



# Level 3 Reform Options Guide for the Digital Sector

Helping educators navigate updated digital  
qualifications



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# What Is Changing in Digital?

# Overview of Level 3 qualification reform in Digital

The UK government is reforming Level 3 qualifications in England, meaning large qualifications in Digital will be subject to defunding.

Smaller and specialist BTECs are still available, but large-scale vocational courses will be replaced by T Levels and approved alternatives. (funding TBC; [refer to Pearson's funding guidance](#)).

**Pearson offer the full range of qualification options at Level 3, including:**

- T Levels
- Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs)
- BTECs and Academic qualifications

[Click for updates on Level 3](#)





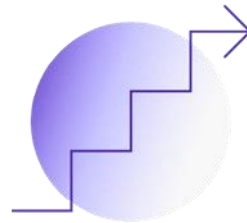
# What this means for centres

**Note:** Pearson are the only Awarding Organisation that offer the full range of options at level 3.



## T Levels as Primary Option

The T Levels in Digital Software Development, Digital Data Analytics, and Digital Support and Security become the primary large funded option.



## Transition from BTECs

Centres offering existing large BTECs will need to transition to T Levels or Mixed Programmes of study which include AAQs, other funded BTEC courses, and A Levels.



## Effective communication

Transition planning and confident communication with students will be essential.

# Overview of Pearson Digital Qualifications (2026 onwards)

In relation to the level 3 reforms.

## T Levels in Digital Software Development, Data Analytics, and Support & Security

### Two-year full-time programmes

Pearson are the only Awarding Organisation that offer the T Levels in the Digital sector.

T Levels are two-year, full-time programmes equivalent to three A Levels for students wishing to focus exclusively on their technical subject.

#### Consisting of:

- Core component (2 exam papers)
- Employer Set Project (ESP)
- Occupational Specialism
- Industry placement (minimum 315 hours)
- Assessment through exams, ESP, and Occupational Specialism Assessment, which include project-based assessments

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[Find out more](#)



# Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) in Digital

## Flexible Mixed Programmes

AAQs offer flexibility in mixed programmes by combining mandatory content, external exams, and Pearson Set assignments.

## Complementary to A Levels

AAQs are designed to be taken alongside A Levels, small or medium vocational qualifications (pending funding outcomes)

## Pathways to Higher Education

AAQs provide strong progression routes into higher education, supporting student advancement and career opportunities.

[Find out more](#)





# Other Small or Academic Qualifications

## **A Levels Qualifications**

A Levels courses in subjects like Maths and Business provide advanced academic knowledge for further education or careers.

## **Vocational Awards**

Small vocational awards such as Creative Media Production offer practical skills and enhance employability in specific fields.

## **GCSE Resits**

GCSE English and Maths resits help students improve essential skills necessary for academic progress where needed.

## **Extended Project Qualification**

Level 3 stand-alone qualification equivalent to half an A Level.

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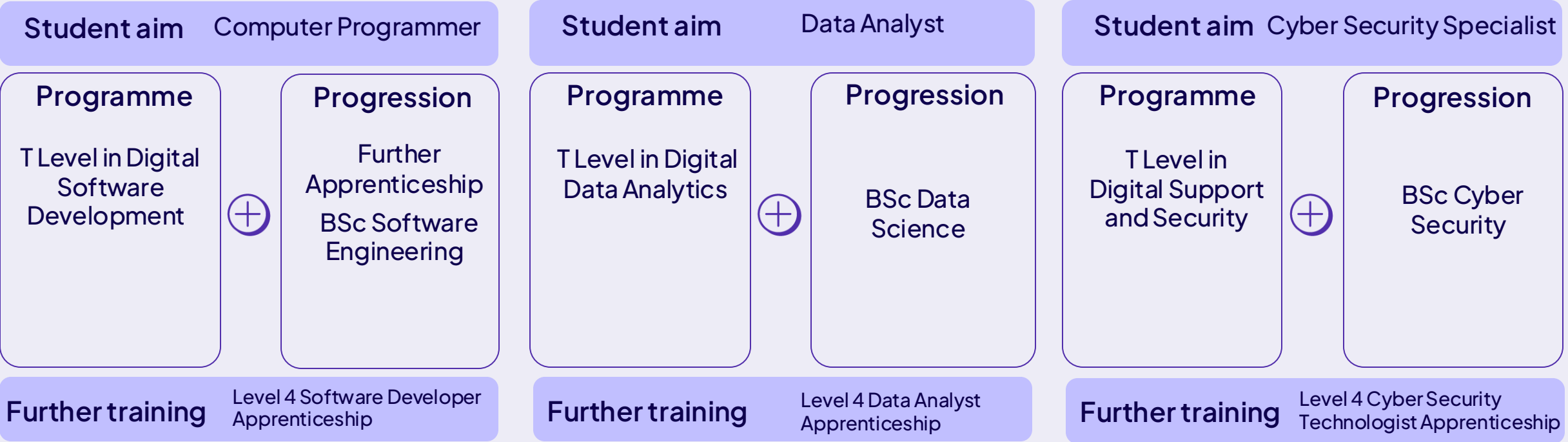
# Key similarities and differences: BTEC vs T Level

