

Spotlight on T LEVELS

Welcome to OCR's regular update on T Levels. This newsletter will keep you informed as T Levels develop and provide food for thought, both from OCR and from other interested stakeholders keen to be involved at the start of this exciting time for technical education.

This edition includes:

- **T Level news:** we take a look at all the latest developments
- **Industry placements:** what can we learn from the industry placements pilot?
- **The Last Word:** a chance to hear from wave one providers.



If there is anything you'd like us to cover in *Spotlight on T Levels*, or perhaps your organisation would like to contribute to future editions, we'd love to hear from you via policy@ocr.org.uk.

T LEVELS TO CARRY UCAS POINTS

T Levels will have the same UCAS points as three A Levels. This has now been confirmed by the Education Secretary as he set out the government's latest decisions on T Levels.

In what was mooted as a defining [speech](#), Damian Hinds provided details of updates to the DfE's T Levels [action plan](#), which included plans for UCAS points for T Levels. "I want T Level students that want to, to be able to go to university to do relevant technical degrees", he announced, confirming that the government is stepping up engagement with Higher Education Institutions to find out how they might use T Levels for admissions purposes now that the outline content for the first T Levels has been published. Further discussions are taking place with UCAS to identify how points will be awarded per T Level pass, merit or distinction grade.

The updated T Level action plan provided progress updates on the policy development and implementation of T Levels and included details of:

- The next **seven T Level programmes** to be taught from 2021:
 - Digital Support and Services T Level (Digital)
 - Digital Business Services T Level (Digital)
 - Onsite Construction T Level (Construction)
 - Building Services Engineering T Level (Construction)
 - Health T Level (Health and Science)
 - Healthcare Science T Level (Health and Science)
 - Science T Level (Health and Science).

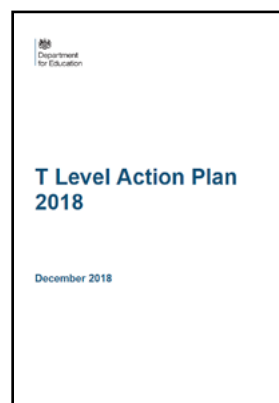
In a change to the original action plan, T Levels in Legal, Financial and Accounting and Engineering and Manufacturing will now be introduced a year later from 2022 onwards.

- An updated list of [providers](#) who will offer T Levels from 2020 and beyond, now showing the pathways they intend to offer.
- The evaluation of the [industry placement pilots](#) which ran during 2017/18 and tested different approaches to better understand what a meaningful placement looks like, and how to overcome the initial challenges of planning and implementation (see article on page 4).
- Support for "a new generation of **Higher Technical Qualifications**" - a system of employer-led national standards for higher technical education. These existing and new qualifications will be in place from 2022 - ready for the first T Level students who have completed their two-year course. A consultation will follow in 2019 on how this approach will be delivered
- The reform of the **pupil destination performance measure** to show how many young people go on to study degrees, higher technical apprenticeships or higher technical qualifications.

- Support for [skills advisory panels](#). These local partnerships between public and private sector employers, local authorities, colleges and universities will assess what skills are needed in the local area. Every area will produce a local industrial strategy so that colleges are incentivised to develop skills that match local labour market needs.

Damian Hinds also promised more details of the **transition year** offer early in 2019, for those students not quite ready to start T Levels at age 16.

Following the announcement, The Institute for Apprenticeships launched a consultation on five new T Levels to be taught from 2021 covering draft outline content for Technical Qualifications in Building Services Engineering, Digital Business Services, Health, Health Science and Science.



T LEVEL TIMELINES: WHERE ARE WE NOW?

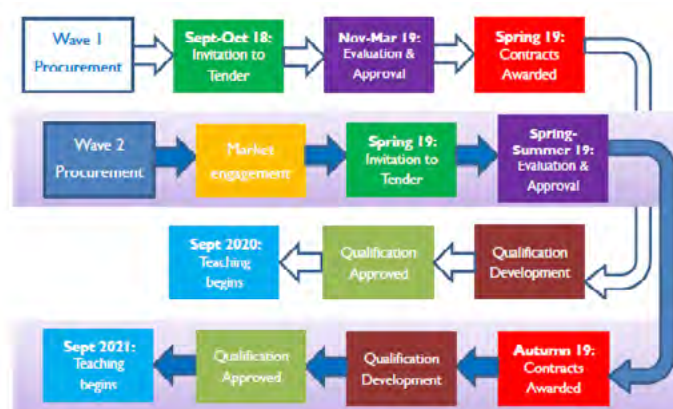


Diagram source: T Levels action plan

T LEVELS TO BE FUNDED BASED ON PROGRAMME SIZE

The DfE has published proposals for different rates of funding for different T Levels to reflect variations in programme size.

