



Department
for Education

Digital: Digital Production, Design and Development

**T Level outline content: final version for
approval**

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Introduction

T Levels are new two-year, level 3 study programmes that include a substantial technical qualification. They will enable students to secure skilled employment, by providing a mixture of:

- practical skills and knowledge specific to their chosen industry and occupation
- at least 45 days' industry placement in their chosen industry or occupation
- English, maths and digital skills.

T Levels will become one of three major options when a student reaches level 3, alongside apprenticeships for students who wish to study and train for a specific occupation 'on the job', and A levels for students who wish to continue academic education.

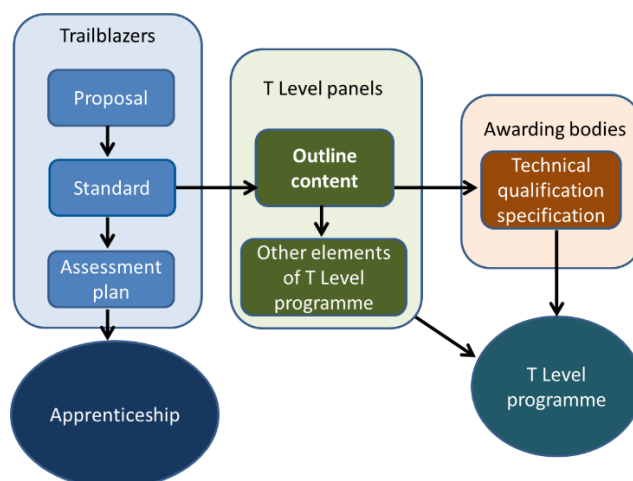
When they complete a T Level study programme, students will be able to choose between moving into a skilled occupation or further study, for example, a higher or degree level apprenticeship, or higher level technical study, including higher education.

Technical education has been categorised into fifteen different technical routes, according to occupational specialism. T Levels will be available across eleven of those routes, with occupations in the remaining four routes accessible through an apprenticeship only. Most routes have been split into a number of pathways; the T Level will broadly sit at pathway level. The occupations within scope for each T Level are set out in the Institute of Apprenticeships' occupational maps.

Outline content

This outline content has been produced by [T Level panels](#) of employers, professional bodies and providers, based on the same standards as those used for apprenticeships. The outline content will form the basis of the qualification specifications for T Level qualifications, which will be developed by awarding organisations for approval by the Institute for Apprenticeships. Awarding organisations will be appointed after a procurement process.

The diagram below demonstrates how the same standard created by employer-led Trailblazer groups is used for both Apprenticeships, and as the basis for this outline content. It also shows that this outline content will be used by awarding organisations to develop the full technical qualification specification.

