

Hundreds of free qualifications on offer to boost skills and jobs

An estimated 11 million adults now have the opportunity to gain a new qualification for free, designed to help them to gain in-demand skills and secure great jobs.

Almost [400 qualifications](#) are available to take from today (1 April) – backed by £95 million in government funding in 2021/22 – as part of the government's Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

The qualifications on offer range from engineering to social care to conservation and are available to any adult who has not already achieved a qualification at Level 3 (equivalent to A-levels).

The roll out marks a major milestone in the delivery of the landmark Lifetime Skills Guarantee – [announced by the Prime Minister in September 2020](#). The Guarantee aims to transform the skills system so everyone, no matter where they live or their background, can gain the skills they need to progress in work at any stage of their lives. It will also ensure employers have access to the skilled workforce they need, and more people are trained for the skills gaps that exist now, and in the future.

Adults who take up the free courses have the potential to boost career prospects, wages and help fill skills gaps, while supporting the economy and building back better.

For example, with a Diploma in Engineering Technology adults can progress to roles in Maintenance or Manufacturing Engineering. A Level 3 Diploma in Electrical Installation or a qualification in Adult Care can also provide a gateway to sectors offering rewarding careers and where there are multiple job opportunities.

So more unemployed people can take full advantage of these courses, the government will pilot an extension to the length of time they can receive Universal Credit while undertaking work-focused study.

They will now be able to train full time for up to 12 weeks, or up to 16 weeks on a full time skills bootcamp in England, while receiving Universal Credit to support their living costs. This will allow access to more training options and provide a better chance of finding work, while continuing to receive the support they need.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

As we cautiously lift lockdown restrictions, the government's focus is on recovering from the pandemic and building back better.

The Lifetime Skills Guarantee is fundamental to that – with free

courses giving adults the expertise they need to find new, better jobs.

My message is clear. At every stage of your life, we will help you get the skills you need to train, retrain, and get into jobs you want and our economy needs.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The launch of these free qualifications for adults is a pivotal moment in the delivery of our Lifetime Skills Guarantee, which will make sure everyone can train, retrain or upskill throughout their lives.

As we build back better and rebuild our economy, it is vital we level up more opportunities for people across the country and help more people progress in work.

This offer will help give millions of adults the chance to gain the skills they need to secure rewarding careers in key sectors of the economy including construction, healthcare and digital. With almost 400 to choose from, there is something there for everyone.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Therese Coffey MP said:

Opening up a wider choice of courses and qualifications for jobseekers could be the clincher that lands them their next job.

Helping people get the skills they need is a central part of our Plan for Jobs which is already supporting people of all ages into work as we build back better from the pandemic.

Helen Tupper, co-author of Sunday Times best-selling book *The Squiggly Career*, said:

Our jobs today are constantly changing and one of the ways people can increase their ability to adapt is through ongoing learning. Course fees are a barrier for many adults but the introduction of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee has significantly increased the accessibility of adult learning opportunities, making hundreds of free courses available for people to increase their employability and gain skills to progress in work or secure a better job. If you're an adult considering your next step, I'd really encourage you to think about how new skills could boost your existing strengths and check out any free opportunities you're eligible for.

As well as the free courses, as part of the Lifetime Skills Guarantee,

thousands of adults have taken advantage of new [Skills Bootcamps](#) which offer free, flexible courses lasting up to 16 weeks covering areas including construction, digital and technical. Skills Bootcamps – which are currently running in six areas of the country – provide a chance to learn specific skills and offer a fast-track to an interview with a local employer at the end. Skills Bootcamps will be expanded across the country later this year.

The government's [Skills for Jobs White Paper](#), published in January, enshrines the Lifetime Skills Guarantee – setting out landmark reforms that will realigning the post-16 education system around the needs of employers, so that people are trained for the skills gaps that exist now, and in the future, in sectors the economy needs, including construction, digital, clean energy and manufacturing.

The White Paper forms a key part of the government's [Plan for Jobs](#) which is protecting, supporting and creating jobs across the country and will help everyone to benefit from the opportunities available to them.