Department for Education

Technical qualifications for 14- to 16-year olds

2023 key stage 4 performance tables

Technical guidance for awarding organisations

February 2020

Contents

Summary

1. This publication sets out the requirements for qualifications submitted to the Department for Education for consideration as Technical Awards for inclusion in the key stage 4 performance tables[1] from 2023.

Expiry or review date

2. This guidance will be reviewed before July 2021.

For whom is this technical guidance intended?

3. This technical guidance is primarily for awarding organisations but will also be of interest to anyone involved in the education of 14 to 16 year olds. It should be read in conjunction with Ofqual's Qualification Level Conditions (QLCs), requirements and guidance on regulating the qualifications listed on key stage 4 performance tables[2] (referred to in the rest of this guidance as QLCs).

Main points

4. The Department is introducing a revised approval process for key stage 4 technical qualifications that awarding organisations would like considered for inclusion in 2023 performance tables. Only those technical qualifications that meet stretching requirements (as outlined in this technical guidance and in Ofqual's QLCs), have been reviewed by Ofqual and have been approved by the Department will be recognised in the 2023 key stage 4 performance tables[3] alongside academic qualifications.

5. After approval by the Department for inclusion in key stage 4 performance tables, these qualifications will then become subject to Ofqual's QLCs. In this way Ofqual will be able to monitor compliance and quality on an ongoing basis and use its powers where necessary to address concerns.

6. In exceptional circumstances, Ministers may decide to approve qualifications for performance tables where Ofqual has advised that the qualifications might not meet its rules on an ongoing basis. This might be the case if, for example, there

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[1] Different rules apply to other qualifications included in key stage 4 performance tables, including GCSEs, AS levels and graded music exams.

[2] [Insert URL once available]

[3] The lists of qualifications approved for inclusion in the current key stage 4 performance tables are available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/key-stage-4-qualifications-discount-codes-and-point-scores

would otherwise be a detrimental impact on the range of qualifications available to pupils at key stage 4. The final decision on which qualifications should be included in performance tables lies with the Secretary of State for Education.

Section 1: Introduction

Background

7. The Wolf review of Vocational Education[4] (which reported in March 2011) considered vocational education for 14 to 19 year olds. In response to the Wolf Report, the Government announced a number of reforms including that only those technical and vocational qualifications that are most valuable for young people – in terms of their content, assessment and progression – would be recognised in performance tables.

8. From 2014 the Department ran an annual process of assessing qualifications put forward for inclusion in school and college performance tables at key stage 4 and key stage 5. Just over 500 qualifications are approved for inclusion in the 2021 tables, of which 74 are approved for the key stage 4 performance tables. This review process was suspended in 2018 after the publication of the qualifications approved for 2020 performance tables, pending the outcome of the review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below[5].

9. Ministers are now lifting the performance tables moratorium for key stage 4 qualifications with effect from 2023. The performance tables moratorium for qualifications for 16 to 18 year olds will remain in place, however, while the post-16 qualifications review is taking place.

10. This technical guidance provides awarding organisations with the information they need to submit qualifications for approval for inclusion in the 2023 key stage 4 performance tables[6] (which will be taught in schools and colleges from September 2021). It should be read in conjunction with Ofqual's QLCs[7].

11. The list of qualifications that will be included in the 2023 key stage 4 performance tables will be published on GOV.UK in early 2021. Until the list is finalised, schools and colleges are advised to exercise caution in making changes to their curriculum in anticipation of a particular qualification being approved.

12. There may be pupils for whom qualifications that are not included in the performance tables are appropriate. Where it is in a pupil's best interest, schools and colleges may choose to teach qualifications that are on ESFA's list of

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[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/review-of-vocational-education-the-wolf-report
[5] https://consult.education.gov.uk/post-16-qualifications-review-team/post-16-level-3-and-below-qualifications-review/
[6] The final 2023 school and college performance tables will be published in early 2024 on GOV.UK.
[7] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/awarding-organisations-understanding-our-regulatory-requirements#the-ofqual-handbook---rules-and-guidance-for-qualifications

qualifications approved for funding 14 to 16[8] but not on the list of qualifications approved for inclusion in performance tables.

