

National Competitions


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Landscape Gardening Technical Handbook 2026



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WorldSkills UK

We thank all the amazing sponsors that make this competition possible:



Overview

Landscaping, often referred to as gardening, is that and so much more. The modern landscaper must understand topography, construction, carpentry, lighting, plumbing and procurement. We hope this guide will provide you with a clear path to follow, from initial registration to the National finals and beyond.

Resources

For information and resources, including how to register, competition rules, and the steps to competing, visit:

<https://www.worldskillsuk.org/competitions/landscape-gardening/>

Cycle timeline

| Date | Stage |
|--------------------|--|
| 2 March – 27 March | Registration |
| April | Entry Stage |
| May-June | National Qualifiers |
| 6 July | Announcement of finalists |
| W/C 15 November | National Finals with training beforehand (in locations across South Wales) |

Project specifications (Entry stage)

Projects will be designed to test competitor's technical ability to;

- See correct installation
- See the different in tolerances
- Assess their own work

Project overview

| Included features | Optional features |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assessing Decking -Assessing Block Paving -Assessing Paving -Assessing Planting Schemes -Assessing Fencing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Brief description to why you have given the score and how you could improve. |

Project example: Entry Stage test

| Design specification | |
|----------------------|--|
| Material | Online assessment |
| Time | Should not take any longer than 1hr |
| Additional data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look closely for defects in the installation process. • We are looking for a show garden finish in the planting. • Measurements and quantities for required job. |

Explain what you see in this picture and how you would change it.



Shortanswer text

What has gone wrong with the decking below



Shortanswer text

How could you improve this corner.

