

## Mandated qualifications - previous policy

In September 2023 IfATE published the [new mandated qualifications policy](#).

The new policy applies to all apprenticeship submissions where MQs (except [degrees](#)) are proposed. There are exemptions outlined in the guidance for which this, previous policy, may apply.

## Developing an occupational proposal

### Mandatory qualifications and professional recognition

At the occupation proposal stage you should include high-level information about any qualifications you believe should be mandated within the apprenticeship. Full information, including evidence to justify mandating the qualification, will need to be provided when you submit the occupational standard. Further information about mandated qualifications policy is available in [section 7 of our developing an occupational standard guidance](#).

Professional recognition or status demonstrates that an individual has reached a recognised standard of competence. Unless the professional recognition is provided by a [statutory regulator](#) – see below, it is not a requirement to work in the occupation but it may enhance their employability. For example, an individual working in an engineering occupation may meet the requirements for engineering technician, incorporated engineer, or chartered engineer.

You will need to state if professional recognition exists for the occupation.

Where this is the case, the professional body's or bodies' requirements for an occupation should be reflected in the [occupational standard's](#) knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) and, for an apprenticeship, any mandated qualifications (where applicable). Trailblazer groups may identify other KSBs that the occupational standard needs to contain beyond those required for professional recognition. You need to name the professional body or bodies that have agreed to work with you to develop the apprenticeship.

## Developing an occupational standard

### ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Please note that, when applying the new degree apprenticeships policy, different criteria to those detailed below apply to mandating degrees. See section 2 of our [degree apprenticeship 2022 requirements and guidance](#) for further details.

In some cases a qualification may be mandated for all apprentices on an apprenticeship. Where mandated, it must be completed as a 'gateway' requirement before the apprentice takes the EPA. Potentially mandated qualifications fall into the following two broad types:

**Type 1** – a qualification that accredits occupational competence, for example an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification: still available as a brand within the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF). Summative assessment in these qualifications duplicates EPA and costs a relatively large amount of money to deliver, drawing resources away from training.

**Type 2** - covers off-the job technical qualifications (for example 'day release' qualifications) and short awards (for example food safety and manual handling certificates) which are usually delivered off-the-job. These qualifications do not accredit occupational competence, do not duplicate EPA and add very little to the cost of the apprenticeship, as the off-the-job training would be required and funded anyway.

Qualifications of either type may be mandated where they are:

1. a regulatory requirement for the occupation; or
2. a requirement of a professional body for professional registration relevant to the occupation; or
3. required by employers in the labour market for the occupation on such a widespread basis that an apprentice would be significantly disadvantaged without it. This is known as the 'hard sift' criterion.

In addition, type 2 qualifications that do not meet one of these criteria may still be mandated where they:

- add no significant cost or volume to the off-the-job training that would be required without the qualification; and
- provide fuller occupational coverage assisting in achievement of the whole occupational standard, that is more duties, knowledge and/or skills than is likely to be covered in the workplace; and/or
- provide structure for off-the-job training where there is little history of this for the occupation

A technical qualification of this type can be at a different level (if higher, normally only one level higher) to the occupational level of the apprenticeship as a whole.

The inclusion of a qualification based on being a regulatory, professional body or hard sift requirement in an occupational standard should usually only be a temporary requirement (with the exception of degree apprenticeships). The apprenticeship standard itself should be designed to meet the requirements of a regulatory or professional body and employers in the sector. Over time, as apprenticeships gain currency, individuals will no longer be disadvantaged in the job market by not having a specific qualification, and the need to mandate it should fall away. However, we understand that there may be some situations, for example, a fixed legislative requirement, where this may not be possible.

In the case of both types, qualifications cannot be mandated unless they are already available for use by employers and training providers.

Where there is no mandated qualification in an apprenticeship, an employer and training provider can still choose to use one, provided the content aligns with the occupational standard and the employer pays the registration and certification fees.

If your occupational standard includes a mandatory qualification that accredits occupational competence, this should be at the same level as the occupation. If it includes a mandatory off-the-job technical qualification, the qualification level and occupation level does not need to be the same.

