



Department  
for Education

# Post-16 technical education reforms

T level action plan

October 2017

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## Summary

This publication follows the Post-16 Skills Plan, published in July 2016 by the Department for Education. It provides an update on progress made in developing policy and implementing the reforms set out in the Skills Plan.

## Who is this publication for?

This plan is for:

- Further and Higher education providers, training providers, and their representative bodies
- Industry, employers and their representative bodies
- School leaders, school staff and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies, free schools, studio schools, and University Technical Colleges
- Local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships

## Main points

The Post-16 Skills Plan, published in July 2016, is an ambitious framework to support young people and adults to secure a lifetime of sustained skilled employment and meet the needs of our growing and rapidly changing economy.

- The government is committed to the reforms set out in the Skills Plan and has announced significant levels of funding for the implementation of T levels.
- We are working with a range of stakeholders to implement these routes, including the development of standards and qualification content, and to understand how we can support the sector in their preparation for delivering T levels.

# Technical Education Reforms

This Action Plan sets out government's recent progress in the delivery of the T level reform programme and immediate next steps.

'T levels' are new technical study programmes that will sit alongside Apprenticeships within a reformed skills training system. The reforms are at the heart of a skills partnership between government, business and education and training providers – a partnership that will create the skills revolution needed to meet the needs of our economy.

The reforms will deliver the recommendations from the Independent Panel on Technical Education<sup>1</sup>, chaired by Lord Sainsbury. The Panel put forward 34 recommendations to government in April 2016, including the introduction of a new framework of 15 technical routes to skilled employment, covering classroom-based training programmes (T levels) and work-based programmes (Apprenticeships). The Panel made a compelling case for change: we currently have a system that doesn't work and has a confusing and ever-changing multitude of qualifications and market failures, which can lead to a 'race to the bottom' in the quality of delivery. In the Post-16 Skills Plan<sup>2</sup>, the government accepted all recommendations put forward by the Panel and committed to their implementation.

The reforms will help Britain make a success of leaving the European Union. They will support young people and adults to secure a lifetime of sustained skilled employment and meet the needs of our growing and rapidly changing economy, contributing to improving individual's social mobility and economic productivity.

We recognise that this will only work if government, business and the education and training sector work in genuine partnership to design and implement these reforms. Just as A levels are demanded by universities, in time we want T levels to be demanded by employers for entry into skilled employment.

In July, we announced we will introduce T levels from September 2020 and set out an outline timetable for introduction across the new routes. This Action Plan goes further by:

- Outlining the key principles underpinning the delivery of T levels and how they fit within the wider 16 to 19 offer
- Providing more detail on our plans for implementation from 2020

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

- Setting out our approach to co-creating the next phase of T level implementation, indicating how, where and when business, education and training providers and awarding organisations can come on board and get involved in shaping the future technical education system.

## T levels and the wider education landscape

The introduction of T levels is at the heart of wider reforms to the 16 to 19 education system, which aim to produce a high quality and coherent system with different study programmes designed to lead people to valuable outcomes. As we described in the government’s Post-16 Skills Plan, our ambition is that every young person, after an excellent grounding in the core academic subjects and a broad and balanced curriculum to age 16, is presented with two choices: the academic or the technical option. The academic option is already well regarded, but the technical option must also be world-class. It must be a distinctive, prestigious, high-quality offer in its own right; a positive, informed choice.

The technical option will prepare individuals for skilled employment which requires technical knowledge and practical skills valued by industry. It will include T levels and apprenticeships, offering two different, but equally valid routes to skilled employment. We are also considering technical education at levels 4 and 5, as well as the offer for those at entry level and level 1, alongside these reforms.

The different types of study programmes within the technical option will suit a wide range of students, whatever their interests, strengths or aspirations, and will each support progression, whether that be into skilled employment, higher level technical training, or technical degrees in higher education.

For 16 year olds, the core options are summarised below. We are also considering what a transition year will consist of. It will provide an offer for 16 year olds who leave the school system with low or no qualifications so that they can develop the skills they need to progress to further education or employment.

