

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)

Key things careers professionals need to know

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) form a key part of the post-18 landscape and understanding them and how they fit alongside apprenticeships, T Levels and degrees means you can give students accurate, up-to-date guidance and ensure they don't miss out on this growing set of technical pathways.

HTQs - key information

What are HTQs?

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) are new and existing Level 4 and 5 qualifications that have gone through a national approval process led by the Department for Education. This process confirms that they meet employers' needs and align with national [occupational standards](#). Examples of the type of qualifications that have been approved as being an HTQ include Higher National Certificates (HNCs), Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and Foundation Degrees.

Where do HTQs fit in with other qualifications?

HTQs are higher education qualifications that are often taken after studying a Level 3 qualification. They are classroom-based alternatives to Level 4 and 5 higher apprenticeships that are shorter and more occupationally focused than a level 6 Bachelor's degree, but may be topped up to a degree later on. See page 2 for more information about progression within Higher Education.



Why are some HNCs, HNDs and Foundation Degrees also known as HTQs but not others?

An HTQ is a Level 4 or 5 qualification that has been quality marked because it has been approved by the Department for Education as meeting employer-led occupational standards for specific occupations.

Non-HTQ Level 4 and 5 qualifications may offer valuable learning, but they have not been assessed or approved against occupational standards in the way HTQs have.

Only qualifications that have been approved by the Department for Education can display the quality mark.

Where can you study HTQs?

HTQs are typically classroom-based and taught in:

- further education colleges
- universities
- [Institutes of Technology](#) (IoTs)
- Independent Training Providers (ITPs)

Some HTQ courses recruit through UCAS and you can see a listing [here](#).

For other HTQ courses students can apply direct to the institutions.

These can be found on the [National Careers Service website](#).



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Who can study an HTQ?

Learners must be at least 18 years old to start an HTQ. They are typically studied after completing a Level 3 qualification, such as A-levels, T Levels, BTECs or some advanced apprenticeships. HTQs are also suitable for those looking to upskill, retrain or progress in their career. HTQs can be studied as standalone qualifications or, in some cases, form the mandatory qualification within a higher apprenticeship.

How long do HTQs take?

If taken full time, Level 4 HTQs are typically a one-year course and Level 5 HTQs are typically a two-year course.

Can an HTQ course be taken online or part time alongside working?

HTQs can offer flexible study options, including full-time, part-time, online and hybrid delivery. Availability varies by subject and provider, so learners should check the specific arrangements for each course. Learners may also be able to study an HTQ alongside employment. Unlike an apprenticeship, they do not need to be employed before starting the qualification.

Do HTQs include a work placement?

Work placements are not a mandatory requirement of an HTQ and they are delivered primarily in a classroom setting. However, some providers may include employer projects, simulated workplaces or voluntary placements as an optional part of the qualification.

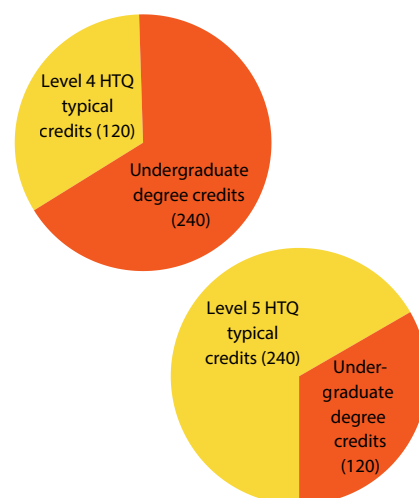
How do HTQs support progression within Higher Education?

HTQs are higher education qualifications at Levels 4 and 5. They carry credits that are widely accepted by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) that can support progression to further study.

For example, an approved Level 4 HNC typically carries 120 credits and an approved Level 5 HND typically carries 240 credits.

Learners may be able to use credits gained through an HTQ to apply for entry to a later stage of a related undergraduate degree, sometimes referred to as a 'top-up' degree. Each higher education institution has its own policies on credit recognition and will assess applications on an individual basis.

Typically, 360 credits are needed in total to complete an undergraduate degree.



Do HTQs involve local employers?

HTQs are aligned to employer-designed occupational standards and many providers work closely with local businesses to shape delivery. These employer links mean HTQs focus on the skills, knowledge and behaviours needed in the local labour market, helping learners move into higher-skilled roles more quickly.

Which skills do learners gain through HTQs?

HTQs develop a blend of technical and professional skills. Alongside the specialist knowledge needed for specific higher-skilled jobs, learners build important skills such as confidence, teamwork and professionalism. This combination helps them succeed not only in the technical aspects of a role, but also in the workplace behaviours that employers value.

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HTQs - subjects

Are HTQs available in all sectors?

More than 200 HTQs are now approved across 13 subject areas. Below are examples from across all 13 areas.



Agriculture, environmental & animal care

- FdSc – Sustainable Agriculture with Livestock Management
- HNC – Animal Conservation and Countryside Management



Business & administration

- HNC - Business (General)
- FD - Business and Management
- HND - Leadership and Management



Catering & hospitality

- HND - Hospitality Management
- FdA – Culinary Arts



Care services

- FdSc - Assistant Practitioner
- FdSc – Nursing Associate
- FdSc – Visual Impairment Rehabilitation



Construction & the built environment

- HND - Modern Methods of Construction
- HNC - Quantity Surveying
- HNC - Architectural Technology for England



Creative & design

- FD - Audio and Music Production
- CertHE – Game Development
- HNC / HND - Photography
- HNC - Make up and Hair Artistry



Digital

- HNC - Artificial Intelligence Solutions and Applications
- HND - Applied Computing
- FD - Cyber Security



