

A large, circular network diagram composed of numerous small grey dots connected by thin grey lines. Some dots are highlighted in red and orange, and the overall shape resembles a globe or a complex web.

World Future Skills Index

UK Spotlight

**Transforming higher education
for the skills economy**



Higher education’s role in future workforce readiness

Welcome to the UK Spotlight on the QS World Future Skills Index, where we explore higher education’s critical role in shaping the workforce of tomorrow. This tailored resource empowers you to analyse UK’s future skills supply and demand, benchmark key industry jobs and skills gaps against over 80 countries, and align your higher education system with the skills training required for economic transformation.

By 2030, an estimated 375 million workers will need to switch occupational categories, requiring tailored reskilling initiatives and modular, lifelong learning opportunities.

Source: Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained report from McKinsey

The QS World Future Skills Index in numbers

190+
countries analysed

4
indicators, informed by
13 sub-indicators

280m+
job postings assessed

5m+
employer skill demands reviewed

5,000+
universities measured

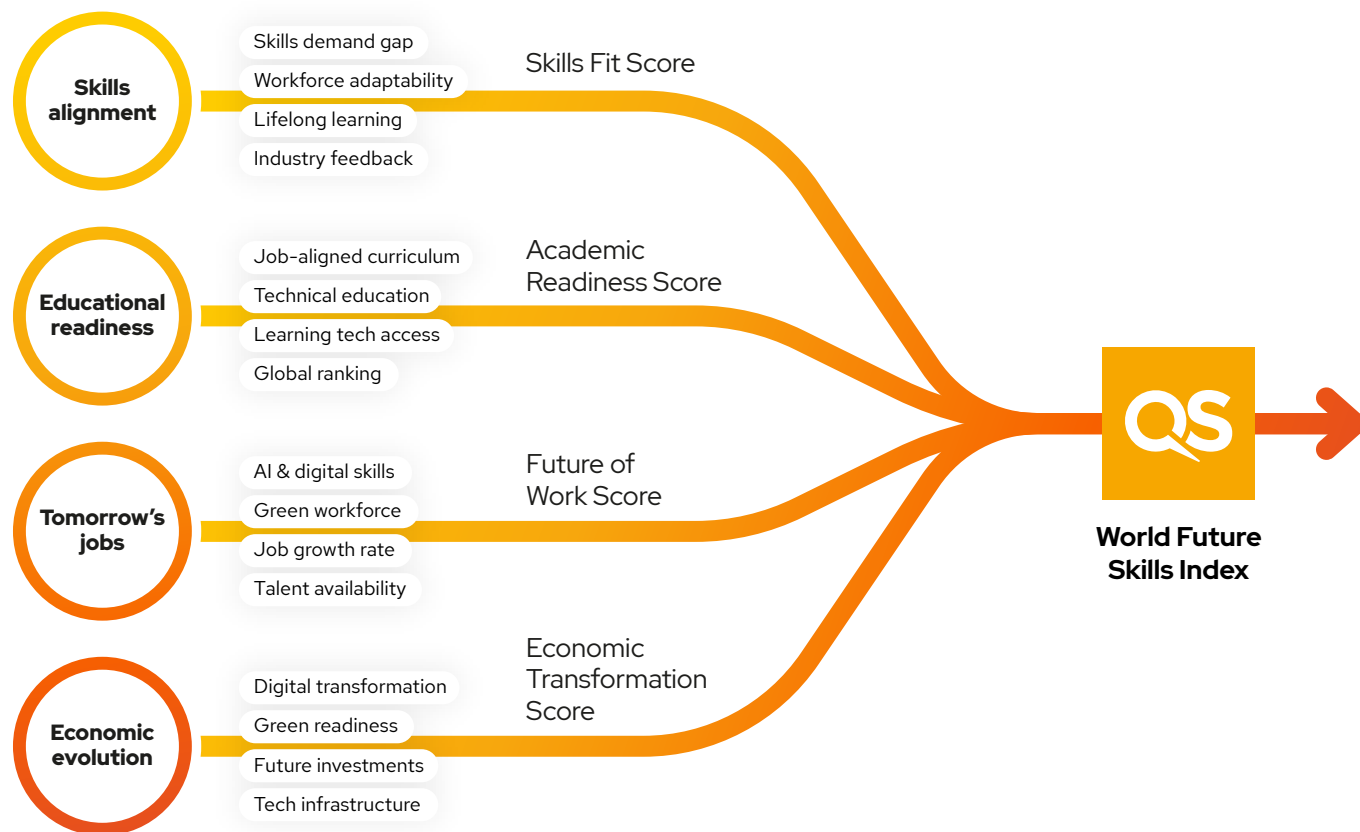
17.5m+
research papers examined

How to use the QS World Future Skills Index



The QS World Future Skills Index is designed to assess how prepared countries are to tackle the shifting demands of the global workforce, particularly in the context of digital transformation, AI, sustainability, and the broader economic changes impacting jobs.

Skills like AI proficiency, digital literacy, and environmental sustainability will form the bedrock of the industries of tomorrow. Countries that fail to adapt risk losing their competitive edge and missing opportunities for economic growth.



The QS World Future Skills Index uses data from over 280 million job postings via QS iMentor, the QS Global Employer Survey, and economic and demographic statistics from the World Bank Group. The Index assesses countries across four key indicators: Skills Fit, Academic Readiness, Future of Work, and Economic Transformation. Each indicator plays a vital role in providing a comprehensive view of a country's preparedness to thrive in an increasingly skills-driven global economy.