Programmes	What are they?	Who are they for?
<b>1. Academic option</b>	Study programmes in this option will include academic subject based qualifications at level 3 that require in-depth study and whose primary aim is to prepare individuals for academic higher education. It includes A levels and AS levels. The academic option also includes Applied General qualifications (AGQs), which feature more applied learning and which meet the requirements of some higher education courses, either by themselves or when	Generally taken by 16 to 19 year olds who have a longer term aim to progress to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher academic education</li> <li>• Degree apprenticeships</li> </ul>

Programmes	What are they?	Who are they for?
	<p>taken alongside A levels or other level 3 qualifications.</p> <p>As the first new A levels became linear from 2015, the related AS level was decoupled so that AS marks do not count towards the final A level grade. In almost all subjects it will continue to be possible for students to take an AS before deciding whether to continue at A level. Students may also take a stand-alone AS to increase the breadth of their studies.</p> <p>Study programmes within the academic option will generally be taught full-time over 2 years in school sixth forms, sixth form colleges and in some further education colleges.</p>	
<p><b>2. Technical option</b></p> <p><b>a) a T level programme, or</b> <b>b) an Apprenticeship</b></p>	<p>A provider-based technical education route: The technical option will be designed, through close engagement with employers and others, to meet the needs of skilled employment. The technical option includes study programmes based around T levels and apprenticeships.</p> <p><b>a) A T level programme</b></p> <p>Study programmes based around a T level will generally be studied over 2 years and will include a new technical qualification, which may be taught in a classroom, workshop or simulated work environment. The programme will include a substantial work placement of up to 3 months as well as English, maths and digital content.</p> <p>A T level is designed to train young people with the knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to enter skilled employment in a particular occupational area, for example software development, or to continue to study that technical subject at a higher level. The content of the T level will be based on the same occupational standards, which extend the provider-based route similarly to apprenticeships, with content defined by employers and others.</p>	<p>T levels will generally be taken by 16 to 19 year olds<sup>3</sup>, but will take account of the needs of adult learners when considering the design of the programme.</p> <p>T levels are for students who want to develop work-related knowledge and skills, but are not yet clear about the specific occupation they want to work in. They are for students who want to get the specialist knowledge and skills they need to progress to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment in a highly skilled occupation (including higher degree apprenticeships)</li> </ul>

<sup>3</sup> In the first wave of reform to technical education, we plan to focus on developing T level programmes for 16 to 19 year olds. Over time we plan to also review technical education for adults and technical provision at levels 4 and 5.

Programmes	What are they?	Who are they for?
	<p>The T level programme for 16 to 19 year olds will generally be taught full-time in a college or other provider, with time spent on a work placement. Individuals will be assessed at the end of the programme to test and certify their skills. Students who pass all parts of the programme will be awarded a T level certificate.</p> <p><b>b) Apprenticeship</b></p> <p>A work-based technical education route: An apprenticeship is a job which includes a significant training component to allow an individual to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to competence in their chose occupation. Individuals will be assessed at the end of the programme to test and certify their skills.</p> <p>The content of apprenticeship training is set out in apprenticeship standards, which are designed by employers and others.</p> <p>An apprenticeship is a real paid job, which is expected to last a minimum of a year and with 20% of the training to take place off the job.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher levels of technical study, including degree courses with substantial technical content</li> </ul> <p>Apprenticeships are for anyone over the age of 16 who wants to enter work and train on the job, in an occupation that they are clear they want to pursue.</p> <p>They are for students who want to get the specialist knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to progress to highly skilled employment in an occupation whilst in the workplace. They may also help students to progress to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A higher apprenticeship (including a degree apprenticeship)</li> <li>Higher level technical training</li> </ul>

In addition to the two options described above, traineeships are study programmes that include employability skills and a work placement alongside English and maths, and lasts for a minimum of 6 weeks and a maximum of 6 months. Traineeships are for students who want to progress to an apprenticeship, or to other employment, usually in an occupation where learning is ‘on the job’ rather than requiring qualifications.

We recognise that movement between academic and technical provision will be important in enabling individuals to move between the options in either direction. This may require the study of additional ‘bridging’ content. We will provide more information about this as the policy is developed.

