



Options Guide for the Science Sector

Helping educators navigate updated science
qualifications



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What is Changing in Science?

Overview of Level 3 qualification reform in Science

The UK government is reforming Level 3 qualifications in England, meaning large qualifications in the Applied Science sector will be subject to defunding, large-scale vocational courses will be replaced by T Levels (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](#)



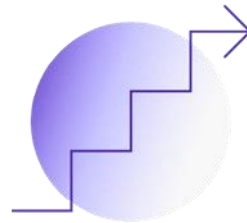
What this means for centres

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



T Levels as Primary Option

The T Level in Science becomes the primary large funded option.



Transition from BTECs

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



Effective communication

Transition planning and confident communication with students will be essential.

Overview of Pearson Science Qualifications (2026 onwards)

T Level in Science

Two-year Full-time Programmes

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

Consisting of:

- Core component – 3 exam papers
- Employer-Set Project (ESP)
- Occupational Specialisms:
 - Food Science
 - Laboratory Science
- Industry placement (minimum 315 hours)
- Core assessment through exams and ESP
- OS assessment which includes practical activities

[Find out more](#)



Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) in Science

Flexible Mixed Programmes

AAQs offer flexibility in mixed programmes by combining mandatory content, external exams, and Pearson Set assignment Briefs (PSAB).

Available in the Science sector:

- Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Applied Science
- Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification BTEC National in Medical Science

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

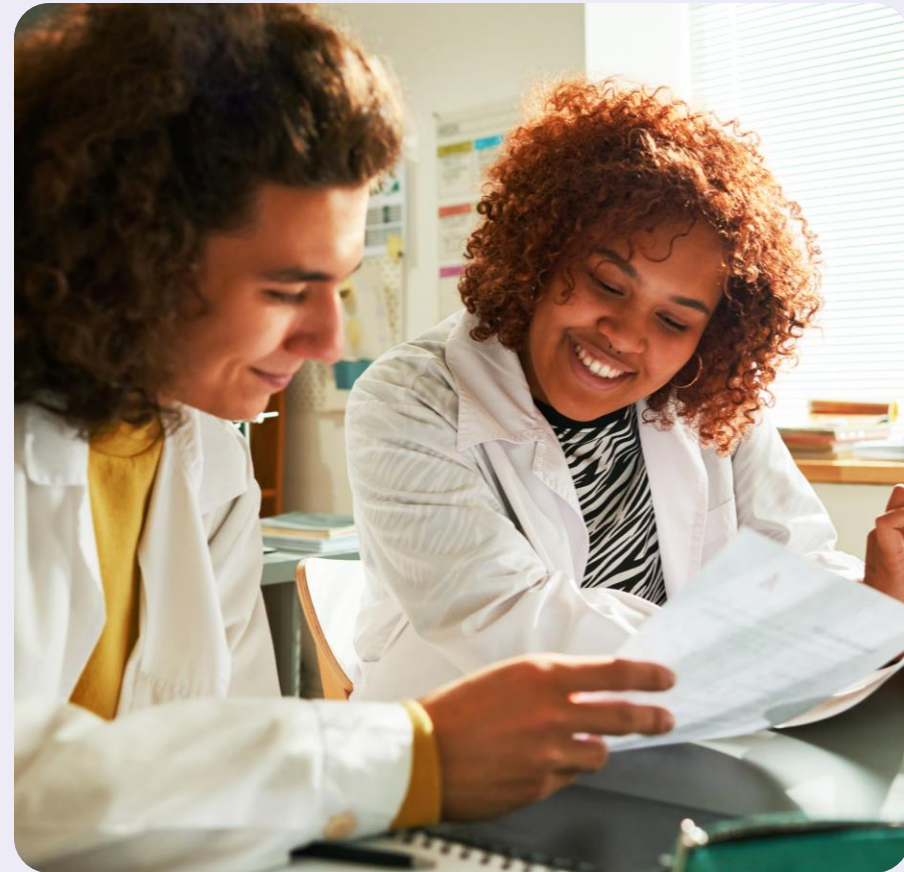
A Levels courses in subjects like Biology, Chemistry and Physics provide advanced academic knowledge for further education or careers.

