Pearson
BTEC

BTEC Nationals 2025

Preparing students for their future

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The future has never looked as complex and unpredictable as it does today, which emphasises the need for secondary education to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Global issues such as climate change and the depletion of natural resources require a shift in our lifestyles and a transformation in the way we think and act.

At the same time, technological advances in automation and AI mean that some skills are becoming obsolete while demand for others increase. The *McKinsey Skills Shift Report 2018* found that there will be a greater demand for technological, social-emotional and higher-order cognitive skills by 2030.

The accelerated pace of these changes mean that young people can no longer be prepared for a moment in time or just for the next step in their progression – they need to be prepared for "jobs that have not yet been created, for technologies that have not yet been invented, to solve problems that have not yet been anticipated." (OECD 2018).

This is why our new BTEC Nationals 2025 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.

"Preparing the next generation for their future, not our past"

Andreas Schleicher
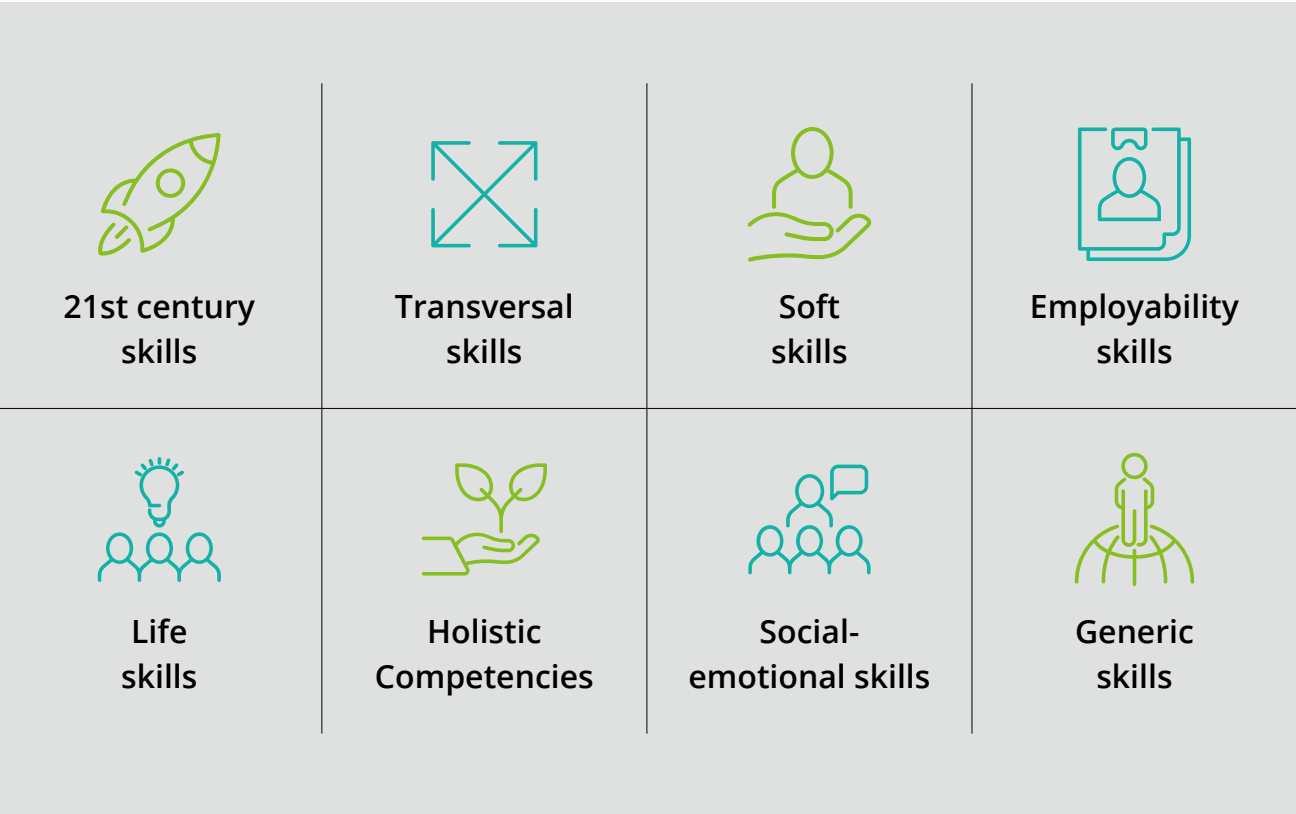Director for Education and Skills, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

1. Transferable Skills

What are transferable skills?

