

---

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

# UNITED KINGDOM

---





Please cite this publication as:

Abusland, T. (2019). *Vocational education and training in Europe: United Kingdom*.

Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018.

[http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational\\_Education\\_Training\\_Europe\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_2018\\_Cedefop\\_ReferNet\\_pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_United_Kingdom_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet_pdf)

Author: Torjus Abusland

Contributor(s): Katherine Latta and Lisa Collett. UK NARIC gratefully acknowledges the input of the UK ReferNet Steering Group members.

Validated by: Ann Miller, UK national representative for ReferNet

Reviewed by Cedefop

© UK NARIC (Cedefop ReferNet United Kingdom), 2018

Reproduction is authorised, provided the source is acknowledged.

This VET in Europe report is part of a series prepared by Cedefop's ReferNet network. VET in Europe reports provide an overview of national vocational education and training (VET) systems of the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. The reports help to understand VET's main features and role within countries' overall education and training systems from a lifelong learning perspective, and VET's relevance to and interaction with the labour market.

VET in Europe reports follow a common Cedefop format. They are available at <http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Information-services/vet-in-europe-country-reports.aspx>.

The opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of Cedefop.

VET in Europe reports are cofinanced by the European Union and ReferNet national partners.

ReferNet is a network of institutions across Europe representing the 28 Member States, plus Iceland and Norway. The network provides Cedefop with information and analysis on national vocational education and training. ReferNet also disseminates information on European VET and Cedefop's work to stakeholders in the EU Member States, Iceland and Norway.

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/networks/refernet>



# Table of contents

CHAPTER 1 External factors influencing VET.....	6
1.1 Structure and development of the population .....	6
1.2 Structure and development of the workforce .....	7
1.4 Regulation of the labour market .....	10
1.5 Welfare and employment policies.....	11
1.6 Value of VET in the labour market.....	11
CHAPTER 2 Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective.....	12
2.1 Diagram of the national education and training system .....	13
2.2 Government-regulated VET provision .....	13
2.2.1 VET providers .....	15
2.2.2 School- and college-based VET at EQF level 3, ISCED 351, 352 .....	16
2.2.3 School- and college-based VET at EQF level 4, ISCED 351, 354 .....	18
2.2.4 College-based VET at EQF level 5, ISCED 551, 554 .....	21
2.2.5 College-based VET at EQF level 7, ISCED 767 .....	23
2.2.6 Apprenticeships .....	26
2.2.7 Apprenticeships at EQF levels 2-3, ISCED 351, 352.....	27
2.2.8 Apprenticeships at EQF level 4, ISCED 354.....	29
2.2.9 Higher apprenticeships at EQF levels 5 and 6, ISCED 551, 554, 665 ...	31
2.2.10 Higher apprenticeships at EQF level 7, ISCED 767.....	34
2.2.11 Learning opportunities for vulnerable groups.....	38
2.2.12 Governance of VET.....	39
2.2.13 Financing of VET.....	41
2.2.16 Teachers and trainers in VET.....	42
2.3 Other forms of training .....	43
2.3.1 Training providers and programmes.....	44
2.3.2 Workplace learning .....	45
2.3.3 Funding mechanisms .....	46
2.3.4 Recognition of non-formal and informal learning .....	46
2.3.5 Quality assurance mechanisms.....	47
CHAPTER 3 Shaping VET qualifications.....	48
3.1 Methods used to anticipate labour market needs .....	48
3.2 Design process and qualification designers.....	49
3.2.1 Strategic development of VET.....	51
3.3 Assessment .....	53
3.4 Quality assurance of the processes .....	54
CHAPTER 4 Promoting participation in VET .....	56
4.1 Incentives for individuals .....	56

4.2	Incentives for enterprises .....	57
4.3	Incentives for providers .....	58
4.4	Guidance and counselling, structures and services.....	58
4.4.1	Careers advisors .....	58
4.4.2	Careers advice services .....	59
	Bibliography .....	62
	List of acronyms and abbreviations .....	65
	ANNEX 1 Overview of UK education authorities .....	68

# List of figures and tables

## Figures

Figure 1.	Projected old-age dependency ratio.....	6
Figure 2.	Long-term international migration (thousands).....	7
Figure 3.	Unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over (%).....	8
Figure 4.	Employment rates in UK regions (%).....	8
Figure 5.	Employment in the UK by industry.....	9
Figure 6.	Employment by age and educational attainment level – annual data (%), ISCED 2011, in 2017.....	9
Figure 7.	Net migration to the UK by citizenship (thousands).....	10
Figure 8.	VET in the UK's education system.....	13
Figure 9.	Participation of 16-18 year olds in education and training in England in 2017 (%).....	25
Figure 10.	Participation of 16-19 year olds in education and training in Scotland in 2018 (%).....	25
Figure 11.	Apprenticeship starts by level: England.....	36
Figure 12.	Apprenticeship starts by level: Scotland.....	37
Figure 13.	Apprenticeship starts by level: Wales.....	37
Figure 14.	Apprenticeship starts by level: Northern Ireland ( ).....	38
Figure 15.	Training days per employee by sector, 2013 – 2017.....	44

## Tables

Table 1.	UK national qualifications frameworks in relation to the EQF.....	14
Table 2.	NQFs and apprenticeship levels in relation to the EQF.....	26

## CHAPTER 1

# External factors influencing VET

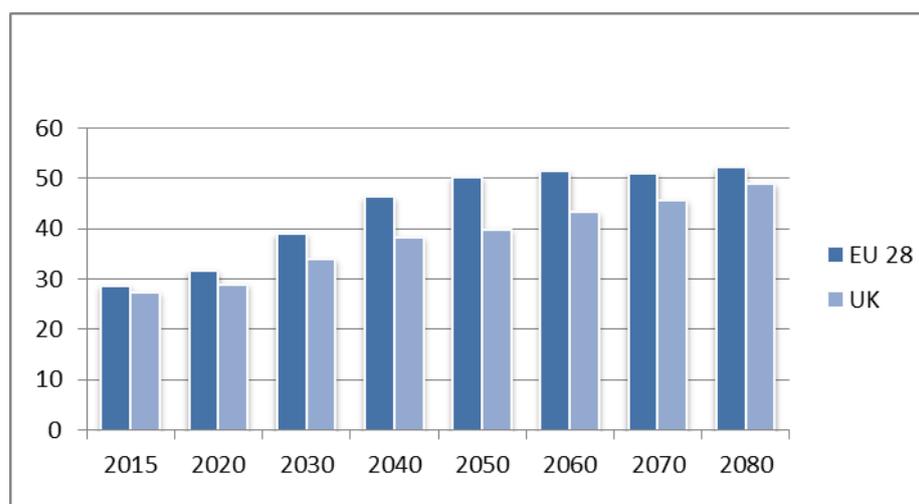
The United Kingdom (UK) is a union of Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales) and Northern Ireland. The UK Government has devolved decision-making powers in a number of areas of policy responsibility to the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, such as governance for all levels and types of education, including VET. Whilst there are similarities between the systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, reforms are creating greater divergence and the Scottish system has always been significantly different in many ways to those of the rest of the UK.

At the time of the update to this report, in 2018, the UK electorate as a whole has voted in a national referendum in favour of leaving the European Union. The government is currently negotiating the terms of exiting, and the UK's future relationship with the EU. The electorates in both Scotland and Northern Ireland voted to remain. The contrary positions of the referendum results for the UK and Scotland and Northern Ireland has provided some additional constitutional complexity to be resolved.

### 1.1 Structure and development of the population

The population of the UK is currently 65.8 million, having risen from just over 60 million in 2005 <sup>(1)</sup>. The UK old age dependency ratio is showing a trend towards an aging population, with more people reaching pension age. The old age dependency ratio for 2015 was 27.5%. The ratio is expected to rise dramatically after 2020. The estimated EU average for 2015 was 28.8%.

Figure 1. **Projected old-age dependency ratio**

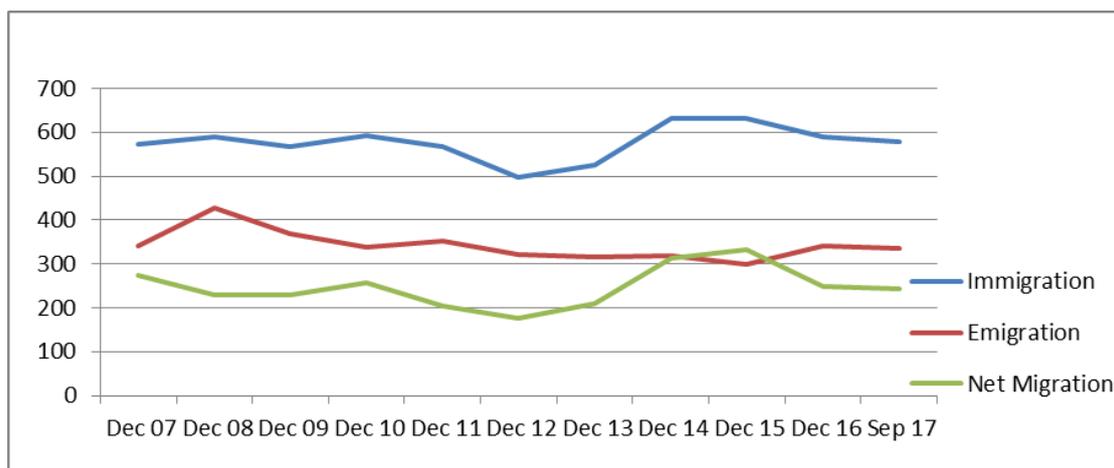


Source: Eurostat (2018). [Projected old-age-dependency ratio](#) [accessed 05.07.2018].

<sup>(1)</sup> Eurostat (2018b). [Population on 1 January 2017](#) [accessed 05.07.2018].

Estimated immigration to the UK in the year ending December 2016 was 589 000, down from 631 000 in the previous 12 months. There has been a significant drop in immigration from the EU since June 2016 as shown in figure 7. Emigration is estimated to have been 340 000 in the year ending December 2016, a number which has remained relatively stable since 2010 and net migration was an estimated 249 000, down after the previous year's number of 332 000.

Figure 2. **Long-term international migration (thousands)**



Source: Office for National Statistics (2018). [Long-term international migration](#) [accessed 05.07.2018].

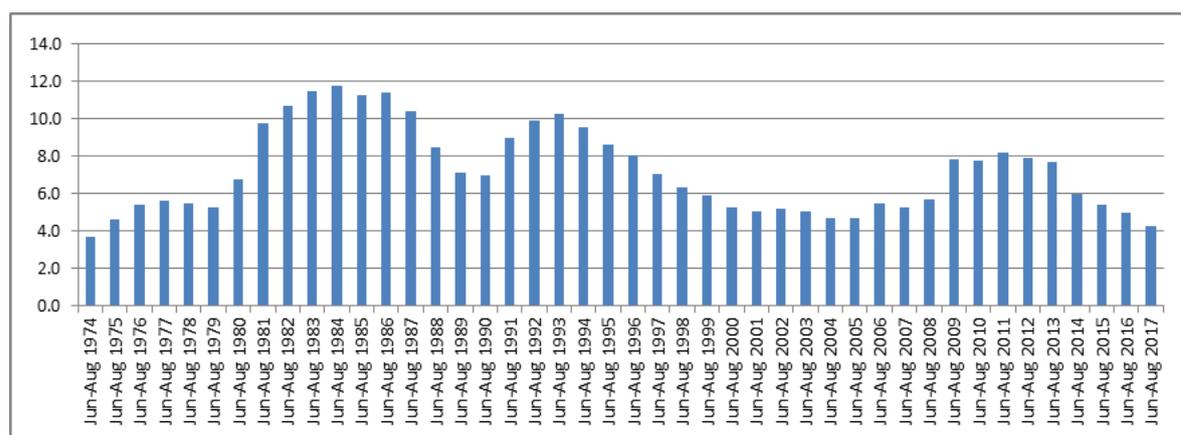
124 000 migrants arrived in the UK to study in the year ending in December 2016, which represents the second largest group of immigrants after those who arrived with the intention of gaining work<sup>(2)</sup>. Immigrants attend the same VET programmes as UK students. Preparatory English language courses exist. The majority of long-term immigrants classed as students come for higher education study.

## 1.2 Structure and development of the workforce

The total UK employed workforce (aged between 16 and 64) accounted for 32.4 million people in April 2018, which is an employment rate of 75.6%. There has been a general increase in the employment rate since late 2011/early 2012, and the unemployment rate has fallen to 4.2%, which is the lowest since 1975. The Office for National Statistics estimates that non-UK nationals made up 3.5% of all people working in the UK in 1997, which had risen to 11% in March 2018.

<sup>(2)</sup> Office for National Statistics (2016). [Migration statistics quarterly report May 2016](#) [accessed 22.2.2017].

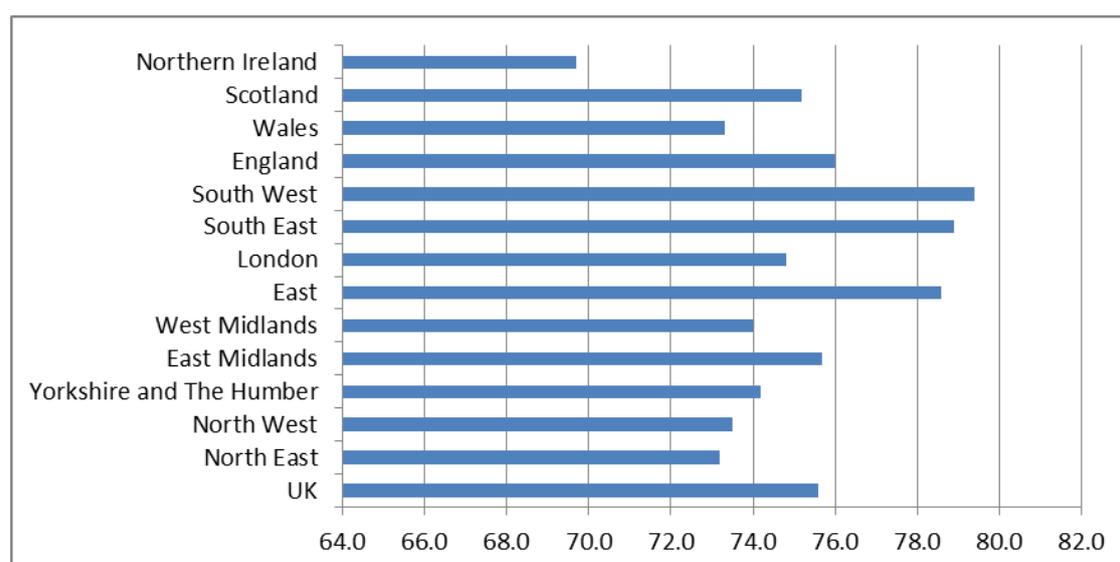
Figure 3. **Unemployment rate for those aged 16 and over (%)**



Source: Office for National Statistics (2018d). [UK Labour Market, June 2018](#) [accessed 06/07/2018].

Levels of employment vary on a regional and national basis, with Northern Ireland recording a rate of 69.7% in June 2018, and parts of the North of England and Wales also struggling with low rates. In contrast the South West, South East and East of England all have employment rates above 78%.

Figure 4. **Employment rates in UK regions (%)**

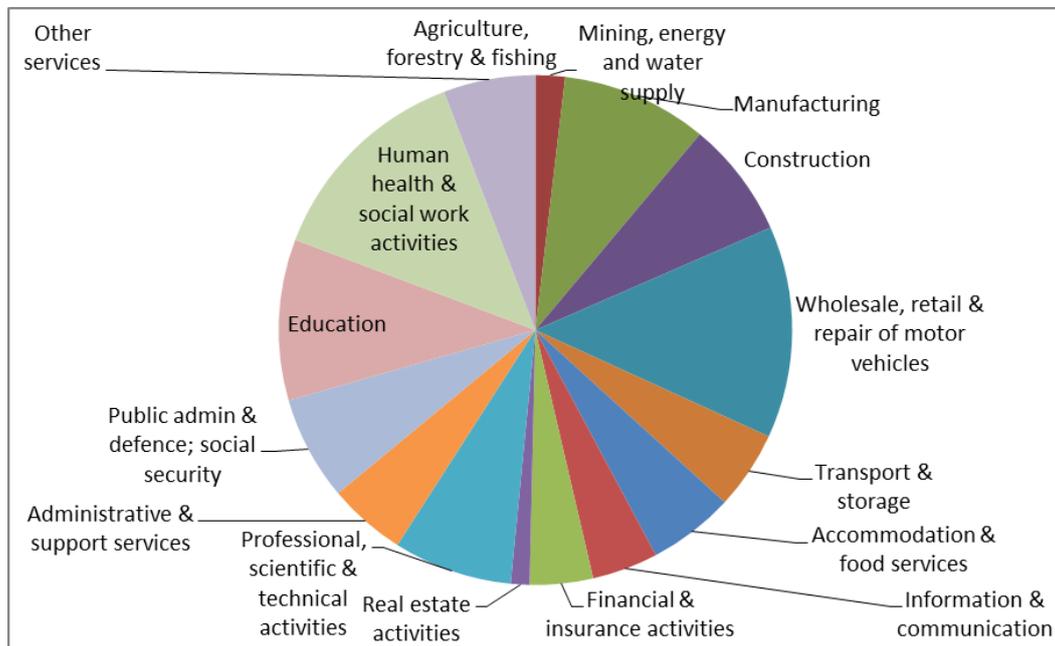


Source: Office for National Statistics (2018c). [Regional labour market statistics in the UK: June 2018](#) [accessed 06/07/2018].

Since the 2009 recession there has been a rise in people employed on a part-time, temporary and self-employed basis. Public sector employment has shrunk to 16.5% (December 2017) of the total workforce, which is the lowest proportion since quarterly records began in 1999. It is expected that the UK labour market will in future need more workers in the professional services, administrative services, arts and recreation, energy supply services and finance and insurance sectors with legal and social associate professionals predicted to account for the largest amount of jobs

growth. The mining and quarrying, manufacturing and construction sectors are, however, in decline <sup>(3)</sup>.