## Developing the design principles of the T level programme

Academic study programmes are already well established following successful reforms to make them a rigorous option that supports progression to employment or further study. We are introducing a high-quality coherent technical option, consisting of Apprenticeships

and T levels, to sit alongside the academic option for students aged 16 to 19. Reforms to work-based Apprenticeships are already underway. Provider-based T levels are a new initiative introduced to provide an equally rigorous level 3 classroom-based technical study programme. We will consider how the introduction of T levels will impact on current level 2 provision in a classroom setting and cover this in the consultation later this year. In time, T levels will replace most of the technical provision currently funded for 16 to 19 year olds. Set out below are the design principles that will guide the development of new T levels, based on the recommendations in the report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education.

- T levels will be level 3 technical study programmes, based on employer-designed standards and content, which will prepare students for highly skilled jobs and enable them to adapt to meet the skills needs of the future.
- T levels will be designed primarily to support entry to skilled employment. Successful completion of a T level will provide students with the knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to start skilled employment in an occupation related to their field of study.
- Students achieving T levels will also be able to progress to the highest levels of skilled employment or technical education and training at levels 4, 5 and 6. Progression options will include higher and degree level apprenticeships or higher technical education, including technical degrees.
- Apprenticeships and T levels will be based on the same set of standards designed by employers and others but there will be differences in the overall content of each programme, to reflect that apprenticeships are mainly delivered in the workplace, and T levels will mainly be delivered in the classroom. Apprentices will train for a single occupation while T level students will undertake a broader programme, gaining skills and knowledge relevant to a range of occupations in a route. At the end of their training an apprentice will meet all the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the apprenticeship standard. T level students will have developed a wide range of relevant knowledge, skills and behaviours and will be able to progress into employment, higher level apprenticeships or higher level study.
- Students achieving a T level will have the numeracy, literacy, digital skills and wider transferable skills, attitudes and behaviours needed to succeed in occupations relevant to their chosen route and the wider workplace of the future.
- T level programmes are substantial and will be high quality. They are likely to be equivalent in size to a 3 'A' level programme and will have more teaching time built in to enable students to acquire more and better knowledge, skills and behaviours than can be achieved through other vocational qualifications currently offered.

- All T level programmes must include a substantial work placement with an employer, away from the individuals' learning environment, to help students put into practice the knowledge and skills they have learnt in the classroom.

## **Developing the accountability system for the T level programme**

Accountability measures for T levels will be developed alongside the programme. These measures will provide external confidence in the quality of T level delivery, at provider and sector level, and support effective oversight and inspection.

The current accountability system at 16 to 18 operates across both schools and colleges. We will need to consider how the system should be developed so that it can fully meet the needs of technical education.

A robust and comprehensive accountability system will ensure that T levels establish themselves as a high-quality alternative to the traditional academic option, with an equivalent focus on performance and effective oversight appropriate to a skills based route.

## **Implications of the reforms on current vocational and technical qualifications**

The ultimate aim of these reforms is to establish a national system of technical education with qualifications that are easy to understand, have credibility with employers and remain stable over time. This is a significant change from where we are today: our current system does not always meet these aims. As set out by the Independent Panel on Technical Education, students and employers must currently navigate a confusing and ever changing multitude of qualifications, many of which hold little value to individuals and are not understood or sought by employers.

To ensure that we can deliver a technical education system which is straightforward, easy to understand and has real currency, we need to also address the incentives and support currently available for other competing qualifications.

We are aware that decisions around this are important for many of our partners and will have a significant impact on them. We will consult further on our approach to ensure that awarding organisations, providers and others are able to input views on our approach and will ensure that transitional arrangements are put in place. As a general principle, we would expect the number of qualifications that are funded for 16 to 19 year olds to reduce substantially in the future.

## High-level timetable for implementation

As recommended by the Independent Panel on Technical Education, we have created a framework of 15 occupational routes which apply across the new T level programme and across apprenticeships. A route is a group of occupations which share some common knowledge, skills and behaviours. Within each route, there are a number of pathways which reflect different occupational specialisms.

Four routes are expected to be delivered through apprenticeships only. The roll out of the remaining 11 T level routes will be phased, with a small number of providers delivering some pathways within 3 of the routes in September 2020, and the remaining routes being launched in two waves in September 2021 and 2022. The planned timetable for delivery of the 11 classroom-based routes is given below.



