

Introducing the Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project Qualification in Future Skills for Employability

What are future skills for employability?

Employers frequently express the opinion that education needs to evolve in order to meet the challenge of preparing young people for a future that is being shaped by forces such as the march of technology, a changing political climate, the globalisation of the economy and concerns about the sustainability of our way of life.

In response to this, the 2017 Pearson/NESTA report addressing future demand for UK occupations identified the top five most important skills and abilities as:

- Judgment and Decision-Making
- Fluency of Ideas
- Active Learning
- Learning Strategies
- Originality Abilities.¹

There is a challenge here for education: how should future skills for employability be taught?

Teaching future skills for employability

A project-based approach to teaching and learning has much to offer. A project could take the form of a personally chosen response to an open-ended question or even a practical challenge. As such, project work calls for the use and development of the skills that employers identify as necessary for the workplaces of the future.

A student setting out on a project must exercise their own judgement in making decisions about the direction of their work. In place of the passive learning that happens when 'teaching to the test' is prioritised, project students learn actively: they learn by doing. If the project is to embody a rich process of creative development, the student will have to think creatively about alternative possible developmental routes, evaluating their relative strengths and weaknesses, while also drawing on guidance from research sources. The project process therefore requires and encourages the development of each of the top five future skills for employability listed above.

Delivering future skills for employability through the Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project Qualification

As a project-based learning qualification, the Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project Qualification in Future Skills for Employability (abbreviated hereafter to Pearson Future Skills for Employability)

¹ Bakhshi, H., et al. (2017). The Future of Skills: Employment in 2030, London: Pearson and Nesta, page 67. Available online at:

https://media.nesta.org.uk/documents/the_future_of_skills_employment_in_2030_0.pdf

provides an ideal context for the teaching, development and assessment of future skills for employability.

The Pearson Future Skills for Employability framework is designed to integrate with the Extend Project Qualification (EPQ), making the EPQ a vehicle for the delivery of future skills for employability.

Future skills for employability teaching can happen as part of the 40 guided learning hours that make up the taught course element of the EPQ. Further aspects of the Pearson Future Skills for Employability curriculum can be taught in other settings, such as PSHE classes and curriculum enrichment sessions, or through participation in schemes such as the Young Enterprise Company Programme.

The guided learning hours within the Pearson Future Skills for Employability EPQ covers any activities set by the teacher, even if they are not done during timetabled lessons. Therefore, student responses to activities assigned through a learning platform count as guided learning hours. It is therefore possible for much of the Pearson Future Skills for Employability teaching to occur as students work independently to carry out activities that are assigned to them.

Pearson Future Skills for Employability schemes of work

The schemes of work for the Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project Qualification in Future Skills for Employability provide guidance on how future skills for employability can be taught. They suggest employability-themed activities that can be used to help students begin tasks such as interview preparation, creating an employability portfolio, researching and understanding companies, working with clients and responding to a client brief.

The schemes of work are designed to be delivered over the Pearson Future Skills for Employability's 40 guided learning hours. The activities listed cover the Pearson Future Skills for Employability curriculum, as well as preparing students for both a pilot project and their own full projects. As this material can be set in the form of assignments on a learning platform, or covered in other lessons, it is not necessarily the case that there will be 40 hours of timetabled Pearson Future Skills for Employability lessons. In most cases, the taught programme will be delivered using a combination of timetabled lessons (for example, one or two lessons per week) and directed study. So, for example, the activity 'Understanding Business' could be introduced in a lesson, with additional research undertaken as a homework assignment.

The one-year scheme of work

Many centres offer the Pearson Future Skills for Employability over the course of one year. The one-year scheme of work provides guidance on running a one-year (three-term) Pearson Future Skills for Employability programme. In this scheme of work, the taught course covers the Pearson Future Skills for Employability curriculum during the first term, along with work on a pilot project and the research phase of the EPQ. The second term is used for project development, with the edit, review and final presentations happening in the third term.

One advantage of a one-year Pearson Future Skills for Employability course is that the project can be completed prior to the start of Year 13, freeing up time for students to meet the demands of other courses and application processes for employment or HE. It may also prove easier to timetable.

While the one-year scheme of work will often be used during a single academic year, which could be either Year 12 or Year 13, it could also be used over both years, with the taught course and initial research happening during the final term of Year 12, and two terms of Year 13 being used for completion of the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project. This would allow students time during the summer holidays to concentrate on their project.