QS World Future Skills Index indicators

Skills Fit

The Skills Fit indicator measures how well countries are equipping graduates with the skills that employers desire. This is assessed by determining the gap between what employers find important and their level of satisfaction with the skills provided by graduates.

This is done using data from the QS Global Employer Survey, the largest of its kind, and data from the World Bank Group. Since 2021, over 100,000 employers have rated the importance of certain skills and their satisfaction in their graduate hires.

Future of Work

The Future of Work indicator evaluates a country's readiness to recruit for the skills needed in the jobs of tomorrow. Specifically, it measures how well the job market is prepared to meet the growing demand for digital, AI, and green skills, all of which are becoming critical as economies transition towards technology-driven and sustainable industries.

Academic Readiness

This dimension measures how well a country is prepared for the future of work. We look at the number of universities assessed for the QS World University Rankings by Subject, and how they perform.

We then measure this in tandem with population size – if a country has a large population but few well-ranked institutions, for example, the country will be penalised.

Economic Transformation

Economic Transformation uses a weighted formula to assess a country's readiness to support the growth and future of work and skills by examining various key indicators. The Index highlights whether a country has the infrastructure, investment power, and talent available to transition to industries driven by AI, digital transformation, green technologies, and high-skilled work, using data from the World Bank Group, UNESCO Institute for Statistics and the Education Policy Institute.



UK | Performance overview

The UK places top in the world for two indicators - Skills Fit and Academic Readiness - and secures a perfect score. This suggests very strong higher education performance, and alignment with industry needs. However, the UK doesn't feature in the top five for either Future of Work or Economic Transformation, where it comes in positions six and eight, respectively.

