4-digit and 3-digit Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) coding, where 4-digit SOC codes relate to specific job titles e.g. laboratory technician and 3-digit SOC codes relate to the host 'minor group' e.g. Science, Engineering and Production Technicians.

24. Although computer science qualifications will not be considered for approval as Technical Awards (see the GCSE specification for a detailed assessment), qualifications in information and communication technology (ICT) can be submitted for consideration and these may include underpinning knowledge of computer science.

Reform of key stage 4 reporting: performance tables

25. DfE has changed how qualifications are reported in performance tables because it is important that 14-16 year olds are encouraged to follow a broad and balanced programme of study. This will prioritise the development of core academic skills whilst encouraging the study of a limited number of other academic, applied or practical qualifications, that are also valuable for progression at 16.

26. Reforms to the secondary school accountability framework were announced and will come into effect for performance measures based on 2016 exam results. Further details of these reforms are available here.

27. In 2016, the headline measures of secondary education performance will be:

- progress across 8 subjects (called Progress 8);
- attainment across 8 subjects (called Attainment 8);
- the percentage of pupils achieving a C grade or better in both English and mathematics;
- the English Baccalaureate.

28. From 2016, the new Progress 8 and Attainment 8 performance measures will count up to three Technical Awards as part of the 'open group' of subjects. The other five slots are reserved for English, mathematics and other EBacc qualifications.

29. In the future, DfE will assign discount codes to Technical Awards in parallel with judgements about their inclusion in performance table lists. The proposed codes will be published at the same time as the approved list of Technical Awards. There will be an opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback before the codes are finalised.

Ofqual's new regulatory approach for vocational qualifications

30. Ofqual is changing the way it regulates vocational qualifications and has already started to discuss with awarding organisations its expectations for the design, development, assessment and delivery of all qualifications. This approach is learning relevant lessons from the reform of general qualifications. Ofqual will also set out its approach to improved regulatory scrutiny through the full life cycle of a qualification.

31. In assessing whether an awarding organisation's qualification is fit for purpose, Ofqual will, using a risk approach, collect evidence about the process of qualification development, including approaches for designing the content and assessment and the performance standards set. In addition, there will be increased focus on the expectation for awarding organisations to engage with the qualification's end users, to provide feedback on whether the purpose of the qualification has been met over time. This approach is strengthened by Ofqual's ability to provide guidance and implement sanctions when qualifications are not meeting expected standards.

32. Qualifications must be included on Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications to be considered for recognition in performance tables. The final decisions on which qualifications meet the requirements will continue to rest with DfE.

Section 2: Characteristics required of Technical Awards recognised in 2017 and 2018 performance tables

33. All qualifications at levels 1, 1/2 and 2 will need to demonstrate the required characteristics (set out in this section) to be approved as a Technical Award and recognised in the 2017 and/or 2018 performance tables.

34. DfE expects awarding organisations to demonstrate characteristics C – F in the qualification specification. Where a qualification contains a number of pathways or options, all possible combinations will be required to demonstrate all relevant characteristics.

35. Schools and colleges are responsible for supporting students' personal development and employability skills (or similar) through personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education and careers guidance provision. Standalone qualifications in PSHE subjects (or similar) will not be recognised in performance tables.

36. A qualification recognised in the 2016 performance tables list as a 'linked level 1' qualification can remain on the 2017 and 2018 lists only if the level 2 or level 1/2 qualification to which it is linked also remains on the list, and both qualifications are unchanged. New or redeveloped level 1 qualifications will only be recognised in performance table lists if they demonstrate all the required characteristics and are linked to an approved level 2 qualification in the subject in question. All level 1 qualifications will need to demonstrate the required characteristics to be recognised in the key stage 4 performance tables from 2019.

