



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

T Level Transition Programme

**Supporting young people to progress
onto and succeed on a T Level**

Framework for delivery 2020/21

October 2019

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Foreword by Michelle Donelan MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families



T Levels are at the centre of our plans for technical education reform and are intended to provide new, world-class technical education. They will be rigorous, stretching level 3 study programmes based on recognised, employer-led standards. As such, they will help young people to gain the higher skills and knowledge that they and employers need to succeed. This in turn will increase our nation's productivity and create a more productive economy.

Not all young people will be ready to start a T Level at 16 without further preparation. We owe it to these young people to provide them with the additional knowledge and support that they need to progress onto T Levels and subsequently to fulfilling careers. I am delighted that we are introducing the T Level Transition Programme from September 2020, an exciting new type of 16 to 19 study programme to give young people effective, tailored preparation specifically to help students to progress onto and succeed on a T Level. By increasing the number of young people who are able to progress onto a T Level, the T Level Transition Programme will support our ambition to boost further education over the next decade. This will benefit young people and help to deliver the skills our economy needs.

We are taking a phased approach to implementing the T Level Transition Programme – working with a small number of schools, colleges and training companies on first delivery – so that we can develop and share good practice to make it as innovative and effective as possible. We will also use this phased approach to work with the sector in developing a future programme that ensures all students are consistently prepared to progress to a T Level, through an appropriate technical curriculum. This Framework sets out guidance and expectations for these early schools, colleges and training companies on how the programme should be delivered in academic year 2020/21.

We are fortunate that there is a wealth of experience and good practice in the sector in building effective programmes to support progression to level 3 study. We have drawn on this practice in designing the T Level Transition Programme and we want schools, colleges and training companies to build on this to develop their own strong T Level Transition Programmes that are effective in preparing students for T Levels.

I am committed to ensuring that as many young people as possible are able to benefit from T Levels. The T Level Transition Programme will be key to this. I look forward to working with you as it develops to meet young people's needs.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature on the left is 'Michelle', written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M'. The second signature on the right is 'Paul', also in cursive, with a large initial 'P' and a long horizontal flourish extending to the right. The signatures are positioned above a thin vertical line that runs down the right side of the page.

Introduction

1. The T Level Transition Programme is a new type of 16 to 19 study programme, specifically designed to develop the skills, experience, knowledge and behaviours to support progression onto and success on a T Level. It is targeted at students who are not ready to start a T Level but have the potential to progress onto one following a tailored preparation programme. We expect the T Level Transition Programme to be a full-time study programme lasting up to a standard academic year in most cases.
2. The T Level Transition Programme will be introduced through phased implementation from September 2020, working initially with a small number of volunteer T Level schools, colleges and training companies, to explore different approaches to delivery and develop good practice in effectively preparing students for a T Level. We will scale up the number of institutions delivering the Transition Programme as T Levels are rolled out. Following our stakeholder engagement to date, we will work closely with the first Transition Programme schools, colleges and training companies and wider stakeholders on its continued development.
3. This Framework sets out information and expectations for how the T Level Transition Programme should be delivered in academic year 2020/21, for those T Level schools, colleges and training companies taking part in its phased implementation. These expectations include the key components that are nationally set, to provide a broad foundation for T Levels, whilst allowing schools, colleges and training companies the flexibility to put together the most appropriate and effective programmes to meet the needs of their own students.
4. Schools, colleges and training companies should use the Framework as a guide to support the development of their T Level Transition Programmes. Our work with schools, colleges and training companies during phased implementation to identify good practice will inform future iterations of the Framework.
5. This document applies to England only and should be read alongside the [16 to 19 funding guidance and rules](#) published by the ESFA and the [16 to 19 study programme guidance](#).
6. In this document, we refer to “T Level Transition Programme” and “Transition Programme” interchangeably. In phased implementation, we will work with schools, colleges and training companies on how they will market and name the programme locally and on how the programme’s local branding fits alongside the branding of T Levels.