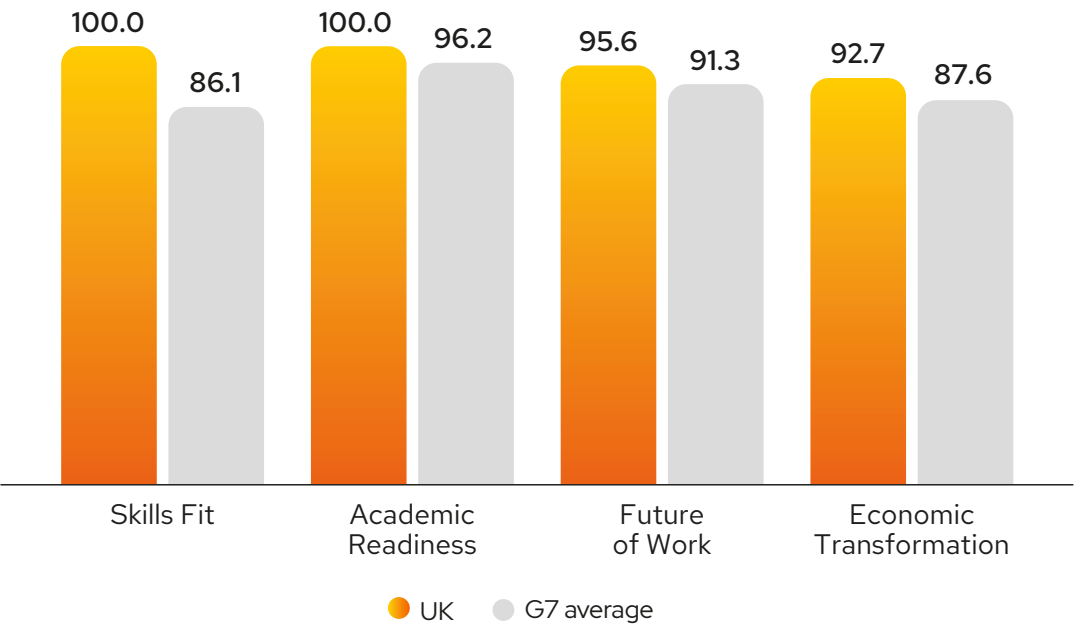
At a macro level, the UK's low-to-no growth over the past decade, the stagnating workforce productivity, declining real public and private investment and the young-age workforce

population decline predicted from 2030 all contribute to low scores in the Economic Transformation indicator.

As a consequence, the UK economy is likely to see self-reinforcing stagnation, driven by skills shortages and low R&D innovation unless action is taken.

Overall score: **97.1/100**

QS World Future Skills Index
UK performance vs G7 average



Skills Fit
100/100

Skills Fit measures the alignment between workforce skills and employer needs. It highlights how effectively education systems prepare graduates for key industries, especially in emerging fields like AI, green technology, and digital innovation. Addressing gaps here boosts employability, drives economic transformation, and ensures the workforce remains competitive internationally.

Academic Readiness
100/100

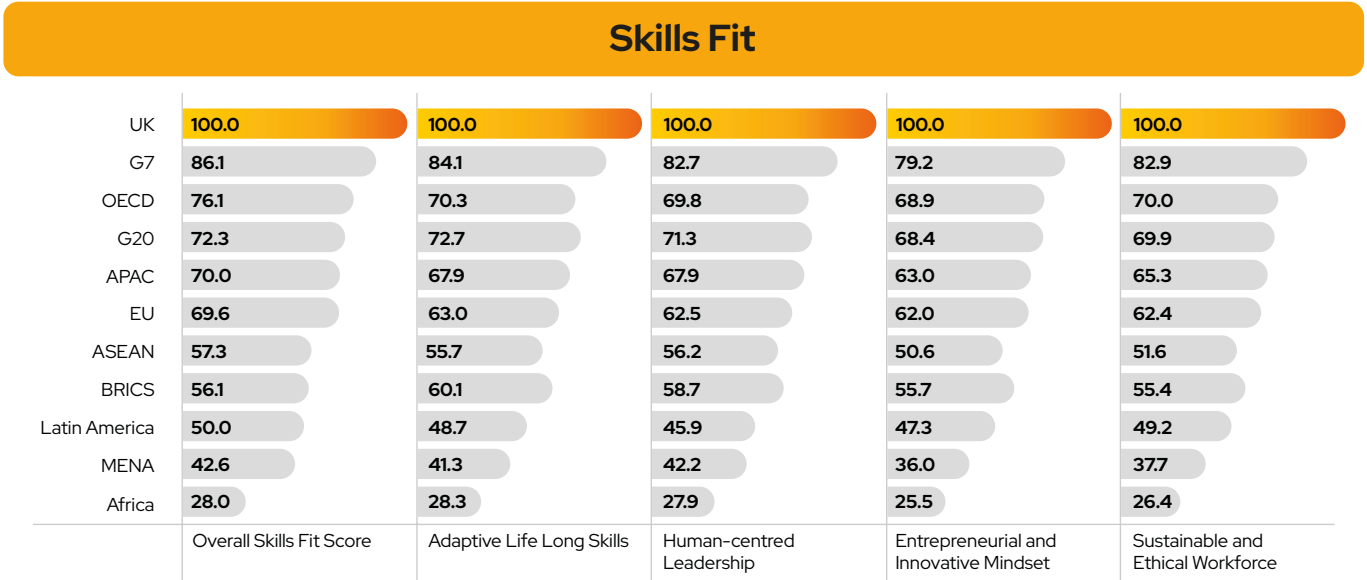
Academic Readiness reflects the capacity of a country's higher education system to equip students with relevant skills for future jobs. A robust system fosters innovation, aligns curricula with industry demands. This ensures graduates are not only employable but also capable of adapting to a rapidly changing global economy