Characteristic	For 2017 performance tables	For 2018 performance tables
A. Declared purpose	X	X
B. Size (minimum 120 GLH)	X	X
C. Appropriate content	X	X
D. External assessment	X	X (rises to 40% for new submissions)
E. Synoptic assessment	X	X
F. Grading	X	X
Additional requirements after first awarding:		
G. Progression	X	X
H. Track record	X	X

Table 1: Characteristics required for approval for 2017 and 2018 performance tables.

37. All qualifications will need to demonstrate these characteristics:

A) declared purpose;

B) size;

C) appropriate content;

D) external assessment;

E) synoptic assessment;

F) grading.

38. Additional requirements that must be demonstrated within the first two years of a qualification being awarded (i.e. completion and certification of the qualification for a cohort of key stage 4 students):

G) progression;

H) track record.

39. All qualifications will be subject to periodic reviews of track record (for characteristic H). DfE will use its records of completion data for the track record requirement.

Characteristics that all qualifications must demonstrate

A. Declared purpose

40. Awarding organisations must be clear about the aims, objectives and intended purpose of their qualifications and provide a detailed Purpose Statement for each qualification. A clear Purpose Statement will help students make informed decisions about which qualification(s) to take.

41. Ofqual's regulatory requirements are broader than this and additionally include expectations that a qualification's objective is supported by the design of the qualification, including the content that it covers, the approaches to assessment used and the performance standard set. Regulation by Ofqual, focused across the whole qualification life cycle, provides assurance that a qualification is fit for purpose (i.e. valid) over time, and that action will be taken if it is not.

Requirement

42. This is a new requirement. It applies to all qualifications to be considered for recognition in the 2017 and 2018 performance tables, including those recognised for inclusion in the 2016 performance tables.

43. A Purpose Statement must accurately reflect and clearly explain the qualification's content and signal what the student will learn by studying the qualification, what skills will be developed and the value of the qualification for further study.

44. A Purpose Statement must explain why a student might choose a specific qualification especially if larger or smaller versions of the qualification are available or sector-related qualifications focus on different aspects of technology or processes. This will help students make an informed decision about which qualification is right for them.

Evidence sought

45. Awarding organisations must publish a Purpose Statement for each qualification on their website, alongside or as part of the qualification specification. This must clearly explain the purpose of a qualification, in terms that are meaningful and relevant to students and parents considering key stage 4 options.

46. Annex B provides a template for use when preparing and publishing Purpose Statements. It is not mandatory to use the template, but DfE recommends that awarding organisations do so, as it will make it easier for students and their parents to compare qualifications and make informed choices.

B. Size

47. All Technical Awards, regardless of size, will count as equivalent to no more than one GCSE in the key stage 4 performance tables.

Requirement

48. Technical Awards must be at least 120 Guided Learning Hours (GLH) in size. This is equivalent to the GLH value for a full GCSE qualification. Qualifications may be larger than this.

49. Ofqual will shortly be consulting on the definition and regulation of Guided Learning Hours (GLH). Until that time, DfE will continue to use the current GLH measure to confirm the size of a qualification.

Evidence sought

50. Awarding organisations should provide evidence to justify the proposed size of a qualification when submitting it to Ofqual for regulation.

51. DfE will judge this characteristic on the basis of the GLH value held in the Ofqual Register.

C. Appropriate content

52. Technical Awards are broad, high-quality qualifications in non-EBacc subjects that sit alongside GCSEs in the key stage 4 curriculum.

Requirement

53. Technical Awards must:

- only contain content directly related to the qualification's purpose as set out in the Purpose Statement, and have a clear rationale for the weighting of each topic covered;
- focus on an applied study of an industry sector, occupational area or cover the acquisition of practical and technical skills;
- offer breadth and depth of study, incorporating a significant core of knowledge and theoretical content with broad-ranging applicability, alongside opportunities for students to acquire and hone a small number of practical and technical skills.

54. Qualifications that focus on particular occupations or skills, have limited applicability, relate to a specific occupational context or may limit a 16 year old's progression opportunities, will not be approved as Technical Awards.

