



**T Level Technical
Qualifications Key Dates
Schedule Consultation
Response - 2022**

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Purpose

This document provides an overview of the Key Dates consultation that was held **between 14 April and 20 May 2022**. It details the feedback received by providers and actions taken, where necessary.

Overview

NCFE sent consultation details out to 106 providers, of which a total of 12 providers (7.5%) provided consultation responses. These responses were received either by email or through account executive engagement, with 31 issues identified by respondents. NCFE's response takes into consideration the fact that the majority of providers chose not to respond to this consultation.

Provider response themes

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

Theme	Number of providers	Number requesting change	Narrative response included (Yes/No)	Change effected
ESP window length	7	7	Yes	Partly
Overlapping assessments	6	6	Yes	Partly
Clashes with GQ assessments	5	5	Yes	No
Revised structure of KDS	4	0	Yes	N/A
Flexibility within ESP windows	3	3	Yes	Yes
Overlap with religious festivals and holidays	2	2	Yes	No
Structure of Employer Set Project (ESP)	1	1	Yes	No
Number of KDS amendments	1	1	Yes	Yes
Specific delivery qualification guidance	1	1	Yes	No
Flexibility in delivery model	1	1	Yes	No

Actions taken and NCFE responses

Following a review of the feedback accountable teams at NCFE have provided the following responses and have taken the actions detailed below, where appropriate. Provider responses are collated into typical representative comments.

Theme - Window length of ESP assessments

Typical comment – ESP windows are too short which creates a strain on providers to adequately resource current cohorts. This also impacts provider's ability to increase cohorts and/or offer additional T Level technical qualifications in future years. A particular comment was made with reference to the Health ESP and the requirements for conducting standardised patient discussions.

NCFE response – From Summer 2022 onwards, the Science ESP window has already been lengthened by 1 week to bring this assessment in line with other T Level ESP assessment window lengths.

With respect to the ESP for the Health qualification, this window is currently two weeks, in line with other ESPs. We will keep this feedback under review, especially with respect to the manageability challenge around conducting standardised patient discussions for larger cohorts in future series. We would expect to communicate any change in time for next summer's series. We have reviewed this autumn's series and note that it has a smaller cohort, so expect this to remain in line with the Sample Assessment Materials and the summer 2022 series.

Action Taken: Science ESP window lengthened by 1 week. Review of Health ESP window duration to take place and results of review communicated to providers before summer 2023 assessment series.

Theme – Overlapping Assessment Windows

Typical comment - ESP and Occupational Specialism windows and assessments should not overlap, doing so puts constraints on staffing and student timetabling.

NCFE Response – When NCFE’s T Level qualifications were first developed, it was with the intention that there should be a gap between these assessment components. However, having listened to feedback from providers throughout 2021, particularly in relation to the number of Guided Learning Hours required to prepare students for summative assessments, Occupational Specialisms were relocated to later within the academic sessions, resulting in an inevitable overlap. Where assessment components are within the same qualification e.g., Digital Support Services, we have brought forward set date and time elements so that there is little or no overlap.

Action Taken: Where there are clashes between set date and time assessments across components we have restructured and rescheduled to attempt to remove the burden on providers and students. This relates to the Employer Set Project and Occupational Specialism of Digital Support, within the Digital Support Services qualification. In order to avoid clashes in set date and time assessments, both Tasks of Assignment 2 within the summer 2023 diet for Digital Support have been brought forward to avoid a clash with the corresponding Task 1 of the Employer Set Project.

Theme – Clashes with GCSE and A-Level Assessments

Typical comment - Your assessment windows clash with GCSEs, and this is proving challenging for providers to manage on top of an already challenging ESP.

NCFE Response - NCFE construct all T Level external assessment timetables 2 years in advance of the assessment, as required by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). This is done with the intention of supporting providers in their future planning.

In doing so, we cross-check any published or provisional assessment dates for related qualification suites e.g., GCSE, A-Level, BTEC etc. This cross-check is carried out during the development of the original drafts and the consultation periods.

However, as many of these suites operate on a single year cycle (e.g. GCSE dates), there may be occasions where clashes occur after dates are agreed and published. This may in turn lead to operational challenges for our providers and students; for example, we have agreed T Level, CACHE and V Cert external assessment dates for 2022/23 and are currently consulting on 2023/24, whereas some other qualification suites have yet to confirm dates for Summer 2023.

We acknowledge this issue and, where clashes do occur, suggest that this be managed either through our Timetable clash arrangements, as per our Regulations, or through our Assessment Variation process, should a postponement to an alternative date be require, subject to approval.

Action Taken: None.

Theme – Revised Structure of Key Dates Schedule

Typical comment - I think the new format is very clear and a great response to provider feedback! It's much easier to find the relevant information now.

NCFE Response – None required, and no further actions required.

Theme – Flexibility within ESP Windows

Typical comment - When we've asked if we can administer the exams in a certain way (after being told to do it how I want), my account executive has had to check if my suggestions are ok. The ESP format can be confusing and guidance not always clear.

NCFE Response - Where possible, we will clarify within our Key Dates Schedule where there are restrictions on how hours should be delivered, across a window, either in terms of number of hours or the number or timing of sessions.