In a new [consultation](#), the government outlines its proposals for how funding will be distributed to providers for the delivery of T Levels from 2020.

It plans to have a number of new funding bands to reflect the difference in the number of hours required over 2 years for T Levels.

In addition, the consultation sets out how the government intends to distribute the increased funding available for T Levels roll out, including:

- Recognition that T Levels will be larger programmes and will therefore attract more funding than existing study programmes.
- Confirmation that additional funding will be provided to support T Level students who have not yet met the minimum English and maths requirements.
- Details of how funding will be allocated to help providers set up the industry placements
- Providing extra funding for T Level students who are aged 18 to ensure that they can have the hours needed for larger T Level programmes.

The deadline for responses to the consultation is 19 February 2019.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR T LEVEL TEACHERS TO BE ROLLED OUT

A new professional development offer is being developed to help teachers prepare for the roll out of T Levels.

Developed by the Education and Training Foundation, the [programme](#) aims to ensure that teachers and trainers have the teaching skills, subject/industry knowledge and confidence needed to deliver T Levels from 2020.

The five key strands of the programme are:

- Teacher development programme: This will focus on pedagogy (core teaching skills and methods); practice

(subject knowledge and subject specific teaching); professional knowledge (industry and employability understanding for teachers); and developing teachers' capacity to embed Maths, English and Digital skills in technical teaching environments.

- Ongoing professional development needs analysis
- Understanding T Levels
- Knowledge hubs
- Organisational readiness.

Training is due to begin in Spring 2019.

REGULATION OF NEW TECHNICAL QUALIFICATIONS CONFIRMED

The [outcomes](#) of Ofqual's autumn consultation on the rules and guidance for the Technical Qualifications within T Levels have been published.

Most of the original proposals will be implemented unchanged, other than minor changes to wording to improve clarity. However, Ofqual has decided to make the following amendments to the conditions in light of the responses received:

- Marking assessments – Ofqual will provide additional guidance on factors an awarding organisation should consider when considering whether it is possible for it to mark an assessment itself in a way that is valid and manageable, or whether it might be necessary to permit centre-marking to secure this.
- Prior learning – Ofqual will clarify how an awarding organisation should consider whether it is possible to recognise prior learning or prior attainment for the Core across different Technical Qualifications.
- Total Qualification Time (TQT) – Ofqual will clarify how TQT should be calculated.



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T LEVELS INFO

Visit the [OCR website](#) for further information on T Levels.

T LEVEL INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS: WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE PILOT?

An industry placement will be an essential part of T Levels. The longer duration, a minimum of 45 working days, aims to ensure students are given enough time to master the essentials, and that the employer has the opportunity to develop and shape young people's skills.

The DfE recently published a 120-page [evaluation](#) of an industry placement pilot which ran in 2018, testing different approaches to better understand how to make placements successful and overcome the potential challenges of implementation. It comes as no surprise when the report tells us that arranging placements is resource intensive but what important lessons can we learn from the pilot?

PREPARATION

Preparation is key to success – and the earlier the better – for several reasons.

Essentially students need a placement that is well matched to their objectives and this requires careful planning. Planning can help to ensure realistic expectations are set, that the student understand the benefits, and can see the relationship between the placement and the rest of the curriculum.

Employers also need time to structure the placement. The pilot showed employers value input into learner selection at an early stage to help with planning. Learners too would like more choice in the employer they are matched with to talk through the experience they want to gain and their career ambitions. This kind of pre-placement planning can also help to reduce possible non-completion of placements.

STAFFING

Specialist placement teams were effective during the pilot. When staff with teaching responsibilities undertook the role this did not allow for the significant time needed for placement brokerage and employer support. That said, curriculum staff played a valuable role in providing details of the curriculum and T Level content and in ensuring placements were matched effectively to learners.

