

**T Level Technical
Qualifications Key Dates
Schedule Consultation and
Provider Engagement
Response - 2024**



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Purpose

This document provides an overview of the Key Dates consultations that were held **between 17 April and 10 May 2024**, together with ongoing dialogue with providers throughout 2023/24 (in the form of 1-1 Exams Officer Focus Group meetings, Exams Office and Association of Colleges workshop delivery, and 1-1 discussions with Heads of Centre). It details the feedback received by providers and actions taken, where necessary.

Overview

NCFE sent consultation details out to over 200 providers, of which a total of 4 providers supplied direct consultation responses. These responses were received by a Microsoft Forms document, shared through regular newsletter communications, with 7 issues identified by respondents. It should be noted at the outset that, in line with previous provider feedback and ongoing dialogue with key provider staff throughout 2023/24, many issues were pre-empted and/or addressed in the revised consultation document, as summarised below, and also that NCFE's response takes into consideration the fact that the many providers chose not to respond to this consultation or to engage with other communication opportunities.

Additional provider key date discussion interaction opportunities throughout 2023/24

The Exams Office Interactive Workshops (29/01/2024, 30/01/2024, 05/02/2024) – 134 centres in attendance
Association of Colleges Interactive Workshop (06/03/2024) – 28 providers in attendance
Exams Officer Focus Group 1–1 meetings – 15 providers

Action taken by NCFE as a consequence of provider feedback throughout 2023/24

Prior to consultation of the Key Dates Schedule for 2024/25 and 2025/26, NCFE made efforts to address key points related to previous and ongoing dialogue with providers, incorporated within the consultation document itself. These addressed the following areas:

- Education and Early Years Occupational Specialisms (both pathways) dates proposed to permit all Occupational Specialism tasks to be completed prior to commencement of Employer Set Project.
- Health Employer Set Project summer 2026 window extended from 2 weeks to 3 weeks, to mitigate against increased provider workload to accommodate an increase in student numbers.
- Digital Business Services Occupational Specialism (Data Technician) dates proposed, to permit all Occupational Specialism tasks to be completed prior to commencement of Employer Set Project.
- Healthcare Science Occupational Specialism (Assisting with Healthcare Science) dates proposed, to minimise overlap between completion of Occupational Specialism assignments and commencement of Employer Set Project.
- Creation of a qualification calendar of key dates, per assessment series, published on NCFE's website and incorporating additional and complementary assessment-related information to aid provider planning and preparation.
- Consultation with JCQ on high volume qualifications to mitigate against timetable clashes with key GCSE and GCE assessments.
- Amendments to digital evidence upload process to minimise impact on providers, including extension of upload timeframe from 2 working days to 3 working days, designated point of contact for queries, opening of window for upload prior to end of assessment, and provision of guidance for uploading video and large file content.

Provider response themes

Responses from providers are summarised by theme in the table below, along with NCFE's narrative response to the issues raised.

Theme	Change effected
Overlapping assessments	Yes
Scalability of Health ESP	Yes
Overlapping GCSEs, A Levels and similar assessments	Partly
Calendar of assessment dates	Yes
Account taken of religious holidays other than Easter	Partly
Assessment scheduled too early in academic session	No
Provider challenges in qualification delivery across multiple year groups	No

Actions taken and NCFE responses

Following a review of the feedback, accountable teams at NCFE have provided the following responses and have taken the actions detailed below, where appropriate.

Provider responses are collated into typical representative comments.

Theme – Overlapping Assessment Windows

Typical comment - There is an overlap in Summer 2024 (E&EY) where the ESP timeframe falls in the same time as the end of Assignment 2 part 2. It would make far more sense to have the ESP after the Assignment 2 deadline, e.g. from 19th May up until May half term.

NCFE response –The suggested timeframe for the repositioning of the ESP, to solve this issue, would be insufficient to accommodate a 3-week window. For summer 2024 and 2025, the ESP terminates a few days after the end of the window for the Occupational Specialism assignment referenced, this permits some opportunity for at least part of the ESP assessment to be completed after the Occupational Specialism assessment. However, the particular Occupational Specialism assignment referenced is a window that, although terminating during the ESP window, opens 3 months previously (early February) and therefore we would encourage providers with resourcing limitations to structure their learning activities to accommodate an earlier finish to the Occupational Specialism assignment, prior to the start of the ESP.

Action taken: For 2025/26, Education and Early Years Occupational Specialisms (both pathways) dates have been proposed to permit all Occupational Specialism tasks to be completed prior to commencement of Employer Set Project.

Theme – Scalability of Health Employer Set Project

Typical comment - Two weeks is an insufficient amount of time for providers to complete this task due to the requirements of the ESP.

NCFE response – The decision to offer the Health Employer Set Project as a 2-week window was reached at the design phase of the qualification, in accordance with standard durations across other T Level qualifications. This window length was determined by the necessity for students to use retained knowledge and application throughout the required tasks, hence their proximity to each other. However, after listening carefully to provider concerns, and since this issue is likely to impact summer assessment series to a greater extent, we have increased the duration of the assessment window for this particular assessment by 1 week, to a maximum of 3 weeks, from summer 2026 onwards.

