



Example Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) Student Programme Handbook Insertions



Elizabeth Cleaver Consulting Limited



Contents

About this Toolkit	3
Purpose of this document	4
Handbook Insert 1: What is an HTQ?	5
Handbook Insert 2: Programme Alignment to Occupational Standards	6
Handbook Insert 3: Learning and Assessment Approaches	6
Handbook Insert 4: Industry Engagement & Workplace Skills	7

** All weblinks and web-images checked and correct at time of writing (May 2026).*

About this Toolkit

The Toolkit provides a lens through which to scrutinise and adapt existing academic governance and quality management processes to create Level 4 and Level 5 programmes of study that are HTQ-ready. By HTQ-ready, we mean that qualifications are ready for submission to the Department for Education (DfE) for approval as Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs), and to navigate this external approvals process as smoothly as possible.

Importantly, the Toolkit is not intended to replace or duplicate established quality management processes. However, in recognition of the unique positioning of HTQs as classroom-based, occupational-standard aligned and employer-endorsed qualifications, it is important that programmes are as fully prepared as possible before entering the DfE approval process.

The aim is to minimise the need for changes to programmes and modules that have already been validated, and to avoid unnecessary delays in the approval process. As a qualification cannot be marketed as an HTQ until full DfE approval has been granted, any such delays may have consequences for student recruitment and programme delivery.

The Toolkit was developed by Elizabeth Cleaver Consulting Limited in partnership with an expert practitioner group comprising representatives from De Montfort University, New College Durham, Newcastle College University Centre, Northumbria University, Nottingham Trent University, Sheffield Hallam University, Teesside University, the University of Manchester, the University of Portsmouth and the University of Salford.

The resources were developed in response to feedback from awarding organisations involved in the pre-2025 HTQ approval process, as highlighted in Gatsby's 2025 report, *The Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) Approval Process in England: A Review*.

The project was commissioned by the Gatsby Foundation and supported by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Users are advised to consult the most recent guidance from the DfE on the HTQ approval process before using these resources.

Purpose of this document

This guidance document has been developed as one of a suite of resources designed to support degree awarding bodies in England to prepare to submit validated Level 4 or 5 qualifications for external approval and recognition by the Department for Education (DfE) as Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ).

It provides four suggested HTQ-relevant insertions with which to adapt student-facing Programme Handbook templates. Importantly, the insertions are not intended as a replacement for current templates but to augment them, adding nuanced information that will support a positive student experience for those registered on HTQ programmes.

Each insertion is designed to help students to understand their programme, navigate their learning, and recognise the benefits of the HTQ kitemark. Together the insertions support awarding bodies to address the questions outlined in Sections C14 and E14 of the overarching HTQ Readiness Prompts worksheet, and letters and numbers replate to the original section in which each question is situated.

C14. Validation: Student Programme Handbook - Does the programme handbook template for HTQs include a designated section covering employer engagement and KSB alignment, written for a student audience?

E11: Periodic Review: Student Programme Handbook - Do periodic review processes require the use of a programme handbook template which includes a designated section covering employer engagement and KSB alignment, written for a student audience?

Handbook Insert 1: What is an HTQ?

This insertion is suggested to ensure that students on your HTQ programme are fully aware of its HTQ status and what this means in practice. Evidence to-date shows that knowledge of HTQs, their purpose and their benefits, even for those registered on HTQ-approved programmes, can be low. As such, it is important to restate the purpose and benefits regularly to ensure students are familiar with these.

Your academic programme has been approved as a Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ). To achieve this, we have taken the programme through a rigorous governmental external review process which maps the qualification to a nationally approved occupational standard, and evidences that we have engaged with employers during its design and development. You can therefore be fully assured that your programme has been designed to prepare you for a positive future in highly skilled employment or relevant further study.

The < name of academic award e.g. Foundation Degree in Cyber Security > is aligned to < name and identifier of relevant occupational standard >. It is designed to meet the required Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours (KSBs) of this occupational standard. Further details on mapping to the KSBs is outlined below. A full list of KSBs can be found by following this link < link to occupational standard on Skills England website >.

On successful completion of your programme of study, your academic award certificate will detail the qualification that you have been awarded, the category of award you have achieved, and the fact that you have successfully completed a registered HTQ.

Handbook Insert 2: Programme Alignment to Occupational Standards

This suggested insertion ensures that you create a simplified version of your module/ KSB validation mapping document for students to see. It should offer an at-a-glance map of when and where students will engage with the relevant KSBs from the occupational standard as part of their studies.

The table below indicates how each module of your programme is mapped to the KSBs in < name and identifier of relevant occupational standard >.

Module code	Module title	KSBs Covered

Handbook Insert 3: Learning and Assessment Approaches

This suggested insertion is designed to reiterate the work-aligned and industry-led nature of the programme students are studying and to ensure that they understand why some of the teaching and learning methods they will encounter may be different to those they have experienced in other educational settings.

Our programme learning and teaching approach is work-aligned and industry-led. It blends theory, insight and practical application and includes industry-relevant projects, real world case studies, and industry and work simulation exercises.

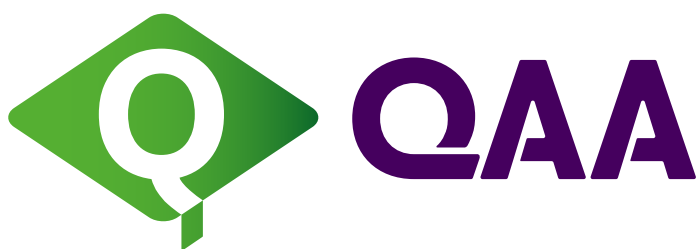
Our summative assessment tasks are designed to be authentic. Wherever possible, they mirror real-world challenges in the workplace, and stem from real or simulated live-briefs gathered from our employer partners. This approach enhances your preparation for the world of work by demonstrating competence in situations similar to those you are likely to encounter there.

We will also include formative assessment tasks that don't count towards the calculation of your final academic award. These are planned to be taken at points that offer you opportunities to practise and prepare for the summative assessment task(s) that count towards your academic credit and your overall qualification, and allow us to provide timely and helpful feedback on your progress.

Handbook Insert 4: Industry Engagement & Workplace Skills

This suggested insertion is associated with insertion four, stating how you will make explicit connections with the workplace and industry during the programme. While HTQs do not normally require a work placement (unless specifically stated), you may also wish to consider how this could be integrated for students who wish to engage directly with employers.

HTQs are classroom-based qualifications and do not routinely include work-placements or direct industry experience, unless specifically stated. We will, however, include opportunities for you to engage with external industry expertise and practices in different ways. This may include guest lectures, alumni engagement, live brief tasks, and collaborative projects. Details of these activities will vary across modules and will be provided directly in each module guide/handbook.



Copyright © Gatsby Charitable Foundation and
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education June 2026

[qaa.ac.uk](https://www.qaa.ac.uk)