



Department
for Education

T Level Professional Development (TLPD) Initial phase evaluation

**A CFE Research report for the
Department for Education**

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All fieldwork for this study was completed before impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the UK from March 2020. The evaluation evidence presented within this report is partial due to the cancellation of the final round of fieldwork. From late March 2020 the pandemic led to the closure of most education settings for most learners. The fieldwork covered in this report dates to before this disruption (though some information was collected via delivery partners during that time) and therefore this needs to be considered when interpreting findings.

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Glossary

Continuing Professional Development (CPD): Continuing Professional Development is used to describe the learning and training activities which professionals engage in to develop and enhance their teaching abilities.

Department for Education (DfE): The Department for Education is responsible for child protection, education (compulsory, further and higher education), apprenticeships and wider skills in England.

Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA): The Education and Skills Funding Agency is an executive agency of the government of the United Kingdom, sponsored by the Department for Education.

Education and Training Foundation (ETF): The Education and Training Foundation is the national workforce development body for the Further Education and Training sector.

Further Education (FE): Further Education is the education of people who have left school but who are not at a university or a college of education.

Industry Insights: Industry Insights is part of the wider TLPD offer that provides the opportunity for practitioners to upskill via placements within industry.

Knowledge Hubs: Knowledge Hubs are designed to support longitudinal peer-to-peer collaboration and sharing. They are responsible for the dissemination of all national information regarding curriculum as it becomes available, and the contextualisation of this information for local teachers and provision.

Organisational tool A: The organisational tool A is an online tool designed to measure organisational readiness for the T Level reforms.

Organisational tool B: The organisational tool B focuses on readiness, aimed at department heads or curriculum managers. It looks at whether necessary systems and processes are in place, workforce development, curriculum planning and employer engagement.

Practitioner: An individual working in the Further Education sector who teaches, trains, advises or mentors learners.

Practitioner tool: The practitioner tool targets teachers and trainers in FE and poses questions about the areas staff need to understand to successfully deliver T Levels including pedagogy, professional knowledge and assessment and generates a personalised action plan.

Professional Development Advisers (PDAs): Professional Development Advisers identify and challenge providers with their professional development planning, as well as identify their workforce development needs in preparation for undergoing training offered through T Level Professional Development.

Professional Development Plan (PDP): A Professional Development Plan is an organisation-wide document used for detailing a strategy to meet organisational goals for workforce upskilling. This includes training needs and support.

Professional Practice events: Professional Practice events provide opportunities for providers to meet as a group with an employer or specialist from industries, to receive updates, demonstrations or Q&A sessions.

T Level Professional Development (TLPD): T Level Professional Development offers support for FE teachers and leaders as they prepare to deliver T Levels. The programme includes providing opportunities for teachers to further develop their teaching skills, subject knowledge and industry expertise.

Teacher Regional Improvement Projects (TRIPs): Teacher Regional Improvement Projects are collaborative projects designed to improve the quality of technical teaching and learning in a diverse range of settings.

Executive Summary

Context

T Levels are new two-year courses which provide young people with a high-quality technical alternative to A Levels. They were developed with employers and combine classroom study with workplace experience from which students can progress directly into work or further study. The first three T Levels¹ began in September 2020 and were offered by 44 providers across England.

T Levels were designed to offer a high-quality programme with substantially more teaching hours compared to some existing vocational programmes. In developing T Levels, the government recognised that teachers and leaders could benefit from additional support to prepare for this change. DfE appointed the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) to design and deliver the initial phase (up to March 2020) of a comprehensive, centrally-funded programme of professional development called T Level Professional Development (TLPD). The initial phase of TLPD was available from May 2019 to providers planning to deliver T Levels from 2020. Whilst the initial phase was aimed primarily at the first wave of T Level providers in 2020, other providers outside this cohort could also access some aspects of the programme where capacity allowed. The core elements of the TLPD offer incorporated five Strands of activity, which were aimed to collectively ensure providers' readiness to deliver T Levels from September 2020. Further detail of the support accessed through each of the five Strands of activity is provided below.

The TLPD initial phase was delivered between May 2019 and March 2020. Fieldwork for the evaluation took place between May 2019 and November 2019, with planned fieldwork in Spring 2020 being cancelled due to COVID-19. This evaluation therefore does not cover the whole duration of the TLPD initial phase rollout.

