



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, which means current BTEC Nationals and BTEC National (AAQ) qualifications in IT and Computing will be defunded in 2027.

[Refer to Pearson's funding guidance.](#)

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

- BTECs
 - BTEC Nationals (Diploma and Extended Diploma)
 - BTEC Nationals from 2025 (AAQs)
- T Levels
- Other vocational and academic qualifications

[Click for updates on Level 3](#)



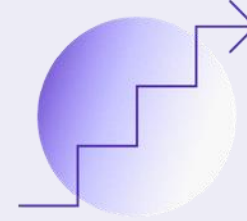
What this means for centres

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



T Levels

From the 2027/28 academic year, T Levels in Digital Software Development, Digital Data Analytics, and Digital Support and Security will be the only available options for large (3 A Level equivalent) size qualifications in the sector.



Transition from BTECs and AAQs

From the 2027/28 academic year, centres offering existing BTECs will need to transition to T Levels or Mixed Programmes of study which include V Levels, other funded BTECs, 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

BTEC Nationals

(Nationals and National AAQs)

Available qualifications:

- [BTEC Nationals in Computing](#) (Diploma and Extended Diploma)
- [BTEC Nationals in Information Technology](#) (Diploma and Extended Diploma)
- [Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing](#) (Certificate and Extended Certificate)
- [Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Information Technology](#) (Certificate and Extended Certificate)

[Explore BTEC Nationals](#)

Flexible

Offer flexibility in mixed programmes by combining mandatory content, external exams, and internally assessed assignments.

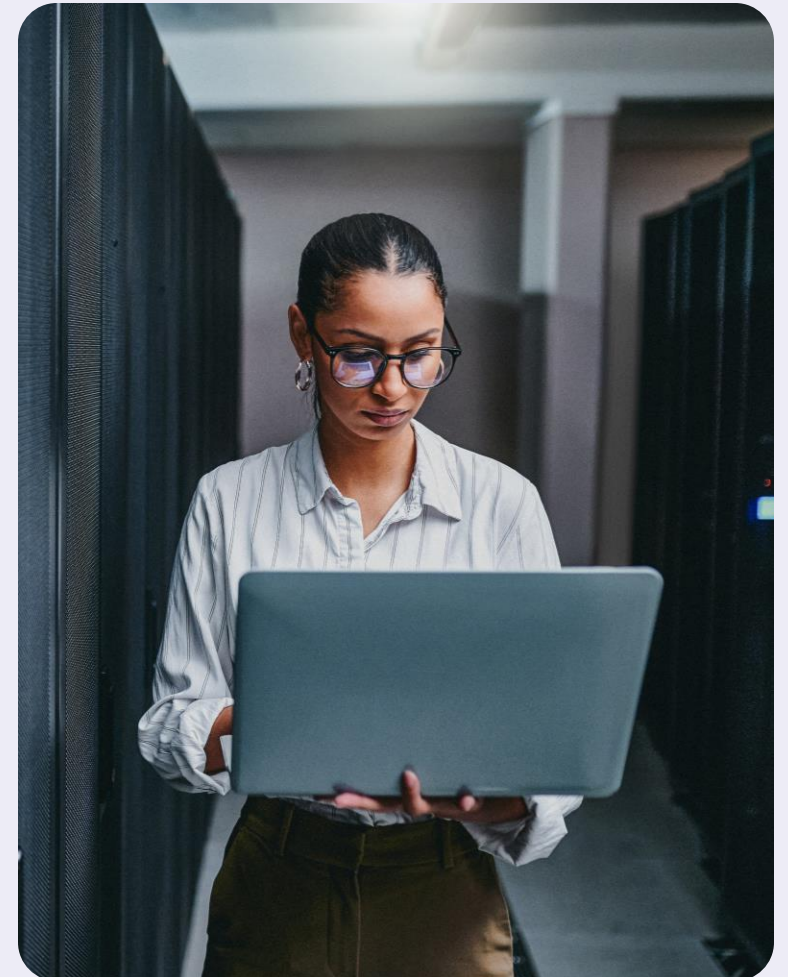
Complementary to other qualifications

Designed to be taken alongside A Levels, small or medium vocational qualifications.

Pathways to Higher Education

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

[Explore BTEC Nationals AAQs](#)



T Levels

- Digital Data Analytics
- Digital Software Development
- Digital Support and 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

[Find out more](#)

Other vocational and 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.