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines transferable skills as "the bundle of knowledge, attributes and capacities that can be learned and that enable individuals to successfully and consistently perform an activity or task and can be built upon and extended through learning".

UNICEF in their Global Framework on Transferable Skills aptly characterises transferable skills as the 'the glue of all skills' in recognition of their role in bridging and supporting the acquisition of other skills set, such as digital and technical skills.

Different terms have been used interchangeably over the years to describe transferable skills:

21st century skills	Transversal skills	Soft skills	Employability skills
Life skills	**Holistic Competencies**	**Social-emotional skills**	**Generic skills**

Whilst there are differences in how they are described, there is a clear consensus on the importance of these skills for the future.

The need for transferable skills

Whilst the need for transferable skills is not a new one, the rapid acceleration of the pace of technological developments in recent years means that the nature of these transferable skills has evolved, and that they are now more important than ever.

The Pearson Skills Outlook 2022 – Power Skills found that while technical skills and expertise remain highly valued, the top five most sought-after skills (now and in the short-term future) are all 'human skills' - communication, collaboration, attention to detail, leadership and customer service. Its findings on the most in-demand skills by 2026 shows that the need for 'human' or soft skills is set to continue for the future.

The WEF Future of Jobs Report 2023 reflects similar findings on the current and future need for transferable skills. Of the top ten skills that employers considered as core for their workforce in 2023, over half of these skills are social-emotional skills. The top two skills, analytical thinking and creative thinking, are more cognitive skills but are just as important as the social-emotional skills, as transferable skills are holistic.

Transferable skills are not only important for supporting a changing workforce – they bring about personal and social complementary benefits for individuals and society.
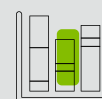
Research has shown that individuals with fewer non-cognitive/ social-emotional skills struggle more to complete degrees than those with more of these skills, and that there is a robust causal link between developing social-emotional skills and improved wellbeing and a positive correlation with higher academic achievement.

The 5 Power Skills that are projected to be most in-demand by 2026 – and in need of greatest improvement and investment – are:

Collaboration
The ability to develop constructive and cooperative working relationships with others.

Customer Focus
Actively look for ways to assist customers and clients.

Cultural and Social Intelligence
Have awareness and understanding of other's reactions.

Personal Learning & Mastery
The ability to acquire knowledge or skills through one's study or experience.

Achievement Focus
The ability to take on responsibilities and challenges with little or no supervision, develop one's own way of doing things, and depend on oneself to get things done.

Source: The Pearson Skills Outlook 2022

Top Ten Core Skills in 2023

1. Analytical thinking
2. Creative thinking
3. Resilience, flexibility and agility
4. Motivation and self-awareness
5. Curiosity and lifelong learning
6. Technological literacy
7. Dependability and attention to detail
8. Empathy and active listening
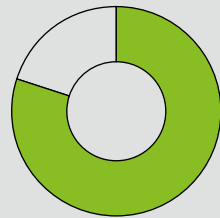9. Leadership and social influence
10. Quality control

*Source: World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2023.*

The transferable skills gap

Transferable skills are considered to have the largest skills gap by employers and educators. This gap has been developing for decades and is likely to get worse as jobs become increasingly automated and employers seek more workers with the skills machines cannot replace.

Whilst this gap between supply and demand is well-understood, there is another gap in transferable skills that does exist but is not often recognised. This is called the *'awareness gap'*. Simply put, this is the inability of young people to make employers aware of the skills they have, because they themselves don't know that they have these skills.