¹ The first three T Levels delivered from September 2020 are:

- design, surveying and planning for construction;
- digital production, design and development; and
- education and childcare.

Strand 1 - Assessing organisational needs and planning for workforce Continuing Professional Development

This Strand built providers' understanding of organisational and staff professional development needs via support offered by ETF Professional Development Advisers (PDAs) and two self-assessment tools². These tools were designed to help providers consider implementation, identify priorities and plan for the introduction of T Levels.

Strand 2 - Understanding T Levels

This Strand provided CPD directly to all provider staff involved in the delivery of T Levels during 2020 and some of those in 2021. The CPD offer aimed to ensure delegates understood T Levels and the implications for their role.

Strand 3 - Teacher Development Programme

Support offered through the Teacher Development Programme aimed to meet the diverse professional development needs of teachers. Professional development focussed on pedagogy (core teaching skills and methods); practice (subject knowledge and subject-specific teaching); professional knowledge (industrial and employability understanding for teachers); and developing teachers' capacity to embed maths, English and digital skills in technical teaching environments.

Strand 4 - Knowledge Hubs

Knowledge Hubs support longitudinal peer-to-peer collaboration and sharing. The Hubs were responsible for the dissemination of all national information regarding T Level curricula as it became available, and the contextualisation of this information for teachers. Industry Insight placements provided teachers with the opportunity to update their industry skills and knowledge by spending time with an employer. Teacher Regional Improvement Projects (TRIPs) were collaborative projects undertaken by one or more providers.

² The practitioner tool generated a personalised action plan by assessing an individual's strengths and areas for improvement; generated advice on next steps and signposted the user to online and face-to-face CPD across the other Strands of the TLPD offer. The organisational tool assessed whether necessary systems and processes were in place to deliver T Levels such as workforce development systems, curriculum planning and employer engagement. This tool also assessed providers' current readiness and signposted to other elements of the TLPD offer.

Strand 5 - Organisational Readiness

This Strand focused on leading and managing educational change. The design focussed on developing the leadership and management skills of leadership and governance teams. Strand activities targeted curriculum and timetabling planning, partnerships, employer engagement and the cultural aspects of leadership during change.

Evaluation aims and objectives

CFE Research was commissioned by DfE to undertake this process evaluation of TLPD's initial phase. The evaluation will help DfE develop its understanding about whether the TLPD offer was implemented as intended.

Method

The evaluation used quantitative and qualitative methods including surveys and interviews with TLPD provider leads and key stakeholders. Key stakeholders included ETF, DfE, PDAs and TLPD delivery partners. These activities were complemented by site visits to nine T Level providers where interviews and focus groups were conducted with 102 staff including senior leaders, subject leads, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. A review of ETF monitoring data was also completed to further enhance understanding of provider engagement with the TLPD offer.

Limitation of findings

The research design originally included longitudinal fieldwork in the Spring of 2020, but the advent of COVID-19 and associated disruption to education providers meant this fieldwork could not be completed. The findings herein are therefore derived from the baseline interviews and surveys only. These were designed to collect early data on providers' current skills, knowledge and expectations of engagement with the programme. If the research had continued as planned, the report could have tracked progress over time until delivery. At the time of the research, providers were still in the early stages of TLPD engagement. The discussion on the impact of TLPD is therefore much more limited than originally envisaged and findings needs to be read within that context.

Key Findings³

Awareness and understanding of TLPD

- Senior leaders had a strong understanding of the five Strands of TLPD and what each Strand aimed to achieve. Student-facing staff were less able to connect training and development activity specifically to the TLPD offer. The primary reason for limited awareness of TLPD among teachers and administrative staff was the decision by senior management, within providers, to cascade selective information about TLPD to staff.
- Provider staff and stakeholders held three overall views about the purpose of TLPD:
 - preparedness: TLPD supported providers' preparation and readiness to deliver T Levels from September 2020;
 - collaboration: TLPD encouraged collaboration through shared learning, peer support and collaborative projects; and
 - holistic approach: delivery via the five Strands of activity facilitated a customisable offer.
- A strength of the design of the TLPD programme, recognised by the majority of stakeholders, was that it catered for the varied needs of T Level providers – from a strategic level through to operations and delivery.

