



Department  
for Education

# Implementation of T level programmes

**Government consultation**

**Launch date 30 November 2017**

**Respond by 08 February 2018**

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## Foreword by the Secretary of State for Education

I believe it has never been more important to truly focus on developing our home grown talent so we become a highly skilled and productive country; a global Britain which responds to the challenges and opportunities that will come our way. Our guiding mission is social mobility and a country where there is equality of opportunity. This means empowering individuals to choose the path that will give them the knowledge and the skills they need to succeed.

We need a world-class technical education system that develops our young people's talent and means they have access to the training they need right on their doorstep. This is an opportunity we cannot ignore. For too long, our technical education system hasn't given young people the skills that they need to progress and hasn't met the needs of employers. We have too many qualifications that do not provide the skills business needs, and too often it is those from more disadvantaged backgrounds and from areas of fewer opportunities whose options are limited as a result.

If we are to ensure we meet the skills needs of businesses, if we are to ensure people from all backgrounds have the knowledge and skills to thrive, and if we are to tackle regional differences to ensure every place in the country can prosper, we need to transform our technical education system. This must enable opportunity for all and tackle the barriers that prevent individuals from reaching their potential.

This is why the Government accepted in full all the recommendations made by the Independent Panel on Technical Education, chaired by Lord Sainsbury, on how to improve the technical education system in England. The panel proposed a new approach to 16 to 19 education based around two equally valuable options for young people – academic or technical programmes. The technical option – T levels, will be a distinctive and prestigious offer in its own right, with high standards and rigour, which will be designed to prepare individuals for skilled employment. They will have credibility with employers, who will be involved in designing them, and will prepare our young people for jobs of the future and for increasing automation in our economy, supporting the aims of the Government's Industrial Strategy. We have already confirmed our intention to review higher level technical education to ensure high quality progression options for students achieving T levels, as well as those looking to upskill and retrain. Through these reforms the Government is delivering on our manifesto commitment to put in place a world-class technical education system.

These reforms are at the heart of a skills partnership between Government, business and education and training providers – but change will not happen overnight. The T level proposals in this consultation will be ground breaking and therefore challenging to deliver. That is why we are seeking your views on the changes to ensure we have your support.

I am committed to making Britain a country that gives our young people a level playing field, with every opportunity to succeed. We need to put in place a technical education

system that will help every child fulfil their potential. Your support is essential for the successful delivery of the programme. Government simply cannot deliver this on its own. So I hope you will feed your views into this consultation.

**Rt. Hon Justine Greening MP**

## Introduction

We want a skills revolution to ensure all young people can go as far as their talents and hard work can take them. Developing our home grown talent will ensure that British business has the skills it needs on its doorstep. Our education reforms have transformed schools so that more pupils are in good or outstanding schools than ever before, giving pupils from all backgrounds the knowledge and skills they need to succeed. The next phase is to ensure that, for the first time, we present young people with two world-class choices after the age of 16: an equally rigorous academic and technical option – A levels and T levels.

In July 2016, the Government published the report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education and the Post-16 Skills Plan. The panel made 34 recommendations on how to reform the technical education system, to ensure that individuals can develop the technical knowledge and skills needed by employers and industry. The Government accepted all of the recommendations in the Post-16 Skills Plan and brought forward the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 ('the 2017 Act'). In October 2017, we set out further information on our policy on T levels in the T Level Action Plan.

This consultation sets out proposals for T level programmes (referred to as T levels throughout this document) and the wider reformed technical education system. It seeks views on how best to implement the reforms so that they meet the aims of the Sainsbury Report and the Post-16 Skills Plan. We recognise that these reforms will be challenging for education and training providers to deliver, and we are committed to working with stakeholders to shape their implementation. We will provide the necessary support to ensure these reforms are a success.

We want to get a range of views so that we can meet the implementation timetable set out in our Action Plan, which is to introduce the first T levels in September 2020. Alongside this, work is also ongoing to reform higher level qualifications at level 4 and above to ensure a high quality progression offer for T level students. This will enable more adults to upskill and will complement the apprenticeship offer. We invite employers, providers, learners, and others with expertise in this area to feed into the review of higher level technical education by contacting: [Level4-5.Team@education.gov.uk](mailto:Level4-5.Team@education.gov.uk)

## Who this is for

This consultation is for anybody with an interest in technical education in England. This includes:

- Employers
- Awarding organisations
- Schools / colleges
- Further Education providers including colleges and independent training providers

- Higher Education providers
- Adult Education providers
- Teachers and trainers
- Head teachers and college principals
- Equality organisations
- Governors of education and skills providers
- Local Enterprise Partnerships

Other interested parties may include: local authorities, students, young people, parents and carers, careers advisers, unions, representative organisations, mayoral combined authorities, professional bodies, voluntary sector organisations and academics.

## Issue date

The consultation was issued on 30 November 2017.

## Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the team by emailing:

- [Tlevel.consultation@education.gov.uk](mailto:Tlevel.consultation@education.gov.uk)

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: [consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

## Additional copies

Additional copies are available electronically and can be downloaded from [GOV.UK DfE consultations](#).

## The response

The results of the consultation and the Department's response will be [published on GOV.UK](#) in Spring 2018.

## **Respond online**

To help us analyse the responses please use the online system wherever possible. Visit [www.education.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations) to submit your response.

## **Other ways to respond**

If, for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the consultation document and email or post your response.

### **By email**

[Tlevel.consultation@education.gov.uk](mailto:Tlevel.consultation@education.gov.uk)

### **By post**

Technical Education Implementation Division  
Department for Education  
Ground Floor, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London  
SW1P 3BT

## **Deadline**

The consultation closes on 08 February 2018.

# 1. Principles of the T level programme

The report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education<sup>1</sup> (referred to as ‘the Sainsbury Report’ in this document) recommended a new system of technical education that would introduce a high quality technical option alongside an academic option for students aged 16 to 19. In the Government’s Post-16 Skills Plan and the Technical and Further Education Act 2017, we committed to these recommendations. We will reform the 16 to 19 education system so that options for 16 year olds are radically simplified. Students will be able to choose from an academic study programme (primarily through A levels), a technical option (primarily through a T level study programme or an apprenticeship).

All young people will have access to high quality education programmes that give them the chance to succeed, wherever their aspirations lie. We are unashamedly ambitious for the new technical education system. We are not setting out to make incremental improvement, but rather to make a transformational change to the quality of the system, achieving parity of esteem between academic A levels and technical education routes. We will achieve this by simplifying the options available to students, promoting high quality provision, and removing poor quality provision.

As set out in our Action Plan, published in October, A levels and T levels will exist as high quality, rigorous, level 3 study programmes. A levels will continue to support entry to degree level higher education. T levels will be designed primarily to support entry to skilled employment in technical occupations at level 3 and above. They will also support progression to higher education options including higher technical qualifications, higher apprenticeships, degree apprenticeships, and technical degrees, including through Institutes of Technology and National Colleges. Both A levels and T levels will be prestigious programmes for ambitious students who want to progress into rewarding careers. Just as we have raised standards in primary and secondary education, including GCSE and A levels, the introduction of T levels alongside A levels will ensure high standards and rigour across post-16 education. We are determined that all young people will have world-class choices available to them.

T levels are a classroom-based technical study programme. They will be available alongside apprenticeships as one half of a high quality technical education offer. Both T levels and apprenticeships will provide in depth technical training via two different routes. Apprenticeships are employment with training, and apprentices specialise in one occupation as they learn on the job. T levels will be primarily studied at an education or training provider. Students will study a broad occupational area before specialising, and

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[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/536046/Report\\_of\\_the\\_Independent\\_Panel\\_on\\_Technical\\_Education.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536046/Report_of_the_Independent_Panel_on_Technical_Education.pdf)

will have the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills on a substantial work placement.

