

News story: Plans launched to boost digital skills for adults

Free courses will be offered to thousands of people to help the 1 in 5 adults with no or low basic digital skills learn how to thrive in an increasingly digital world.

The new qualifications, unveiled today by Apprenticeship and Skills Minister Anne Milton, will be based on new, rigorous national standards and will be available for free to anyone over the age of 19 from 2020.

They have been designed to help adults learn the essential skills, such as sending emails, completing online forms or using a tablet, that many people take for granted.

[Research shows](#) that digital skills have become as important in getting a job and being part of society as English and Maths. An estimated 90% of all jobs in the next 20 years will require some form of digital knowledge, but one in five adults still lack these skills.

The new offer will comprise of:

- range of new essential digital skills qualifications, available from 2020, that will meet new conditions and requirements set by independent exams regulator Ofqual, also published today.
- digital Functional Skills qualifications, available from 2021, that will support progression into employment or further education and develop skills for everyday life.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton said:

I want people of all ages to have the skills and confidence they need for work and everyday life.

Being online is more important than ever and yet one in five adults in the UK don't have the basic digital skills that many of us take for granted. This is cutting many people off from so many opportunities – from accessing new jobs, further study and being able to stay in touch with friends and family.

I am thrilled to launch the new 'essential digital skills' qualifications which will give adults the chance to develop a whole host of new skills to help get ahead in work, but also to improve their quality of life overall.

Minister for Digital and the Creative Industries, Margot James, said:

The new entitlement will give everyone the opportunity to participate in an increasingly digital world and take advantage of digital technology, whether it is using a smartphone, learning how to send emails or shopping online.

Implementation of the new entitlement will be complemented by the work of our Digital Skills Partnership to boost digital skills at all levels – from the essential digital skills that support inclusion, to the digital skills we increasingly need for work, right through to the advanced digital skills required for specialist roles.

The new national entitlement from 2020 will fully fund adults with no or low digital skills to undertake the new qualifications. They will be supported to use digital devices like tablets, smart phones and laptop computers and to perform everyday activities like how to navigate the internet, send an email and make online payments.

The announcement follows a [12-week consultation](#) and extensive work with a wide range of providers, employers, subject experts, Ofqual, awarding organisations and digital inclusion charities.

The announcement builds on steps already taken to drive up the government's digital offer including making computing a statutory national curriculum subject and introducing a new Computer Science GCSE and A Level.