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Department  
for Education

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## T levels: what they are

T levels are a new 2-year, level 3 technical study programme which include a qualification. They will enable students to secure skilled employment by providing a mixture of:

- practical skills and knowledge specific to their chosen industry or occupation
- at least 45 days' work placement in their chosen industry or occupation
- core English, maths and digital skills

transferable skills to use in the workplace

T level students will be able to:

- learn practical skills specific to their chosen industry from the beginning of their course
- choose occupational specialisms that they wish to focus on during the course

T levels will also:

- offer employers a valued qualification to help recruitment of a skilled young workforce
- simplify choices for post-16 technical education for students and providers

T levels will be introduced over 3 years, starting from the 2020 to 2021 academic year. T levels are expected to replace many of the vocational and technical education qualifications currently offered at level 3.

The first T levels are being collaboratively developed by the Department for Education (DfE), the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA), education providers and employers.

The implementation of T levels was the subject of a [recent government consultation](#), which has now closed. The Department for Education is analysing the consultation feedback and will publish its response in the spring.

## How T levels will work with other level 3 study programmes

T levels will become 1 of 3 major options when a student reaches level 3, alongside:

- apprenticeships for students who wish to learn a specific occupation 'on the job'
- A levels for students who wish to continue academic education

When they complete a T level study programme, students will be able to choose between moving into:

- a skilled occupation
- higher or degree level apprenticeships
- higher level technical study, including higher education

The DfE recognises that the current range of technical qualifications is confusing and that some have been more successful than others.

The department will review which qualifications it should fund at level 3 and below alongside T levels and A levels. It also intends to engage with interested parties throughout the design of the review. Further information about the review will be contained in the government consultation response, published later in the spring.

## The Sainsbury Review and technical education

The introduction of T levels follows the [‘Sainsbury Review’](#) of technical education, which the government has accepted in full. The review recommended grouping technical education options by the skills required to work in 15 different industries.

T levels will offer students a mixture of college-based learning and ‘on-the-job’ experience in the following of these 15 industries:

- digital
- construction
- education and childcare
- engineering and manufacturing
- health and science
- legal, finance and accounting
- hair and beauty
- agriculture, environment and animal care
- business and administration
- catering and hospitality
- creative and design

Both T levels and apprenticeships will share the same standards for their relevant occupations, approved by the IfA.

The course content for T levels will reflect that they:

- enable students to learn occupational skills inside and outside the workplace
- are broader in content than apprenticeships
- may have a different duration to apprenticeships

## Funding for T levels

The DfE has committed additional funding specifically for T levels – rising to an extra £500 million per year.

The additional funding recognises that T levels will give students more learning time than many current technical education options – in some cases an increase of 50%.

## How T levels are being developed

The first T levels are being ‘co-designed’ by the DfE, the IfA, education providers and employers.

This means that:

- the DfE has set out the aims for T levels as a study programme
- education providers, employers and the IfA are helping the department to develop the outline content for the first qualifications

The department's development plans for T levels are being tested with students, education providers and employers. They will be continually reviewed, refined and retested.

This approach means that, in some cases, final details about how the programme will work will be confirmed later than education providers and employers may be used to.

This is to ensure all views are being taken into consideration and acted upon during development - and the resulting qualification is effective and deliverable.

At a later date, technical education functions will transfer to the IfA (which, at that time, will change its name to the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education).

A procurement exercise to identify awarding organisations to develop the details of the first 3 T level qualifications (for approval by the IfA) will take place later in 2018.

## T levels: structure, assessment and grading

The structure, assessment and grading for T level courses was part of a [recent government consultation](#), which has now closed. The DfE is analysing the consultation feedback and will publish its response in the spring. You can find details of the proposals in the [consultation document](#), or a high-level summary of them below.

### Structure of T levels: current proposals

The subject range of T level study programmes will be defined by the IfAs' [occupational maps](#).

Groups of employers define the skills and requirements for T levels programmes for each industry by participating in '[T level panels](#)'.

The T level panels will also develop the outline content for the qualification, based on the same standards for apprenticeships. These standards are approved by the IfA.

Individual education providers will decide how to structure the T level courses they offer. This will enable them to deliver the study programme's mandatory components in the most effective way for students.

T levels programmes will either:

- cover an industry, with students choosing at least one occupational specialism during the course
- be based on an occupational specialism from the outset

Total time is expected to be around 1,800 hours over 2 years (including the work placement of at least 45 days). This is a significant increase over most current technical education programmes.