Changes to the arrangements for submitting qualifications

13. The headline characteristics against which qualifications will be assessed for inclusion in performance tables (set out in paragraphs 44 to 89 below) are broadly the same as those published in the Department's technical guidance for qualifications to be reported in performance tables for previous years. The Department's policy intention of assuring the quality of qualifications included in performance tables remains the same.

14. However, awarding organisations should note that some requirements in this technical guidance have been clarified, expanded and strengthened in the light of Ofqual's QLCs. These changes and the policy intentions behind these changes are set out in this document.

15. In a change from the process in previous years, when considering whether to approve a qualification for inclusion in performance tables, the Department will take into account Ofqual's advice on whether the qualification will be likely to meet the requirements of its regulatory framework for Technical Awards on an ongoing basis. The Department will also undertake a review of whether the qualification meets the characteristics that are not embodied in Ofqual's QLCs (such as progression and track record – see paragraphs 84 to 91 below). The Department may also seek Ofqual's advice on other aspects of the qualification, such as its level of challenge being comparable to GCSEs.

Role of Ofqual

16. Ofqual is the independent qualifications regulator for England, recognising more than 150 awarding organisations to design and deliver qualifications. The awarding organisations are held to account by Ofqual's General Conditions of Recognition[9] and the qualifications they develop are referenced against the Regulated Qualifications Framework[10], which puts in place a consistent approach to determining qualification level and size.

17. Awarding organisations must assure themselves that they have met the requirements set out in the General Conditions of Recognition before they upload a qualification to Ofqual's Register of Regulated Qualifications.

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[8] https://section96.education.gov.uk/
[9] Ofqual Handbook: General Conditions of Recognition, Ofqual, October 2017
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook
[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulated-qualifications-framework-a-postcard

18. Ofqual already undertakes a rolling programme of evaluation of qualifications against its General Conditions of Recognition on qualifications that are submitted for, and included in, performance tables.

19. In order to improve further the validity and reliability of technical qualifications approved for inclusion in key stage 4 performance tables as Technical Awards, Ofqual is introducing a regulatory framework that relates specifically to these qualifications. This is largely based on the characteristics set out in this technical guidance document. The framework will provide greater assurance to the users of Technical Awards that they provide reliable evidence of the knowledge and skills shown.

20. As a result, the process for submission and decision now includes an enhanced role for Ofqual. Ofqual will review an assessment strategy and associated materials provided by the awarding organisation for each qualification against its QLCs. Following this review, Ofqual will provide advice to the Department on the degree of confidence it has regarding whether the qualifications put forward for inclusion on performance tables fulfil, or are likely to fulfil (following some further modification by the awarding organisation), the requirements set out in the QLCs.

21. Should the qualification be approved by the Department for inclusion in performance tables then Ofqual's QLCs will apply to the qualification. Ofqual recognises the important part that awarding organisations must play in regulated qualifications that count in performance tables. Awarding organisations must keep their approach to development, delivery and award under review to assure themselves that regulated qualifications remain up-to-date, valid and rigorous. Ofqual has a range of regulatory powers, including the ability to impose sanctions where appropriate, when regulated qualifications are not meeting expected standards.

22. Ofqual and the Department will share information so that the necessary assurance on qualifications is provided. Where risks are identified, Ofqual will seek assurance from awarding organisations.

Role of the Department for Education

23. A qualification will only be considered by the Department for inclusion in key stage 4 performance tables if it has been reviewed by Ofqual against its QLCs and is on the ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding for 14 to 16 year olds.

24. The Department will take into account Ofqual's advice in its decision on inclusion in the performance tables. It will also consider other aspects of a qualification to assure itself that the qualification is suitable for use in schools and colleges, is consistent with the Government's policy direction, and that it represents a level of demand comparable to that of reformed GCSEs. The Department may ask Ofqual for its advice on a range of issues such as level of demand and/or may

use other sources of information for this purpose. The final decision on which qualifications should be included in performance tables lies with the Secretary of State for Education.

