



QUALIFICATION
INFORMATION
PACK

T Level Technical Qualification in Digital
(Digital Business Services, Digital Support Services)

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Introduction to NCFE

We're NCFE: an educational charity and leader in vocational and technical learning. We combine over 170 years of education experience with deep insight, working with a network of expert collaborators to galvanise the technical and vocational education sector around the greatest learning needs and to shape smarter solutions. In doing this, we're working for a fairer education system for all learners to power inclusivity and choice.

Introduction to T Level¹ programmes

In September 2020 the Government introduced T Levels as a high-quality, work-focused alternative to A Levels for young people once they've completed their GCSEs. T Levels are underpinned by new Technical Qualifications, developed in close consultation with employers and expert practitioners to ensure they intimately reflect the needs of the sectors and occupations they're designed to serve.

NCFE has been working closely with the Government to develop the Technical Qualifications for T Levels in:

- Education and Childcare
- Digital Business Services
- Digital Support Services
- Health
- Science
- Healthcare Science.

¹T Level is a registered trademark of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.
The T Level technical qualification is a qualification approved and managed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

What is a T Level?

T Levels are qualifications approved and managed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education. A T Level is a technical study programme, aimed at preparing young people for work, higher-level apprenticeships or higher education (HE). It comprises 5 key components:

- occupational role
- a minimum of 315 hours of industry placement with an external employer
- English, mathematics and digital requirements; students will have to achieve a minimum of Level 2 mathematics and English in order to achieve a T Level
- Employability, Enrichment, and Pastoral (EEP) elements
- in some cases, it may also include mandatory additional requirements (MAR), such as important licence to practice qualifications.

Over the 2-year programme, students will develop threshold competence, which the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) defines as:

'The level of competence deemed by employers as sufficient to secure employment in roles relevant to an occupational specialism. Achievement of threshold competence signals that a learner is well-placed to develop full occupational competence, with further support and development, once in work.'

What industries are they available in?

- Agriculture, environment and animal care
- Business and administration
- Catering and hospitality
- Construction
- Creative and design
- Digital
- Education and childcare
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Hair and beauty
- Health and science
- Legal, finance and accounting.

When will they be available?

There are 25 T Levels in total spread across the 11 industry sectors. As of September 2021, 10 T Levels are available at selected colleges, schools and other providers across England.

The remaining courses will be starting in either 2022 or 2023. More information on the roll out of T Levels can be found [here](#).

Future qualification landscape at Level 3

Existing Level 3 qualifications are under review as part of the Government's 'review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England'. The review's aim is clearer qualification choices for young people and adults, and to ensure that every qualification approved for public funding has a distinct purpose, is high quality and supports progression to positive outcomes for students.

Technical Qualification (TQ)

The T Level Technical Qualification in Digital outline content has been produced by T Level panels based on the same standards as those used for apprenticeships. The outline content formed the basis of this qualification and has been further developed by NCFE.

The TQ in Digital has 2 components:

- core component
 - + Route core component
 - + Pathway core component
 - Digital Business Services
 - Digital Support Services
- occupational specialism component.

Pathway	
Digital Business Services	Digital Support Services
Data Technician	Digital Infrastructure Digital Support Network Cabling

The core component provides a high-level foundation of knowledge and skills that are relevant to all occupational specialisms. Some of the core topics and ideas are then broken down and contextualised in more detail in the occupational specialisms, allowing the student to apply the knowledge and skills in their chosen specialism.

Each occupational specialism component covers the knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviours required to achieve threshold competence in a chosen occupational specialism.

English, mathematics and digital skills have also been embedded throughout the TQ.