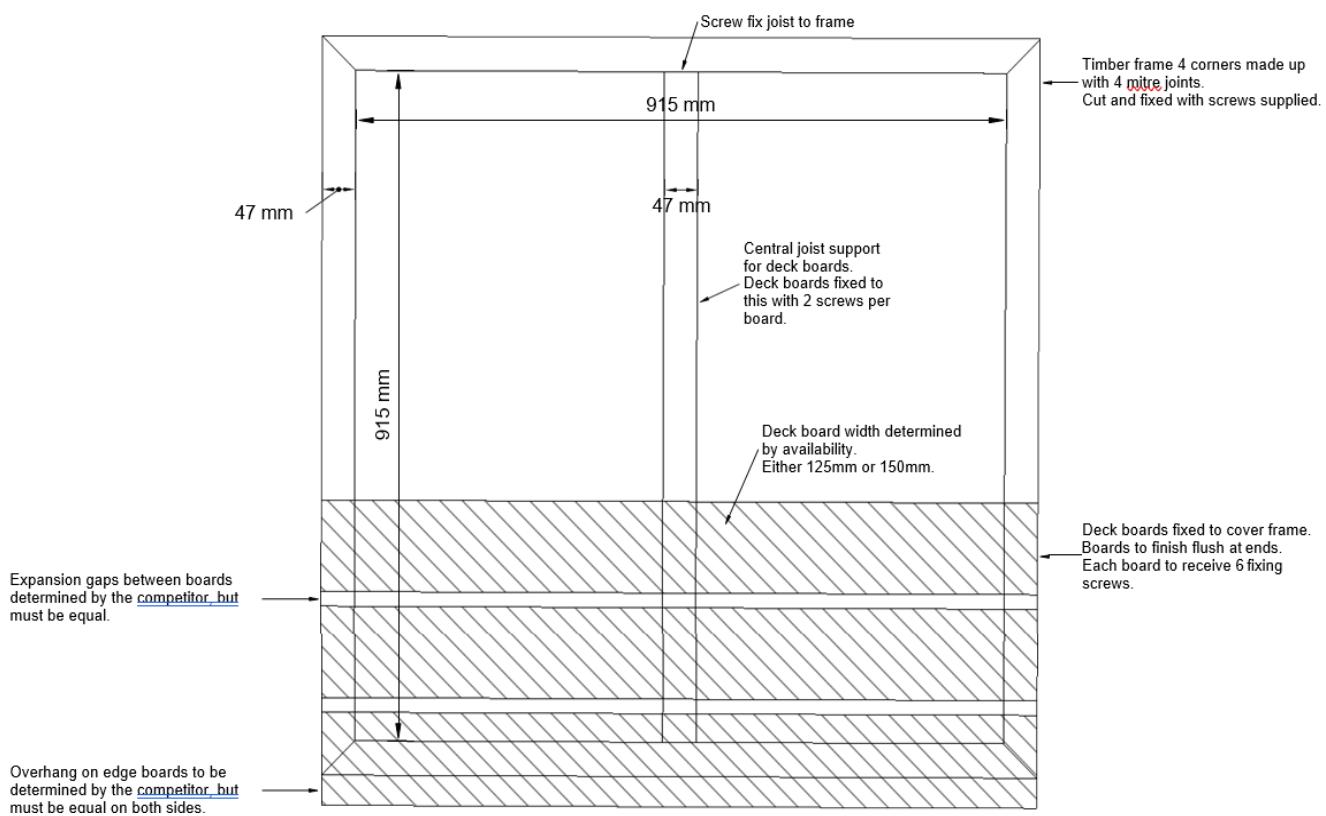


Shortanswer text

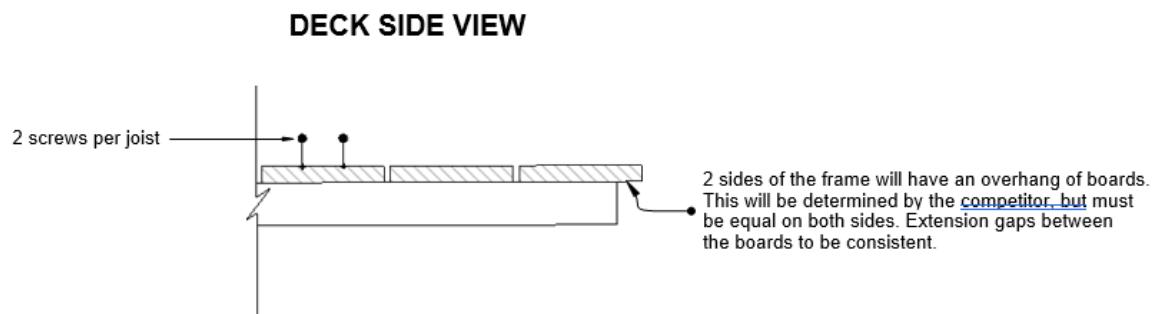
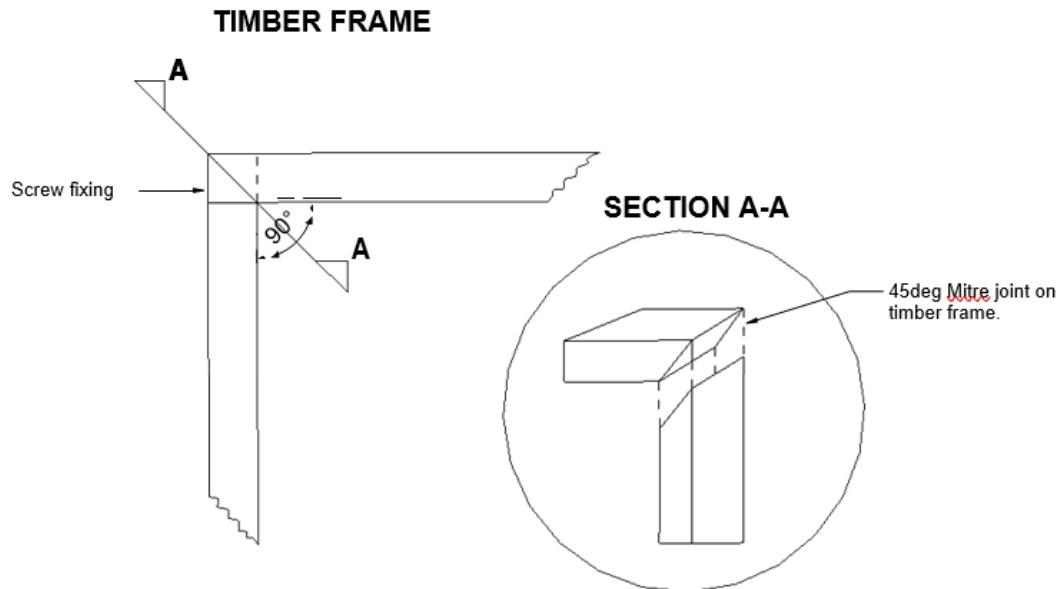
Full sheet is supplied on application. Pass mark is 60% with up to 2 points given for every correct score most questions have multiple answers.