Future of Work
95.6/100

Future of Work assesses a country's preparedness for jobs of the future, focusing on adaptability to technological and industrial changes. It reflects innovation, R&D investments, and sustainable practices in education. Higher education plays a vital role in fostering a future-ready workforce equipped with the skills required for evolving global industries.

Economic Transformation
92.7/100

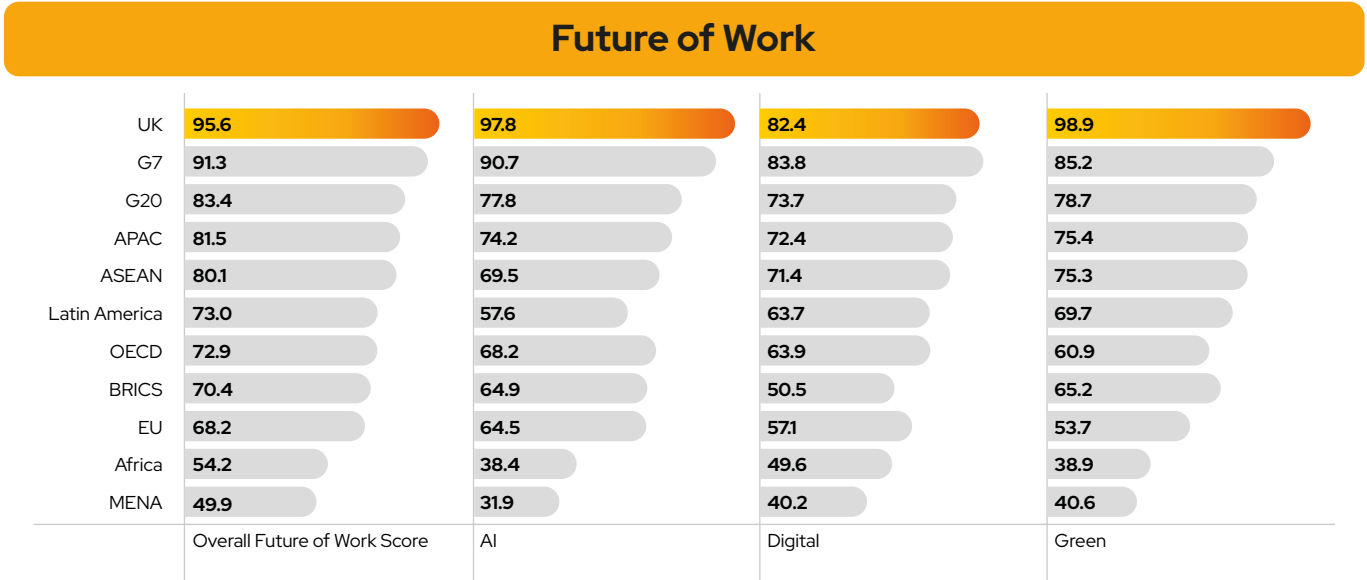
Economic Transformation examines the interplay between education, workforce skills, and industrial growth. Higher education underpins this by driving productivity, innovation, and sustainability. Universities that align their programmes with industry needs not only strengthen national competitiveness but also ensure a balance between economic momentum and workforce adaptability.



QS Analysis

The UK stands out as a global leader in workforce skills, achieving a perfect score across Adaptive Life Long Skills, Human-Centred Leadership, and Entrepreneurial & Innovative Mindset. This exceptional performance highlights the nation’s ability to equip its workforce with the agility, creativity, and leadership qualities needed to thrive in a rapidly changing economy. The UK’s ability to integrate these skills across education and industry makes it a model for countries striving to prepare their workforce for future challenges. By maintaining this momentum and continuing to innovate, the UK ensures its graduates are not only competitive but also capable of driving progress on a global scale.

