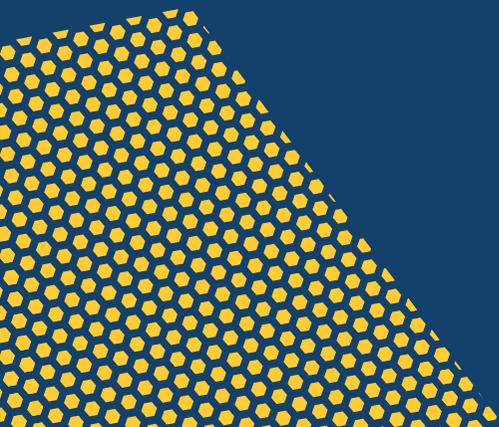




Training  
Qualifications UK

Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs)

# Quick Reference Guide



## Overview

In light of the review conducted on qualifications for students aged 16 and above, the Department for Education (DfE) has confirmed its objective to establish a streamlined qualifications system.

This guide has been created to provide you with a summary of the current information available and its implications for your post-16 level 3 vocational curriculum. Additional comprehensive details can be found on our website. Rest assured, we will keep you updated as we learn more about these changes and continue to provide the necessary resources to support you.

### What are AAQs?

AAQs are a new kind of qualification designed to help learners move into higher education with a greater sense of clarity and purpose. Alternative Academic Qualifications are scholarly in nature and designed to support progression to further and higher education. So if learners want to head to university, this is the route for them.

AAQs come in two different sizes:

Small AAQs can feature between 150 and 420 Guided Learning Hours (GLH). Our small AAQs have been designed to be studied alongside A levels in a mixed study programme, and have 360GLHs (equivalent to an A level).

Large AAQs can have either 720 or 1080GLHs and are designed to be studied on their own (1080GLH only) or alongside one A level (720GLH only).



## Timescales for development

### Cycle 1 – First Teach 2025 to 2026

For 2025 to 2026, the DfE has approved some small AAQs for first teach from September 2025.

For 2026 to 2027, the DfE will allow further small AAQs to be added to this list for first teaching from September 2026. Additional AAQs approved will be confirmed in September 2025, for first teaching from September 2026.

This includes the following subject areas, typically where they are less well served by A Levels and T Levels:



- Applied Science, Medical Science
- Engineering and engineering principles / technology
- Health and social care
- Information technology, Computing
- Subjects which support progression to degrees in healthcare professions allied to medicine, dentistry, and nursing

### Cycle 2 – **On hold**

For Cycle 2, which included small and large AAQs in the following subject areas, are now on hold and being reviewed as part of the 'Curriculum and Assessment Review', where outcomes are expected to be confirmed in late 2025.



#### Small AAQs:

- Uniformed Protective Services, Policing
- British sign language studies
- Art, craft and design, Sound engineering, Animation and visual arts
- Creative digital media production, Digital games, film and video production
- Sport, exercise science, and physical activity, Sporting excellence and performance
- Performing, production, and creative arts, Music performance, production and technology, Qualifications for music practitioners/the creative music industry

#### Large AAQs

- Sport, Sport and exercise science, Sport and Physical or outdoor activity
- Art and design, Art, design and media or communication, Fine and applied art
- Performing arts, production arts, Music technology, Music performance and production

## Next steps for TQUK

At TQUK, we recognise that every student is unique, and our aim is to ensure that all students receive the education they deserve and can achieve their aspirations. We will be submitting AAQs for approval in the academic route in March 2025. The outcomes for these qualifications, scheduled to be first taught in September 2026, will be known by September 2025.

Once approved, in September 2026, TQUK will be offering Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) in:

 Cycle 2		
 Subject	 Size	 First Teach
Engineering	Small	Sept 2026
Health & Social Care		
IT and Computing		
Sport and Exercise Science		