Communication of the offer

- TLPD was largely promoted to providers through newsletters, the ETF bulletin and PDAs. A top-down approach, whereby provider leadership teams communicated aspects of TLPD to staff, was preferred by some senior leaders who:
 - recognised that not all Strands of activity applied to all staff;
 - wished to avoid overburdening staff with excessive information; and
 - noted that different Strands of activity went 'live' at different times throughout the year.
- Where information was cascaded through leadership structures, it was prioritised by need, based on the judgement of senior staff; only information about Strands of activity relevant to their own professional development was cascaded to staff.

Findings related to the perceptions, engagement and usefulness of Strand activities are detailed below.

³ In reporting findings we refer to people who attended ETF CPD as 'delegates'. Provider staff and stakeholders who were interviewed are referred to as 'interviewees', and those who responded to a survey are referred to as 'respondent'.

Strand 1: Assessing organisational needs and planning for workforce CPD

Views on Professional Development Advisers

- When interviewed⁴, provider staff valued the overall support and guidance offered by PDAs. They offered sound, strategic advice to most interviewees working for providers. They also effectively signposted provider staff to CPD that could support their development.
- However, the guidance given by PDAs was sometimes undermined by the late publication of technical specifications from Awarding Organisations which detailed the design, content and assessment methods for T Level pathways. Although the role of PDAs was to signpost to information or make referrals to other agencies, some staff were disappointed that PDAs could not provide this level of detail. A few senior leaders made a connection between this perceived weakness and the lack of published detail by Awarding Organisations at that point in the development cycle.

Organisational and practitioner tools

- Prior to any training being offered, providers were asked to complete both organisational and practitioner self-assessment tools to gauge their confidence and readiness to deliver T Levels. The results of these were used in the initial planning phase of the offer. The ETF management information data shows a large number of practitioners and organisational representatives interacted with the tools at least once. However, there were very few instances of provider staff using the tools in an ongoing, iterative basis.
- Data for Organisational Self-Assessment Tool part A (senior leaders' views on their readiness to deliver T Levels) was collected between September 2019 and March 2020. Respondents were relatively concerned about the awareness and understanding of T Levels amongst staff. Respondents were most positive about some of the procedures and systems they had in place at the time, especially equality, access and inclusion procedures and management practices and systems to deliver T Levels. Organisational planning was a little further forward at the time than workforce and staff planning.
- There was limited use of the Organisational Self-Assessment Tool part B (curriculum leaders' views on readiness to deliver T Levels) amongst 2020 T Level provider staff at the point of analysis. Although anecdotal, the data from part B (Section 3.5)

⁴ Fieldwork was undertaken in Autumn 2019.

supports some of the wider report findings regarding organisational readiness and preparedness for technical and T Level assessment activity.

- In their self-assessments, practitioners were most likely to suggest assessment and grading for T Levels as a development requirement, especially for teachers and trainers. Developing ways to increase knowledge among practitioners in assessment and grading for T Levels was seen as a priority.
- Around a third of practitioners felt their opportunities to improve their occupational knowledge and undertake CPD to increase such knowledge was limited. This could be addressed through wider access to Strand 4 activity.
- These two factors most likely contributed to the relatively high level of reported unpreparedness to deliver T Levels within the practitioner assessment data (completed May 2019 to March 2020).

Strand 2: Understanding T Levels

- ETF's post-event feedback forms⁵ show high levels of satisfaction with training. They also illustrate that Strand 2 events were particularly effective in raising awareness of T Levels. Qualitative evidence mirrors these positive perceptions towards the contribution of Strand 2 in raising awareness of T Levels.
- Few interviewees directly associated development activity as part of ETF's Understanding T Levels programmes, especially as content was often used in combination with other CPD. Some of the less positive views of Strand 2 activity (that CPD is generic and repetitive) may result from the widespread use of development content from a range of sources in addition to Understanding T Levels.
- Senior leaders and subject leads usually displayed greater awareness of T Levels than teaching and administrative staff. The evidence suggests this difference was more a reflection of providers' implementation strategy at the time of fieldwork⁶ rather than the content of the Strand. Senior leaders and subject leads needed to plan earlier than other staff in order to put CPD and other development actions in place.
- ETF feedback data showed Strand 2 raised awareness. Strand 2 was delivered via nine role specific courses. Despite this, qualitative feedback from subject leads, teaching and non-teaching staff suggested the CPD could be improved by including more information about the specific role of different staff members in delivering T

⁵ i.e. the forms were completed directly after event ended. Events (online and face-to-face) took place between May 2019 and April 2020.

