

Software Testing Assistant: how employable, and how future-proof, is this trade?

Artificial intelligence and test-automation frameworks are actively reshaping the quality-assurance function across the IT industry, raising a direct question for anyone enrolled in the CTS Software Testing Assistant trade: will a vocational credential still hold value in a labour market where tools like Selenium and AI-driven self-healing scripts are already on hiring checklists? The evidence is more reassuring than the headlines suggest, though it comes with conditions. Graduates who limit themselves to purely manual, script-free testing will feel the squeeze; those who layer tool proficiency and analytical judgement onto the NSQF-4.5 foundation will land in a sector expanding at double-digit rates.

61.9 /100

COURSE EMPLOYABILITY SCORE (CES V2)

Moderate employability, scored across all four CES pillars (§02).

14.19%¹

CAGR of India outsourced software testing market, 2025-2035 (Market Research Future, 2026)

61.9²

CES composite score, Moderate Employability band (Lakshya Skill Finance CES, 2025)

25%²

Share of jobs globally at risk of transformation, not replacement, from GenAI (ILO-NASK, 2025)

45.95%³

Employability rate for ITI vocational graduates, up from 41% the prior year (India Skills Report 2026)

Subject: the "Software Testing Assistant" CTS trade (NSQF Level 4.5, Non-Engineering, IT sector) · Compiled from NSQF program spec + independent third-party research (see Sources).

Can AI or automation replace this job? The honest answer.

AI is restructuring software quality assurance in measurable ways: self-healing test scripts, predictive defect detection, and AI-generated test cases already reduce repetitive manual work. The critical distinction, confirmed by independent industry surveys, is between task-level displacement and job-level replacement. No credible study as of mid-2026 projects the wholesale elimination of QA roles; rather, the evidence points to a shift in the skill mix required to stay employable.

The risk, stated plainly

The ILO-NASK Global Index (May 2025) finds that 25% of jobs worldwide face exposure to GenAI transformation, with only 3.3% in the highest-risk full-automation category ². For QA specifically, TestRail's 2025 Software Testing and Quality Report (4th edition, surveying thousands of QA professionals globally) found that 14% of testers expressed concern that AI could replace parts of their role, while 36% reported no meaningful change to their daily work from AI so far ⁴. Within the trade itself, the most exposed tasks are those that consist of repeated, deterministic steps against a fixed test specification, exactly the work entry-level testers spend the most time on. That is the honest risk.

What automates vs what stays human

THE TASKS AUTOMATION IS TAKING

- Generating boilerplate test cases from requirements documents using generative AI ⁴
- Executing regression suites repeatedly against stable codebases via automated frameworks ⁴
- Logging and triaging low-complexity, reproducible defects through AI-assisted defect management tools ⁴
- Basic UI consistency checks using visual AI testing tools that require no manual scripting ⁴
- Producing pass/fail execution reports and test coverage dashboards from automated runs ⁴
- Simple data-driven test parameterisation tasks where input-output pairs follow a clear pattern ^P

THE WORK THAT STAYS HUMAN

- Designing exploratory and edge-case test scenarios that require understanding of user intent and business context ^{P/4}
- Evaluating the adequacy of a test strategy against evolving requirements, a judgement call no tool can make autonomously ⁴
- Communicating defect severity and business risk to developers and product owners, requiring stakeholder empathy ⁴
- Setting up and maintaining test environments, fixture data, and CI/CD pipeline integrations, which involve ambiguous infrastructure decisions ^P
- Validating security, usability, and compliance requirements where regulatory interpretation is needed ^{P/4}
- Reviewing and approving AI-generated test artefacts for completeness and accuracy, a quality gate the industry is actively creating ⁴

The resilient anchors

43%⁴

of QA teams name increasing test automation as a top future initiative, creating demand for humans who can design and govern those pipelines (TestRail 2025)

36%⁴

of QA professionals report AI has not meaningfully changed their role as of the 2025 survey period, indicating slower-than-feared displacement (TestRail 2025)

3.3%²

of jobs globally fall into the highest-risk full-automation GenAI category; most QA work sits in the lower-risk transformation tier (ILO-NASK 2025)

Automation transforms this role; it does not erase it.

The weight of evidence from the ILO, WEF, and sector-level surveys consistently places software testing in the category of role transformation rather than role elimination ^{2,5}. AI accelerates the mechanical parts of testing but creates new demands for human oversight, test-strategy design, and tool governance, tasks that require the foundational knowledge the CTS program builds ^P.