This is brought to life by Kirsty, one of the witnesses who contributed to the *Sink or Swim: The impact of COVID and how to bridge the widening inequalities gap* report published by Pearson in 2021. Kirsty said:

Nearly 80% of employers believe that current graduates do not arrive fully equipped with the skills they need to be work-ready.

Work Ready Graduates: Building employability skills for a hybrid world – CMI – September 2021
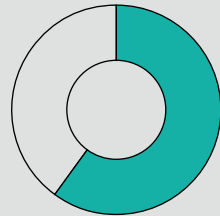
Nearly 6 in 10 UK adults fail to demonstrate the core employability skills needed for the world of work.

"How employable is the UK?" Report published by Barclays - 2018
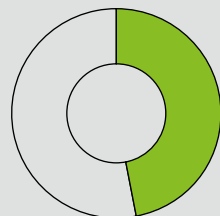
On average 47% of teachers felt that there were fewer opportunities to develop employability skills and competencies due to changes in GCSEs and A Levels.

Getting young people 'work ready' – Our vision for how education should prepare young people for the modern world - CBI - June 2019

"A lot of young people have transferable skills, it's just they need to be taught to recognise them, especially as we enter a new careers environment after the pandemic. As a young adult, you doubt yourself a lot, but you do have skills. Working in a shop, it might seem very minor and not that great to you, but you've got to show reliability, organisation, teamwork, and I think people just need to be made aware they've got them."

Sink or Swim: *The impact of COVID and how to bridge the widening inequalities gap. Pearson, 2021*

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"The debates on the existence, or lack of, employability skills possessed by young employees have been raging for decades...In our uncertain and complex world, so called 'soft' or 'transferable' skills are increasingly cited as the necessary tools to forge a successful career."

Dr. Mary Bousted
Joint General-Secretary, National Education Union (2017 – 2023)

This awareness gap emphasises the need for an approach to developing transferable skills that goes beyond just aligning the skills to the curriculum – for transferable skills development to be impactful, it must also be supported by appropriate pedagogical and assessment practices.

BTEC Transferable Skills Framework – addressing the gap

To ensure that we are applying a framework that is fit for purpose for BTEC National qualifications, our learners and customers, we used existing transferable skills frameworks as a reference point and worked with FE educators and HEI representatives to develop the **BTEC Transferable Skills Framework**.

This framework is a holistic one, consisting of the appropriate combination of cognitive, social and emotional skills. It has four broad skill areas, each with a cluster of transferable skills as shown in the skills wheel below:

Each transferable skill has a set of descriptors that outline what achievement of the skill looks like in practice. These transferable skills have either been *embedded* in the teaching, learning and assessment of the qualifications where the skills are naturally occurring, or *signposted*, as an opportunity for delivery and development. Students will receive a digital badge recognising their achievement of the embedded transferable skills upon certification of their qualifications.

In implementing the framework in our qualifications, we have observed 3 main principles:

- Ensuring transferable skills are delivered within sector contexts as far as possible to engage students in meaningful learning

- Supporting opportunities for wider personal development of students outside of qualification-specific learning

- Avoiding any unnecessary additional workload for teachers.

Resources and training will be available to support teachers in using the end-to-end BTEC learning experience, from induction to certification, to deliver these transferable skills, so students have every opportunity to develop as many of these skills as possible.

BTEC Transferable Skills Framework

Solving Problems: Creativity and Innovation, Problem Solving, Critical Thinking

Inter-personal Skills: Cultural and Social Intelligence, Teamwork, Verbal and non-verbal Communication, Written Communication

Effective Learning: Primary Research Skills, Secondary Research Skills, Continuous Learning, Managing Own Learning

Managing Yourself: Personal Goal Setting, Career Orientation Planning, Personal Strengths and Resilience, Taking Personal Responsibility

2. Digital Skills

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What are digital skills?

Digital skills refer to any skills needed to effectively operate in an increasingly digital world. UNESCO describes digital skills as the ability to use digital devices, communication applications, and networks to access and manage information. Digital skills allow individuals to create and share content, communicate, and collaborate globally and instantaneously.