GCSE Resits

GCSE English and Maths resits help learners 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 (APPLIED SCIENCE)	T LEVEL IN SCIENCE
Level	3	3
Duration	1-2 years	2 years
Industry Placement	None	Yes – mandatory 315 hours
Assessment	External examinations and internal Pearson Set Assignments	External core examinations, Employer Set Project and Occupational Specialism Assessment
Primary Progression Routes	Higher Education	Skilled occupation
Employer Engagement	During development process	Ongoing through work placement
Flexibility	Mandatory components with choice of optional units.	Choice of 2 occupational specialisms

Programme of Study Scenarios

Study programme example

Pathway A: T Level in Science

Student aim

Laboratory Assistant

Programme

T Level in Science

English GCSE resit
if required

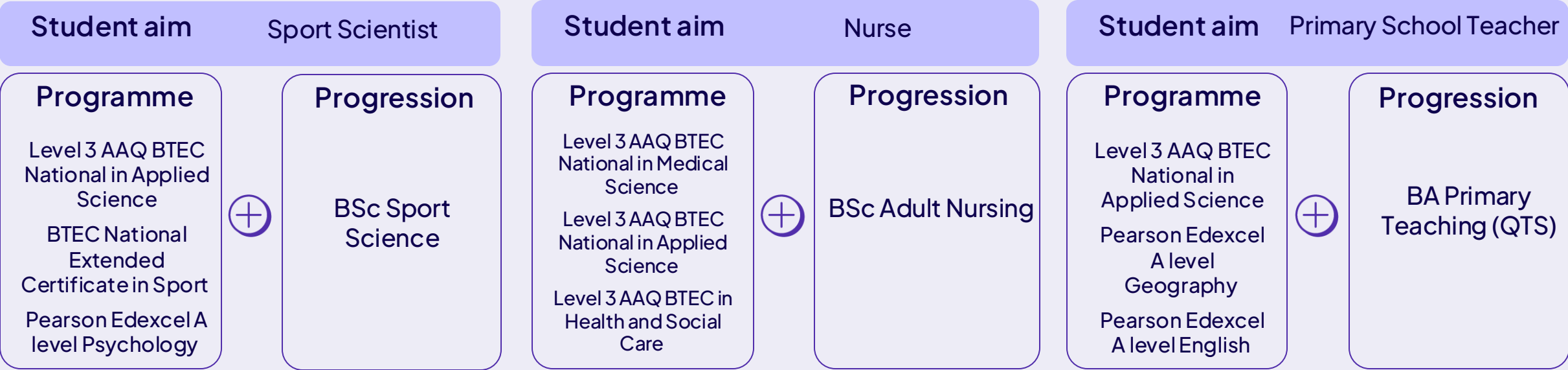


Progression

Technician Scientist
Level 5

Study programme examples

Pathway B: Mixed Programme of Study



Consider adding the [Pearson Edexcel Level 3 Extended Project Qualification in Climate and Sustainability](#) 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 **AAQ in Medical Science** and **Applied Human Biology**, as both qualifications are fundamentally about human biology.