Evidence sought

55. Awarding organisations must demonstrate within the qualification specification and Purpose Statement that all qualification components meet this characteristic. The specification must describe how the content of the qualification meets the description provided in the Purpose Statement.

56. DfE will seek evidence that qualifications submitted for approval for recognition in performance table lists, do not have significant overlap with the content of GCSEs in EBacc subjects (English, mathematics, sciences (including computer science), languages, history and geography).

D. External assessment

57. Rigorous and appropriate assessment arrangements, including a significant proportion of the content of a qualification must be subject to external assessment, to offer a comparable level of challenge to GCSEs.

58. External assessment is a form of assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are specified by the awarding organisation, then taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marking or assessment judgements are made by the awarding organisation. It does not include moderation or verification of centre-based assessment undertaken by an awarding organisation.

59. External assessment need not be limited to paper or on-screen tests. It may include digital recordings of students, external examiners viewing and assessing artefacts made by students, assessed performance at an external assessment centre or other effective means made possible by developing technologies.

60. Internal assessment must be subject to appropriate controls by the awarding organisation, through external verification or moderation. External verification is the process by which an awarding organisation checks that the internal assessment processes, decisions and outcomes are valid and accurate. External moderation is the process by which assessment processes, decisions and outcomes are adjusted in order to maintain valid and consistent standards and outcomes. In both cases, awarding organisations may intervene to ensure that centres' assessment decisions are correct.

Requirement

61. This requirement applies to all new and redeveloped qualifications submitted for approval as Technical Awards for the 2017 or 2018 performance tables.

62. **To be recognised in the 2017 performance tables**, the proportion of the qualification's content that is externally assessed, and the associated contribution to the overall grade, must be at least 25%.

63. **To be recognised in the 2018 performance tables**, for all new and redeveloped qualifications, the proportion of the qualification's content that is externally assessed and the associated contribution to the overall grade, must be at least 40%.

64. To ensure that external assessment provides sufficient challenge, qualification specifications or associated assessment guidance must state that repeat submissions are not allowed. Students failing to reach the required standard or deemed to have underperformed must be given the option of one retake opportunity. The retake must be a new task or assignment different to the original assessment.

65. All assessments must be suitably controlled to ensure that work submitted is authentic (i.e. prepared and produced by students independently, without assistance from others and free of plagiarism) and assessed against clear and unambiguous criteria, setting out how levels of attainment will be differentiated.

66. In setting a minimum expectation, DfE expects awarding organisations to ensure their chosen methods of assessment are the most suitable and appropriate for their qualification. Where a greater proportion of external assessment is possible and represents the most robust approach, DfE expects qualifications to exceed these minimum requirements.

Evidence sought

67. The qualification specification must clearly explain the arrangements for both external and internal assessment, including the controls to be used. It must include information about the knowledge, skills and understanding that will be assessed, as well as details of the arrangements for these assessments. It must clearly set out the percentage of the qualification's content that is subject to external assessment. This is particularly important for linear or non-modular qualifications.

E. Synoptic assessment

68. Qualifications must include synoptic content that will help a student to develop appreciation and understanding of the connections between the different elements of a body of knowledge and skills. Associated synoptic assessment must require the student to identify and use an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories and knowledge from across the course content effectively and in an integrated way.

Requirement

69. In consultation with awarding organisations, the following definition for synoptic assessment has been agreed:

> *"A form of assessment which requires a candidate to demonstrate that s/he can identify and use effectively, in an integrated way, an appropriate selection of skills, techniques, concepts, theories, and knowledge from across the whole vocational area, which are relevant to a key task."*

70. DfE has not set a minimum contribution that synoptic assessment must provide to the final grade. It must be of sufficient size to meaningfully cover the full range of the qualification's content. Synoptic assessment does not necessarily have to involve external assessment.