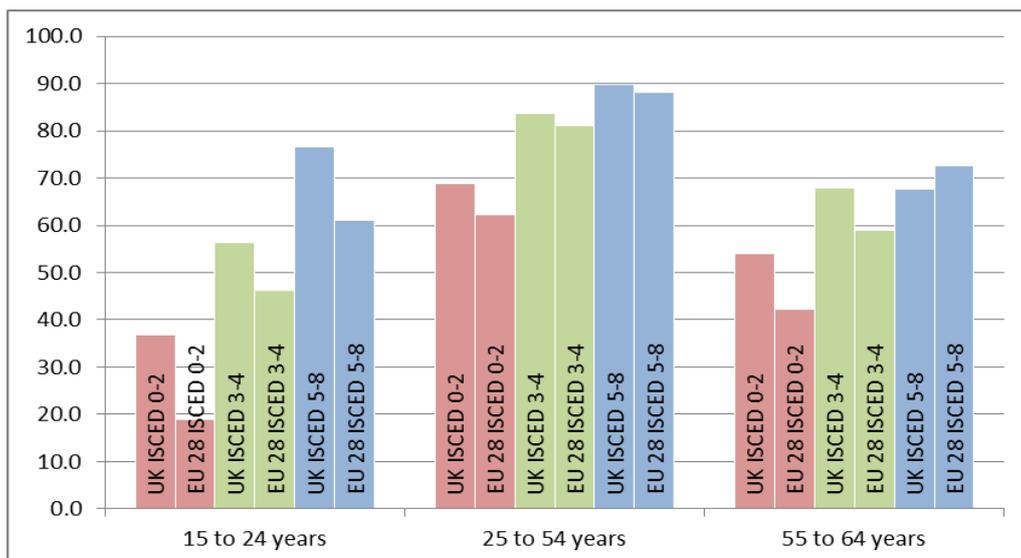
Figure 5. **Employment in the UK by industry**



Source: Office for National Statistics (2018a). [Employment by industry](#) [accessed 06/07/2018].

People with no formal qualifications or low skills have found it increasingly difficult to find employment in recent years, specifically for the age group 15-24 as detailed in figure 6 below. See chapter 3 for information about how labour market information influences qualification design.

Figure 6. **Employment by age and educational attainment level – annual data (%), ISCED 2011, in 2017**



Source: Eurostat (2018). [Employment by educational attainment level – annual data \(%\) in 2017](#)

<sup>(3)</sup> Cedefop (2018). [Skills Panorama](#) [accessed 02.08.2018].

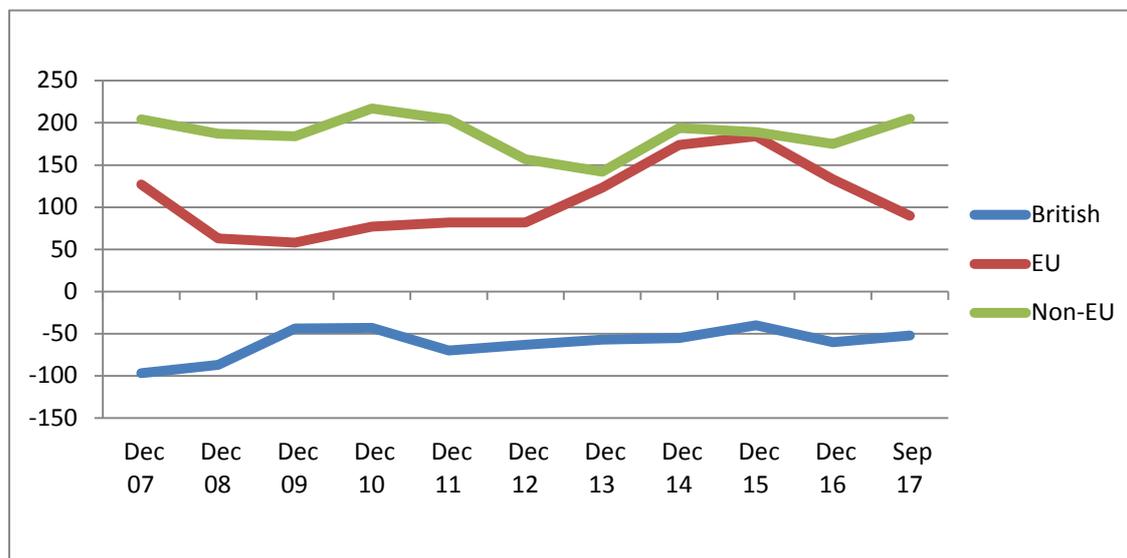
### 1.3 Economy structure

The UK has a market-based economy and is a major international trading power. Financial services as well as pharmaceutical, petroleum, automotive, aerospace, telecommunications and other technological industries play an important role in the UK's economy, with the services industry being the largest contributor. The UK Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was the fifth largest in the world in 2017. The GDP fell in 2008 and 2009, but the economy has since grown steadily.

### 1.4 Regulation of the labour market

The UK labour market is demand-led and amongst the least regulated in the world. Skill shortages exist in various sectors. The top five occupations experiencing shortages are currently finance, medicine associate professionals, nursing and midwifery, other health professionals and ICT <sup>(4)</sup>. The UK Government lists shortage occupations for work permit purposes and currently includes various engineering and technician jobs, medicine, health, science, teaching (secondary level), IT/computing, chefs and arts amongst other professions <sup>(5)</sup>. UK NARIC works with the UK immigration authority by providing recognition of formal qualifications from abroad to the most appropriate level within the UK education system. The current UK Government is committed to reducing immigration and less EU nationals have been arriving in the country since the EU referendum as shown in figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Net migration to the UK by citizenship (thousands)



Source: Office for National Statistics (2018). [Long-term international migration](#) [accessed 05.07.2018].

<sup>(4)</sup> Cedefop (2018), *Mismatch priority occupations: UK* [accessed 03.08.2018].

<sup>(5)</sup> Home Office (2018). *UK Shortage Occupation List from 06 July 2018* [accessed 03.08.2018].

## 1.5 Welfare and employment policies

Following the Welfare Reform Act 2012, the UK Government began introducing changes to the benefit system in 2013 with the stated aim of ensuring that it pays more for people to work than for them to stay on benefits. Further initiatives include modernising the Jobcentre Plus services and creating closer links with local authorities, employers and providers. The UK Work Programme's stated intention was to support benefit claimants in need of assistance with job seeking and training opportunities. The Work Programme was replaced by the Work and Health Programme in 2017, which provides specialised employment support for people with disabilities and the long-term unemployed. The UK Government published the *Improving Lives: The Future of Work, Health and Disability* White Paper <sup>(6)</sup> in November 2017, aiming to support more people finding and staying in work during the next ten years.

## 1.6 Value of VET in the labour market

The amount of job roles requiring intermediate and higher skills and education is rising in the UK and it is expected that it will become even more important to possess specialist skills and higher education in the coming years, in order to qualify for a more technologically advanced labour market. Whilst a number of occupations will continue to exist for unskilled and low skilled employees, more and higher paid jobs will increasingly require intermediate (upper secondary/technician) level and higher education qualifications. In fact, 2012 was the first time there were more jobs requiring higher education degrees than jobs requiring no qualifications <sup>(7)</sup>. There are a large variety of VET qualifications in the UK and some enjoy a higher regard in the labour market than others. See chapter 2 for an overview of available qualifications in the UK. Employers are generally well aware of sector specific qualifications; however, research has found evidence that frequent changes to qualifications can lead to confusion regarding their value and relevance <sup>(8)</sup>.

---

<sup>(6)</sup> Department for Work and Pensions (2017). *Living lives: the future of work, health and disability* [accessed 13/11/2018]

<sup>(7)</sup> Felstead et al (2012). *Skills at Work in Britain, First Findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2012* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(8)</sup> Wolf, A. (2011). *Review of Vocational Education – the Wolf Report* [accessed 22.2.2017].

## CHAPTER 2

# Providing vocational education and training in a lifelong learning perspective

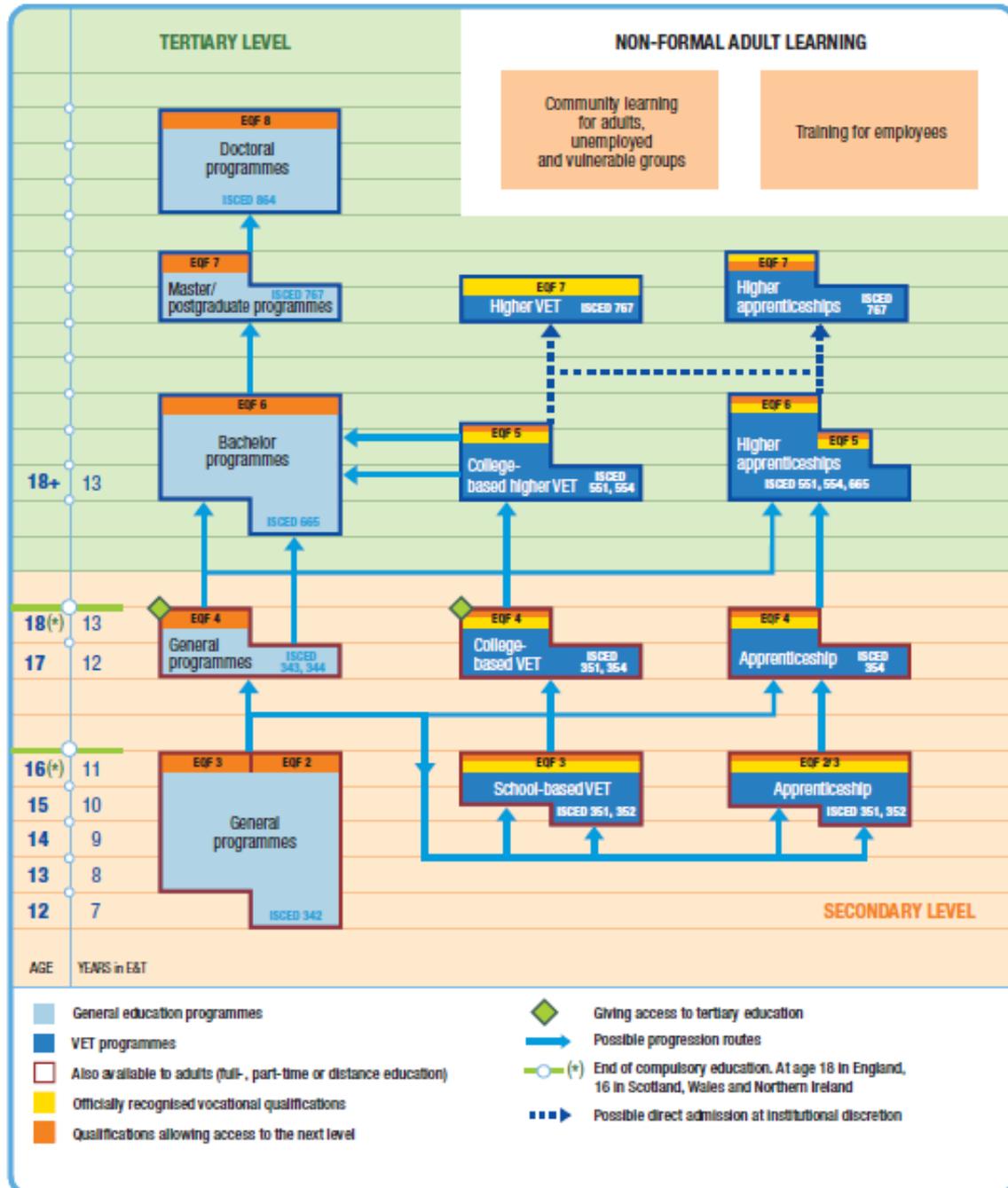
- Vocational education and training (VET) is available at secondary and higher education levels in the UK; (EQF levels 2 to 7). Most VET qualifications are taken at EQF level 3 and EQF 4 <sup>(9)</sup>.
- Education or training is compulsory up to age 16 (18 in England). Most VET programmes can be accessed from age 15/16, although learners can be introduced to VET earlier after dropping out of compulsory schooling or combining vocational subjects with general secondary study.
- VET qualifications exist in a wide variety of sectors and prepare learners for work and further study.
- Programme duration varies by subject area, level of study and type of learning and is between one and four years.
- Predominantly school-based programmes that combine general academic study with VET elements exist alongside broad VET programmes and specialist occupational programmes. Work-based learning may take place both in a VET provider setting and a workplace.
- Apprentices are employed and are taught core, transferable skills. Technical and occupational learning take place on and off the job. A national qualification is awarded upon completion.
- Qualifications are designed and issued by independent awarding organisations.
- 2.2 million people registered with colleges in 2017/18, 1.4 million of those VET learners were adults <sup>(10)</sup>. Adult and continuing education is part of the formal education system, but is also offered as non-formal training by employers and training providers.
- The UK government has devolved decision-making powers in several areas of policy, including governance of VET, to the administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. There are similarities between the education and training systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, but reforms are creating greater divergence. Scotland has a different, long-established VET system.

---

<sup>(9)</sup> See also: <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>  
<sup>(10)</sup> Association of Colleges (2017). [College Key Facts 2017/18](#)

## 2.1 Diagram of the national education and training system

Figure 8. VET in the UK's education system



NB: ISCED-P 2011, ISCED classification based on the 2015 mapping of UK classifications by the Department for Education  
 Source: Cedefop and ReferNet UK

## 2.2 Government-regulated VET provision

Formal VET in the UK is organised within several national qualifications frameworks. The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) was introduced in England and

Northern Ireland in 2015 and encompasses academic and vocational qualifications. The RQF gives awarding organisations increased freedom and flexibility to develop qualifications that meet specific labour market needs. Qualifications are now expected to be validated and supported directly by employers to ensure qualifications measure the knowledge and skills necessary for industry, rather than follow prescriptive rules and structures imposed by government agencies. Level descriptors have been revised, but the same eight framework levels (plus entry levels, see Table 1) remain from the previous Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), and the existing qualifications continue to be offered until they are withdrawn by the awarding organisation. The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) also has the same levels as the QCF/RQF. The CQFW is a meta framework which comprises three pillars. These are regulated qualifications, higher education qualifications and lifelong learning qualifications, which include workplace continuing professional development and bespoke business training, as well as non-formal learning, recognition of prior learning (RPL), and assigned accreditation for learning. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) comprises 12 levels and includes formal, and an increasing volume of non-formal qualifications.

The CQFW, SCQF and the previous QCF describe levels, qualifications and units in terms of learning outcomes as well as credits and notional learning hours. RQF qualifications have, from 31 December 2017, been described in terms of total qualification time <sup>(11)</sup> as credit allocation to units and qualifications is not compulsory within the RQF. National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are competence-based, practically oriented qualifications that are based on National Occupational Standards and often assessed in the work place. While NVQs sit within the RQF and CQFW, SVQs sit within the SCQF.

The UK qualifications frameworks correspond to the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) as described in the table below:

Table 1. **UK national qualifications frameworks in relation to the EQF**

EQF	RQF	SCQF	CQFW
8	8	12	8
7	7	11	7
6	6	10/9	6
5	5/4	8/7	5/4
4	3	6	3
3	2	5	2
2	1	4	1
1	Entry 3	3	Entry 3
	Entry 2	2	Entry 2

<sup>(11)</sup> Ofqual (2015). *Total Qualification Time Criteria* [accessed 22.2.2017].

EQF	RQF	SCQF	CQFW
	Entry 1	1	Entry 1

Source: QAA (2014). [Qualifications can cross boundaries – a guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland](#) [accessed 22.2.2017].

There is not always an automatic right to progression from one level to the next within the frameworks as education providers retain the right to set the entry requirements to individual qualifications based on individual awarding organisations' (see 3.2) requirements. However, the unit-based structure of many qualifications opens up the possibilities for validation of prior learning and transfer of credit between qualifications (see 2.3.4 for further details).

### 2.2.1 VET providers

There is a range of education and training providers within the UK VET sector. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, providers include lower secondary schools, school sixth forms, sixth form colleges<sup>(12)</sup>, further education (FE) colleges<sup>(13)</sup> and higher education institutions (HEIs) in addition to private training organisations and work-based learning providers. FE colleges represent the largest group of VET providers, offering education to learners that are predominantly 16 years old and upwards, including a large number of adult learners. FE colleges offer vocational learning at entry level (EQF 2) through to higher VET (EQF level 7). Students may attend FE colleges on a full-time or part-time basis and combine the study with an apprenticeship. In Scotland, VET is mostly offered in colleges providing vocational secondary from EQF level 2 and higher education and by private training providers, but also in secondary schools (EQF 2 – 4) and higher education institutions (HEIs). The recent introduction of graduate apprenticeships (see 2.2.9) means that VET is now increasingly being provided by HEIs in Scotland.

A large number of colleges exist in the UK, but many have in recent years merged to form larger regional units, a process that is still on-going in England.

University Technical Colleges (UTCs) (EQF 2-4) are VET institutions for 14-19 year olds in England. UTCs are formed through partnerships between universities, colleges and businesses to match national curriculum requirements to local needs and include work placements. UTCs combine core skills with early subject specialisation and links to higher education. Similarly, Studio Schools have been introduced in 2010<sup>(14)</sup> for the same age range in England. These are small institutions offering

<sup>(12)</sup> Sixth form programmes are offered in years 12 and 13 in secondary general or vocational (college-based) programmes to often acquire an A level (EQF 4), but also vocational qualifications at the same level (<https://www.aoc.co.uk/sixth-form-colleges>)

<sup>(13)</sup> See <https://www.gov.uk/further-education-courses>. Further education colleges are accessible to both young people below 18 and adults; programmes include general academic study, key competences, general vocational programmes, study that may be focused on a specific sector as well as off-the-job apprenticeship training

<sup>(14)</sup> UK NARIC (2014). [Innovation in VET and the concept of Studio Schools](#)

vocational qualifications (at EQF levels 2-4), general qualifications (such as GCSEs) <sup>(15)</sup> as well as teaching through enterprise projects and work placements <sup>(16)</sup>.

To meet labour market demand for higher technical skills, a network of Institutes of Technology is being created in England focussed on skills development at qualifications framework levels 3-5 (EQF 4-5). These institutes will be sponsored by employers, registered with professional bodies and aligned with apprenticeship standards, and be both empowered and expected to design clear routes to employment in cooperation with employers and professional organisations. Moreover, funding from the government and employers was confirmed for five National Colleges in 2016. These National Colleges will focus on delivering technical skills at levels 4 to 6 (EQF levels 5-6) in the areas of digital skills, high speed rail, nuclear, creative and cultural, and onshore oil and gas.

### **2.2.2 School- and college-based VET at EQF level 3, ISCED 351, 352**

#### **Entry requirements / target groups / part of compulsory education and training**

Vocational study at this level may be taken as alternatives to compulsory general academic study at secondary schools or as stand-alone qualifications completed after moving sideways from secondary school to starting VET at a college. Adults may also start VET at this level.

In Scotland National Certificates are primarily aimed at people in full-time education and National Progression Awards are usually shorter, more flexible programmes for employees or people returning to work, though are also taken as part of a wider curriculum of qualifications within the school or college setting.

Students may complete this type of VET at age 15/16. Age 16 marks the end of the compulsory schooling age, although the age to which individuals are required to take part in education or training, either part-time or full-time, was raised in England to 18 in 2015 in a bid to improve the skill levels of the work force.

