

Prime Minister
Chancellor of the Exchequer
Secretary of State for Education
Secretary of State for Work & Pensions
By email



14th January 2026

CONCERNS OVER POST-16 LEVEL 3 AND BELOW PATHWAYS CONSULTATION

Dear Prime Minister, Chancellor and Secretaries of State,

On behalf of CONSTRUCT, we welcome the opportunity to respond to the Government's consultation on Post-16 Level 3 and Below Pathways. We believe that a robust landscape of Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications is the cornerstone of a productive UK workforce. While we recognise the intent to simplify the technical education landscape and improve outcomes for learners, we must express our strong concerns regarding the proposed changes.

Simplicity must not come at the cost of inclusivity; we are concerned that removing established qualifications may leave many learners without a viable starting point.

Our members operate across the construction and infrastructure sector, directly employing, training, and upskilling young people and new entrants. From this position, we do not believe the proposed reforms adequately reflect the realities of the labour market, nor the needs of employers in sectors already experiencing significant skills shortages.

Construct members believe that 'one-size-fits-all' academic reforms often fail to meet the niche, practical competency requirements that employers actually demand on-site.

In particular, we are concerned that the changes risk:

- Reducing access to practical, employer-led pathways for learners who are not best served by purely academic routes. Social mobility is hindered when the 'stepping stones' of smaller, flexible vocational units are replaced by rigid, high-stakes assessments.
- Undermining progression opportunities into apprenticeships and skilled employment, especially at Levels 2 and 3. Level 2 qualifications are often the 'bridge' for disadvantaged learners to enter the industry; removing them risks cutting off the pipeline to Level 3 apprenticeships.
- Creating further confusion for learners, parents, and employers at a time when clarity and stability are essential

Construction relies heavily on clear, well-supported vocational pathways that allow individuals to enter the industry, gain experience, and progress. Any reform that narrows these routes or removes proven qualifications risks disengaging learners and exacerbating existing workforce challenges. CONSTRUCT advocates for a system that retains 'proven qualifications' which have high employer recognition and clear links to CSCS cards and other industry-standard mandates.

We would strongly urge the Government to reconsider elements of the proposed changes, engage more closely with employers and sector bodies, and ensure that any future system genuinely supports technical education, social mobility, and economic growth.

We would welcome further dialogue and the opportunity to contribute constructively to the development of a system that works for learners, employers, and the wider economy.

Yours faithfully,

Ian Burnett
On behalf of CONSTRUCT