ROUTES AND PATHWAYS

The key message from the pilot is that 'one size fits all' does not work in any route or pathway or indeed, type of employer. No single solution for a model was established in the pilot. Routes with small employers or project-based working presented greater challenges. This included the digital and creative/design routes. Routes with a broad range of occupations and a variety of employment

settings proved easier to source, such as business and administration, but the evaluation admitted that it could be hard to achieve an accurate match between learner and employer in such routes.

SKILLS

Where placements worked well, learners' technical skills developed through their placement and, interestingly, students were able to share these with other learners back in the classroom. The balance of placement content edged towards soft skills rather than technical skills on many placements. Consistent in-placement reviews are essential to monitoring the development of skills, particularly alongside the pressures of students having to juggle their learning alongside T Level course work and maths and English.

WHAT NEXT?

Overall, the evaluation of the industry placements pilot reported that, despite the challenges of implementation on a larger scale, most employers welcomed the opportunity that longer placements presented in being able to train learners to the point that they can become productive members of staff during the placement. Learners too, believed that the placements were a good opportunity to acquire or hone skills in a professional environment.

The next challenge is to test the feasibility of the different approaches as the scale of the operation increases. The DfE recognises that there needs to be further testing in the run up to the introduction of T Levels in 2020 with the extension of placements to a wider group of employers.

The funded pilot was carried out with 21 post-16 providers in England. Approximately 2,000 students were involved. As T Levels are still in design, the placements covered existing qualifications that corresponded to T Level technical education routes.



THE LAST WORD: T LEVELS: A VIEW FROM THE PROVIDERS

Key to the delivery of the T Level programme are the DfE-selected wave one providers – a limited number of schools, colleges and training organisations that will deliver the first three T Level pathways from September 2020. We spoke to two of these providers to get their views.

MOTIVATION TO ENGAGE

Cardinal Newman College in Preston, a sixth form college that has historically delivered general and vocational qualifications, predominantly at Level 3, believes that T Levels will offer something exciting and interesting for students and is therefore keen to be involved from the start.



The college will be delivering the Digital Production pathway. “The myriad of sectors and industries available to students taking the Digital T Level is a definite plus point”, said Kathy Salisbury, Assistant Principal (HE).

The college has already had its first employer engagement event where fifty local employers attended a business breakfast to hear all about T Levels and how they can get involved in the programme.

Cardinal Newman College accepts that there are some unanswered questions around T Levels but recognises that the wave one pilot from 2020 will be an opportunity to address these. “We’d particularly be interested to hear more about whether the recent announcement that T Levels will attract UCAS points, will actually convert to the offer of places at universities”, said Kathy, calling for more guidance on progression from T Levels to further study or training.

The college already has experience of running a similar programme to T Levels involving an employer and period of work placement so understands the opportunities and challenges involved. Current students undertake the

Extended Diploma in Health and Social Care at the college with two days’ work experience at the local NHS Trust where they can apply theory into practice. Students undertaking the programme have already been offered jobs within the Trust and the opportunity to progress to university.

SKILLS FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Another wave one provider, New College Durham – which has a strong track record with local businesses - has had very positive feedback on T Levels from its early discussions with employers.

The college believes that the opportunity to provide skills for the local economy will be crucial to the success of T Levels as they develop. “We need to ensure that we can deliver what local employers want”, said Principal John Widdowson.

Vice Principal, Mark Anderson, outlined the importance of appropriate information, advice and guidance to potential T Level students. “Having relevant information on the options available is crucial so that young people can make informed choices, particularly when other Level 3 routes such as A Levels and Applied General qualifications are so well known and established” said Mark. Cohort numbers at New College Durham will start small to enable appropriate management of the programme and to ensure its success.

Upskilling staff and having the appropriate resources will also be an area that the College will be keeping a close eye on as T Levels progress and the content of individual pathways becomes clearer. New College Durham already has a strong reputation for delivering Digital programmes and there is a host of very impressive IT suites to support learners on the new Digital T Level pathway.



Spotlight on T Levels will revisit the providers in a future issue to see how the T Level programmes are progressing.

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