Guided learning hours (GLH) are as follows:

Digital Business Services

	GLH for delivery	GLH for assessment	Total GLH	TQT
Core Component	514 hours	19 hours	533 hours	547 hours
Data Technician	600 hours	29 hours	629 hours	658 hours

Digital Support Services

	GLH for delivery	GLH for assessment	Total GLH	TQT
Core Component	600 hours	16 hours 40 minutes	616 hours 40 minutes	647 hours
Digital Infrastructure	600 hours	24 hours 30 minutes	624 hours 30 minutes	657 hours
Network Cabling	600 hours	31 hours	631 hours	657 hours
Digital Support	600 hours	34 hours	634 hours	657 hours

Higher-level study skills

This qualification aims to provide students with a number of progression options, including higher-level studies at university or further education (FE) colleges. The skills required to progress to higher academic studies are different from those required at levels 1 and 2. Level 3 qualifications enable the development of these skills. Although there is no single definition of higher-level learning skills, they include:

- checking and testing information
- supporting points with evidence
- self-directed study
- self-motivation
- thinking for yourself
- analysing and synthesising information/materials
- critical thinking and problem solving
- working collaboratively
- reflecting upon learning and identifying improvements
- presenting information in written and verbal formats.

Level 3 criteria can require students to analyse, draw conclusions, interpret or justify, which are all examples of higher-level skills and support progression and further learning.

Achievement of this qualification requires students to demonstrate evidence of higher-level skills in analysis, evaluation, criticality and reflection in relation to both core content, requiring knowledge and understanding of the wider digital sector, as well as one occupational specialism.

The synoptic assessment requires students to integrate and apply their learning from a range of units, with breadth and depth. Honing these skills plays an important part in preparing the student for higher education and supports with their ability to sustain their performance during their studies at university.

A Digital T Level could support progression on to a wide variety of degree courses, such as:

Digital Business Services

- Data Science (Hons)
- Data Analytics (Hons)
- Data Science and Business Analytics
- Network Services.

Digital Support Services

- Digital and Technology Solutions (Hons)
- Network Engineering
- Networking and Architecture
- Network Security.

As Higher Education institutions (HEIs) set their own entry requirements for degree courses, it's advisable to check entry requirements with the chosen HEI to establish full student progression routes.

Research skills

T Levels require students to hone their research skills. For example, students are required to investigate, explore, compare, and show analysis of evidence-based research for application in digital roles from a range of perspectives. Equipping students with these important skills prepares them for the rigour and depth of research they will be expected to demonstrate in their higher education studies.

Values and behaviours

Students studying for the T Level in Digital will be able to show increasing appreciation of the values and behaviours required for occupational roles in their chosen sector. Students will have the opportunity to apply knowledge and understanding to real work situations, demonstrating perception and problem-solving.

Experience in the workplace

As part of achieving the overall T Level programme, all students are required to complete a minimum of 315 hours on industry placement.

Industry placements are intended to provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for skilled employment in their chosen occupation and which are less easily attainable by completing a qualification alone.

It is the provider's responsibility to ensure the minimum number of hours is undertaken by the student.

Rigorous assessment

The core component is externally assessed by:

- paper A written examination
- paper B written examination
- employer-set project (ESP).

To achieve a grade for the core component, students must have results for both sub-components: the core (written) examination and the ESP.

The purpose of the ESP is to ensure that students can apply core knowledge and skills to develop a substantial piece of work in response to an employer-set brief. The brief and tasks are contextualised around an occupational area and chosen by the student ahead of the assessment window.

As part of the ESP, students must demonstrate the following core skills:

Digital Business Services

- **Core skill 1:** working with stakeholders to clarify and consider options to meet requirements
- **Core skill 2:** researching and investigating relevant sources and data to meet requirements
- **Core skill 3:** applying a valid approach to solving data problems, identifying and resolving issues whilst recording progress and solutions to meet requirements
- **Core skill 4:** ensuring that actions identify and mitigate risk to security
- **Core skill 5:** communicating information clearly to technical and non-technical stakeholders
- **Core skill 6:** reflecting and evaluating their own performance and understanding the need for continuous learning and development.