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 science education provider

Government-Endorsed Pathways

Government endorsed pathway with the T Level in Science

Employer-Informed Curriculum

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

Comprehensive Support Services

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

Flexible Qualification Options

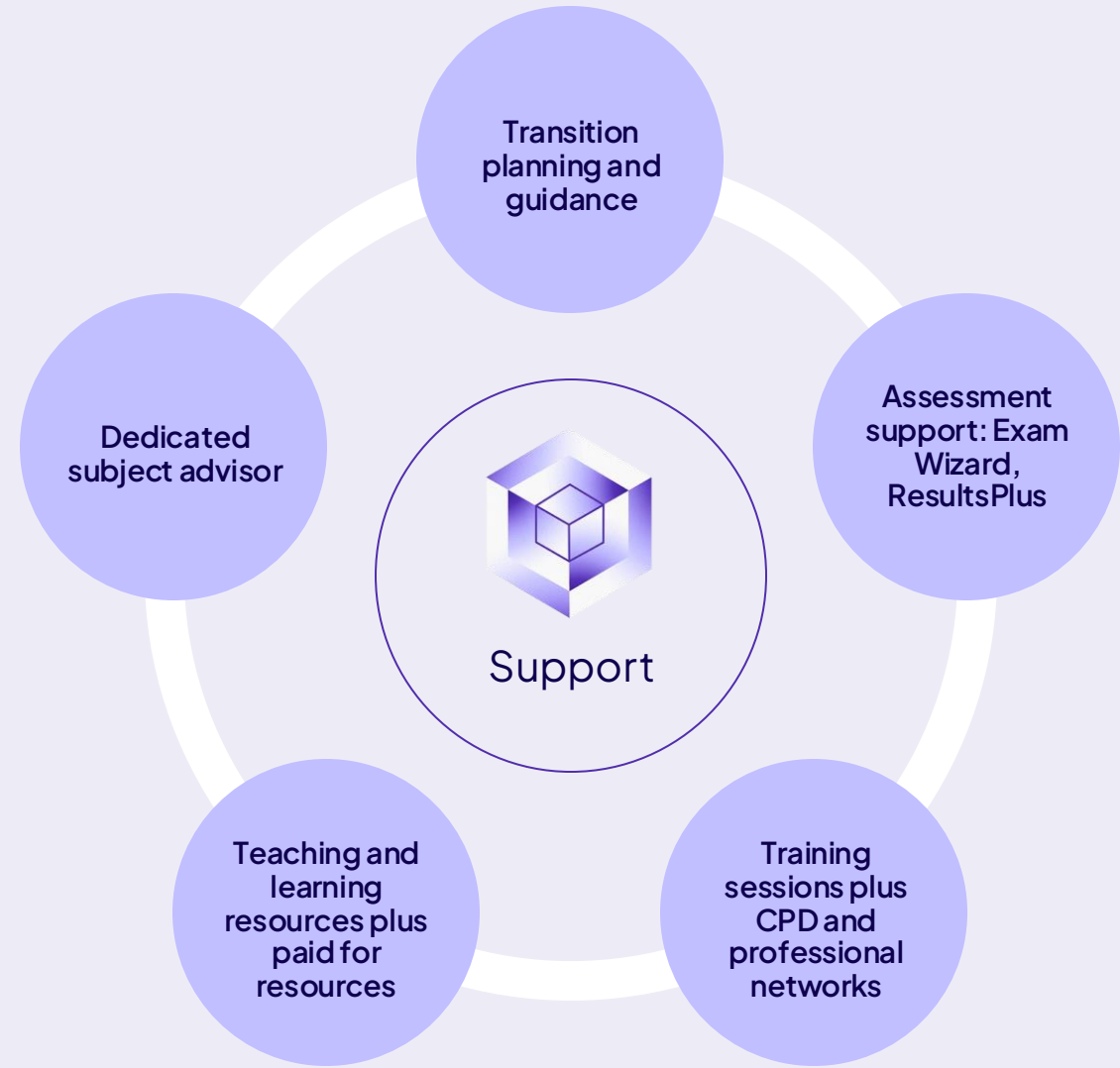
Flexible qualification combinations via mixed programmes which include AAQs, other funded BTEC courses and A Levels

Removing pain points

If you're already an existing provider of our Level 3 BTEC in Applied Science, you can move to our AAQs in the same area without needing to go through the approvals centre.

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.



Useful links and resources

[T Level in Science](#)

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

[Level 3 Funding Updates](#)

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

[Live and on-demand
training](#)

[Sector Briefings and
Webinars](#)

[Funding Guide](#)

[Support from ETF](#)

[Support from The
Technical Education
Network](#)

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Ready to
take the
next step?

[Get in touch](#)