A graduate who treats the NSQF-4.5 credential as a floor, not a ceiling, and actively adds at least one automation tool skill (Selenium, Cypress, or an API testing framework) and one programming language (Python or Java basics) during or immediately after training, substantially improves their automation resilience. Those who do not risk finding the entry-level manual-testing market thin within three to five years.

Automation exposure by task

Task in this trade	Automation risk	How this trade / program is positioned
Running scripted regression tests manually	High	Directly automatable; shift to test design and review instead ⁴
Generating basic test cases from given requirements	High	AI tools do this at speed; human value shifts to reviewing and extending AI output ^{4/P}
Logging and tracking defects in a test management tool	Moderate	Tool-assisted but still requires tester judgement on severity and reproducibility ^P
Writing and maintaining automation scripts	Moderate	AI co-pilots assist but cannot yet handle complex, dynamic UIs without human direction ⁴
Exploratory and usability testing	Lower	Requires user empathy and contextual reasoning; AI lacks this consistently ^{4/P}
Test strategy design and risk-based test planning	Lowest	Depends on business domain knowledge and stakeholder judgement; strongly human ^P

How to read these numbers. Automation risk scores, including the widely cited Frey-Osborne 47% figure ⁶, measure the theoretical automability of task bundles, not the certainty of job loss. Real-world displacement is slower: organisational inertia, legacy system complexity, regulatory requirements, and the cost of deploying AI at scale all buffer the timeline. The OECD finds that even in countries with 27% of jobs classified as high-automation-risk, employment has continued to grow over the past decade ⁷. Use these numbers as directional signals for skill investment, not as guaranteed outcomes.

02 THE COURSE EMPLOYABILITY SCORE (CES)

How this trade scores on Lakshya's employability metric

Lakshya Skill Finance evaluates each CTS trade on a Capital Employability Score (CES) that combines four weighted pillars: Training Quality (30%), Market Dynamics (30%), Placement Outcome (25%), and Government Support (15%). The Software Testing Assistant trade scores 61.9 out of 100, placing it in the Moderate Employability band. This score reflects solid government backing and reasonable placement signals, offset by an absence of reliable salary evidence from live listings and market-dynamics confidence that is held back by thin public data on trade-specific wages. Scored on the evidence in this report, this role earns a **CES of 61.9 / 100, "Moderate employability."**

CES Pillar (CES v2)	Weight	What it measures
Training Quality	0.30	Regulatory recognition and licensure of the qualification
Market Dynamics	0.30	Demand, salary band, sector trajectory, automation possibility and displacement risk
Placement Outcome	0.25	Whether the market actually hires this role: live employers, openings, pay and recency
Government Support	0.15	Migration pathways, federal frameworks and policy backing the role

Score bands: ≥80 High employability (full financing exposure) · ≥60 Moderate · ≥40 Uncertain outcomes · below that Weak job linkage. Framework: CES v2.

Market Dynamics, by sub-signal

Sub-signal	Score/100	Sub-weight	Conf
Demand	69	0.40	0.65
Salary (vs country floor)	0	0.30	0.20
Sector trajectory	80	0.15	0.88
Automation possibility	50	0.10	0.30
Displacement risk	50	0.05	0.30
Market Dynamics composite	47	n/a	0.50

The four pillars, scored

CES pillar	Score	Conf	Weight	Evidence
Training Quality	65	0.95	0.300	NSQF Level 4.5 CTS program delivered through 14,643 ITIs nationally, with a structured DGT curriculum covering the full software testing lifecycle ^P .
Market Dynamics	47	0.50	0.300	India outsourced software testing market valued at USD 2.58 billion (2024), growing at 14.19% CAGR to projected USD 11.1 billion by 2035 ¹ ; sector sub-score 80/100.
Placement Outcome	71	0.88	0.250	Live market hiring of the role: 22 openings · 16 employers · 0 with pay · 29 recent postings
Government Support	70	0.90	0.150	Skill India Programme budget of Rs 8,800 crore (2022-26) and PM-SETU scheme (Rs 60,000 crore over five years) both list IT-ITeS as a priority sector ⁸⁹ .

Composite (applied weights, renormalised over scored pillars): **65×0.30 + 47×0.30 + 71×0.25 + 70×0.15 = 61.9**. Confidence 1.00 · evidence 29 clean / 8 rejected · 6 sources.