As set out in the Technical and Further Education Act 2017, approved technical education qualifications (which will form part of T levels) and apprenticeships will be based on the same set of employer designed standards. The Institute for Apprenticeships (which will become the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education next year and is referred to throughout this document as the Institute) will approve and manage the development of standards and the content of the T levels. This process is discussed further in section 2.

We want students who complete T levels to be able to move into apprenticeships at level 4 and above, or progress to further specialist technical qualifications at higher levels or higher education. This is discussed further in section 3.

T levels will develop in-depth knowledge and skills, and we want students who take them to be highly prized by employers. They will be valued as highly as apprenticeships and academic programmes and will improve social mobility, enabling students from all backgrounds to reach their potential. They will also benefit employers, who will have access to more highly skilled young people across different areas of our economy. We want a variety of T levels to be available to all students, regardless of where they live. Our intention is for T levels to replace most current technical qualifications available to 16 to 19 year olds; the Sainsbury Report highlighted that many of these qualifications are not understood or sought by employers.

The Government will shortly publish its Careers Strategy which will set out how everyone can obtain information, advice and guidance about education, employment and training. This will help people make the best decisions about their future and help employers recruit people with the right skills.

While this consultation focuses on delivering T levels for 16 to 19 year olds we want learners of all ages to have access to high quality technical programmes. This is discussed further in section 4.

### **The wider qualifications offer at level 3**

The introduction of T levels must simplify our complicated qualifications system. In future, as T levels are introduced, we expect the majority of funding for 16 to 19 year old students studying level 3 qualifications to be directed to T level and A level programmes. We recognise that there may be a need to fund some other qualifications in addition to A levels and T levels but are keen to ensure that the system is as simple as possible and that other qualifications offer the best possible opportunity for young people.

As such, we are proposing to review the range of qualifications currently funded by Government. This review will include considering the role of Applied General Qualifications

(AGQs). We propose that it should be guided by three key principles in assessing continued funding:

1. they have a distinct purpose, and are truly necessary in the new simplified system
2. they are good quality
3. they support progression to good outcomes

The Sainsbury Report suggested that 4 of the 15 technical education routes would primarily be delivered through apprenticeships. We would not expect to see T levels offered in the 4 'apprenticeship only' routes. However, there may be a limited number of occupations in these routes in relation to which we will fund qualifications. We will consider these on an exceptional basis through this review.

Over time, and as T levels are introduced nationally, we expect to reduce the number of qualifications we fund. We also expect the process for approving performance tables qualifications to be suspended at some future point. We will ensure that those qualifications that continue to attract funding after the review represent value for money and will work with Ofqual to ensure that they are robustly regulated in the future.

We recognise that this is a significant change for providers and awarding organisations and we want to work closely with those affected during the review. Our aim is to make sure that funding is carefully handled and that the transition is managed effectively. This consultation is an important step in the process. We are keen to receive information and views from all of those potentially affected at this early stage.

We intend to publish a plan for the next steps in this process in due course, once we have carefully considered the responses to this consultation.

**Question 1: Do you agree that the principles outlined above are the right ones on which to base a review of which level 3 qualifications we should continue to fund in the new system, alongside T levels and A levels? Yes/No. If no, what other principles do you think we should consider?**

## **Wider qualifications at level 2 and below**

We want to raise ambitions and ensure that the majority of young people are supported on a journey to achievement at level 3. For many this will involve starting an A level, apprenticeship or T level at 16; for others it will begin with a transition year followed by two years of study.

For a small number of students on taught programmes we recognise that achievement at level 2 by the age of 19 may be an appropriate aim. We want to ensure that flexibility and targeted support remains in place for students who need the most support, as well as those wanting to take the work-based route, but who are not yet ready for an apprenticeship.

However, we want any qualifications we continue to fund at level 2 and below to be supported and valued by employers, with clear opportunities for re-engagement with education and training at a later date. Following the review of level 3 technical qualifications, we propose to review current qualifications at level 2 and below to consider which qualifications we should continue to fund alongside T levels and transition year. We will work with education providers to design provision so that it best supports students working at level 2 and below, many of whom have additional needs. We also expect the process for approving performance tables qualifications to be suspended at some future point.

**Question 2: Do you agree that we should review qualifications at level 2 and below based on the principles that these qualifications should support progression into employment or higher level study and have a value in their own right alongside T levels? Yes/No. If no, what other principles do you think we should consider?**

## 2. The components of the T level programme

In this section we set out more detailed proposals on the design of T levels, building on the principles set out in our Action Plan. T levels will follow a study programme format, designed to deliver the skills, knowledge and behaviours required for skilled employment.

T levels will each follow the same broad framework. Each programme will consist of 5 components:

- an approved technical qualification<sup>2</sup>
- a work placement
- maths, English and digital requirements
- any other occupation-specific requirements / qualifications, as set out by the relevant T level panel as part of the Institute
- any further employability, enrichment and pastoral (EEP) provision (as required in all study programmes)

We expect each T level will, on average, consist of 1800 hours over two years. T levels will differ in size to reflect the requirements of different occupations; we expect the total time for the technical qualification will fall between 900 and 1400 hours. The remainder of the programme time will be made up of the other components listed above.

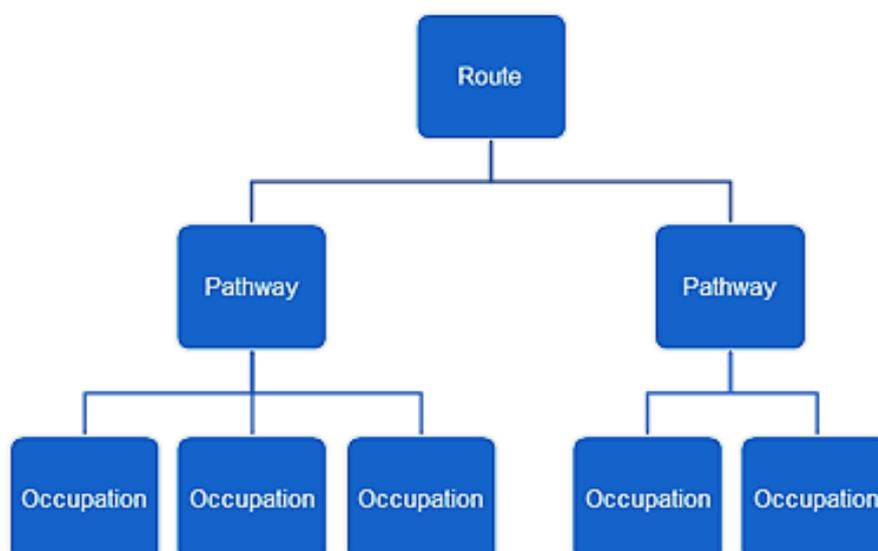
### The process for developing T levels

The Institute will approve and manage the process of developing content for new T levels. They will appoint T level panels, consisting of experts in relevant occupations and industries. The T level panels will set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for each T level, based on the standards developed by employers and others.

An occupational map has been developed for each Sainsbury route. This map breaks the route down into a number of occupations, and closely-related occupations are grouped together into pathways. We expect there to be one or a small number of T levels per pathway. There were 15 routes set out in the Sainsbury report and, in line with the report's recommendations, we expect that 11 of these routes will have a T level.

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<sup>2</sup> The Technical Education Qualification approved by the Institute under section A2DA of the Technical and Further Education Act 2017



The Institute will run a separate engagement exercise on the content of the occupational maps shortly.

