

Technical Education Programme

'Update on Technical Education Pathways' webinar (18/09/24) – Q&A

Many thanks to colleagues from the DfE, Amazing Apprenticeships, IfATE and the Gatsby Foundation for their input to the answers below.

Disclaimer: Please note that the information in this document reflects the policy situation at the time of the webinar recorded in September 2024 and is subject to change over time.

T Levels

Q: Why is there no support structure for T Levels, in the same way that there is for supported apprenticeships and internships?

A: There are flexibilities for SEND students, who can spend up to one third of their industry placement hours working in the providers' on-site facilities, so long as it is relevant to students' T Level pathway and/or occupational specialism. This is to help build the students' confidence before undertaking the remainder of their placement hours with an external employer.

We have also introduced the T Level Foundation Year, to support those young people who could access a T Level following some additional tailored preparation.

Q: If BTECs are defunded, what is going to replace BTEC Firsts, as a progression route to T Levels if the student doesn't have 4 GCSEs at grade 4?

A: The T Level Foundation Year supports those young people who could access a T Level following some additional tailored preparation. It provides relevant knowledge, practical and study skills for the full two-year T Level programme.

In July we announced a [short review of qualifications reform](#) – and to allow space for this review we have paused the planned removal, on 31 July 2024, of 16 to 19 funding from qualifications in Construction and the Built Environment, Digital, Education and Early Years, and Health and Science.

The review will assess how best to improve the quality of the overall qualifications landscape, support the growth of T Levels, and ensure that all young people and adults have high-quality options that meet their needs. The review is examining the current planned reforms and is looking at how we can ensure leading technical qualifications like T Levels are open to as many people as possible, whilst ensuring high-quality

alternatives. The short review is now underway and we are unable to pre-judge the results of the review, which will report before the end of the year.

Q: If BTECs are defunded, how will the 500 000 students currently taking them be moved on to alternatives, including T Levels?

A: Irrespective of the review outcomes, students currently taking a BTEC course will be able to complete their course.

Q: Can careers advisers feed in to the qualification review?

A: The review is internal, however we are engaging with a group of representative stakeholders as part of the process.

Q: Where will the work placements come from?

A: Over 30,000 young people have taken a T Level since their launch in 2020. Our digital Connect service allows employers to express interest in T Levels, and providers to see that interest in order to initiate contact. In August 2023 we were encouraged to see 94.9% of students complete their industry placements.

We are also continuing with our extensive engagement with employers, to raise their awareness of industry placements and the value that placements can bring to their organisations. Over the last year we have developed a [comprehensive package of support](#) to help employers deliver industry placements.

We have also implemented different [delivery approaches](#) to ensure that students can access high-quality and meaningful placements across the country, and across all industries. For example, industry placement hours can be split by up to two different employers, students who work part time can count these hours towards their placement (where it's relevant to their occupational specialism) and up to one fifth of the placement hours can be carried out remotely for certain T Levels.

Q: Do students have to find their own T Level placement if the college cannot source one?

A: Providers are responsible for sourcing the industry placement and must make sure that it is the right match for both students and employers. The placement must be linked to the content of the T Level to provide students with the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours at Level 3, in the workplace. Providers may encourage students to find their own placement. In this scenario, it is important that providers help students to identify suitable employers that are relevant to their chosen occupational specialism. Providers and students may also wish to refer to the [self-sourcing guidance](#).

Q: What is being done to support employers, as it is very challenging to set up industry placements?

A: There is extensive support for employers published [here](#). Our digital [Connect service](#) allows employers to express interest in T Levels, and providers to see that interest in order to initiate contact. Since 2019 over 4,000 employers have attended workshops and webinars and over 500 hours of one-to-one support has been offered to support employers plan and implement industry placements.

Industry placements are about providing students with high-quality, meaningful training, not work. Therefore, students on a T Level industry placement are not entitled to a salary as the placement is forming part of a course of further education. However, employers can pay students should they wish to.

Q: What was the completion rate for the 3rd cohort of T level students?

A: The retained and assessed rate for the cohort who began their T levels in 2022 is 71% over 16 pathways, compared to the previous cohort's 66% over 10 pathways. This gives us confidence that retention on T Levels can improve as providers become more familiar in delivering them. More detail around results and the methodology used can be found [here](#).

Q: Why do entry requirements differ between providers?

A: In line with other qualifications, entry requirements are not set centrally – each provider has discretion to set requirements they feel matches the content of each T Level.

Q: Are we seeing virtual work placements rather than in person? I read a pilot about this recently.