Who is the T Level Transition Programme for?

7. This Framework sets out the intended core target group for the T Level Transition Programme, within which schools, colleges and training companies have a degree of discretion where they believe a student has the potential to progress on to a T Level. This should enable schools, colleges and training companies to recruit the young people for whom this provision would be the most effective preparation for T Levels.

Age range

8. The T Level Transition Programme is available for young people aged 16 to 19 and for young people with Education, Health and Care Plans up to age 24. However, when enrolling students onto the Transition Programme, schools, colleges and training companies need to consider that these students will need to be eligible to receive 16 to 19 funding throughout their subsequent T Level. This would require them to start their T Level no later than the academic year in which they are 18, unless they have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

Target group

9. The aim of the T Level Transition Programme is to prepare students to progress onto and succeed on their chosen T Level. A range of different programmes support young people, so we want to ensure that the Transition Programme is targeted at those who will benefit most from it.
10. The core target group are students who are not ready to start a T Level but have the potential to progress onto one following a tailored preparation programme; specifically students who:
 - are able to demonstrate an aptitude and keenness to progress onto studying a T Level;
 - need further support to address barriers to accessing a T Level – due to prior attainment, pastoral issues or personal development needs – that can realistically be delivered within the duration of the Transition Programme;
 - would benefit from the additional time the Transition Programme allows to build their knowledge and skills in English and Maths, in order to achieve their Level 2 by the end of their compulsory education or training;
 - learn better in a predominantly classroom/workshop-based environment rather than the workplace.
11. The T Level Transition Programme is not intended for:
 - those who have the skills and experience needed to start a T Level without the need for an additional transition year;
 - those who are not expected to be ready for a T Level by the end of the Transition Programme, for example, those who require very intensive support or have barriers that cannot realistically be addressed within a transition year;

- students with a desire for, and who might be better suited to, other more work-based technical provision such as an apprenticeship or traineeship.

12. We will monitor the prior attainment of students enrolled on the T Level Transition Programme and how this aligns with the intended core target group. In addition, we will review learner information on disability, gender, ethnicity and other relevant protected characteristics, to ensure that young people in the core target group with these characteristics are able to access and benefit from the Transition Programme, and to monitor the impacts upon them to inform future development of the programme. We will monitor this data to ensure that the Transition Programme is meeting its policy aim of preparing students for progression onto T Levels, and we will review whether we need to make further changes in light of this monitoring. See section on monitoring for further information.

What should the T Level Transition Programme provide?

Core content

13. The T Level Transition Programme consists of five core components which are tailored to the needs of individual students:

Diagnostic and guidance period	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To assess students' capability and support needs in order to tailor their Transition Programme to address these needs• Help students decide which T Level route they want to prepare for
English and maths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For students who do not hold at least a GCSE grade 4 in English and/or maths and are required to continue studying as per the condition of funding.
Work experience and preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To develop the skills, behaviours, attitude and confidence that will be needed for students to complete the T Level Industry Placement.
Introductory technical skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introductory skills and concepts to prepare students for the T Level route they wish to progress to.
Pastoral support and personal development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relevant and meaningful support to address barriers to education, support emotional and/or mental health difficulties, and support the development of study skills, and reflective and resilience skills.

Tailoring the programme

14. We expect schools, colleges and training companies to bring these components together and integrate them in the most effective way to engage and support individual students, and provide stretch and challenge to prepare them for T Level study. We expect schools, colleges and training companies to work with young people from the outset to assess their individual needs and aspirations and tailor a programme that meets those needs, and takes account of the T Level route into which they want to progress.

15. We expect the diagnostic and guidance period to be at the start of the Transition Programme (see below) but do not expect the other components to be delivered sequentially and some may last the duration of the programme. The duration of each component may not be the same for all students. For instance, some students may need more time for English and maths than others.

16. We do not expect generic skills (e.g. problem solving, critical thinking) to be taught in isolation but developed in the context of gaining and applying knowledge, for example through the teaching of technical skills and/or English and maths.

