

More high-quality degree alternatives to boost adult skills and job prospects

Adults will be able to access more, high-quality alternatives to university degrees under new measures to boost the nation's skills and job prospects.

The package will help colleges and universities invest in new equipment that will support technical studies, and boost training opportunities with businesses in areas such as digital and construction.

It will also create new, shorter courses for working adults in STEM subjects like engineering and manufacturing, giving those wishing to upskill or retrain greater flexibility in how and when they study.

Boosting the uptake and quality of Higher Technical Education – technical qualifications that sit between A Levels and degrees – and supporting adults to study more flexibly throughout their lives is a key part of the [Government's landmark reforms to post-16 education and training](#).

A major review of Higher Technical Education revealed these qualifications can unlock the [skills employers need](#), can lead to well paid jobs and help support the country to build back better from the pandemic.

Despite this, only [4% of young people achieve a qualification at higher technical level by the age of 25](#) compared to the 33% who get a degree or above.

The funding will be invested from Summer 2021 to kickstart work to ensure more Higher Technical Education is on offer across the country, providing more people with high-quality alternatives to university degrees.

The package consists of:

- A new £18 million Growth Fund to support further and higher education providers to expand high-quality Higher Technical Education. The fund will help providers to invest in equipment and develop the business links they need to offer training that will meet growing employer demands for skills in sectors including Digital, Construction, Health and Science.
- Up to £10 million for Institutes of Technology to develop and deliver higher technical short and modular courses in STEM disciplines like engineering, manufacturing, construction and digital. Aimed at working adults, these courses, which will be available from Autumn 2021, will be free to access and will support people to rapidly reskill or upskill to meet local economic needs.
- £2 million to support the development and delivery of high-quality modular training focused on upskilling employees to help address future skills gaps

in high value manufacturing. The High Value Manufacturing Catapult, an organisation that supports businesses to harness innovation, have been appointed to lead this [exciting new project](#), working with Institutes of Technology.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Investment in higher technical skills will support more people to secure exciting and rewarding careers, fill skills gaps in our economy and help us build back better from the pandemic.

We also want to counter the myth that a degree is the only way to a good job. This funding will help open up more high quality training alternatives for people, empowering them to get the skills they need to build the life they want, wherever they live.

Higher technical training is currently offered at Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) institutions, but [research](#) shows that the quality of courses on offer can be variable and it can be hard for students and employers to find the ones that are right for them.

From September 2022 the government will start rolling out newly approved Higher Technical Qualifications, starting with Digital.

Construction and Health and Science will follow in 2023 with a full suite of qualifications rolled out by 2025.

Qualifications will only be approved where they provide the skills employers need, so students and employers can be confident the courses on offer will provide the skills they need to succeed.

The Government's network of [Institutes of Technology](#) – unique collaborations between universities, FE colleges, and leading employers – will also specialise in delivering high-quality Higher Technical Education and training in STEM subjects, such as digital, advanced manufacturing and engineering that will provide employers with the skilled workforce they need.

Higher Technical Qualifications will provide a natural progression route for young people taking new T Levels or A Levels, and adults looking to upskill or retrain, enabling them to take the next step up and gain higher technical skills in key subjects like STEM.