The digital skills gap

Digital skills are required in every industry as well as in everyday life – over 80% of all jobs advertised in the UK now require digital skills. However, employers say the lack of available talent is the single biggest factor holding back business growth. Over half of the UK's workforce (17.1 m) lack workplace digital skills and over 22% of adults (11.7m) are without the essential digital skills needed for everyday life (Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020).
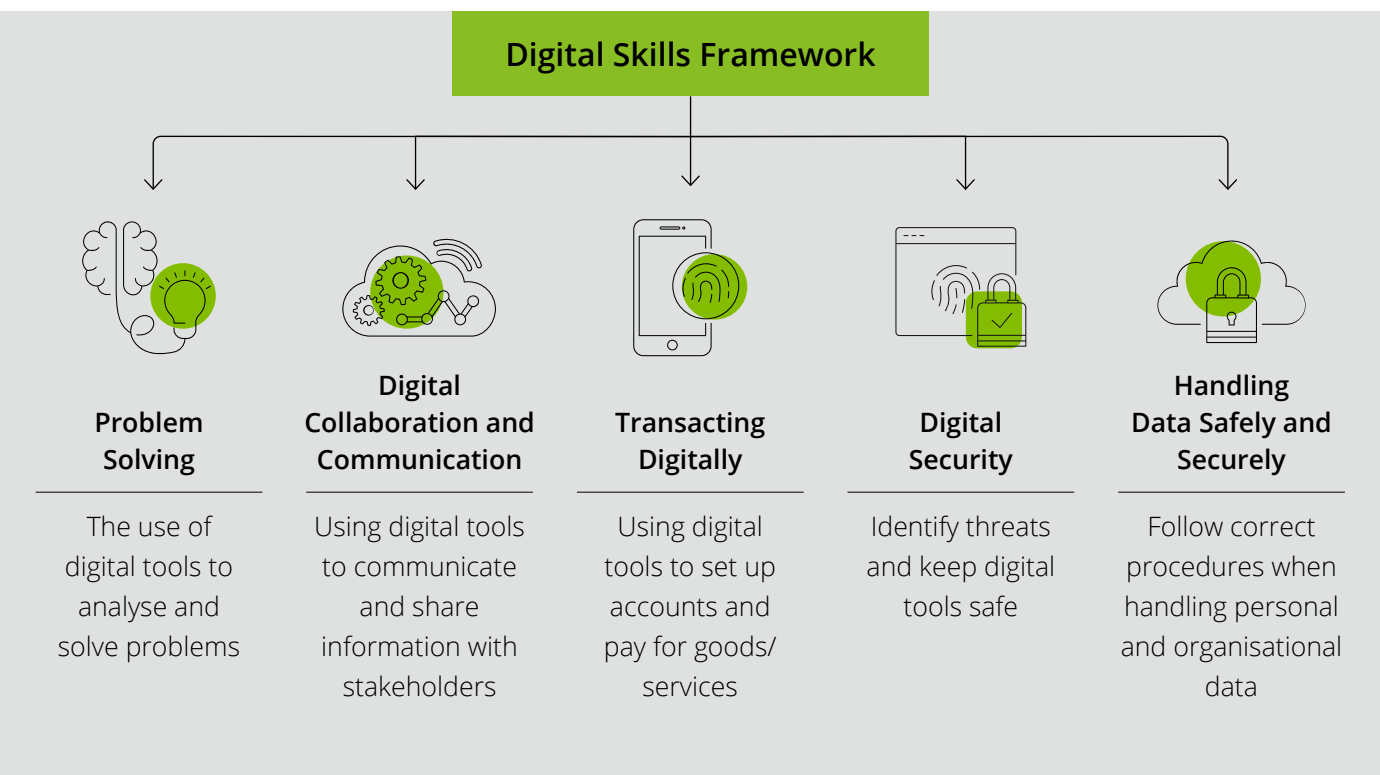
With the acceleration of automation and AI in industry and in every aspect of life, this gap is widening, preventing businesses from taking full advantage of digital technology and consequently damaging productivity.

