Solihull College & University Centre | Stratford-upon-Avon College

Programme Specification

HND Computing for England (Cyber Security) HTQ

Awarded by

Pearson

Programme Specification

Title of Programme: HND Computing for England (Cyber Security) HTQ

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided.

1. Awarding Body	Pearson
2. Teaching location	Solihull College and University Centre, Blossomfield Campus, Solihull B91 1SB
3. Accreditation details	N/A
4. Final award	Higher National Certificate
5. Name of award	HND Computing for England (Cyber Security) HTQ
6. Codes	
a. UCAS code	a. 006J
b. Solihull Qualification Code	b. IPACL061BCF1
c. Pearson Programme Code (& approval dates)	c. Level 4: 610/0580/0, Level 5: 610/0581/2
7. QAA Subject Benchmark or other external reference such as published by Pearson if the course is a Higher National	Published by Pearson
8. Date this specification applies from	15/09/2025
Approved	Anhar Ali and Mohammed Maher

RECORD OF UPDATES

Date amended*	Nature of amendment**	Reason for amendment**
18/09/2025	Added the relevant information	Creation of document

1. Educational Aims of the Programme

HND Computing (Cyber Security) Level 4 and Level 5

The Higher National Diploma (HND) in Computing is a two-year, career-focused qualification designed to equip you with the technical skills, professional knowledge, and practical experience needed to thrive in the fast-evolving world of IT and computing. This course is part of the Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) initiative, meaning it's been approved by employers and developed to meet the needs of the modern tech industry.

The objective of this qualification is to:

- Demonstrate a critical understanding of computing and cyber security principles, including programming, networking, database management, and system design, alongside advanced topics such as threat intelligence, digital forensics, and secure systems development.
- Apply industry-standard tools and techniques to identify, analyse, and mitigate cyber threats and vulnerabilities across a range of platforms and environments.
- Evaluate the impact of cyber security risks on organisations and society and develop appropriate technical and organisational responses to ensure system resilience and data protection.
- Analyse and interpret security policies, governance frameworks, and legal/ethical requirements, applying them effectively to real-world scenarios.
- Design, implement, and test secure computing solutions that meet specified business and technical requirements, while demonstrating professional standards of documentation and reporting.
- Develop advanced problem-solving and analytical skills by engaging with authentic case studies, simulations, and employer-led projects that reflect the challenges of the cyber security sector.
- Collaborate effectively in professional contexts, demonstrating project management, teamwork, and leadership skills, alongside the ability to communicate technical information clearly to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- Engage in reflective practice and continuous professional development, preparing for progression into employment in roles such as Cyber Security Analyst, Network Security Engineer, IT Security Consultant, or for further study at Level 6 (BSc degree).
- Contribute to the modern digital economy by aligning knowledge and skills with the needs of employers, as this course is part of the Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQ) initiative approved by industry leaders.

2. Programme structure

The Higher National Diploma (HND) is a Level 4 and Level 5 qualification made up of 240 credits (Level 4 120 Credits and Level 5 120 Credits). It is studied full time over two years. Students are expected to have achieved at least 90 credits at Level 4 before progressing to Level 5 units. This allows them to submit the remaining 30 credits at Level 4 while continuing with their Level 5 study.

If an HND student does not complete the full qualification, they may be awarded an HNC if they have gained enough credits.

Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals consist of core units, specialist units and optional units.

- Core and specialist units are mandatory
- Specialist units provide a specific occupational focus to the qualification in line with
- professional body standards
- Optional units provide greater depth and breadth of study and can be localised.

Each unit usually carries 15 credits. Units are designed around the amount of time it will take for a student to complete them and receive a qualification. This is known as the total qualification time (TQT). TQT includes guided learning activities, directed learning activities and assessment. Each 15-credit unit has a TQT of 150 hours – 60 guided learning hours (GLH) and 90 hours of independent learning hours (ILH).

- The total qualification time for Higher National Certificate (HNC) = 1,200 hours
- The total qualification time for Higher National Diploma (HND) = 2,400 hours.