## **Which education and training providers will deliver which routes, and when?**

We expect a wide range of institutions to deliver T levels, and those institutions will want to ensure they have strong employer links and suitable teaching facilities. By 2022, all planned T level routes and pathways will have been launched.

However, we also expect that colleges and training providers may wish to increase and expand their T level offer over time as the programme is fully rolled out and government's support for current duplicate and overlapping qualifications is phased out. Our ambition is that the majority of providers will be offering T levels by 2024, recognising the opportunity that the new programmes will offer, including increased government funding per student and support to ensure that their staff are well prepared to deliver them.

As confirmed by the Skills Minister in July 2017, we expect the first T levels introduced in September 2020 to be delivered by a small number of providers initially. We will confirm the process to determine which providers will deliver T levels from 2020 during the autumn.

We expect to run a similar process to identify the providers who will offer the routes that will be available from September 2021. Details will be published in spring 2018.

## **Progress and next steps on key elements of the programme**

This section provides information on the progress that has been made in developing the key elements of the programme, and outlines next steps.

The successful design and delivery of T levels is highly reliant on input from employers, providers and awarding organisations. The sections below also outline how partners can be involved.

### **The role of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education**

The Institute for Apprenticeships (the Institute) was established in April 2017 to oversee apprenticeship standards and assessment plans. It is independent of government and at the heart of employer-led reforms.

The Institute is responsible for approving and publishing apprenticeship standards and assessment plans, among other things. The Technical and Further Education Act 2017 allows the Institute's remit to be extended to include technical education, and we will announce further details over the coming months about the transfer of functions to the Institute relating to technical education.

### **Putting employers at the heart of Technical Education**

To deliver on our commitment to put employers at the heart of these reforms, playing a vital role in co-creation of technical education programmes, we have convened T level Panels made up of employers, professional bodies and providers with relevant curriculum experience. They will be responsible for developing the outline content for technical qualifications and the broader T level curriculum, building on the apprenticeship standards developed by Trailblazer groups. Panel members will have the support of education and assessment experts experienced in qualification development. We have convened Panels across the six routes for delivery in 2020 and 2021. Further Panels will be convened in due course across the remaining five routes for delivery in 2022. If you would like further information about this, please contact us at this email address: [employer.panels@education.gov.uk](mailto:employer.panels@education.gov.uk).

Overseeing and giving final approval to the work of the T level Panels will be the Institute's Route Panels, made up of industry experts and members of the Institute, whose core responsibility is the ongoing management of standards, qualifications and occupational maps for each technical route – for both apprenticeships and T levels.

## Developing occupational maps

We have worked with the Gatsby Foundation to develop an occupational map for each of the 15 technical routes. The maps identify the skilled occupations that sit within each route and cluster together those with similar knowledge, skills and behaviours.

They show entry level technical occupations and options for progression to higher technical, and professional occupations following further training, education or experience, as well as indicating which occupations are most suitable for apprenticeships (work-based training) and which may be appropriate for a T level (provider-based).

The occupational maps will enable T level Panels to see how the occupations within a route are related in terms of the shared content and opportunities for progression. Panels will identify core knowledge, skills and behaviours that will form the basis of high quality qualifications in which employers can have full confidence.

To ensure the occupational maps command wide sector support, the Institute will be carrying out a public engagement exercise before the end of the year to continue to collect feedback on the maps from a wide number of interested parties, including employer representative bodies, providers and awarding organisations. We will provide details about this engagement activity via the Skills Plan page on Gov.uk<sup>4</sup>. You can contact the Institute at [enquiries.ifa@education.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries.ifa@education.gov.uk).

## Developing qualifications

T level Panels will develop the outline content for each T level, based on the relevant standards. They will identify the content common across the route and pathway, as well as the specialist content required for each occupation listed on the relevant occupational map. Panels will advise on broader programme requirements, including the study of further qualifications where needed and the maths, English and digital requirements to secure skilled employment following completion of the T level.

We have also commissioned an independent research organisation to work with employers, providers, awarding organisations and others to explore approaches to structuring, assessing and grading the qualifications. This will inform wider consultation on design principles for T levels later in the year.

The qualifications will be offered under exclusive licensing, in line with the recommendations of the Independent Panel on Technical Education. We will seek views on the details of our approach to implementation in late 2017 from awarding

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education>

organisations, including members of the Joint Council of Qualifications and the Federation of Awarding bodies. The procurement process will follow standard EU government procurement procedures and we expect it will launch in summer 2018, following the consultation.