A: Industry placements should take place in a real work environment – in a workplace with the student making a meaningful contribution. There are flexibilities for how industry placements can be delivered – and up to one fifth (20%) of a student's total industry placement hours can be delivered remotely for some T levels, with the remaining placement hours being delivered in-person. This applies to the following T Levels: Digital, Accounting, Finance, Legal Services, Management and Administration and Media, Broadcast and Production.

Q: Are there sites on T Level routes offering support for careers advisors?

A: Resources for careers advisers can be found [here](#). The T Levels website also contains information for students and a postcode finder to search for your nearest T Level. If you have any questions about T Levels or would like to suggest additional resources which might be helpful for careers advisers, please email us at tlevel.delivery@education.gov.uk We also work with Amazing Apprenticeships to raise awareness of T Levels with teachers and careers advisers and hold regular information webinars on T Levels – so please sign up [here](#) for more information.

The CDI's Technical Education Programme aims to bring information and advice on all technical education pathways into one page. We are currently developing a Resource Hub which will be hosted on the CDI website, which will curate existing resources and develop new ones specifically aimed at careers professionals.

Q: Do T Levels still need to be approved or can any provider deliver?

A: From 2026 providers currently funded to offer 16 to 19 study programmes and with existing students funded in band 5 (the full-time national funding band) will be eligible to offer all T Levels. They will need to register [here](#).

Q: Are universities more open to T Levels in their entry requirements now?

A: Yes – as the T Level rollout has continued, more universities are accepting T Levels. The Department has published a [list](#) of higher education providers that have confirmed they accept T Levels on at least one course. We are pleased that this list includes over 160 higher education providers, including several higher tariff institutions. We expect this list to grow as T Levels become more established. This list is not exhaustive or an official register of all Higher Education providers that accept T Levels. We strongly encourage students to look at the UCAS Course Directory and their preferred higher education provider's website for more information on entry requirements.

Q: I was under the impression that a T Level qualification is fully vocational, rather than academic, as it was designed on the same framework as apprenticeships? Is that correct?

A: T Levels are based on the same approved occupational standards as apprenticeships. However unlike apprenticeships, T Levels comprise around 80% time spent in a classroom and 20% on an industry placement. The qualification aspect of T Levels comprises two separate components:

- A core component that assesses underpinning knowledge, understanding and core skills relevant to the occupations covered by the T Level. As part of T Level core content, students undertake an Employer Set Project. These are live briefs set by employers in conjunction with Awarding Organisations (AOs) - and cover current issues relevant to employers in that industry.
- One or more occupational specialist components focussed on assessing occupationally specific knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to an occupation within the relevant T Level pathway

T Levels are designed to equip students for skilled employment, whilst also providing a high-quality route to further study, including apprenticeships and higher education. The core content provides underpinning knowledge and breadth of skills to support adaptability. The occupational specialisms develop technical competence – and the industry placement builds attitudes and behaviours and takes technical competence further.

Q: How does the grading for T Levels compare to that for A Levels?

A: Students who meet all of the requirements of their T Level are awarded an overall grade of either Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction*. A student's overall T Level grade is worked out from the grades they achieved on the core component and the occupational specialism(s). You can find out more here about [How grades are calculated – T Levels support for schools and colleges](#). The UCAS tariff for T Levels supports progression into higher education. The tariff is based on an alignment of the standards for T Levels with other Level 3 qualifications, including A levels. The top T Level grade is equal to achieving 3 A* at A Level and T Level students must achieve at least an overall Pass grade to receive UCAS points. There is also a separate tariff allocation for both components of the Technical Qualification: an allocation for students that have passed the Core and completed the Industry Placement and an allocation for students that have passed the Occupational Specialism and completed the Industry Placement. More information can be found through the [UCAS Tariff Calculator](#).

Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)

Q: Can you top up to an undergraduate degree from a level 4 or 5 course?

A: Although a qualification such as an HND or a Foundation Degree is an excellent qualification in itself, it is usually possible for students to 'top up' to an undergraduate degree, if they so wish. Many universities allow students to progress to the second or third year of a degree and many Further Education Colleges have arrangements with degree providers to accept level 4 and 5 students onto their courses.

Q: The option to top up to level 5 has not been easy in some sectors. Is funding available for level 4/5 courses as it is for degree courses?

A: This is largely the responsibility of the university sector, which is made up of autonomous institutions who are already empowered to recognise prior learning – including credit gained through qualifications at levels 4 and 5 – when offering progression from levels 4 and 5 through to level 6. Those institutions and their learners have the same access to funding and student finance for top-up courses as do those starting a bachelor's degree at 18. Any learner considering an HTQ can ask the provider of that qualification what arrangements they have for progression to degree level if this is not already indicated in the course information.

Q: Are HTQs a standard, rather than an actual qualification?