#### **Awards provided**

A wide variety of qualifications exist at this level, including BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) Awards, Certificates and Diplomas <sup>(17)</sup> as well as NVQs (National Vocational Qualifications). SVQs (Scottish Vocational Qualifications), National Certificates and National Progression Awards (NPAs) are vocational qualifications in Scotland.

The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in vocational subjects is

---

<sup>(15)</sup> General Certificate of Secondary Education (RQF/CQFW levels 1 and 2 corresponding to EQF levels 2 and 3 respectively), see also [http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united\\_kingdom\\_england\\_and\\_northern\\_ireland\\_-\\_european\\_inventory\\_on\\_nqf\\_2016.pdf](http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/files/united_kingdom_england_and_northern_ireland_-_european_inventory_on_nqf_2016.pdf)

<sup>(16)</sup> UK NARIC (2014), *Innovation in VET and the concept of Studio Schools*

<sup>(17)</sup> See also Pearson. [What is a BTEC?](#) [accessed 15/02/2019]

available in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. National Qualifications are offered in both vocational and academic subjects also in Scotland.

### **Main providers of these programme types**

Colleges, secondary schools

### **Duration**

Although short courses and individual units of study can be completed, most full-time VET programmes at this level take between one and two years to complete. In Scotland National Certificates and National Progression Awards are National Qualifications Group Awards in which students accumulate credits towards distinctive group awards. Programmes can take longer when studied part-time.

### **Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

BTEC Firsts (RQF level 2 qualifications) <sup>(18)</sup> are often studied part-time and in conjunction with other qualifications. NVQs/SVQs are often taken by employed people or in conjunction with an apprenticeship, but are also available in college settings.

### **Work-based learning / general education subjects / key competences**

GCSEs in vocational subjects can normally be studied alongside general academic subjects. BTEC and NVQ / SVQ programmes combine theoretical and practical vocational education and can form part of an apprenticeship programme.

'Early adopter' college regions in Scotland explored and developed vocational pathways for 15-18 year old secondary school students (at EQF levels 2-4) that aimed to bridge the gap between school, college, university and employment. This trial resulted in the Foundation apprenticeships described in section 2.2.7.

Work-based learning, such as workshops, in-company training and on-the-job apprenticeship training may all be included in programmes of this type, but the inclusion and amount depends on the programme.

### **Progression opportunities for learners after graduation**

Qualifications at this level may provide entry to the labour market in professions such as heating and ventilation engineer, motor vehicle technician or care worker, but are not all linked to an occupational standard and are mostly intended to prepare students for further vocational specialisation at a higher level.

In Scotland National Progression Awards are National Qualifications Group Awards that allow entry to more advanced study and employment.

---

<sup>(18)</sup> Pearson. [About BTEC Firsts](#) [accessed 15/02/2018]

*Generating our success: the Northern Ireland strategy for youth training* (<sup>19</sup>) sets out how a new broad-based baccalaureate-style programme for young people should be developed at EQF 3. Piloting started in autumn 2015 and the programme integrates structured work-based learning primarily as a method for developing skills. The programme was created as a stepping stone towards VET at EQF level 4 and above through apprenticeships (see 2.2.8), and new higher level apprenticeship programmes (see 2.2.9). An Education and Training Inspectorate evaluation of the 2015-17 pilots found that most of the programmes were appropriately designed to enable students to progress or re-engage with education and training, to learn new skills and build upon their prior experiences. It also appeared that the piloted programmes enabled students to access education and training at an appropriate level and to progress seamlessly to employment, and further and higher education (<sup>20</sup>).

### **2.2.3 School- and college-based VET at EQF level 4, ISCED 351, 354**

#### **Entry requirements / target groups / part of compulsory education and training**

Vocational study at this level encompasses vocational subjects and qualifications taken as alternatives to general academic study at secondary schools or as stand-alone qualifications completed after progressing from secondary school to starting VET at a college. Adults may also start VET at this level.

Most pupils take examinations for the GCSE at age 15/16 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The grades achieved here play an important role in determining the future study opportunities within VET. In Scotland, National 4 and 5 qualifications (EQF 2/3, see Table 1), normally also taken at age 15/16, are the most common entrance qualifications to VET.

Students may complete this type of VET at age 18/19. Age 16 marks the end of the compulsory schooling age, although the age to which individuals are required to take part in education or training, either part-time or full-time, was raised in England to 18 in 2015. The 'Opportunities for All' pledge offers a guaranteed place in education or training for 16-19 year olds in Scotland. In Northern Ireland, a guarantee of training towards level 1-3 qualifications (EQF levels 2-4) is offered through the Training for Success programme for all unemployed 16-17 year old school leavers with extended eligibility for those with a disability and from an in-care background. The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training includes a policy commitment for the future system that all 16–24 year olds who require training at level 2 (EQF 3) will have the opportunity to participate.

---

(<sup>19</sup>) Department for Employment and Learning (2015). *Generating our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training* [accessed 13/11/2018]

(<sup>20</sup>) Education and Training Inspectorate (2017). *An evaluation of the Youth Training pilot programmes at level 2 and the ApprenticeshipsNI pilot programmes at level 3 provided by the six colleges of further education in Northern Ireland* [accessed 15/11/2018]

### **Awards provided**

A wide variety of qualifications exist at this level, including BTEC National Awards, Certificates and Diplomas, and NVQs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and National Progression Awards, National Certificates, Professional Development Awards and SVQs in Scotland.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland applied subjects at upper secondary level are also available in the General Certificate of Education Advanced level (GCE A level) and Advanced Subsidiary programmes and the Welsh Baccalaureate. National Qualifications, such as Higher and Advanced Higher are offered primarily in academic, but also some vocational subjects in Scotland.

### **Main providers of these programme types**

Colleges, secondary schools

### **Duration**

Although short courses and individual units of study can be completed, most full-time VET programmes at this level take between one and two years to complete. Programmes can take longer when studied part-time.

### **Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

BTEC Nationals are often studied part-time and in conjunction with other qualifications. SVQs/NVQs are often taken by employed people or in conjunction with an apprenticeship, but are also available in college settings.

### **Work-based learning / general education subjects / key competences**

Work-based learning, such as workshops, in-company training and on-the-job apprenticeship training may all be included in programmes of this type, but the inclusion and amount depends on the programme.

BTEC and NVQ/SVQ programmes combine theoretical and practical vocational education and can form part of an apprenticeship programme.

In England, 16-19 year olds are expected to follow a 16-19 study programme consisting of a main vocational qualification (or general academic qualification) and including work-related learning as well as English and mathematics, unless the required level has already been achieved in these two subjects.

Qualifications taught in England at RQF level 3 may be categorised as either technical or applied general qualifications. Qualifications receiving sufficient endorsements from employers and trade and professional associations are categorised as Tech levels (Technical level qualifications as a mark of quality and relevance to the labour market. Applied general qualifications provide a broader study

of a vocational area, and need the public backing of three universities to achieve the quality mark. Students completing a study programme started in 2014 or later that includes one of the Tech levels, a level 3 core mathematics qualification and an extended project will achieve the Technical Baccalaureate <sup>(21)</sup>.

The Welsh Baccalaureate contains academic and vocational qualifications alongside a wider programme of learning that includes an individual project and three challenges that enable young people to develop critical skills including problem solving and creativity. This programme comprises literacy, numeracy, digital literacy, critical thinking and problem-solving, planning and organisation, creativity and innovation and personal effectiveness, as well as general academic and/or vocational qualifications in addition to the skills challenges that require learners to demonstrate research skills, entrepreneurship and participate in community activities.

### **Progression opportunities for learners after graduation**

Completion of qualifications at this level may lead to jobs such as electrician, veterinary nurse and dental technician.

Candidates holding RQF level 3 or SCQF level 6 vocational qualifications may be allowed access to selected first cycle university programmes at institutional discretion. The Curriculum for Excellence <sup>(22)</sup> in Scotland creates opportunities for students to combine a wider range of qualification types, which means that a larger variety of secondary qualifications are used to apply for tertiary education. Vocational RQF qualifications at level 3 that are classified as Applied General qualifications are designed to provide a clear route from vocational education to higher education in England.

The majority of young university entrants in England, Wales and Northern Ireland hold general academic A level (RQF/CQFW level 3) <sup>(23)</sup> qualifications, but recent years have seen a steady rise in applicants being accepted with only vocational qualifications and a mixture of academic and vocational qualifications <sup>(24)</sup>. In Scotland, the majority of young university entrants will hold Scottish Higher qualifications (SCQF level 6 / EQF level 4). However, the final report of the Commission on Widening Access in 2016 recommended that the admissions processes of post-16 institutions recognise alternative pathways to higher education and do not unnecessarily disadvantage those who choose them, and that by 2018 a

---

<sup>(21)</sup> See also Department for Education (2014). [The Technical Baccalaureate Performance Table Measure](#)

<sup>(22)</sup> See also: <https://www.gov.scot/policies/schools/school-curriculum/>

<sup>(23)</sup> CQFW level 3 are referenced to EQF level 4, RQF levels are still to be referenced to EQF levels

<sup>(24)</sup> UCAS (2015). [End of Cycle Report 2015](#) [accessed 10.01.2019].

Framework for Fair Access should be published <sup>(25)</sup>.

The Department for Education (DfE) is taking forward the reforms proposed in the 2016 Post-16 Skills Plan in an action plan for the introduction of new technical study programmes called *T levels* <sup>(26)</sup> in England. The aim is to simplify the national system of VET and raising the credibility of qualifications with employers. *T levels* will – together with apprenticeships – be a route to skilled employment as well as entry to higher technical education and training. The programmes will be two years long and include a new technical qualification (taught in a classroom, workshop or simulated work environment), a substantial work placement of up to three months, as well as English, mathematics and digital content. A work placement pilot scheme was launched in September 2017 to test different models and approaches to delivering *T level* placements.

Apprenticeships and *T levels* will be based on the same set of standards designed by employer-led consortia, but *T level* students will undertake a broader programme, gaining skills and knowledge relevant to a range of occupations. *T level* panels consisting of employers, professional bodies and providers with relevant curriculum experience have been established and have been given the responsibility of developing the outline content for technical qualifications and the broader *T level* curriculum. Panel members have the support of education and assessment experts experienced in qualification development. *T level* qualifications will be offered under exclusive time-limited licensing following a procurement process. *T levels* will be introduced from September 2020 and are expected to gradually replace most of the technical provision currently funded for 16 to 18 year olds in England as *T levels* are phased in.

The qualifications regulator in Wales - Qualifications Wales - is reviewing and reforming vocational qualifications in each major sector of employment. The review aims to find out whether current qualifications are effective in meeting the needs of learners as well as addressing the needs of industry and society.

#### **2.2.4 College-based VET at EQF level 5, ISCED 551, 554**

##### **Entry requirements / target groups / part of compulsory education and training**

Entry to these non-degree higher education qualifications are usually based on possession of an EQF level 4 qualification from school or college in either vocational or academic subject areas. Entry is allowed at the discretion of the college guided by the awarding body.

Vocational study at this level encompasses stand-alone qualifications for applicants aged 18+. These study programmes may also be completed by employees looking for

---

<sup>(25)</sup> Scottish Government (2016b). *The final report of the Commission on Widening Access* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(26)</sup> Department for Education (2017b). *Post-16 technical education reforms: T level action plan* [accessed 15/11/2018]

career progression.

### **Awards provided**

A wide variety of qualifications exist at this level, including BTEC Higher Certificates and Diplomas, and NVQs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and National Progression Awards, National Certificates, Professional Development Awards and SVQs in Scotland.

### **Main providers of these programme types**

Colleges

### **Duration**

Although short courses and individual units of study can be completed, most full-time VET programmes at this level take between one and two years to complete. BTEC/SQA Higher National programmes are vocational short-cycle higher education programmes under the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA) and are either Certificates (approximately one year) or Diplomas (two years). Programmes can take longer when studied part-time.

### **Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

BTEC/SQA Higher Nationals are often studied part-time. SVQs/NVQs are often taken by employed people or in conjunction with an apprenticeship, but are also available in college settings.

### **Work-based learning / general education subjects / key competences**

Work-based learning, such as workshops, in-company training and on-the-job apprenticeship training may all be included in programmes of this type, but the inclusion and amount depends on the programme.

### **Progression opportunities for learners after graduation**

Possession of qualifications at this level is needed for jobs like quantity surveyor, education administrator and paramedic.

There are good articulation options for progression from higher VET programmes at RQF levels 4 and 5/SCQF levels 7 and 8 (EQF level 5), such as Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND), to the second or third year of a Bachelor degree in a related field in the UK. However, admission and transfer arrangements are made at the discretion of the admitting institution, though in Scotland the Government and Scottish Funding Council (SFC) have provided strategic funding to help build more substantive and sustained articulation arrangements through the use of regional 'articulation hubs'. This funding and the hubs are no longer in place, but universities and tertiary colleges have built into their

Outcome Agreements with the SFC<sup>(27)</sup> the requirement to sustain and ideally increase such articulation activity. This is also supported by recommendations from the Commission on Widening Access set up by the Scottish Government, with a Commissioner on Fair Access in place to help drive such activity.

A review of post-18 education in England was launched in February 2018 that will focus on identifying ways to help people make more effective choices between the different options available after 18; ensuring funding arrangements across post-18 education in the future are transparent and do not stop people from accessing higher education or training; enabling people from all backgrounds to progress and succeed in post-18 education; and making sure the post-18 education system is providing the skills that employers need.

In Scotland in 2013, additional funding was allocated for an increase in the number of learners with HNCs and HNDs to second and third year of university, respectively. Universities that bid for the additional funded places work closely with partner tertiary colleges on supporting guaranteed articulation places for successful learners, and these form part of the Scottish Funding Council Outcome Agreements that are brokered with universities and regional college boards.

Published in 2016, *Towards 2030: a framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales*<sup>(28)</sup> suggests that, while quality and performance of the further and higher education sector is good, the post-compulsory education and training landscape could support progression better. The framework suggests setting up clear and flexible learning and career pathways and opportunities. Revision of age 16 as the end of compulsory schooling is also suggested, in view of increasing requirements in skills and competence levels. The report emphasised the need for the post-compulsory education and training (PCET) sector to avoid operating as several distinct sectors in competition with each other and advocated collaboration and partnership working between PCET providers of all types, to support learners to reach their potential and to achieve greater alignment with the needs of the labour market.

### **2.2.5 College-based VET at EQF level 7, ISCED 767**

#### **Entry requirements / target groups / part of compulsory education and training**

Entry to these non-degree higher education qualifications are usually based on possession of a university degree or other non-degree higher qualifications. Work experience in a related subject is often also taken into consideration. Entry is allowed at the discretion of the college guided by the awarding body.

These study programmes are, in the main, completed by employees looking for career

---

<sup>(27)</sup> <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/outcome-agreements/outcome-agreements.aspx>

<sup>(28)</sup> Hazelkorn, E. (2016). *Towards 2030: a framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales* [accessed 15.11.2018]

progression and to improve professional practice.

**Awards provided**

A wide variety of qualifications exist at this level, including BTEC Professional qualifications, such as Extended Level 7 Diplomas along with NVQs and SVQs.

**Main providers of these programme types**

Colleges and higher education institutions

**Duration**

Programmes at this level usually take between six months to a year to complete.

**Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

Programmes are often studied part-time by employed people, but are also available in college settings that include work experience. Courses are often also offered through distance learning.

**Work-based learning / general education subjects / key competences**

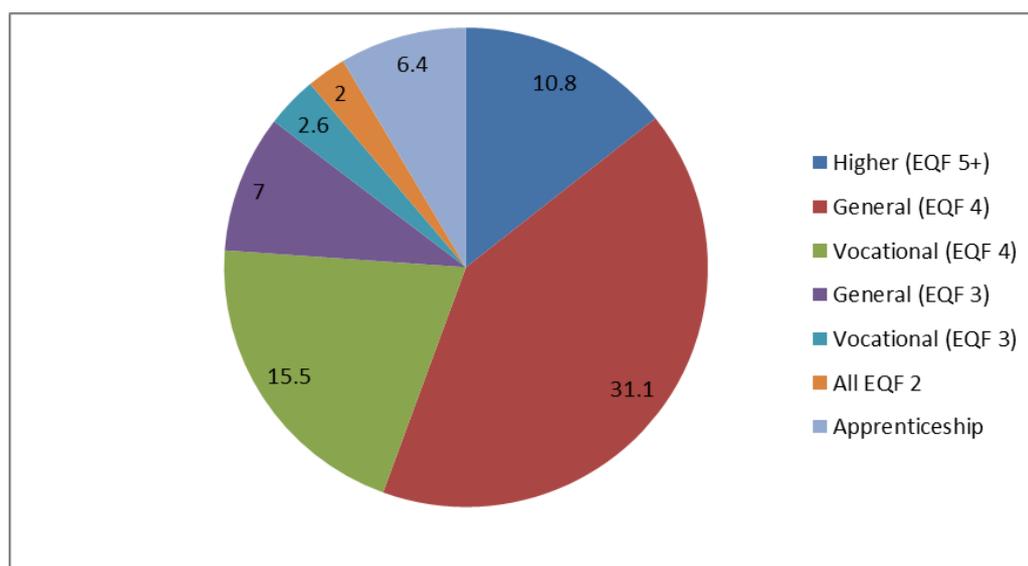
Work-based learning and in-company training are included in programmes of this type, but the amount depends on the programme. Many students will be in employment whilst studying. General subjects are not usually included as the programmes are narrowly specialised to meet the skills demands of a specific profession.

**Progression opportunities for learners after graduation**

BTEC professional qualifications are mainly used for career progression within companies, but may allow credit transfer to certain professional qualifications in the same area of specialisation.

1 605 000 students in England in the 16-18 age group participated in education and training at various levels in 2017, which accounts for 86% of all young people in this age group.