This development process for T levels has begun. T level panels have started developing T levels in Construction; Digital; and Education and Childcare for September 2020. They are also developing T levels in Legal, Finance and Accounting; Health and Science; and Engineering and Manufacturing for September 2021. This process is being managed by the Department for Education but will transfer to the Institute at a later date.

Employer-led T level panels will use a consistent process to develop T level content. This will follow the following principles:

- T level panels will use the approved standards, which have been developed by apprenticeship trailblazer groups, as a basis for outline content, and we will ensure that this process is responsive to new and revised standards
- the content of technical qualifications will vary depending on the requirements of the occupations relevant to each T level. The breadth of a technical qualification is likely to be at pathway level but, in some particularly broad pathways, it may cover one occupational cluster within a pathway. We expect that this would only occur in a very limited number of cases. T level panels will determine the title of overall T levels
- T level panels will ensure that the outline content meets employer expectations so that a student has the skills needed to secure skilled employment. The outline content will also be considered by delivery and assessment experts to ensure that it is deliverable and capable of being assessed. This will also help identify the typical planned hours needed to complete the qualification

- T level panels will advise on broader programme requirements. This includes the study of further qualifications where needed (e.g. necessary licence to practise qualifications) and the maths, English, digital requirements and other transferable and employability skills required to secure skilled employment
- the Institute is responsible for overseeing and giving final approval to the work of the T level panels

## 2.1. The technical qualification

Each T level will include a new, substantial technical qualification based on content devised by T level panels and standards approved by the Institute. This qualification will be the largest component of the T level and will provide the student with their technical knowledge and skills. This section summarises our proposals for the design of the technical qualifications. Further information on the proposals can be found in the technical annex which is published alongside this document.

### The role of the technical qualification

We propose that the role of the technical qualification within the T level is to:

- set out the knowledge, skills and behaviours that must be learned in order to secure skilled employment relevant to the T level, drawn from the relevant approved standards
- signal what a student knows and can do as a result of attaining the qualification
- ensure the minimum standard of performance required for attainment meets employer expectations
- ensure comparable standards of performance are maintained over time and across providers for the same technical qualification
- support fair access to attainment for all students who take the qualification, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

### Technical qualification components

In designing a technical qualification, the approved awarding organisation will need to ensure the outline content produced by T level panels is properly covered by the qualification.

The Sainsbury Report recommended that the technical qualification included core content followed by specialisation. In line with this, we propose that the content for each technical qualification is assessed through separate components:

- **The core** which will develop underpinning knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to the T level. This component will have two parts:
  - knowledge and understanding of contexts, concepts, theories and principles relevant to the T level
  - overall employability and an assessment of how well students can apply a minimum breadth of transferable skills, and selected numeracy, literacy and digital skills relevant to the T level
- **One or more specialisms** focussed on developing occupationally specific knowledge, skills and behaviours to achieve 'threshold competence' in the occupational specialism

Achievement of threshold competence signals that a student is well-placed to develop full occupational competence, with further support and development, once in employment. Threshold competence is as close to full occupational competence as can be reasonably expected of student studying the qualification in a classroom-based setting (e.g. in the classroom, workshops and simulated working environments).

Some specialisms will be too large to allow a student to successfully study all specialisms within a technical qualification. For example, it would take longer than two years to learn all the trades in construction. Therefore, we propose that, where necessary, students are able to select one or more specialisms from a defined set.

In designing courses, we would encourage providers to ensure much of the core is delivered before students are assessed on their specialism(s).

## Assessment

The T level content (e.g. knowledge, skills, behaviours, attitudes, understanding) will inform the method of assessment used. Where the same type of content is found in different qualifications, we would expect to see a similar type of assessment method.

We propose that:

- the underpinning knowledge of the core component is assessed through an external examination, set and marked by the licenced awarding organisation. This will ensure breadth of knowledge and understanding is covered in sufficient depth
- core employability skills are assessed through practical employer-set projects, to ensure a motivating and authentic work relevant focus to how they are applied
- for occupational specialisms, students will need to demonstrate that they have the skills to achieve threshold competence i.e. through practical assignments to, for example, find and fix faults in an electrical system, deliver a learning plan or create a software application

**Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed approach to assessing technical qualifications? Yes/No – Please give reasons for your response.**

## Grading

It is essential that the technical qualification grading enables employers and providers to differentiate student attainment. Recruiters may select students from a range of T levels, so we propose that the same naming system is used for technical qualification grades.

As there will be significant differences in the content, purpose and mode of assessment for the core and specialisms in each T level, a single overall grade for the qualification will not be a reliable and meaningful signal of student attainment. Technical qualifications will be

substantial – typically the size of 3 A levels, so we believe that one overall grade would oversimplify students' attainment and would be complicated to produce. Therefore, we propose that the technical qualification has component grades - a grade for the core and a grade for each specialism, which will be recognised separately on the T level certificate.

As the core includes a knowledge-based exam and a separate employer-set project, there is likely to be a wide range of overall achievement. To be fair to students, grading will need to clearly show this range and so we propose **the core component is graded E - A\***, with A\* being the highest grade.

Each specialism will assess whether a student has threshold competence. Grading will need to show whether it has been achieved, and so we propose **specialist components are graded Pass, Merit, Distinction**. Merit and Distinction would show increasing levels of performance above the threshold (Pass) and support providers' efforts to stretch and challenge more able students.

If a student's performance is below that required to achieve an E grade for the core or a Pass grade for each required occupational specialism, their assessment evidence for the component will be ungraded.

In order to achieve a T level and be awarded a certificate, students must attain the following grades in the technical qualification:

- an E or above in the core component
- a Pass or above in each occupational specialism (if more than one is required).

**Question 4: Do you agree with the approach to grading technical qualification components? Yes/No – Please give reasons for your response.**

### **Comparable standards of performance**

In devising outline content, T level panels will help set the minimum standard of threshold competence for each occupational specialism. To ensure grades are awarded in line with employer expectations, we propose that employers should also have a role in supporting standardisation of assessors and grade awarding.

To ensure fairness to students, and clarity for employers, we propose that a grade for a technical qualification component (e.g. a Pass) with the same title should be consistent with the grades awarded to other learners (by the same and different training providers) in the year it was awarded and in other years.

**Question 5: Do you agree with the approach to maintaining comparable standards of performance for technical qualifications? Yes/No – Please give reasons for your response.**

## Prior attainment and re-taking components

We recognise that in some instances students may want to switch to another T level, either within the same route or in a completely different route. Students who want to switch to a T level in a different route will need to complete all assessments in the new route.

To support flexibility, we propose that if the core content is the same (or only has marginal differences) across T levels within a route, prior attainment of this could count towards the core for any T level within the route. This principle would only apply within the route, not across routes.

**Question 6: Do you agree that prior attainment of the core could count if students switch to another T level within the same route? Yes/No – Please give reasons for your response.**

As the technical qualification is comprised of different components, we propose that students can retake separate components i.e. they do not need to retake the whole qualification. The better grade for the component will be listed on their final T level certificate. However, in line with our funding rules on re-takes, additional funding will not be provided for students aged 16 to 18 re-taking components of the technical qualification.

Re-take rules for other aspects of the programme will continue to operate as currently.

## Updates to technical qualification content

To ensure the continued currency of the qualifications, especially given the pace of change in many industries, when standards are updated this will trigger an update process for the relevant T level qualification, if the Institute deems it necessary.

## 2.2. Work placements

As recommended by the Sainsbury Report, every 16 to 19 year old student undertaking a classroom-based technical education route will be entitled to a high quality, substantial work placement. It is expected that a student will not be able to achieve a T level without having successfully completed a work placement.

