

Government Launches Transition to Reformed 16–19 Qualifications Landscape

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The UK Government has set out plans for a major overhaul of the 16–19 vocational qualifications system, describing the reforms as a “once-in-a-generation” change aimed at simplifying pathways and improving skills outcomes for young people.

Under the proposals, the new qualifications landscape will focus on creating clearer routes for students choosing between academic, technical and vocational education, as part of wider reforms outlined in the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper. The Government says the changes are intended to help meet growing labour market demand, with nearly 900,000 additional skilled workers expected to be needed in priority sectors by 2030.

For manufacturers, the reforms could have significant implications for the future talent pipeline. A simplified technical education system and clearer progression routes could help address longstanding skills shortages in advanced manufacturing, engineering and digital roles. However, the transition period will require education providers to adjust course offerings and delivery models as existing qualifications are phased out and replaced.

The Government says the reforms aim to ensure more young people move into higher-level learning by the age of 25, whether through academic study, technical routes such as T Levels, or other vocational qualifications.

Rt Hon. Robert Halfon, Executive Director, [Make UK](#), said: “Make UK has welcomed the Government’s efforts to achieve parity of esteem between technical, vocational and academic education routes for young people over recent months. Today’s commitment to introducing new V Levels and reformed level 2

qualifications will be welcomed by manufacturers as a statement of intent in supporting businesses to develop the next generation of talent and addressing the NEETs crisis.

“Effective implementation of the changes will rely on close collaboration with industry. Working with businesses on curriculum design, support for industry placements and effective communication will all be critical to ensuring new courses in engineering and manufacturing for 2028. It is crucial that no funding is withdrawn for existing qualifications until after this date.

“As engineering and manufacturing apprenticeship starts continue to dwindle, and more than 50,000 vacancies for skilled jobs across an ageing workforce remain unfilled, the right solutions for investment in young people are now needed more than ever. We look forward to working with the Government on behalf of industry to make sure these reforms give employers the skills they need, and young people routes into the secure, well-paid jobs that manufacturing provides.”