Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification
**BTEC Nationals in**

# Computing

## Transition Guide

*Extended Certificate for first teaching from September 2025*
*Certificate for first teaching from September 2026*

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**This document is for centres/practitioners moving (transitioning) from:**

- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Computing to the **Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing (Extended Certificate)** from 2025
- Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Certificate in Computing to the **Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing (Certificate)** from 2026

# Content

# Introducing the Level 3 BTEC Nationals from 2025 (AAQs)

The Level 3 BTEC Nationals from 2025 qualifications provide students with meaningful and practical learning experiences across a range of career sectors. They equip students with the applied knowledge, skills and personal attributes they need to enter and thrive in higher education and meet the demands of future employment in our fast-changing world.

Level 3 BTEC Nationals from 2025 (AAQs) are:

- **Engaging and future-focused -** providing opportunities for students to learn in real, relatable and practical ways and designed to ensure that they develop critical knowledge and transferable skills to navigate the future.
- **Accessible and fair for students, balanced with the demands of progression to the next stage of learning -** the use of the N Grade and our holistic approach to designing assessment criteria means that qualifications are attainable for students whilst ensuring that they have a solid foundation of skills and knowledge, and the confidence to progress.
- **Accepted and supported by universities -** developed in collaboration with educators and universities to ensure students have the right combination of skills and knowledge for success in higher education. Over 100 letters of support from universities.
- **Well supported and straightforward to deliver and administer -** simple structure making unit combination more straightforward; uniformed format of external assessment across subjects to streamline administration; Pearson-Set Assignment Briefs (PSABs) removing the need for centres to plan their own assignments, and wide range of training and support.

# What is new?

## *Preparing students for their future*

Our new Level 3 BTEC Nationals from 2025 (AAQ) qualifications are designed with a clear focus on the future.

Our aim is to ensure that students are given every opportunity to develop the new knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to navigate and thrive through the uncertainty and to shape their world. We have identified three critical skill areas for the future – ***transferable skills, digital skills and sustainability*** – and have designed our new BTEC qualifications with these areas at the heart. Join us on the journey as we prepare young people to be the best versions of themselves for the future.

Read our brochure.

Click on the infographic to see further information.

## What makes it easy to transition to the new BTEC Nationals from 2025 (AAQ)?

- **Auto approval -** if you are currently approved to deliver BTEC Nationals you will receive automatically approval for the new qualification.*
- **Refreshed and updated content and assessments –** to ensure your learners continue to progress to popular progression routes into HEIs and beyond.
- **Simple, manageable and flexible structure –** you can continue to structure your delivery of teaching, learning and assessment when it best suits you and your learners.
- **Unchanged Quality Assurance** process with Standards Verification at the heart.
- **Assessments -** Externally Assessed Exams available twice a year, and Internally Assessed units, Assessments set by Pearson, and taken by learners when they are ready.
- Familiar retake and resubmission rules
- **Grading, marking and assessment methodologies unchanged -** you can continue to teach and assess with confidence.
- **Dedicated support -** our Subject Advisors and assessments teams are here to support you every step of the way

*You must be approved in the relevant sector to receive automatic approval.

