



A guide to UK qualifications frameworks

Pre-16 qualifications

Academic or general education qualifications are studied by most 14-16 year olds in the UK. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland they are GCSEs and in Scotland they are Scottish Qualifications Certificates (SQC). A number of STEM subjects are included in these academic or general education qualifications including mathematics, the sciences, design and technology, engineering, computing science and ICT.

Technical awards recently introduced in England are broad, high-quality level 1 and level 2 qualifications that equip pupils aged 14-16 with applied knowledge and associated practical skills not usually acquired through academic or general education. At Key Stage 4, pupils are encouraged to take up three technical awards alongside a minimum of five academic GCSEs from the list of EBacc subjects.

From 2015 a maximum of two vocational qualifications will count towards Key Stage 4 performance tables, changing to three from 2016 when the Progress 8 measure (measuring the performance of students in eight subjects) is introduced.

Post-16 qualifications

From 2014, qualifications for 16-19 year olds in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have been classified as academic, technical or applied general. In addition, young people can gain qualifications through an apprenticeship. The key features of these are summarised on the following page.



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| Post-16 learning pathways | | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | Apprenticeships | Academic | Applied general | Technical awards |
| Description | Combine practical training in a job with study. They are available to anyone over 16 and apprentices earn a wage. They are available in over 170 occupational areas | Allow achievement of a deep knowledge base in one subject. Usually follow on from GCSEs | Rigorous qualifications allowing broad study through applied learning. Equip students with transferable skills | Rigorous technical qualifications specific for particular occupations. Recognised by employers as equipping students with specialist knowledge |
| Qualification | Vocational qualifications eg NVQ available at levels 2, 3 and 4 | AS and A level All level 3 | Vocational qualifications eg NVQ all level 3 | Vocational qualifications eg NVQ all level 3 |
| Examples | Over 170 sectors including IT, engineering, business, veterinary, nursing, healthcare, etc | Physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, technology | Include diplomas in engineering, healthcare, science, etc | Include qualifications in engineering, healthcare, etc |
| Notes | Young people aged 16-25 with a learning disability can also access a traineeship which provides support to gain the knowledge and skills to get an apprenticeship. Traineeships include work experience plus English and mathematics (if not previously achieved at level 2) | From 2015 they will be linear with assessments at the end of two years. AS levels will remain as a one-year, stand-alone qualification | Taught from 2014. Fulfil entry requirements for a range of HE courses either on their own or alongside and adding value to other level 3 qualifications | Enable entry to apprenticeship, technical degree or job. Some lead to a 'licence to practise' and exemption from professional exams. tech levels are one component of the TechBacc measure which also includes level 3 maths and an Extended Project qualification |
| | More information | More information | More information | More information |

A list of qualifications approved for teaching in England, Wales and Northern Ireland can be found on the [Ofqual website](#)
Guidance from the DfE about which qualifications will be included in performance measures can be found [here](#)



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Substantial Vocational Qualifications/Technical Certificates

at level 2, introduced in September 2015, provide students aged 16-19 with a route into a skilled trade or occupation, where employers recognise entry at this level. They will also provide access to tech levels. Substantial Vocational Qualifications at level 2 support entry to a wide range of STEM-related trades and practical occupations from plumbing to bricklaying, or horticulture to professional cookery. Like tech levels, they will offer students the chance to acquire the skills and expertise needed to apply for further learning, apprenticeships and jobs at operative or technician level.

Technical certificate qualifications range in size from 150-800+ GLH. A number of BTECs, Cambridge Technicals and City & Guilds qualifications have been accredited in this category.

