

RSB response July 2018 Regulating Technical Qualifications: Consultation on Ofqual's approach to regulating Technical Qualifications

Assessment structure

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to set a requirement that Technical Qualifications are assessed through a Core and Occupational Specialism(s)?

Strongly Agree/**Agree**/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Please give reasons for your answer:

In the Royal Society of Biology's response to the Department for Education's Implementation of T level programmes consultation, we raised the importance of not relying on employers as developers of assessment. We are supportive of an assessment approach that ensures awarding organisations assess both the Core and Occupational Specialism components of Technical Qualifications.

Furthermore, we feel it is important students are able to transfer between T levels within the same pathway in order to keep their options open as they progress through the Technical Qualifications and beyond into employment or further education. To ensure this, assessment of both core knowledge and understanding and core skills must be consistent between Technical Qualifications within a given pathway.

http://www.rsb.org.uk/images/RSB_T_level_consultation_response_6_February_2018.pdf

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to set a requirement that core knowledge and understanding and core skills are assessed separately?

Strongly Agree/**Agree**/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Please give reasons for your answer:

The Technical Annex published by DfE in May states that awarding organisations will be expected to describe minimum performance of the core component to cover both core knowledge and core skills, in order to ensure compensation across core knowledge and skills does not result in a student attaining a pass without having made a genuine attempt at both parts.

For routes that include STEM occupations basic data handling, laboratory skills, and health and safety precautions could be reasonably described as core skills common across all T levels within multiple routes, however the context of those skills is likely to be dependent on, and defined by, the core knowledge and understanding in a particular route. It therefore seems reasonable that while a standard approach may be taken to assessing these STEM skills across multiple T level Qualifications in a test based knowledge and understanding component, there may be distinct, context specific, aspects tested through assessment of core skills in a given route.

Q4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to provide guidance on the relative weightings of core knowledge and understanding and core skills within the Core?

Strongly Agree/**Agree**/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Please give reasons for your answer:

The Royal Society of Biology's response to the Department for Education's Implementation of T level programmes consultation stated that in the absence of licenses to practice, employers should encourage students to work towards registered status with the relevant body to their profession. Demonstrating professional competence and engagement with continued professional development are therefore vital skills for occupations in which professional registers exist. The approach outlined in the Regulating Technical Qualifications document seems reasonable, and would allow for development and assessment of these skills within a core skills context.

http://www.rsb.org.uk/images/RSB_T_level_consultation_response_6_February_2018.pdf

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to set a requirement for awarding organisations to specify combinations of Occupational Specialisms that may, or may not, be taken in combination?

Strongly Agree/**Agree**/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Please give reasons for your answer:

Guidance should be provided for students, and employers, on the combination of occupational specialisms that could be studied to the relevant level within reasonable teaching hours without a detrimental impact on the occupations the student could continue into post qualification.

Prior learning

Q17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with our proposal to put in place a requirement for an awarding organisation to recognise prior learning in Technical Qualifications, where this is possible?

Strongly Agree/**Agree**/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Please give reasons for your answer:

In the Royal Society of Biology's Response to the Department for Education's Implementation of T level programmes consultation we highlighted the importance of recognition of prior attainment in core content within the same T level route. We are therefore supportive of such a requirement.

http://www.rsb.org.uk/images/RSB_T_level_consultation_response_6_February_2018.pdf

Grading

Q21. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should put in place guidance for Occupational Specialisms regarding how assessment design must take into account this grading model?

Strongly Agree/**Agree**/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Please give reasons for your answer:

As in the Royal Society of Biology's response to the Department for Education's Implementation of T level programmes consultation we remain concerned that the variety of grades within a Technical Qualification may be confusing for students and employers. Although overall pass, merit or distinction grade as suggested in the Technical Annex goes some way to addressing this, it may still be difficult to clearly determine the difference in attainment between a Core Grade A, Occupational Specialism Pass student, and a Core grade C, Occupational Specialism Merit student as the grading scales will be significantly different. Guidance and descriptors for assessment design are therefore important.

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Setting and marking assessments

Q31. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should require awarding organisations to set assessments for core skills?

Strongly Agree/**Agree**/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Please give reasons for your answer

Awarding organisations have the appropriate assessment expertise to design and set assessments for core knowledge and understanding, skills and occupational specialisms. Employers should not be expected to design assessments.

Q32. To what extent do you agree or disagree that we should require awarding organisations to set assessments for Occupational Specialisms?

Strongly Agree/**Agree**/Neither Agree nor Disagree/Disagree/Strongly Disagree

Please give reasons for your answer

Awarding organisations have the appropriate assessment expertise to design and set assessments for core knowledge and understanding, skills and occupational specialisms. Employers should not be expected to design assessments.