Project example: National Qualifier

| Design specification | |
|----------------------|---|
| Materials | Timber, 50mm x 100mm. Decking boards, Grit/ Sharp Sand, Block Paving. Screws and Kiln dried sand. |
| Time | 4 hours |
| Additional data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where possible all tools to be provided by competitors. All cuts will be made by hand saws and block splitters only. Marking is done against drawings and within mm tolerances. A plant ID will also form part of this qualifier |

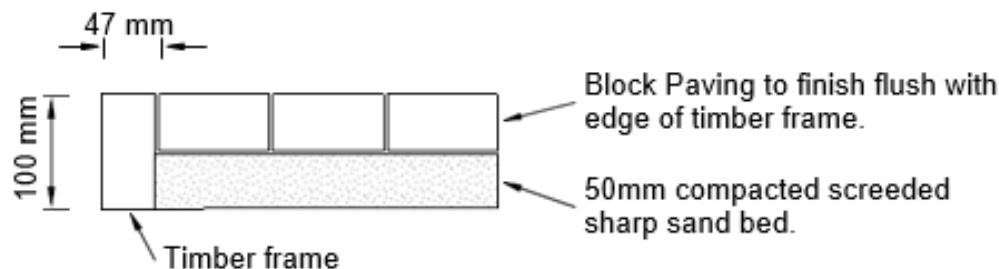


Project example: National Qualifier drawings continued...



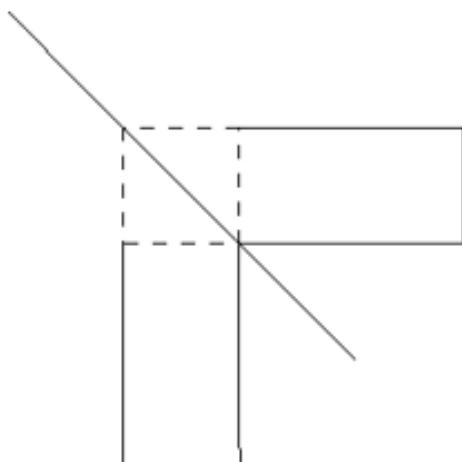
Project example: National Qualifier drawings continued...