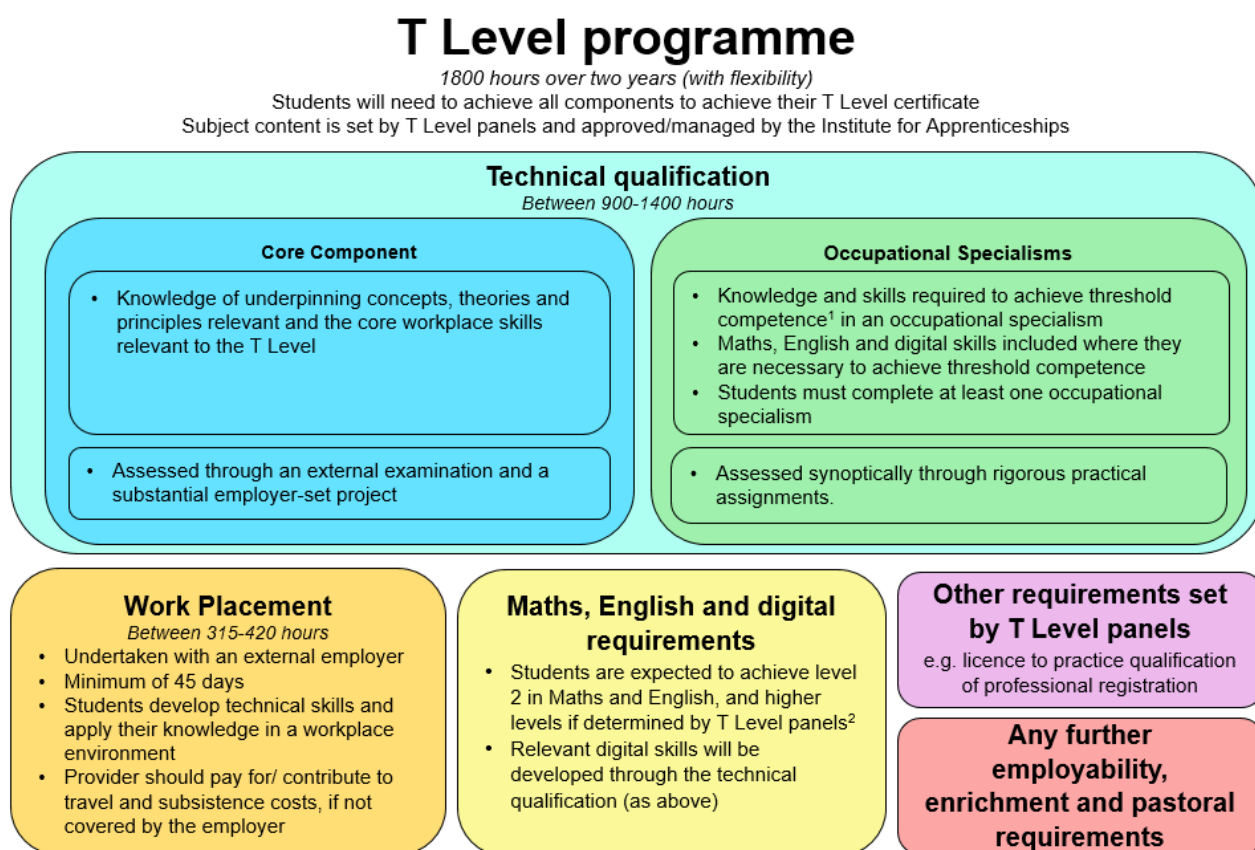


Colleges and other education and training providers will decide how to structure the T Level courses they offer, based on the qualification specifications. This will enable them to deliver the study programme's mandatory components in the most effective way for students.

T Level study programmes will include the following mandatory elements:

- a 'core' set of underpinning knowledge, concepts and skills, tailored for their chosen industry and occupation: 'core content'
- specialist training covering occupational or industry-specific skills: 'occupational specialist content'
- an industry placement with an employer, which will last for 45 working days.

The diagram below demonstrates the different elements of a T Level programme. This outline content relates solely to the technical qualification part of a T Level programme.



¹ Threshold competence is as close to full occupational competence as can be reasonably expected of learners after two years of study in a provider based setting and be validated by employers as sufficient to secure skilled employment in a relevant role.

² Students are expected to achieve a minimum level of Maths and English. Students can achieve this through GCSEs or a level 2 Functional Skills qualification. Under the Maynard recommendations, those with a care plan taking apprenticeships may have different entry level requirements for English and maths.

Purpose Statement

Qualification Purpose

The purpose of the level 3 technical qualification is to ensure students have the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to progress into skilled employment or higher level technical training relevant to the T Level.¹

To achieve this, each level 3 technical qualification must:

- provide reliable evidence of students' attainment in relation to:
 - the core knowledge and skills relevant to the route and occupational specialisms covered by the qualification
 - the knowledge skills and behaviours required for at least one occupational specialism relevant to the qualification.
- be up-to-date, providing the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed for the occupations have continued currency among employers and others.
- ensure that maths, English and digital skills are developed and applied where they are essential to achieve occupationally relevant outcomes.
- ensure that the minimum pass grade standard for occupational specialisms attests to threshold competence, meets employer expectations, and is as close to full occupational competence as possible.
- allow the accurate identification of students' level of attainment and the effective differentiation of their performance.
- provide a clear and coherent basis for development of suitably demanding high-quality level 3 courses, which enable students to realise their potential
- provide students with the opportunity to manage and improve their own performance
- support fair access to attainment for all students who take the qualification, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

¹ The Institute for Apprenticeships may only approve the qualification "if satisfied that by obtaining the qualification a person demonstrates that he or she has attained as many of the outcomes set out in the standards as may reasonably be expected to be attained by undertaking a course of education" (sA2DA(3) of the 2009 Act).