Digital Support Services

- **Core skill 1:** communicating information clearly to a technical and non-technical audience
- **Core skill 2:** working with stakeholders to clarify and consider options to meet requirements
- **Core skill 3:** applying a logical approach to solving problems, identifying and resolving faults whilst recording progress and solutions
- **Core skill 4:** ensuring activity avoids risks to security.

The combined results from the written exams and the ESP will be aggregated to form the overall core component grade (A* – E and U).

The occupational specialism components are assessed by synoptic assignments.

Synoptic assessment enables students to integrate and apply knowledge, understanding and skills with breadth and depth. It also requires them to demonstrate their capability to apply knowledge, understanding and skills across the chosen occupational specialism.

The student is required to successfully achieve one of the following grades in one of the occupational specialisms:

- distinction*
- distinction
- merit
- pass.

Grading

Students who complete their T Level will receive an overall grade of pass, merit, distinction or distinction*. They will get a nationally recognised certificate which will show their overall grade and a breakdown of what they have achieved.

The T Level certificate will include:

- an overall grade for the T Level, shown as pass, merit, distinction or distinction*
- a separate grade for the core component, using A* to E
- a separate grade for each occupational specialism, shown as pass, merit or distinction.

It will also include confirmation that the student has:

- met the minimum requirements for maths and English qualifications
- completed the industry placement
- met any additional mandatory requirements.

A student's overall T Level grade will be worked out from the grades they achieved on the core component and the occupational specialisms.

Students who do not pass all elements of their T Level will get a T Level statement of achievement which will show the elements they have completed.

Progression to higher-level study

Students who achieve this qualification could progress to the following, depending on their chosen occupational specialism:

- higher-level technical study
- degree courses
- higher or degree-level apprenticeships.

UCAS tariff points

UCAS points will only be allocated to the overall T Level grade. Students must achieve at least an overall pass grade to receive UCAS points.

UCAS tariff points	T Level overall grade	A Level
168	Distinction* (A* on the core and distinction in the occupational specialism)	AAA*
144	Distinction	AAA
120	Merit	BBB
96	Pass (C or above on the core)	CCC
72	Pass (D or E on the core)	DDD

Qualification specification and supporting materials

QRN	Title of qualification	Link to qualification specification and supporting materials
603/6902/4	T Level Technical Qualification in Digital Business Services (Level 3) (Delivered By NCFE)	View on QualHub
603/6901/2	T Level Technical Qualification in Digital Support Services (Level 3) (Delivered By NCFE)	View on QualHub

In order to ensure providers successfully transition to T Levels, we have reached beyond the traditional role of an awarding organisation with the support we are providing. We have developed a comprehensive suite of blended learning resources to support the delivery of the T Level in Digital. These resources reflect our expertise in the sector, as well as the work we have done with employers and practitioners to develop the new Technical Qualifications and assessments. They are designed to ensure providers can effectively deliver all elements of the T Level and to support students to develop their knowledge and skills in this area.

The resources are designed to follow active learning principles and include:

- interactive eLearning modules for use in and out of the classroom
- virtual reality resources and apps
- schemes of work and lesson plans for teachers' planning
- interactive PDFs
- textbooks
- a range of classroom-based activities
- reflection activities
- independent study and research tasks to develop students' research skills and support preparation for assessment.

Summary

The T Level in Digital offers students the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of the sector. The elements of the core component consider theoretical concepts, encouraging a breadth of knowledge, whilst the performance outcomes of the occupational specialisms demand depth, focusing on specific occupational roles and evidence-based practice. Students will show their understanding through a series of synoptic, external assessments subject to controlled supervision. Cohesion of theory and practice is challenged throughout. The qualification is robust, and appropriately challenging in level of demand, with the opportunity to prepare students for the world of work as well as significantly preparing them for study at higher education in a range of relevant disciplines.

Document information

'T-LEVELS' is a registered trade mark of the Department for Education.

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Change history record

This section summarises the changes to this document since the last version.

Version	Description of change	Date of Issue
v1.0	First issue for publication	July 2021
v1.1	Additional course progression information added	September 2021
v1.2	Table formatting updated	November 2021