⁶ Autumn 2019

Levels⁷. Respondents felt that final technical specifications would include more detail and identify how a role might change, or remain similar, based on the curriculum needs of T Levels.

Strand 3: Teacher Development Programme

- Teaching staff were considered to be central to the success of T Levels and therefore Strand 3 activity was important in ensuring that teaching staff had the right skills and knowledge to deliver these effectively.
- Stakeholders and providers saw the following challenges to the successful delivery of the Teacher Development Programme:
 - providers said they would be unable to plan for teacher CPD early on in the academic year because the subject and assessment specifications were not to be finalised until April 2020⁸; and
 - the engagement of T Level delivery staff might be difficult.
- At the time of qualitative fieldwork⁹ the majority of teaching staff had not engaged with the Teacher Development Programme primarily because their leaders wanted to align training to final subject and assessment specifications. Those who had begun to access training had mainly undertaken subject-specific training. Some staff had also engaged with modules concerning assessment and teaching the English, maths and digital skills already embedded within T Levels. Management information collected by ETF from attendees registered high levels of satisfaction with Teacher Development Programme events. Directly after completing an event, more than nine-tenths (92%) of delegates who completed the feedback survey agreed with the statement *I was satisfied with the event overall*.
- The overwhelming majority of delegates reported that the Teacher Development Programme had both improved their knowledge of T Levels and impacted on their professional development. Qualitative findings provided further insights into the usefulness of training, specifically improved understanding of T Levels and practice and the opportunity to network with other teachers who had responsibility to deliver T Levels. Areas for improvement included the relevance, content and delivery of training.

⁷ Strand 2 CPD was delivered as nine separate role specific modules. The timing of the qualitative fieldwork (October/ November 2019) may have only captured engagement with earlier modules.

⁸ Draft specifications were available for providers to view from November 2019. However many providers were hesitant to use the draft specifications to inform their training and development plans in anticipation that the final drafts maybe significantly different.

⁹ September to November 2019

Strand 4: Knowledge Hubs, TRIPs and Industry Insights

Knowledge Hubs

- The value of Knowledge Hubs in promoting and encouraging collaboration and sharing of learning across the sector was acknowledged by providers and stakeholders alike.
- Knowledge Hubs provided “coherency” to the TLPD offer and were a mechanism to embed CPD from the other Strands of activity, and to develop more innovative CPD.
- Albeit from a low achieved sample, survey findings showed that providers felt the most useful aspects of Knowledge Hubs were: sharing teaching and learning practice among different providers; and providing demand-led T Level CPD.
- Qualitative interviewees noted two main benefits of Knowledge Hubs: developing existing networks; and sharing learning and support. However, hub members wanted more access to industry experts to assist teaching staff with the delivery of T Levels.
- Some school-based providers felt hub activity was less relevant to them and was more targeted to colleges and independent training providers.

Teacher Regional Improvement Projects

- TRIPs encouraged collaboration among T Level providers through evidence-based problem-solving, with the overall objective to help improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Most providers participated in TRIPs because (as with Knowledge Hubs) they wanted an opportunity to work with another organisation sharing similar aims and objectives. Access to funding was influential for some but not all.
- TRIPs encouraged collaboration among providers; and projects helped to develop an evidence base and inform future practice. However, providers had short timeframes to deliver projects and ETF placed limitations on how providers could use the remission awards.

Industry Insights

- The Industry Insight offer was deemed to be the ‘most’ important aspect of TLPD because this Strand offered dual professionalism; that is, knowledge, conceptual understanding and expertise in teaching and learning, matched with expert subject knowledge and skills.
- Provider staff identified a number of benefits arising from undertaking Industry Insights, including; first-hand industry experience for staff, the links with employers developed by staff and then making connections between T Level technical specifications and curriculum design. Limitations identified included an unclear

application process for placements and the failure to ensure staff with the greatest need were selected.