Technical Qualification Design

T Level programmes will differ in length to reflect the requirements of different occupations, but are expected to last 1800 hours over two years (on average).

To accommodate legitimate differences in content across T Levels, we propose that the total time for the technical qualification:

- will fall within a defined range of between 900 and 1400 hours
- is no less than 50% of the time for the T Level programme as a whole and
- is no more than 75% of the total time for the programme as a whole.

Component	Content	Assessment	Grading	Planned Hours
<p>Core</p> <p>Students complete one component which covers all the core content</p>	<p>Knowledge and understanding of contexts, concepts, theories and principles relevant to the T Level</p> <p>Ability to apply core knowledge and skills, through a project, to meet employer-set requirements</p>	<p>Assessed through an externally set test and an employer-set project</p>	<p>Six point scale plus ungraded (U)</p> <p>A* – E and U</p>	<p>Between 20% and 50% of the qualification time</p>
<p>Occupational specialisms</p> <p>Students must complete at least one, or more depending on the minimum requirements specific to the qualification</p>	<p>Knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to achieve threshold competence</p>	<p>Synoptic assessment of performance outcomes, to determine whether a student meets the minimum requirements for threshold competence</p>	<p>Three point scale plus ungraded (U)</p> <p>Distinction, Merit, Pass and Ungraded</p>	<p>Between 50% and 80% of qualification time</p>

Digital: Digital Production, Design and Development

Core content

The core content relates to the whole route, and the pathway that the qualification covers. This content will vary depending on the requirements of the route and the pathway or occupations covered by the scope of the qualification.

The core content focuses on students' knowledge and understanding of contexts, concepts, theories, principles and core skills relevant to the T Level. This could include, where appropriate, assessment of knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to the route and the pathway. This breadth of content will help to ensure students are able to apply their skills in a variety of contexts and for a variety of different purposes.

The core content is assessed through an examination and a practical employer-set project. Awarding organisations can integrate knowledge in the employer-set project, to contextualise of core skills. The allocation of content to each type of assessment will need to be approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships.

Core knowledge and understanding

Element	Content
Business Context	<p>The business environment, including the importance of serving customer, end user and business needs.</p> <p>The value of Digital to the business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• measurable value of software as an asset in business• processes and business models• context and market environment. <p>Technical change management including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• risk• impact• configuration• document• request for change• roll back planning• reproducibility• traceability. <p>Examples of how organisations respond to change, why change is needed, and change management procedures relevant to Digital in a range of contexts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• societal• technological• environmental• economic

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • political. <p>The significance of target audience, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brand awareness • cultural awareness/ diversity • accessibility • internal/ external audience • level of technical knowledge • profile. <p>Examples of codes of conduct, implications of hacking and non-compliance.</p>
Culture	Ethical and moral issues that an increasing reliance on technology raises e.g. autonomous operation, changing behaviours, addiction.
Data	<p>Concepts and fundamentals of data, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • search, store, integrate and organise (e.g. index) • how organisations of various types use data • key features and functions of information systems • data formats and their importance for analysis • entry and maintenance • visualisation and presentation • data modelling • relationship modelling.
Digital Concepts	<p>Algorithms.</p> <p>Abstraction.</p> <p>Action.</p> <p>Decomposition.</p> <p>Pattern recognition.</p>
Digital Environments	<p>Computing systems fundamentals including physical, virtual and cloud:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • physical systems: including hardware, peripherals, operating software, software • devices, servers, Internet of Things • networking fundamentals • virtualization technologies. <p>Cloud:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • terminology • concepts.