# Support offer

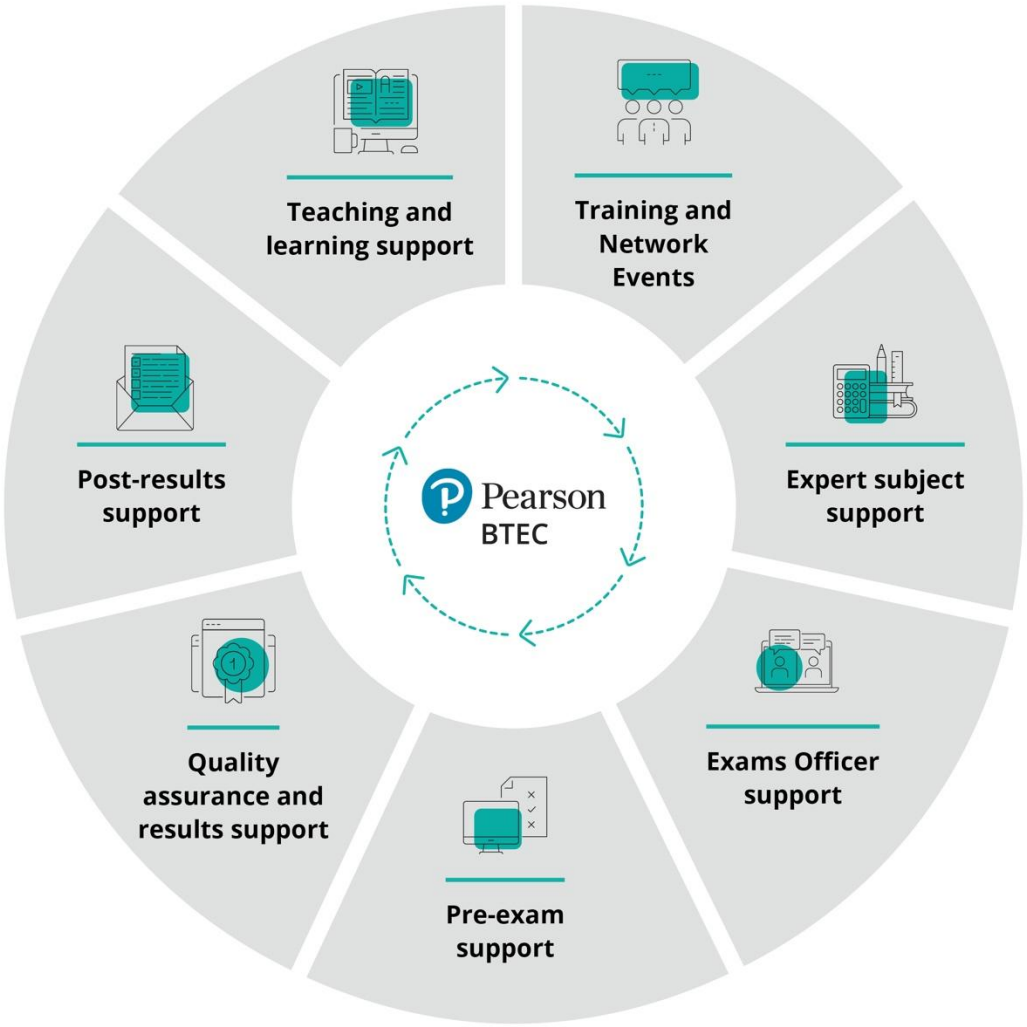
## Complimentary resources and services

- **BTEC National Teacher Guide –** a comprehensive guide to support preparation for delivery of your new BTEC National AAQ.
- **Sample Assessment Materials -** showing how tasks, questions and marking will be applied, which can be used as sample papers/tasks to prepare learners.
- Exam Wizard - an online resource containing a bank of past paper questions and support materials to help you create your own mock exams and tests.
- Results Plus - a free online results analysis tool for teachers that gives you a detailed breakdown of your students' performance in BTEC external assessments.
- **Training and standardisation –** Getting Started and Preparing to Assess training events and recorded sessions will be available from July 2024 onwards.
- Network events – an opportunity to hear about the latest developments from subject experts within Pearson and to share good practice with fellow centres.
- **Dedicated** Subject Advisor available throughout the year so please do get in touch if you would like any support or guidance with:
    - Planning your courses
    - Overview of BTEC quality assurance processes
    - Suggested resources
    - Teaching and Assessment of internal units and components
    - Teaching external units and components
    - The training and support materials we have available.

## Comprehensive Package of Paid resources

- **Student Books –** provide concise yet complete coverage of each sector, with ample student activities and assessment practice, covering all mandatory and optional units. Available in print and e-book formats.
- **Teacher Packs –** provide further supporting teacher resources for each sector. Designed to help students excel, including a front-of-class version of the e-book, activity sheets, fact sheets, videos and interactive knowledge check quizzes. Available as a bundle of units for each sector or as single unit packs.

Click on the infographic
to see further information.