Action taken: Health Employer Set Project summer 2026 window extended from 2 weeks to 3 weeks, to mitigate against increased provider workload to accommodate an increase in student numbers.

Theme – Clashes with Similar Assessments

Typical comment – Once more T Level assessments are clashing with BTec and similar qualifications, Can Awarding Bodies please work together to ensure that these assessments do not coincide.

NCFE response - NCFE construct all T Level external assessment timetables 2 years in advance of the assessment as required by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). This is done with the intention of supporting providers in their future planning. In doing so, we cross-check any published or provisionally available assessment dates for related qualification suites e.g., GCSE, A-Level, BTEC, etc. This cross-check is carried out during the development of the original drafts and the consultation periods. NCFE have reached out directly to other T Level providers and have worked collectively with the JCQ to make every effort to minimise timetable clashes.

However, as many of these suites operate on a single year cycle (e.g., GCSE dates), there may be occasions where clashes occur after T Level dates are agreed and published. This may in turn lead to operational challenges for our providers and students. For example, we have agreed T Level, CACHE and V Cert external assessment dates for 2025-26, whereas some other qualification suites have yet to confirm dates for the 2024-25 academic session. That said, in order to minimise the possibility of future clashes, NCFE have shared with the JCQ (responsible for production of the GCSE and A Level common timetable) our agreed 2025-26 T Level dates in advance of the corresponding common timetable production for this session, so that high-volume T Level assessments do not clash with similar GCSE and A Level examinations.

Action taken: The Core A assessment in summer 2025 for the Education and Early Years qualification has been rescheduled from a morning to an afternoon start, to avoid a clash with a GCSE English examination. T Level dates now shared with JCQ in advance of production of each year's common GCSE and A Level timetable, to avoid significant future clashes.

Theme – Calendar of assessment dates

Typical comment - It would be helpful to display this assessment information on a calendar form.

NCFE response – For higher volume qualifications, we have created a corresponding calendar of key dates that will incorporate not only the dates within the Key Dates Schedule, but also additional information related to the receipt and return of both hard copies and digital assessment materials together with assessment variation / special consideration / post-results enquiry deadlines. We will extend this to all qualifications and all assessments for the autumn 2024 session on.

Action taken: No amendment to Key Dates Schedule required.

Theme – Religious festivals other than easter

Typical comment - Could the Passover holiday please be taken into account as this our first year of doing the T Level and as we don't celebrate Easter, I notice a lot of the dates have fallen over our Passover holiday this year.

NCFE response – Where possible, set date and timed assessments are scheduled so as not to coincide with religious festival dates. However, given the proportion of providers observing Easter holidays, typically we would account for this religious period, in particular. Where, owing to the number of assessments within each series, a clash with other religious festivals has proved to be unavoidable, we would encourage all providers to use our assessment variation process, in order to deliver assessments within acceptable timeframes while simultaneously permitting such providers to observe specific religious holiday periods.

Action taken: No amendment to Key Dates Schedule required.

Theme – Assessment scheduled too early in academic session

Typical comment – We believe that the occupational specialism for Laboratory Science is held too early, it gives us a very short timeline for completing the content. I like that it doesn't overlap with ESP in case of resits, and I am not sure what the solution is. Even if Assignment 1 is just moved into April/May

NCFE response – Given that Laboratory Science Assignments 1 and 2 are not independent from each other, and also that the instruction from the design of the assignment is that Assignment 2 must be completed over a 6 working-week timeframe, to be completed by mid-May (also allowing for the movable 2-week Easter break interval), we are limited by how late we can schedule this assignment. For future versions of the Key Dates Schedule, we will consult further with all providers for this qualification, to investigate the possibility of reducing the window length for Assignment 2, allowing us to potentially postpone Assignment 1 until early April, pending Easter holiday variations, for future versions of this document.

Action taken: No amendment to existing Key Dates Schedule required.

Theme – Provider challenges in qualification delivery across multiple year groups

Typical comment – The timings of the assessments for year 1 and 2 are not thought out from a centre point of view - since March we have been stretched to breaking point having to fit in both year assessments and structured observations (which we have to fit in with moderator).

NCFE response – NCFE recognises the challenges that providers have when adopting a particular delivery model of concurrence of year groups, incorporating possible resit attempts. However, we neither assume, nor recommend, particular delivery models in terms of when assessment components should be undertaken but leave that in the hands of providers to determine which series of assessments should be undertaken by their cohorts, and to resource accordingly. To bring assessments forward (implied by the provider comments) would potentially jeopardise other providers' abilities to deliver the required Guided Learning Hours.

Action taken: No amendment to Key Dates Schedule required.



Change History Record

This section summarises the changes to this document since the last version.

Version	Description of change	Date of Issue
1.0	Version 1.0 published	July 2024

Document information

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