Diversity and inclusion	<p>The value of difference and being sensitive to the needs of others, especially when they are different from one's own, this includes understanding the relevant legislation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> protected characteristics.
Learning	<p>Emerging technology trends and innovation.</p> <p>Reflection techniques.</p> <p>The breadth of sources of knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reliable and unreliable e.g. internet and search engines, academic papers.
Legislation	<p>The importance of keeping up with the most recent legislation, including professional practice, security standards, regulations and their consequences across at least two sectors; the role of criminal and other law; key relevant features of UK and international law.</p> <p>Legal and regulatory requirements e.g. Data Protection, Security, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), Data sharing, marketing consent, personal data definition.</p> <p>The role and importance of Industry Standards and where to find them (e.g. ISO standards, IETF RFCs).</p>
Planning	<p>The principles of planning including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> time cost quality.
Security	<p>The importance of maintaining privacy and confidentiality of company information, as well as that of customers and colleagues.</p> <p>Processes and protocols used to ensure internet security, including concepts of security assurance.</p> <p>Threats and vulnerabilities including the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> technical physical human. <p>The interrelationship between security, identity, confidentiality, integrity, availability, threat, vulnerability and risk management.</p>
Testing	<p>A fundamental understanding of the importance of testing for all components (including software, hardware, data), interfaces and the resulting service.</p> <p>Application of root cause analysis to problems.</p>

Tools	<p>Digital tools and their use in business:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • management and presentation tools • evaluation tools and techniques. <p>Examples of collaborative technologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication tools and technologies for collaborative working e.g. discussion threads, document collaboration, markdown.
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Employer-set project

The employer-set project ensures students have the opportunity to combine core knowledge and skills to develop a substantial piece of work in response to an employer-set brief.

To ensure consistency in project scope and demand, awarding organisations will develop assessment objectives, which require learners to:

- plan their approach to meeting the brief
- apply core knowledge and skills as appropriate
- select relevant techniques and resources to meet the brief
- use maths, English and digital skills as appropriate
- realise a project outcome and review how well the outcome meets the brief.

The awarding organisation will work with a relevant employer or employers, to devise a set brief that:

- ensures a motivating starting point for students' projects, for example, a real-world problem to solve
- ensures students can generate evidence that covers the assessment objectives
- is manageable for providers to deliver
- is officially approved by the AO and employer.

For software application design and development, in achieving the assessment objectives and meeting the brief, students must demonstrate the following core skills:

- reflective evaluation
- communicate information clearly to a technical and non-technical audience
- work with others to clarify user needs and develop software design specifications
- develop software
- create an artefact
- apply a logical approach to solving problems, identifying and fixing defects and proposing software solutions
- ensure software development activity mitigates risks to security.

Occupational Specialist Content

Specialist content is structured into different occupational specialisms, which correspond to the apprenticeship standards listed on the occupational map covered by the T Level. Occupational specialisms ensure students develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to achieve ‘threshold competence’ in the occupational specialism.

Achievement of threshold competence signals that a student is well-placed to develop full occupational competence, with further support and development, once in work (including an apprenticeship). The knowledge and skills listed are required to achieve one or more ‘performance outcomes’. These indicate what the student will be able to do as a result of learning and applying the specified knowledge and skills.

In essence, each performance outcome describes, at a high level, what the student ‘can do’ to have achieved threshold competence in an occupational specialism.

Performance Outcome 1: Analyse a problem to define requirements and acceptance criteria aligned to user needs

Knowledge Specific to Performance Outcome	Skills	Maths, English and Digital
Software Development Lifecycle (SDLC) Methodologies, including sequential and iterative. Software and business: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measurable value of software as an asset in business 	Outline the business context and understand roles and responsibilities.	Select, prioritise and summarise main ideas, using appropriate language and structure (verbal or written).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • processes and business models • context and market environment • roles and responsibilities. <p>Software requirements, including functional and non-functional.</p> <p>Analytical models.</p> <p>Principles of problem analysis.</p> <p>Stakeholder analysis, including the actors, the story, and their roles across the life of the software, development and use.</p>	<p>Define a range of problems from the perspective of a user.</p>	<p>Give clear, precise and coherent explanations for a given purpose and audience (verbal or written).</p> <p>Understand and employ technical language appropriately.</p>
<p>Acceptance criteria, including identification, value and use.</p>	<p>Implement functional and non-functional requirements.</p>	<p>Use digital evidence to solve problems and answer questions.</p> <p>Understand digital research methods and data analysis tools and techniques.</p> <p>Adopt professional approaches to using digital communications and social media.</p> <p>Choose devices, applications, software and systems relevant to different tasks, having assessed their benefits and constraints.</p> <p>Develop an awareness of user experience analysis and its principles.</p>