## Qualification Structure Comparison (Certificate)

| Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Certificate in Computing | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Unit number** | **Unit title** | **GLH** | **How assessed** |
| **Mandatory units – learners complete and achieve all units** | | | |
| **2** | Fundamentals of Computer Systems | 90 | External |
| **7** | IT Systems Security and Encryption | 90 | Internal |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing (Certificate) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Unit number** | **Unit title** | **GLH** | **How assessed** |
| **Mandatory units, learners complete all units** | | | |
| **1** | Programming Fundamentals | 120 | External |
| **Optional units – learners complete one unit** | | | |
| **3** | Human-Computer Interaction | 60 | Internal |
| **4** | Practical Programming | 60 | Internal |

## Qualification Structure Comparison (Extended Certificate)

| Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Computing | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Unit number** | **Unit title** | **GLH** | **How assessed** |
| **Mandatory units – learners complete and achieve all units** | | | |
| **1** | Principles of Computer Science | 120 | External |
| **2** | Fundamentals of Computer Systems | 90 | External |
| **7** | IT Systems Security and Encryption | 90 | Internal |
| **Optional units – learners complete one unit** | | | |
| **10** | Human-computer Interaction | 60 | Internal |
| **11** | Digital Graphics and Animation | 60 | Internal |
| **14** | Computer Games Development | 60 | Internal |
| **15** | Website Development | 60 | Internal |
| **17** | Mobile Apps Development | 60 | Internal |
| **20** | Managing and Supporting Systems | 60 | Internal |
| **21** | Systems Analysis and Design | 60 | Internal |

| Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing (Extended Certificate) | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Unit number** | **Unit title** | **GLH** | **How assessed** |
| Mandatory units, learners complete all units | | | |
| **1** | Programming Fundamentals | 120 | External |
| **2** | Computer Network Security and Encryption | 120 | External |
| **3** | Human-Computer Interaction | 60 | Internal |
| **4** | Practical Programming | 60 | Internal |

## Summary of key similarities and differences

- **Updated and includes topics like programming that progress from the KS4 National Curriculum** and are topical and challenging to students
- **Aligned with Higher Education Computer Science courses** as well as designed with A Levels in mind
- **Internal assessments** mirror industry and teach skills that transfer to Higher Education courses or jobs in the sector
- **Problem solving, Critical Thinking and Self Management are** embedded into the qualification to develop student autonomy in preparation for their progression
- **Units have been chosen to work together and provide links throughout the qualification** to embed knowledge, develop skills and allow students to achieve their potential
- **Mandatory content** means more support, better coherency and more trust from HE Partners
- **Familiar optional units** offering teacher flexibility and a variety of progression opportunities for learners. *
- **Employers and HE Partners** have worked with us on the content to ensure it meets the needs of the changing sector and provides progression

* optional units apply to the Certificate only.

## Assessment Structure

Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing (Extended Certificate)

**NB**: For the Certificate, refer to the information on relevant units shared with the Extended Certificate.

| Mandatory units, learners complete all units | | | | Assessments |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Programming Fundamentals | 120 GLH | External | • An external examination set and marked by Pearson.<br>• 90 marks<br>• Assessment Availability: January and June<br>• First assessment June 2026 |
| **2** | Computer Network Security and Encryption | 120 GLH | External | • An external examination set and marked by Pearson.<br>• 90 marks<br>• Available January and June<br>• First assessment June 2026 |
| **3** | Human-Computer Interaction | 60 GLH | Internal | • Pearson sets the assignment for the assessment of this unit.<br>• The PSAB will take approximately 20 hours to complete, and consists of 3 tasks<br>• The PSAB will give a choice of client briefs<br>• The PSAB will be marked by centres and verified by Pearson.<br>• You will make assessment decisions for the PSAB using the assessment criteria provided in the specification.<br>• The PSAB will be valid for the lifetime of this qualification. |
| **4** | Practical Programming | 60 GLH | Internal | • Pearson sets the assignment for the assessment of this unit.<br>• The PSAB will take approximately 36 hours to complete and consists of 2 tasks<br>• The PSAB will give a choice of client briefs<br>• You will make assessment decisions for the PSAB using the assessment criteria provided in the specification.<br>• The PSAB will be valid for the lifetime of this qualification. |

## Pearson Set Assignment Briefs (PSAB)

Internally assessed units are assessed using a Pearson Set Assignment Brief (PSAB), which is set by Pearson, marked by you and subject to external standards verification. The PSAB will be valid for the lifetime of this qualification, with clear guidance on how to deliver for each new **cohort.**

# Mapping Guide

Mapping of Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing (Extended Certificate) to the Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Computing specification.