25. The Secretary of State reserves the right to remove any qualification from the list of qualifications approved for inclusion in the performance table at any time if there is evidence to indicate that the qualification does not meet the characteristics of a Technical Award (as set out in paragraphs 38 to 91 below) or the requirements of Ofqual's QLCs, or if wider policy changes mean that it is no longer suitable for inclusion in the performance tables. The Department will consider the impact on pupils, schools and colleges in any such instances. Where a qualification is removed from the key stage 4 performance tables list by the Department, the qualification will continue to be subject to Ofqual's QLCs until Ofqual decides that they should no longer apply.

Key stage 4 performance tables

26. The headline measures of secondary education performance are designed to encourage schools to offer a broad and balanced curriculum at key stage 4 with a strong focus on an academic core. The headline measures are:

- Progress 8 - progress across eight qualifications

- EBacc entry - percentage of pupils entering the English Baccalaureate (EBacc)[11]

- Pupil destinations - percentage of students staying in education or going into employment after key stage 4

- Attainment in English and mathematics - percentage of pupils achieving a grade 5 or above in GCSE English and mathematics

- Attainment 8 - attainment across the same eight qualifications as Progress 8

- EBacc average point score – pupils' attainment across the five pillars of the EBacc

27. The Progress 8 and Attainment 8 performance measures are based on a calculation of pupils' performance across eight qualifications: English and mathematics GCSEs or AS level qualifications, up to three further GCSE or AS level qualifications in EBacc subjects, and up to three further qualifications (including Technical Awards) from the Department's approved list.

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[11] An explanation of EBacc and list of EBacc qualifications is available at
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-baccalaureate-ebacc/english-baccalaureate-ebacc

28. The Department has published guidance to help schools to understand the measures above[12].

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[12] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/783865/Secondary_accountability_measures_guidance.pdf

Section 2: Technical Awards

Definition

29. Technical Awards are broad, high-quality level 1 and level 2 qualifications in non-EBacc subjects.

30. Technical Awards are intended to equip 14 to 16 year olds with applied knowledge not usually acquired through general qualifications (for example GCSEs). They are intended to focus on a sector or occupational group and enable the development of knowledge as well as associated practical skills where appropriate, but they are not intended to focus on any specific occupation.

31. Through a combination of the content of the qualification and the expectations set by the assessments, pupils will be required to demonstrate proficiency appropriate to level 1 or level 2 as appropriate.

32. Results from these qualifications will provide to those working in post-16 education evidence of pupils' achievements at this level for the purposes of selection onto post-16 academic and technical programmes of study. To enable these judgements to be made confidently on an ongoing basis, the qualifications (and the processes that support their delivery) must be designed so that they provide outcomes with sufficient reliability and consistent grading standards over time. Results from these qualifications will also be combined with other results to be used as part of the evaluation of school performance. They must be designed to support appropriate delivery in schools and colleges, and promote positive teaching practice.

33. These qualifications should be designed to be engaging for pupils who have chosen to take them as an alternative to non-EBacc GCSEs and should seek to encourage continued enthusiasm and engagement for study post-16. If an awarding organisation has, at any point in its qualification design, to make a trade-off between the purposes of their qualification, engagement should not take precedence over the rigour and depth expected at the relevant level.

34. The content and approach to assessment should be appropriate for pupils typically studying the courses between the ages of 14 and 16. Technical Awards are distinct from GCSEs. They complement and supplement the academic curriculum. They must, however, provide a comparable level of rigour and challenge to GCSEs if they are to be recognised as valuable, distinctive and respected qualifications. Technical Awards will fulfil entry requirements for academic, technical and applied study post-16, alongside GCSEs.

Subject coverage

35. For pupils in key stage 4, the Government believes that the study of EBacc subjects (English, mathematics, sciences (including computer science),

languages, history and geography) is best served through the teaching of GCSEs. To avoid a proliferation of alternative qualifications in EBacc subjects, qualifications in these subjects, or applied versions of these subjects, will not be approved as Technical Awards.

36. More broadly, it is important that qualifications included in performance tables are credible qualifications in areas that will support pupils' attainment and future progression. Proliferation of the subjects represented in key stage 4 performance tables is not necessarily in the best interest of pupils. Submissions to the Department for a qualification in a subject area not available in the 2020 performance tables should include the case for inclusion, including evaluation of the need and demand, the benefits expected for the pupils taking this qualification (in particular in terms of progression) and the supporting evidence. In future years, awarding organisations may be asked also to justify how a new qualification in a subject area already included in performance tables is different from other existing qualifications offered either by other awarding organisations or as an alternative qualification to its own existing qualifications.