The overall regulatory and assurance system for T level qualifications will be different from that for A levels and GCSEs and other existing vocational qualifications. Standards set by employers will systematically provide, the benchmark for approval of qualifications and grade awarding. We are working to ensure that design, development, approval and regulation join together to form a robust quality assurance system which ensures that the new T levels consistently deliver the outcomes which employers and students need.

## **Work placements**

As part of their T level programme, every 16 to 19 year old student will undertake a structured, high quality work placement. Work placements will enable young people to put into practice and further develop the knowledge, practical skills and behaviours that they have learnt in the classroom.

We launched a work placement pilot scheme in September 2017 to test different models and approaches to delivering T level placements. We have worked with providers and employers to design models which are appropriate for different occupations. 21 providers are piloting these in academic year 2017/18, working with a range of employers and approximately 2500 students. An evaluation organisation will work alongside these pilots to gather lessons and develop best practice after they have ended.

The Secretary of State for Education has also announced funding to support work placements. We will allocate funding starting with £74million to cover the period April 2018 to July 2019 for providers to start building their capacity and infrastructure to deliver work placements, with detailed guidance published on how funding can be accessed in September 2017. The guidance is available on Gov.uk<sup>5</sup>.

## **Entry Level and Level 1**

The Independent Panel on Technical Education said that all young people should have the opportunity, and be encouraged, to benefit from technical education. However, the Panel also acknowledged that for many reasons there are some who are not ready to access technical education when they leave compulsory schooling at age 16 (or older if

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/work-placements-capacity-and-delivery-fund-from-april-2018-to-july-2019>

their education has been delayed), and so these young people should be offered a ‘transition year’.

Therefore, as part of the wider technical education reforms, we are considering what a transition year will consist of, so that students who are not ready for post-16 education have an opportunity to develop the skills they need to progress either to the technical option (a T level or an apprenticeship), the academic option, a traineeship or other post-16 education.

Young people who achieved poorly at school currently study a mix of vocational or more generic qualifications at level 1 or below, together with English and maths. Whilst many students progress successfully to education at a higher level, data shows that performance varies widely between institutions and the subjects studied. Of the 49,000 16 year olds without any GCSE passes at A\*-C in 2013, who went on to then study at entry or level 1, 38% progressed to an apprenticeship or level 2 the following year. But at institution level, this percentage ranged from 75% to 7%<sup>6</sup>. Whilst this can be explained in part by prior attainment, it is clear that there are also other influential factors.

That is why we have commissioned and published two external research projects which explored effective practice in the teaching and support of lower attaining students<sup>7</sup>. This research has highlighted the importance of the transition year being flexible, in terms of both its content and length, to meet the very diverse needs of students. Many will still need to agree realistic career choices, so the transition year must help them to make choices not just about technical or academic education and training, but also about other programmes such as traineeships, so that their programme can be tailored to best prepare them for their choice.

Our research found that vocational programmes were the most appealing to students where delivery is as practical as possible, with theory, basic skills and ‘life skills’ embedded in practical tasks. Low level qualifications have a role in motivating students who performed poorly at school, and some can lead to better employment prospects.

We are using the findings from these reports, together with external research, to draw up a set of proposals for the transition year which we will test with education providers and representative bodies prior to national public consultation later this year. This will include testing appropriate branding to best encourage students to participate.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-effective-curriculum-practice-below-level-2>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-entry-and-level-1-students-in-post-16-institutions>

## Support for delivery

The introduction of T levels is a major change programme and government is committed to ensuring education and training providers and employers have the support they need for successful introduction and delivery.

Critical to the success of T levels will be highly-skilled teachers and leaders. Although there are already clear strengths in the teaching profession within the technical education sector, we know that we need to do more to attract and retain the highly-skilled professionals who are key to realising learners' potential. In July 2017, the Secretary of State set out her commitment to bring forward a new package of support for those teaching in the technical education sector, including the introduction of a new national programme to attract industry experts to work in further education colleges.

We are planning to work with providers to understand the gap between the current capacity and capability of their teachers and leaders, and what they need in order to deliver T levels. This will help us, in conjunction with other partners, to devise and deliver the right support.