17. Whilst we expect this to be a tailored programme to prepare students for their preferred T Level route, we recognise that schools, colleges and training companies will need to deliver their programmes in a viable way that fits their circumstances. For example:

- Delivering it through different classes or groups each preparing for a T Level route, where student volumes permit;
- Grouping students across routes for some components, when this is the most practical (e.g. for study skills, English and maths, personal development classes) or grouping students across specific routes (e.g. for technical skills);
- Tailoring the programme through setting route-specific projects, where student volumes are small.

Diagnostic and guidance period

18. The T Level Transition Programme should begin with an intensive diagnostic and guidance period, during which schools, colleges and training companies take a holistic approach to understanding the needs of individual students, to ensure the Transition Programme provides the right support to give them the best chance of progressing onto their chosen T Level. This is crucial so that schools, colleges and training companies can agree an individual learning plan with students and tailor the other four components to meet the student's needs. The aim of this period is twofold:

- To assess students' individual capabilities, prior attainment and pastoral support needs, including any inter-agency support required;
- To help students decide, or confirm, which T Level route they wish to prepare for, through, for instance, tasters of different routes and careers guidance.

19. Where students have a preferred T Level in mind when they enrol, this period should also help students determine whether this is the right route for them. Where they are undecided, it should help them to consider different options. Schools, colleges and training companies may already offer tasters as part of their pre-enrolment marketing activities. Tasters could also be used during the diagnostic period to assess students' aptitude and appetite for a particular route(s).

20. Schools, colleges and training companies can determine the duration of the diagnostic and guidance period based on the needs of their cohort. As a guide, we would expect it to last up to the first half-term. During the diagnostic period, a student (in agreement with their school, college or training company) may decide that another programme would be better suited to them. If this decision is taken before the student completes the funding qualifying period, and their preferred programme is available to them, the student can move without any impact on funding. After this, normal 16 to 19 funding rules apply. After the diagnostic period, the Transition Programme should be tailored to support students in preparing for

their chosen route. [Careers guidance](#) should continue throughout the programme to help students make decisions about the next step that is right for them and aspire to achieve their full potential.

English and Maths

21. Employers are clear that English and maths are crucial employability skills and they are imperative to higher level study. English and/or maths will be an important part of the T Level Transition Programme for those who need to continue to study these in order to achieve their Level 2 by the end of their compulsory education or training.
22. As the T Level Transition Programme will be a type of 16 to 19 study programme, the 16 to 19 maths and English [condition of funding](#) will apply. Effective initial assessment will be needed to determine the most effective means of supporting good progress towards successful completion.
23. Schools, colleges and training companies have the flexibility to tailor the duration of this component according to their students' needs. However, GCSE and Functional Skills qualifications in English and maths are clear on the type of knowledge and skills students should learn over the course of their study of the qualification, to build confidence and recognise the importance of English and maths in work and life. For the Transition Programme, core English and maths teaching should be supplemented by content that is contextualised to reflect the T Level route the student wishes to pursue, making explicit the English and maths connections.

Work experience and preparation

24. This will be an important component of the T Level Transition Programme, to enable the student to develop the skills, behaviours, attitude and confidence to successfully complete the T Level industry placement, and for future workplace readiness more generally; for example, time keeping, personal presentation, workplace behaviour. Students should have the opportunity for meaningful employer engagement throughout the programme. We expect this component to include the following:

High quality work experience

25. This can include work shadowing, work tasters, work experience to give students exposure to a real workplace, ideally with an external employer on an external site. Work experience hours must be reasonable for a student of that age, and should reflect the most suitable pattern for the student and employer capacity. Work experience related to students' chosen T Level route is desirable but not a requirement of the Transition Programme, although site visits and work shadowing could still be route-specific. The ask of employers is significantly increasing through T Level industry placements, so schools, colleges and training companies

need to consider employer capacity when arranging work experience for Transition Programme students, and consider broader opportunities for work experience where necessary. The [16 to 19 study programme guidance](#) includes guidance on work experience.

