

National Competitions



Foundation Skills: Hairdressing Technical Handbook 2026

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WorldSkills UK

WorldSkills UK is an independent charity and a partnership between employers, education and governments. Together, they are raising standards in apprenticeships and technical education to enable more young people get the best start in work and life. They are leading the charge to ensure that all young people have equal access to high quality apprenticeships and technical education, by:

- *Inspiring young people through their careers advice resources, to choose excellence through apprenticeships and technical education as a prestigious career route on their path to reaching their potential, whatever their background.*
- *Developing excellence in young people by testing and assessing their skills and knowledge against their peers through their national and international competitions programmes, improving their confidence and potential.*
- *Innovating to mainstream global excellence to help improve the standard of teaching, training and assessment through international benchmarking to help young people, employers and the UK economy succeed.*

They are also part of WorldSkills, a global movement supported by over 80 member countries, which celebrates young people achieving world-class standards in the biennial 'skills Olympics'.

[This link](#) can be used to access more information about WorldSkills UK and the work it undertakes:

Sector Overview

The competition is suitable for learners with SEND with an Education health & Care Plan (EHCP) on a vocational, employability or work-skills programme. It is roughly equivalent to a vocational qualification at Entry Level 3 (England and Wales), Level 2 (Ireland), Access 3 (Scotland).

Competitors will be required to dress a long hair head during the competition to create a total look, style should include twist and an ornament for a chosen theme.

Career Pathway

The competition is an opportunity for young people who may be aspiring to work in the Hairdressing industry to showcase their talent and demonstrate their journey towards work-readiness. Some examples of the job roles available might be:

- a) Hair Stylist
- b) Junior hairdresser
- c) Salon Assistant

Competition Cycle

Date	Stage
2 March – 27 March	Registration
20 April – 29 April	Entry Stage
W/C 22 nd June 2026	National Qualifier
6 July	Announcement of finalists
W/C 16 November	National Finals

Competition Cycle

About the Competition

This competition assesses the skills and abilities of competitors entering the field of Hairdressing.

This competition consists of:

- At Entry Stage a remote assessment in which you must complete work in your own time and submit this for judging.
- A qualifying heat, which will be held during w/c 22nd June 2026 at NWSLC Nuneaton Campus. This will be face to face.
- You must attend and complete a series of tasks on a specific day, or a set of tasks that you will be sent and must be completed within a given timescale.
- A UK national final, taking place in South Wales during the week commencing 16 November 2026 as part of WorldSkills National Finals.

Core competencies

Competitors taking part in this competition should be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- a) Hairstyle
- b) Ornamentation
- c) Styling & Finishing
- d) Continuity of Design
- e) Finish
- f) Total Look

Qualifications

This competition is mapped out to the following qualifications:

The competition is suitable for learners with SEND with an Education health & Care Plan (EHCP), on a vocational, employability or work-skills programme. It is roughly equivalent to a vocational qualification at Entry Level 3 (England and Wales), Level 2 (Ireland), Access 3 (Scotland)

Assessment Criteria

For this competition the breakdown below will help in how you can go from being competent in the skill to excellent and what the judges will be looking for.

Core Competence	Competent	Excellence
Pre-Competition Preparation	Sourced an image of inspiration.	Source a range of images and explaining reasonings for choice.
Hairstyle	Display base line techniques, for example backcombing and smoothing.	Use techniques appropriate to the finished hairstyle.
Finish	Collate necessary tools and accessories.	Source appropriate tools and accessories and explain reasoning for choices made.
Continuity of Design	Clear visual like to chosen inspiration images.	Explaining where the hairstyle is appropriate for and where inspiration came from.
Transferable Skills	Be able to complete a hairstyle in a time frame.	Demonstrating why more time is spent on a particular technique.

Entry Criteria

This competition is for neurodiverse students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), additional learning needs (ALN), or who require additional support for learning (ASL). Applicants should be currently undertaking a course within a curriculum area specific to SEN needs at an FE or training provider from Entry level 3 up to a maximum of Level 1.

Competitors must be 16 years of age or over.

Competition Specific Rules

Competitors who arrive late for the event will not receive additional time.

Competitors will start, and finish work as instructed by the judges.

If there is a power stoppage, breakdown of equipment or accident, the competitors must act accordingly to the instruction of the organiser.

If during the competition a competitor feels they must leave their work (e.g.: medical reasons, toilet break), they will have the time recorded on a 'time out' sheet by a member of staff.

No mobile telephones are allowed in the competition room.

Photographs will be taken during the event that may be used for marketing/publicity purposes – if the competitor / support staff cannot have their photo taken it is the responsibility of the college entering the competition to notify the organisers beforehand and at the event.

Pre-competition Activity

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 the pre-competition activity](#) (available on the bottom of the webpage). As well, the following activities could be used to support prospective competitors to 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:

- On and off the job training and work experience.
- WorldSkills UK or other externally run competitions.
- Internal competitions e.g. internal to an employer, specially designed competitions using WSUK competition briefs.
- Local competitions e.g. in colleges and training providers.

Entry Stage

As well as being judged on vocational competence and work-readiness, competitors will be required to provide evidence of tasks carried out in preparation for the competition, and learning activities embedded in their normal curriculum delivery which are relevant to the competition.

The Entry Task is a remote assessment for learners to complete. This will be sent out to competitors once registration is complete.

"The competition entry task forms the first stage of a wider, ongoing project designed to progressively develop skills and capability. Completion of the entry task provides a foundation for assessment and learning, with outcomes and feedback directly informing the next phase. Successful participants will then progress to a more advanced qualifier task, aligning with the standards and expectations of the WorldSkills competition pathway."

National Qualifier

For competitors who have managed to pass through the Entry stage the next step is the national qualifiers. These will be held at the North Warwickshire and South Leicestershire College Nuneaton Campus w/c 22nd June 2026. This stage will involve a photographic submission of a hairstyle to give competitors a chance to demonstrate their skillset.

This stage will be marked by WorldSkills UK expert judges. The top eight scores from the national qualifiers will then go through to the next round, the national finals.

National Finals

The 8 highest scoring competitors from across the National Qualifiers will be invited to compete at the finals – held in locations across South Wales in the week commencing 16 November 2026.

This will be held in a physical location which will be announced at a later date.

The competition will be held over a 1 day event where the competitors can showcase their skills in a live environment.

The hair must be of one uniform colour and 60cm (24inches) long and in its natural state. (Head must not be pre-prepared prior to competition)

Judges' Top Tips

- Read the brief carefully and use this as a checklist to ensure all tasks are completed.
- Research current trends thoroughly to give yourself as many ideas as possible.
- Plan your presentation layout/content before you begin the tasks for your mood boards.
- Ensure you have taken your time to record how long each part of your style takes so that you can manage your time.
- Get advice from your tutors.

Contacting Us

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