We intend to begin engaging with providers after the autumn 2017 Skills Summit, and to complete analysis of additional support needs by summer 2018. We will then be able to give more detail about the support that will be available for providers to access.

In support of T level development, we will undertake wider sector development work to enhance the image of the sector as an attractive career opportunity for high-quality tutors and teachers with relevant skills and experience, increasing the number of industry experts working in the sector. As part of this work, we will look carefully at how we can attract teachers and leaders into the sector.

Additional funding, rising to an additional £500 million a year, was secured as part of the Spring Budget 2017 for the delivery of T levels. This additional investment will increase the hours of learning by over 50% for young people on technical education routes, from 600 hours per year to over 900 hours per year, including a high-quality technical work placement. We will provide details on how this funding will be allocated in due course.

## How you can get involved

To ensure the successful delivery and long term impact of T levels, we need to design and deliver T levels in partnership with employers, providers, awarding organisations and others. This will require significant engagement to help us design the detail of qualifications, deliver work placements and ensure the broader system is ready for T level delivery. We also want to ensure that those who will be delivering T levels have the information they need, when they need it, to ensure they can deliver successfully.

We will engage in a variety of ways:

- Through the T Level Stakeholder Advisory Group with membership comprising; The Association of Colleges, The Association of Employment and Learning Providers, Ofsted, Ofqual, Confederation of British Industry, Federation of Small Businesses, Skills Group, Institute for Apprenticeships, Education & Training Foundation, Gatsby Foundation, British Chambers of Commerce, Universities UK, Barclays and Optimity.
- Regional awareness raising events aimed at providers who haven't engaged with the details of the reforms yet and want an introduction to the changes and the implications for them – October/November 2017.
- A series of research events with employers and providers to help shape key elements of the public consultation – autumn 2017.
- A 10-week public consultation launched before the end of 2017 on the design and delivery of T levels, including key aspects of work placements, to allow interested organisations and individuals to contribute towards the implementation of the new programmes.
- Direct engagement with providers and others at a local level to inform what support is needed to ensure T levels are delivered successfully – winter 2017/summer 2018.
- Updates from speakers for the Department for Education at conferences led by provider representative organisations and government forums – autumn/winter 2017.
- Monthly newsletters linked to the ESFA bulletin to help providers keep abreast of engagement activities and T level developments.

If you would like further information about the activities outlined above, please contact us at this email address: [technical.education@education.gov.uk](mailto:technical.education@education.gov.uk).

Much of this initial engagement activity is focused on providers to ensure they have the time they need to get ready to deliver the new T level programmes. However, we are aware that there are many different interested groups who we must ensure we engage to enable T levels to be a success. We have already engaged a number of employers in the design of different models for T level work placements, which will be piloted over the next

year. Employers will be an important part of the pilots, and will also be involved in delivering work placements with providers who successfully secure funding to deliver them in 2018/19. Once this first pilot phase of delivery has been completed and we have more clarity about what work placements will look like, we will begin engaging much more comprehensively with employers in general, as roll-out approaches.

We will also be developing plans to communicate with parents, students, careers advisors and others with a key interest, again as roll-out approaches.

## The wider post-16 reform programme

There are a number of wider policies which will contribute to the successful implementation and future delivery of T levels.

### Apprenticeships

T levels build upon the apprenticeship reforms which we are currently implementing to continue to improve the quality of apprenticeships for all, aligning both technical education options to provide the skills that employers need, and to reach our commitment of 3 million apprenticeship starts in England by 2020. The recently-established Institute for Apprenticeships puts employers at the heart of decision-making processes and supports the quality of new apprenticeship standards, which are being developed by employers themselves and form the basis of T level qualifications.

The UK-wide apprenticeship levy was launched on 6 April 2017 to fund this step change in apprenticeship numbers and quality. The levy will encourage employers to invest in quality training for their apprentices.

Finally, we have introduced a Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers – a list of organisations that employers can use to choose who to buy their apprenticeship training from. As of May 2017, only providers listed on the Register can receive public funds for apprenticeship training. The Register encourages diversity and competition in the provider market, supporting quality and employer choice.