FEATURE	BTECS IN IT AND COMPUTING (AAQS)	T LEVELS IN DIGITAL
Level	3	3
Duration	2 years	2 years
Industry Placement	None	315 hours
Assessment	Exams and Pearson Set Assignments (AAQs)	Exams, Employer Set project and Occupational Specialism Project
Progression Routes	University and Apprenticeships	Employment, Apprenticeships and University
Employer Engagement	Not required	Required by provider for the work placement (AAQs)

# Programme of Study Scenarios

# Study programme examples

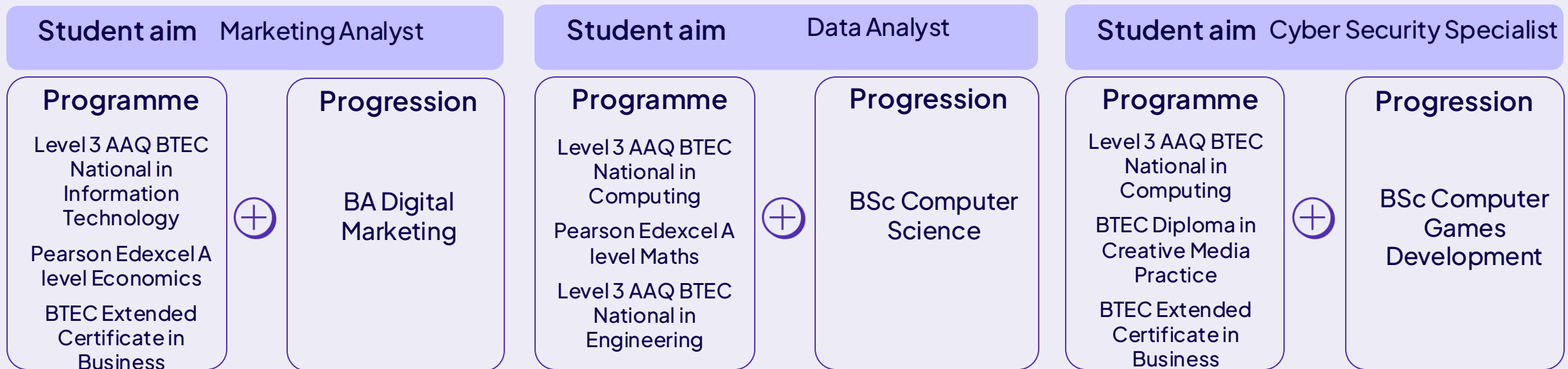
## Pathway A: T Levels





# Study programme example

## Pathway B: Mixed Programme of Study



Consider adding the [Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project Qualification in Artificial Intelligence \(AI\)](#) in addition to any of these programmes.

# Important guidance on study programmes: combinations

There are various factors to consider when devising a student's programme, including:

- their strengths, interests and intended progression destination
- whether they need to continue with English/Maths alongside
- any non-qualification activities they will be undertaking, e.g. work placement

## Avoid Overlapping Subjects

Choosing combinations with a high proportion of overlap reduces student engagement and limits breadth in Level 3 study programmes.

For example, we do not think it would be appropriate to take an **A level in Computer Science** alongside the **AAQ in Computing**, as both qualifications are fundamentally about computer science

# Important guidance on study programmes: progression

**One of the most important considerations when devising a study programme is taking account of students' intended progression outcome.**

Study programmes should align with students' intended progression goals, such as higher education aspirations. For example, many students taking the BTEC Level 3 National (AAQs) will be intending, or hoping, to progress to HE

For those intending to progress to HE, select subjects/ qualifications that cover a broad range of content and skills relevant to their intended degree specialism(s). This will help maximise their chance of successfully progressing to HE. Some universities have subject-specific entry requirements, particularly for STEM-related degrees, where they may require students to have studied specific subjects and/or specific A levels.

## Check Entry Requirements

Understanding varying university entry requirements is crucial for guiding students effectively.

At present, a few selective UK universities do not accept students with more than one vocational qualification at Level 3. Where universities do accept students holding more than one BTEC qualification, they generally expect this to be in separate subject disciplines and do not accept combinations with a high degree of overlap, irrespective of UCAS points.

It is important to check that your student's intended destination(s) accept the combination(s) you are considering delivering.

Where students have yet to decide which university and/or degree they wish to progress to, it is worth asking your main recruiting universities for their views on your proposed combination.

# Why Choose Pearson for Your Transition?



# Why Pearson?

## Longstanding trusted partner

Continuity and expertise as a longstanding education provider of digital sector qualifications

## Government-Endorsed Pathways

Government endorsed pathway with the T Levels in all three Digital subjects.

## Removing pain points

If you're already an existing provider of our Level 3 Digital, you can move to our AAQs in the same area without the need of going through the approvals centre.