Evidence sought

71. Awarding organisations will need to demonstrate in the specification how the qualification meets the agreed definition and includes a significant amount of synoptic content and assessment. This is particularly important for qualifications that do not have an explicit synoptic assessment or where synoptic assessment is deemed to be present in a wide range of assessments. Awarding organisations may decide on the most appropriate format for incorporating this information into the specification, but it must be sufficiently detailed for a judgement to be made.

F. Grading

72. The grading of qualifications is important for student motivation, to provide challenge, distinguish between levels of student achievement and encourage excellence, whilst ensuring sufficient rigour in the assessment of the qualification.

Requirement

73. Technical Awards must have a distinction, merit, pass, fail structure or a more detailed grading scale.

74. Grading must apply to the overall qualification and reflect a student's attainment across the qualification's content.

Evidence sought

75. The approach to grading must be available in the qualification specification. It must explain how final grades are derived from assessments, particularly where not all individual units or assessments are graded.

Additional evidence requirements (required within the first two years of a qualification being awarded)

76. Within the first two years of awarding to students completing key stage 4, qualifications need to demonstrate characteristics G (progression) and H (track record). This does not apply to linked level 1 qualifications that are eligible to remain on the 2017 and/or 2018 lists.

77. All qualifications will be subject to periodic reviews for the progression and track record characteristics.

G. Progression

78. Professor Wolf's report recommended that young people should not specialise too early and pre-16 students should take qualifications that provide the foundation for them to progress to a broad range of academic and vocational qualifications post-16.

79. Technical Awards must be recognised and valued by post-16 education and training providers as beneficial to students' general education at key stage 4 alongside GCSEs.

Requirement

80. **To be recognised in the 2017 performance tables**, qualifications first awarded to students completing key stage 4 in 2013 (or earlier, if the progression requirement has not already been met), must demonstrate that they are accepted alongside GCSEs as entry requirements for a range of post-16 options.

81. **To be recognised in the 2018 performance tables**, qualifications first awarded to students completing key stage 4 in 2014 (or earlier, if the progression requirement has not already been met), must demonstrate that they are accepted alongside GCSEs as entry requirements for a range of post-16 options.

Evidence sought

82. Awarding organisations must provide formal evidence that post-16 providers accept qualifications as an integral and equally regarded part of a student's wider suite of qualifications. Providers must consider Technical Awards equally and alongside GCSEs as fulfilling the entry requirements for a range of courses.

83. Awarding organisations are required to provide formal, fit for purpose evidence from at least five post-16 providers. The evidence must clearly show the full title and qualification number (QN) of the qualification under consideration, as well as the full name and job title of the individual, and name and contact details of the organisation supplying the evidence. The person providing the evidence must be in a position to give assurances on entry requirements to a range of courses e.g. head of sixth form, head of admissions etc.

84. The evidence must clearly state that the provider will accept the qualification as enabling entry to the institution, for a range of both academic and vocational post-16 options and they will consider it equally alongside GCSEs for entry to post-16 courses, (for example, a Technical Award might count as part of a sixth-form college's requirements for students to have five GCSEs at A*-C).

H. Track record

85. Low take-up demonstrates that young people, schools and colleges do not, in general, see the qualification as worthwhile, valuable and/or appropriate for key stage 4 students.

Requirement

86. **To be recognised in the 2017 performance tables**, qualifications first awarded to students completing key stage 4 in 2013 (or earlier, if the track record requirement has not already been met), must demonstrate that they have been awarded to at least 100 key stage 4 students in the same year group and in five or more schools or colleges in England.

87. **To be recognised in the 2018 performance tables**, qualifications first awarded to students completing key stage 4 in 2014 (or earlier, if the track record requirement has not already been met), must demonstrate that they have been awarded to at least 100 key stage 4 students in the same year group and in five or more schools or colleges in England.