It is proposed that a T level work placement will need to meet the following criteria:

- the student has had the opportunity to develop relevant and up-to-date technical skills and specialist knowledge related to their field of study at the appropriate level (as defined by their technical qualification) in an external workplace environment, for 45-60 days (min. 7 hours a day, max. 37.5 hours a week)
- the student has had the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in a workplace environment
- the student has experienced a real life job and has the opportunity to develop behaviours and attitudes expected in the workplace

The work placement must take place with an external employer (i.e. on a site external to the student's learning environment) as it is important that the student experiences a real job and work responsibilities. The longer duration ensures students are given sufficient time to master the essentials and that the employer has the opportunity to develop the student's technical abilities. A work placement does not need to be taken in one long block and providers should offer a degree of flexibility on the timing and pattern of the placement to suit the requirements of differing industries.

The Government recognises that this represents a major change for the post-16 sector. To support providers and ensure their capacity and capability to deliver work placements, £74m funding will be available from April 2018 (for the 16 months from April 2018 to August 2019). This will increase every year up to and beyond the introduction of T levels. Examples of what the funding can be spent on and details of the principles and responsibilities of employers and providers are set out in the Capacity and Delivery Fund guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/work-placements-capacity-and-delivery-fund-from-april-2018-to-july-2019>.

**Proposals for work placements set out in this section should be considered in the context of this significant funding that has been made available to support delivery.**

## Setting learning objectives

Early in the T level programme, students and providers<sup>3</sup> should discuss the student's career aspirations and how the work placement can support this. Work placements must also be relevant to the course being studied, so the provider, student and employer will all work together to define the student's learning objectives. The provider should work with the student to ensure that objectives link to the technical qualification and focus on the technical and employability skills they need. Learning objectives should be agreed with the employer so they can ensure that the tasks set are relevant.

## Assessing student performance

The provider will be responsible for ensuring that the student has demonstrated progress against their agreed learning objectives, and that the essential criteria for a work placement have been met. The provider should regularly assess the relevance and quality of the work placement. If the placement is not meeting the learning objectives or does not fulfil the essential criteria, this should be addressed with the employer and, if unsuccessful, the student should be withdrawn and an alternative placement sought.

At the end of the placement, the employer will be required to provide an appraisal of the student's performance on the placement, including how that student has demonstrated progress against the learning objectives. We propose this is in the form of an Employer Reference. To make this easier for employers, a standard template will be provided for employers to complete. A copy of this reference will be made available on request so that future prospective employers can see it alongside the T level certificate.

## Failure to complete work placements

If a placement has not fulfilled the essential criteria or the student has not demonstrated progress against the learning objectives for reasons outside of their control, the provider is responsible for arranging and funding an alternative placement.

If the provider determines that progress against the learning objectives has not been demonstrated as a result of circumstances within the control of the student, the student will not have successfully completed their work placement. The student will not obtain their T level until a successful work placement has been completed. The student would have the right to appeal the decision with the Institute for Apprenticeships. It will be at the discretion of the provider as to whether the student should be entitled to another work placement in order to obtain their T level.

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that references to 'provider' throughout this section refer to a variety of staff roles, including work placement coordinators, teachers, employer engagement staff, curriculum leads etc. It will be for the provider to determine who is most appropriate to carry out these roles and responsibilities.

**Question 7: Do you agree with the proposed approach integrating the work placement within the T level programme? Yes/No. please explain your answer. If no, what would be a preferable approach?**

**Question 8: Do you agree with the proposed method of appraising the student's performance on their work placement, including the Employer Reference? Yes/No. please explain your answer. If no, what would be a preferable approach?**

## **Quality assurance, monitoring and reporting arrangements**

We are fully committed to ensuring a safe working environment and quality experience for students. We also want to keep this process as simple as possible and minimise the burden on employers and providers.

**Providers** will need to carry out due diligence and health and safety checks on all new employers agreeing to host work placements. They will need to ensure a Work Placement Agreement is developed and signed by the student, employer and provider so that all parties have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, set realistic expectations of the student's ability and agree the learning aims of the placement. We will provide a standard Work Placement Agreement template to support this.

Providers will also need to ensure there is an identified line manager for the student while on placement, that the employer is given appropriate guidance and that they prepare the student for the placement. It will be the provider's responsibility to ensure this preparation time is factored into the curriculum as well as providing any ongoing support during the placement, including having regular meetings with the student. Providers will need to check students' eligibility for specific work placements, which may include checking the student's age, Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) status and drugs/crime history.

**Employers** will need to ensure that the student receives an adequate health and safety induction to the workplace, and that they comply with health and safety, insurance and other legal obligations. Employers should hold regular progress review meetings with the student to review progress. We propose that the student should be required to complete a weekly Log Book, which will be a straightforward way to track their learning.

We expect providers to establish the track record and experience of employers in offering placements to determine the level of monitoring they may need. A whistleblowing service will be set up to provide students with the opportunity to raise concerns about their work placement.

At the end of the work placement, a final feedback session should be held between the student, employer and provider. The employer should provide an Employer Reference in relation to the student's progress against their learning objectives and provide evidence of their achievements and development areas.

We will work with Ofsted to consider the inspection of work placements within the overall inspection of T levels.

**Question 9: Do you agree with the proposed approach to quality assurance set out above? Yes/No – please explain. If no, please explain how we can ensure work placements are quality assured?**

## **Ensuring accessibility to all students**

We would expect **all** students, including those with additional needs, to access and undertake a work placement as outlined above, as part of their T level. There may be circumstances when the provider should make modifications for students with additional needs. The provider must ensure all students are adequately prepared for and supported to undertake work placements that accommodate their particular needs. The provider will need to make this decision on a case by case basis. Providers should also have early discussions with the employer to ensure the appropriate level of support can be provided to accommodate a student's needs before agreeing the placement. Providers should use their work placement funding to provide additional support in the workplace as necessary and assist with reasonable workplace adjustments.

**Question 10: What additional support or further modifications should be available to those with greater needs or special circumstances (such as caring responsibilities) during a work placement?**

**Question 11: How can we support students to access work placements relevant to their course in areas where there are no employers to offer work placements nearby?**

## **Students already in employment**

A work placement could be taken at the student's current place of employment as long as the essential criteria for a work placement set out above can be demonstrated. Challenging learning objectives must be agreed between the provider, student and employer, and the employer must not be a family member. The quality assurance process outlined above must be adhered to.

## **Paying students whilst on a work placement**

Employers are not required to pay students during their work placement unless they employ them. Some employers may wish to pay students who complete work placements with them or meet their expenses for food and travel. If employers choose to do this, they could either contract with the student or pay a sum outside of a contract of employment which would be subject to tax and NICs.

Students should not be prevented from undertaking a work placement due to travel and subsistence costs. If employers choose not to pay wages or expenses, and the student would incur additional expenses that they cannot afford, then the provider should pay for or contribute to those additional costs. Providers can use some of their allocated work placement funding to fund these costs, as well drawing on their 16 to 19 bursary allocation as needed.

**Question 12: Do you agree with our suggested approach to providing students with financial support whilst on a work placement?**

## **Supporting employers**

It is important that employers are supported to deliver work placements. We believe that they will benefit significantly from offering work placements, both in the added value that a student on a work placement will bring and in building their future potential workforce. We recognise that this will also be a big change for employers and we want to ensure that they have the right support in place to offer placements at the scale needed. We are currently considering what this support could look like and would welcome your views.

Alongside this support, employers could also be recognised for delivering high quality work placements by being awarded a national 'kitemark' or 'badge'.

