

T LEVELS BRIEFING NOTE – MAY 2020

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 63 providers. You can find your local provider by visiting www.tlevels.gov.uk
- The remaining 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 for Construction as well Digital Production, Design and Development. Pearson and NCFE published the specifications for these T Levels in April.
- 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.
- The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education lead the procurement for Awarding Organisations and they will announce the successful bidders for the 2022 T Levels in the Autumn.

T Level Rollout (visit www.tlevels.gov.uk to find your nearest provider)

- We have selected a [relatively small number of high performing providers](#) for the first two years of delivery (around 46 in 2020 and a further 63 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.
- In January 2020 we launched the expressions of interest process for providers wishing to deliver T Levels in 2022. The list of successful providers has now been published – 88 providers expect to deliver T Levels in 2022.
- The awarding organisations responsible for developing, delivering and awarding the first three qualifications (NCFE and Pearson) published the specifications for these on 1st April 2020. Prior to this, drafts were shared at set stages during their development, so that providers were familiar with the detailed content covered in the T Level qualification well ahead of teaching.

Full T Level rollout

Route	T Level	Delivery
Construction	Design, Surveying & Planning for Construction	2020
	Onsite Construction	2021
	Building Services Engineering for Construction	2021
Education & Childcare	Education and Childcare	2020
Digital	Digital Production, Design & Development	2020
	Digital Support and Services	2021
	Digital Business Services	2021
Health and Science	Health	2021
	Healthcare Science	2021
	Science	2021
Legal Finance and Accounting	Legal	2022
	Finance	2022
	Accounting	2022
Engineering and Manufacturing	Maintenance, Installation & Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing	2022
	Engineering and Manufacturing Design and Development	2022
	Engineering, Manufacturing, Processing & Control	2022
Business and Administration	Management & Administration	2022
	Human Resources	2022
Hair and Beauty	Hair, Beauty & Aesthetics	2023
Creative and Design	Craft & Design	2023
	Media, Broadcast & Production	

Catering and Hospitality	Catering	2023
Agriculture, Environmental, and Animal Care	Animal Care & Management	2023
	Agriculture, Land Management & Production	2023

COVID-19 and T Level Rollout

- Having a skilled workforce that meets the needs of the economy will be crucial to our recovery. T Levels, designed by employers and with reference to the world's best technical education systems, will be crucial to meeting this need. This is why we are fully committed to rolling them out this September as planned.
- The decision to continue was taken following discussions with the 2020 providers, who have already done a huge amount of work to prepare, and the majority told us they wish to continue as planned. We are keeping the situation under review and are in close contact with the 2020 providers.
- We are also continuing to monitor the regional and industry challenges that Covid-19 has caused to providers and employers on delivering industry placements and will target our support to ensure that employers are able to offer placements where possible.
- We are exploring how to support providers as they move to recruiting online over the summer – and we are monitoring the situation closely. We have never set targets for student recruitment – the focus is on high-quality provision.

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 2019. We made the following 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. We launched a second £95m capital funding round for wave 2 T Level providers on 7 February.

This includes up to £20,000 fee support for providers that are eligible to apply for buildings and facilities grant.

- 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 included £8m for a new T Level Professional Development (TLPD) offer led by the Education and Training Foundation. We are investing £15m in 2020- 21 to expand TLPD.
- 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. A further £55m is allocated for 2019/20.
- 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](#).
- We have revised the methodology for the 16-19 discretionary bursary with effect from the 20/21 academic year. The revised methodology considers two issues: deprivation levels and student's costs. Part of the costs calculation considers students likely to need additional financial support because they are taking part in an industry placement.

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 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.
- We are consulting on the review in two stages. The first stage consultation on this review ran from 19th March to 10th June 2019. 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.
- In the first stage consultation, we detailed our intention to make early progress by withdrawing funding approval for qualifications with low and no publicly funded enrolments. On 13 February 2020 the Department launched the process to confirm the removal of public funding for qualifications with low and no enrolments. The Department has identified 5,383 qualifications with low and no enrolments in scope for removal of public funding. As part of the process, awarding organisations can notify the Department if they believe a qualification should retain public funding. On 27th March, the Department informed awarding

organisations of the revised timeframes for the ongoing notification process. → The notification process for qualifications with no enrolments would continue but under an extended timeframe. The notification process for qualifications with low enrolments is currently suspended but will be relaunched in the autumn as part of the second cycle of review.

- The consultation on Higher Technical Education (levels 4-5) in England closed on 29 September 2019. We aim to publish the government response in spring 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 our wider programme to improve productivity and help people progress in their work and lives.

T Level Transition Programme

- 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 Association of Colleges (AoC) will support providers taking part in the phased implementation of the T level Transition Programme running up to first delivery in academic years 2020/21 and 2021/22.

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 included £8m for a new T Level Professional Development (TLPD) offer. The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) delivered the first phase of TLPD (up to March 2020).
- To continue to support teachers and leaders with the delivery of T Levels, we are investing a further £15m in 2020-21 to expand TLPD. The ETF is leading on the development and delivery of this expanded phase of TLPD, which will help teachers and leaders prepare for the change and successfully deliver T Levels. As with the first phase of TLPD, the training will be at no charge to providers planning to deliver T Levels.
- The five core elements of the expanded TLPD offer will be: Training Needs Analysis, Understanding T Levels, T Level Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Professional Development for Leaders and Knowledge Hubs.
- Relevant online teaching and training modules will remain in place from the first phase of TLPD, whilst the ETF is designing and developing an expanded offer.

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 £55million allocated for 2019/20 and further funding confirmed for 2020/21.
- 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 approximately 2000 students.
- On 6th December 2018 we published the evaluation of the pilot programme. Subsequently, we have published ‘how to’ guidance for both providers and employers, based on good practice from the pilots, as well as recently launching a specific website for employers offering support and guidance which can be access here: <https://employerindustryplacements.co.uk/>.
- We published an Industry Placements Policy Statement in May 2019, which announced some changes:
 - Allowing students generally to work with up to 2 employers
 - Using on-site facilities for SEND students for part of the placement, and for all of the placement for young offenders.
 - 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, including digital, construction and engineering, 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 2019/20 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 – which includes a function to search for a local T Level provider, alongside a [T Level film](#).
- The campaign provides national coverage but is targeted in our 2020 provider areas. Activity includes 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.