

## T LEVELS BRIEFING NOTE – OCTOBER 2019 (vs 2)

### Background

- The [Post 16 Skills Plan](#), published in July 2016, formed the government's response to the recommendations made by the Independent Panel on Technical Education. This panel, chaired by Lord Sainsbury, advised Ministers on how to improve technical education in England.
- The Post 16 Skills Plan confirmed the government's acceptance of all of the recommendations of the Sainsbury panel. It outlines a radical reform of post-16 education, which will transform the technical education landscape.
- The aim is to streamline the current system, by addressing the problem of the bewildering choice of qualifications for young people and ensuring that there is a clear line of sight between the qualification and their intended job role.
- At age 16, young people will be able to choose either an academic option for those targeting undergraduate study, or a technical option for those seeking to enter skilled employment, an apprenticeship or higher level technical study.
- A common framework of 15 technical education routes that encompass all employment-based (apprenticeships) and college-based (T Levels) training has been established. T Level courses, alongside apprenticeships, will form the basis of our new technical education offer.
- The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has published [Occupational Maps](#) which articulate this common framework by documenting all the skilled occupations that can be achieved through an apprenticeship or T Level. Occupations are grouped together to show linkages between them and possible routes for progression.

### T Levels

- [T Levels](#) are new, two-year, level 3, technical study courses that will be available full time in colleges, and other further education providers.
- T Level courses will be classroom based with a substantial industry placement element (around 80% in the classroom and 20% on the placement).
- The primary purpose of T Levels is to prepare students for entry into skilled employment or higher levels of technical education.
- The UCAS tariff for T Levels has been confirmed - this will support progression into higher education. The tariff is based on an alignment of the intended standards for T Levels with other Level 3 qualifications, including A Levels. The highest T Level grade – Distinction\* – will be awarded the same number of UCAS points as 3 A\*s at A Level. An overall Pass grade at T Level will be awarded at least as many points as 3 Ds at A Level.
- We are working closely with HE stakeholders to understand HE progression

routes from T Levels, and ensure HE providers have the information they need to determine how T Levels will work within their admissions policies.

- A key element of T Levels is a high-quality, structured industry placement of a minimum of 315 hours, with an average of 350 hours (approx 45 days). There is an extensive programme of support in place for their delivery, including a capacity and delivery fund for providers and a referral and matching service for employers through the National Apprenticeship Service.
- An industry placement pilot programme, which ran in 2017-18, tested different models of placements and the resulting good practice is published on the [Association of Colleges website](#). The evaluation of the pilots was published in December 2018 and can be found [here](#).
- The outline content of the new courses is devised by [T Level panels](#), consisting of employers and other professionals representing occupations within the route, with input from education experts.
- T Level courses comprise a technical qualification, a placement in industry together with maths, English and digital requirements, as well as other occupation-specific requirements / qualifications, and employability, enrichment and pastoral provision.
- Students who meet all of the requirements of their T Level will be awarded an overall grade of either Pass, Merit, Distinction or Distinction\*. A student's overall T Level grade will be worked out from the grades they achieved on the core component and the occupational specialism(s)
- Students who do not pass all elements of their T Level will get a T Level statement of achievement which will show the elements they have completed
- T Level courses are substantial. They are likely to be equivalent in size to 3 A levels and will have more teaching time built in, giving all students a consistently high quality education programme.
- The first teaching of three T Levels by around 50 providers will start in September 2020, followed by seven more T Levels taught by a further 64 providers. You can find your local provider by visiting [www.tlevels.gov.uk](http://www.tlevels.gov.uk)
- The remaining 15 T Levels will be launched in 2022 and 2023 – as confirmed in the [2019 T Level Action Plan](#). This phased approach reflects our ambition to ensure high quality delivery which grows coverage across the country in a managed way.

### **The Technical Qualification Part of a T Level (TQ)**

- The TQ aspect of T Levels will comprise two separate components:
  - A core component that assesses underpinning knowledge, understanding and core skills relevant to the occupations covered by the T Level;

- 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.
- Providers will need to design their curriculum in a way that supports students to make a choice between different occupational specialisms. We do not expect students to have decided at the outset of their T Level course which occupational specialism they wish to pursue, and providers will play an important role in facilitating that decision.

### **Maths and English Requirements**

- The minimum T Level exit requirement will be GCSE grade 9-4 or a Functional Skills level 2 pass in maths and English, to align with the existing requirements for level 3 apprenticeships.
- For some T Levels where higher levels of achievement are required for the associated occupations, the maths and/or English requirement may be higher.
- The policy relating to the condition of funding that applies to providers delivering other 16 to 19 year study programmes will not apply to T Level students.
- In line with the requirements for apprenticeships, our policy is that the maths and English exit requirement for some T Level students with SEND will be Entry Level 3 in Functional Skills.