26. In setting up work experience, schools, colleges and training companies must consider, in discussion with the student and the employer, whether a young person with complex needs and/or SEND needs more support in the workplace than their peers, ensure adequate support is in place for these students, and that employers understand these needs.

Work preparation and employability skills development

27. All students should receive relevant work preparation in advance of their work experience (e.g. talks, pre-visits, help with coordinating travel plans) to ensure students and employers get the most out of their experience. Its content is for schools, colleges and training companies and employers to agree. We expect this to include development of any personal and social skills; for example, timekeeping and workplace behaviour.
28. Schools, colleges and training companies should also support students to develop employability skills (e.g. problem solving, interview skills and CV writing) as part of the Transition Programme. Employability skills could be integrated into work preparation prior to work experience, as part of the route-based work-related projects, or as part of their pastoral support. Schools, colleges and training companies may also wish to develop students' understanding of workplace interactions e.g. dealing with difficult situations, forming relationships, how to communicate with employers.
29. Most young people are confident in their use and application of digital skills. However, there may be students who lack basic digital skills, and for whom development of these skills would be an appropriate part of the Transition Programme. Schools, colleges and training companies would need to undertake an initial assessment of a student's digital skills to determine this. Where possible, digital content should also be contextualised to reflect the student's chosen technical route.

Route-based work-related projects

30. Work-related projects should support students' ability to apply knowledge and understanding. These should ideally relate to a student's preferred T Level route, as this can provide a key means of stimulating their interest in the T Level route they wish to progress onto, and as such can be a strong motivator for students. Schools, colleges and training companies should consider how they can make meaningful links to the workplace, such as engaging employers to introduce projects and provide feedback on outputs. These projects can also encompass delivery of technical skills – see section below.

Useful links: The Gatsby Benchmarks describe a framework to help secondary schools and colleges deliver good career guidance to their students, including experiences and encounters with employers. For more information about the framework and to read about good practice and sources of support for schools and colleges, visit: www.goodcareerguidance.org.uk/. The Careers Enterprise Company provides useful [guidance](#) on the Gatsby Benchmarks. The [Operating Instructions for Creation of Outline Content](#), which are specifically intended for use by T Level Panels developing outline content, include the T Level employability skills framework. This is not a teaching and learning tool, but may be of interest. The Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP) provides some useful [guidance on implementing work experience](#). DfE research into work experience and related activities in schools and colleges, which includes good practice in providing effective work experience, is available on [Gov.uk](#). Preparing for Adulthood (PfA) have produced a useful [guide](#) on engaging employers to find work experience for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The Association of Colleges (AoC) has published [Shaping communities – colleges and social action](#) to provide examples of community action. The website for the [#iwill](#) campaign on youth social action is also a useful resource.

Introductory Technical Skills

31. The T Level Transition Programme should include introductory technical knowledge and practical skills to prepare students for their chosen T Level route. This component will be a strong motivating factor for students and will help to keep them engaged and interested. However, we do not expect that it will be the biggest component in terms of hours.
32. Schools, colleges and training companies should consider what technical knowledge and skills to include on the Transition Programme, based on what they consider to be effective preparation to support progression onto a T Level. They may wish to take into account the relevant T Level Technical Qualification (TQ) content when deciding what to include.
33. Schools, colleges and training companies could deliver introductory technical knowledge and skills in two ways:
 - I. **Through an existing level 2 technical qualification** that is both on [ESFA's list of approved qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds](#) and available for 16 to 19 year olds.
 - II. **Non-qualification-based delivery of introductory technical content devised by schools, colleges and training companies.** This could be delivered as discrete modules, workshops, projects or as part of other components. This approach gives schools, colleges and training companies the flexibility to determine how much and what they feel is the most appropriate content to deliver, to prepare their students for progression onto a T Level, and how they wish to deliver it.