37. Where a qualification has previously been included in performance tables and has retained the same qualification number, the Department will also consider the evidence on the progression and track record for the qualification, as described in paragraphs 84 to 91 below.

Characteristics of Technical Awards that will feature in the 2023 performance tables

38. All qualifications will be assessed on their own merits and must demonstrate all of the characteristics below[13] to be approved by the Department for inclusion in the 2023 key stage 4 performance tables as a Technical Award. It is not a requirement for a level 1 Technical Award to be linked to a Technical Award at level 2 or vice versa.

39. The necessary characteristics to be demonstrated by a Technical Award relate to:

- Qualification purpose
- Size
- Appropriate content
- Appropriate assessment
- Grading and awarding

and after the qualification has been awarded to a cohort of pupils the additional characteristics of

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[13] In the case of new qualifications, the additional characteristics of progression and track record apply after the qualification has been awarded to a cohort of pupils, following approval for inclusion in performance tables.

- Progression

- Proven track record

40. Each characteristic is described in more detail below, including the key elements and justification for its use in terms of the Department's policy intent. It is the intention that all of these will need to be met for a qualification to be included in the key stage 4 performance tables as a Technical Award. The Department will take into account the advice of Ofqual when considering whether to make an exception in the case of certain qualifications.

41. The first five characteristics are embodied in Ofqual's QLCs, requirements and guidance. The text of this technical guidance cross-refers to these where relevant.

Assessment strategy

42. Ofqual's QLCs require an assessment strategy to be written for each qualification put forward for consideration for inclusion in performance tables. Ofqual's Condition PTQ 3.1 requires awarding organisations to establish and maintain an assessment strategy for each Technical Award that sets out how they intend to secure, on an ongoing basis, compliance with Ofqual's Conditions of Recognition. Ofqual requires that the assessment strategy should present explanations and provide supporting evidence for the qualification and assessment design decisions the awarding organisation has taken and should identify the risks and impacts of those decisions.

43. The requirement for an assessment strategy supersedes (except where specified) all the requirements in previous versions of the Department's technical guidance on "Evidence to be submitted" and the guidance on "What makes for strong evidence".

A: Qualification purpose

45. The Department requires awarding organisations to set out the purpose of each qualification submitted for consideration for approval, which must be in line with the policy intent described in the section on Technical Awards above (paragraphs 29 to 34).

46. Awarding organisations should publish on their website a Purpose Statement, alongside or as part of the qualification specification. The Purpose Statement should set out the aims, objectives and intended purpose of each qualification in order to help pupils make informed decisions about which qualification(s) to take. The Purpose Statement must be expressed in plain English and in terms that are meaningful and relevant to pupils, parents, teachers and other intended users.

47. The Purpose Statement must include the title of the regulated qualification, the level and the qualification number. It must also cover all the points outlined in the exemplar template for a Purpose Statement at annex A of this guidance.

48. Ofqual's requirements follow the Department's policy intent on qualification purpose. Ofqual's requirements in relation to PTQ 5 define the general purposes for Technical Awards and require awarding organisations to set specific purposes for their qualifications that are in line with the general purposes.

49. The requirements also set out how awarding organisations should balance the purposes in the design of each Technical Award and require them to explain in their assessment strategy how their qualification will fulfil their qualification's specific purposes.

B: Size

50. The size of a qualification must relate to its purpose, the level of study and the skills and knowledge that the pupil will develop. The size characteristic relates to the qualification's value in terms of hours of guided learning. The Department requires that Technical Awards should be at least 120 guided learning hours in size and this is set out in Ofqual's QLC 7.1.

51. Ofqual has published guidance on activities that contribute to guided learning hours[14]. Ofqual's QLC PTQ 7.1 also requires awarding organisations to assign the number of hours for total qualification time (TQT) by applying the TQT criteria.

C: Appropriate content

52. The content of Technical Awards is not set by the Department. The content must be decided by awarding organisations in line with the general purposes of

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[14] See Condition E7 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/ofqual-handbook/section-e-design-and-development-of-qualifications

Technical Awards set out at paragraphs 29 to 34 above. Awarding organisations are expected to set out clear information about the content of the qualification and ensure that the content is coherent and links to the purpose of the qualification.