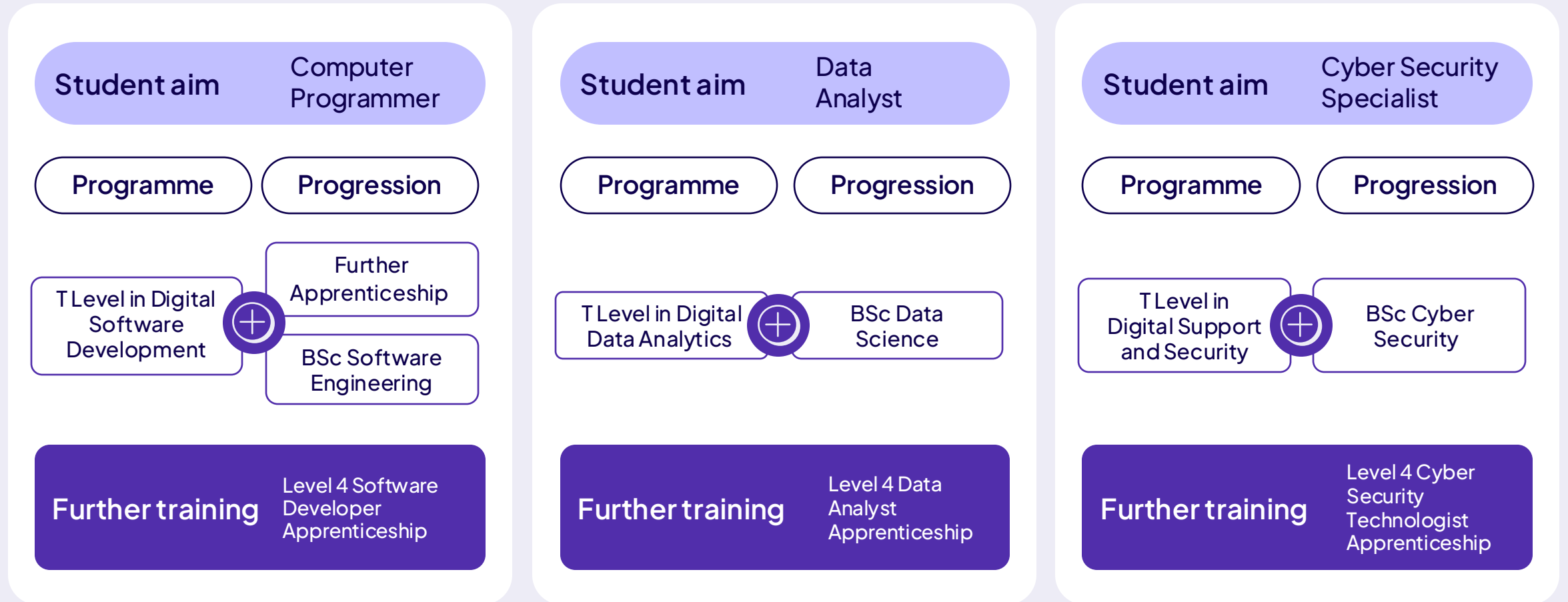
Key similarities and differences: BTEC vs T Level

FEATURE	BTEC NATIONALS IN IT AND COMPUTING	BTEC NATIONALS IN IT AND COMPUTING (AAQS)	T LEVELS IN DIGITAL
Level	3	3	3
Size (GLH)	720 and 1080	180 and 360	1160-1260
Duration	2 years	2 years	2 years
Industry placement	None	None	315 hours
Assessment	Exams and assignments briefs	Exams and Pearson set assignments	Exams, employer set project and occupational specialism project
Progression routes	University and apprenticeships	University and apprenticeships	Employment, apprenticeships and university
Employer engagement	Not required	Not required	Required by provider for the work placement (AAQs)