	<p>Apply analytical decomposition and elicitation techniques.</p>	<p>Select, prioritise and summarise main ideas, using appropriate language and structure (verbal or written).</p> <p>Optimise work processes.</p>
	<p>Demonstrate how Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can be used to frame and measure desired outcomes.</p>	<p>Choose devices, applications, software and systems relevant to different tasks, having assessed their benefits and constraints.</p> <p>Give clear, precise and coherent explanations for a given purpose and audience (verbal or written).</p>
	<p>Develop and use acceptance criteria.</p>	<p>Understand innovation, enterprise and project management in digital settings.</p> <p>Understand and employ technical language appropriately.</p>

	Identify and plan learning opportunities.	Identify and participate in digital learning opportunities. Plan learning in basic digital skills by making use of available resources including online tutorials, FAQs and advice forums. Keep up to date with digital developments in the work environment, adopting new techniques to improve productivity in business.
	Apply critical thinking e.g. problem analysis.	

Performance Outcome 2: Design, implement and test software

Knowledge Specific to Performance Outcome	Skills	Maths, English and Digital
Design: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • architecture and design including tools, models, patterns and standards • self-documenting code, including purpose and structure • interface design, including User and API • databases • networks • platforms • performance constraints • data dictionary/library • data types and structures. 	Implement secure code in at least two appropriate languages of different types which is maintainable, readable, functional.	Read, understand and follow instructions. Give clear, precise and coherent explanations for a given purpose and audience (verbal or written). Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between text and image. Understand and employ technical language appropriately. Use rules and formulae.

<p>Implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development tools including version control • workflow • code structure including singular purpose • management and presentation tools • principles of object oriented, prototype-orientated e.g. functional languages, shell scripting • a range of languages • code review • deployment • scalability, availability, reliability. <p>Test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fundamental principles of testing in the SDLC, test levels and test process • debugging vs. testing and test first • test types, including functional, non-functional, structural, change-related and regression • static testing and reviews • Test Techniques including Black Box and White Box • Test Management, including strategy, approach, planning, control and risk management • Test Tool types and uses • defect management 	<p>Design software solutions to meet a requirement using tools and techniques.</p>	<p>Read, understand and synthesise written information.</p> <p>Read, understand and follow instructions.</p> <p>Understand and employ technical language appropriately.</p> <p>Optimise work processes.</p>
	<p>Demonstrate how to work in a shared codebase, practice, etiquette, tools.</p>	<p>Choose devices, applications, software and systems relevant to different tasks, having assessed their benefits and constraints.</p>
	<p>Use code organisation techniques, including classes, methods, sub-routines, re-factoring, open source, functions, modules.</p>	<p>Understand and employ technical language appropriately.</p> <p>Use rules and formulae.</p> <p>Optimise work processes.</p>
	<p>Integrate code which meets the functionality of the task, complies with the required standards and includes appropriate code documentation.</p>	<p>Read, understand and follow written instructions.</p> <p>Optimise work processes.</p>
	<p>Implement systems including User Interface, Database, Service, Persistence, Web, Simple, Layered systems</p>	<p>Collate, manage, access and use digital data in spreadsheets, databases and other formats, and interpret data by running queries, data analyses and reports.</p> <p>Understand digital media as a social, political and educational tool, and of digital media production as a technical practice.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quality assurance. 		<p>Select, prioritise and summarise main ideas, using appropriate language and structure (verbal or written).</p> <p>Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between text and image.</p> <p>Process data.</p> <p>Understand data.</p>
	Apply testing principles, types, techniques and tools.	Optimise work processes.
	Use simple debugging techniques.	
	Perform code reviews.	Optimise work processes.
	Apply creativity e.g. design thinking, writing a test, implementation of a test plan.	
	Demonstrate observing techniques.	
	Apply a range of recording techniques.	
	Use a range of communication techniques by adapting style and tone e.g. with the user, technical and non-technical (storyboard).	<p>Select communication modes for different business interactions.</p> <p>Use business etiquette when communicating.</p> <p>Adopt professional approaches to using digital communications and social media.</p>

		Share information securely.
	Identify and investigate ways of learning.	