The units for Year 1 and Year 2 are:

Year 1 HTQ (Level 4) Units and Credits

Unit	Credit Value
Cyber Security	15
Professional Practice	15
Planning a Computing Project	30
Database Design and Development	15
Networking	15
Security	15
Website Design and Development	15
Programming	15

Year 2 HTQ (Level 5) Units and Credits

Unit	Credit Value
Computing Research Project	30
Forensics	15
Emerging Technologies	15
Business Process Support	15
Information Security Management	15
Applied Cryptography in the Cloud	15
Network Security	15

Calculation of the final qualification grade

Assessment decisions for Pearson Higher Nationals must be based strictly on the specific assessment criteria provided for each unit and grade level. These criteria are designed within a consistent framework to ensure that standards are maintained both within the qualification and across the wider suite of Higher Nationals.

Each unit is developed to assess a student's knowledge and understanding, their practical and technical skills, and the vocational attributes required for successful progression. The assessment criteria for each unit follow a progressive hierarchy. For instance, if a Pass criterion requires a student to explain a concept and the related Merit criterion requires them to analyse, then achieving a Merit will require the student to meet both the Pass (explain) and Merit (analyse) requirements. The unit assessment grid illustrates these relationships, enabling assessors to apply all relevant criteria to the evidence holistically.

Assessors are required to record and justify their grading decisions clearly, referencing the criteria in the official assessment records. Once a student has completed all assessments within a unit, the assessment team will determine an overall grade. This is awarded at the highest level for which the student has demonstrated achievement of all associated criteria.

- Pass: Awarded when the student meets all Pass criteria for the unit, showing coverage of the learning outcomes and achievement at Level 4 or 5 of the national framework.
- Merit: Awarded when the student meets all Merit criteria, as well as the Pass criteria, demonstrating a higher level of performance across the learning outcomes.
- Distinction: Awarded when the student meets all Distinction criteria, in addition to the Pass and Merit criteria, demonstrating outstanding performance across the entire unit.

The overall qualification grade for the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals in Computing is determined by the student's performance across all units studied at the appropriate level. For the HNC (Level 4), the final grade is calculated from the achievement in all 120 credits at Level 4. For the HND (Level 5), however, the final grade is based solely on performance in the Level 5 units, even though students will have completed 240 credits in total across both levels. This ensures that the classification reflects higher-level learning and achievement.

Each unit is first graded as Pass, Merit, or Distinction. These grades are then converted into points per credit, which are used to calculate the overall performance. A Pass is valued at 4 points per credit, a Merit at 6 points per credit, and a Distinction at 8 points per credit. The number of points for each unit is determined by multiplying the grade points by the unit's credit value. For example, a 15-credit unit achieved at Merit is worth 90 points (15 × 6), while a 30-credit unit achieved at Distinction is worth 240 points (30 × 8).

Once all units at the required level have been completed, the points are summed to provide a total score. The overall grade is then awarded according to the following boundaries: Pass requires 420–599 points, Merit requires 600–839 points, and Distinction requires 840 points or above. It is important to note that students must attempt all units in a valid combination for the qualification and meet the conditions of award, including any compensation arrangements. Units that have been compensated will be shown as unclassified ('U') on the notification of performance, although they may still contribute to the overall award.

This calculation method ensures fairness and consistency across the qualification by combining both the student's breadth of achievement across units and the depth of performance at higher levels. It rewards students who demonstrate higher-order skills and sustained excellence across their programme of study, while also recognising those who have achieved competence at the required standard.

Points available per credit at specified unit grades

Points per Credit		
Pass	Merit	Distinction
4	6	8

Qualification grades

Points Range	Grade	
420-599	Pass	P
600-839	Merit	M
840+	Distinction	D

3. Intended Learning Outcomes of the Level 4 Programme

The units studied are:

Unit
Cyber Security
Professional Practice
Planning a Computing Project
Database Design and Development
Networking
Security
Website Design and Development (Optional)
Programming

Unit
Computing Research Project
Forensics

Emerging Technologies
Business Process Support
Information Security Management
Applied Cryptography in the Cloud
Network Security

4. Teaching and Assessment

Teaching methods are varied and informed by contemporary practice in teaching in higher education.