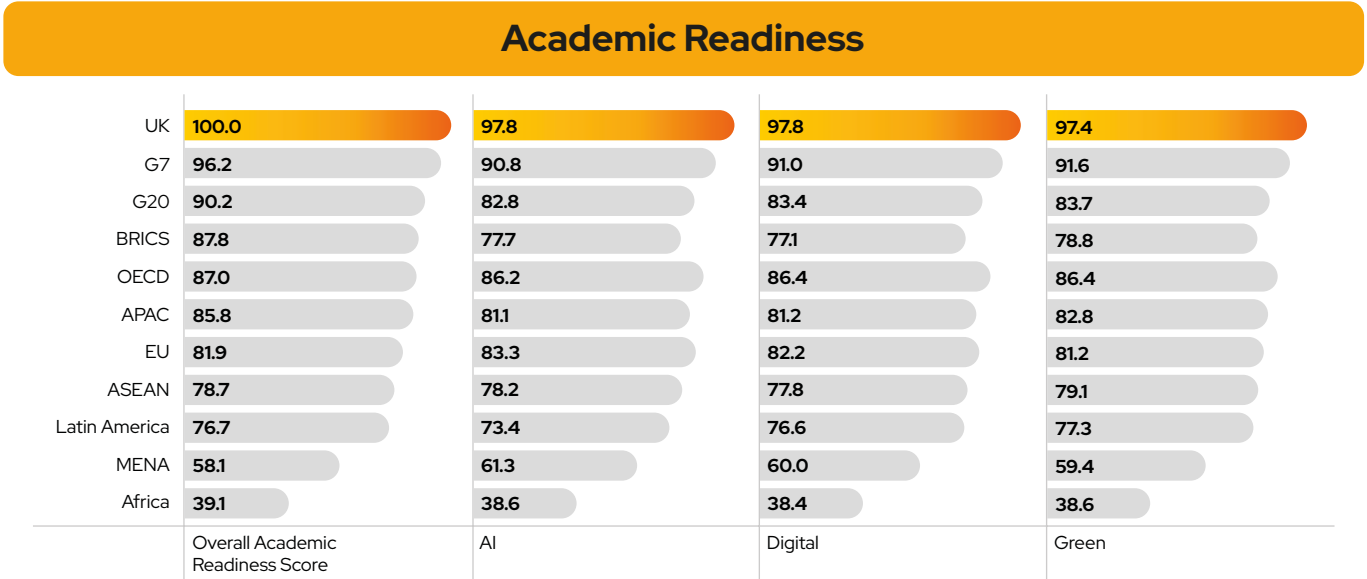
Note: The Skills Fit score is derived from over 5 million skills nominations, reflecting insights from more than 100,000 employer responses to the QS Global Employer Survey over the past four years. Employers identified key skills they value and their satisfaction levels. By analysing this data at the country level, and integrating it with the World Bank’s Human Capital Index, the QS Insights and Consulting team developed the final scores. Skills nominated by employers have been grouped based on the findings.



QS Analysis

The UK is well-positioned, with strong demand from employers for AI, Digital, and Green skills. Part of the Rapid Industry Innovation Cluster, it must ensure talent supply meets demand by utilising and improving its already strong education system and industry collaboration. Expanding access to future-focused training and upskilling will be vital to keeping its workforce competitive and resilient.