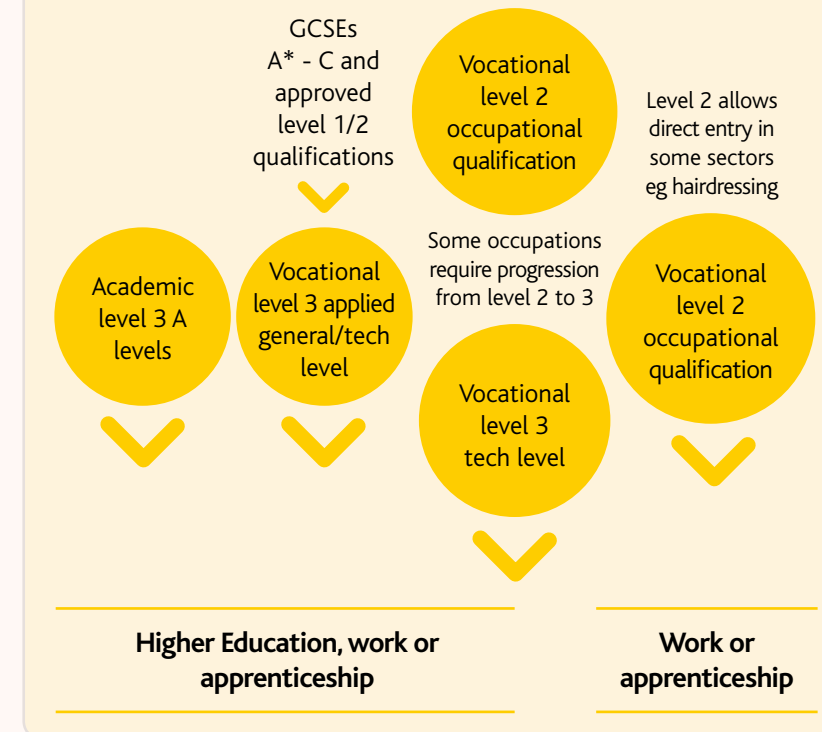
Core Maths

Core Maths is a level 3 mathematics course for students in post-16 education who have passed GCSE mathematics at grade C or above but are not taking A level mathematics. It is half the size of an A level, with two end-of-course examinations. The qualification will be considered for: UCAS points; 16-19 level 3 mathematics performance; measure for schools and colleges; the mathematics element of the new Tech Bacc.