Programme of study scenarios

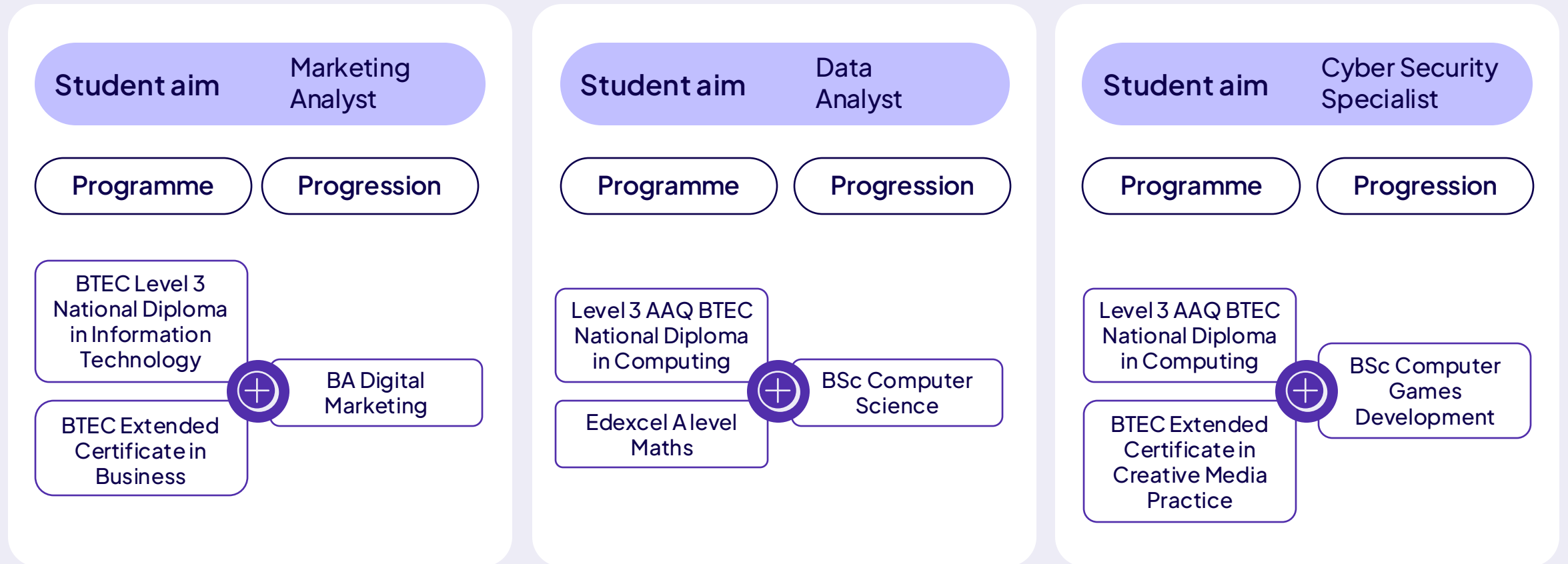
Study programme examples

Pathway A: T levels



Study programme examples

Pathway C: 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 Nationals 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.

Sector transition plan

Subject to change

Based on current information, further details on qualification titles, and full plan to be published in June 2026 by the DfE.

Refer to our main [Guide to Funding and Support](#)

Digital (IT and Computing)

New qualifications will be introduced in this route:

- Digital

Academic Year 2027 to 2028

- V Level(s) (Level 3)

T Levels available and funded

- [Digital Data Analytics](#)
- [Digital Software Development](#)
- [Digital Support and Security](#)

Legacy Pearson qualification proposed final funding dates

Level 3

QN	QUALIFICATION TITLE	GLH	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31
610/6195/5	Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Information Technology (Certificate)	180	✓	x	x	x	x
610/3960/3	Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Information Technology (Extended Certificate)	360	✓	x	x	x	x
603/0455/8	Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Diploma in Information Technology	720	✓	x	x	x	x
603/0454/6	Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Information Technology	1080	✓	x	x	x	x
610/6194/3	Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing (Certificate)	180	✓	x	x	x	x
610/3963/9	Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing (Extended Certificate)	360	✓	x	x	x	x
603/0445/5	Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Diploma in Computing	720	✓	x	x	x	x
601/7342/7	Pearson BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma in Computing	1080	✓	x	x	x	x

Digital (IT and Computing)

New qualifications will be introduced in this route:

- Digital

Academic Year 2027 to 2028

- Foundation Certificate (Level 2)

T Levels available and funded

- Occupational Certificate (Level 2)

Legacy Pearson qualification proposed final funding dates

Level 2

QN	QUALIFICATION TITLE	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31
600/4789/6	Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First Award in Information and Creative Technology	✓	✓	x	x	x
600/6071/2	Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First Certificate in Information and Creative Technology	✓	✓	x	x	x
600/6072/4	Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First Extended Certificate in Information and Creative Technology	✓	✓	x	x	x
601/0169/6	Pearson BTEC Level 1/Level 2 First Diploma in Information and Creative Technology	✓	✓	x	x	x
501/1290/9	Pearson BTEC Level 2 Diploma in Professional Competence for IT and Telecoms Professionals	✓	✓	x	x	x
501/1381/1	Pearson BTEC Level 2 Certificate in ICT Systems and Principles	✓	✓	x	x	x
603/0510/1	Pearson BTEC Level 2 Technical Certificate in IT Support	✓	✓	x	x	x
603/0878/3	Pearson BTEC Level 2 Technical Diploma in Digital Technology	✓	✓	x	x	x

Why choose Pearson for your transition?

Why Pearson?