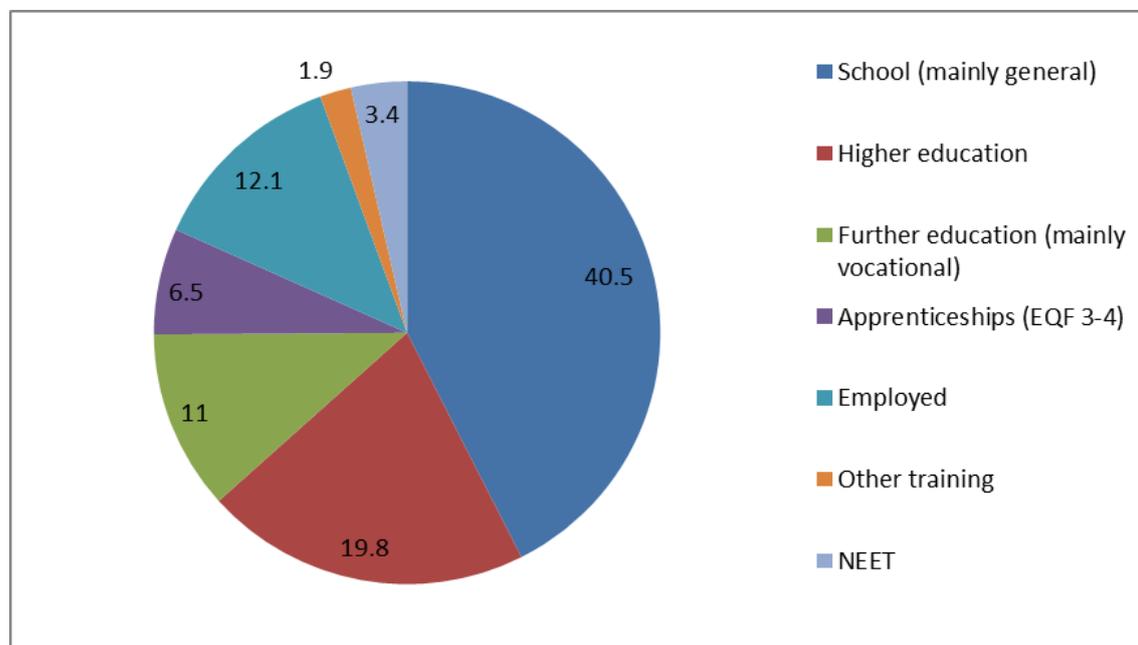
Figure 9. Participation of 16-18 year olds in education and training in England in 2017 (%)



Source: Department for Education (2018e). *Participation in education, training and employment: 2017* [accessed 15.11.2018]

150 500 students in Scotland in the 16-19 age group participated in education at various levels in 2018, which accounts for 71% of all young people in this age group. Apprenticeship and non-formal and informal training are not included in this number.

Figure 10. Participation of 16-19 year olds in education and training in Scotland in 2018 (%)



Source: Skills Development Scotland (2018a). *Annual Participation Measure for 16 – 19 year olds in Scotland 2018* [accessed 15.11.2018]

## 2.2.6 Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships in the UK are offered as basic training at secondary level to advanced education and training at higher education level. Table 2 below shows at which levels training is available. It should be noted that, apart from the new apprenticeship standards in England (see 2.2.7) it is the qualifications within the apprenticeship frameworks that are benchmarked to the NQFs, not the frameworks as a whole.

Table 2. **NQFs and apprenticeship levels in relation to the EQF**

RQF / CQFW	England	Wales	Northern Ireland	EQF	Scotland	SCQF
8	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships	8	Professional Apprenticeships	12
7	Degree / Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships	7	Professional / Graduate Apprenticeships	11
6	Degree / Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships	6	Professional / Graduate Apprenticeships	10
					Technical / Graduate Apprenticeships	9
5	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships	5	Technical / Higher Apprenticeships	8
4	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Apprenticeships	Higher Level Apprenticeships		Modern Apprenticeships	7
3	Advanced Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships	4	Modern / Foundation Apprenticeships	6
2	Intermediate Apprenticeships	Foundation Apprenticeships	Apprenticeships / Traineeships	3	Modern Apprenticeships	5
	Traineeships	Traineeships				

Source: ReferNet UK.

Validation of prior learning is conducted at the discretion of the VET provider guided by the requirements of awarding organisations. Qualifications offered within Scottish and Welsh apprenticeship frameworks, and in the apprenticeship frameworks that include QCF qualifications in England and Northern Ireland, are unit-based which enables credit transfer. The new apprenticeship standards in England are; however, not unit-based and are assessed through a final examination, which makes the process of credit transfer more dependent on the discretion of the learning provider (see 2.2.7 about new apprenticeship standards in England and 2.2 about the QCF).

All UK apprentices are employed and off-the-job training is available from colleges and independent training providers and training organisations with which colleges subcontract. Independent training providers must be registered with the Register of Training Organisations to be eligible to deliver education and training services under the adult education budget in England.

## 2.2.7 Apprenticeships at EQF levels 2-3, ISCED 351, 352

### Entry requirements / target groups / part of compulsory education and training

Apprentices may complete this type of study at age 16, but many apprentices are adult learners who may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.

Entrance requirements to apprenticeships vary depending on the occupational area and the level of the apprenticeship framework/standard. Competition for some apprenticeship places is fierce and good secondary qualifications at EQF level 3 in English and mathematics are sometimes necessary.

Traineeships in England are designed to provide young, unemployed people who possess little work experience and low qualifications with skills and work experience in preparation for apprenticeships and employment. The core content comprises literacy and numeracy, work preparation training and a work placement. This programme is tailored to individual candidates' needs and should be completed in less than six months.

Scottish learning providers offer additional skills and employability training opportunities, through the Employability Fund that prepare young people for Modern Apprenticeships or employment. Training is targeted towards seven key sectors and programmes include employability skills, basic occupational skills, employer experience and lead to a recognised vocational qualification or certification <sup>(29)</sup>.

Traineeships are furthermore available for 16-18 year olds in Wales and provide needs-based training to help learners progress to further learning, apprenticeships and employment through provision at three levels.

Traineeships are being introduced in Northern Ireland at EQF level 3 and will allow progression to RQF level 3 (EQF 4) apprenticeships. A baccalaureate-style curriculum is being created, which will include work-based learning and allow students to continue into an apprenticeship or further education or be skilled enough to find sustained employment.

### Awards provided

Apprenticeships at this level are called Level 2 apprenticeships (RQF), foundation apprenticeships (CQFW) and modern apprenticeships (SCQF). An apprenticeship

---

<sup>(29)</sup> Qualifications vary depending on the needs of the person and the local area, more information at: <https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/what-we-do/employability-skills/employability-fund/>

certificate <sup>(30)</sup> is awarded along with a vocational qualification, such as BTEC First Awards, Certificates and Diplomas, NVQs and SVQs.

#### **Main providers of these programme types**

Colleges, independent training providers

#### **Duration**

Apprenticeships at this level usually last one year, but the duration can be longer depending on the programme, employment contract and the needs of the apprentice. There is a requirement for apprenticeships to last at least 12 months in England.

#### **Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

Apprenticeship programmes in the UK require apprentices to be trained both on-the-job and off-the-job. Off-the-job learning may be organised as one or two days per week at an education and training provider or through longer, less frequent blocks of learning. Evening classes are also offered.

#### **Work-based learning / general education subjects / key competences**

Apprenticeships in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks which include a work contract, a formal technical/occupational qualification and Functional Skills/Essential Skills/Key Skills/GCSEs in English, mathematics and other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile.

In England most apprenticeship frameworks are in the process of being replaced by new apprenticeship standards developed by groups of employers from 2015/16. The new standards are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations, and apprentices are assessed by an independent assessor from industry or a separate training provider to the one the student attended at the end of the training.

Scottish Modern apprenticeships include a work contract and are required to include as mandatory components SVQs or alternative competence based qualifications and Work Place Core Skills that comprise ICT, problem solving, numeracy, communication and working with others.

#### **Progression opportunities for learners after graduation**

Apprenticeship programmes and VET qualifications at this level usually provide entry to the labour market and whilst apprenticeships are linked to a profession, such as bricklayer, motor vehicle technician and legal secretary, not all qualifications are linked to an occupational standard. Some apprenticeships at this level provide the

---

<sup>(30)</sup> attesting that the qualification was delivered as part of an apprenticeship programme

first step towards a more narrowly defined apprenticeship or training programme at a more advanced level.

The latest reform of apprenticeships in England is based on the Richard Review (2012). New apprenticeship standards are being developed by employer-led consortia (Trailblazer groups)<sup>(31)</sup> and the quality of the standards are being regulated by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education<sup>(32)</sup> (see 3.4). New apprenticeships must include a work contract and at least 20% off-the-job training in addition to English and mathematics, but there is no longer a requirement to include an occupational qualification within the programme. Standards are linked to single professions and the unit-based structure of the previous apprenticeship frameworks has been replaced with holistic end-point assessment. The new apprenticeship standards are currently being phased in and run in parallel with the previous frameworks.

### **2.2.8 Apprenticeships at EQF level 4, ISCED 354**

#### **Entry requirements / target groups / part of compulsory education and training**

Apprentices may complete this type of study at age 18, but many apprentices are adult learners who may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.

Most pupils take examinations for the GCSE at age 15/16 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The grades achieved here play an important role in determining the future study opportunities within VET. In Scotland, National 4 and 5 qualifications (EQF 2/3, see table 1), normally also taken at age 15/16, are the most common entrance qualifications to VET.

Entrance requirements to apprenticeships vary depending on the occupational area and the level of the apprenticeship framework/standard. Competition for some apprenticeship places is fierce and good secondary qualifications at EQF level 3 in English and mathematics are sometimes necessary.

Aligned with the Scottish Government's policy agenda of *Developing the Young Workforce*, Foundation apprenticeships have been created to offer school pupils (at EQF level 4) the chance to undertake some components of a Modern apprenticeship in Scotland whilst still in school studying other subjects like National 5s and Highers. These apprenticeships are linked to key sectors of the Scottish economy, so young people are getting industry experience which will help them kick-start a successful career in their chosen field.

---

<sup>(31)</sup> See also Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. [Trailblazer Apprenticeship Groups](#) [accessed 19.02.2018]

<sup>(32)</sup> Changed name as of January, 31 2019: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/about/news-events/name-change-ushers-in-exciting-new-dawn-for-t-levels-preparations/>

**Awards provided**

Apprenticeships at this level are called Level 3 apprenticeships, advanced apprenticeships, and in Scotland: foundation apprenticeships and modern apprenticeships (see table 2). An apprenticeship certificate <sup>(33)</sup> is awarded along with a vocational qualification, such as BTEC National Awards, Certificates and Diplomas along with NVQs and SVQs.

**Main providers of these programme types**

Colleges, independent training providers

**Duration**

Apprenticeships at this level usually last one to two years, but the duration can be longer depending on the programme, employment contract and the needs of the apprentice. There is a requirement for apprenticeships to last at least 12 months in England.

New apprenticeships in Northern Ireland will last at least two years and training is being increased in terms of occupational range and introduced at higher education level.

**Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

Apprenticeship programmes in the UK require apprentices to be trained both on-the-job and off-the-job. Off-the-job learning may be organised as one or two days per week at an education and training provider or through longer, less frequent blocks of learning. Evening classes are also offered.

**Work-based learning / general education subjects / key competences**

Apprenticeships in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks which include a work contract, a technical/occupational qualification within the RQF/CQFW and Functional Skills/Essential Skills/Key Skills/GCSEs in English, mathematics and other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile.

In England most apprenticeship frameworks are in the process of being replaced by new apprenticeship standards developed by groups of employers from 2015/16. The new standards are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations, and apprentices are assessed by an independent assessor from industry or a separate training provider to the one the student attended at the end of the training.

---

<sup>(33)</sup> attesting that the qualification was delivered as part of an apprenticeship programme

Scottish Modern apprenticeships include a work contract and are required to include as mandatory components SVQs or alternative competence based qualifications and Work Place Core Skills. The Work Place Core Skills comprise ICT, problem solving, numeracy, communication and working with others. Young people on Foundation apprenticeships are not employed and spend time in school and on work placements (approximately one day per week). Successful students may transfer to a modern apprenticeship on completion.

### **Progression opportunities for learners after graduation**

Apprenticeship programmes and VET qualifications at this level are designed to provide entry to the labour market and are linked to a profession, such as electrician, veterinary nurse and dental technician.

Progression opportunities to higher apprenticeship or training programmes at a more advanced level also exist. Entry to first level university degree study is also possible depending on the qualifications achieved.

A review of apprenticeships in Wales is considering issues such as design and accreditation of apprenticeships; to move more apprenticeship training above level 2 (EQF level 3); to make all apprenticeships occupationally-specific; and how to include key competences and Welsh language in apprenticeships. An apprenticeships skills policy plan, *Aligning the apprenticeship model with the needs of the Welsh economy*, was published in February 2017. Within the project action plan, the all-age apprenticeship programme started in August 2016, targeting those facing difficulties in (re)entering the labour market (mainly people over 50). It is also foreseen that level 2 apprenticeships (EQF 3) should allow automatic progression to level 3 apprenticeships (EQF 4).

Apprenticeships in Northern Ireland are being reformed. Traineeships at EQF level 3 and apprenticeships from EQF level 4 to 8 are being piloted. New apprenticeships will last at least two years and training is being increased in terms of occupational range and introduced at higher education level. The pilot programmes comprise project- and work-based learning, a vocational qualification as well as English and mathematics qualifications, and are completed while in employment or through training that include structured work experience.

### **2.2.9 Higher apprenticeships at EQF levels 5 and 6, ISCED 551, 554, 665**

#### **Entry requirements / target groups / part of compulsory education and training**

Higher apprenticeships are for adult (18+) learners, many of whom may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.

Entry to these non-degree higher education qualifications are usually based on possession of an EQF level 4 qualification from school or college in either vocational or academic subject areas. Entry is allowed at the discretion of the college guided by the awarding body.

Specific entrance requirements to apprenticeships vary depending on the occupational area and the level of the apprenticeship framework/standard.

Degree apprenticeships (in Scotland: Higher and Graduate apprenticeships) create a different pathway to obtaining university degrees. Whilst academic ability, including grades and numerical and reasoning skills are considered by the university or college, candidates are also interviewed for a job with a company (unless they are already employed with the company). Both employers and universities must be satisfied the applicant meets their respective requirements. There may therefore be a joint recruitment process.

#### **Awards provided**

Apprenticeships at this level are called higher apprenticeships, higher level apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships, graduate apprenticeships, professional apprenticeship, technical apprenticeships and modern apprenticeships (see table 2). A certificate may be awarded along with a vocational qualification, such as a Foundation degree, BTEC Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, along with NVQs and SVQs. Degree and professional apprenticeships result in the award of a Bachelor degree (EQF 6).

#### **Main providers of these programme types**

Colleges, independent training providers, universities

#### **Duration**

Apprenticeships at this level usually last one to six years (one to four years in Scotland), with the duration varying depending on the programme, employment contract and the needs of the apprentice. In Northern Ireland, Higher level apprenticeships must be a minimum of two years duration.

#### **Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

Apprenticeship programmes in the UK require apprentices to be trained both on-the-job and off-the-job. Off-the-job learning may be organised as one or two days per week at an education and training provider or through longer, less frequent blocks of learning. Evening classes are also offered.

#### **Work-based learning / general education subjects / key competences**

Apprenticeships in England and Wales are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks which include a work contract, a technical/occupational qualification within the RQF/CQFW and other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile.

In England most apprenticeship frameworks are in the process of being replaced by new apprenticeship standards developed by groups of employers from 2017/18. The new standards are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-

job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations, and apprentices are assessed by an independent assessor from industry or a separate training provider to the one the student attended at the end of the training.

Scottish Modern apprenticeships include a work contract and are required to include as mandatory components SVQs or alternative competence based qualifications and Work Place Core Skills. The Work Place Core Skills comprise ICT, problem solving, numeracy, communication and working with others. Sectors may decide to include other qualifications, such as HNCs/HNDs or other vocational qualifications either as a mandatory or optional enhancement. Technical and Professional apprenticeships do not include Work Place Core Skills; rather they include a range of SVQ units designated as career skills. Technical and Professional apprenticeships may include work-based qualifications other than SVQs (or alternative competence based qualifications) such as SQA HNDs or professional qualifications as the mandatory qualification.

Higher level apprenticeship frameworks in Northern Ireland consist of an academic element, which contains a strong work-based element, combined with on-the-job training, and may include technical work-based qualifications as appropriate.

#### **Progression opportunities for learners after graduation**

There are good articulation options for progression from higher VET programmes at RQF levels 4 and 5/SCQF levels 7 and 8 (EQF level 5), such as HNC and HNDs, to the second or third year of a Bachelor degree in a related field in the UK. However, admission and transfer arrangements are made at the discretion of the admitting institution. See section 2.2.4 for information about progression opportunities in Scotland.

In Northern Ireland all Higher level apprenticeship opportunities must offer a linear progression pathway from EQF Level 4 to 5 to 6 to 7, either to further vocational learning, or to part-time provision.

Possession of a Bachelor degree allows entry to postgraduate programmes at universities and other qualifications at EQF level 7.

Apprenticeships at levels 6 and 7 have been developed in a broad range of sectors in England, including automotive, banking, digital, chartered surveying, aerospace and nuclear. *Universities UK* <sup>(34)</sup> reports that at least 60 universities and higher education institutions in England were implementing or planning to implement

---

<sup>(34)</sup> the representative organisation for the UK's universities

degree apprenticeships in 2017/18 and estimates the number of degree apprentices to exceed 7 600 during that academic year <sup>(35)</sup>.

A degree apprenticeship can be structured in two ways. Employers, universities, and professional bodies may co-design a fully integrated higher education degree specifically for apprentices that delivers and tests both their academic learning and on-the-job training. This may be the preferred approach for many sectors, as the learning is seamless and it doesn't require a separate assessment of occupational competence. A sector may also make use of existing university degrees to deliver the academic knowledge required in a specific profession. This degree programme may be combined with additional on-the-job training to meet apprenticeship training requirements. This model would feature separate tests of occupational competence and academic ability at the end of the programme.

Wales is piloting Degree Apprenticeships with delivery initially focused on skills gaps identified by Regional Skills Partnerships in digital, ICT and advanced engineering. The second stage of the pilot will look to expand delivery into other priority sectors, for example, in health and social care. At every stage degree apprenticeship investment will be determined by evidence of skills gaps/shortages and the impact on the Welsh economy.

The types of Scottish apprenticeship programmes were also renewed through the introduction of Higher and Graduate apprenticeships, a new apprenticeship model designed in 2015-16. Its distinctive feature is the potential to obtain a HND qualification (EQF 5), or a Bachelor degree (EQF 6) leading to professionally recognised qualifications, as part of the apprenticeship programme. Graduate apprenticeships also offer more work-based learning and are intended to provide more apprenticeships in key sectors <sup>(36)</sup>. The first four Graduate apprenticeships were introduced in Scotland in 2017 in information technology (IT), computing and engineering subjects. Since then other subject areas have been developed such as business and cyber security with future plans for areas such as accountancy.

### **2.2.10 Higher apprenticeships at EQF level 7, ISCED 767**

#### **Entry requirements / target groups / part of compulsory education and training**

Higher apprenticeships are for adult learners, who may already be employed prior to starting the apprenticeship programme.

Degree apprenticeships were introduced to create a different pathway to obtaining university degrees. Whilst academic ability, including grades and numerical and

---

<sup>(35)</sup> Universities UK (2017). *Degree apprenticeships: realising opportunities* [accessed 15.11.2018]

<sup>(36)</sup> Bachelor honours degree level at the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (SCQF) level 10 (EQF level 6) and leads to degrees or to degree level, professionally recognised, qualifications, or leads to an HND short-cycle higher education qualification at SCQF level 8 (EQF level 5).

reasoning skills are considered by the university or college, candidates are also interviewed for a job with a company (unless they are already employed with the company). Both employers and universities must be satisfied the applicant meets their respective requirements. There may therefore be a joint recruitment process.