**Question 13: What are the common barriers / challenges for employers to host work placements and how can we support employers to offer work placements?**

**Question 14: How do these challenges vary across industries and location types?**

**Question 15: How can the range of employers, including SMEs, be better supported to offer work placements for students with additional needs?**

**Question 16: Would employers value a recognition in delivering work placements, for example through a form of 'kitemarking'?**

## 2.3. Maths, English and digital

Numeracy, literacy and digital skills are essential in any 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. In line with the recommendations in the Sainsbury Report, these skills will form a core part of the T level programme.

### Maths and English

As recommended in the Sainsbury Report, we will not set maths and English entry requirements to enrol on a T level programme. The setting of entry requirements is a decision for education providers to make, mindful of the standards that a student will need to achieve to secure a T level.

However, in order to achieve a T level, students must achieve a minimum level of maths and English. This will be set at level 2 to align with the existing policy on maths and English requirements for level 3 apprenticeships. Therefore, students may meet the requirement through achievement of either a GCSE standard pass or a level 2 Functional Skills qualification.

This minimum requirement will ensure that employers can be confident that every student who has taken a T level has good numeracy and literacy skills.

For some occupations, higher standards of numeracy and literacy may be required. The T level panels will be able to recommend that these are embedded within the technical qualification where necessary, subject to Institute approval. The Institute will also be able to set higher maths and English requirements for a T level where they judge that a higher standard of numeracy and literacy is required.

**Question 17: Should students be able to opt to take a higher level maths or English qualification e.g. core maths, A level maths, or work towards higher grades in GCSE even if T level panels do not require it? What are the issues for providers in delivering this?**

### Digital

We want to ensure that young people on T levels develop the digital skills required to succeed in the modern workplace. Therefore, numeracy, literacy and digital skills will be embedded within each technical qualification, alongside wider transferable skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to succeed in work. This will ensure students continue to practice, apply and develop these essential skills throughout their T level programme.

We expect occupation-specific digital skills relevant to an industry to be an integral part of each T level programme. For example, subject to Institute approval, we might expect the T level panel for accountancy to recommend that students are able to use accounting

software or for the T level panel for engineering to recommend that students are able to use computer-aided design (CAD) software.

## **Funding maths and English for those who do not yet meet the minimum requirements**

As set out above, in order to achieve a T level, students must achieve a minimum level of maths and English. To achieve this level some students on a T level may need to continue studying maths and English at level 2. We are keen to seek views, particularly from providers, on how this is funded. There are two possible options we are considering:

**Option 1** : Provide the maths and English study from each student's T level programme hours, in the same way as it is currently provided from within the set 16 to 19 study programme hours. All students would have a similar number of total funded hours, but some students would spend part of this time studying for their maths and English level 2, and therefore have less time for their technical study.

**Option 2** : Provide the maths and English study for these students as additional funded hours on top of their T level hours (with the hours funded from the overall T levels funding). This would mean these students would have more hours of study each week, and students not needing this English and maths would have fewer hours of study in total.

**Question 18: Which of these options for funding maths and English within the T level programme do you think would be the most appropriate? Please explain the reasons for your answer.**

## 2.4. Additional requirements/qualifications

As well as a technical qualification, maths, English and digital content and a work placement, we expect that for some routes there may be additional occupation-specific requirements. For apprenticeships, these currently include qualifications that are a regulatory or mandatory requirement (e.g. licence to practise), required for professional registration or are used as a hard sift in recruitment exercises.

We will be asking the employer-led T level panels to make recommendations about the additional requirements that a student will need to meet in order to obtain a job in their chosen occupation or field. Wherever possible we would expect the new T level qualifications to incorporate these requirements. Additional qualifications would exist only by exception. T level panels will need to involve professional bodies in any such discussions.

**Question 19: Where there are additional occupation-specific requirements that can be delivered or assessed off the job, do you agree that these should be incorporated into T levels? If not, why not?**

## 2.5. Certification

The T level certificate should show employers what a potential employee can do and the skills, knowledge and behaviours they have acquired. We also want students to be confident that the certificate they have worked hard to achieve will be recognised by employers and other education providers.

We will create a single, nationally recognised certificate for T levels, which reflects the distinct requirements for industries within each route. We propose that a T level certificate should include information about a student's attainment across all the different elements of the programme and information about the specialist experience they have gained. To pass the T level and be awarded a certificate, students will need to pass all components of the programme.

The Secretary of State has the power to award the T level certificate but this may be delegated to the Institute and we propose that the design aligns with the apprenticeship certificate.

We propose that the T level certificate will state:

- the technical qualification and grades achieved, including the grades for the core component and occupational specialist component(s). This will not include the name of the awarding organisation of the technical qualification.
- any other additional professional qualification/registration which has been taken and the grade achieved, if applicable.
- maths and English qualifications and the grade achieved – this would draw in data from achievement at key stage 4 if they had already achieved English and/or maths prior to starting the T level.
- confirmation that the work placement has successfully been completed and the learning objectives achieved.

We do not believe that it is appropriate to include an overall grade for the T level as a whole. Instead the grades for separate components will be listed, which will enable employers and other recruiters to make a judgement about an individual based on the importance they place on different components.

Annex A includes an example of what the T level certificate could look like.

**Question 20: Do you agree with the information we propose to include in the certificate? Yes/No – Please explain your answer.**

### Recognising partial attainment

We believe it is important that students who do not complete all elements of the T level, or who choose to exit part way through, have their achievement acknowledged. In line with

our current funding rules on re-sits, students aged 16 to 18 who fail to achieve components of the programme will not receive additional funding to re-take T levels.

We propose that where a student does not meet the minimum requirements for certification or exits the course part way through, they will instead receive a transcript. The transcript would recognise the components that the individual has achieved. This will help them to progress onto a related area of study or apprenticeship or to return to their T level at a later date. This is discussed further in section 3.

Annex A includes an example of what the T level transcript could look like.

**Question 21: Do you agree that partial attainment should be reflected in the proposed transcript? Yes/No. Please give reasons for your response.**

### **3. Flexibility and progression in technical education**

Young people who complete a T level should have the option to progress onto other programmes that best meets their ambitions. This could mean progressing directly into work or onto an apprenticeship, higher education or higher level technical qualifications. This section considers the principles for progression from a T level.

#### **Progression from T levels to apprenticeships**

T levels will be based on the same knowledge, skills and behaviours identified in the standards that apply to apprenticeships.

This alignment between standards for T levels and apprenticeships means that there is strong potential for students who have completed a T level to be able to progress to apprenticeships at level 4 and above (higher and degree apprenticeships) related to their area of specialism. This aligns with funding rules for apprenticeships. These state that an apprentice can only be funded for an apprenticeship at a level at or below the qualification level they currently hold if it allows the individual to acquire substantive new skills and has materially different training content. An apprenticeship must last a minimum of 12 months, including 20% off the job training.

#### **Students who do not complete a T level**

We expect that an individual who only has partial attainment of a T level (e.g. had achieved some components but not all) may be eligible for an apprenticeship at level 3 provided that they would need to acquire substantive new skills.

The content of the apprenticeship training would need to be different to what they had already studied in the T level, so employers and providers would need to ensure that individuals are not repeating content identified as achieved in their T level transcript.

#### **Large occupational specialisms**

Some apprenticeships at level 3 take significantly longer than two years to complete. This means that for some occupational specialisms there could be a gap between the workplace skills of a T level student when compared to an apprentice who achieves full occupational competence in the workplace over 3 or more years.

Therefore, there may be specialisms where it would be appropriate for individuals with a T level to complete the remaining level 3 apprenticeship content in work (potentially as part of an apprenticeship) prior to starting an apprenticeship at level 4 or above. This will be made easier by the fact that T levels are based on the same standards as apprenticeships. In those cases, we would not expect the T level student to be required to repeat content they have already studied and been assessed on.