Education & early years

- FdA - Childhood Studies Care and Education
- FdSc - Basketball Coaching and Performance
- HNC - Community Coaching for Sport



Engineering & manufacturing

- HND - Aeronautical Engineering for England
- HNC - Civil Engineering
- HND - Mechanical Engineering



Health & science

- FD - Nursing Associate
- HND - Healthcare Assistant Practitioner
- HNC - Applied Science (Biology)



Legal, finance & accounting

- FdSc - Criminology, Policing and Criminal Law
- Level 4 Diploma - Professional Accounting
- FD - Payroll Management



Protective services

- Level 4 Cert. for Protective Security Advisers
- HNC - Public Services
- FdSc Youth Justice Practitioner



Sales, marketing & procurement

- HNC - Digital Marketing and Communications
- HNC – Marketing Management
- HNC - Journalism

Qualifications key:

CertHE - Certificate of Higher Education

HNC - Higher National Certificate

HND - Higher National Diploma

FD - Foundation Degree

FdA - Foundation Degree in Arts

FdSc - Foundation Degree in Science

What roles can HTQs lead to?

Skills England's occupational maps show where technical education can lead.

Explore the occupational maps:

occupational-maps.skillsengland.education.gov.uk



Questions students or parents/carers may ask

Who is most suited to an HTQ?

HTQs are a great option for anyone post-18 who has completed a Level 3 qualification and wants a technical or career-focused route. They may be particularly relevant for those who:

- are looking for a practical, employer-led programme with applied, career-focused learning, but who prefer classroom-based learning to work-based learning.
- want to remain in a learning environment but don't want to commit to the time and cost of a full degree.
- may not feel ready for an apprenticeship or a degree, or haven't secured the position, apprenticeship or course they wanted. An HTQ can get them ready and help boost their chances of securing their next step.
- would prefer to stay local to study.
- are interested in specific technical careers.
- want to go straight into skilled employment.
- may want to progress to a full degree later.
- are adults who want to retrain or upskill, or employees seeking career progression.

What are the entry requirements for HTQs?

Each educational provider sets their own entry requirements. The grades or qualifications needed will depend on the type of course being applied for. Most providers state their entry requirements in terms of UCAS tariff points.

You can use the UCAS search function to look at the different requirements across the many providers. [Search UCAS](#)



How do learners apply for HTQs?

Learners can apply either via UCAS (please note that not all HTQs are on the UCAS website) or directly via the provider following their application process.

Key aspects of an HTQ

- If studied full time, HTQs take one year (Level 4) or two years (Level 5) compared to 3+ years for a degree. Students gain job-ready technical skills earlier, which is ideal for those who want to enter the workforce sooner.
- Fewer years of study means a lower overall cost and whilst students can still access student finance, they can avoid the higher cost of full degrees. See page 5 for more detail on financing an HTQ.
- HTQs are approved against employer-designed standards, meaning the content directly matches what industry needs. Employers know HTQs signal practical competence, not just academic knowledge.
- HTQs are often delivered part time, making them ideal for students who want to work alongside the course.
- HTQs have clear progression routes - direct entry into skilled employment, progression to a higher or degree apprenticeship, options to top up to a full degree and professional qualifications in a relevant sector.
- HTQs target sectors with skill shortages, meaning employment outcomes could be stronger.
- Most HTQs start in September, with some January starts, offering learners greater flexibility.

HTQs - finances

Do you have to pay tuition fees to do an HTQ?

A full-time HTQ can cost the same per year as a degree course (currently up to £9,790) but most HTQ providers charge lower fees. This is because they are often offered by smaller providers with different financial models.

Is student finance available for HTQs?

Students wanting to study an HTQ are entitled to apply for student finance on the same terms as for other undergraduate study. The amount learners could get will depend on their circumstances and the type of HTQ they are studying. HTQ courses that are shorter than a year in duration will be eligible for the Advanced Learner Loan, which covers the tuition fee loan but not the maintenance loan.

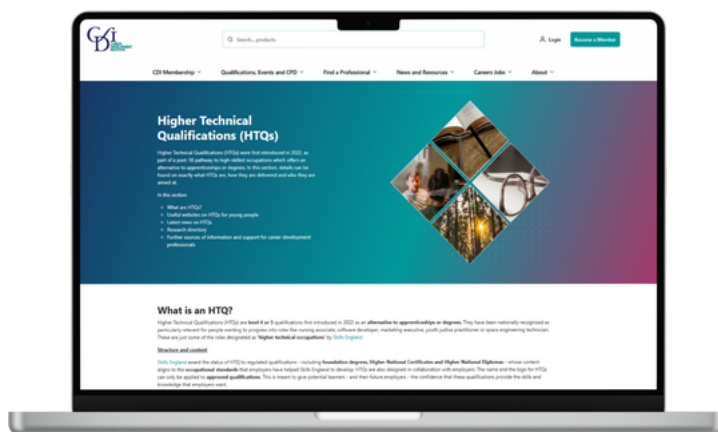
From September 2026, learners will be able to apply for [Lifelong Learning Entitlement \(LLE\)](#) for the first time for courses and modules starting from January 2027 onwards. LLE funding will replace the two existing systems of publicly funded higher education: student finance loans and Advanced Learner Loans.

The LLE will provide all new learners with a tuition fee loan entitlement equivalent to four years of post-18 education and this can be used up to the age of 60.

You can find out more about student finance here: gov.uk/student-finance

Who pays for the HTQ if the student is employed?

If the student is in employment, the employer may often pay for all, or part of the costs of studying.



Stay informed on HTQs by visiting the CDI Resource Hub:



thecdi.net/resources/technical-education-resource-hub/higher-technical-qualifications