Delivery of all elements of the course use the College Virtual Learning Environment (typically for locating course and module resources, but also for discussion forums, collaborative information gathering, journal logs and coursework submissions and feedback). This allows for inclusive learning and digital inclusion.

Other teaching methods include seminar discussions or debates, one-to-one or small group tutorials and problem-solving workshops. Reflective learning is encouraged through use of self, peer and staff formative feedback on assignments, group work and project work, and reflective diaries. All these activities develop academic literacy, critical self-awareness, and personal literacy.

The integration of contemporary technologies (digital inclusion) and practical facilities allow Learners to develop their academic and vocational skills to industry standards (employability learning).

Research literacy is taught and practised throughout the course.

Development of active citizenship attributes will form a part of the core ethos of the programme and will be considered in detail in discussions and debates around ethical and welfare topics in today's world. Active citizenship is encouraged and nurtured in the programme through the use in teaching of international textbooks and journals that expose UK students to non-UK perspectives; guest speakers and conferences expose students to diverse cultural perspectives.

Summative assessments for modules are vocationally contextualised. Coursework assignments are diverse and develop research literacy and digital and information literacy. Indicative assignments include essays, work diaries, practical reports, poster presentations and problem-solving exercises. Within some assessments students can tailor their submission to their own vocational area of interest.

Staff ensure that the content of their teaching remains up to date by integrating, where appropriate, the latest research findings in their lectures. In addition, staff undertake annual CPD within the industry to keep abreast with current and contemporary practices.

The programme handbook provides a further commentary for students on Academic literacy, Research literacy, Critical self-awareness and personal literacy, Digital and information literacy, Active citizenship are developed through the programme. In addition, students attend regular tutorials with their academic tutor, which will focus on identifying module content and activities leading to their acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills.

5. Support for Students and Their Learning

Solihull College and University Centre operates a proactive approach to personal tutoring. It recognises that students need to make various adjustments as they move into higher education, whether from school or employment.

Firstly, an induction process is conducted where initial course expectations, rules, and regulations (via handbooks), enrolment and team building activities are undertaken in the week prior to commencing the course. This helps students gain an understanding of what the course involves and allows them to interact with their peers. Late enrollers have a shorter but none the less comprehensive induction.

Secondly, Tutors monitor student progress regularly in 1:1 tutorial to check that they are maximising their potential. Students have access to an academic skills tutor, where they can join group sessions or book one-to-one support with aspects of HE study, such as Harvard referencing or critical thinking. Close links between specific learning difficulty co-ordinators and tutors is used on a regular basis for tracking students with additional learning needs. If students are faced with challenges that affect their ability to study, such as illness, bereavement, depression, financial difficulties, or accommodation issues, we will collaborate with them in finding a way forward.

Thirdly, careers advice (academic and employment) is available through-out the course and within the programme which enables inclusivity as well as employability skills (Curriculum Vitae building, application forms, interview techniques)

There are also support services both that the students will have access to, including learning and personal support services. These range from programme liaison managers, advisers, support co-ordinators, mental health team to specialist subject librarians, career advisers and other learning support staff all designed to ensure that students get the best out of their studies.

6. Assessment Methods

Summative assessment methods include:

- Written work required in various formats such as reports, essays, and blogs.
- Oral presentations to a group audience using teaching aids such as PowerPoint, poster, Electronic Whiteboard, Practical Models.
- Project work.
- Small scale research studies
- Work-based learning.

Assessment is enhanced by encouraging the students to use technology e.g. digital cameras, flip videos, analysis software to augment their presentational work.

As far as possible all assignment work is connected to a vocational relevant scenario. Students receive individual written and oral feedback within 3 weeks of submission date.

Formative assessment for learning and feedback may include:

- Group activities involve students actively contributing to, leading and participating in discussions and debates on a wide range of subject areas, undertaking games or group activities allowing immediate assessment and feedback.
- Subject related tutorials are led by the subject tutor and aim to address a particular module or assignment. These tutorials are linked to workshop sessions where necessary.
- Workshops are for students to develop skills in self-directed study with the support of tutors. These sessions will be supported by staff but not staff led. There will also be self-directed time for students to further develop these skills and spend time reading around topics using a variety of recommended sources.
- Extension activities/quizzes/Discussion forums on Moodle.
- Presentations are used to support research skills, organisation, time-management skill and are also a confidence-building tool.
- The need for IT support in general will be identified and where necessary, IT support will be organised.
- Diagnostic testing identifying Maths and English support where necessary.