**NB:** For the Certificate, refer to the information on relevant units shared with the Extended Certificate.

| Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing (Extended Certificate) | Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Certificate in Computing | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| **Unit 1: Programming Fundamentals (120 GLH) External** | **Unit 1: Principles of Computer Science (120 GLH) External** | |
| **Assessment outcomes:**<br>**AO1** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of computing facts, terms, standards, concepts, technologies and processes.<br>**AO2** Demonstrate application of knowledge and understanding of computer facts, terms, standards, concepts, technologies and processes<br>**AO3** Demonstrate analysis of data and information related to computing to communicate solutions/understanding<br>**AO4** Demonstrate evaluation of technologies, procedures, outcomes and solutions to make reasoned judgements | **Assessment outcomes:**<br>**AO1** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of computing facts, terms, standards, concepts and processes<br>**AO2** Apply knowledge and understanding to communicate understanding of computing facts, terms, standards, concepts and processes<br>**AO3** Select and use computing technologies and procedures to explore outcomes and find solutions to problems in context<br>**AO4** Analyse data and information related to computer science in order to predict outcomes and present solutions<br>**AO5** Evaluate technologies, procedures, outcomes and solutions to make reasoned judgements and make decisions | Content has been updated to reflect changes in technology<br><br>Streamlined content in favour of Python<br><br>Assessment is an exam in both versions<br><br>New section on Issues relating to developing computer programs |

| Unit 2: Computer Network Security and Encryption (120 GLH) External | Unit 7: IT Systems Security and Encryption (120 GLH) External | |
|---|---|---|
| **Assessment Outcomes**<br>**AO1** Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the concepts and terminology of computer network security and encryption<br>**AO2** Demonstrate application of knowledge and understanding of methods and techniques used in computer network security and encryption<br>**AO3** Demonstrate analysis of data and information related to computer network security and encryption of different types of networks to communicate solutions/understanding<br>**AO4** Demonstrate evaluation of computer network security and encryption techniques and solutions to make reasoned judgements | **Learning Aims**<br>• Understand current IT security threats, information security and the legal requirements affecting the security of IT systems<br>• Investigate cryptographic techniques and processes used to protect data<br>• Examine the techniques used to protect an IT system from security threats<br>• Implement strategies to protect an IT system from security threats. Implement strategies to protect an IT system from security threats. | No longer a set task, this is now an exam<br><br>More coverage of networking in the new unit<br><br>Updated coverage of security issues |
| **Unit 3: Human-Computer Interaction (60 GLH) Internal** | **Unit 10: Human-Computer Interaction (60 GLH) Internal** | |
| **Learning aims:**<br>• Explore the factors affecting human-computer interaction<br>• Develop a proposal and designs for a human-computer interaction solution in response to a brief<br>• Develop your planned human-computer interaction solution in response to the brief | **Learning aims:**<br>• Examine the factors affecting the development of human-computer interaction<br>• Investigate the human-computer interaction requirements of an identified client<br>• Develop a human-computer interaction solution to meet client requirements | The new Human-Computer Interaction unit updates the previous one. With a similar approach to assessment<br><br>The emphasis on developing a proposal and designs gives more structure to the learning and assessment<br><br>The Assessment is set by Pearson but allows for choice in centre |
| **Unit 4: Practical Programming (60 GLH) Internal** | **Unit 22: Systems Analysis and Design (60 GLH) Internal** | |
| **Learning Aims**<br>• Explore principles of computing related to software development<br>• Manage the development of a software solution | **Learning aims:**<br>• Examine the principles of systems analysis and design<br>• Investigate the computing requirements of an identified organisation<br>• Develop a design for a computing system to meet an organisation's needs | The new unit is far more practical and focuses on programming<br><br>It builds on Unit 1 and extends programming a practical project<br><br>Assessment is set by Pearson with a choice of scenarios |