The four-term scheme of work

The four-term scheme of work is designed to support Pearson Future Skills for Employability programmes that span Years 12 and 13. This scheme of work is similar to the one-year model but is elongated for delivery over a longer time frame. The advantage with this model is that it allows more space and time for a longer course, during which valuable exploration of future skills for employability can take place. The whole of the first term is given over to the Pearson Future Skills for Employability curriculum and work on a pilot project. Research and development of the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project itself each occupies one term, and the final term is given over to editing, reviewing and final presentation of the project.

The longer time span may suit students who prefer to contemplate possible project ideas over a longer period. While the programme runs across both years, it is designed so that the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project can be completed as early as the end of the first term of Year 13. This means that the actual development of the project is out of the way well before end-of-year examinations begin.

Features of the schemes of work

Project workstream	The schemes of work have been designed as a set of activities that could be posted onto a virtual learning platform (such as Google Classroom™) to form a workstream for students. Alternatively, the activities can be incorporated into lessons. The taught course can be delivered using approximately one activity per lesson.
Activities	<p>These activities are designed to develop employability and future skills, as well as to help students prepare for their Pearson Future Skills for Employability projects. Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • into employment (interview preparation) • portfolio builder (exemplifying skills) • understanding business (researching and understanding companies) • meeting the brief (responding to a client brief). <p>Skills required for the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project will be further delivered through the pilot project activities.</p>
Pilot project activities	The pilot project is designed to provide a training ground for further development of project skills, while also giving students a chance to try out an idea that might turn into their main Pearson Future Skills for Employability project.
EPQ development scaffolded workflow	Once work has begun on the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project itself, the schemes of work provide suggestions for guidance that students will need for the different stages in the development of their Pearson Future Skills for Employability.
Future skills portfolio builder	See at a glance how each scheme of work activity delivers against a future skills objective. The four future skills characteristics (Forward thinker, Digital superuser, Powerful influencer, Most valuable player) are followed by the overarching skill being practised (in brackets) and then finally the topic-specific skill descriptor.
Employability skills development	See how each scheme of work activity provides students with a skill that employers are looking for.
Resources	Links are provided throughout the scheme of work to supporting materials, including those found on the Pearson Edexcel website and within the student Activity Sheets provided.

Approach to teaching and learning

The teaching and learning of future skills for employability should happen through an environment in which there is active collaboration, ongoing discussion, negotiation, problem-solving, active research, practical decision-making and self-reflective review. There are opportunities for activities that use these

practices in the initial taught course element of the programme and during the project development phase.

Use of information technology (IT) is integral to all Pearson Future Skills for Employability work. In particular, given the growth of cloud-based systems and their value as platforms for supporting project learning, as well as their widespread use in the world of work, the schemes of work and resources developed for the Pearson Future Skills for Employability highlight ways of using learning platforms to enable a rich learning experience, as well as to facilitate the tasks of tracking and providing guidance to students.

The full package of resources includes videos for students and teachers, providing support in contexts where teaching time may be at a premium. A student could progress through many of the workstream activities using private study, if the activities and resources are made available through a learning platform such as Google Classroom™ or Microsoft® Teams.

Linking Pearson Future Skills for Employability to future skills for employability characteristics

Future skills for employability will be developed by students as they make their choice of Pearson Future Skills for Employability project title and enter into the processes of planning, researching, developing and reviewing their project. These skills fall within the broad characteristics of ‘forward thinker’, ‘digital superuser’, ‘powerful influencer’ and ‘most valuable player’.

Forward thinker	The project invites students to make a case for their point of view, considering both argument and counter-argument, to solve important problems and to invent new solutions.
Digital superuser	Use of IT is integral to project work. Cloud-based systems for project development enable collaboration and creativity, and optimise the research process.
Powerful influencer	Negotiation is part of the Pearson Future Skills for Employability process. Learning happens through ongoing dialogue. A presentation is part of the outcome.
Most valuable player	Teamwork projects are supported by the Pearson Future Skills for Employability. Students also learn valuable skills of working with experts/mentors and accessing peer support.

Mapping project work to the Pearson Future Skills for Employability Framework

The Pearson Future Skills for Employability Framework highlights points of contact between the EPQ assessment objectives and future skills for employability. For example, the forward thinkers’ future skill ‘solve important problems’ is assessed in AO1 (Manage), where reflecting on problems encountered and steps taken to overcome them is an indicator of a mark band 2 or mark band 3 performance.