Evidence sought

88. All qualifications will be subject to periodic reviews of track record. DfE will use records of completion data to assess compliance with the track record requirement. Awarding organisations may opt to provide completion data for a qualification, but this is not essential. DfE's data will be used to make the final judgement.

Section 3: Process for approval

89. This section provides information on the process for the submission of qualifications for approval as Technical Awards, including:

- entry routes into the 2017 performance tables;
- entry routes into the 2018 performance tables;
- evidence required for all qualifications submitted;
- evidence requirements for qualifications submitted for recognition in 2017 performance tables;
- evidence requirements for qualifications submitted for recognition in 2018 performance tables;
- key dates and further information.

Entry routes into the 2017 performance tables

90. Qualifications eligible to be included in the 2017 performance tables list must be available to students starting key stage 4 in September 2015. They will fall into one of the following categories:

- Category A: Level 1, 1/2 and 2 qualifications included in the 2016 performance tables list that have not been amended. Evidence of the Declared Purpose characteristic will be required for all qualifications. See paragraph 99.

  NB Any qualification that will no longer be available to students starting key stage 4 in September 2015 (including Principal Learning qualifications) will not be recognised in the 2017 performance tables. Awarding organisations must notify DfE of any change to the status of any such qualifications by 12 September 2014.

- Category B: New or redeveloped qualifications that are regulated by Ofqual. See paragraph 100.

NB New or redeveloped level 1 qualifications will only be recognised in performance tables if they demonstrate all the required characteristics and are linked to level 2 qualification which is also approved. Those linked to a level 2 or level 1/2 qualification that has been changed, will fall into Category B.

91. DfE will consider Ofqual regulated qualifications if the appropriate forms and additional evidence are submitted by 12 September 2014. Submissions made after this point will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Entry routes into the 2018 performance tables

92. Qualifications eligible to be included on the 2018 performance tables list must be available to students starting key stage 4 in September 2016. They will fall into one of the following categories:

- Category A: Level 1, 1/2 and 2 qualifications included in the 2017 performance tables list that have not been amended. See paragraph 101.

  NB Any qualification that will no longer be available to students starting key stage 4 in September 2016 will not be recognised in the 2018 performance tables. Awarding organisations will need to notify DfE of any change to the status of any such qualifications.

- Category B: New or redeveloped qualifications that are regulated by Ofqual. See paragraph 102.

  NB New or redeveloped level 1 qualifications will only be recognised in the performance tables if they demonstrate all the required characteristics and are linked to a level 2 qualification which is also approved. Those linked to a level 2 or level 1/2 qualification that has been changed will fall into Category B.

93. DfE will consider Ofqual regulated qualifications if the appropriate forms and additional evidence are submitted by the deadline for submissions. Submissions made after this point will only be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Evidence requirements for all qualifications submitted for performance tables

94. The evidence required and the process for submission will be determined by the category of the qualification (see paragraphs 90 and 92). Awarding organisations must submit the relevant forms for each qualification to be considered for recognition in the performance tables, irrespective of its category. The form must explain where the evidence of each required characteristic can be found.

95. Where an awarding organisation's evidence is in the qualification specification or other published document, reference will need to be made to the specific location (i.e. page number and/or numbered section). New or redeveloped qualifications must be on Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications by the time they are submitted to DfE for consideration, and all qualifications must have section 96 approval for teaching to pre-16 students.

96. Qualifications will need to demonstrate the relevant characteristics described in section 2 in order to be considered for recognition in the 2017 and/or 2018 key stage 4 performance tables.

97. All qualifications will be subject to periodic reviews of the progression and track record characteristics. Evidence of track record is held by DfE and this will be used to make the final judgement of characteristic H, if relevant.

98. DfE's approval process for Technical Awards is set out in Annex C.

Evidence requirements for qualifications submitted for 2017 performance tables

99. Qualifications included in the 2016 performance tables list that have not been amended:

- Awarding organisations will need to submit the relevant form and publish a Purpose Statement to demonstrate characteristic A.
- No evidence is required for characteristics B – F.
- For qualifications (with the exception of linked level 1 qualifications eligible to remain on the list) awarded in August 2013 (or earlier) to students completing key stage 4, evidence is required for characteristic G (progression).