If there are no restrictions indicated within the Key Dates Schedule, providers should assume the designated number of hours can be delivered within the timeframe at a provider's discretion.

However, we would advise all providers to refer to appropriate tutor or provider guidance documents for further information on best practice in delivering individual or collective sessions throughout any given assessment window. We do take this feedback on board and are looking to make our other assessment documentation clearer with respect to the tasks, timings, and conditions for each of our ESPs, as well as the Key Dates Schedule.

Actions Taken: Clarity provided on specific tasks within Healthcare Science ESP windows where timings and duration is variable dependent upon the number of learners. Increased clarity given on timings for the Education & Childcare EYE Occupational Specialism for Assignment 1

Theme – Overlaps with religious festivals and holidays

Typical comment - Religious fasting impacts on students' concentration and energy levels. Can decisions on dates and times of assessments please account for these along with national holiday periods.

NCFE Response – NCFE's updated structure and content of the Key Dates Schedule document, for 2022-2024, now incorporates pre-release data. Together with the timetabling of external assessments, we have factored in standard provider holiday periods and key religious dates in their despatch and delivery as far as reasonably possible.

As far as is reasonably possible, where religious festival days and/or holidays are on set dates, NCFE will not schedule fixed set date and time assessments. However, given that many religious festivals cover a range of dates, and differ year-on-year, it is logistically unfeasible to completely avoid some overlap. In cases where this happens, we advise providers who believe students could be adversely affected to reference and implement where appropriate our Assessment Variation and/or Special Consideration policies.

Actions Taken: Inclusion of pre-release information, to providers and/or students, within the revised Key Dates Schedule, incorporating wider windows of pre-release to allow for the provider variability in holiday periods.

Theme – Structure of Employer Set Project

Typical comment – These should either be entirely paper-based or entirely on-screen (analogous to driving theory test).

NCFE Response – We are currently reviewing the assessment materials to make them as convenient as possible for providers to deliver themselves within the requirements of the assessment tasks. For example, we are looking at separating out pro formas into separate editable Word documents, that can be worked on digitally. However, for some tasks, although the evidence submitted will always be in a digital form, in their nature the activity cannot be digital and may have to be done on paper to be consistent with valid coverage of the skills and knowledge.

Actions Taken: None.

Theme – Number of Key Dates Schedule amendments

Typical comment - Reduce the number of changes necessary by anticipating the need for dates to be changed.

NCFE Response - We acknowledge that there have been more alterations to previous versions of the Key Dates Schedule than we would have hoped, and we apologise for any inconvenience this has caused. We have taken on board all provider feedback and have carried this into our review for future versions. Additionally, all providers have had the opportunity to consult on forthcoming dates and provide feedback for future series.

Please also note that, on occasion, date changes applicable across all qualifications, are not determined at Awarding Organisation (AO) level. For example, registration date amendments or extensions of review request timeframes will impact all AOs with responsibility for the delivery of T Level technical qualifications.

Actions Taken: Increased consultation through provider newsletters and Insight Surveys to gain a clearer understanding of provider issues to improve the accuracy and reliability of data within the Key Dates Schedule. Additional internal scrutiny on Key Dates Schedule before publication to be carried out.

Theme – Specific qualification delivery guidance

Typical comment - Task 2a for the Health qualification ESP – the current method is impractical, there are too many staff and student constraints. Our suggestion is to use an alternative (OSCI) format used by nurses.

NCFE Response – Currently we do not propose changing this other than to consider feedback on the ESP window length as above which may mitigate some of the challenges around this task.

The task is designed with the purpose of an ESP in mind, which is expected to be done at a point in the course before the student has had a chance to do very much preparation for their Occupational Specialism. The Occupational Specialism assessments in Supporting Healthcare do include challenging OSCI style practical assessments as they are designed to assess a student's threshold competence in preparation for potential work roles, but the ESP is a step on the way towards this type of assessment. However, we will always keep this type of feedback under review.

Actions Taken: None for the moment

Theme - Flexibility in Delivery Model

Typical comment – Awarding Organisations need to ensure that they facilitate the holistic model for which T levels were designed but, also, allow a mixture of approaches as there are multiple windows within the course. It should be possible to do each element across the spring and summer window each year. This would allow centres to decide what is year 1 and what is year 2.

NCFE Response – The T Levels are, by design, qualifications that have linear style assessments. This applies across all T Levels and not something that is in our control to change. The reason for requiring students to sit all assessments for a given component at the same time is to ensure that they are assessed against the full range of required skills and knowledge at a point in time to show their true ability in the form of a grade for that component. This is as opposed to achieving the component piecemeal through multiple assessments spread through the year. However, it is worth noting that there is flexibility in the model - providers can choose between summer and autumn windows for the core component, in any year, and where a student is resitting, they do not have to sit both the exams and the ESPs together (but note that they must always sit both core exams in the same series). The Occupational Specialisms are available in the summer of every year, and to offer an autumn opportunity would present huge logistical challenges for both students, providers, and NCFE.

Actions Taken: None

Change History Record

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

Version	Description of change	Date of Issue
1.1	Published	June 2022

Document information

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