### **Awarding Organisation Procurement**

- To protect the standard of T Levels and ensure they are a valued qualification recognisable by employers, one awarding body will have exclusive rights to deliver each T Level Technical Qualification. This was a key recommendation made by Lord Sainsbury in his independent review of technical education.
- In February 2019 we announced the successful bidders for the first three T Levels - NCFE was awarded a contract to deliver the Education and Childcare TQ, and Pearson was awarded contracts to deliver TQs in Design, Surveying and Planning as well Digital Production, Design and Development.
- In October 2019 the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education announced the successful bidders for the seven T Levels to be delivered in 2021 - NCFE was chosen to develop the qualifications for: Digital Business Services, Digital Support Services, Health, Healthcare Science and Science; and City & Guilds have been granted the contract for Onsite Construction and Building Services Engineering.

### **T Level Rollout**

- We have selected a relatively small number of high performing providers for the first two years of delivery (around 50 in 2020 and a further 64 in 2021), to ensure

that they get the support they need, and that T Levels are high quality courses from the very start. These providers were selected because they met a set of quality criteria, and are therefore starting from a good position to prepare to deliver high-quality T Levels.

- The Department is working closely with the 2020 providers to test and shape different elements of the T Level programme – through ongoing communication and a series of engagement events and workshops. The awarding organisations responsible for developing, delivering and awarding the first three qualifications (NCFE and Pearson) are sharing drafts of the qualification specification at set stages during their development, so that providers are familiar with the detailed content covered in the T Level qualification well ahead of teaching.
- The 2019 T Level Action Plan confirmed the selection criteria for providers to deliver T Levels in 2022. We are looking for a wide range of post-16 providers to offer T Levels, including FE colleges and sixth form colleges, UTCs, schools and independent training providers. The expressions of interest process for 2022 delivery will launch in early January 2020.

### Full T Level rollout

Route	T Level	Delivery
Construction	<b>Design, Surveying &amp; Planning</b>	<b>2020</b>
	<b>Onsite Construction</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>Building Services Engineering</b>	<b>2021</b>
Education & Childcare	<b>Education</b>	<b>2020</b>
Digital	<b>Digital Production, Design &amp; Development</b>	<b>2020</b>
	<b>Digital Support Services</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>Digital Business Services</b>	<b>2021</b>
Health and Science	<b>Health</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>Healthcare Science</b>	<b>2021</b>
	<b>Science</b>	<b>2021</b>
Legal Finance and Accounting	<b>Legal</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>Financial</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>Accountancy</b>	<b>2022</b>
Engineering and Manufacturing	<b>Maintenance, Installation &amp; Repair</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>Design and Development</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>Manufacturing, Processing &amp; Control</b>	<b>2022</b>
Business and Administration	<b>Management &amp; Administration</b>	<b>2022</b>
	<b>Human Resources</b>	<b>2022</b>
Hair and Beauty	<b>Hair, Beauty &amp; Aesthetics</b>	<b>2023</b>
Creative and Design	<b>Craft &amp; Design</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>Cultural Heritage &amp; Visitor Attractions</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>Media, Broadcast &amp; Production</b>	<b>2023</b>
Catering and Hospitality	<b>Catering</b>	<b>2023</b>
Agriculture, Environmental, and Animal Care	<b>Animal Care &amp; Management</b>	<b>2023</b>
	<b>Agriculture, Land Management &amp; Production</b>	<b>2023</b>

## Funding

- In the 2017 Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced an additional £500 million a year for T Levels once they are fully rolled out, which will support the increase in learning hours.
- From 27 November 2018 to 19 February we launched a [consultation](#) on how funding will be distributed to providers from the 2020/21 academic year. This included indicative funding rates and the related funding policy considerations.
- The response to the funding consultation was published in June. We are making some changes in light of the feedback we received:
  - Introducing an early adopter fund to help the early providers of T Levels and the T Level Transition Programme meet some of the costs that are unique to these early providers.
  - Reducing the minimum hours providers will be required to deliver for 2 of the funding bands to align these with existing study programmes.
  - Providing additional disadvantage funding for industry placements.
- In January 2019 we launched a £38m capital fund to support the initial roll-out of T Levels from September 2020. This funding will be used to improve the quality of facilities and equipment that will be used to deliver T Levels. In July 2019 we announced an initial investment of £8.65m in providers from the fund, with more awards to be confirmed later in the year.
- In the two years to March 2020, we will already have invested up to £20m to help teachers and leaders prepare for the introduction of T levels.
- We have already allocated nearly £60 million to providers to help them build capacity for the improved industry placements that will form part of the new T levels.
- We have now published further operational detail on how T Levels will be funded in academic year 2020/21 and this is available [here](#).
- On the 31 August 2019, the Chancellor announced an [additional £400m](#) for 16 to 19 education for academic year 2020 to 2021. As a result, we will be increasing the funding rate for 16-19 education, including T Levels, by 4.7% and the new funding rates have now been published [here](#).