100. New or redeveloped qualifications:

- Awarding organisations will need to submit the relevant form with evidence that the qualification demonstrates characteristics A and C – F.
- For regulated qualifications that have been awarded in August 2013 (or earlier) to students completing key stage 4, evidence is required for characteristic G (progression).

Evidence requirements for qualifications submitted for 2018 performance tables

101. Qualifications included in the 2017 performance tables list that have not been amended:

- The relevant form must be submitted confirming that the awarding organisation wishes the qualification to be recognised in the performance tables.
- No evidence is required for characteristics A – F.
- For qualifications awarded in August 2014 to students at the end of their key stage 4 studies (with the exception of linked level 1 qualifications eligible to remain on the list), evidence is required for characteristic G (progression).

102. New or redeveloped qualifications:

- Awarding organisations will need to submit the relevant form with evidence that the qualification demonstrates characteristics A and C – F.
- For regulated qualifications that have not been recognised in previous year's performance tables lists, but have been awarded in August 2014 (or earlier) to students completing key stage 4, evidence is required for characteristic G (progression).

Key dates for 2017 performance tables

Stage	2017 processes
Forms and submission details made available to awarding organisations	June 2014
Process opens for awarding organisations to submit qualifications for judgement	June 2014
For qualifications included on the 2016 list that have not been amended, deadline for awarding organisations to submit forms to DfE	25 July 2014
Deadline for new or amended qualifications to be on Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications	12 September 2014
Deadline for all regulated qualifications to be submitted to DfE	12 September 2014
Publication of the list of qualifications included in the 2017 performance tables	November 2014
Deadline for awarding organisations to request a review of decisions about qualifications not approved	December 2014
Amendments to the list of qualifications following the review process	January 2015

Table 2: Key dates for the 2017 performance tables process

The 2018 process will follow the same pattern as the 2017 process, but may be brought forward so that the submissions deadline falls in the summer of 2015.

Dates will be confirmed in due course.

