

News story: Research reveals lesser known qualifications could help boost skills and jobs

New research reveals that less well known qualifications could be the key to unlocking the skills demanded by employers and lead to rewarding, well-paid jobs.

The findings published on Tuesday (14 August) by the Department for Education form part of an ongoing review of education at Level 4 and 5. These qualifications are higher than an A level qualification (Level 3) but lower than a degree (Level 6).

Qualifications at this level include Diplomas of Higher Education and Foundation Degrees in subjects such as engineering and digital. They are offered at universities and Further Education colleges – such as the London South Bank University and the National College for Nuclear.

The Government is determined to drive up participation in further education and training. This is central to the modern Industrial Strategy, and includes introducing new T Levels from 2020 and creating more high quality apprenticeships.

Welcoming the interim findings of the report, Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton said:

We want everyone to be able to access high quality technical education and training so they can get the skills they need. Having these skills can change people's lives, leading to a rewarding career and fantastic opportunities.

These early findings show how learning at Level 4 and 5 can benefit people of all ages and a wide variety of backgrounds, whilst helping employers get the skilled workforce they need.

This research will play an important part of our ongoing review of Level 4 and 5 qualifications so we can understand how we can make education at this level work even better for everyone.

Initial findings from the review highlight for the first time the benefits of studying a qualification at Level 4 or 5, including:

- Studying at this level can increase earning potential and employability – students achieving a Level 4 or 5 qualification by age 23 had higher median wages by the time they were 26 and were more likely to be in sustained employment than students who achieved a Level 3.
- A growing demand for qualifications at this level from employers in key

sectors such as ICT and Engineering – meaning increased take up could play an important role in the UK economy, helping to plug technical skills gap and boost productivity.

- Learners at this level often study part-time, and come from diverse backgrounds – highlighting how studying at this level could boost learning and job opportunities for hundreds of thousands more people across the country.

Research shows that only around 7% of people in England aged between 18 and 65 are undertaking training at this level, one of the lowest rates in the OECD. Only around 200,000 people are currently studying for qualifications at this level compared with around 2 million studying across Level 3 and Level 6.

Level 4 and 5 education is currently being reviewed by the Department for Education, focusing on how technical qualifications at this level can better address the needs of learners and employers.

The review forms part of the Department's work to boost skills and improve Higher and Further Education, including the implementation of the Post-16 Skills Plan. It is focusing on classroom based technical education and considering how Level 4 and 5 qualifications alongside T Levels and apprenticeships can help deliver the skills the economy needs.

The Government is also carrying out a Review of Post-18 Education and Funding to make sure the system is joined up and works for everyone. It is also going to carry out reviews of Key Stage Four qualifications (excluding GCSEs) and post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below to make sure that all qualifications taken by students are high quality and lead to employment or further study.