Progression pathways

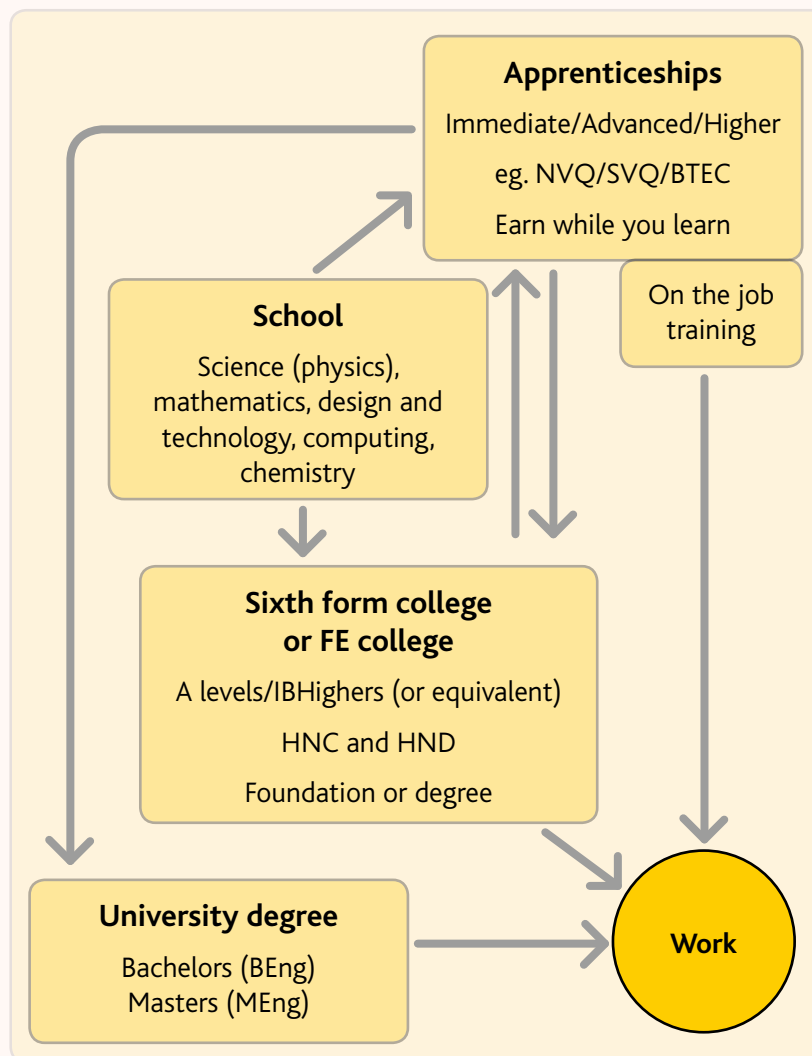
14-19 qualification pathway

Learning at entry and foundation level
eg Entry level awards, functional skills





A guide to UK qualifications frameworks



A guide to qualifications frameworks across the UK

England, Northern Ireland and Wales

| Level | Examples of qualifications |
|-------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8 | Doctoral Degrees, eg PhD in Mechanical Engineering |
| 7 | Master's Degrees, eg MSc in Biotechnology Postgraduate Certificates and Diplomas, eg PG Dip Advanced Manufacturing: Technology & Systems NVQ Level 5, eg NVQ 5 in Vocational Safety |
| 6 | Bachelor's Degrees with Honours, eg BSc (Hons) Computing Graduate Certificates and Diplomas, eg Postgraduate Certificate in Mathematics Higher Apprenticeships, eg Level 6 Broadcast Technology |
| 5 | Higher National Diplomas (HND), eg HND in Electrical and Electronic Engineering Foundation Degrees, eg FdSc in Sustainable Construction Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE), eg DipHE in Environmental Science NVQ Level 4, eg NVQ Level 4 Diploma in Managing Standard Processing Operations for the Extractive and Minerals Processing Industries Higher Apprenticeships, eg Level 5 Life Sciences and Chemical Science Professionals |



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| Level | Examples of qualifications |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | Higher National Certificates (HNC), eg HNC in Building Services Engineering Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE), eg Certificate of Higher Education in Computing and IT NVQ level 4, eg NVQ level 4 Diploma in Processing Industries Operations Higher Apprenticeships, eg level 4 Power Engineering |
| 3 | GCE AS and A level, eg A level Design and Technology Core Maths Vocational Qualifications level 3, eg level 3 Extended Diploma in Sport and Exercise Sciences NVQ level 3, eg NVQ level 3 Diploma in Laboratory and Associated Technical Activities Advanced Apprenticeships, eg level 3 Diploma in Software Development |
| 2 | GCSEs at grade A*-C (9-5 from 2017) Technical Awards, eg level 2 Diploma in Service and Maintenance Engineering Functional Skills level 2 (English, Mathematics and ICT) NVQ level 2, eg Chemical, Pharmaceutical and Petro-Chemical Operations Intermediate Apprenticeships, eg NVQ level 2 in Air Conditioning |

| Level | Examples of qualifications |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | GCSEs at grade D-G (4-1 from 2017) Technical Awards, eg level 1 Diploma in Construction Functional Skills level 1 (English, Mathematics and ICT) NVQ level 1, eg level 1 NVQ Diploma in Plastering (Construction) |
| Entry | Entry level Certificates (sub levels 1-3), eg Design and Technology Functional Skills Entry Level (English, Mathematics and ICT) |

NB Apprenticeships are frameworks not qualifications.



A guide to UK qualifications frameworks

| The Scottish credit and qualifications framework | | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| SCQF levels | SQA qualifications | | Qualifications of HEIs | SVQs / MAs |
| 12 | | | Doctoral Degree | Professional Apprenticeship |
| 11 | | | Masters, Integrated Masters Degree, Post Graduate Diploma Post Graduate Certificate | Professional Apprenticeship SVQ5 |
| 10 | | | Honours Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate | Professional Apprenticeship |
| 9 | | Professional Development Award | Bachelors / Ordinary Degree, Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate | Professional Apprenticeship SVQ4 |
| 8 | | Higher National Diploma | Diploma of Higher Education | Professional Apprenticeship SVQ4 |
| 7 | Advanced higher, Awards, Scottish Baccalaureate | Higher National Certificate | Certificate of Higher Education | Professional Apprenticeship SVQ3 |
| 6 | Higher, Awards, Skills for Work Higher | | | Professional Apprenticeship SVQ3 |
| 5 | National 5, Awards, Skills for Work National 5 | | | Professional Apprenticeship SVQ2 |
| 4 | National 4, Awards, Skills for Work National 4 | National Certificate | National Progression Award | SVQ1 |
| 3 | National 3, Awards, Skills for Work National 3 | | | |
| 2 | National 2, Awards | | | |

This framework diagram shows the mainstream Scottish qualifications already credit rated by SQA and HEIs. Visit the [SCQF website](https://www.scqf.org.uk) to view the interactive version of the framework or search the database.