53. The Department requires that Technical Awards should:

    - only include content that is directly related to the qualification's specific purposes and have a clear rationale for the weighting of each topic covered, where relevant

    - focus on applied study of a sector or broad occupational group, with opportunities to acquire associated practical and technical skills where appropriate

    - offer breadth and depth of study that will prepare pupils for study post-16

    - have content of sufficient depth to represent credible development relevant to the identified sector/occupational group yet have sufficient breadth to demonstrate wider relevance

    - incorporate a significant core of knowledge and theoretical content with broad-ranging applicability, comparable to the challenge and rigour offered by GCSEs.

54. The structure of the qualification should be appropriate to the purpose, content and other aspects of design. Awarding organisations should be able to explain and justify the choice of structure - whether linear or unitised - and how it supports the validity and robustness of the qualification.

55. Awarding organisations should be able to explain their approach to optional units of study and, in particular, how they will ensure that standards are maintained across the qualification.

56. In order to be able to advise the Department on whether these requirements are met, Ofqual will expect this information to be included in the assessment strategy for the qualification.

D: Appropriate assessment

57. Rigorous and appropriate assessment arrangements, including external assessment (assessment by examination), help to ensure that Technical Awards offer a comparable level of challenge to GCSEs and reliably indicate pupil achievement.

58. The Department expects awarding organisations to meet Ofqual's QLCs on assessment as set out in PTQ 3 and PTQ 10, including the requirement for submitting an assessment strategy as part of the application for a qualification to be included in the performance tables.

59. This section combines and extends the requirements of the two sections on Appropriate Assessment and Synoptic Assessment from previous versions of the Department's technical guidance.

Assessment by examination

60. Assessment by examination refers to any assessment in which question papers, assignments or tasks are set by the awarding organisation, and taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration), with marking or assessment judgements being made by the awarding organisation. It does not include moderation or verification of centre-based assessment undertaken by an awarding organisation. In previous versions of the Department's technical guidance we have used the term "external assessment" but we use "assessment by examination" here for consistency with Ofqual's terminology.

61. The Department requires that assessment by examination for Technical Awards must assess knowledge and understanding, provide stretch and challenge commensurate with the level of the qualification and be an appropriate amount for the size of the qualification. The proportion of the qualification's content that is assessed by examination, and the associated contribution to the overall grade, must be at least 40%.

62. Ofqual's QLCs stipulate a number of key features in order to assist awarding organisations in establishing more consistent controls over assessment by examination. The assessment must be set and marked by numerical means by the awarding organisation and taken simultaneously by pupils on a date decided by the awarding organisation.

63. Awarding organisations will be able to make a case to Ofqual for exemption from the simultaneous sitting requirement but not for weighting of a minimum of 40% or the use of assessment by examination.

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

Terminal assessment

65. An assessment by examination must be taken at the end of a pupil's course of study ("terminal assessment") and this must contribute at least 40% of the total marks available for the qualification. Ofqual's QLCs require that pupils must use towards their final overall grade the result of the assessment by examination sat in the series in which they are completing the course. This should typically lead to candidates sitting the assessment by examination at the end of year 11.

Non-exam assessment

66. Non-exam assessment is any form of assessment not covered under the definition of assessment by examination in paragraphs 60 to 65. In previous versions of the Department's technical guidance we have used the term "internal assessment" but we use "non-exam assessment" here for consistency with Ofqual's terminology.

67. Non-exam assessment can provide valuable evidence of the attainment of knowledge and skills by pupils. As such it is a useful element where it fulfils the purpose set out for it in relation to the content of the qualification.

68. The Department requires that non-exam assessment is set by the awarding organisation. It may be marked by the school or college or by the awarding organisation. Non-exam assessment may contribute up to 60% of the marks available for assessment of a Technical Award.

69. Non-exam assessment must be subject to appropriate controls by the awarding organisation. All assessments must be suitably controlled to ensure that work submitted is authentic (that is, prepared and produced by pupils 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.