A: Yes, HTQs are qualifications which have been approved against employer-developed standards, ensuring that learners gain the skills required by industry. These are the same occupational standards that underpin apprenticeships, meaning that learners on classroom-based HTQs are gaining many of the same skills as those on apprenticeships. This is important for learners who have been unable to find an apprenticeship in their chosen occupation. HTQs include new and existing qualifications which have been approved by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE). Approved courses should display the quality mark logo.

Q: Will employers be able to access to use the Apprenticeship Levy to fund level 4 and 5 courses?

A: The new Apprenticeship and Skills Levy will be implemented by Skills England, which is in the process of being formed. Skills England will be conducting a consultation on the new flexibilities to be applied, and the outcomes of this will help to determine the different non-apprenticeship courses that could be funded. In short – we don't know yet.

Q: How will this fit with an apprenticeship pathway (those which have level 4 as an embedded qualification)?

A: There are currently over 700 apprenticeships approved for delivery, many of which have embedded, mandatory qualifications. These mandatory qualifications are funded by the existing levy. How things will 'fit' together in future, in terms of pathways, will be determined by Skills England in the months ahead.

Q: Are there any free posters or resources for the different level 1-7 routes? HTQs are not mentioned on some of the existing ones.

A: IfATE's [Occupational Maps](#) show where technical qualifications can lead.

The [Education Landscape](#) produces a useful 'Guide for Employers' which includes an overview of the education system at a glance.

A full list of qualification levels can be found here [here](#) and a simple table showing qualifications from entry level to level 8 can be found [here](#)

Q: Will HTQs be available to search on UCAS?

A: Yes, many HTQs are listed and searchable on UCAS. Individual institutions are responsible for uploading their course information and the DfE team is working with providers to improve their coverage. We are also supporting UCAS to work more closely with providers and to ensure the relevant information is available.

Apprenticeships

Q: Is any work being done with the NHS? Some apprenticeships at level 3 don't attract UCAS points to progress on to a degree or a Degree Apprenticeship. Are there any plans to attach UCAS points to apprenticeships?

A: In March 2023, UCAS announced that they would be consulting on allocating UCAS points to apprenticeships. An announcement is expected soon. [Revealed: UCAS' points plan for apprenticeships \(fewweek.co.uk\)](#)

Q: What is the best way to access NHS apprenticeships? Some, e.g. Nursing are almost impossible to access unless you are already working within the NHS.

A: All NHS related apprenticeships are found on the [IfATE website](#). From here you can link to the “find an apprenticeship” pages, to find advertised vacancies. [Apprenticeship search / route health-and-science / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#)

Q: How will Skills England link with devolved nations, e.g. Scotland

A: It is intended this will happen, but the details will be worked through in the months ahead. Devolution is referenced in the SE report published 24.9.24 [Skills England: driving growth and widening opportunities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Q: What are the strategies to add further apprenticeships for niche areas, where volumes of learners are low?

A: IfATE recognises that some niche occupations will only ever attract low volumes of learners. Apprenticeships is one way of protecting skills, such as in heritage occupations. Our key strategy then is to ensure that any new apprenticeship will be in reasonable demand, and is viable to deliver. We are still adding further apprenticeships, but at a slower pace than previous years, as the occupational map coverage is comprehensive already. The introduction of Skills England from 2025 is likely to also influence which sectors and occupations we prioritise.

Q: What are the best ways to find apprenticeships? The government apprenticeships website is not very good.

A: The government’s Find an Apprenticeship portal has recently been refreshed to include some exciting new features and functions to assist aspiring apprentices to search and apply for vacancies. It’s worth checking out some of the changes. However, it’s not the only place to look... Finding apprenticeship vacancies is effectively job searching, and so there are a number of different ways that you can support your students to search.

Q: What do people do after a level 3 apprenticeship, if not a Degree Apprenticeship?

A: Many (if not most) apprentices will be permanent employees within their business and so will also be supported by ongoing personal and professional development with their employer. Some apprentices will pause after completing their level 3 apprenticeship and decide on an area of the business that they want to specialise in. Apprenticeship progression does not have to be immediate, and it does not have to be linear. It could be that they decide to take a break in studying. They could also look at other apprenticeships that might support their skills development in other areas. Apprentices are able to complete another apprenticeship at the same level. There are also many level 4 and level 5 opportunities.

Q: Can you progress from a level 3 childcare apprenticeship to a teaching qualification?

A: If you take the teacher degree apprenticeship as an example, the apprenticeship lasts 4 years, assuming no prior learning. If an apprentice has recognised prior learning, such as in childcare, then this must be taken account and the duration adjusted accordingly. Please note the teacher apprenticeship has specified entry requirements [Teacher / Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#)