![Ufi VocTech Trust logo]

Ufi + Policy Makers:
# Working together to get adults learning

Ufi VocTech Trust calls on policy makers to reform the UK assessment and qualifications system to unlock UK skills and productivity for a thriving and sustainable economy.

- Our research shows that the current assessment and qualification system is holding the UK back from getting the skills it needs for a changing economy.
- Reform is needed to ensure we have an agile and financially viable system that can give people and employers the skills they need for work.
- Technology is central to creating adaptive, responsive, and relevant forms of assessment and qualifications.

The problem

There are not enough people with the skills the UK needs for the future of work. 82% of businesses identify qualifications and skills as the reason they struggle to find the talent they need, and recruiting skilled staff is the second biggest barrier to SMEs growing their businesses.[1]

Despite the demand for skills, rates of adult participation in learning are at rock bottom levels, with nearly 30% of people not having learnt since leaving school.[2] The people who need to upskill most, those with the lowest qualifications and in the lowest paid roles, are least likely to take part in learning.[3]

When did you last learn?
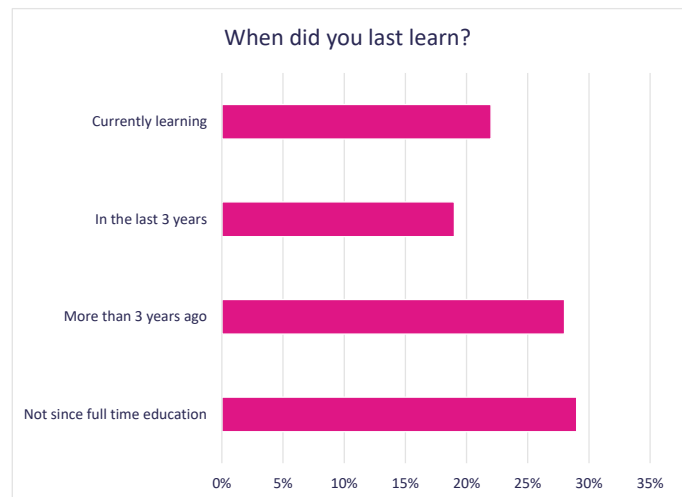
Source: L&W, *Adult Participation in Learning*, 2022

All or nothing

Adults are not starting to learn because of negative past experiences and because we require commitments to large chunks of learning, with 'all or nothing' final exams that often don't show individuals' true capabilities. We require a burdensome and intimidating commitment in time and resources that deters individuals and employers from investing in skills throughout their lives.[4]

Inflexible and irrelevant

The inflexibility of the skills system results in assessment and qualifications that are too rigid in time and scope, with funding that is not financially sustainable for providers. The system has failed to keep up with the demands of the modern world, leaving students ill equipped for the workplace, often with a lifelong distaste for learning, and with employers not getting the skilled people they need.[5]

Limited options

The limited number of qualifications and assessment methods restricts how learners can develop and demonstrate their skills. As a result, the UK is failing to give students the opportunity to equip themselves with the technical or soft skills necessary to succeed in the workplace.[6] By reducing choice, we make learning more intimidating and make the system less agile to the changing needs of employers.

[1] FSB, *Scaling up Skills*, 2022
[2] L&W, *Adult Participation in Learning*, 2022
[3] Ibid

[4] RSA/Ufi, *Rebalancing Adult Learning*, 2022
[5] Rethinking Assessment, *Blueprint for Change*, 2023
[6] IET, *Press Release*, 2021

What do we want to see?

We want policy makers to look at the system as a whole, so that policy, regulation and funding can help to get more adults learning so that the UK has the skills it needs and no one gets left behind.

1. Modularity

More qualifications should be made up of assessments that are modular and not dependent on high-stakes exams. People should be able to take and resit qualifications module by module and build the award that is right for them and their employers.

2. Flexibility

Offer a wider range of assessment modes, develop, and deploy digital tools that better support qualifications, and allow for a greater level of adaption. End point exams and large qualifications work for some, but for many they do not represent their skills or the world of work.

3. Choice

Provide a broader range of options for students and ensure the continued existence of qualifications like BTECs. Use micro-credentials to provide qualifications in small chunks, evidencing learning and offering learners and employers exactly what they want.

Ufi's experience and expertise

- **VocTech Challenge Skills for an Economy in Transition:** Our research showed up the flaws in the current skills system and our White Paper has set out a number of ways we will take action.
- **NCFE Strategic Partnership:** We support NCFE's Innovation in Assessment Fund and collaborate to advocate for the role of technology in the future of assessment.
- **RSA Strategic Partnership:** We have supported Cities of Learning and are currently exploring new research on the future of assessment.

Ufi-supported **Cities of Learning** from the RSA, is a digital platform that accredits informal and formal training in communities through a system of digital badges and helps learners find pathways into further education and work.

The programme is live in Brighton, Belfast, Plymouth, Southampton, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Bradford, Tees Valley.

Ufi-supported **CENTURY** uses AI to personalise learning and improve student outcomes while reducing teacher workload by creating actionable data insights and targeted interventions.

CENTURY's platform answers 1 million questions a day, saving teachers 6 hours a week, in 45 countries around the world.

Ufi-supported **Bodyswaps** allows learners to safely practice their skills and measure their progress through a library of VR role-play simulations.

Bodyswaps provides accurate, live and cost-effective feedback on soft skills development, with 85% of learners reporting a significant improvement in their confidence.

Ufi VocTech Trust is an independent charity that champions the power of technology to improve skills for work and deliver better outcomes for all. We provide funding and expertise to organisations across the UK that are developing digital technologies to support skills for work. Follow #GetAdultsLearning.

Stay in touch - Ufi wants to support policy makers developing reforms to assessment and qualifications. Stay in touch with us by contacting josh.smith@ufi.co.uk

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