34. Schools, colleges and training companies delivering technical content without the use of a qualification can develop their own approaches to this. This could include introducing Transition Programme students to some TQ content to begin familiarising them with it.
35. In addition, schools, colleges and training companies will have the flexibility to consider offering some level 3 'bridging' content towards the end of the Transition Programme, where they feel this is appropriate for their students. Allowing students to work towards some level 3 content could be motivating and it allows schools, colleges and training companies to formatively assess their readiness for level 3 study.

Pastoral support and personal development

36. Schools, colleges and training companies should ensure that students have access to relevant and meaningful pastoral support and personal development opportunities. This should complement the other components and be tailored to the student's individual needs, to facilitate their progression to a T Level. It is important that sufficient time is dedicated for this component from the start, with regular reviews of progress, to ensure barriers are not preventing progress in the other components.
37. Pastoral and development support should help students address their barriers to learning, and support emotional and/or mental health difficulties. This could include individual mentoring, personal development tutoring or specialist services/agency support and, for example:
- activities to develop confidence and resilience;
 - group work to develop communications skills;
 - tutorials and seminars (including careers education);
 - life skills, such as: the ability to travel independently, personal finance.
38. Supporting the development of study skills, and reflective and resilience skills, will be important in preparing students for the type of level 3 study and assessments they will encounter on a T Level. Study skills could be developed through a structured set of activities, such as opportunities to develop reading, writing, referencing and interpretation.
39. *Useful links: The AoC has a [web page](#) on supporting health and wellbeing in colleges, which includes resources and case studies, and has produced a resource pack on [Supporting Student Mental Health and Wellbeing in Colleges](#).*

Additional flexible content

40. In addition to the five core content components, schools, colleges and training companies have the flexibility to add elements to the T Level Transition Programme, where this supports the needs of their students and where they feel

this is important preparation to support progression to a particular T Level route. For instance, a science qualification/content, health & safety/first aid at work qualification, or food hygiene certificate where schools, colleges and training companies feel this is relevant to support progression to a particular T Level route.

Achievement

Progress and achievement on the Transition Programme

41. Schools, colleges and training companies are expected to ensure that a student's progress in each component is recorded to allow students to reflect on what they have learnt and to assist the schools, colleges and training companies' monitoring, tracking and intervention practices.
42. The Transition Programme is intended for students who will progress to a full T Level programme. If they wish, schools, colleges and training companies may award locally recognised certificates for achievement of the T Level Transition Programme, showing what students have achieved and can decide what these certificates include.

Progression to a T Level

43. The aim of the Transition Programme is to prepare students to progress onto and succeed on T Levels, so we want and expect the vast majority of students to progress to T Levels.
44. Whilst completion of the Transition Programme would be considered good preparation for supporting progression to a T Level, it will not in itself lead to automatic enrolment onto a T Level. Students will need to apply for entry to a T Level as part of a school, college or training company's normal enrolment practices. Schools, colleges and training companies retain the discretion to make the final decision on their T Level cohort. They will need to make this clear to students at the outset.
45. If a student has not developed the skills needed to progress to a T Level following the support of the Transition Programme, the student and the school, college or training company will need to determine the most appropriate next step for them. This may include considering, for instance, other level 2 or level 3 study programmes, apprenticeships or direct entry to the workplace as appropriate (if compliant with the raising of the participation age). For students not progressing onto a T Level, the Transition Programme should have significantly increased their skills and given them work experience they can reference in their CV. We expect the school, college or training company to ensure that these students are given the appropriate careers guidance to help them secure appropriate next steps and that they are supported to complete any qualifications, including English and maths, begun on the Transition Programme.