## Wider review of qualifications

- The Department is carrying out a review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below, excluding A levels and GCSEs. The first stage of this review ran from 19th March to 10th June. The aim is to simplify the qualifications landscape so all qualifications are clearly understood and have clear links to further study or employment.

- We want to ensure that every qualification is necessary and has a distinct purpose, is high quality and supports progression to positive outcomes. The consultation asked for views on defining these principles further.
- We are consulting on the review in two stages. A second consultation will follow, and will set out the proposed criteria that will be used to determine whether a qualification continues to receive public funding.
- The consultation on Higher Technical Education (levels 4-5) in England closed on 29 September 2019. We aim to publish the government response in early 2020. The consultation set out proposals to make higher technical education a prestigious choice that delivers the skills employers need, encourages more students to continue studying after A levels or T levels and attract workers of all ages looking to upskill and retrain. The consultation proposals build on the introduction of T Levels and our investment in Apprenticeships as part of the modern Industrial Strategy to improve productivity and help people progress in their work and lives.
- We are developing the T Level Transition Programme for students who are not ready to start a T Level but have the potential to progress onto one following a tailored preparation programme. The AoC will support the phased implementation of the T level Transition Programme, running up to first delivery in academic year 2020/21.

## **Support for Providers**

### T Level Professional Development (TLPD) Offer

- In the two years to March 2020, we will already have invested up to £20m to support providers as they prepare for the introduction of T Levels. This includes £8m for a [new T Level Professional Development offer](#). The Education and Training Foundation are leading on delivering this flexible Continuing Professional Development offer to help staff prepare for the change and successfully deliver the first T Levels.
- The offer has 5 strands: Professional development needs analysis, Understanding T Levels, Teacher development programme, Knowledge hubs, and Organisational readiness. The training has been available since May this year.

### Industry Placements

- We have allocated nearly £60million to providers through the Capacity and Delivery Fund, to help them establish the infrastructure and resources needed to deliver industry placements, with another £55m allocated for 19/20
- Working alongside ESFA, we are putting in place arrangements for more intensive support for those providers who need it

- We have invested in the National Apprenticeship Service – expanding their current remit to provide a matching service for providers and employers – and to raise awareness and promote industry placements through their employer networks.
- The industry placement pilot scheme, run by ‘The Challenge’, tested different models and approaches to delivering T Level placements in academic year 2017/18. 21 providers piloted these, which involved over 2000 students.
- On 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018 we published the [evaluation](#) of the pilot programme. We have published [‘how to’ guidance](#) for both providers and employers, based on good practice from the pilots
- DfE is leading by example with the civil service as a major employer offering industry placements - the first placements were hosted in DfE from May 19
- We published an [Industry Placements Policy Statement](#) on 19 May, which announced some changes:
  - Allowing students generally to work with up to 2 employers
  - Using on-site facilities for SEND and young offenders for part of the placement
  - Allowing a small proportion of occupationally relevant work tasters to count towards placement
  - Allowing part time work to count as long as it is occupationally relevant and at the right level
  - Placements recorded in hours rather than days - to reflect different working practices
  - Some route-specific models to reflect different industries, such as allowing placements at route level for digital.
- The Policy Statement also outlined details of the following employer support package:
  - Training, guidance and intensive support for employers to deliver high quality placements
  - Piloting a £7m employer support fund in AY 19/20 to support employers who have cited cost as a barrier to offering placements
  - Exploring local innovation to tackle location and access barriers

## Communications

- The T Level communications campaign launched in October 2019 - targeting young people, parents, teachers and employers. The aim is to establish the status of T Levels, raise awareness of the key benefits, stimulate demand and inspire our audiences to find out more. The communications campaign will widen as the rollout of T Levels continues.
- A new website has been launched – [www.tlevels.gov.uk](http://www.tlevels.gov.uk) – which includes a function to search for a local T Level provider, alongside a [T Level film](#).