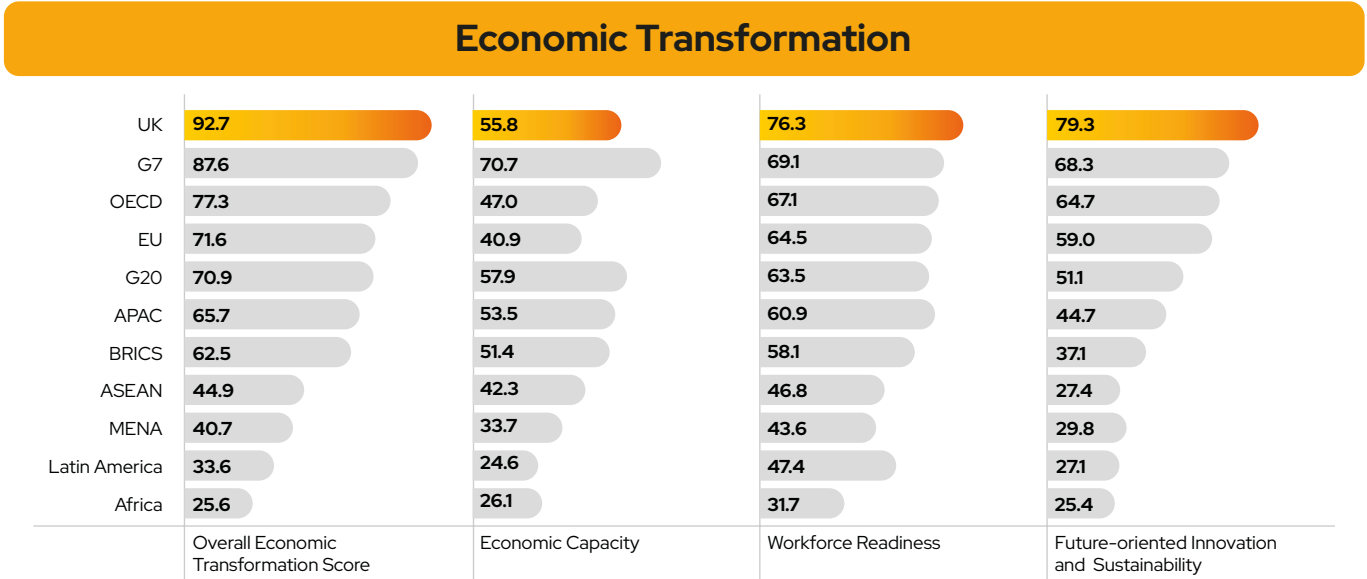
Note: The Future of Work Score measures the extent to which future-focused skills—such as digital, AI, and green competencies—have permeated global job advertisements compared to traditional skillsets. This score is derived from an analysis of over 280 million job postings worldwide, leveraging the QS proprietary skills taxonomy. Over 9,500 emerging skills were identified and benchmarked against conventional skills, providing a clear indicator of how deeply future-oriented capabilities are being prioritised by employers in the global labour market.



QS Analysis

The UK’s education system preparing students for working in future industries, achieving top scores in AI, Digital, and Green skills. With over 100 universities ranked in the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024, the UK sets the global benchmark for academic excellence and innovation. This strong foundation reflects its ability to align higher education with emerging economic demands. However, to maintain its leadership, the UK must evolve its curricula to stay ahead of global trends and further integrate sustainability, enhance interdisciplinary collaboration, and prioritise future-focused training.

Note: This chart draws on data from the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024, analysing over 5,000 universities globally. The Academic Readiness score is calculated using the median subject rankings score for each country, adjusted for performance in key areas such as AI, digital, and green-related disciplines. Population size and the number of universities ranked are used as weighting factors to ensure a balanced assessment of scale and quality. This provides a comprehensive view of how effectively higher education systems are preparing for future workforce demands.



QS Analysis

The UK’s economic transformation relies on growth, innovation, and workforce readiness, supported by its world-class higher education system. Strong in Future-Oriented Innovation and Sustainability, the UK is well-placed to lead in emerging industries. However, aligning economic capacity with long-term goals remains a challenge. Education institutions play a vital role in developing future-ready skills, but sustained investment in innovation and infrastructure is crucial. By addressing these gaps, the UK can strengthen its global leadership and maintain its competitive edge in the evolving economy.

Note: The Economic Transformation indicator is built on three core dimensions: Economic Capacity, Workforce Readiness, and Future-Oriented Innovation and Sustainability. It combines data on GDP growth, labour productivity, employment rates, R&D investment, and infrastructure development. These indicators are weighted and benchmarked globally to assess a country’s ability to adapt to skills-driven industrial change, with a focus on AI, digital, and green industries. The methodology ensures a comprehensive view of how effectively economic fundamentals and future-focused investments align with evolving workforce demands.



Note: The scores reflect the final results of the QS World Future Skills Index. Categories are organised alphabetically by economy for clarity and ease of comparison.