Performance Outcome 3: Change, maintain and support software

Knowledge Specific to Performance Outcome	Skills	Maths, English and Digital
<p>Change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • why change is needed, e.g. regulatory, review, test • change requirements and the implications on the code e.g. risk • communication methods and formats e.g. updates, functionality change, technical and non-technical • understand software specific release management concepts at all stages. <p>Software maintenance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintainable code • types of maintenance e.g. planned and reactive. <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need for support (e.g. bug fixes) • causes of software issues • communication methods • audience e.g. technical and non - technical, internal and external. 	<p>Communicate change, taking account of audience, frequency, timing and channels.</p>	<p>Select communication modes for different business interactions.</p> <p>Use business etiquette when communicating.</p> <p>Adopt professional approaches to using digital communications and social media.</p> <p>Share information securely.</p> <p>Understand innovation, enterprise and project management in digital settings.</p> <p>Understand and employ technical language appropriately.</p> <p>Communicate using mathematics.</p>
	<p>Follow a change process e.g. implications on code, analysis of requirements, communication process.</p>	<p>Represent with mathematical diagrams.</p> <p>Use rules and formulae.</p>

Root cause analysis.		Optimise work processes.
	Add a feature and fix a bug in an unfamiliar application, whilst ensuring maintainability.	
	Test software as part of the maintenance cycle using techniques such as regression testing.	Select, prioritise and summarise main ideas, using appropriate language and structure (verbal or written). Understand and employ technical language appropriately. Optimise work processes. Use rules and formulae.
	Identify the cause of a problem e.g. user error, system error, application error.	Give clear, precise and coherent explanations for a given purpose and audience (verbal or written). Understand and employ technical language appropriately. Process data.
	Identify the causes of a software issue.	Give clear, precise and coherent explanations for a given purpose and audience (verbal or written). Understand and employ technical language appropriately.
	Refactor code without changing its behaviour.	Use rules and formulae.

	Use a range of communication techniques by adapting style and tone.	
	Apply a range of recording techniques.	

Performance Outcome 4: Create solutions in a social and collaborative environment

Knowledge Specific to Performance Outcome	Skills	Maths, English and Digital
<p>Collaborative technologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communication tools and technologies, for collaborative working e.g. discussion threads, document collaboration, markdown • code collaboration technologies e.g. version control, source control, Integrated Development Environments (IDEs). <p>Audience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brand awareness • cultural awareness/ diversity • accessibility • internal/ external audience • level of technical knowledge • profile. 	Use communication tools and technologies for source and version control.	Select communication modes for different business interactions.
	Use communication tools and technologies for writing technical documentation for, and adapting to, specific audience(s).	Use business etiquette when communicating.
	Use a range of communication styles.	Adopt professional approaches to using digital communications and social media.
	Observe e.g. cultural awareness and diversity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timezones, localisation. 	Share information securely.
		Participate in digital teams and working groups.
		Understand and apply appropriate accessibility requirements e.g. W3C.
		Be proactive in peer learning.
		Understand and employ technical language appropriately.