The Digital Skills Framework – addressing the gap

Digital skills are life skills

To facilitate and support the delivery of digital skills, we have used the Digital Skills Framework published by IFATE as a frame of reference to identify and build in opportunities for the delivery and development of digital skills in the new BTEC National qualifications.

This Digital Skills framework has five categories with specific digital characteristics that apply in varying extent across sectors:

Digital Skills Framework

Problem Solving	Digital Collaboration and Communication	Transacting Digitally	Digital Security	Handling Data Safely and Securely
The use of digital tools to analyse and solve problems	Using digital tools to communicate and share information with stakeholders	Using digital tools to set up accounts and pay for goods/ services	Identify threats and keep digital tools safe	Follow correct procedures when handling personal and organisational data

Opportunities to develop these digital skills are identified and built into the qualifications where they are relevant and appropriate to each sector, meaning that:

· Where they naturally occur

· Where they add no assessment burden

· Where they will enhance a student's skills and knowledge in the sector.

Mapping will be provided in each specification to identify where these skills are built into the qualifications and guidance will be provided to support the delivery of the skills to ensure students understand how digital technologies are relevant and applied in the context of the sector they are studying.

3. Sustainability Education

What is Sustainability Education?

UNESCO, one of the major enablers of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) globally, defines ESD as "[empowering] learners to take informed decisions and responsible actions for environmental integrity, economic viability and a just society, for present and future generations, while respecting cultural diversity." This definition makes it clear that ESD is holistic – it is not just about environmental challenges – it brings together the ecological, social and economic aspects of our lives to leverage the interactions between them.

The Sustainability education gap

The Green Jobs Taskforce has set an ambition for two million green jobs in the UK by 2030, and in 2021, the UK committed to achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. These ambitions require green skill development in the talent pipeline.

However, there is still a skills gap in relation to sustainability education. A report by the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) found that whilst 3% of all FE students are enrolled on qualifications with some sustainability or green skills, only 0.5% are enrolled on qualifications with significant sustainability content. Over 90% of teachers surveyed by the ETF believed that all UK learners should be taught about sustainability issues, and more than half felt that the current UK post-16 education system does not adequately educate learners on sustainability issues. Educators in FE have cited 'lack of ESD in the curriculum' as the biggest barrier to actively incorporating ESD in their professional practice and the ETF has suggest that awarding organisations should embed ESD in all qualifications.

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> " ...sustainability is increasingly being seen as the 'fourth functional skill' alongside English, maths and digital."
> **FE Week**

How are we addressing the gap?

Pearson is responding to the call to action by incorporating sustainability education throughout all our new BTEC National qualifications. In designing the qualifications, we have used the **UNESCO Sustainable Development Goals** (17 SDGs) as a frame of reference and entry point, working closely with our sector experts, to guide what sustainability content we incorporate and how it is designed, to ensure it is appropriate to the sector context of each qualification.

We believe sustainability is best understood when it is applied in realistic contextual situations and experienced in a way that is authentic to the sector context - it is only then that students feel able to articulate ideas of sustainability and develop the capabilities to take action to positively impact sustainability challenges. This approach ensures that sustainability learning content isn't just treated as an 'add-on' to a qualification but is inherently relevant to the sector context and outcomes of the qualification. Mapping will be provided in each specification to identify where sustainability content is built into the qualification and how it aligns to the SDGs.

Delivering impactful sustainability education will require a subtle shift in delivery approach to ensure that it is 'actions and solutions focused' – we will be providing delivery guidance and resources to help teachers create the right learning environments for students to develop the knowledge, skills, values and attributes to create a more just and sustainable world.

We have recently published ***Embedding Sustainability – A Support Guide for BTEC Nationals*** to support teachers in delivering sustainability education through our current BTEC National qualifications.

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Find out more...

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If you are a college or a work-based learning provider:

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If you are a school:

vqmanchester@pearson.com

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