#### **Awards provided**

Apprenticeships at this level are called higher apprenticeships, higher level apprenticeships, graduate apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships and professional apprenticeships. An apprenticeship certificate may be awarded along with a Master's degree.

#### **Main providers of these programme types**

Colleges, universities

#### **Duration**

Apprenticeships at this level usually last one to three years, but the duration can be longer depending on the programme, employment contract and the needs of the apprentice. Higher level apprenticeships must be a minimum of two years duration.

#### **Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)**

Apprenticeship programmes in the UK require apprentices to be trained both on-the-job and off-the-job. Off-the-job learning may be organised as one or two days per week at an education and training provider or through longer, less frequent blocks of learning. Evening classes are also offered.

#### **Work-based learning, general education subjects, key competences**

Apprenticeships in England and Wales are offered in the shape of apprenticeship frameworks which include a work contract, a technical / occupational qualification within the RQF/CQFW and other general subjects relevant to the occupational profile.

In England most apprenticeship frameworks are in the process of being replaced by new apprenticeship standards developed by groups of employers from 2017/18. The new standards are currently run in parallel with the frameworks and comprise on-the-job and off-the-job training and learning, linked to specific occupations, and apprentices are assessed by an independent assessor from industry or a separate training provider to the one the student attended at the end of the training.

Scottish apprenticeships include a work contract. Technical and Professional apprenticeships include career skills and may include work-based or alternative competence based qualifications or professional qualifications as the mandatory qualification.

Higher level apprenticeships frameworks in Northern Ireland consist of an academic element, which contains a strong work-based element, combined with on-the-job

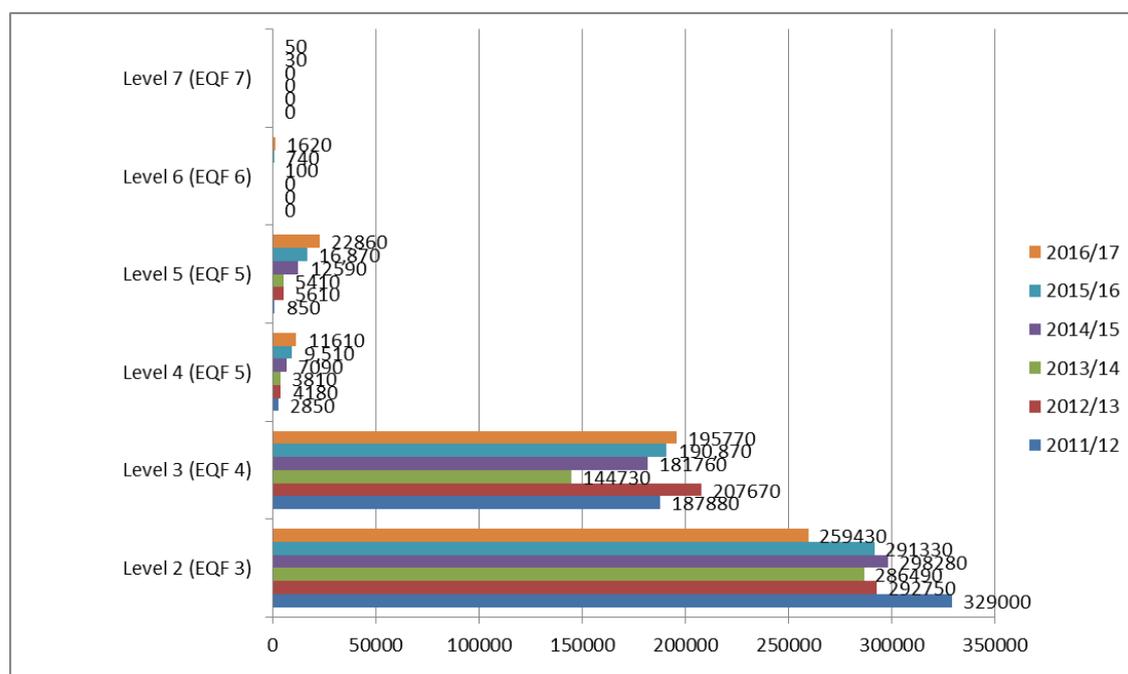
training, and may include technical work-based qualifications as appropriate.

### Progression opportunities for learners after graduation

Higher apprenticeships at Doctoral level have not yet been developed. Possession of a Master's degree awarded from a university with degree awarding powers in the UK allows progression to Doctoral study in the UK at institutional discretion.

There were a total of 491 300 apprenticeship starts in England in the 2016/17 academic year. Numbers peaked in 2011/12 and have remained around the 500 000 mark since, which is a significant rise from the 2009/10 academic year. 53% of apprenticeship starters in England in 2016/17 were female <sup>(37)</sup>.

Figure 11. Apprenticeship starts by level: England

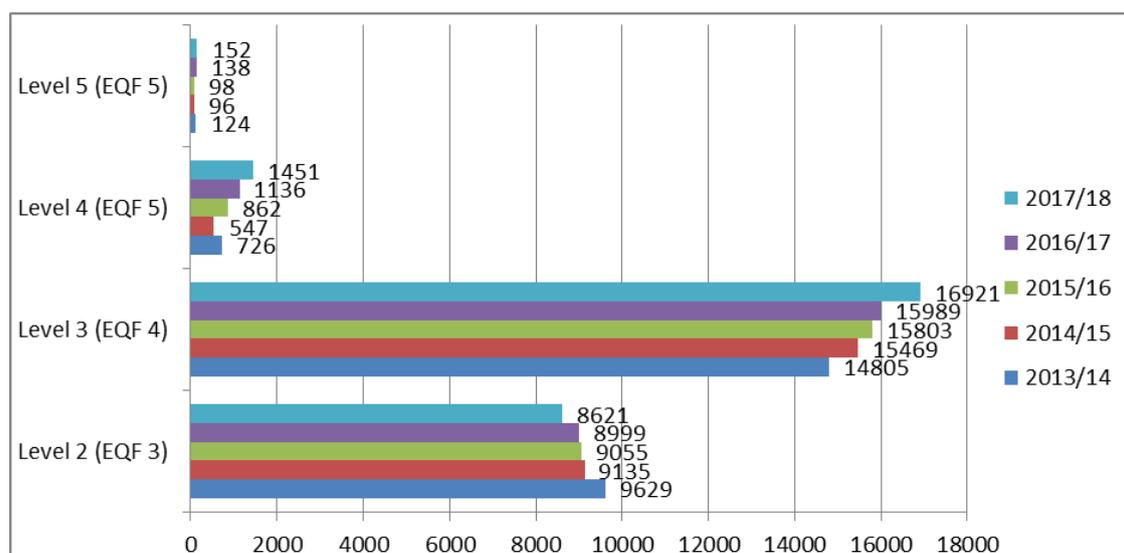


Source: Department for Education (2018a). [Apprenticeships and traineeships data](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].

The number of Scottish Modern apprenticeship starts has remained steady in the last few years and amounted to 27 145 in 2017/18. 61% of starters in Scotland were male.

<sup>(37)</sup> Skills Funding Agency (2016a). [FE data library: apprenticeships](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].

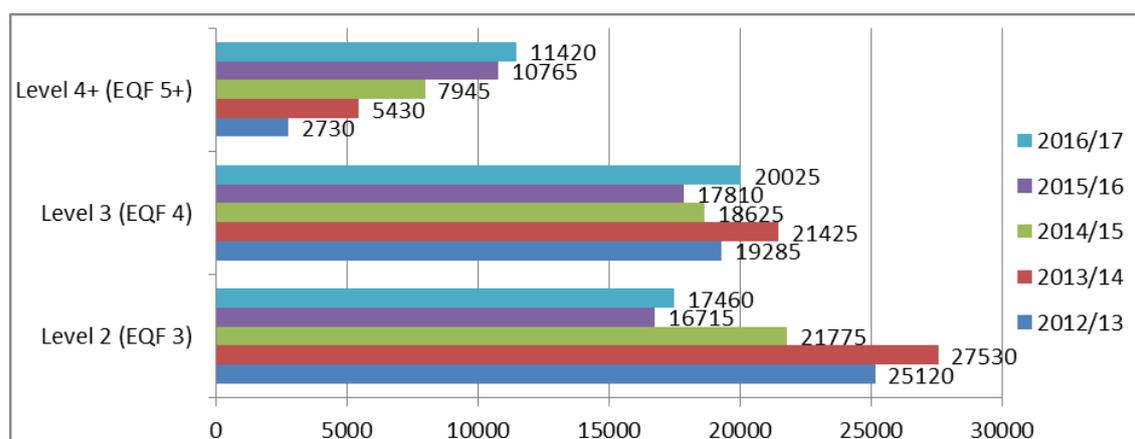
Figure 12. Apprenticeship starts by level: Scotland



Source: Skills Development Scotland (2018). *Modern Apprenticeship Statistics* [accessed 15.11.2018]

In 2016/17, 48 900 apprenticeships were started in Wales – a number which continues to grow. 60% of apprentices starting in Wales in 2016/17 were female.

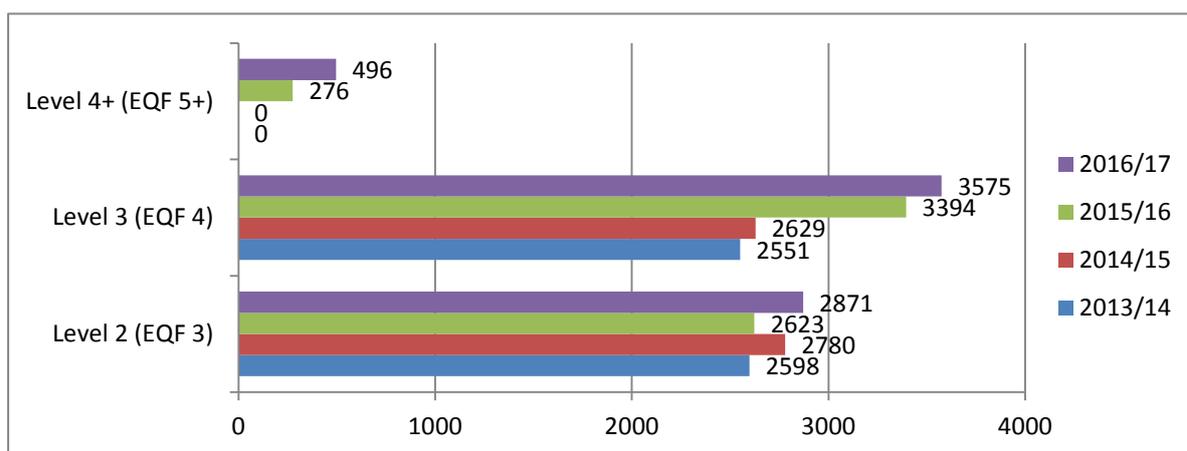
Figure 13. Apprenticeship starts by level: Wales



Source: Welsh Government. *Learning programmes for Foundation Apprenticeships, Apprenticeships and Higher Apprenticeships* [accessed 15.11.2018]

There were 6 942 apprenticeship starts in Northern Ireland in 2016/17, which is a higher number than in previous years. 62% of starters were male. Numbers of starts at higher apprenticeship level are also rising.

Figure 14. Apprenticeship starts by level: Northern Ireland <sup>(38)</sup>



Source: Department for the Economy. *ApprenticeshipsNI statistics* and *Higher Level Apprenticeship pilot Activity in Northern Ireland: 2015/16 to 2016/17* [accessed 15.11.2018]

Traineeship starts in England has risen from 10 400 in 2013/14 to 20 300 in 2016/17, peaking at 24 100 in 2015/16 <sup>(39)</sup>. In 2015/16, 62 per cent of learners that completed a traineeship had a sustained positive destination rate into either employment or learning based on a cohort of 17 230 completed learners <sup>(40)</sup>.

### 2.2.11 Learning opportunities for vulnerable groups

Formal VET targeted at vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as people with disabilities and learning difficulties are mostly offered in the same providers as other students; however, additional funding is available. Lifelong Learning Partnerships (LLPs) consist of a variety of education providers ranging from voluntary sector providers to further and higher education institutions as well as employers and trade unions. LLPs often reach out to disadvantaged communities and assist disadvantaged learners to engage with education and training again.

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) updated its *Equalities Action Plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland* and the Equality Challenge Fund in 2017 <sup>(41)</sup> for projects aimed at widening access to Modern apprenticeships. Organisations including charities, colleges and training providers have received funding to help boost Modern apprenticeship numbers among under-represented groups such as individuals from minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled people and care leavers as well as tackling gender imbalance in certain sectors. The Scottish Funding Council outcome agreements require colleges and universities to produce access and inclusion strategies that define their inclusive practices and the impact this has on learners. The

<sup>(38)</sup> Department for the Economy. *ApprenticeshipsNI statistics* and *Higher Level Apprenticeship pilot Activity in Northern Ireland: 2015/16 to 2016/17* [accessed 15.11.2018] <sup>(39)</sup> Skills Funding Agency (2016). *FE data library: traineeships* [accessed 15.11.2018]

<sup>(39)</sup> Skills Funding Agency (2016). *FE data library: traineeships* [accessed 15.11.2018]

<sup>(40)</sup> Department for Education (2018c) *Further education outcome-based success measures: 2015 to 2016* [accessed 29.10.2018]

<sup>(41)</sup> SDS (2017). *Equalities action plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland* [accessed 19.02.2019].

SFC expects colleges to evidence how they use funds to support students with educational support needs, including disabled students, to ensure they have an equal chance of successfully completing their programme of study <sup>(42)</sup>.

The educational attainment of children and young people in care is improving slowly in Wales, but the Wales Audit Office found in 2012 that there is too much variation in attainment, inconsistent support and a lack of clearly defined outcomes against which progress can be assessed. The Welsh Government subsequently published *Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales* strategy and action plan in 2016 <sup>(43)</sup> which recommends improvements in the areas of effective teaching, use of data, funding arrangements and partnerships and collaboration between the Welsh Government, regional education consortia, local authorities, schools, educational settings, foster carers and looked after children.

In Wales, the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) recognises lifelong learning such as vendor/industry/professional qualifications and smaller 'bite size' units of accredited learning. Such achievements can be highly positive and help to raise the aspirations of disadvantaged learners. The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) also recognises lifelong learning and bite size pieces of learning from all sectors and all types of organisations, including many aimed at disadvantaged and vulnerable learners. The SCQF includes two levels which are below level 1 of the EQF. At these levels the emphasis is placed on the learning which takes place as a result of learners' participation in, and the experience of, situations as well as the carrying out of basic tasks. The inclusion of these lower levels allows the SCQF to be an inclusive NQF for all learners including those who may not have been successful in mainstream education.

The Northern Ireland Strategy for Further Education, *Further Education Means Success* published in January 2016, recommends that colleges, in partnership with organisations in the voluntary, community, public and private sectors, support diversity and social inclusion through widening access to provision for those with low or no skills or who experience other barriers to learning. The strategy commits the colleges to adopting international best practice in the use of technology enhanced learning to support and improve teaching and learning, and adopt flexible approaches to learning to meet the needs of learners and employers.

### **2.2.12 Governance of VET**

Governance of VET in the UK rests with the UK Government and Government departments in the Devolved Administrations. Devolved Government legislation does

---

<sup>(42)</sup> Scottish Government (2016a). *A fairer Scotland for disabled people* and Scottish Funding Council (2016). *Guidance for the development of College Outcome Agreements: 2017-18 to 2019-20* [accessed 15.11.2018]

<sup>(43)</sup> Welsh Government (2016b). *Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales Strategy / Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales Action Plan* [accessed 22.2.2017].

not include detailed regulations, such as lists of approved qualifications, but the law provides for the respective Government Ministers to issue the lists following advice from the relevant advisory body. There is a complex institutional framework in the UK VET sector with the Department for Education (DfE) having policy-making responsibilities in England; the policy-making authorities for VET in Northern Ireland are the Department of Education (DE) and the Department for the Economy, in Wales the body is the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Public Services and Department for Economy, Skills and Infrastructure, and, in Scotland, the Department of Learning and the Department of Lifelong Learning of the Scottish Government are responsible.

Different inspection and review bodies exist in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In England, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) holds responsibility for inspection of schools and further education colleges. Ofsted considers the overall effectiveness of the outcomes for learners, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, in addition to the effectiveness of leadership and management. Schools and colleges are inspected by Education Scotland in Scotland, Estyn in Wales and the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) in Northern Ireland. Education Scotland evaluates the outcomes and impact of education provision, the service delivery, as well as the vision and leadership of providers. Estyn reports on the quality of education and training provided, the standards achieved by students, and whether colleges provide value for money. ETI Northern Ireland focuses on the learners' achievements, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the quality and effectiveness of the leadership and management of the curriculum.

Higher education provided at UK further education (FE) colleges is subject to quality review by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) through their Higher Education Review that involves peer review, student involvement, as well as analysis of core and thematic elements. In Scotland, HE in the form of HNCs and HNDs in tertiary colleges is subject to inspection and review by Education Scotland, not QAA Scotland. However, for those colleges which are constituent parts of the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) or Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), their HNC and HND provision is subject to inspection and review by Education Scotland and review by QAA Scotland. The Integrated Quality Enhancement Review methodology in Northern Ireland includes peer review, developmental engagement and summative review.

The Hazelkorn report <sup>(44)</sup> recommends creating a new single body for regulation, oversight and co-ordination for the entire post-compulsory education and training sector in Wales. The Welsh Government White Paper *Public Good and a Prosperous Wales – Building a reformed PCET system* <sup>(45)</sup> set out how the new body, referred to as the *Tertiary Education and Research Commission*, would manage allocating

---

<sup>(44)</sup> Welsh Government (2016a). *A framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(45)</sup> Welsh Government (2017). *Public Good and a Prosperous Wales – Building a reformed PCET system* [accessed 15.11.2018]

resources, assuring and assessing quality, monitoring and managing performance and risk, regulation of the system and accreditation of institutions as well as strategic planning, co-ordinating, steering and providing advice of policy including a responsibility for research and innovation which all is envisaged to form a more coherent and integrated post-compulsory system.

See Annex 1 for a list of various stakeholders involved in the UK VET sector.