		<p>Evaluate the impact of vocabulary, form and grammatical/ organisational features on the reader.</p> <p>Understand and employ technical language appropriately.</p> <p>Communicate using mathematics.</p>
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Performance Outcome 5: Discover, evaluate and apply reliable sources of knowledge

Knowledge Specific to Performance Outcome	Skills	Maths, English and Digital
<p>Sources of knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reliable and unreliable e.g. internet and search engines, academic papers and peers. <p>Evaluation techniques.</p> <p>Communication methods e.g. code comments, commit messages and forums.</p>	Identify (up to three) reliable sources, and assess their reliability.	Using rules and formulae (Boolean search criteria).
	Demonstrate the validity and appropriateness of the information and its legitimate use.	Boolean and set operations (AND OR and NOT).
	Corroborate across multiple sources.	Process data.
	Search for information relevant to a topic or scenarios.	Understand data.
	Select and use techniques and tools to aid evaluation.	Optimise work processes.
	Compare options, appraise and recommend actions.	Qualify information sources evaluating their reliability and suitability for a purpose.
	Identify and understand bias.	Take a critical approach to evaluating information in terms of its provenance, relevance, value and credibility.

		<p>Participate in and benefit from digital learning opportunities, using digital techniques to identify and store learning e.g. solutions to common problems.</p> <p>Participate in, facilitate and build digital networks.</p> <p>Read, understand, evaluate and compare a range of materials, identifying bias and misuse of information where appropriate.</p> <p>Give clear, precise and coherent explanations for a given purpose and audience (verbal or written).</p> <p>Evaluate the impact of vocabulary, form and grammatical/organisational features on the reader.</p> <p>Read, understand, evaluate and compare a range of materials, identifying bias and misuse of information where appropriate.</p>
	Demonstrate critical thinking e.g. triangulation /evaluation of sources.	
	Use research and referencing skills.	
	Demonstrate how to analyse.	
	Use investigative techniques.	
	Plan, for example, a work schedule.	
	Prioritise and self-manage tasks.	

	Use a range of communication techniques.	
	Evaluate information.	

Performance Outcome 6: Apply ethical principles and manage risks in line with legal and regulatory requirements when developing software

Knowledge Specific to Performance Outcome	Skills	Maths, English and Digital
<p>Legal and regulatory requirements that apply to software development e.g. data protection, security, Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> software rights, copyrights and patent. <p>Standards and where to find them e.g. ISO standards, IETF RFCs.</p> <p>Principles of risk management, including identification, quantification and mitigation of risks.</p> <p>Ethical implications that apply to software engineering e.g. hijacking code, software licensing.</p> <p>Codes of conduct, implications of hacking and non-compliance.</p>	<p>Source regulatory and legal information and territorial restrictions.</p> <p>Check for the existence of and follow guidelines or rules that underpin regulations.</p> <p>Identify, quantify and mitigate risks using a basic framework.</p> <p>Adhere to codes of conduct in a community, and recognise inappropriate behaviour.</p> <p>Demonstrate methods to reduce the risk and impact of attack.</p> <p>Apply and maintain procedures and security controls to ensure confidentiality, integrity and availability.</p> <p>Apply information law in the use of client data e.g. not using personally identifiable information in test systems, making sure</p>	<p>Follow licensing guidelines, using only approved and licensed software applications.</p> <p>Understand the rules of copyright and open alternatives e.g. creative commons, and reference digital works appropriately in digital contexts.</p> <p>Act safely and responsibly in digital environments.</p> <p>Develop and project a positive digital identity and manage digital reputation.</p> <p>Understand the benefits and risks involved in digital participation.</p> <p>Seek support from approved sources and escalate security related issues.</p> <p>Understand how data is used in professional and public life.</p>

<p>Ethical and moral issues that are raised by increasing reliance on technology e.g. autonomous operation, changing behaviours, addiction.</p> <p>Different means of attack on a business through different vectors, e.g. software and social.</p> <p>Dangers and losses that may occur both to organisations and individuals through attacks, through denial of service and theft of personal information.</p>	<p>personal actions comply with ICO regulations.</p>	<p>Be aware of information security and the security controls that can be used to mitigate security threats within solutions and services.</p> <p>Estimate, calculate and error-check.</p> <p>Work with proportion.</p> <p>Select and use a range of reference materials and appropriate resources.</p> <p>Read, understand and synthesise written information.</p> <p>Understand and employ technical language appropriately.</p> <p>Give clear, precise and coherent explanations for a given purpose and audience (verbal or written).</p>
	<p>Use a range of observational techniques to inform situational awareness</p>	