70. It is important that centres are supported to assess their pupils' work effectively. An approach where centres allocate individual, numerical marks for non-exam assessments is generally a more secure method for setting and maintaining standards. There may be circumstances, however, where an approach other rather than numerical marking is more appropriate given the design and structure of the qualification. The assumption therefore is that non-exam assessment is numerically mark-based except where an awarding organisation can justify an alternative approach. In such cases the awarding organisation will be able to make a case to Ofqual for an exemption.

71. Ofqual expects non-exam assessments to be moderated by awarding organisations. Moderation requires that checks by the awarding organisation must take place for each group of candidates and allows for adjustments to be made before results are issued. As such it provides an assurance that these qualifications are of sufficient reliability to be included in performance tables alongside GCSEs.

72. Qualifications approved for inclusion in performance tables will be added to Ofqual's list of qualifications for which centre-assessment judgements must be subject to moderation.

73. The non-exam assessment methodology must be included as part of the qualification's assessment strategy.

Synoptic assessment

74. Synoptic assessment helps demonstrate a pupil's understanding of the connections between the different elements of a body of knowledge and skills.

75. In consultation with awarding organisations, the following definition for synoptic assessment has been agreed[15]:

   > *A form of assessment which requires a candidate to demonstrate that they 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.*

76. The Department has not set a minimum contribution to the final grade that synoptic assessment must provide. However, the awarding organisation must be able to demonstrate that it is of sufficient size to cover meaningfully the full range of the qualification's content and that it requires the pupil to identify and use an appropriate selection of knowledge, skills, techniques, concepts and theories from across the qualification's content effectively and in an integrated way. Synoptic assessment does not necessarily have to involve assessment by examination.

77. The synoptic assessment methodology must be included as part of the qualification's assessment strategy.

E: Grading and awarding

78. The Department requires that all Technical Awards are graded. Grading differentiates pupils' performance and provides motivation and ambition by differentiating achievement and recognising high attainment. Grading also helps to raise public confidence in Technical Awards.

79. Ofqual's requirements in relation to grading and awarding are set out in QLCs PTQ 10 and PTQ 11. These state that a Technical Award at either level 1 or at level 2 should have no fewer than three grades (such as pass, merit, distinction) and no more than four grades. A qualification that spans both levels 1 and 2 should have no more than eight grades (such as level 1 pass, merit, distinction, distinction*, level 2 pass, merit, distinction, distinction*). An unclassified or ungraded outcome should also be provided for all Technical Awards.

80. While we do not propose to require specific changes now, a common grading scale for Technical Awards would make it easier for users to understand how the outcomes of different qualifications compare and we would welcome a movement by awarding organisations towards a common structure in future years. At

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[15] The Department's Technical Guidance for 2020 performance tables, paragraph 137.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/661918/2020_Technical_Guidance.pdf

present, in order to avoid the proliferation of different grading scales, we encourage awarding organisations to choose one that reflects those already in use in a qualification approved for inclusion in performance tables, as set out in the Department's Secondary Accountability Measures guidance[16].

81. It is important that the standards of Technical Awards are consistent over time and that users can have confidence that achievement in a Technical Award represents a credible achievement comparable to GCSEs. Awarding organisations' approach to standard setting should be designed to ensure that this is the case and Ofqual will expect it to draw on an appropriate range of evidence and techniques.

82. The grading approach should ensure that the 40% weighting of the assessment by examination is reflected in the final qualification grade. Whilst we do not expect awarding organisations to require that the assessment by examination is passed in order to achieve a pass grade for the qualification, we would be unlikely to approve a qualification where it is possible for candidates routinely to achieve a pass grade whilst demonstrating a low level of performance on the assessment by examination. However, we would ask Ofqual for a view and consider the assessment strategy as a whole in making such decisions.

83. Ofqual's awarding requirements are set out in QLCs PTQ 11[17]. Awarding organisations are required to implement a compensatory approach to combining a pupil's marks within each individual assessment in their qualifications. The chosen grading scale, any compensatory approach to combining marks within an individual assessment, and the approach to aggregating outcomes across assessments for the final grade should be set out in the assessment strategy for the qualification.

Characteristics required of qualifications after their first year of awarding

F: Progression

84. Technical Awards must be recognised and valued by schools and colleges as beneficial to pupils' general education at key stage 4, alongside GCSEs, if they are to remain on the approved list.