Details of the information to be provided in relation to any proposed mandated qualification (except where applying the new degree apprenticeships policy referenced at the beginning of Section 7 above) and the evidence to support such a proposal is available below under the heading 'Mandated qualifications information and evidence requirements'.

## Mandated qualifications information and evidence requirements

If an apprenticeship standard mandates a qualification, you will need to include information about the qualification on the occupational standard. This is to ensure employers and training providers know which qualifications meet the mandated qualification requirements.

The Education & Skills Funding Agency's (ESFA) Learning Aims reference Service (LARS) will list the qualifications that meet the mandated qualification requirements for each apprenticeship standard.

When completing the occupational standard section of the template, you need to select a category as the basis for mandating a qualification; additional information fields that you need to populate will then appear.

The information requirements are below.

For **all qualifications**, you need to include:

- whether it is mandated due to it being a regulatory requirement, professional registration requirement, meeting our 'hard sift' criterion or being an off-the-job technical qualification
- the 'type' of qualification, that is: 'type 1' - a qualification that accredits occupational competence, or 'type 2' - an off-the-job technical qualification
- title; if there are a number of titles then please include all of them
- level
- whether the qualification is Ofqual regulated (excluding degrees, see below) and the qualification number

For qualifications mandated because of a **regulatory or professional registration requirement**, you also need to include:

- the name, address and web link for the regulatory or professional body together with a contact

Regulatory or professional bodies will need to update the ESFA regarding any qualifications (including degrees) developed that meet the mandated qualification requirements for an apprenticeship standard after it is published; so that they can be added to LARS and used in the apprenticeship standard. The ESFA will publish guidance on the process.

For qualifications mandated by meeting the **‘hard sift’** criterion or by virtue of being an **off-the-job technical qualification**, you also need to include:

- the awarding organisation for each of the specific qualifications that meet the criteria (excluding degrees, see below)

For **degree apprenticeship standards**, you also need to provide:

- the name of the Universities/Higher Education Institutions (HEI) involved in the development of the apprenticeship standard and expected to deliver the degree

Only those Universities/HEIs and degrees initially named on the occupational standard will be on the ESFA’s LARs.

Additional degrees not named on the occupational standard can be added to LARs, by reference to the regulatory or professional body recognition of their degree programme. Universities/HEIs should contact the ESFA in order to be added.

If other Universities wish to deliver an integrated or non-integrated degree apprenticeship standard, approved under the ‘hard sift’ criterion (where there is no regulatory or professional body involved) their proposed degree will need to be checked for alignment to the occupational standard. We are currently looking at how best to do this.

### **Evidence requirements**

If you wish to mandate a qualification in your occupational standard, you will need to provide evidence justifying this as follows.

For a **regulatory requirement**:

- information on the relevant legislation; or
- a letter from the regulator

For a **professional registration requirement**:

- letter(s) of support from Professional Body

We have provided a template for the [professional body letter of support](#).

For **‘hard sift’ criterion**:

- 10 job adverts from employers that are representative of the sector including small employers (fewer than 50), showing the qualification as an entry requirement; and

- evidence of support for inclusion of the qualification via your consultation on the occupational standard

For a qualification that does not meet any of the above criteria but which you believe meets the requirements for mandating it as a **type 2 - off-the-job technical qualification**:

- evidence that the qualification can only be delivered in off-the-job settings, such as published information or a letter from an awarding body
- evidence that the cost or volume of off-the-job training will not increase significantly as a result of mandating the qualification
- the total qualification time (TQT) including guided learning hours (GLH) for the qualification
- a case that shows how the qualification provides greater breadth to achieve the whole occupational standard or provides structure to the off-the-job training

The relevant route panel will use the evidence provided by you to form a view on whether the qualification meets our requirements for mandating as an off-the job qualification. In making such a decision, the panel will also want assurance that it:

- only accredits learning acquired in off-the-job training
- does not incur more cost or require more off-the-job training than needed for competence in the occupational standard
- does not accredit occupational competence
- is not (normally) more than one level higher than the level of the apprenticeship standard