# Digital skills take centre stage on World Youth Skills Day



World Youth Skills Day, marked each year on 15 July and celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2025, is shining a spotlight on the growing importance of digital and artificial intelligence (AI) skills. This year’s theme reflects the pivotal role these technologies play in shaping the future of work and society.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres, in his message for the occasion, said that skills are not simply tools but engines of opportunity, enabling young people to shape their futures and build more inclusive, peaceful and sustainable communities. He emphasised the wide spectrum of skills—from traditional knowledge and creative arts to community leadership—while highlighting the increasing importance of digital and AI capabilities. From basic digital literacy to advanced data science, such skills are now essential for young people to thrive.

However, Guterres stressed that access to these opportunities must be universal. Closing the digital divide remains a pressing challenge to ensure that all young people—regardless of gender, geography or background—can realise their potential. He called for a human-centred approach to digital education that fosters not only technical skills but also creativity, critical thinking and compassion. As AI reshapes societies, he urged a view of young people not only as learners but as co-creators of a fair digital future.

The focus on AI and youth skills comes as the Fourth Industrial Revolution continues to transform economies, redefining both work and education. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems must evolve to keep pace, equipping young people with future-ready skills. AI is already transforming education through tools such as intelligent tutoring systems, virtual and augmented reality, and personalised learning, making skills development more accessible and engaging.

Yet the rapid adoption of AI also brings risks. Without a focus on equity and inclusivity, the digital divide could deepen, widening existing social and economic inequalities.

World Youth Skills Day was established in 2014 by a United Nations General Assembly resolution, introduced by Sri Lanka, to underline the importance of skills development in promoting employment, decent work and entrepreneurship for young people. The event remains a key platform for highlighting how youth skills drive not only economic growth but also peace and sustainable development.

Organisations such as UNESCO-UNEVOC and WorldSkills continue to celebrate the day, championing the value of AI and digital skills in empowering youth worldwide. They advocate for education that combines technological excellence with human values, preparing young people to lead in an increasingly digital world. Looking ahead, the challenge lies in creating inclusive, adaptive education systems that guarantee all young people can gain the digital and AI skills needed to succeed. By investing in such learning environments, the UK and other nations can strengthen their positions as leaders in responsible AI, fostering a future where youth empowerment and technological progress go hand in hand.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://press.un.org/en/2025/sgsm22723.doc.htm> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-youth-skills-day/messages> - On World Youth Skills Day, UN Secretary-General António Guterres emphasised that skills are engines of empowerment and opportunity. He highlighted the importance of digital and AI skills for youth, stating that from basic digital literacy to advanced data science, these capabilities are vital for young people to thrive today and lead tomorrow. He also stressed the need to close the digital divide to ensure every young person can reach their full potential, regardless of gender, geography, or background.
3. <https://unevoc.unesco.org/home/World%2BYouth%2BSkills%2BDay%26> - World Youth Skills Day 2025 marks the 10th anniversary since its inception in 2015. The theme for 2025 focuses on youth empowerment through AI and digital skills. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution reshapes economies through Artificial Intelligence (AI), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) must evolve to equip youth with future-ready skills. AI is transforming how we live, learn, and work, but it also poses serious risks if not implemented equitably.
4. <https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-youth-skills-day> - In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly declared 15 July as World Youth Skills Day to celebrate the strategic importance of equipping young people with skills for employment, decent work, and entrepreneurship. The theme for World Youth Skills Day 2024, 'Youth Skills for Peace and Development,' underscored the crucial role young people play in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The 2025 theme focuses on youth empowerment through AI and digital skills.
5. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/world-youth-skills-day-2025-youth-empowerment-through-ai-and-digital-skills> - World Youth Skills Day 2025 marks the 10th anniversary of the event. The theme for 2025 focuses on youth empowerment through AI and digital skills. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution reshapes economies through Artificial Intelligence (AI), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) must evolve to equip youth with future-ready skills. AI is transforming how we live, learn, and work, but it also poses serious risks if not implemented equitably.
6. <https://worldskills.org/media/news/celebrate-world-youth-skills-days-worldskills-and-unesco/> - WorldSkills joins UNESCO-UNEVOC in celebrating World Youth Skills Day under the theme 'Youth empowerment through AI and digital skills.' As AI and digital tools reshape industries and redefine how we live and work, equipping young people with the right skills has never been more urgent. AI is already transforming TVET, from personalized learning through intelligent tutoring systems to immersive, hands-on practice using virtual and augmented reality.
7. <https://worldskills.org/what/campaigns/world-youth-skills-day/> - On 18 December 2014, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution declaring 15 July as World Youth Skills Day. Sri Lanka initiated this resolution to highlight the importance of youth skills development at a global level. The goal is to achieve better socio-economic conditions for today’s youth, including addressing the challenges of unemployment and underemployment. WorldSkills International fully supported the proposal for a World Skills Youth Day.