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
United States	94.4	98.2	100.0	97.9	97.6
United Kingdom	100.0	100.0	95.6	92.7	97.1
Germany	89.2	99.6	94.7	94.7	94.6
Australia	87.2	98.9	96.5	90.6	93.3
Canada	90.9	97.8	97.4	78.1	91.0
Netherlands	88.6	99.3	90.4	81.2	89.9
Switzerland	80.7	97.1	82.6	96.8	89.3
France	84.8	92.6	91.3	84.3	88.2
Singapore	83.2	91.7	92.2	85.4	88.1
South Korea	84.4	88.4	76.5	100.0	87.3
China	78.5	93.9	87.8	88.5	87.2
Spain	76.4	96.3	93.0	70.8	84.1
Israel	70.6	93.0	73.0	98.9	83.9
Sweden	80.4	95.1	72.2	86.4	83.5
Japan	73.4	87.9	74.7	95.8	83.0
Belgium	72.4	95.9	71.3	91.6	82.8
Ireland	81.8	95.5	86.1	67.7	82.8
Denmark	73.0	96.7	66.1	93.7	82.4
Hong Kong SAR	77.0	98.6	69.5	80.2	81.3
Italy	70.3	97.4	85.2	69.7	80.7
Finland	76.1	93.4	62.6	87.5	79.9
New Zealand	75.6	94.7	80.0	63.5	78.5
Norway		94.3	56.5	83.3	78.0
Poland	68.5	85.3	86.9	68.7	77.3
India	59.1	89.9	99.1	58.3	76.6
Portugal	71.0	92.1	66.9	76.0	76.5
Czech Republic	72.4	77.5	82.6	71.8	76.1
Austria	66.5	90.8	64.3	82.2	75.9
United Arab Emirates	71.6	90.3	77.4	60.4	74.9

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
Greece	62.3	85.9	65.2	72.9	71.6
Brazil	44.1	83.1	78.2	77.0	70.6
Malaysia	64.0	91.2	88.6	35.4	69.8
Thailand	58.1	81.4	80.8	52.0	68.1
Mexico	54.8	80.8	98.2	37.5	67.8
Lithuania	61.4	87.4	52.2	66.6	66.9
Hungary	59.3	84.2	68.6	54.1	66.6
Russia	73.4	84.8	33.8	73.9	66.5
Saudi Arabia	56.9	82.5	73.8	51.0	66.1
Türkiye	62.1	73.3	60.0	64.5	65.0
Colombia	58.3	82.0	89.5	27.0	64.2
Costa Rica		67.5	79.1	45.8	64.1
Argentina	57.8	83.7	84.3	23.9	62.4
Philippines	47.6	66.6	93.8	40.6	62.2
Estonia		70.1	53.0	61.4	61.5
Kazakhstan	67.8	75.5	40.8	59.3	60.9
Egypt	45.4	76.9	75.6	44.7	60.6
Indonesia	60.0	74.0	67.8	39.5	60.3
Lebanon	45.9	86.4	46.9		59.7
Chile	63.1	88.9	70.4	13.5	59.0
Qatar	45.5	79.5	59.1	47.9	58.0
Romania	43.0	72.5	58.2	48.9	55.7
Vietnam	58.1	74.7	57.4	31.2	55.4
Jordan	49.2	78.2	49.5	41.6	54.6
Slovenia		49.1	35.6	79.1	54.6
Bulgaria	37.6	56.0	61.7	57.2	53.1
Peru	51.0	80.1	54.7	26.0	53.0
Latvia	56.4	60.7	46.1	46.8	52.5
South Africa	28.3	89.4	81.7	10.4	52.4