### T level study programmes – current proposals

Study programmes will include 3 mandatory elements:

- a 'core' set of underpinning theories, concepts and workplace skills, tailored for their chosen industry or occupation
- specialist training covering occupational or industry-specific skills
- a work placement with an employer, which will last for around 45 working days

## Core skills

The 'core' will be split into 2 parts.

One part will develop 'underpinning' skills and knowledge relevant to the T level's industry. This will include understanding:

- how the industry works
- how occupational specialisms fit within the industry
- what the working practices in the industry are like

The other part will focus on employability, covering both:

- transferable skills within the industry covered by the T level
- maths, English and digital skills needed for the type of industry and occupation the T level covers

## Specialist skills

Specialist skills for the chosen industry or occupation will be based on the standards for apprenticeships. For T levels, these skills will be delivered in a 'classroom-based' environment (including, for example, workshops and simulated working environments).

T levels students will aim to achieve 'threshold competence'. This will provide evidence of achievement in work-specific skills that shows they can work in their chosen industry. In some cases, these competences will be expected develop fully when in work, with appropriate support and development.

The time taken to reach 'threshold competence' will vary from T level to T level, in the same way it does in apprenticeships.

Dependent on the T level course they select, students may aim to reach threshold competence in one or multiple occupational specialisms.

## Work placement

T level study programmes must contain a meaningful work placement with an employer. These will last a minimum of 45 working days, but can last up to 60 working days.

Different ways of carrying out work placements are being piloted to see which work best for specific industries and providers. For example, the placement could be a continuous block of working days or distributed across the study programme. The DfE will confirm how work placements should be delivered when the pilots have been completed.

Additionally, the DfE is [funding a number of work placements](#) during the academic year 2018 to 2019.

Both these schemes will help to:

- test the work placement concept
- learn from the trial
- build providers' and employers' confidence

The DfE has proposed [target standards](#) for providers and employers to meet on work placements. These will be reviewed and confirmed after the pilots have been completed.

## Assessment of T levels – current proposals

Both parts of the 'core' will be assessed separately, but scored using an average of the two. This will allow higher performance in one area to compensate for lower performance in the other (subject to a defined minimum being reached in the lower-performance element).

Assessment of industry-specific learning will be based on the student showing they have reached a 'threshold competence' – a minimum level of capability for their chosen occupation. For example, for a T level specialising in electrical engineering they may need to show they can find and fix faults in an electrical system.

The work placement will be managed by the employer and the provider. It won't be externally assessed.

## Grading of T levels – current proposals

The core will be graded on a 6-point scale from E to A, with A being the highest. Occupational specialisms can award a pass, merit or distinction.

## Students not ready to start a level 3 study programme

The DfE recognises that not all students who wish to start a T Level will be ready to do so at age 16. The department plans to offer a 'transition' to help students get to the standard required to start a T level.

## Key dates in T level development

The DfE plans to introduce T level programmes progressively between 2020 and 2022.

### Spring 2018

Publication of government responses to the:

- [Implementation of T levels consultation \(Department for Education\)](#)
- [Occupational maps consultation \(Institute for Apprenticeships\)](#)

Funding starts to be released from the Work Placement Capacity and Delivery Fund for work placements during the academic year 2018 to 2019.

Providers selected to deliver the [initial T levels in the academic year 2020 to 2021](#) will be announced.

## Autumn 2018

First work placements funded by the [Work Placement Capacity and Delivery Fund](#) begin.

## Autumn 2020

First T level programmes start for specific occupations in 3 industries:

- software application development (digital industry)
- building services engineering (construction industry)
- education (education and childcare industry)

## Autumn 2021

Full range of T level programmes start for the following industries:

- digital
- construction
- education and childcare
- engineering and manufacturing
- health and science
- legal, finance and accounting

## Autumn 2022

Full range of T level programmes begin for the following industries:

- hair and beauty
- agriculture, environment and animal care
- business and administration
- catering and hospitality
- creative and design

## Get involved in T level delivery

### Forthcoming surveys

The government wants to understand more about the type of support providers need to make the introduction of T levels successful. It will be running 3 surveys in the spring.

You can find out more about [the surveys and how to get involved](#).

## Expressions of interest for the 2020 to 2021 academic year

If you [expressed an interest](#) in delivering the initial 3 T level programmes in the 2020 to 2021 academic year, you'll get a letter in early May. The letter will tell you whether you've been successful and, if so, what the next steps are.

## Next T level updates for education providers

This page will be updated when the government's consultation responses are published.

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