- The key challenges interviewees identified when engaging employers to secure staff (and student) placements were local competition for placements (especially in rural areas) and the absence of existing industry contacts through which to build partnerships.
- ETF feedback forms recorded high levels of satisfaction among delegates for all events. Industry Insight¹⁰ and Professional Practice events were rated particularly highly for all measures, including improving knowledge of T Levels, building confidence to deliver them and positively impacting on professional development.

Strand 5: Organisational Readiness

- Organisational readiness was the last Strand to launch. The first events were held in September 2019. The first event feedback forms received from the ETF for Strand 5 are dated October 2019. This means there was little chance for interviewees to engage with it prior to the end of the fieldwork. The advent of COVID-19 meant no interviews could be completed to cover this Strand in detail. The chapter covers initial perceptions of organisational readiness CPD, rather than views following engagement and is therefore not a full evaluation of this Strand.
- Interviewees noted middle managers would play an instrumental role in the successful implementation of T Levels. They managed the capacity to deliver T Levels, planned timetables and curriculum and managed staff requirements for CPD. CPD activity for middle managers was vital to provide the guidance, skills and knowledge to navigate changes to their role.
- At the time of the research, no interviewees had engaged with Organisational Readiness CPD. The main reasons offered for non-engagement were:
 - the later launch date;
 - the costs associated with travelling to face-to-face CPD events;
 - delaying engagement until staff had seen the subject specifications; and
 - staff being unaware that modules existed.

¹⁰ See ETF's landing page for the Industry Insights Strand: https://www.etf-foundation.co.uk/supporting/professional-development/technical-education/T_Levels/industry-insights/. Accessed 14th September 2020

Barriers to achieving TLPD aims

Three main reported barriers to achieving TLPD aims and objectives were common across the five Strands:

- Timings associated with the publication date of the final technical specifications was a key concern for all provider staff and most stakeholders. These specifications were important for planning CPD, developing course materials and assessments, and informing and engaging employers.
- Partly as a result of timings associated with the publication date of final technical specifications, provider interviewees felt that the timeframe to plan and undertake CPD was short. The majority of senior leaders, subject leads and teaching staff articulated strong concern over the short timescale for implementation of TLPD CPD amongst their staff.
- Some senior provider staff and a few stakeholders were apprehensive about the scale and complexity of the change required to successfully implement T Levels, and the associated risks to implementation. Senior leaders' apprehension was due to concerns about their staff's capacity to engage with TLPD and their view that insufficient time was available to deliver the required CPD.

Provider readiness to deliver T Levels

Knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels

- Provider staff perceptions of their knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels varied¹¹. Senior leaders and subject leads were positive about their organisation's ability to implement and manage changes brought about by T Levels.
- The qualitative interview evidence shows that the majority of teaching staff were confident in their pedagogical knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels. Teachers identified developing exam-based assessments and in-depth industry knowledge as gaps in their knowledge.
- These views were supported within ETF's management and event feedback data. In particular, data from the organisational and practitioner self-assessment tools identified understanding assessment processes and improving industrial knowledge as key development areas for teachers, trainers and leaders.

¹¹ It is important to note that interviewees' perceptions of their knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels were before the majority of them had undertaken CPD.

Organisational readiness to deliver T Levels

- The analysis of organisational self-assessment data shows confidence that systems and processes were in place to implement T Levels. However, organisations felt their workforces were less ready, primarily because they needed the detail from technical specifications to finalise CPD plans.
- Most of the target provider staff (curriculum leads, heads of department) did not engage with Organisational Tool part B. A review of the tool and / or any related communication activity designed for the target audience would be valuable to understand the low take-up in more detail.
- Interviewees said short timescales to prepare for the delivery of T Levels, and workforce challenges, were the two main barriers to organisational readiness.
 - Short timescales were associated with the length of time that middle managers would have to organise and undertake organisational readiness training; complete curriculum and resource plans; design course plans and materials; and organise estate changes.
 - Workforce challenges were associated with the recruitment of new staff and the retention of existing staff.

Conclusions

The conclusions are somewhat limited due to the cessation of fieldwork caused by COVID-19.

Provider readiness

- A provider's confidence in their readiness to deliver T Levels was driven by two factors: how ready they felt to implement and manage changes brought about by T Levels; and confidence in their teaching staff's subject knowledge and pedagogical skills to deliver T Levels. Understanding assessment processes and improving industrial knowledge were recognised by providers and teachers as key development areas.