Country/Location	Skills Fit	Academic Readiness	Future Of Work	Economic Transformation	Final Score
Bahrain	47.2	62.7	33.0	55.2	49.6
Ukraine	57.9	71.8	51.3	15.6	49.1
Bangladesh	39.1	65.7	42.6		49.1
Luxembourg		54.8	47.8	43.7	48.7
Kuwait	36.3	69.3	40.0		48.5
Belarus	57.6	40.4	29.5	65.6	48.3
Iceland		31.6	20.0	89.5	47.0
Pakistan	35.7	78.9	63.4	4.1	45.5
Croatia		36.4	35.6	62.5	44.8
Uruguay	40.6	59.5	60.8	17.7	44.7
Brunei Darussalam	29.8	70.9		30.2	43.6
Ecuador	30.6	64.8	41.7	34.3	42.8
Armenia	25.3		45.2	50.0	40.2
Uzbekistan	48.1	57.2	29.5	16.6	37.9
Cyprus	45.2	44.2	37.4	18.7	36.4
Azerbaijan	31.8	50.6	27.8	29.1	34.8
Oman	32.5	42.5	29.5	33.3	34.4
Panama	24.2		50.4	28.1	34.2
Sri Lanka	43.5		42.6	6.2	30.8
Morocco	17.0		53.8	20.8	30.5
Tunisia		29.0	37.4	19.7	28.7
Algeria	21.3		22.6	32.2	25.4
Tajikistan	16.7		26.9	21.8	21.8

*Where a country lacks an indicator score, this reflects insufficient data available to evaluate overall performance

The UK has long been recognised for its innovation and leadership in global business. Industries driving this growth include Financial Services, Technology, Healthcare, and Creative Arts. But economic stagnation could mean that the country falls behind and fails to capitalise on the future skills revolution. Economic Capacity performance is lower than the G7 average (55.8 compared to 70.7), and sustained investment in higher education and R&D is crucial if the UK is to remain a top performer.

The demand for cutting-edge skills is evident in the UK, which scores highly on Future of Work indicators. With exceptional performance in areas such as AI, green skills, and lifelong learning, the UK workforce is positioned to remain competitive.

Our analysis and recommendations:

1. **Leverage the strength of the higher education system to attract international talent to fill short-term, high impact skills gaps within economies:** The UK should seek to benefit from talent already in the country, including those on the Graduate Visa route, as well as leverage existing strong higher education performance to recruit new talent.

2. **Support the ability of education and industry to integrate future skills, innovate and ensure talent supply meets demand with funding, lifelong learning and upskilling opportunities:** The UK government should support universities to develop new courses co-designed with industry – those programmes should focus on all future skills such as Green, AI and Digital. The UK already places above peer countries in the Academic Readiness for AI, Digital and Green skills. This strength must be maintained.

3. **Connect industry and higher education’s capacity for research innovation and foster partnerships to drive economic stimulus and industrial diversification:** The UK can become an AI, digital and green industry powerhouse in partnership with its higher education sector. By fostering an innovative research environment and having an aligned curricula, UK higher education can become an engine that creates skills-ready entrepreneurs, who go on to create new jobs and drive economic growth.

4. **Sustain investment in innovation and infrastructure to strengthen the UK’s competitive edge:** It is important that the investment is sustained and that the UK’s excellent universities have the financial support to continue to innovate. The government should look beyond institutions ranked highly overall, and instead look at institutions with unique specialisms and foster innovation here too.



Your future workforce and skills partner

Connecting higher education, government policy, employer demands and student needs

Speak to your QS partnership director to gain access to more insight and advice.

Assess economic risk

We can help you analyse skills supply and demand by industry or region to identify skills shortages

Access data on the industries, occupations and skills driving growth to set your labour market strategy

Address skills gaps

Benchmark your skills shortages against peer nations to assess your relative risk

Identify the countries providing the most skills-aligned talent for your high-growth industries to set a talent attraction strategy

Align higher education with future skills

Assess the top performing universities within your country or region to deliver future skills ready graduates

Establish a future skills strategy for higher education institutions within your country or region, and enhance curricula and learning modes to deliver the skills of tomorrow

Evaluate performance at the subject level to develop an internal benchmark and skills performance improvement strategy

1

Assess economic risks:
Analyse supply and demand imbalances to identify skill shortages and develop strategies to safeguard your economy against workforce misalignment.

2

Address skills gaps:
Benchmark job and skill requirements globally to ensure graduates are equipped to meet industry needs and strengthen economic resilience.

3

Align higher education with future skills:
Transform higher education to embed future skills, ensuring graduates contribute to innovation, economic growth, and reduced workforce displacement.



Read the full QS World Future Skills Index briefing paper



QS can help you transform insights into policy and policy into action.

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