**Question 22: How can T levels be designed in a way that enables students to progress onto apprenticeships?**

### **Progression to higher technical education and technical degrees**

We have recently announced that we are reviewing how higher level technical education, and particularly level 4 and 5 qualifications, meet the needs of students and employers and supports social mobility.

While T levels are primarily designed to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours required to access skilled employment in level 3 occupations, they should also enable students to progress to higher level technical education.

T level panels will be expected to consider the progression routes for T level students, and will work with Higher and Further Education providers to ensure that the content of the programme provides sufficient grounding for further study at higher technical levels 4 to 7. This should include both apprenticeships and higher technical qualifications.

**Question 23: How can T levels be built to provide a solid grounding for, and access to higher levels of technical education?**

Students who successfully complete T levels and wish to progress to academic degrees may need to access bridging provision. The Sainsbury Report and the Post-16 Skills Plan outline the need for flexible bridging provision to support individuals who want to develop into areas which align or build on their current level of skills and experience. As part of the level 4/5 review, we will consider how this could allow individuals to progress to both academic and technical higher level provision, and consider where bridging provision may be required to support access to degrees.

**Question 24: What good practice already exists in enabling learners with technical (rather than academic) backgrounds gain access to, and succeed on, degree courses?**

## 4. Meeting the needs of all learners

We want to ensure that there is a high quality offer for all young people, including those who are not yet ready for level 3, and which offers genuine opportunities to progress to study at a higher level or to employment.

### Transition Year

The Sainsbury Report recommended that we establish a 'transition year' for 16 year olds who are not ready to start either the academic option (e.g. A levels) or the technical option (a T level or apprenticeship).

We would welcome views on how we can create a transition offer for those not able to progress to level 3 at the age of 16. This transition year would be provided within existing funding rules and would be specifically designed to support entry into T levels. We are clear that it should focus on maths, English and developing technical skills, knowledge and behaviours linked to T levels, as well as transferable skills. It would be targeted at students who have not yet achieved grade 4 in English and maths but who could progress to a T level with the right support, and where this aligns with their career aspirations. It would be a flexible programme in content and length, designed by providers to give students the support they need. Only students who intended to progress on to T levels would be entered onto this programme.

Many providers already offer provision along these lines, and we would want to build on best practice to ensure a flexible and tailored programme that supports progression. We plan to pilot this approach once the first T levels are introduced in 2020.

**Question 25: What support should we consider as part of a transition offer to ensure that students can progress to level 3 study and particularly T levels?**

### Adult learners

Adults should have access to the same high quality content as 16 to 19 year olds and we want to consider how we can adapt T levels to that they are appropriate for adult learners.

Many adult learners find themselves in different circumstances from young people. Barriers to learning include time pressure created by work and caring responsibilities, and perceptions that learning is unaffordable or inaccessible. In addition, for some adults, negative past experience of school can create an aversion to re-entering formal learning. These factors may make a two year, full time T level which includes a work placement, as designed for 16 to 19 year olds, more difficult for some adults to access in full.

We are considering a range of options to ensure that adults can retrain and upskill throughout their lives, allowing them to respond to changes in the labour market and access secure and fulfilling employment. This could include looking at removing some of

the barriers adult learners may face through flexible delivery of T Levels for adults and developing the right support and funding incentives for those looking to retrain and upskill.

In assessing the effectiveness of potential options, we will draw on the insights of our Career Learning pilots. The first of these, announced in October, is the Flexible Learning Fund, which provides support for projects that test flexible and accessible ways of delivering provision to adults. The second, announced in November, is being delivered with the Learning and Work Institute where we will be testing different approaches to outreach to encourage adults to learn as well as testing the impact of reduced course cost for certain courses that meet local economic need.

**Question 26: How should we adapt T levels for adults so that they meet the needs of adult learners?**

## 5. Delivery of T levels

### Provider capacity and capability

We understand that the introduction of T levels will have significant implications for education providers and employers. We want to understand the support that providers and employers may need to ensure successful introduction and delivery.

We will work directly with providers over the coming months to help them identify the gap between current capacity and capability and what they need to deliver high quality T levels for first introduction in September 2020. Initial responses via this consultation will help us plan for this work.

**Question 27: What do you think the biggest challenges will be for providers in delivering new T levels and what additional support do you think providers will need? Specifically, ensuring:**

- **the right facilities are available**
- **the right equipment is available**
- **appropriately trained staff are recruited, and in the numbers required**
- **existing staff get high quality training and development**

**Question 28: What information do you think will need to be provided to be able to market T levels effectively to students and parents, and how far in advance of first teaching will it be needed?**

**Question 29: How much engagement do providers currently have with industry professionals in shaping the curriculum, teaching, and training other members of staff?**

**Question 30: What challenges will providers face if they want to bring in more industry expertise?**

### Ensuring T levels offered by providers meet skills needs

T level content will be designed by employers to meet the skills needs of their industries. But, as we set out in the Government's Industrial Strategy, we know that there are entrenched regional disparities in education and skills levels and these are considered to be the biggest drivers for regional variation in productivity.<sup>4</sup> There is a strong link between skills development, local economic growth and earning power so we must make sure that the T levels offered by providers reflect both local and national skills requirements. We

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<sup>4</sup> CBI (2016), 'Unlocking regional growth', <http://www.cbi.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/unlocking-regional-growth/>

should also make sure that choices and opportunities for individual students are not limited and that a wide range of courses are available.

Under current arrangements, students choose what they want to study from the options made available by providers, and subject to local entry criteria, most subject areas are available to most students.

The programmes that providers make available, and that students choose, might not necessarily match labour market needs or have the highest economic value. As the Industrial Strategy sets out, and in line with our manifesto commitment, the Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) programme will ensure that skills provision is aligned with local employer skills needs. The SAPs programme will begin to roll out across England shortly. As part of the SAPs programme we will consider how local providers can be incentivised to be more responsive to local needs.

We also want to consider how else we might influence what is offered locally to ensure skills needs are met and that there is a universal offer on T levels for all young people, rather than solely following student choice as is largely the case now.

**Question 31: Should we seek to further influence which T levels are offered by providers, according to local and national skills needs? Yes/No. If yes, how should we do this?**

**Yes/No. If yes, how should we do this?**

**Question 32: How do providers currently take account of local and national skills needs when planning their provision and how do they work with the existing structures that have responsibility for local skills planning?**

**Question 33: What additional support will providers need to ensure that T levels meet local skills priorities?**

## 6. Procurement and contracting of T levels

### Background of market reform

The Sainsbury Report recommended that for each occupation, or cluster of occupations, there should be one high quality qualification for 16 to 19 year olds that meets employer-set standards. They also recommended that a single body or consortium should deliver each qualification under an “exclusive licence” that would be awarded for a fixed time-period following open competition.

They recommended this approach for two reasons. First, to protect standards and prevent the ‘race to the bottom’ that can develop where awarding organisations (AOs) compete to offer less demanding qualifications that are easier to teach and easier to pass. Secondly, to provide clarity for students, employers and providers, to make a confusing landscape easier to navigate. The Government accepted this recommendation of the Sainsbury Report and is committed to introducing an exclusive licence approach for all T levels.

### The procurement process

The contracts will be awarded following a procurement process which will comply with relevant procurement rules and follow the principles of openness, fairness and transparency.

We expect the tendering process to commence in summer 2018 for T levels intended for teaching from 2020. The remainder will be rolled out in subsequent competitions.

The employer-led T level panels for the initial pathways have been established and will produce the outline content to be approved by the Institute’s Route Panels. Through the procurement process, potential AOs will be invited to tender for delivery of the qualification specification, based on the outline content (including the taught and assessed content), the assessment strategy, assessment instruments and services related to the assessment delivery and awarding of the qualification.

