

The New-Level 2 and Level 3 Plumbing Standards – Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What are the new Plumbing Standards?

A: These are the new Plumbing Standards at Level 2 and Level 3 that are to be taken by all plumbing and heating apprentices in England through End Point Assessment (EPA).

Q: Who are the Plumbing Employers' Group?

A: These are owners of plumbing and heating companies across the UK who have formed the Plumbing Employers' Group (PEG). The PEG was formed after the CIPHE ran a Plumbing Education Survey, which showed, overwhelming support for a Level 2 Plumbing Standard. It is the PEG who have agreed and ratified the new Level 2 and Level 3 Plumbing Standards content.

Q: Who are IfATE?

A: The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) is an employer-led, crown, non-departmental, public body. They oversee the development, approval and publication of apprenticeship standards and assessment plans. They are also responsible for the class-room content of 'T-Levels'. They work with employers to develop, approve, review and revise apprenticeships and technical qualifications.

Q: What is the difference between the Level 2 Standard and the Level 3 Standard?

A: The Level 2 Standard incorporates and develops the basic knowledge, skills and behaviours that a 'Domestic Plumber' would need in their day-to-day activities, such as the knowledge and understanding of cold water systems, hot water systems, heating pipework, sanitation and rainwater installations.

The Level 3 Standard builds on these aspects to include higher level cold water, hot water, and sanitation, as well as low temperature hydronic heating systems. It focuses more on the design and planning of plumbing and heating systems.

Q: Are there formal qualifications attached to the new Plumbing Standards?

Yes (pending IfATE approval). The PEG have ratified two 'Mandated Qualifications'. At Level 2 the draft title for provisional qualification is the '**Level 2 Diploma in Domestic Plumbing Installation**'. At Level 3 the draft title for the provisional qualification is the '**Level 3 Diploma in Advanced Plumbing and Heating Installation**'.

Q: Why do neither of the Standards incorporate gas or renewables?

A: Not all plumbing companies require or want a fuel mandate. Many plumbing companies only require the 'wet' part of the trade i.e. cold water, hot water, heating system pipework and sanitation. The Plumbing and Domestic Heating Standard we have at present does not take the wishes of these companies into account, and so many 'would-be' apprentices miss out on a bona-fide route into the plumbing industry. These new Standards aim to level the playing field to include ALL plumbing routes and not just those that are fuel based.

Q: When will the new Standards be ready for delivery in the colleges?

A: The CIPHE is working towards being ready possibly for September 2025 or early 2026 but there is more work to do and further stages of external approval and qualification funding to be finalised. The next stage of the process is further consultations with the PEG, awarding organisations and training providers. If you are any of these, you can register your interest with us so that we can engage with you through co-ordinated channels.

Q: We are a small plumbing company who deal mostly with new housing sites. Which apprenticeship would be the best route to take?

A: Your apprentice starts with the Level 2 Standard. The mandated qualification for this is the 'Level 2 Diploma in Domestic Plumbing Installation'. This would give the apprentice the basic skills and knowledge to complete these installations to a high standard, while providing a springboard to many other courses, such as Water Regulations and G3-Hot water. Your apprentice can take the Level 3 route later after gaining valuable experience if required.

Q: My apprentice has previously completed their Level 2 Standard but now wishes to complete the Level 3. Is this possible?

A: Yes, absolutely! It is the natural progression for a Level 2 apprentice.

Q: Can my apprentice stop their existing programme and move over once the new standards are up and running?

A: You will need to talk with your training provider, as they look after this part of the apprenticeship journey.

Q: What funding will be in place for each of the new Standards?

A: This is not known at the present time. We have a lot of work to do before we get to this stage. We will, of course, keep everyone informed with regular updates, where possible.

Q: Will we have to contribute to future training costs?

A: We would anticipate no changes in this regard, unless funding rules change in the meantime.

Q: What if I want my apprentice to have a heat pump or solar thermal outcome?

A: The apprentice would need to complete both Level 2 and Level 3 standards, then there are numerous opportunities and short 3 – 5 day courses for Air Source and Ground Source Heat Pump installation and Solar Thermal installations at a minimum cost. Some are even funded by Central Government. Most of the leading Awarding Organisations have these courses as part of their portfolio. The bonus here is that the apprentice will be qualified a full year earlier than they would otherwise have been with the present qualification and standard. It may also be worth talking to the college or centre where the apprentice attends about the possibilities.

For government funding of renewables courses, see here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heat-training-grant-for-heat-pumps>

Q: Why should I send my apprentice on to a Plumbing Standard when I can send them on a Gas Engineering or Low Carbon Standard?

A: If either of these routes are taken, the apprentice would not be a plumber at the end of it. Neither of these courses go into the depth of knowledge required for a plumber to do their job. In both these instances, sanitation and drainage are not covered at all and Water Regulations/G3-Hot water are not mandatory. They are optional. With the Plumbing Level 3 standard, achievement of both of these is mandatory and sanitation is covered as a norm.

Q: As a company, we do a lot of bespoke installations where the design of the system has been completed in house. What Standard would you recommend?

A: The Level 3 incorporates the design of cold water, hot water, low temperature hydronic heating, sanitation and rainwater systems. It also has Water Regulations and G3-Hot water assessment as part of the Level 3 mandated qualification. On completion of the Level 3 EPA the apprentice may apply for Engineering Council Eng. Tech recognition.

Q: I want my plumbing apprentice to eventually have a gas ACS outcome. With no gas pathway in the new Standards, how is this possible?

A: First, the apprentice would need to complete the Level 2 Standard. This takes 2 years to complete. Then, after completion of the Level 2 EPA, the apprentice can enrol on to the Level 3 Gas Engineering Standard. This will take another 12 - 18 months. This route is DOUBLE FUNDED as funding is available

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for both Standards, and, in theory, the apprentice achieves both Plumbing and Gas subjects 6 – 12 months earlier than with the present Level 3 DP&HT gas pathway option. Remember, an apprentice can take more than one apprenticeship. However, they can't do them at the same time. They need to finish the first before they start the second.

Included in the Qualification	Optional unit	Domestic Plumber Standard – 24 months	Advanced Plumber Standard – 18 months	Gas Engineering Standard – 18 months	Air Source Heat Pump – 3 days	Ground Source Heat Pump – 3 days	Solar Thermal – 3 days	Rainwater and Greywater – 3 days	Low temperature heating – 3 days	Water Regulations – 2 days	BRAD G3 - Hot Water – 2 days
Plumber										Opt	
Advanced Plumber											
Plumber with gas										Opt	
Plumber with gas/ASHP										Opt	
Plumber with gas/GSHP										Opt	
Plumber with gas/ASHP/GSHP										Opt	
Plumber with ASHP only										Opt	
Plumber with ASHP/GSHP										Opt	
Plumber with solar thermal										Opt	
Plumber with RW/GW										Opt	
Plumber with HP/ST/RW										Opt	
Advanced Plumber with gas											
Advanced Plumber with gas/ASHP											
Advanced Plumber with gas/GSHP											
Advanced Plumber with gas/ASHP/GSHP											
Advanced Plumber with ASHP only											
Advanced Plumber with ASHP/GSHP											
Advanced Plumber with solar thermal											
Advanced Plumber with RW/GW											
Advanced Plumber with HP/ST/RW											