### Careers strategy

The Secretary of State for Education has confirmed that we will publish a careers strategy in the autumn, with a clear focus on social mobility. It will include proposals to improve the quality and coverage of careers advice in schools and colleges, and give people the information they need to access training throughout their working lives. The strategy will be based on evidence as to what works best, both in this country and internationally, and will seek to share this best practice with all people, of all ages and in all areas, including those who are hardest to reach.

In addition, new legislation in the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 requires schools to give education and training providers the opportunity to talk directly to pupils in years 8 to 13 about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships that they may offer. This will ensure that young people hear much more consistently about the merits of alternatives to academic and school-based routes and are aware of all the routes to higher skills and into the workplace.

A further measure in the Act requires Ofsted to consider the quality of the careers offer when conducting standard inspections of further education colleges, and to comment on it in the inspection report.

These new duties will commence in January 2018 and the Department for Education will publish statutory guidance setting out what schools will need to do to comply. Communications will begin in the autumn term to explain the requirement and help schools and providers to prepare for its introduction.

## Career learning

In the Industrial Strategy Green Paper, published in January 2017, the government committed to exploring ‘ambitious new approaches’ to encouraging lifelong learning, with a focus on using existing contact points between individuals and government in order to adopt a more proactive approach to promote the benefits of learning. The need for action is clear: only 10% of adults in this country hold a technical qualification as their highest educational achievement. Furthermore, studies have reported that up to 35% of existing jobs at medium skills levels are at risk of replacement by new technology in the next 10 to 20 years. The Spring Budget allocated up to £40m to fund pilots over the next two years to test these new approaches. The pilots will provide crucial insights into what works, and what does not, in engaging adults about the opportunities and benefits of training. These are currently being developed and we will set out further detail in due course.

## Levels 4 and 5

The Independent Panel on Technical Education rightly identified that many of the same issues that exist in the technical education system at lower levels are also seen at levels 4 and 5. Qualifications currently available are not consistently providing the skills employers need. Learners are often faced with a complex array of choices even within a single subject area. We have therefore committed to consider the provision of technical education at the highest levels, to ensure that there is a high quality progression offer for T level students who wish to progress and specialise within a provider-based environment, and for those in the workforce looking to upskill and retrain.

There are, however, further issues at this level which do not exist elsewhere. Level 4 and 5 education is delivered through both further education and higher education institutions and is therefore subject to multiple regulatory systems, creating a number of complexities. Reforms to higher level technical education will be shaped both by the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 and Higher Education and Research Act 2017. In addition, level 4 and 5 education needs to work for a broader group of learners than at lower levels. It needs to offer valuable progression options for school and college leavers completing T levels, or other full-time education; be that to the higher level technical skills wanted by employers and leading to higher level skilled occupations, or as a pathway to further study beyond level 5. And, as well as meeting the needs of school- and college-leavers, levels 4 and 5 should also meet the needs of older learners who may be wanting to return to the education system from the workforce and study whilst

working, to upskill or retrain. And finally, there needs to be clear alignment between provider-based level 4 and 5 provision and, where appropriate, Higher Apprenticeships.

The government will consider how to extend technical education reforms to higher levels, including good progression routes for T levels.

## Your thoughts on this Action Plan

We will be carrying out a formal consultation later this year and you will be able to feed in your views on specific questions around the next phase of implementation. However, we would also welcome your thoughts on the contents of this plan. You can email us at: [technical.education@education.gov.uk](mailto:technical.education@education.gov.uk).

## Post-16 skills reform implementation timeline

	Autumn / Winter 17	Spring / Summer 18	Autumn / Winter 18	Spring / Summer 19	Autumn / Winter 19	Spring / Summer 20
Technical Education Panels established for first 6 routes	●					
Work placement Pilots launched	●					
Outline content developed	→					
Launch consultation on occupational maps	●					
Launch consultation on T level principles, licencing etc.	●					
Route Panels established by Institute of Apprenticeships	→					
Publish careers strategy	●					
Consultation on T level principles etc. closes - Response	→					
Develop support programme to ensure provider, employer and student readiness	→					
First work placements funding released		●				
First work placements delivered with capacity building funding			●			
Announce programme of support for providers				●		
Development of Qualifications		→				
Delivery of readiness support programme				→		
First teaching of early adopter routes – September 2020						●



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