The early activities in the schemes of work are designed to provide students with an opportunity to engage in some activities focused on future skills for employability before they proceed to work on the usual project processes of planning, research, development and review. However, in order that their project clearly fulfils the objective of enabling the development of future skills for employability, students and tutor-assessors can be asked to make reference to these skills when completing elements of the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project.

Here are some points in the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project process where there are opportunities for links between a student’s project and specific future skills for employability.

- *Filling in the Project proposal form (PPF)*: The PPF can be found on the website for the Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project qualification. (Go to <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-project-qualification/level-3.html> and click on the ‘Coursework materials’ tab.) Students can use sections 1 and 2 of the PPF to describe

how their choice of EPQ title is linked to their aim of developing skills for future work. An example of a completed Project proposal form can be seen in the document Exemplar of Student Work: Project proposal form.

- *Keeping the Project activity log:* The Project activity log can be found on the website for the Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project qualification. (Go to <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-project-qualification/level-3.html> and click on the 'Coursework materials' tab.) It provides a framework for ongoing reflection on the project process. This reflection can address both the extent to which students feel their skills are developing and the extent to which they feel that their project work could meet the needs of a real or potential client. An example of a completed Project activity log can be seen in the document Exemplar of Student Work: Activity log.
- *Exploring research sources:* Students can look at models of professionally credible project outcomes for inspiration when conducting their research. For example, a student who aspires to work in the graphic design world would be expected to look at the work of influential graphic designers, as well as exploring the genre of graphic design more generally and researching the processes and techniques that professional graphic designers use.
- *Project development:* Successful project development involves more than just a series of steps taken to reach a goal. In successful projects, development involves a process of critical thinking about alternative ideas, in which different developmental routes are explored and evaluated. Decisions are made about which of the possible alternatives works best as a means of achieving the overall aims of the project. In this way, project development work calls for students to exercise the skills of 'forward thinking'. The student's evidence of project development should reflect this. For example, a sketchbook could contain evidence of a sequence of design ideas that have been critically evaluated before a final decision is taken about which design will best allow the student to meet their design brief.
- *Review:* Evaluating the success of a project involves considering the extent to which the original aims were met. If these aims take the form of a professionally credible challenge (for example, a design brief from an imaginary or real client company) then the process of review will involve 'forward thinking' about the effectiveness of the solution the student has developed.

As there is a presentation component in the project review, students will also have the opportunity to develop and utilise effective communication skills, working as a 'powerful influencer' in articulating the journey of creative development undertaken throughout their Pearson Future Skills for Employability project.

The project itself, and the presentation, can be commented on by a professional observer, using the Observation Record/Witness Statement form. The form can be found on the website for the Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project qualification. (Go to <https://qualifications.pearson.com/en/qualifications/edexcel-project-qualification/level-3.html> and click on the 'Coursework materials' tab.) In their comments, observers can relate the qualities shown in the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project to the categories of 'forward thinker', 'digital superuser', 'powerful influencer' and 'most valuable player'.

Building a future skills for employability portfolio

Students taking a Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project Qualification in Future Skills for Employability are expected to build a portfolio containing evidence of the development of particular skills.

During the opening phase of work, students will carry out a number of activities to prepare themselves before they begin the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project itself. These activities, as well as the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project, can provide evidence of skills development to build a portfolio. The portfolio can be used to provide evidence of progress towards the four future skills characteristics ('forward thinker', 'digital superuser', 'powerful influencer' and 'most valuable player').

An example of how a portfolio for the four future skills characteristics could be developed alongside the Pearson Future Skills for Employability project is given below. In this case, a student adds evidence of the skills they gained during the taught course element of their Pearson Future Skills for Employability programme, which included debating, team meetings and research. Their Pearson Future Skills for Employability project, which in this example was about the value of online advertising, provides further

evidence of their development as a forward thinker, digital superuser, powerful influencer and most valuable player. The student's portfolio can therefore also include their project experiences, to highlight where these skills have been developed.

	Portfolio evidence of future skills for employability		Pearson Future Skills for Employability project
Forward thinker	Notes on how to select the right information	Debating the risks of social media	Evaluating value of online advertising
Digital superuser	Laying out the final design for a web page	Designing storyboard	Experimenting with different platforms
Powerful influencer	Team meetings	Discussions with supervisor	Presentation of project
Most valuable player	Talking to a design teacher to find out ideas for research	Joint video editing work	Discussion with client to establish brief