85. In order for a Technical Award to be considered for inclusion in the 2023 performance tables, the Department requires that the awarding organisation must demonstrate that it has been accepted alongside GCSEs for a range of post-16 options. (This applies only to a qualification that has been completed by

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[16] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/progress-8-school-performance-measure (pages 37-38)
[17] See guidance at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/awarding-organisations-understanding-our-regulatory-requirements#the-ofqual-handbook---rules-and-guidance-for-qualifications

a cohort of pupils since first being approved for inclusion in previous years of performance tables and has retained the same qualification number).

86. Awarding organisations must provide formal evidence that schools and/or colleges that teach students aged 16 to 19 have accepted the relevant Technical Awards as part of a student's suite of qualifications to fulfil the entry requirements for a range of courses, and that they are valued on an equal basis to GCSEs for this purpose.

87. Awarding organisations are required to provide such evidence from at least five schools and colleges. The evidence must show the full title and qualification number 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 an assurance as set out in paragraph 85 - for example, a head of sixth form or head of admissions.

G: Proven track record

88. Low take-up demonstrates that pupils and schools and colleges do not, in general, see a qualification as a strong route to an apprenticeship or other employment or a higher-level course/qualification.

89. In order for a Technical Award to be considered for inclusion in the 2023 performance tables, the Department requires that the qualification must have been awarded to at least 100 key stage 4 pupils in the same year group, across at least five schools or colleges in England, in one of the first two years following approval for recognition in performance tables. (This applies only to a qualification that has been completed by a cohort of pupils since first being approved for inclusion in previous years of performance tables and has retained the same qualification number).

90. The Department will also check the track record for longer-established qualifications (retaining the same qualification number) put forward for performance tables inclusion, by looking at the most recent two years of completion data available.

91. Awarding organisations will not be asked to provide evidence to show that a qualification has met the proven track record requirement as the Department will use completion data to make this judgement.

Section 3: Applications process

How to submit an application

93. A separate application should be submitted to the Department for each qualification for which the awarding organisation is seeking approval. The application must include a detailed assessment strategy (see paragraphs 42 and 43 above). Further details about the submission process, including which documents should accompany the application, will be published in a separate process document shortly.

94. The Department will share the application with Ofqual, which will undertake a detailed review of the qualification against its QLCs and the relevant General Conditions of Recognition. Ofqual will provide advice to the Department on whether the qualification will meet its rules on an ongoing basis if approved as a Technical Award. In order to provide this advice Ofqual will need to contact the awarding organisation to discuss aspects of its application.

95. As stated in paragraph 24 above, the final decision on which qualifications should be included in performance tables lies with the Secretary of State for Education.

96. For the 2023 performance tables approvals process, qualifications will be considered in one submission window, with one subsequent opportunity for awarding organisations to request a review of the decision if the Department has not approved a qualification. We will publish information about the process and timeline for this review process as part of the process document referred to in paragraph 93.

Qualifications approved for inclusion in performance tables in previous years

97. GCSEs and AS level qualifications are automatically included in key stage 4 performance tables. This technical guidance describes the new arrangements for qualifications submitted for consideration for approval as Technical Awards from the 2023 performance tables onwards. In the light of these changes none of the Technical Awards approved for use in performance tables in previous years will automatically be eligible for inclusion in 2023 performance tables. Awarding organisations will need to "opt-in" to the new requirements by submitting their qualifications for approval.

98. The Department is considering how graded music exams could be assessed for inclusion in performance tables in future using a similar process and will say more in due course.

Enquiries

99. Any enquiries about this guidance or the approvals process more generally, should be made to: technical.education@education.gov.uk

Annex A: Purpose Statement template for Technical Awards

Awarding organisations are strongly encouraged to use the template below when writing a Purpose Statement. They may devise their own if they wish to provide the information in a different format but should make sure that **everything** below has been covered.

The Purpose Statement is primarily for the pupil and should be written in plain English.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Awarding Organisation Name and Logo:

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

Type of Qualification: Technical Award

OVERVIEW

Who is this qualification for?

Who might be interested in taking this course?

What will the pupil study as part of this qualification?

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

What knowledge and skills will the pupil 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 pupil 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, such as the specification, sample assessment materials, and similar.