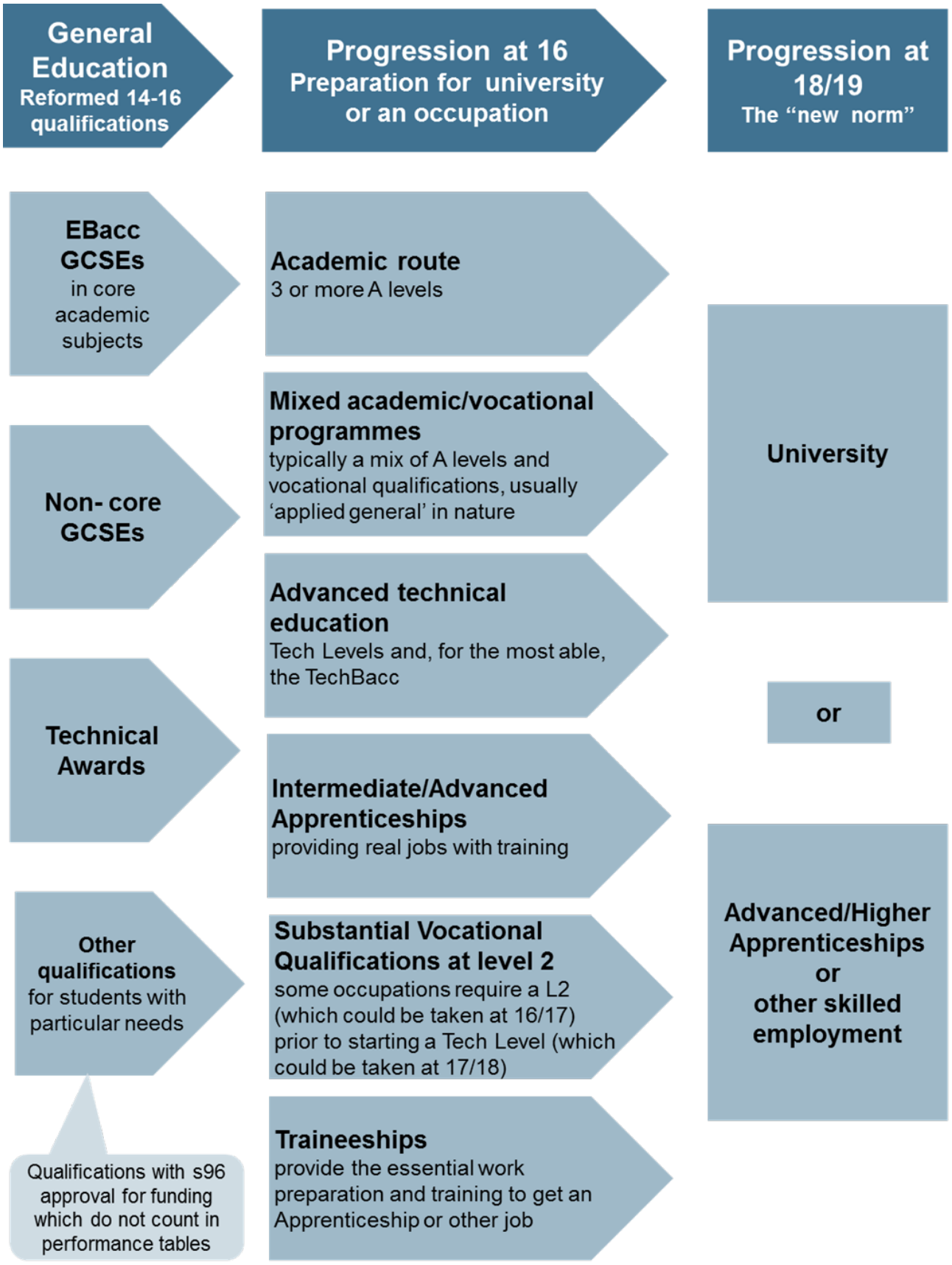
Further information

DfE will make operational details, including forms and submission addresses, available to awarding organisations when the process opens in June 2014 (for 2017 performance tables list) and spring 2015 (for 2018 performance tables list).

Awarding organisations will be notified of the outcomes for their qualifications in advance of publication of the performance tables lists.

Awarding organisations will have the opportunity to request reviews of decisions if they disagree with the assessments of the evidence submitted. Evidence will be considered a second time by an independent reviewer who was not involved in the original assessment.

Annex A: 14-19 Academic and Vocational Pathways



Annex B: Purpose Statement template

Awarding organisations must provide the information requested below for the declared purpose (characteristic A). This template can be used for Purpose Statements, although it is not mandatory. Awarding organisations can devise their own if they wish to provide the information in a different format. All Purpose Statements must be provided in plain English to ensure the information will be understood by students considering their key stage 4 options.

Awarding Organisation Name and Logo:

Title of Regulated Qualification: (including level and qualification number (QN)).

OVERVIEW

- Who is this qualification for?

Who might be interested in taking this course?

- What will the student study as part of this qualification?

Please describe, in summary terms, the key topics the student will study.

- What knowledge and skills will the student develop as part of this qualification and how might these be of use and value in further studies?

Please give details of the knowledge, practical and technical skills that the student will develop by completing this course and how they might be of value to further studies?