### 2.2.13 Financing of VET

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is an executive agency sponsored by the DfE in England. Aside from funding learners aged between 3 and 19 and adult further education and skills training, the ESFA supports the building and maintenance programmes for schools, academies<sup>(46)</sup>, free schools<sup>(47)</sup> and sixth-form colleges. A simplified, learner-led funding system is in place since 2013/14. Much of school-based VET is Government funded, but employers fund an increasing part of workplace training, such as in-company training and learning through specialist consultants and agencies. An apprenticeship levy was introduced in 2017 to create long-term, sustainable investment in apprenticeships. The levy is paid by all large employers with a paybill of over £3m a year. Levy payers and non-levy paying employers are able to access funding to support their apprenticeship training. In England a growing number of education providers now receive funding directly from the Government rather than through local authorities. These are academies, free schools, university technical colleges and studio schools (see 2.2.1.). Privately funded training providers also operate within the UK VET sector.

The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council, commonly known as the Scottish Funding Council, is the strategic body for the funding of teaching, learning, research and other activities across all levels of tertiary education in Scotland. Public (VET) schools are funded through and accountable to local authorities, with one exception being directly funded by the Scottish Government. Skills Development Scotland funds Modern apprenticeship programmes and other government funded programmes of learning.

Funding of VET in the Northern Ireland further education sector and for providers of specific Government-funded programmes is the responsibility of the Department for the Economy.

VET funding in Wales is traditionally the responsibility of the Welsh Government and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (also sponsored by the Welsh Government). In January 2014 the Welsh Government published its *Policy statement on skills* which set out its long term vision for employment and skills policy in Wales. This work was supplemented by the development of the *Framework for co-investment in skills*, also introduced in 2014, which sets out the principles for government and employer investment in skills<sup>(48)</sup>. The framework aims to provide a foundation for

---

<sup>(46)</sup> See also <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/academies>

<sup>(47)</sup> See also <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/free-schools>

<sup>(48)</sup> Welsh Government (2014a). *Framework for co-investment in skills* [accessed 15.11.2018].

shifting the emphasis from a government-led approach to skills investment to a system influenced and led by employers. The investment made by employers, supported by the co-investment framework, will place them in a stronger position to challenge the skills system in Wales.

#### **2.2.16 Teachers and trainers in VET**

Different training and registration requirements exist at secondary education level to further and higher education level across the UK. In England VET teachers working in maintained secondary schools must meet the requirements of the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA), which includes a degree level qualification, GCSE level subjects in English, mathematics and science in addition to obtaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and completing an induction year. The same statutory requirement to hold QTS is not in place for VET teachers employed by publicly-funded free schools and some academies. In Wales, those training to teach in local authority funded secondary schools are required to gain QTS and complete an induction period by meeting professional standards set by the Welsh Government. There is also a requirement in Wales to complete an undergraduate or postgraduate programme of Initial Teacher Education, which includes assessment against the QTS. In addition there are minimum requirements for GCSE attainment including a standard equivalent to a grade B in the GCSE examination in English and/or Welsh and in mathematics.

Those teaching in FE colleges are usually referred to as lecturers (VET teachers) and those teaching work-based learning are normally called VET trainers. In England the criteria to teach at FE level are flexible in line with the criteria for teaching at higher education level, where the education provider decides upon the suitability of the teaching staff. Only voluntary professional registration exists (with the Society for Education and Training) <sup>(49)</sup>. Advice about professional standards for teachers and trainers in education and training in England is provided by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) <sup>(50)</sup>. In England it is not mandatory to obtain Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) status to teach in FE colleges, but it can be beneficial for teachers that also wish to teach at secondary level in maintained schools.

Teaching qualifications for the FE sector in England are available from higher education institutions and Ofqual-recognised awarding organisations <sup>(51)</sup>. Teacher training also takes place in-house, and in both colleges for further and higher education. Associate Teachers work with less responsibility than Full Teachers/Lecturers in terms of curriculum development and delivery. In the FE sector, Associate Teachers are often known as instructors or trainers and should work under the supervision of a Full Teacher. FE lecturers in Northern Ireland must possess a

---

<sup>(49)</sup> professional membership organisation for teachers and trainers in the UK, see <https://set.et-foundation.co.uk/>

<sup>(50)</sup> European training foundation (2014). *Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(51)</sup> Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofqual>

degree level qualification or a qualification at QCF level 5 in a subject area relevant to the subject taught, plus three years relevant industrial experience. Lecturers must also possess or be enrolled in a teaching qualification, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) (FE). In Wales, lecturers are required to hold a Certificate of Education, PGCE (FE) qualifications or Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and those employed as teachers in institutions in the FE sector in Wales are required to have, or to be working toward, these relevant teaching qualifications.

In Scotland, teachers must be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS), which sets the standards and qualifications required by teachers for professional practice. Scottish secondary VET teachers must hold a first degree, a teaching qualification such as the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE), or an undergraduate equivalent, such as the Bachelor of Education (BEd) or a concurrent degree, where a teaching qualification is studied alongside another specialism, e.g. a science or English. Additionally, English or English as a second or other language at Higher (SCQF level 6/EQF level 4) and mathematics or applications of mathematics at National 5 (SCQF level 5) level is a mandatory requirement. The Scottish College for Educational Leadership provides programmes of learning for teachers after they have qualified; most notably the new *Into Headship* programme at SCQF level 11 (EQF 7) will be mandatory for all new head teachers from 2019. VET Trainers and VET teachers/lecturers in tertiary colleges do not need to register with the GTCS, although it is desirable and strongly suggested by the Inspectorate of Education – Education Scotland. It is moreover considered preferential to hold a GTCS recognised further education teaching qualification or be working towards one.

The Education Workforce Council (EWC) is the independent regulator in Wales for VET teachers in local authority funded schools, further education (FE) VET teachers and learning support staff in both school and FE settings. From April 2015, the requirement for professional registration was extended to FE teachers, and from April 2016 registration is also compulsory for school/FE learning support workers. Secondary VET teachers must possess a university degree, GCSE subjects and a teaching qualification. FE VET teacher qualifications available in England and Wales include the PGCE for FE, which is a postgraduate programme leading to Full Teacher status, and in England the Level 3 Award in Education and Training, which is a short introduction to FE teaching, the Level 4 Certificate in Education and Training, and the Level 5 Diploma in Education and Training, which is the minimum qualification needed to obtain Full Teacher status.

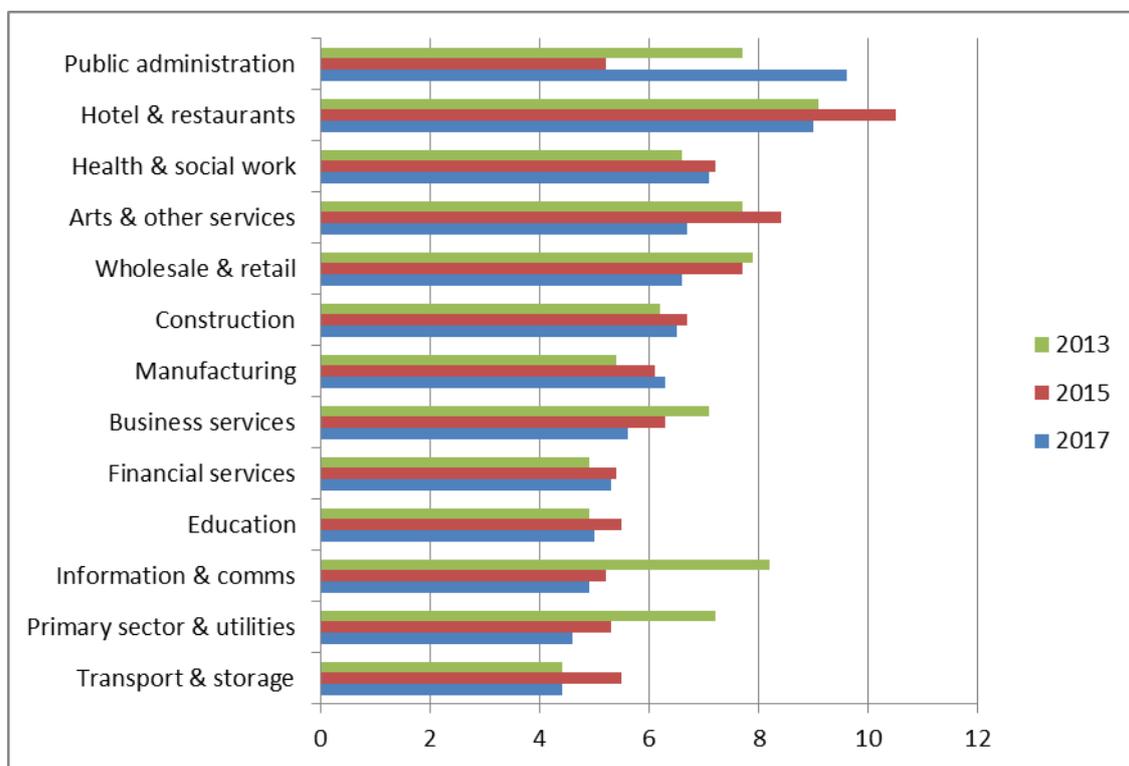
The Education and Training Foundation operates in England to improve professionalism and standards in the FE and skills sector. Ofsted is the inspection agency for the quality of teacher education in England.

## 2.3 Other forms of training

Continuing professional development and non-formal training is generally conducted on a voluntary basis unless there are specific requirements for training in

professionally licensed trades. Despite this, the UK has a high participation rate in adult education and continuing training of the workforce. 66% of UK workplaces that responded to the UK *Employer Skills Survey* in 2013, 2015 and 2017<sup>(52)</sup> had arranged on-the-job or off-the-job training for employees in the preceding 12 months, with on-the-job training slightly more popular. More employers in Scotland provided training than in the rest of the UK. Larger companies were also more likely to arrange formal training than smaller companies. The type of training provided varies greatly from induction training and health and safety to technical, job-specific skills training in addition to learning new technologies and management training. Around 17.9 million employees received training in the last 12 months before the survey, which is an increase from the 2015 survey. The average time spent training per person has fallen slightly from 6.8 days to 6.4 days. The sectors in which employers provided the most on- and off-the-job training to employees were public administration, hotels and restaurants, and health and social work.

Figure 15. **Training days per employee by sector, 2013 – 2017**



Source: Department for Education (2018b). *Employer skills survey 2017* [accessed 15.11.2018]

### 2.3.1 Training providers and programmes

A diverse range of organisations provide non-formal and informal training in the UK, including public and private enterprises, voluntary organisations, uniformed services, health and care services, professional education and registration bodies as well as trade unions. Unionlearn is the Trades Union Congress' (TUC) learning and skills

<sup>(52)</sup> Department for Education (2018b). *Employer Skills Survey 2017* [accessed 11.10.2018].

organisation that supports unions' learning and skills work. In Scotland, the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) support Scottish Union Learning, which helps trade unions support lifelong learning in Scottish workplaces.

E-learning is growing in use in the UK. 51% of the employers that provided training to staff had made use of online and e-learning according to the 2017 Employer Skills Survey. NEN – the Education Network – works throughout the UK towards improving standards and access to ICT and e-learning by providing learning resources via broadband internet connections.

Community learning comprises non-formal and informal adult learning, mostly unaccredited, delivered in places such as adult education centres, libraries, museums, community centres, union learning centres, schools, children's centres, colleges and workplaces. It could be a taster, a weekend, a short course or a year-long programme in order to learn new skills, pursue interests or prepare for progression to formal learning. Outcomes include improved health and well-being, increased confidence, and better community integration. Learning mostly takes place face-to-face through appropriately qualified teachers, although some learning can take place online. Community learning is an important part of the wider learning and skills landscape because it can reach the people who are most disadvantaged and furthest from learning.

Following the 2013/14 reforms across England, Community Learning is supporting closer partnership-working between Government-funded learning providers, local people, local services, local businesses and voluntary sector organisations to meet the learning needs of their communities.

Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) work across England to provide employment related learning services and work experience to young people. EBPs offer students mentoring, enterprise activity and professional development to prepare them for working life. Entrepreneurs are furthermore being brought into the classroom in schools, colleges and higher education institutions through the Enterprise Champions programme and Enterprise Societies.

In addition, the UK Government announced a National Retraining Scheme, in 2017 for adult learners, in order to respond to changes in the economy. The scheme will support people to progress in work, redirect their careers and secure high-paid, high-skilled jobs of the future, focusing on those individuals that need it most. The scheme is being rolled out on a phased basis with an initial focus on construction and digital.

### **2.3.2 Workplace learning**

The *Learning and Talent Development Survey 2015*<sup>(53)</sup> from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) shows that the institute's members believe in-house development programmes, coaching by line managers or peers and on-the-job-

---

<sup>(53)</sup> CIPD (2015). [Learning and Talent Development Annual Survey Report 2015](#) [accessed 22.2.2017].

training to be the most effective employee development practices. This type of training is perceived to be more closely tailored to specific job roles than qualifications that form part of the formal education system, in addition to being more cost effective. Learning technologies are now used by three-quarters of organisations, but face-to-face delivery remains dominant. Many respondents to the survey report a lack of confidence in using learning technologies. Also, according to the survey the learning and development strategy is 'extremely aligned' with business strategy in a quarter of organisations and 'broadly aligned' in a further two-fifths of organisations.

### **2.3.3 Funding mechanisms**

The majority of non-formal training in workplaces is employer funded. The UK Government's Education and Skills Funding Agency contributes to the overall cost of delivering community learning in England (see 2.3.1) through the Adult Education Budget. Each Community Learning provider is also required to develop a robust financial strategy to maximise the value of public funding through sponsorship, volunteer activity, match funding, pooling resources and more locally responsive fee strategies.

Trade unions in the UK have statutory status for Union Learning Representatives and assist workers' training through the Union Learning Fund. The Wales Union Learning Fund for example helps workers in the up-skilling process and to gain essential skills to enter onto formal qualifications. The Welsh Government provides funding to people who have recently been made redundant or are at risk of being made redundant through the Redundancy Action Scheme. This funding gives access to vocational training and training support.

The CIPD Talent and Development Survey from 2015 reports a decrease in public sector budgets for learning and development and that further reductions are expected. The funding situation in private organisations is more mixed and related to their general economic circumstances.

### **2.3.4 Recognition of non-formal and informal learning**

There are generally less transfer opportunities to further and higher education for qualifications obtained outside a formal qualifications framework in the UK. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is granted at institutional discretion based on the RPL policy of individual awarding organisations in England.

Guidelines for the Recognition of Prior Informal Learning form part of the SCQF in Scotland. There was previously a RPL network connected to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership which published a RPL toolkit<sup>(54)</sup> and an online guide that aims to increase and improve recognition of non-formal and informal learning as well as formal learning. While the RPL Network is no longer in operation, the tools and supporting workshops continue to be available.

---

<sup>(54)</sup> SCQF (2010). *Facilitating the recognition of prior learning: toolkit* [https://www.sqa.org.uk/files\\_ccc/RPLToolkitUpdatedDecember2010.pdf](https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/RPLToolkitUpdatedDecember2010.pdf) [accessed 15.11.2018].

In England, RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning) was furthermore devised by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (now: the Learning and Work Institute) and the former Learning and Skills Development Agency to aid recognition and validation of learning that does not lead to a formal award. RARPA includes a staged process in assessing individual learners' achievement by taking into consideration their starting point, identification of learning objectives, recording of progress and end of programme assessment.

The Quality Assurance Agency offers a service called Employer Based Training Accreditation<sup>(55)</sup> which connects employers to higher education institutions, verifies the quality and standard of in-company training and in some cases matches this to national qualification standards. This process promotes recognition of non-formal training and assists progression to formal education programmes.

Lifelong Learning mechanisms have been developed to allow non-formal education and training, such as community learning, in-company training and continuing professional development, to be recognised in accordance with the high level principles of the Credit and Qualifications Framework of Wales<sup>(56)</sup>.

The Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland aims to encourage more people, who may have less in the way of formal qualifications, to consider applying for places in higher education on the basis of accredited prior experiential learning (APEL). The *Northern Ireland University and College Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) Guidelines*<sup>(57)</sup> were developed to facilitate entry to higher education – particularly Foundation degrees – for those who lack the required formal academic qualifications for higher education entry by accepting vocational qualifications and experiential learning partly or in full. The guidelines were endorsed by the universities and college sector and draw upon good practice within the sector and across the UK.

### **2.3.5 Quality assurance mechanisms**

Training organisations offering non-formal qualifications may register with the British Accreditation Council for Independent Further and Higher Education. Investors in People (IiP) is a nationally recognised business standard encouraging enterprises to invest in training. IiP certification gives an indication that an employer is committed to the development of workers. See further information regarding quality assurance processes in section 3.4.

---

<sup>(55)</sup> QAA (2013). [accessed <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/employer-based-training-accreditation-brochure.pdf>]

<sup>(56)</sup> Welsh Government 2018].

<sup>(57)</sup> Belfast Metropolitan College [s.d]. *Higher education accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) process* [accessed 15.11.2018]

## CHAPTER 3

# Shaping VET qualifications

Skills development is the responsibility of the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations of the UK. Increasing skill levels of the current and future workforce is a priority of all four countries. The qualifications market in the UK is jointly driven by Government policies and private interests. This has led to a large choice of qualifications and awarding organisations.

### 3.1 Methods used to anticipate labour market needs

The *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) results are published regularly by the Office for National Statistics and contain labour market statistics. The LFS is used along with other national, regional and sectoral surveys and audits, such as the *Employer Skills Survey* <sup>(58)</sup> and *Working Futures* <sup>(59)</sup>, to determine labour market needs and gaps. Skills audits and surveys of employers' opinions are also important for this. Other stakeholders involved in providing information and recommendations for skills provision include the Confederation of British Industry, whose research anticipates a growing skills gap with a particular need for higher level skills <sup>(60)</sup>. The Department for Education (DfE) launched a model to anticipate future demand for, and cost of, apprenticeships in initial and continuing VET in a system driven by employer demand in 2017 <sup>(61)</sup>. The *Long-term Apprenticeship Model* forecasts apprenticeship starts and costs for both levy and non-levy paying employers.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are independent, employer-led organisations working towards defining skills needs and skills standards in their industries. National Occupational Standards (NOS) have been developed by SSCs and Standards Setting Organisations working with employers and national and regional organisations to specify competences required in the workplace. See Section 3.2 for more information about NOS.

In England, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) work towards improving local needs and bring together local and regional stakeholders in business and local authorities. LEPs and the new powers to English cities in the Localism Act are designed to give more freedom and a greater voice to local enterprises, in order to create a more demand-led qualification and skills system with a local focus.

---

<sup>(58)</sup> Department for Education (2018b). *Employer Skills Survey 2017: UK* [accessed 12.10.2018].