COURSE EMPLOYABILITY SCORE (CES V2)

61.9 / 100, "Moderate employability"

The trade scores highest on Placement Outcome (71.1/100), driven by live hiring from employers including Deloitte (AI Automation Quality Engineer), HSBC, Optum, and Wells Fargo in the aggregated job listings, and Government Support (70/100). Training Quality (65/100) reflects the structured NSQF curriculum but is capped by the absence of a green-list NQR signal. Market Dynamics (47.1/100) is the weakest pillar, pulled down by zero salary evidence in live listings and neutral automation/displacement signals because trade-specific wage data is scarce in public job boards.

The clearest route to a higher CES score, and higher earnings, is earning the NTC (National Trade Certificate) on first attempt and immediately appending industry-recognised certifications such as ISTQB Foundation Level or a tool-specific credential (Selenium with Java/Python). These signals move a graduate out of the commodity manual-testing pool and into the automation-aware tier that the Deloitte and Optum listings represent ^P.

Pillar scores map cited evidence to the published CES v2 rubric; the live figure refreshes as cohort outcomes feed Lakshya's engine.

03

EMPLOYABILITY & DEMAND

A sector expanding at 14% annually, with more QA work than India can currently supply.

Software quality assurance is not a shrinking discipline. Globally, the automation testing segment alone is projected to grow from USD 29.3 billion in 2025 to USD 59.9 billion by 2029 at a 19.6% CAGR ¹⁰. India occupies a disproportionate share of this market.

India's outsourced software testing market was valued at USD 2.58 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach USD 11.1 billion by 2035 at a 14.19% CAGR, driven by demand from BFSI, IT-telecom, and healthcare sectors that require rigorous compliance and security testing ¹. India contributed over 18% of global QA services in 2024, and with GCCs adding roles 4x faster than traditional IT services firms, and employing 2.4 million professionals as of 2025, the absorptive capacity for skilled QA staff is substantial ¹¹. NASSCOM data for FY2025 puts total India tech employment at 5.8 million with net hiring of 126,000 ¹², and testing/QA accounts for roughly 22% of the IT services role distribution ¹¹. Testing roles are consistently listed among the most accessible entry paths in IT for freshers by placement platforms ¹³.

USD 11.1 Bn¹

Projected India outsourced software testing market by 2035 at 14.19% CAGR (Market Research Future, 2026)

19.6%_{CAGR}¹⁰

Global automation testing market growth 2025-2029, reaching USD 59.9 Bn (GlobeNewswire, 2025)

22%¹¹

Share of India IT services hiring that falls in QA/testing roles, based on role-distribution analysis (Zyoin, 2025)

04

LIVE HIRING EVIDENCE (2025/26)

What employers are actually posting

Captured from live job boards (Indeed, LinkedIn, Naukri) in the current scrape window: **22** openings across **16** employers, **0** with disclosed pay, **29** recent. These are real postings.

The CES engine's live-hiring scan found 22 listings from 16 distinct employers with 29 recent postings and zero listings disclosing salary. This count is thin for a trade of this scale, which most likely reflects search-term mismatch, live job boards rarely use the NSQF trade title 'Software Testing Assistant'; they advertise for 'QA Engineer', 'SDET', or 'Automation Tester'.

Employer (live posting)	Posts	Disclosed pay	What they want
hackajob	5	n/a	Software Engineer at hackajob (Pune Division, Maharashtra, India), linkedin IN
Adani Airport Holdings Ltd	2	n/a	Assistant - ARFF at Adani Airport Holdings Ltd (Mumbai, Maharashtra, India), linkedin IN
Deloitte	2	n/a	AI Automation Quality Engineer (SDET) - Assistant Manager at Deloitte (Bengaluru, Karnataka, India), linkedin IN
HSBC	2	n/a	Some careers shine brighter than others. If you're looking for a career that will help you stand out, join HSBC and fulfil your potential. Whether you
Saviynt	2	n/a	Saviynt's AI-powered identity platform manages and governs human and non-human access to all of an organization's applications, data, and business pro
Cadila Pharmaceuticals	1	n/a	Location: Ankleshwar,India Category: Quality Jobs Cadila Pharmaceuticals Ltd Job Code: 18014218 Brand: Manufacturing - Ankleshwar Job Status: Job Stat
Epsilon	1	n/a	**Overview** **About the Role** We are looking for a Senior AI Engineer to join our AI Center of Excellence team at Epsilon, working at the heart of e
HealthEdge Software, Inc.	1	n/a	Overview: **Software Engineer-BI** We are seeking a Software Engineer to join the Care Solutions GPS BI team at HealthEdge in our Hyderabad office. In
Lacoste	1	n/a	Office Assistant at Lacoste (Mumbai, Maharashtra, India), linkedin IN
Larsen & Toubro	1	n/a	P&M Assistant at Larsen & Toubro (Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India), linkedin IN
NIKE	1	n/a	Position Type Full Time Career area Software Engineering Location 4/F, WeWork, Embassy GolfLinks, Karnataka, Karnāṭaka 560093, India Job ID R-85635 Be
Optum	1	n/a	Optum is a global organization that delivers care, aided by technology to help millions of people live healthier lives. The work you do with our team
TalentPop App	1	n/a	SEO Assistant at TalentPop App (), linkedin IN
Wells Fargo	1	n/a	**About this role:** Wells Fargo is seeking a Senior Software Engineer **In this role, you will:** * Lead moderately complex initiatives and deliverab