- The campaign will provide national coverage but will be targeted in our 2020 provider areas. Activity will include video on demand TV advertising, out of home posters, social media activity etc.
- We are working to promote T Levels within schools and providing training for careers advisers and careers leaders through the Career Development Institute and the Careers and Enterprise Company.
- We are working with the National Apprenticeship Service to promote employer engagement - and using Employer Ambassadors to promote the benefits of T Levels and industry placements
- We have published a series of industry placement case study films on the DfE YouTube channel
- We have provided a communications toolkit, along with branded materials and branding guidelines, for the 2020 providers, designed for them to adapt to suit their local needs to market T Levels in their areas.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: What are the advantages of doing a T Level over current vocational qualifications?**

The content of T Levels is designed by employers, so students will know that their qualification will give them the skills needed to get a good job. The courses will be more substantial than existing technical qualifications, with longer teaching time – we expect them to be roughly the size of 3 A levels.

A key aspect of T Levels is the industry placement - a structured period in employment that is expected to last a minimum of 315 hours, with an average of 350 hours (approx 45 days). This will provide learners with the opportunity to develop the specific technical and practical skills, knowledge, and behaviours required for skilled employment in their field of study, ensuring they are 'work ready'. We recognise that industry placements are a step change for both education providers and employers, which is why we are providing extensive support for their implementation well ahead of first teaching in 2020.

### **Q: How will you ensure that T Levels are held in the same high regard as A levels?**

A key aim of our reforms is to ensure that T Levels are every bit as rigorous as A levels and are equally valued by employers and students. We expect T Levels to be as sought after as A levels because of the value they will bring to students and employers. This is why we have given employers responsibility for setting the content of T Levels, so that they meet their requirements and will have genuine currency for students seeking employment. The industry placement element of T Levels will also provide students with the opportunity to apply the skills learnt in the classroom to a real-life workplace environment. The highest T Level grade – Distinction\* – will be awarded the same number of UCAS points as 3 A\*s at A Level.

And the technical qualification component will be externally assessed, in the same way most A Levels are.

**Q: What is the career guidance entitlement for young people on a T level and who is providing this?**

All FE colleges and sixth form colleges in England are subject to the requirement to secure access to independent careers guidance. We would expect young people on a T Level to receive the advice and guidance they need to progress into employment or further technical training and we are providing training to careers leaders and careers advisers through the Careers and Enterprise Company and Career Development Institute.

**Q: Is the first delivery in 2020 a ‘pilot’?**

The initial rollout of three T Levels in 2020 is not a pilot – as we are not testing out different approaches. Students in 2020 will be taking the final, fully developed qualifications. A further 22 T Levels will be rolled out across England in a measured implementation from 2021 onwards.

**Q. Can an A level be taken alongside a T Level and what is the feasibility around this?**

T Levels will differ in size depending on their industry and occupational specialism. However they will all be substantially larger than most current technical qualifications and at least the size of a 3 A Level programme. In principle, we believe that a student should be able to take an A level alongside their T Level, particularly if it supports progression outcomes for their chosen T Level, including to university. We want to work with the 2020 providers to explore the feasibility of this, including the impact on a student’s timetable.

We are supportive of high attaining students who want to take an additional A Level alongside their T Level and there is provision for this within the current T Level funding arrangements.

A student who takes an A Level and gets a grade B (C in further maths) or better, plus a good grade in their T Level would attract funding for this through the Large Programme Uplift (LPU). Where providers are expanding the number of students taking a L3 maths qualification then they will also attract additional funding through the Advanced Maths Premium (AMP).

As well as the LPU and the AMP, T Level funding arrangements will include an average of 75 hours EEP (employability, enrichment and pastoral) per year, per student. As with existing study programmes, providers may choose to use EEP hours to help fund an A Level.

**Q: What have you learnt from previous reforms, why should T Levels be any different?**

Rather than adding new qualifications to an already complex system, the overarching aim of these reforms is to simplify the qualification landscape. We want T Levels to be part of a long-term solution to ensure that employers get the skilled workers they need for future prosperity. We have conducted a review of recent attempts at reforming the technical/vocational education system, in particular the 14-

19 Diplomas. We have identified some clear reasons why T Levels are better placed to succeed than the Diplomas. We know that a central reason the Diplomas were not widely taken up was that they lacked a clear purpose, attempting to chart a 'middle course' between vocational and academic qualifications.

T Levels are different – they are part of a new, distinct technical offer, based on a common set of standards with apprenticeships. They will give students the knowledge and skills needed to get a skilled job, either immediately or after higher technical education. In contrast to previous reforms, we are directly involving employers in the development of T Levels, and they are setting out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for each occupational area.

**Q: Will T Levels be shelved in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit?**

The Secretary of State has made it clear that the introduction of T levels is not under threat. T levels are a way of making sure young people gain the skills they need to get a great job. Alongside our apprenticeship reforms, T Levels are central to reforming technical and vocational education and training, to improve workforce skills and drive productivity growth. This is why it is important we keep up momentum.