Long-standing trusted partner

Continuity and expertise as a long-standing 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

[T Level in Digital Data Analytics](#)

[BTEC Nationals in Computing](#)

[Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Computing](#)

[T Level in Digital Software Development](#)

[BTEC Nationals in Information Technology](#)

[Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Information Technology](#)

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

[Support from ETF](#)

[Live and on-demand training](#)

[Sector Briefings and Webinars](#)

[Support from The Technical Education Network](#)

[Funding Guide](#)

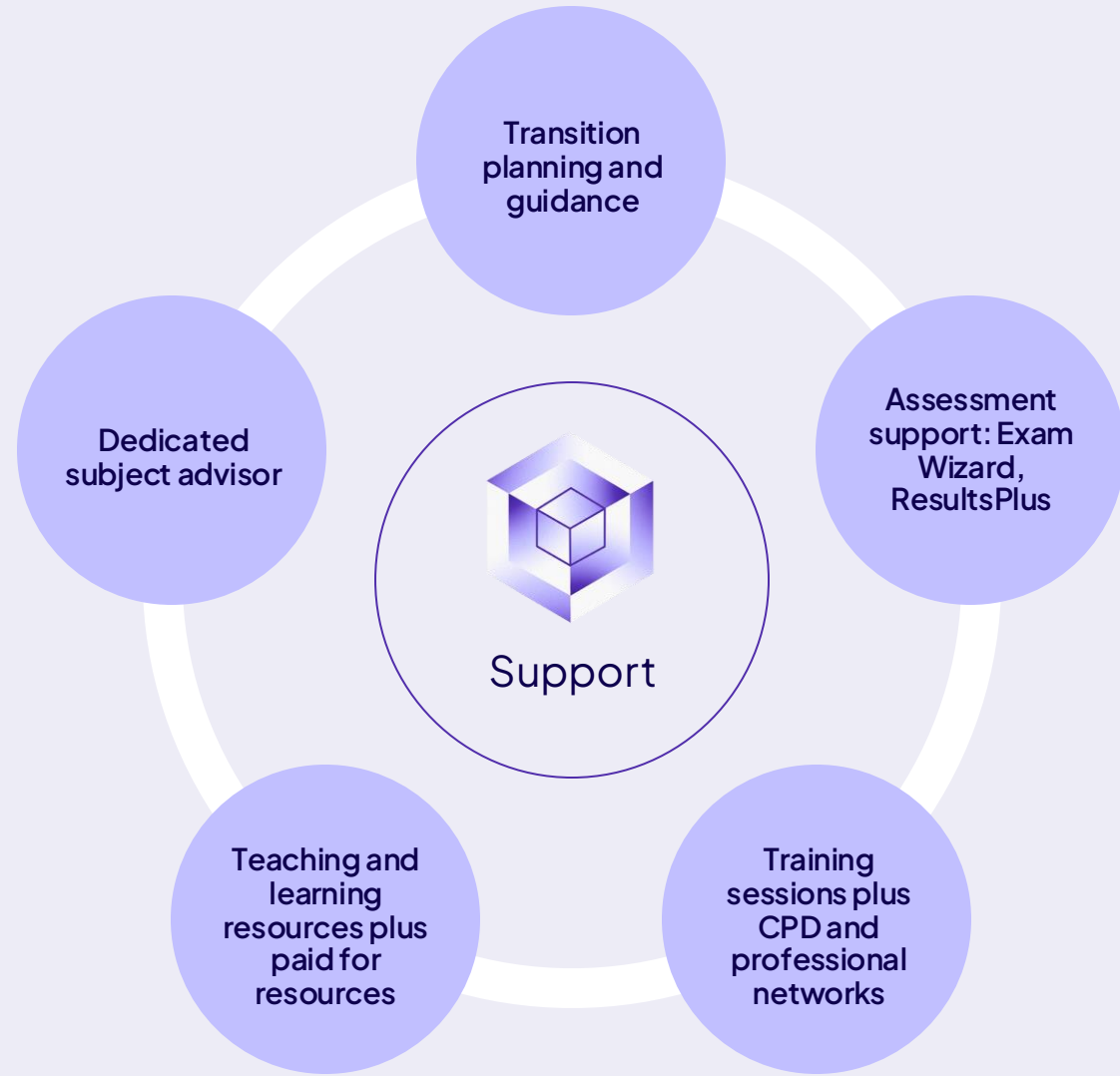
[T Level Training and Admin Support Hub](#)

[Level 3 Funding Updates](#)

[Guide to Funding and Support](#)

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](#)



The Pearson logo is displayed in white against a dark blue background. It features a stylized icon on the left consisting of three curved, overlapping shapes that resemble a stylized 'P' or a series of pages. To the right of this icon, the word "Pearson" is written in a bold, sans-serif typeface.

Pearson