<sup>(59)</sup> UKCES (2016). *Working Futures 2014 to 2024* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(60)</sup> CBI/Pearson (2016). *The Right Combination* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(61)</sup> Department for Education (2017a). *Long-term apprenticeship model appraisal* [accessed 15.11.2018]

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has developed Skills Investment Plans for key sectors in collaboration with Industry Leadership Groups and other key industry players by analysing labour market and skills supply research. Regional Skills Assessment Plans take into consideration regional challenges and opportunities. The Employability, Skills and Lifelong Learning Analytical Services Unit is part of the Scottish Government and conducts research that supports policy developments in VET, higher education and lifelong learning. Topics for research include skills shortages and gaps and training opportunities. In Wales these functions are carried out by Knowledge and Analytical Services and the Labour Market Information Unit within the Welsh Government.

The Department for the Economy requires further education colleges in Northern Ireland to submit annual development plans in line with the Government's priorities and adhere to Public Service Agreements and Funded Learning Unit models regarding finances in relation to strategic priorities. The skills barometer project built a model to estimate future skill needs and gaps by level, sector and subject area across a range of economic outcomes. The project was undertaken as part of a three-year sponsorship arrangement between the Department for the Economy and the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre.

### 3.2 Design process and qualification designers

The Regulated Qualifications Framework removed the requirements to structure qualifications in terms of units and learning outcomes (see 2.2); however, qualifications currently available are largely unit- and outcomes-based and allow for flexibility in delivery of training, except for new apprenticeships in England (see 2.2.6). The qualification frameworks in Scotland and Wales continue to be learning outcomes and unit based. Adult learning in particular is often centred on individual learners' needs both in terms of content and delivery method. Training programmes aimed at young people usually follow a more standardised structure. Qualifications and their broad content, unit and credit structure, learning outcomes and assessment standards are developed by independent awarding organisations in line with regulators' regulatory requirements and industry experts' and other stakeholders' input.

Awarding organisations are also responsible for awarding the final qualifications and organising external moderation of student achievement. These organisations are recognised to operate in England and Northern Ireland by Ofqual and CCEA Regulation respectively. Recognised Awarding Organisations are entitled to award accredited qualifications which are listed in the Register of Regulated Qualifications and part of the RQF. Awarding organisations with approved qualifications registered on the CQFW must be recognised by Qualifications Wales and are listed on the Qualifications in Wales database.

The main awarding organisation in Scotland is the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), which is a quasi-autonomous non-departmental public body and fulfils the roles of both an awarding body and an accreditation body. There are

mechanisms in place to manage the potential conflict of interest between both parts of SQA; the Awarding Body is directly accountable to Scottish Government Ministers and the Accreditation function (SQA Accreditation) is accountable to a statutory Accreditation Committee and thence the Scottish Government. There are also a considerable number of other awarding organisations (including all higher education institutions with degree awarding powers) offering qualifications within the SCQF and also other organisations awarding qualifications often subject to accreditation by SQA Accreditation.

Most education and training programmes for young people that are publicly funded lead to a formally recognised qualification. This is part of the quality control process of VET.

Education providers create curricula and deliver qualifications created by awarding organisations.

Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and other standard setting organisations, in association with employers, develop, maintain and update National Occupational Standards (NOS) to specify competences required to perform occupations and professions. NOS consist of units describing what individuals must be able to do, know and understand to perform specific jobs. NVQs/SVQs and many other vocationally related qualifications are entirely or largely based on NOS or, if relevant, learning outcomes that need to be met for certification. NOS are reviewed to ensure programmes and qualifications include new technologies, innovations and working methods used in the labour market. The Government in England have no longer been mandating the use of NOS within their vocational qualifications system after the end of 2016; however, qualifications designers in England can continue to use NOS if they wish. The development and review of NOS are still continued by the three Devolved Administrations, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Following the change from state funding of the SSCs to self-funded organisations, only the most effective SSCs that are valued by industry have remained operational.

National Skills Academies (NSAs) are employer-led organisations developing the infrastructure and learning resources needed to deliver specialist skills to industry sectors in England. NSAs also strive for training programmes resources to be up-to-date and relevant in the current job market.

### **VET reform in England: more direct employer engagement in VET design <sup>(62)</sup>**

The design process of VET is changing in England by moving away from a system in which a large number of awarding organisations develop qualifications based on NOS to a system where the outline content of new vocational qualifications (T levels) based on the knowledge, skills and behaviours related to occupations will be developed by employer-led consortia within 15 main technical routes. New apprenticeship standards (Trailblazers) are already being developed within the same 15 pathways. T level

---

<sup>(62)</sup> Department for Education (2018d). *Introduction of T Levels: Policy paper* [accessed 15.11.2018] and Institute for Apprenticeships (2019a). *What is an apprenticeship standard?* [accessed 15.11.2018]

qualifications will be developed by a single awarding organisation for each of the occupational pathways. T levels, designed to be delivered in classroom-based settings, will be phased in from 2020 whilst apprenticeship trailblazers are currently run in parallel with the traditional apprenticeship frameworks.

The Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board (SAAB) is led by employers to strengthen their engagement in apprenticeships and aims to ensure that apprenticeships will be closely linked to areas of economic growth and job opportunities. SAAB oversees the development of apprenticeship frameworks and standards. The Wales Apprenticeship Advisory Board, have taken up a key role in developing policy objectives to ensure that apprenticeships are aligned to changing needs of the industry in Wales.

The Strategic Partnership strategy provides the background for UK Government financed projects in which enterprises, employer federations, trade unions, trade associations, public bodies and other stakeholders collaborate to solve sectoral and regional issues including learning and skills.

### 3.2.1 Strategic development of VET

Strategic development of skills and lifelong learning in England is the remit of the Department for Education (DfE). Design of future VET in England is influenced by reviews such as the *Wolf Review of pre-19 vocational education*, the *Whitehead Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications*<sup>(63)</sup> and the *Richard Review of Apprenticeships*<sup>(64)</sup> (see 2.2.7 for further information regarding new apprenticeship standards). The former Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) published the *Skills for Sustainable Growth* strategy<sup>(65)</sup> in response to the Wolf Review with details of a planned skills reform. The *Plan for Growth*<sup>(66)</sup> strategy mentions that "the creation of a more educated workforce that is the most flexible in Europe" is one of the key skills actions and measures to be achieved. *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* sets out how Apprenticeship reforms, and funding only good quality VET in England, will be accelerated<sup>(67)</sup> (see 2.2.3 for information about Tech Levels and the Technical Baccalaureate). *Fixing the foundations* – the UK Government's productivity plan from 2015 – puts focus on the need to develop a highly skilled workforce to increase productivity<sup>(68)</sup>. Most recently the *Post-16 Skills Plan* sets out to streamline VET in England into 15 clear routes leading to skilled employment, either through two-year college courses or apprenticeships<sup>(69)</sup> as recommended in the *Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education*<sup>(70)</sup>.

---

<sup>(63)</sup> Whitehead, N, UKCES (2013). *Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications in England* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(64)</sup> Richard, D. (2012). *The Richard Review of Apprenticeships* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(65)</sup> BIS (2010). *Skills for Sustainable Growth* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(66)</sup> HM Treasury and BIS (2011). *The Plan for Growth* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(67)</sup> BIS/DfE (2013). *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(68)</sup> BIS (2015). *Fixing the foundations* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(69)</sup> DfE/BIS (2016). *Post-16 Skills Plan* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(70)</sup> Sainsbury, D. (2016). *Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education* [accessed 15.11.2018]

The Scottish Government provides details of skills support in the *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth* <sup>(71)</sup>, the *Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland* <sup>(72)</sup>, the *National Youth Work Strategy* <sup>(73)</sup> and *Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition* <sup>(74)</sup>. The Government started a reform of the post-16 education which aims to increase efficiency and flexibility in learner provision and value for money as well as better meet regional needs. A further aim is to simplify the skills system so it is easier to understand for both individuals and employers. The Curriculum for Excellence includes more skills-for-work options for young people in addition to a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship <sup>(75)</sup>. The group responsible for the review of the curriculum comprised representatives from national and local Government, Education Scotland, higher and further education institutions, schools and the Scottish Qualifications Authority in addition to business interest groups, teacher unions and parent organisations. The *Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce's final report* <sup>(76)</sup> from June 2014 includes recommendations on preparing school leavers for work, college education focused on employment and progression in learning, Apprenticeships focused on higher level skills and industry needs, and engaging employers with education and recruiting young people.

The Welsh Government's *Programme for Government* emphasises the importance of skills development in relation to economic growth and sustainable jobs. Qualifications are developed according to the CQFW high level principles. Future VET will be shaped by the *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales* <sup>(77)</sup> (see Section 2.2.3 regarding the Welsh Baccalaureate), *the policy statement on skills* <sup>(78)</sup> and the Welsh Government's *Skills implementation plan* <sup>(79)</sup>. The latter emphasises the importance of aligning skills provision with the current and future jobs market, local needs and employer engagement. Welsh Government published *Towards 2030: a Framework for Building a World-Class Post-Compulsory Education System for Wales* in March 2016 <sup>(80)</sup>. The report's recommendations include the aim to develop clear

---

<sup>(71)</sup> Scottish Government (2010). *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(72)</sup> Scottish Government (2011). *Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(73)</sup> Scottish Government (2014b). *National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(74)</sup> Scottish Government (2014a). *Adult Learning in Scotland, Statement of Ambition* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(75)</sup> Scottish Government (2009). *Innovation for Scotland* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(76)</sup> Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (2014). *Education Working For All! Final Report* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(77)</sup> Welsh Government (2012b). *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(78)</sup> Welsh Government (2014). *Policy statement on skills* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(79)</sup> Welsh Government (2014). *Skills implementation plan* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(80)</sup> Welsh Government (2016a). *A framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales* [accessed 15.11.2018].

and flexible learner-centred learning and career pathways and to introduce more state regulation into the current market-demand driven education system.

The Department for Employment and Learning's (now: Department for the Economy) vision for skills development is articulated within the Skills Strategy for Northern Ireland, *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures* <sup>(81)</sup>, which sets the overarching strategy for the development of skills (including vocational education and training) in Northern Ireland. This strategy will be realised by focusing on those entering the labour force for the first time; up-skilling the existing workforce; and ensuring that those currently excluded from the labour force are provided with the skills to compete for jobs, retain jobs and progress up the skills ladder. To help achieve these ambitions, the Department works closely with the Department of Education to ensure there is a strong collaboration between schools, further education colleges, universities and employers.

Other reviews in Northern Ireland aiming to enhance and shape future VET policy include the new Northern Ireland Strategy for Apprenticeships <sup>(82)</sup> which recommends that Apprenticeships should be at least two years long and start from level 3 (EQF level 4) (see Section 2.2.8). The Strategy for youth training from 2015 describes plans to create a baccalaureate-style curriculum that includes work-based learning that also replaces apprenticeship provision at level 2 <sup>(83)</sup>. The 2016 Further Education (FE) Strategy gives colleges in Northern Ireland a major role in delivering apprenticeships and youth training as well as featuring prominently in strategic advisory forums and sectoral partnerships tasked with matching skills demand and delivery <sup>(84)</sup>.

### 3.3 Assessment

Study programmes leading to formal qualifications at secondary and post-secondary, non-university level (see chapter 2.2) are internally assessed within education providers and workplaces if appropriate, but are not awarded until assessments have been externally verified by awarding organisations (also called examination boards) in the UK. Education providers that are registered as examination centres by one or more awarding organisations can conduct examinations for qualifications awarded by these awarding organisations.

Work-based learning is also assessed in workplaces by qualified assessors. Assessors are usually trained staff with industry experience and knowledge of assessment approaches. In order to assess some qualifications, the assessors are required to possess relevant assessor qualifications as well. Apprentices completing

---

<sup>(81)</sup> DEL (2011). *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(82)</sup> DELNI (2014). *Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships* [accessed 22.2.2017].

<sup>(83)</sup> Department for the Economy (2015). *Generating our Success* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(84)</sup> Department for the Economy (2016). *Further Education Means Success* [accessed 15.11.2018].

the new apprenticeship standards in England are assessed at the end of the programme of training by an Independent End Point Assessor who is required to have up-to-date and thorough knowledge and experience of the specific occupation and ideally possess a Level 3 (EQF 4) assessor qualification.

See Section 2.3.4 for information about recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes.

### 3.4 Quality assurance of the processes

Awarding organisations set question papers or other assessments for their qualifications and examine candidates as well as reviewing examination centres' assessment of candidates and reviewing and verifying the work and standards of the centres. The processes of external review of assessment in examination centres are often referred to as verification. Verification is conducted by qualified individuals with quality assurance of assessment qualifications at level 4 (EQF level 5).

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is the regulator of all vocational qualifications within the RQF for England. During the review leading to the withdrawal of the regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework, Ofqual removed the requirement for awarding organisations to submit new vocational qualifications for accreditation before they are registered within the qualifications framework. Secondary school qualifications such as GCSEs and technical qualifications with detailed design rules are still subject to a spot check of the qualifications' specification and a set of specimen assessment papers and mark schemes<sup>(85)</sup>. The responsibility for quality assurance and relevance of other qualifications rests with the awarding organisations, although periodic Ofqual audits take place.

In 2016 CCEA Regulation took over the regulation responsibility of vocational qualifications, within the RQF, that are exclusively provided in Northern Ireland. The work includes the recognition and monitoring of awarding organisations that operate in Northern Ireland and the accreditation of the qualifications they offer in Northern Ireland against published criteria and conditions.

Organisations which provide non-university qualifications can elect to be accredited by the Scottish Qualifications Authority Accreditation in accordance with the Scottish Qualifications Authority's (SQA) regulatory principles, but this is not mandatory. All programmes accredited by SQA will be credit rated and included on the SCQF. However, organisations can also get programmes credit rated and included on the SCQF through a range of organisations which carry out this function. SQA's Accreditation function has a mandatory remit to accredit certain vocational qualifications, including all SVQs. In addition, if an alternative competence based qualification is to be used as the mandatory qualification in a Modern apprenticeship

---

<sup>(85)</sup> Ofqual. [Accreditation requirement](#) [accessed 20/02/2019]

framework then it must also be accredited by SQA. Certain other “licence to practice” qualifications must be accredited by SQA including the security sector and the licenced trade sector <sup>(86)</sup>.

Qualifications Wales was established in 2015 to take over the responsibility of approving and reviewing qualifications, in addition to developing the design of new qualification requirements and commissioning awarding organisations to develop new qualifications, in Wales. Qualifications Wales is undertaking a long term programme of review and reform of vocational qualifications in each major sector of employment. Four out of eight sector reviews have been or are close to be completed <sup>(87)</sup>. The reviews aim to find out whether current qualifications are effective in meeting the needs of learners as well as addressing the needs of employers, learning providers and professional bodies.

The Institute for Apprenticeships started operations in England in 2017 as an independent statutory body with a remit to develop and maintain quality criteria for apprenticeships and assessment plans, support employer-led development of new apprenticeship standards and regulate the quality of apprenticeships, including both approval functions for apprenticeship standards and quality assurance of assessment <sup>(88)</sup>. The institute is due to also take over responsibility for implementing the T level reform and change its name to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education in 2019.

Employer-led sectoral partnerships are being set up in Northern Ireland as part of the apprenticeship reform to inform the approach for ongoing assessment and testing at the end of apprenticeships.

---

<sup>(86)</sup> SQA Accreditation (2014). *Regulatory Principles* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(87)</sup> Qualifications Wales. *Sector reviews* [accessed 20.02.2019]

<sup>(88)</sup> Institute for Apprenticeships. *What we do* [accessed 15.11.2018].

## CHAPTER 4

# Promoting participation in VET

The UK Government and the Devolved Administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland set individual budgets regarding education and skills funding. Across the UK, however, austerity measures have seen many cuts in state funding in recent years. Whilst the pre-16 schools budget has remained largely protected, reductions have occurred in the 16 to 19 and 19+ further education and skills budgets. Numbers of participants in IVET in the UK reduced in the period 2006-12<sup>(89)</sup>. However, various initiatives to raise numbers and the status of VET are in place in the UK.

### 4.1 Incentives for individuals

The Right to Request Time to Train initiative is a legal right in England to allow workers in businesses with more than 250 employees to request time to take up work-related training that will benefit the business. Training can be both formal and non-formal and take place in-house, at an external training organisation or be delivered through e-learning. Whether the business will pay for the training or pay the employee's salary during the training is left up to the discretion of the employer.

The Trade Union Learning Fund is administered by Unionlearn and provides funding to develop the capacity of trade unions and Union Learning Representatives to work with employees, employers and learning providers, to encourage workplace learning. The Scottish Union Learning Fund, the Wales Union Learning Fund and the Union Learning Fund for Northern Ireland fulfil similar roles.

The *Youth Engagement and Employment Action Plan* is the Welsh Government's plan to help young people move back into education, training and employment. Measures taken to achieve this include the Jobs Growth Wales initiative that supports training and work experience. An evaluation of the action plan based on 2015 data found indications of a reduction in the rates of young people who are NEET, but that it was too early to determine the overall success of the plan<sup>(90)</sup>. Individual Learning Accounts (ILA) were replaced with Individual Training Accounts (ITA) in October 2017. ITAs are payments for the unemployed and not currently in education or those in low paid work in Scotland who wish to learn a new skill or develop their skills further within recognised training programmes. ITAs focus on vocational courses and qualifications in a curriculum area aligned with the Scottish Government's Labour Market Strategy.

An Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is available to Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish students between the ages of 16 and 18 depending on the students'

---

<sup>(89)</sup> Eurostat (2001-2012). [Percentage of pupils in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational stream](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(90)</sup> Welsh Government (2016C). [Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Formative evaluation follow-up study](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].

and their families' financial situation. Bursary Funds are available via schools and colleges for 16-18 year olds who struggle to afford the cost of participating in their studies in England. Bursary Funds are specifically targeted towards vulnerable young people, such as those in care, on income support or those with disabilities, but also to other students struggling to afford transport, food or equipment costs. FE providers also receive learner support funding to support eligible adult learners with a specific financial hardship which is preventing them from taking part and/or continuing in learning.

Free lunches for disadvantaged students were extended to 16-18 year old learners at further education colleges (that offer predominantly vocational courses) in England from the autumn of 2014. These free meals were previously only available for disadvantaged students in secondary schools with sixth form provision.

The Entitlement Framework (EF) came into force in Northern Ireland in 2015, building on the Vocational Enhancement Programme which encouraged collaboration between post-14 school provision and vocational FE college provision. The EF guarantees in law that all learners in Northern Ireland have access to a broad and balanced curriculum with a minimum of 21 courses at lower and upper secondary level, a third of which must be applied and a third, general. Qualifications under the EF contain a range of courses that can be individually tailored to enhance students' employment chances and meet Government priority skills areas. Post-primary schools work together in local Area Learning Communities alongside further education colleges to plan and provide the full range of general and applied course choices for the young people in an area.