Block Paving and Timber Frame section



NB jointing sand to be brushed into paving on completion

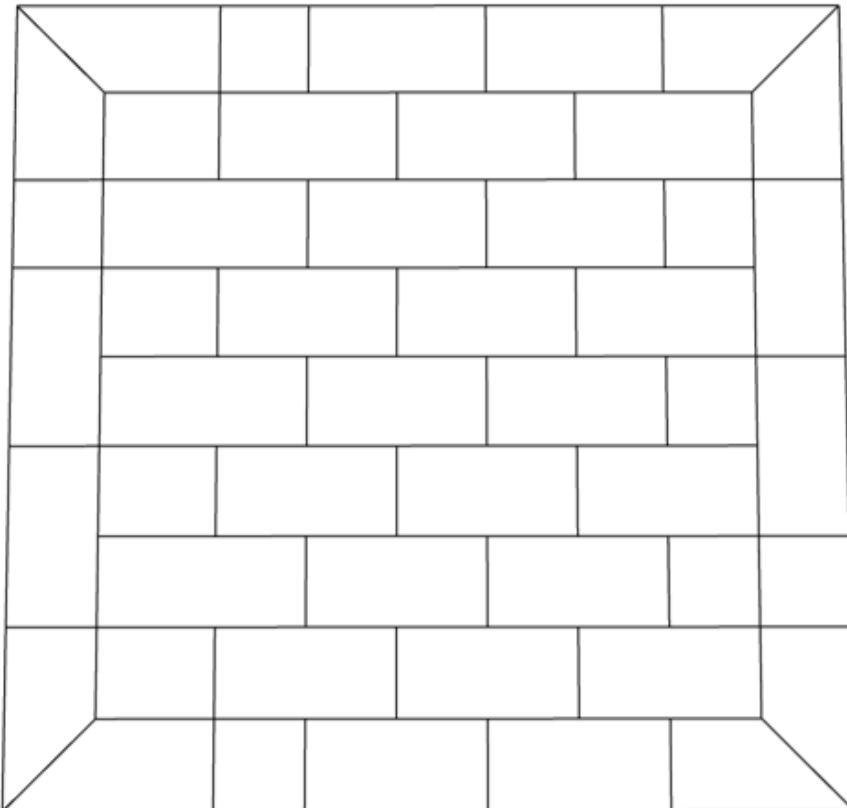
Block Paving Mitre



To create a simple 45deg mitre.

- Place one block over the other at a 90deg angle.
- Score your line.
- Use a Block Splitter to create a 45deg cut.

Project example: National Qualifier drawings continued...



Block Paving

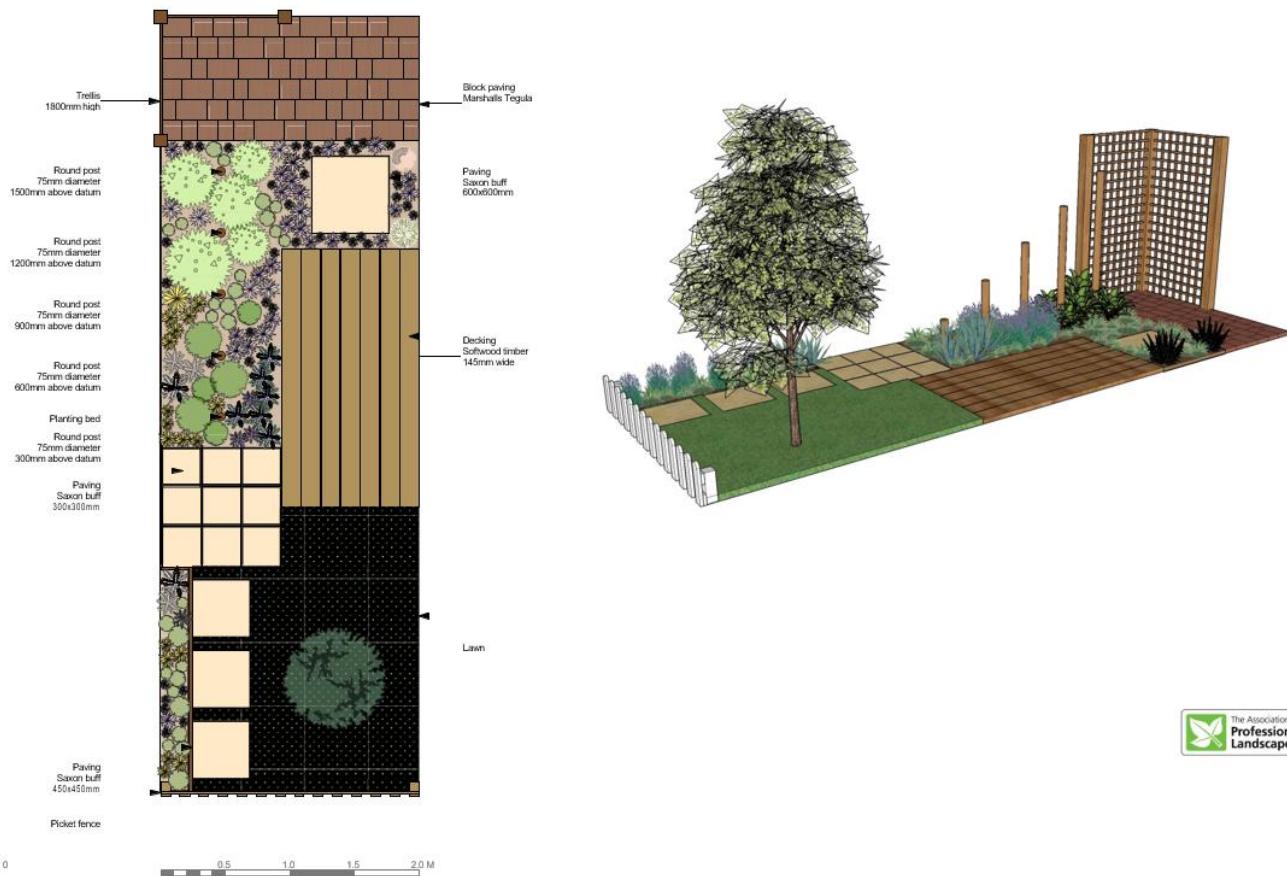
Suggested pattern based on
blocks 200mm x 100mm