In each case, the Invitation to Tender (ITT) will set out the requirements and the specific criteria against which bids will be assessed. In addition to price factors, the evaluation criteria are also likely to address factors such as bidders’ approach to the development of qualifications, and the design of clear and rigorous content. Also, the methodology for assessing the qualification, ability to deliver high quality outputs, value for money and financial and operational resilience.

AOs may decide to bid as part of a consortium. All procurement documentation will be available electronically on the designated government website.

The Institute will sign a contract with the winning bidder, which will then begin to work in close collaboration with the Institute and others (employers, teachers etc.) to develop the

content of the qualification. The qualification will be based on the outline content developed by the T level panels (in turn based upon the trailblazer standards, with one standard per occupation). The final products will be subject to Institute approval before they can be used to deliver the qualification. The AO will deliver the approved qualification in collaboration with the education and training providers offering the qualification.

## Exclusive licensing

Under the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 (as amended), upon approval of the qualification, copyright in the relevant course documents will be transferred to the Institute. The legislation allows the Institute to grant a licence to the AO in respect of the copyright in the relevant course documents. This enables the AO to sell the qualification to education and training providers for a specified period, subject to any restrictions determined by the Institute.

The transfer of copyright gives the Institute the power to step in should an AO fail to deliver, ensuring students can continue to study a high quality programme and receive the qualifications they are working towards. It also ensures that there is continuity in the system. At the end of a licence period, the incoming organisation should not have to develop a completely new set of qualification documents when the existing documents are likely to continue to be relevant or require only minor updating. AOs will be expected to assist in transferring relevant materials and related know-how to new AOs.

The Institute will determine which documents are subject to the transfer of copyright (if any). We envisage that this is likely to apply to key documents relating directly to the teaching and assessment of the qualification, for example, the qualification specification and assessment materials. We do not envisage that it will apply to other materials such as those designed to support teachers, or relating to back-office systems.

**Question 34: What material could reasonably be included under the copyright of a technical qualification? Are there any other steps that we could take, within the parameters of the legislation, that would allow this to operate effectively and in everyone's interests?**

## Competition and pricing mechanism

### Competition

Despite the clear benefits of exclusive licensing, we acknowledge that its introduction also presents challenges that we intend to address. In particular, as we move from competition 'in' to competition 'for' the market, our regulatory approach has to change (as highlighted

in section 7 on quality assurance). These competition challenges are discussed in a [letter from the Competition & Markets Authority](#)<sup>5</sup>, and in [research we commissioned](#)<sup>6</sup> last year.

We intend so far as possible to ensure that the new arrangements are capable of delivering quality and value for money, while at the same time minimising the risk of system failure.

We will use the procurement process and contract terms as levers to make sure that we achieve genuine competition for the market, both at the initial procurement and in subsequent rounds. We wish to ensure that there are enough opportunities in the market for many AOs to shape technical qualifications. We are exploring the following:

- the length of the exclusive licence will be critical in maintaining potential competition for the market. We will set licensing periods that are long enough to provide a return on investment for AOs, but not so long that they grant licence winners too high an incumbency advantage at the next licensing round. Early consultation with AOs has suggested a licence duration of between five and ten years
- a tender lotting strategy may be applied to some of the routes (some of which may, where practicable, be combined in a single tender). This will be dependent on the market size, market appetite and similarities between pathways and/or routes. This may be coupled with limits on the number of lots that individual bidders have the right to bid for or be awarded
- ensuring qualifications and systems are easy to transfer (at the end of the contract term or when performance issues result in early termination). We will look at appropriate common standards and requirements, to avoid high frictions and switching costs that might give a winning bidder an incumbency advantage when retendering

**Question 35: How can the above mechanisms (i.e. licence length, lotting and transferability) be used to help AOs recover their investment, maintain appropriate profit margins but also keep the market competitive for future re-procurements?**

**Question 36: When contracts are re-procured what would be needed over and above the licensed copyright to submit a competitive bid? How will AOs keep their skills levels up to maintain their capability to bid in future re-procurements?**

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-and-further-education-bill-cma-recommendations>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vocational-qualifications-market-in-england>

## **Pricing mechanism**

The new arrangements will need to deliver quality and value for money, while minimising the risk of system failure.

We understand that a number of factors will influence the AOs' ability to make a return on their investment, including:

- Cost of developing, assessing and monitoring the qualification
- Size of the student cohort per qualification
- Length of the contract period
- The fee charged to providers

These factors will vary between contracts, and in some instances we may employ a tender lotting strategy as outlined above. During the consultation period we welcome information on the impact of these variables on operating models.

We are also exploring the option of implementing open book contract management for AOs bidding for and winning licences. As highlighted in the quality assurance section of this consultation, exclusive licensing increases the requirement for us to monitor the market and collect information on AOs' costs and business models.

**Question 37: Are there other variables (in addition to those listed in the text above) that could influence the return on investment for AOs? How might these factors influence interest from the AO sector for initial and further competitions?**

## 7. Quality assurance and regulation

The introduction of T levels calls for a robust and rigorous quality assurance and regulatory system. Having a single qualification for each T level pathway will enable more detailed, proactive scrutiny and approval of individual qualifications, followed by more coherent monitoring of the qualification.

The Institute will have a central, statutory role in setting employer-led standards for each T level and developing and approving new qualifications. Alongside this, we need to develop a broader framework of assurance and regulation that provides similar levels of assurance as for academic qualifications, whilst reflecting the characteristics and aims of technical qualifications.

We will seek alignment between the assurance framework for apprenticeships and T levels as far as possible.

### Scope of assurance system and purpose of assurance framework

The overall assurance system for T levels needs to ensure that:

- the design, content and assessment of each technical qualification delivers the content set by the Institute and driven by employers
- the standard of assessment of each technical qualification is consistent across providers and over time so that employers can be confident that a student holding a technical qualification has acquired the skills they need
- there is a competitive choice of awarding organisations with the expertise, capacity and incentives to compete for technical qualification licences and deliver the qualification. This is so that high quality technical qualifications are available in every pathway and that step-in provision is available where necessary to fill gaps

Under a single qualification model, assuring consistency in assessment and awarding of qualifications in education and training providers across the country year on year will be critical to the credibility and purpose of T levels. This creates a greater need for regulation to monitor developments in the market and take steps to prevent situations that would lead to a lack of credible step-in provision or competition at points of retendering the licences.

We propose an assurance framework that will bring together relevant bodies to oversee qualification development and delivery, and manage the market, ensuring qualifications are high quality, reliable and stable, and that AOs fulfil their responsibilities.

There are 3 main levers we propose to use to monitor and enforce consistent standards:

- DfE / Institute control over the **occupational standards and design of the T levels**, and the approval for individual qualifications

- **statutory and regulatory powers** to establish and enforce quality criteria, monitor outcomes and intervene to correct weakness or failure
- the Institute's **contract management** with AOs to set standards and performance indicators that AOs must meet in delivering T level qualifications

In addition, we will explore the ways in which we can ensure that there is good competition between AOs at the point of tendering licences and that AOs behave appropriately during licence periods. This could include detailed research to monitor AO profiles over time, preventative and enforcement steps to ensure AOs do not abuse their sole provider positions and appropriate step-in provisions in case of AO failure. We propose to use a balance of these levers in a single assurance framework that will define clearly the respective responsibilities of the various parties, manage delivery risks and minimise scope for conflict and confusion.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

Under the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 the Institute has responsibility for setting occupational standards, commissioning and approving T level qualifications and maintaining the T level system. This includes contract management for the duration of each licence, and retendering each qualification when the licence ends.