The UK has the main building blocks in place to support the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET). ECVET aims to give people greater control over their individual learning experiences and promote mobility between different countries and different learning environments. ECVET activities are included in the UK Erasmus+ National Agency (the British Council and Ecorys (UK)) yearly work programme. UK ECVET Experts, appointed by Ecorys UK, raise awareness of ECVET to key stakeholders and promote and encourage organisations involved in mobility to use ECVET in geographical mobility linking ECVET to Erasmus+.

## 4.2 Incentives for enterprises

The Apprenticeship Delivery Board consists of representatives from Barclays Banks, Fujitsu UK, the TV company Channel 4 and the City of London amongst others, that will meet and advise the government on how best to expand apprenticeships<sup>(91)</sup>. The board furthermore works with the National Apprenticeship

---

<sup>(91)</sup> UK Government (2018). [Apprenticeship delivery board](#) [accessed 15.10.2018].

Service and the Apprenticeship Ambassador Network <sup>(92)</sup> to stimulate interest in and take up of apprenticeships in England.

The Flexible Workforce Development Fund is delivered by the Scottish Funding Council and is available to Scottish businesses that contributed towards the UK Government's apprenticeship levy. Funding can support up-skilling and re-training of individual employees in partnership with Scottish colleges. Employers in Scotland are eligible for a payment of up to £4 000 when employing an unemployed young person as an apprentice through Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive. This initiative is targeting young people facing barriers to employment, such as care leavers, carers, ex-offenders and disabled people.

Access is a Welsh Government programme that provides financial support of up to £3 000 to employers to take on unemployed adults (age 18+) as apprentices. The financial support may be used as a contribution towards wages and up to £1 000 in addition may be used for job-related skills training.

An Employer Incentive Payment of between £250 and £1 500 is available to employers whose apprentices successfully completes a full apprenticeship framework in Northern Ireland.

### 4.3 Incentives for providers

VET providers across England continue to have the freedom and flexibility to determine how they use their adult education budget (AEB), working with Local Enterprise Partnerships and local commissioners to determine what the appropriate distribution of funding should be to best meet local needs. From 2019/20 academic year, approximately 50% of the AEB will be devolved to six Mayoral Combined Authorities and delegated to the Greater London Authority who will be responsible for commissioning and funding AEB provision for learners resident in their areas..

The Scottish Funding Council bases funding of VET providers on Outcome Agreements with colleges and universities. These Agreements include learner retention, articulation and progression into further and higher education and other positive destinations, such as employment. More emphasis within the Outcome Agreements is now being put on areas including widening access, gender, skills, innovation and apprenticeships.

### 4.4 Guidance and counselling, structures and services

#### 4.4.1 Careers advisors

Careers advice is offered by a range of professionals, including teachers and careers advisers employed in the education, social work and youth work sectors as well as job

---

<sup>(92)</sup> Department for Education [s.d.]. [Apprenticeship Ambassador Network](#) [accessed 15.11.2018]

centre personnel. Their training varies from in-service training to formal and professional careers guidance qualifications. The Careers Profession Task Force's report *Towards a strong careers profession* <sup>(93)</sup> made detailed recommendations on raising the professional nature of the workforce. One area of concern identified was that careers advisers were too often under-qualified. Following on from this, the Institute of Employability Professionals has introduced qualifications in employability services along with Education Development International. A unified professional body for the careers profession, the Careers Development Institute, maintains a register of Career Development Professionals and a framework for professional development of careers advisers in the UK.

Qualifications in Career Development, such as those developed by the former sector skills council Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), are available at RQF levels 4, 5 and 6, but the Careers Profession Alliance's current voluntary registration requires a level 6 qualification for full registration. Qualifications at postgraduate level are also being developed.

Scottish Careers Advisors are required to hold a postgraduate qualification in career guidance and development in addition to an SDS training plan. Advisers in the Northern Ireland Careers Service similarly should possess a relevant postgraduate level qualification as well as a work-based qualification.

#### **4.4.2 Careers advice services**

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) provides a Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) service across Scotland. SDS works in partnership with education providers and job centres. Targets specified in the *More Choices, More Chances* strategy include young people at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training). SDS has also set up the My World of Work website containing CIAG resources. The Commission on Developing Scotland's Young Workforce recommends incorporating careers advice before subject specialisation in secondary schools, to involve employers more closely with schools, educate teachers to provide comprehensive advice, and include career management skills in the curriculum.

In December 2017 the Careers Strategy for England was published. It sets out a long term plan to build a world class careers system that will help young people and adults choose the career that's right for them. The strategy has been developed in partnership with the Gatsby Charitable Foundation which has developed a set of benchmarks, based on rigorous national and international research, which define excellence in careers guidance <sup>(94)</sup>. The strategy is co-ordinated through an expanded role for the Careers & Enterprise Company, working across all the Gatsby Benchmarks to help schools and colleges deliver the ambitions in the strategy.

---

<sup>(93)</sup> Careers Profession Task Force (2012). [Towards a strong careers profession](#) [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(94)</sup> Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2013). [Good Career Guidance](#) [accessed 15.11.2018]

The National Careers Service (NCS) provides advice on learning, training and employment for young people and adults in England. The service is delivered by local area based contractors who provide access to face-to-face and telephone advice to adults 19 years (or 18 if unemployed or in custody) and over. The NCS also comprise the National Careers Service Helpline (NCH), which offers web chat, text and telephone support to adults and young people, and National Careers Service website gives customers access to information and advice. The National Apprenticeship Service in England runs an Apprenticeship and a Traineeship Vacancy Service, which includes an online search function and mobile app.

Careers Wales offers an all age careers guidance service. The Welsh strategy for further development of careers services is outlined in *Future ambitions: Developing careers services in Wales* <sup>(95)</sup>. Careers Wales also maintains an Apprenticeship Matching Service available for employers and individual applicants.

The Northern Ireland Careers Service provides an all age, impartial careers education and guidance service to promote employment, education and training opportunities. Careers advisers operate throughout Northern Ireland from Job Centres, Jobs and Benefits Offices and stand-alone careers offices. The Careers Service also offers careers guidance via other channels such as telephone, email and webchat. Careers advisers use evidence outlined in the Department for the Economy's Skills Barometer to highlight the skills and qualifications most valued by employers and the sectors expected to experience employment growth, thus helping to balance skills supply and demand. Advisers also work with careers teachers in schools and further education colleges to provide impartial advice and guidance to pupils from 14-19. In Northern Ireland, careers education is a statutory area of learning in the common curriculum for all grant-aided post-primary schools. In addition, further education colleges and higher education institutions offer careers guidance to their students. The strategy for careers education and guidance in Northern Ireland, *Preparing for Success 2015-2020* which was published in March 2016 sets out a coherent and forward thinking strategic vision for the careers system in Northern Ireland <sup>(96)</sup>.

Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG) is also offered in schools, colleges, higher education institutions and third sector bodies across the UK. Careers advice is available from trade unions as well and Unionlearn has developed their Strategy for Supporting Learners through their Union Learning Representatives, specifically targeting those who are disadvantaged in the workplace. Schools and colleges in England have a duty to provide access to independent careers guidance for pupils in school years 8 to 13 (ages 12-18) and for 19 to 25 year-olds with an Education, Health and Care Plan. Government funding for careers provision forms part of overall school and college budgets and it is left up to the discretion of the

---

<sup>(95)</sup> Welsh Government (2010). *Future ambitions: Developing Careers services in Wales* [accessed 15.11.2018].

<sup>(96)</sup> DfE (2018). *Preparing for Success 2015-20* [accessed 15.11.2018].

education provider how much is spent. Local authorities no longer have an obligation to provide careers guidance, but still have a duty to encourage, enable and assist young people to take part in education and training. Careers education and guidance is also provided by schools and colleges in Wales for students aged 14-19. The Careers and the World of Work Framework also forms part of the curriculum for 11-16 year-olds in maintained schools in Wales.

Jobcentre+ advisers work within schools in England to deliver impartial career advice intended to support schools in engaging young people (aged 12 to 18) identified as being at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) or who face potential disadvantage in the labour market. The initiative, known as the Pathfinder programme, will provide students with information on traineeships and apprenticeships, accessing work experience, the local labour market and soft skills that employers expect.

Ofsted's Learner View website allows FE college students in England to rate their college. The results are available for users to search and view to gather an indication of the performance of a college.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) has added information about vocational courses and general careers advice to their website under the name UCAS Progress.

# Bibliography

- Belfast Metropolitan College [s.d.]. *Higher education accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) process*
- BIS (2010). *Skills for Sustainable Growth*
- BIS (2015). *Fixing the foundations*
- BIS/DfE (2013). *Rigour and Responsiveness in Skills*
- Careers Profession Task Force (2012). *Towards a strong careers profession*
- CBI/Pearson (2016). *The Right Combination*
- Cedefop (2018). *Mismatch priority occupations: UK*
- CIPD (2015). *Learning and Talent Development Annual Survey Report 2015*
- Commission for Developing Scotland's Young Workforce (2014). *Education Working For All! Final Report*
- DEL (2011). *Success through Skills – Transforming Futures*
- DELNI (2014). *Securing our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy on Apprenticeships*
- Department for Education (2017a). *Long-term apprenticeship model appraisal*
- Department for Education (2017b). *Post-16 technical education reforms: T level action plan*
- Department for Education (2018a). *Apprenticeships and traineeships data*
- Department for Education (2018b). *Employer Skills Survey 2017*
- Department for Education (2018c). *Further education outcome-based success measures: 2015 to 2016*
- Department for Education (2018d). *Introduction of T Levels: Policy paper*
- Department for Education (2018e). *Participation in education, training and employment: 2017*
- Department for Education [s.d.]. *Apprenticeship Ambassador Network*
- Department for Employment and Learning (2015). *Generating our Success: The Northern Ireland Strategy for Youth Training*
- Department for the Economy (2015). *Generating our Success*
- Department for the Economy (2016). *Further Education Means Success*
- Department for the Economy [s.d.]. *ApprenticeshipsNI statistics*
- Department for the Economy [s.d.]. *Higher Level Apprenticeship pilot Activity in Northern Ireland: 2015/16 to 2016/17*
- Department for Work and Pensions (2017). *Living lives: the future of work, health and disability*
- DfE (2018). *Preparing for Success 2015-20*
- DfE/BIS (2016). *Post-16 Skills Plan*
- Education and Training Foundation (2014). *Professional Standards for Teachers and Trainers in Education and Training – England*
- Education and Training Inspectorate (2017). *An evaluation of the Youth Training pilot programmes at level 2 and the ApprenticeshipsNI pilot programmes at level 3 provided by the six colleges of further education in Northern Ireland*

Eurostat (2001-2012). *Percentage of pupils in upper secondary education enrolled in vocational stream*

Eurostat (2018a). *Employment by educational attainment level – annual data (%) in 2017*

Eurostat (2018b). *Population on 1 January 2017*

Eurostat (2018c). *Projected old-age-dependency ratio*

Felstead et al (2012). *Skills at Work in Britain, First Findings from the Skills and Employment Survey 2012*

Gatsby Charitable Foundation (2013). *Good Career Guidance*

Hazelkorn, E. (2016). *Towards 2030: a framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales*

HM Treasury and BIS (2011). *The Plan for Growth*

Home Office (2018). *UK Shortage Occupation List from 06 July 2018*

Institute for Apprenticeships (2019a). *What is an apprenticeship standard?*

Institute for Apprenticeships (2019b). *What we do*

Office for National Statistics (2016). *Migration statistics quarterly report May 2016*

Office for National Statistics (2018a). *Employment by industry*

Office for National Statistics (2018b). *Long-term international migration*

Office for National Statistics (2018c). *Regional labour market statistics in the UK: June 2018*

Office for National Statistics (2018d). *UK Labour Market, June 2018*

Ofqual (2015). *Total Qualification Time Criteria*

QAA (2013). *EBTA*

QAA (2014). *Qualifications can cross boundaries – a guide to comparing qualifications in the UK and Ireland*

Richard, D. (2012). *The Richard Review of Apprenticeships*

Sainsbury, D. (2016). *Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education*

Scottish Funding Council (2016). *Guidance for the development of College Outcome Agreements: 2017-18 to 2019-20*

Scottish Government (2009). *Innovation for Scotland*

Scottish Government (2010). *Skills for Scotland: Accelerating the Recovery and Increasing Sustainable Economic Growth*

Scottish Government (2011). *Review of Post-16 Education and Vocational Training in Scotland*

Scottish Government (2014a). *Adult Learning in Scotland, Statement of Ambition*

Scottish Government (2014b). *National Youth Work Strategy 2014-19*

Scottish Government (2016a). *A fairer Scotland for disabled people*

Scottish Government (2016b). *The final report of the Commission on Widening Access*

SCQF (2010). *Facilitating the recognition of prior learning: toolkit*

SDS (2015). *Equalities action plan for Modern Apprenticeships in Scotland*

Skills Development Scotland (2018a). *Annual Participation Measure for 16 – 19 year olds in Scotland 2018*

Skills Development Scotland (2018b). *Modern Apprenticeship Statistics*

Skills Funding Agency (2016a). *FE data library: apprenticeships*

Skills Funding Agency (2016b). *FE data library: traineeships*

SQA Accreditation (2014). *Regulatory Principles*

UCAS (2015). *End of Cycle Report 2015*

UK Government (2018). *Apprenticeship delivery board*

UK NARIC (2014). *Innovation in VET and the concept of Studio Schools*

UKCES (2016). *Working Futures 2014 to 2024*

Universities UK (2017). *Degree apprenticeships: realising opportunities*

Welsh Government (2010). *Future ambitions: Developing Careers services in Wales*

Welsh Government (2012a). *Quality Assured Lifelong Learning*

Welsh Government (2012b). *Review of Qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds in Wales*

Welsh Government (2014a). *Framework for co-investment in skills*

Welsh Government (2014b). *Policy statement on skills*

Welsh Government (2014c). *Skills implementation plan*

Welsh Government (2016a). *A framework for building a world-class post-compulsory education system for Wales*

Welsh Government (2016b). *Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales Strategy / Raising the ambitions and educational attainment of children who are looked after in Wales Action Plan*

Welsh Government (2016c). *Youth Engagement and Progression Framework: Formative evaluation follow-up study*

Welsh Government (2017). *Public Good and a Prosperous Wales – Building a reformed PCET system*

Welsh Government [s.d.]. *Learning programmes for Foundation Apprenticeships, Apprenticeships and Higher Apprenticeships*

Whitehead, N, UKCES (2013). *Review of Adult Vocational Qualifications in England*

Wolf, A. (2011). *Review of Vocational Education – the Wolf Report*

## List of acronyms and abbreviations

BIS	Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CCEA	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
Cedefop	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
CDN	College Development Network
CfE	Curriculum for Excellence
CIAG	Careers Information, Advice and Guidance
CIPD	Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
CPA	Careers Profession Alliance
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CQFW	Credit and Qualifications Framework of Wales
DE	Department of Education (Northern Ireland)
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland)
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills (Wales)
DYW	Developing the Young Workforce
EBP	Education Business Partnership
ECVET	European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training
EF	Entitlement Framework
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency
EMA	Education Maintenance Allowance
Estyn	Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
ETF	Education and Training Foundation (England)
ETI	Education and Training Inspectorate (Northern Ireland)
EWC	Education Workforce Council
FE	Further Education
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
FQ-EHEA	Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area
GCE A level	General Certificate of Education Advanced level
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
GTCS	General Teaching Council for Scotland
HE	Higher Education

HEI	Higher Education Institution
HNC	Higher National Certificate
HND	Higher National Diploma
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
liP	Investors in People
ILA	Individual Learning Accounts
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ITA	Individual Training Accounts
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LLP	Lifelong Learning Partnerships
LLUK	Lifelong Learning UK
NCS	National Careers Service
NEET	Not in Employment, Education or Training
NOS	National Occupational Standards
NPA	National Progression Award
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
Ofqual	Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PCET	Post-Compulsory Education and Training
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PSA	Public Service Agreement
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QCF	Qualifications and Credit Framework
QTLS	Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RARPA	Recognising And Recording Progress and Achievement in non-accredited learning
ReferNet	European network of reference and expertise in Vocational Education and Training
RQF	Regulated Qualifications Framework
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SAAB	Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board
SCQF	Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework
SDS	Skills Development Scotland
SFC	Scottish Funding Council
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
SQA	Scottish Qualifications Authority
SSC	Sector Skill Council
SVQ	Scottish Vocational Qualification

TRA	Teaching Regulation Agency
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UTC	University Technical College
VET	Vocational Education and Training

## ANNEX 1

# Overview of UK education authorities

Table 3. **Policy making authorities**

<b>England</b>	<b>Department for Education (DfE)</b> – all levels of education
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Scottish Government</b> – all levels of education
<b>Wales</b>	<b>Welsh Government</b> – all levels of education
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Department of Education (DE)</b> – schools and teacher training
<b>Ireland</b>	<b>Department for the Economy</b> – further education colleges and higher education

Source: ReferNet UK.

Table 4. **VET regulators and inspection/accreditation agencies**

<b>England</b>	<b>Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)</b> - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	<b>Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted)</b> – schools and further education colleges
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)</b> - school, further education and higher education qualifications not awarded by HEIs
	<b>Education Scotland</b> - schools and further education colleges
<b>Wales</b>	<b>Qualifications Wales</b> - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	<b>Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn)</b> - schools and further education colleges
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)</b> - school, further education and non-degree higher education qualifications
	<b>Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)</b> – schools, further education colleges and other providers delivering publicly-funded training programmes

Source: ReferNet UK.

Table 5. **Education providers**

<b>England</b>	<b>Schools/academies</b> – general academic and vocational secondary education
	<b>Further education colleges</b> – secondary and post-secondary VET
	<b>Independent training providers</b> – secondary and post-secondary VET
	<b>Higher education institutions</b> – higher vocational education
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Schools</b> – general academic and vocational secondary education
	<b>Tertiary colleges</b> – secondary and post-secondary VET
	<b>Private training providers</b> – secondary and post-secondary VET
	<b>Higher education institutions</b> – higher vocational education
<b>Wales</b>	<b>Schools</b> – general academic and vocational secondary education
	<b>Further education institutions</b> – secondary and post-secondary VET

	<b>Colleges</b> – secondary and post-secondary VET
	<b>Higher education institutions</b> – higher vocational education
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Schools</b> – general academic and vocational secondary education
	<b>Further education colleges</b> – secondary and post-secondary VET
	<b>Private, community and voluntary sector providers</b> – secondary and post-secondary VET
	<b>Training organisations</b> - – secondary and post-secondary VET
	<b>Higher education institutions</b> – higher vocational education

Source: ReferNet UK.

Table 6. **Qualification frameworks owners**

<b>RQF</b>	<b>Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)</b>
	<b>Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)</b>
<b>SCQF</b>	<b>Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership</b>
<b>CQFW</b>	<b>Welsh Government</b>
<b>FHEQ</b>	<b>Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)</b>

Source: ReferNet UK.