Note:
For further details on assessments, grading criteria, submissions, and resubmissions of assignments, please refer to the BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Enhanced Quality Assurance and Assessment by BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Quality Assurance and Assessment (2024-2025).

7. Admission to the Programme

Applicants are normally required to have achieved a minimum of 64 UCAS Tariff points. This may be obtained through a variety of qualifications, including but not limited to: a BTEC Extended Diploma with an overall grade of PPM, or a T Level qualification with a Pass grade. In addition, applicants must hold GCSE/IGCSE English Language and Mathematics at grade C/4 or above, or an equivalent recognised qualification.

English Language Requirements

Applicants whose first language is not English, or who have not undertaken the final two years of their schooling in English, must demonstrate proficiency in the language at a level appropriate for study at higher education. Normally, this is evidenced by achieving a minimum of IELTS 6.0 overall, with no individual component score below 5.5. Equivalent English language qualifications may also be considered, provided they demonstrate capability at a comparable standard.

Candidates are required to provide a suitable reference.

To encourage widening participation, we will consider offering contextualised admissions to applicants who have experienced barriers to their educational progress. Contextual admissions is a university admissions process that takes into consideration an applicant's individual circumstances and background when reviewing their application, rather than solely focusing on their academic achievements.

8. Programme Resources

- Dedicated Higher Education teaching area.
- Dedicated Higher Education computing area.
- Vocationally relevant equipment
- Student resource facility for the loan of specialist equipment (e.g. lap top computers, digital cameras, video cameras)
- Well stocked library with frequent review and update of books.
- E-library resources.
- A wide range of external links with industry for student trips or external specialist speakers

9. Preparation for Employment

Students need both relevant qualifications and employability skills to enhance their career prospects and contribute to their personal development. A range of employability skills are embedded throughout the programme in preparation for employment:

This qualification has been developed by Pearson in conjunction with several stakeholders. Pearson has worked with employers, students, professional bodies, education providers and other experts to design qualifications with the future workforce in mind. Higher National qualifications blend employability skills with academic, business and technical knowledge. They support trainees and apprentices in their Higher Apprenticeships and other technical education programmes, as well as students working towards a degree. Pearson programmes are regularly updated to maintain their high quality and meet the changing needs of the workforce.

Employers contribute to develop of Pearson Higher Nationals in several ways:

- They are involved in every stage of designing the qualifications, from developing the structure and pathways to selecting subjects, developing content and Authorised Assignment Briefs (AABs) and approving qualifications
- They help with delivery of qualifications, for example through vendor accreditation, letters of support and co-badging. Pearson qualifications actively encourage training providers to work with employers. Work placements and work through learning are key features of BTEC Higher Nationals
- They help us review and update our qualifications to meet Occupational Standards and provide supporting material such as case studies to reflect the world of work.

The Solihull College and University Centre commitment to student employability

This programme is part of Solihull College's commitment to meeting the needs of local, national, and international employers by delivering a diverse range of educational models including

parttime and work-based study for learners drawn from non-traditional backgrounds in addition to internal progressions from FE vocational programmes.

As part of this commitment, Solihull College and University Centre will:

- Support students by providing professional, impartial advice and guidance to enable students to make considered career decisions before and during their studies to enable them to be prepared for their future employment and development by:
- Identifying the skills needed for progression into employment,
- enhancing their existing employment prospects.
- Provide subject-related resources and information on local, national, and international labour markets.
- Be responsive to the needs of employers to maximise students' employability and career progression prospects.
- Include study skills which will improve students' academic writing and research capabilities to enable further study and facilitate career progression.
- Support equality and diversity, and minimise barriers to learning, as described in the college's Equality Policy which can be found on the website under Mission and Policies.
- Ensure that employers play a key part in module content, course design and assessment criteria by formally seeking their views through employer forums, staff liaison visits, work experience coordinators, meetings with industry groups, and the use of a specialist employer service researcher to help to ensure that the course content meets industry expectations and requirements.