## Employer-Informed Curriculum

Curriculum is designed with input from employers to align learning with workforce needs and trends

## Flexible Qualification Options

Flexible qualification combinations via mixed programmes which include AAQs, other funded BTEC courses and A Levels

## Comprehensive Support Services

Including access to a [dedicated subject advisor](#), training, support for teaching and learning materials

# Useful links and resources

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[T Level in Digital Data Analytics](#)

[T Level in Digital Software Development](#)

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[Support from ETF](#)

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[Funding Guide](#)

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[T Level in Digital Support and Security](#)

[Digital Sector Qualifications \(including AAQs\)](#)

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[Live and on-demand training](#)

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[T Level Training and Admin Support Hub](#)

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[Support from The Technical Education Network](#)

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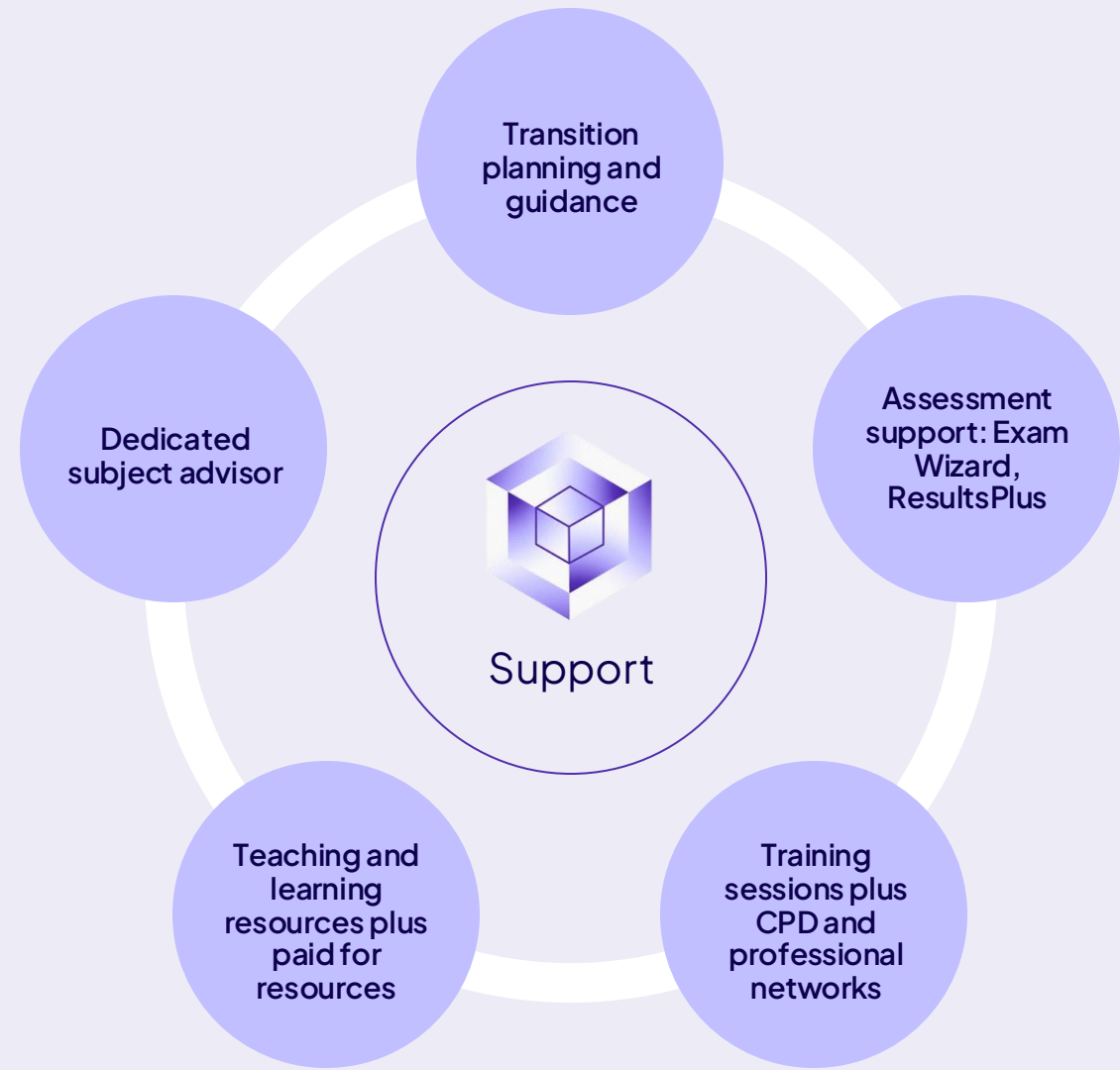
[Sector Briefings and Webinars](#)

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[Level 3 Funding Updates](#)

# What you can expect from us

We'll provide educators with comprehensive, sector-expert support to help you navigate qualification reform with confidence, offering clear guidance, training, and dedicated account-manager engagement.



» Pearson

Ready to  
take the  
next step?

[Get in touch](#)

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