Planned hours and funding

Duration

46. The T Level Transition Programme should be delivered as full or part time study in accordance with existing 16 to 19 funding rules. In most instances, we would expect it to be a meaningful programme delivered in up to a standard academic year.
47. Schools, colleges and training companies will have the flexibility to move students onto a T Level during the Transition Programme, where they have progressed sufficiently to be ready and where this is a viable option. Where progressing early is not viable, schools, colleges and training companies are expected to use their flexibility to ensure students are engaged with meaningful, stretching and challenging activities in further preparation for their chosen T Level route.
48. Schools, colleges and training companies have the discretion to determine how best to meet the needs of SEND students, in line with the broader study programme guidance. For students with an EHC plan this might mean delivering the programme over a longer time period. The [SEND Code of Practice](#) sets out the responsibilities of post-16 providers for young people with SEND, both with and without an EHC plan.

Planned hours

49. The T Level Transition Programme must be delivered within the [existing study programme funding rules](#). We expect it to be a full time study programme with a minimum of 540 planned hours (as per our funding guidance, full-time study programmes for 16 and 17 year olds are expected to be on average 600 hours) to allow sufficient time to deliver the five components. A part-time programme may be agreed in certain circumstances, as per the [16 to 19 study programme guidance](#). [Planned hours](#) are timetabled and supervised by the school, college and training company and are agreed between the institution and the student at the start of their study programme. Schools, colleges and training companies must ensure that the number of hours are realistic and deliverable. The Transition Programme will not include the extra hours that will be needed for T Levels and will not therefore attract the additional T Levels funding.
50. Planned hours are a fundamental element of the funding allocation process, which uses data recorded in the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and the school census. This data is used to calculate future funding allocations so it must accurately reflect the learning activities being taken by each student. Errors in recording planned hours are likely to have an impact on an institution's funding allocation.

Core aim

51. Every study programme must have a core aim recorded against it, which is the principal activity or core purpose of a student's programme. There will be a new programme aim – The T Level Transition Programme aim – that schools, colleges and training companies will be required to use when a student is on the T Level Transition Programme. Schools, colleges and training companies will also be required to select the relevant route-specific programme type, to reflect the T Level route for which the Transition Programme is preparing them. Subsidiary aims should also be recorded for additional qualification activity. The core aim must be agreed between the student and the school, college or training company.

Retention

52. The retention criteria for 16 to 19 study programmes will apply to the T Level Transition Programme. Each student who remains to the planned end date of their study programme, or who is recorded as completed or continuing, is classed as 'retained' and receives full funding. Each student who is not retained attracts 50% of the full funding rate, as long as they have completed the qualifying period (6 weeks for full time students and 2 or 6 weeks for part time students depending on programme length).

Ensuring quality

53. To ensure a focus on getting the best outcomes for young people, the Department will use data on progression from the T Level Transition Programme in 2020/21, to support the development of accountability measures that will be published following national roll out. The data to be reviewed will include:

- The number of students going from Key Stage 4 to the T Level Transition Programme;
- How many students complete the T Level Transition Programme;
- Where students go after completing the T Level Transition Programme, including the percentage that progress to and complete a T Level.

54. The Transition Programme will be subject to Ofsted inspection under the [Education Inspection Framework](#) (in place from September 2019), as 16 to 19 study programmes are and as T levels will be.

Monitoring

55. Schools, colleges and training companies will have some discretion about who they enrol onto the T Level Transition Programme, as they are best placed to decide which individual students are most likely to benefit from it, in order to progress onto and succeed on a T Level. As part of their assurance processes, the Education and Skills Funding Agency already monitors school, college and training company behaviour in relation to funding rules. We will enhance this monitoring for the Transition Programme, to assess how well its delivery reflects the intended target group. This will include internal in-year monitoring of data on the volumes and characteristics of students enrolled on the programme, as well as data on subsequent completion and progression onto T Levels. Whilst we are confident that schools, colleges and training companies will enrol students onto the Transition Programme in line with its intended target group, we will monitor school, college and training company data to identify where that is not the case. We will contact schools, colleges and training companies, as with other funded study programmes, should this monitoring highlight unusual enrolment patterns. We may consider whether controls may be needed in future.



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