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10.Evaluation of Teaching & Learning

Evaluation of the Standards of Teaching and Learning is undertaken using the results of the following documents.

- Student feedback questionnaires, both initial impressions and the spring survey
- Module review forms completed by students at the end of every module and summarised by the course leader.
- Student input to the Programme Quality Board held twice a year.
- Student representations made through the HE Student Council.
- Action areas fed by the above to the course based Annual Monitoring report.
- Findings of the peer teaching observation scheme and recommendations for improvement that are made.
- External Verifiers report and audit of assessed work.
- Students can submit module evaluation questionnaires which are shared in team meetings and relevant actions raised are included in the Annual Monitoring Review.
- Student Representatives volunteer from each group to bring forward the views of their colleagues informally and within bi-annual programme quality boards (PQB).
- Annual module review in the form of student evaluations which are discussed in a team meeting.
- Periodic programmes review to identify best practice and invite employers to contribute to the design of the programmes.
- Invitation to attend Programme Quality Boards to all students and create a transparent discussion to share ideas, best practice, and areas for improvement.

11. Regulation of Assessment

- The programme is the subject of a Annual Monitoring Review (AMR) the last section of which is a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), written by the course leader with help and input from the teaching and tutoring team this is passed to the Head of School for audit and from them to the quality unit for further audit and acceptance as part of the College plan.
- Assessment rules and regulations and quality standards are those that are laid down in the Quality standards requirements of the College Academic Board.
- Assessment and assessment vehicles are regulated by the internal verification system for each programme which is itself audited by the quality unit within the College and by the External Verifier appointed by Pearson.
- External verification of assessment and of the provision and standards of teaching are regulated by Pearson and their quality unit, the programme must seek approval for continuance every 5 years. Their requirements are monitored annually by the visit and report of their appointed external verifier (Standards Verifier)
- Also, the programme must comply with the conditions of registration (notably the B conditions surrounding the quality) as set out by the Office for Students (OfS).

Pearson appoints Standards Verifiers (External Examiners).

The role of Standards Verifier is that of moderator. To do this they check and review:

- Action points from previous reports
- Centre assessment policy and boards effectiveness of assignments and internal verification maintenance and audit of assessment records student registration and certification claims
- student support and review
- areas of good practice

Note:
For further details on regulation of assessments, grading criteria, submissions, and resubmissions of assignments, please refer to the BTEC Higher Nationals Centre Guide to Enhanced Quality Assurance and Assessment by clicking online.

12. Progression Opportunities

Completing the HND in Computing (Cyber Security) opens up a wide range of academic and career pathways, thanks to its strong technical foundation and industry-recognised status as a Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ).

Progress to a Top-Up Degree
One of the most common next steps is to progress to a top-up degree at university. This allows you to convert your HND into a full bachelor's degree (BSc) in a related field such as:

- Cyber Security
- Computer Science
- Network Engineering

- Information Technology
- Digital Forensics

Most UK universities accept HND graduates directly into the final year of a relevant undergraduate programme, enabling you to complete your degree in just one additional year.

Enter the Workforce

The course is designed with employability in mind, and many students choose to go straight into the workforce. With a strong focus on practical skills and real-world applications, you'll be well-prepared for roles such as:

- Cyber Security Analyst
- Network Security Specialist
- IT Support Technician
- Penetration Tester
- Systems Administrator
- Digital Forensics Investigator
- Cloud Security Associate

Employers value the hands-on experience and project-based learning that the HND provides, especially in sectors like finance, healthcare, government, and tech.

Professional Certifications

After completing the HND, you may also choose to pursue industry-recognised certifications to further enhance your employability. These could include:

- CompTIA Security+
- Cisco Certified Network Associate (CCNA)
- Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH)
- Microsoft Azure Security Engineer
- AWS Certified Security – Speciality

These certifications can complement your HND and help you specialise in high-demand areas of cyber security and cloud computing.

Apprenticeships & Graduate Schemes

Some students may also enter higher-level apprenticeships or graduate training schemes offered by major employers. These programmes often combine paid work with further training and can lead to long-term career development opportunities.