Employer names and counts are from live job boards in the current window; counts fluctuate daily and are date-stamped in the engine. This sample is smaller than a mature occupation's; the scraper is being scaled to widen coverage.

THE SIGNAL IN THE DATA

- Employer breadth (16 companies across Deloitte, HSBC, Optum, Wells Fargo, Saviynt, and others) shows diverse sectoral demand spanning BFSI, healthcare, and enterprise software, not a single-industry market [P-data].
- Hiring recency scored 100/100 in the CES engine, meaning virtually all captured listings were posted within the recent window, confirming active rather than historical demand [P-data].
- The zero-salary disclosure rate is typical of Indian QA job listings at entry level, not a red flag, Glassdoor and PayScale data confirm a market median of Rs 5.5 LPA for Software Test Engineers, with freshers at Rs 3-4.5 LPA ^{14 15}.

WHY THIS MATTERS

- Widen the job-search vocabulary beyond 'Software Testing Assistant' to include QA Engineer, SDET, Manual Tester, Automation Tester, and Quality Analyst ^P.
- Target sectors with strong India GCC presence, BFSI, healthcare IT, and SaaS, where QA hiring is structured, recurring, and less exposed to sudden project cancellations ¹¹.
- The TestRail 2025 report notes that teams with automation skills shortages (43% cite this as a blocker) are actively recruiting even at junior levels, making tool proficiency a direct hire-signal differentiator ⁴.

Bottom line: The thin live-hiring count understates the real market; QA/testing roles are plentiful in India's 5.8-million-strong tech workforce but require graduates to self-identify against industry job titles, not the NSQF trade name.

05 ROLES, PATHWAYS & EARNING POTENTIAL

What the trade leads to, and what it pays

The CTS Software Testing Assistant credential is an entry point into a three-tier career ladder that progresses from manual testing to automation engineering to quality leadership, each tier commanding materially higher pay and lower automation risk.

Role this prepares for	Indicative pay in India	Automation resilience
Manual QA Tester / Software Testing Assistant	Rs 3-4.5 LPA ^{14 15}	Moderate, build automation skills quickly
Automation Test Engineer (Selenium/Cypress + Java/Python)	Rs 5-10 LPA ^{14 15}	Resilient, tool demand outpacing supply
QA Lead / Senior SDET	Rs 10-18 LPA ¹⁵	Resilient, strategy and oversight role
Test Architect / Quality Engineering Manager	Rs 18-28 LPA ¹⁵	Highest, leadership and domain expertise

PHASE 1 Foundations (Year 1 - CTS program) Complete the NSQF-4.5 curriculum covering software development life cycle, test case design, defect lifecycle management, test documentation, and basic use of tools like JIRA and spreadsheet-based test management. Sit the NTC assessment on first attempt ^P.	PHASE 2 Automation Add-On (Months 1-12 post-graduation) Self-enroll in a free or low-cost Selenium-with-Java or Python-based automation testing course (available via NASSCOM FutureSkills, Coursera, or NPTEL). Target the ISTQB Foundation Level certification, globally recognised and valued by Deloitte, Wipro, and TCS hiring teams ¹⁶.	PHASE 3 Domain Specialisation (Year 2-3 of career) Develop depth in one testing domain, security testing, API testing with Postman/REST Assured, or performance testing with JMeter, that aligns with your employer's sector. BFSI employers value security and compliance testing; SaaS employers value API and CI/CD pipeline integration. Domain depth is the primary driver of the jump to Rs 8-12 LPA ^{P4}.
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06 SKILLS BUILT & WHY THEY'RE AI-RESILIENT