Suggested Block Pave Pattern. Not to Scale

Project example: WSUK Final (this could change in layout and detail)

| Materials | Paving, Decking, Fencing, Planting, Lighting, Water Features and Raised Planters. |
|-----------------|---|
| Time | 16.5 hours |
| Additional data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where possible all tools to be provided by competitors. All cuts will be made by hand saws and block splitters only. Marking is done against drawings and within mm tolerances. A plant ID will also form part of this qualifier |





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

Whilst in appearance both examples look to be simple structures, they encompass all elements of today's modern landscaping.

Your projects are measured and judged within mm tolerances, your finish has to be clean and blemish free, the planting needs to be creative.

Add to this, you are an individual competitor and your 12m² of landscaping has to be completed in just 16.5hrs, you can appreciate this is a challenge.

Marking scheme

The marking scheme is designed to fairly compare every competitor's work. Marking is split between measurement and judgement aspects.

Measurement

Any dimension on the drawing can be a measurement mark. Measurements and levels are marked to tolerances of between 2 and 5mm.

In some cases there are a range of marks:

- Within tolerance (Full Marks) eg 3 points
- ($\pm 0.1.9$ mm) 2 points
- ($\pm 2.1-2.9$ mm) 1 point
- (± 3 mm) 0 points
- Some marks are awarded on completion of tasks, these are simple Yes/No

All projects will be supplied with a mark summary form. The mark summary form will show only the number of marks assigned to each aspect, not the breakdown of marks (e.g., Decking Exercise: 40 marks maximum).

Judgement

Judgement marks are more subjective, for aspects such as:

- Health and Safety
- General Work Practices and Process
- Overall finish
- Competence on machinery
- Attitude

Judges will work to a judgement handbook with examples of each criterion. Each judge will reveal a value from zero to three, and an average will be taken. For example, if all judges assess the Health and safety as a two overall, the competitor will receive 66% of the possible marks. Judgement marking accounts for only 10% of the overall score.

Example of a score sheet

Competition Marking Form – Decking -
WorldSkills UK Landscaping Intermediate/Advanced – Heat 2020

Competitor Name/Number:

Venue:

Date:

| Aspect ID | Description | Tolerance/Requirement | Max Mark | Mark Awarded |
|-----------|--|---|----------|--------------|
| 1 | Decking | | | |
| 1:1 | Frame Joint 1, 45degree mitre | 0-1.9mm: 3 points 2mm-2.9mm: 2 points 3mm+: 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:2 | Frame Joint 1, 45degree mitre | 0-1.9mm: 3 points 2mm-2.9mm: 2 points 3mm+: 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:3 | Frame Joint 1, 45degree mitre | 0-1.9mm: 3 points 2mm-2.9mm: 2 points 3mm+: 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:4 | Frame Joint 1, 45degree mitre | 0-1.9mm: 3 points 2mm-2.9mm: 2 points 3mm+: 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:5 | Frame (915mm)/(915mm) Internal Measurement This will be confirmed at start of heat depending on blocks supplied | 0-1.9mm: 3 points 2-2.9mm: 2 points 3-4.9mm: 1 points 5mm+: 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:6 | Is frame square? | Yes/No No = 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:7 | Safe use of hand tools with correct PPE 3 strikes = 0 points. | Yes/No No = 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:8 | All Decking boards to finish flush on two external sides and be equal in length and sanded. Any overhang to equal on uncut sides | 0-1.9mm: 4 points 2mm-2.9mm: 2 points 3mm+: 0 points | 4 | |
| 1:9 | Spacing between decking boards to be equal | +/-2mm Over tolerance = 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:10 | All screws to be in straight line (Minimum of 6 screws per board) | 100% 3 60-99% 2 Under 60% 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:11 | All screws flush and evenly spaced (Minimum of 6 screws per board) | 100% 3 60-99% 2 Under 60% 0 points | 3 | |
| 1:12 | Test piece complete | Yes/No No = 0 points | 6 | |
| | | | 40 | |

Equipment

During training and delivery of the National finals, there is a range of equipment you will be required to use. If not used before training will be given on the familiarization period ahead of the finals:

Disc Cutter



Model EK6100 is a Power cutter 305mm (12") equipped with 61cm³ 2-stroke engine with stratified scavenging system to comply with all known exhaust emission regulations.

Compared with the predecessor model DPC6430, this new model has the following advantages:

- Lightweight; 1.2kg (2.6lbs) lighter than DPC6430
- Enhanced air filtration; cyclone pre-separation system effectively removes dust particles away from intake air and reduces dust stuck on the filter.

Chop Saw



TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Blade Diameter 260 mm Max mitre range 60 - 60 ° Max mitre cut at 90° 68 x 310 mm Bore Diameter 30 mm Max bevel range 48 - 48 ° Noise sound pressure 91 dB(A) Noise sound power 101 dB(A) Noise K factor 3 dB(A) Input Wattage 1510 w No Load Speed 3200 rpm Vibration K factor 1.5 m/sec² Vibration no load 2.5 m/sec² Net weight 26.3 kg

Link to product - www.makitaauk.com

USER BENEFITS

- Built in laser guide.
- Motor head slides on fixed pipes without extending machine at rear end, so the machine can be placed close to wall.
- Front knob for easy bevel adjustment
- Holders to support a wide workpiece
- Easy-to-operate mitre angle lock
- One-touch sliding lock
- Large turn base
- Connects to dust extractor
- Electric brake
- Soft start
- Constant speed control
- Double Insulation

Drilling



TECHNICAL INFO:

Capacity in Steel

13 mm

Capacity in Wood

38

Chuck Capacity

1.5 - 13 mm

No Load Speed (Hi)

0 - 1,900 rpm

No Load Speed (Lo)

0 - 500 rpm

Blows per Minute (Hi) - ipm

0 - 28,500 ipm

Blows per Minute (Lo) - ipm

0 - 7,500 ipm

Capacity in Masonry

13 mm

Voltage

18 v

Torque Settings

21 + drill

Battery Type

Lithium-ion

Vibration K factor

1.5 m/sec²

Noise sound pressure

82 dB(A)

Noise sound power

93 dB(A)

Noise K factor

3 dB(A)

Net weight

1.5 - 1.8 kg

Battery Quantity (5.0ah)

2

Max. Fastening Torque (Soft Joint)

27 Nm

Max. Fastening Torque (Hard Joint)

50 Nm

Vibration: Impact drilling into concrete

8.0 m/sec²

Vibration: Drilling into metal

2.5 m/sec²

Entry Stage

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

The registration period for the 2026 National Competitions cycle is from 2 March to 27 March 2025. The Entry Task will be a remote assessment covering a landscaping related-task. This will be sent out to competitors once registration is complete.