Ofqual has a broad responsibility for regulating national qualifications. This includes recognition of AOs and the statutory powers and expertise to monitor both the standards of assessment and of awarding qualifications. It can also intervene where necessary to maintain the quality and consistency of the qualifications it regulates.

We are working with both bodies to develop a coherent, robust assurance system that can make the most effective use of the available quality assurance levers and powers across the technical education system. We will provide more detail of how the assurance and regulatory system will operate in advance of going out to tender on the first T level qualifications next year. We will seek to align the assurance approach for apprenticeships with the approach developed for T levels as much as possible.

## 8. Accountability

As we introduce T levels, we need to ensure we have appropriate accountability arrangements in place for providers who deliver provision; this includes the right incentives. One of the most important things about T levels is that they support young people's progression by putting them on a path to skilled employment or higher learning. Destination measures will therefore be an important part of the accountability system for T levels. We want to ensure that:

- providers have clear incentives to offer high quality courses
- the student completes the entire course
- there is a focus on progress

As we design T level measures we will consider if it is possible to simplify and align performance measures. The accountability system needs to:

- promote self-improvement by informing providers about their absolute and relative performance
- inform parents and students to help them make choices between providers
- drive up standards, both by setting minimum standards and by expecting providers to stretch and challenge their students
- provide reliable data to inform inspection
- provide credible information to enable support to be offered or intervention to be targeted to those providers that need help
- drive ministerial priorities, for instance incentivising the delivery of T levels

### Performance metrics for world-class technical education on a par with A levels

There are many strengths within the current accountability system, for example progress measures and destination measures. In designing any new accountability system, we will consider which existing measures we might retain, which need to be adjusted and if we need to develop any new measures. We think the following performance measures should form the basis of the accountability system for T levels:

**A completion measure:** T levels are not just a qualification like A levels; they are a programme of study made up of several elements. Each element of the T level will increase the student's level of knowledge, skills and employability and therefore it is important that the student completes the entire programme. We propose that an essential performance measure should be to measure the percentage of students who successfully complete their T level, to recognise that they have achieved a challenging, world-class programme.

**An attainment measure:** We want to encourage students to complete their entire T level, but also to recognise the qualification grades that they achieve. We therefore propose to develop an attainment measure just for those students who complete the full T level.

**A progress measure:** Students should be challenged to achieve the best possible grade. We will explore if a value-added progress measure can be developed for either the T level core component, the occupational specialist component or both.

**Destination measures:** T levels are designed to enable a student to progress to skilled employment or higher technical education. Destination measures show how well they achieve this aim. They will also be an important measure for transition year students to show how well they progress to T levels or apprenticeships. We will review destination measures and outcome based success measures to see how they may need to change to reflect technical education routes and transition year destinations.

**Maths and English:** Students who have not achieved at least a grade 4 GCSE at the end of key stage 4 will need to continue to study maths and English and we will need to measure the progress providers are making in helping students to attain these basic skills.

**Question 38: Which of proposed performance measures are most important? Please explain. Are there any other measures, such as student and employer feedback that should be part of the accountability system for T levels? Yes/No. Please explain.**

In order to gather information on how well each T level route is being delivered, the numbers of students taking each route, and which providers achieve the highest completion rates for each route, we propose that performance measures should be published at route level.

## Inspection

Ofsted will be reviewing their inspection framework for 2019 and they will hold a separate consultation on the specifics of their proposals. We propose that, as part of that framework, it will be necessary for Ofsted to evaluate the delivery of T level routes as a separate provision type, and give a grade for T level provision. This would be similar to the way Ofsted evaluates 16 to 19 study programmes and adult learning programmes.

## 9. Funding

In the 2017 Spring Budget, the Chancellor announced an investment in technical education places for 16 to 19 year olds, rising to an additional £500 million a year. This investment will increase hours of learning for young people on T levels from an average of 600 hours per year to over 900 hours per year, including the work placement. In this consultation, we consider some of the broader funding issues.

### Aligning funding with delivery

While 16 to 19 participation funding is generally allocated on a lagged system, we recognise that the additional costs of T levels mean providers will require the additional funding at the time T levels are delivered. We therefore propose to make the funding for T level places available in-year initially. We are then likely to revert to lagged arrangements once we are in steady-state if we adopt this proposal.

We are considering how to ensure the right amount of funding goes to the right providers (i.e. those who will be delivering T levels in each year as early adopters and beyond), as part of the preparation work outlined earlier in this consultation.

### Distributing the funding

We are considering how to distribute the funding effectively between providers. For example, we could adapt the existing 16 to 19 funding formula to accommodate T levels, or consider a different approach.

**Question 39: Do you have any comments about how we might approach the funding of T levels? How could the funding formula be adapted to distribute funding for T levels?**

### Funding flows to awarding organisations

Under current arrangements, colleges and other providers pay fees to the relevant awarding organisations, in return for products and services including course materials and assessment. Awarding organisations keep fees at similar levels by cross-subsidy between qualifications which have different costs and take-up levels. Competition between awarding organisations puts further limits on the range of fees charged. This means that fee levels do not currently influence colleges' decisions about which courses to run. In the context of exclusive licensing, it may be more difficult for awarding organisations to cross-subsidise, and it is therefore possible that fees would vary between different T levels, which could affect their availability. We are clear that all T levels should be made widely available to students around the country, and the funding flows to awarding organisations

should be designed to support this aim.

**Question 40: How might we adapt funding flows to AOs to make sure that the full range of T levels is available to students around the country?**

## 10. Equalities

We are committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all young people and adults in the education system. It is important for us to consider the possible impact that the proposed policies stated in this consultation could have on different groups. This will help us not only to identify, avoid and manage any possible negative impact, but also to make the most of any opportunities to have a positive impact.

Only then can we provide a world-class education system that allows every student to reach their potential, regardless of their background or where they live.

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, when making a decision, public bodies must have due regard to: the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between those people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. The protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

In our assessment of equalities impact, published in July 2016, we set out that we expect an overrepresentation of disadvantaged individuals taking the technical education route. On this basis, we expect the introduction of T levels to result in an improved offer for students from disadvantaged background.

The purpose of this section is to ask for your views on the proposals set out above in this consultation, and whether they are likely to have a positive or negative disproportionate impact on any student with relevant protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

**Question 41: How could any adverse impact be reduced and are there any ways we could better advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not? Please provide evidence to support your response.**

# Annex A: Example T level certificate and transcript



## T Level

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This is to certify that

**ANNE OTHER**

has achieved a T level in

**DIGITAL: SOFTWARE APPLICATION DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT**

### TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION

Software Application Design and Development (Core)  
Web Application Design

**GRADE**  
B  
Distinction

### ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATION

Certified Tester Foundation Level (CTFL)

Pass

### MATHS AND ENGLISH

Awarding Organisation GCSE English  
Awarding Organisation Functional Skills Mathematics (Level 2)

4  
Pass

### WORK PLACEMENT

Trainee Software Designer  
*(Employer Reference issued)*

**STATUS**  
Completed

Awarded on:

01 July 2022

**XYZ**

Chair, Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education

**DIGITAL: SOFTWARE APPLICATION DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT****ANNE OTHER**

The above named learner has completed the following T level components

<b>TECHNICAL QUALIFICATION</b>	<b>GRADE</b>
Software Application Design and Development (Core)	B
<b>ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATION</b>	
Certified Tester Foundation Level (CTFL)	Pass
<b>MATHS AND ENGLISH</b>	
Awarding Organisation GCSE English	4
Awarding Organisation Functional Skills Mathematics (Level 2)	Pass

The above named learner must achieve the following components to be awarded a T level:

- Occupational Specialism
- Work placement



Department  
for Education

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