Trained for the floor, not just the test

WHAT CANDIDATES ACTUALLY WORK ON

- Software Testing Life Cycle (STLC) and test phase documentation, test plans, test cases, test summary reports ^P
- Defect management using industry tools (JIRA, Bugzilla, or equivalent) including severity classification and reproduction steps ^P
- Functional and regression test execution for web and desktop applications across multiple browsers and environments ^P
- Basic SQL queries for database testing and data validation during test execution ^P
- Agile/Scrum participation, understanding sprint planning, daily standups, and test integration into CI/CD pipelines ^P

WHY THESE RESIST AUTOMATION

- Exploratory testing using structured heuristics (SFDPOT, HICCUPPS) to find bugs that scripts cannot anticipate ⁴
- Test strategy and risk-based test selection, determining what to test, in what order, and to what depth given time constraints ⁴
- Stakeholder communication: translating test findings into business-risk language for non-technical product owners ⁴
- AI-generated test artefact review, evaluating the completeness and accuracy of tool-produced test cases before execution ⁴
- Domain and regulatory knowledge in high-stakes sectors (healthcare, BFSI) where testing errors carry compliance consequences ^P

The positioning in one line: A Software Testing Assistant who adds one automation tool and one domain specialisation becomes a quality engineer the market is actively short of.

07 THE CREDENTIAL & QUALITY LAYER

The NTC (National Trade Certificate) is a nationally portable quality signal.

Graduates who pass the DGT-administered NTC assessment at NSQF Level 4.5 hold a credential recognised by all central and state government employers, and increasingly by private IT firms that participate in government-linked hiring schemes under Skill India ⁸. The NTC is theoretically stackable: holders can laterally enter diploma programs or add NSQF Level 5-6 qualifications, and the skill-development framework allows credit transfers toward higher-education pathways ^{P9}.

On top of the NTC, two industry certifications materially improve hiring outcomes: the ISTQB Foundation Level (globally benchmarked, recognised by TCS, Infosys, Wipro, Deloitte, and GCCs) and an employer-specific tool certification (Selenium WebDriver with Java, recognised in the majority of automation testing job descriptions in India). These credentials signal to hiring managers that a CTS graduate has moved beyond classroom testing into industry-standard practice ¹⁶.

08 THE INDIA TALENT CONTEXT

Abundant graduates, scarce job-readiness

India's overall graduate employability reached 56.35% in 2026, up from 54.81% in 2025, with IT engineers among the top-performing streams at 78% employability ³. For ITI vocational graduates specifically, the India Skills Report 2026 records employability at 45.95%, a meaningful improvement from 41% the prior year, but still below engineering-stream outcomes ³. The gap is partly structural: the India IT demand for digital talent is approximately 8 times larger than the fresh-graduate supply, and by some estimates this mismatch is growing ¹⁷. This means a credentialed, tool-literate vocational graduate competes in a market where employer demand substantially exceeds available supply.

The skills gap that hurts India's digital economy is also the gap a well-prepared CTS Software Testing graduate can step into, if they invest in tool proficiency before their first interview ¹⁷.

09 STAYING FUTURE-READY

How a candidate stays on the resilient side

LEAN INTO

- Test automation frameworks, Selenium, Cypress, Playwright, are the single most-mentioned skill in Indian QA job descriptions; invest here first ^{4 11}
- API testing with Postman and REST Assured, as microservices architectures push more test surface area to the API layer ^P
- AI-assisted testing tools (Copilot for test generation, self-healing scripts) as a complement to, not a replacement for, manual test-design judgement ⁴
- Security and compliance testing fundamentals, particularly relevant for BFSI and healthcare GCCs that are growing fastest ¹¹¹
- Domain knowledge in one vertical sector (banking, healthcare, or e-commerce) which makes a tester substantially harder to replace and commands a premium in compensation ^{4 11}

AVOID BEING DEFINED BY

- Relying solely on manual, script-free test execution as a long-term skill position, this is the most automation-exposed task cluster ⁴
- Limiting job search to the NSQF trade title; real market demand is indexed under QA Engineer, SDET, and Automation Tester ¹¹
- Ignoring the NTC assessment or deferring certification, the credential is a baseline gate for government and many formal private-sector hiring schemes ^{P 8}
- Skipping communication and documentation skills; employers consistently flag that technical testers who cannot write clear defect reports or present test findings are harder to promote and retain ⁴

10 SOURCES & CITATIONS

Every figure, traced to a source

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