



# A guide to pre-competition activity 2023



# Introduction

WorldSkills UK Competitions provide real-world environments, to stretch and challenge the capacity of apprentices and students beyond their formal learning programme.

- 97% of competitors cited improved technical skills
- 93% of competitors reported improved employability and personal skills
- The average earnings of those who participated in WorldSkills UK's competition development programmes is 60% higher than those of a comparable peer group

This document will provide you with information that will support you to deliver competition activity and identify the wealth of talent amongst your students, apprentices or employees. The competition activities will enhance their personal development and technical competences whilst enabling you to select those to enter a national competition.

Our tools, developed by our Competition Organising Partners in industry and education, provide solution-based outcomes to help train and prepare for skills competitions. We recognise that the best vocational learning is hands-on, practical, experiential, and related to the real world. It must also involve feedback, questioning, application and reflection. We believe that our competitions can help to deliver all of these aspects.

## What is a skills competition?

Put simply, a skills competition provides an opportunity for individuals (or teams) to compete against one another to demonstrate their talent in a particular vocational skill, using tasks derived from real life, industry-based scenarios. Each individual's work is scored by experts to agreed criteria, and the highest score(s) go through to the next stage.

WorldSkills UK Competitions bring together apprentices and young people

from around the UK to compete to be the best in their chosen skill, first in national competitions and then as part of Team UK in international skills competitions, for those competitions that lead to International competition. Skills competitions provide employers, colleges and independent training providers with a proven method of achieving real results for young people of all abilities.

# Why get involved?

Skills competitions can play a vital role in teaching and learning environments by complementing differentiated approaches that bring learning to life. Some of the benefits of skills competitions are that they:

- enable benchmarking of skills against peers as well as national and international standards
- foster rich opportunities for learning and achievement
- develop employability and technical skills to extremely high levels of excellence and contribute to young people's understanding of their education, career and life choices
- engage, challenge and motivate students so that they get the most out of their learning experience
- provide opportunities to develop critical skills, attributes and behaviours valued by employers such as problem-solving, self-reflection, time management and the ability to work under pressure
- enable students and apprentices to gain experience of using the skills they have learned in pressurised, time-dependent environments, developing their skills to high levels of performance, which will enable them to meet the demands of real-life workplaces.

## Competition preparation

Before registering to enter students and apprentices to take part in a WorldSkills UK Competition, it can be helpful to enable them to practice, test and challenge their technical and mental skills by getting involved in pre-competition activity. This could involve preparing them for the qualifying rounds of skills competitions and involving your wider organisation. This will often take the form of a competition within a college, training provider or business, or between multiple organisations.

This is also a great way of involving the entire class/college:

- individuals get a feel for what will be expected of them in a WorldSkills UK Competition, whilst still in an environment with which they are familiar
- enable a wider number of participants from one organisation to take part in competitive activity, most competitions do not have a cap on how many people can enter so we encourage you to enter as many of your students and apprentices as possible, ensuring a diverse pool of learners are registered
- enable tutors to identify areas of development before competitors reach WorldSkills UK qualifying stages
- ensure that the competitors registered are the strongest performers in a competitive environment, or ones that have the potential to grow and compete as the competition goes on.

## How to use our pre-competition activities

1. Visit our website to view the full list of skills competitions.
2. Select the skills competitions you are interested in entering your apprentices or students. Review the information, taking into consideration the entry criteria and stages of the competition.
3. Review the tools for each skills competition and download the pre-competition activity pack.
4. Read through the activity pack and think about how you can integrate the materials into your teaching, planning and delivery, for example, including competition activity in your assessment plans and schemes of works.
5. Consider the infrastructure and environment you will need to run the activity such as equipment, materials, people, space and time.
6. Partner with a local business, training provider or college to spread the resources you may need to run the activity.
7. Use the pre-competition activity to enhance your teaching by providing a fun and inclusive learning environment to engage and motivate staff and students.

## Taking it to the next level

There are numerous benefits of running inter-organisational competitions. They:

- enable students and apprentices to test their skills against those of their peers before they reach WorldSkills UK National Qualifiers (heats)
- enable tutors/mentors to assess the strengths and development needs of their students and apprentices compared with those in other organisations.
- promote networking between students and apprentices
- provide an opportunity to invite stakeholders to your event
- allow greater opportunity for marketing and promotion of careers and competitions activity
- promote inter-organisational relationships and networking.

## Top tips

1. Ensure that all students and apprentices understand the marking scheme before they start, so that they know the standard of performance required.
2. Ensure that you are giving your students and apprentices a realistic task and providing them with the right support, equipment and materials to complete it to a high standard.
3. Use self-assessment as a tool to promote self-reflection and questioning techniques.
4. Make sure you provide good quality, constructive feedback, highlighting where students and apprentices met the criteria and where they didn't, describing elements that they need to develop.
5. Celebrate the success of all participants, skills competitions are a great tool to enthuse and motivate learners and staff.



## Pre-competition activity checklist

Action	Checked
Venue is large enough to accommodate the competition activities	
Venue can accommodate competitors, delivery team and guests	
A separate room is available for judges briefing and marking	
Location is easily accessible and has disabled access	
All resources are available to carry out tasks including any specialist equipment	
Are there any additional activities planned for this event?	
Internal and external stakeholders have been invited	
Marketing and promotional activities planned	
Team of judges identified and allocated to task	
Event promoted (internally and externally)	
Test project and marking schemes agreed and suitable for level of competitors	
Process for registering agreed and suitable competitors identified	
Reasonable adjustments have been made to test projects to accommodate any individual competitor needs identified	
Standardisation meeting is planned for judges	
Clear area for registration identified and appropriate signage in place	
Timetable of activities produced and supporting staff briefed	
Room allocated for competitor briefing on tasks and health and safety	
Catering and refreshments booked	
Celebration event planned for the end of the day	
Method of providing feedback to competitors agreed and timescale provided	

## Conclusions

Delivering pre-competition activity is an excellent way to improve standards of teaching and learning outcomes for students and apprentices, there are many other ways in which the talent of members of your organisation can be developed, such as:

**Mentoring:** A mentor can be an excellent way of helping apprentices and students to get a different perspective on the work that they are completing, and of giving them access to an experienced individual who can offer them expert advice and guidance.

**Embedding a competitive spirit in the curriculum:** Embedding competitiveness in everyday classroom, workshop or office activities can encourage those taking part to strive for excellence against their peers, which can have the effect of driving up standards.

**Recognising outstanding achievement:** Demonstrating that above average achievement is appreciated and valued can encourage a greater number of staff or young people to aim higher.

### **Offering specialist training:**

Up-skilling your workforce with focused training in their vocational area can lead to a greater depth of understanding of the skill in general.

### **Developing professional practice skills:**

Focusing attention on the softer skills surrounding technical abilities may lead to a greater understanding of personal strengths and areas for development and can lead to enhanced employability skills.

### **Practising work to an industry standard:**

By encouraging students and apprentices to work to a professional, high standard early on in their careers, they will foster attitudes that will lead to a higher level of attainment and improved outcomes for themselves, their college or learning provider and ultimately, their employer.

Get in touch with us for further support on how to run WorldSkills UK pre-competition activity at: [competitions@worldskillsuk.org](mailto:competitions@worldskillsuk.org)



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