National Qualifier

For competitors who have managed to pass through the Entry stage the next step is the national qualifiers. This will be a physical qualifier where competitors will have to demonstrate their landscaping knowledge through a practical assessment. This stage will be marked by WorldSkills UK expert judges. The top eight highest scores from the national qualifiers will then go through to the next round, the national finals.

Locations and dates for the qualifiers will be announced soon but are expected to take place between 5 May and 27 June 2025.

National finals

The 8 highest scoring competitors from across the National Qualifier heats will be invited to compete at the finals – held in locations across South Wales in the week commencing 16 November 2025.

The competition will be an in-person competition where the competitors can showcase their skills in a live environment. Each competitor will be provided with an individual toolkit and drill set. Some other tools such as disk cutter, chop saws and mixers will be shared. Usage of these items will be explained during familiarization session and monitored throughout the competition

Entry criteria

- This is an individual Competition.
- There is no limit to the number of competitors permitted to enter this competition per organisation.
- To be eligible to enter WorldSkills UK Competitions, participants must be at least 16 years of age.
- Participants must also meet at least one of the following criteria; be employed in the UK, studying towards a relevant UK qualification level 2 or working towards an apprenticeship in a relevant trade in the UK.

Judges' top tips

1. You are always sent the plans and information required for your competition ahead of the date. MAKE sure you read them and if you have any questions ask the organising partner, employer or tutor to explain.
2. Practice, Practice, Practice.
3. The first afternoon of the competition is familiarization. This will be your first time at the show. Use this time wisely, look at your allotted plot and make sure you are happy with the set up. Look at the tools and materials you have been given and if you are not sure about anything. ASK. Familiarise yourself with your surroundings, toilets, food areas etc. The judges will go through all this with you.
4. Plan! Look at the task ahead of you and schedule your works over the allotted time. Feel free to share this plan with a judge, who will be able to advise you if it is suitable.
5. Think on your feet. There are some operations where the machinery is limited, so if there is a queue, don't stop and wait, start another part of the project until the queue has gone.
6. If things are going slightly wrong. DON'T PANIC. There are regular breaks in the competition where you will be able to discuss things with your tutors or peers, but also it's a time that you can re look at your plans and re work areas. Don't forget to adjust your schedule.
7. Always look at the schedule at the end of every day, see where you are and where you need to be. If falling behind, it could be that you need to increase the pace for a session, or it may be that you decide one element of the project. Work Smart.
8. It's a tough competition both mentally and physically, but the sense of achievement at the end is unique. Make sure you work hard, fast and accurately. But most of all enjoy the process.

Beyond the National Finals

Looking beyond the National finals, there are opportunities for competitors.

Competitors may join the Champions program, which allows continued involvement, including the opportunity to work with WorldSkills UK and visit schools, colleges, and events to inspire the next generations.

The Association of Professional Landscapers can support you with introductions to some of the best landscapers in the country and even give you opportunities at some of the UK's major flower shows.

Alternatively, if training is of interest to you, you could consider supporting WorldSkills UK with organising and training, and even helping to run the National finals.

Useful Links

There are many useful links for competitors.

www.landscaper.org.uk The Association of professional landscapers. Join the APL here as a student member and get invites to industry focused meetings on Zoom plus regular email e-shots.

<https://www.landscapelibrary.co.uk/> The landscape library is a fantastic resource for Landscapers, Gardeners and Designers. Created and populated by the founder of the APL it has a reduced student membership of £25/year or free for 1 year if a member of the APL.

<https://www.pavingexpert.com/> On this site, you'll find professional, impartial information from an ex-contractor, with construction guides and specifications to all the most popular British and Irish paving types.

<https://deckingnetwork.com/> The fastest growing free network of all things Decking to include photos, forum, blogs, news, information, advice and how to's. This is the hub for the largest gathering of people that share the same interest – and that's Decking



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