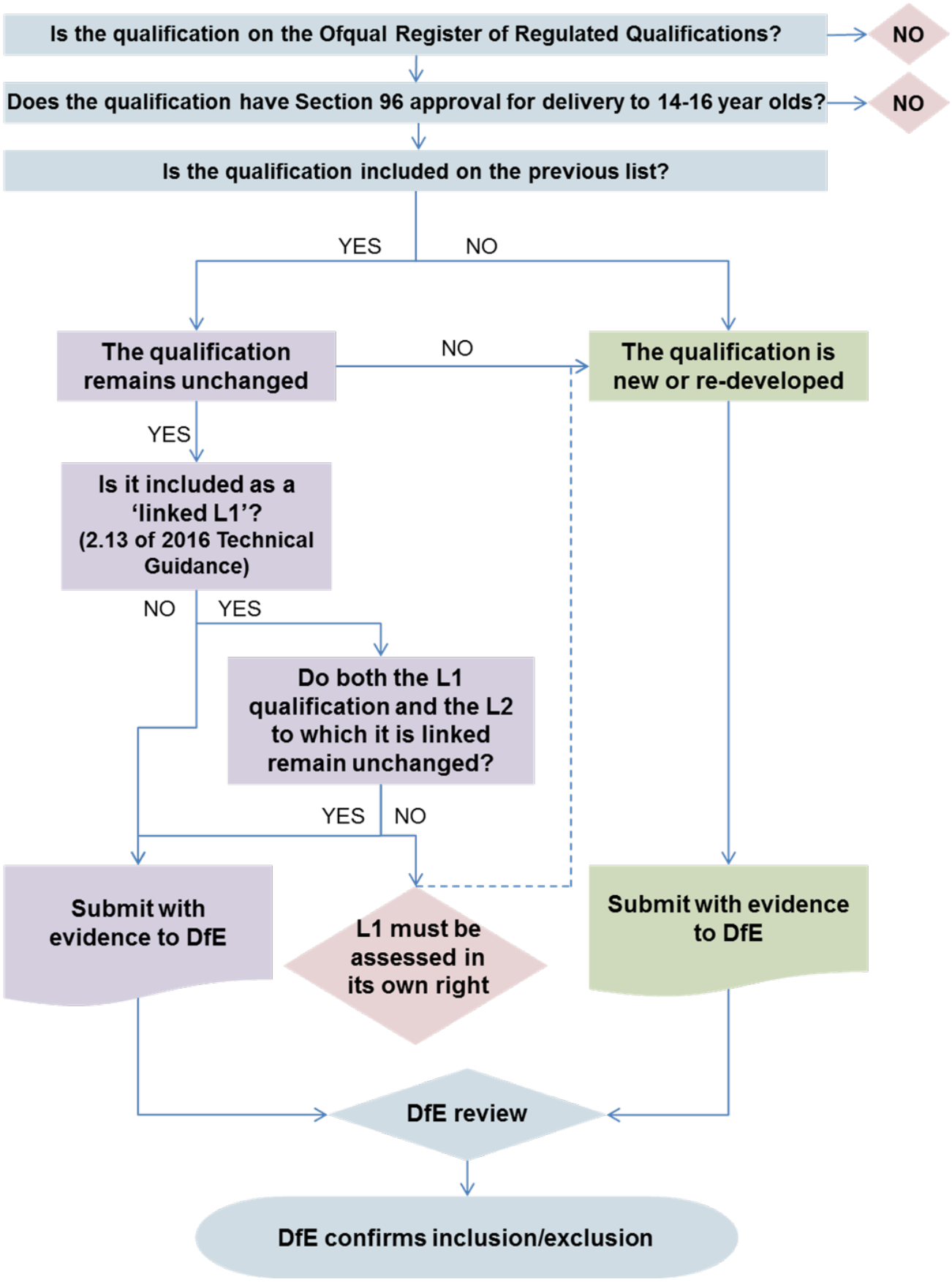
- Which subjects will complement this course?

Please give details of other subjects, both Technical Awards and GCSEs, which this course will supplement or that complement this qualification.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Please provide a hyperlink to further information on the qualification.

Annex C: Process for submission of qualifications for performance tables



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