Key strengths of the offer

- TLPD's holistic offer was an overall strength of its design. The five Strands of activity catered for the varied needs of T Level providers – from a strategic level through to operations and delivery.
- Some providers felt they received a lot of information about T Levels and TLPD. Many senior staff decided which aspects of TLPD were communicated to staff, and

cascaded the information they felt was relevant to staff as required. The volume of information (provided by a range of organisations including the ETF) led providers to curate information and professional development activity for their staff. The cascading method may also partly help to explain why general awareness of the TLPD offer was higher amongst senior staff at the time of fieldwork (Autumn 2019).

- PDAs offered sound, strategic advice to most providers and effectively signposted to CPD that could support staff development. Likewise the Organisational Self-Assessment Tool part A helped providers to plan for organisational change in a structured and coherent way. Although usage was limited, aspects in which staff felt unprepared to deliver T Levels were identified by the Organisational Self-Assessment Tool part B.
- Evidence shows that Strand 2 activity (Understanding T Levels) was well received by providers who felt that the content was effective in raising awareness of T Levels. Senior leaders routinely combined ETF's Strand 2 materials with that produced by other organisations, thus creating a bespoke development offer to their staff. Combining materials allowed senior managers to meet their organisation's specific needs.
- The Teacher Development Programme (Strand 3) was well received and reportedly improved teachers knowledge and understanding of T Levels and their delivery. Strand 3 also provided the opportunity to network with other teachers who had responsibility to deliver T Levels. Teachers therefore received a comprehensive development programme.
- Knowledge Hubs were one element of Strand 4 and many were developed from existing provider networks. Many members felt Knowledge Hubs created a coherent TLPD offer by combining professional development activity from other Strands and non-ETF CPD. Knowledge Hub activities successfully shared learning between members, supported and developed partnerships (via TRIPs) and informed the delivery of T Levels by creating an evidence base for effective professional development activities.
- Industry Insights (another element of Strand 4) was the most valued element of the whole TLPD offer. Some providers were concerned about developing and forging industry links and Industry Insights' placements provided opportunities for staff to develop these relationships. More widely Industry Insights activities developed knowledge and expertise in teaching technical subjects through observational and practical methods. High levels of satisfaction for Industry Insights and Professional Practice events are recorded.

Key areas for improvement and recommendations

Technical specifications

Evidence from all TLPD Strands clearly showed most providers wanted to use final technical specifications when planning CPD activity. Many were concerned that the available draft specifications would change, which would mean their T Level professional development plans would also be subject to change. Specifically, providers did not want to organise activity which included a significant professional development gap that would need to be addressed later. Many senior leaders deemed the specifications essential to design cost-effective and relevant staff development programmes. This opinion governed the actions of many senior leaders and their subsequent feelings towards the programme as a whole, especially that there was too little time to implement all professional development required prior to the launch of T Levels.

Recommendation 1: Providers may feel more comfortable about the overall timing if the final technical specifications for future T Levels are available as early as possible. This would maximise the time available for senior leaders and subject leads to plan, design and deliver professional development.

Content and delivery of CPD for Strands 2 and 3

ETF feedback showed satisfaction with the CPD offered through the five Strands was high. The qualitative evidence from interviewees did, however, highlight some concerns with the relevance, content and delivery of CPD for Strands 2 (Understanding T Levels) and 3 (Teacher Development Programme). Some providers felt that Strand 2 activity was generic and repetitive and Strand 3 activity lacked relevance to different subject areas and provided few subject-specific examples.

Recommendation 2: A more considered appreciation of sixth-form provider needs, particularly in Strand 2 materials would help to overcome issues these providers reported around relevance. Content for Strand 3 would benefit from more tailored, subject-specific examples that teachers can use with learners could increase the relevancy of CPD materials.

Knowledge Hubs

Knowledge Hubs were positively received by most. However, some school-based providers said Knowledge Hubs were less relevant to their needs. The roles and responsibilities of school-based staff can differ considerably to those fulfilling similar duties in colleges and independent training providers. For example, teachers in schools may manage employer relations alongside their teaching role whereas employer-liaison may be the sole preserve of an individual in larger colleges.

Recommendation 3: Consideration of how Knowledge Hub activity can be redesigned to suit school-based provision may be required to better meet their needs.

TRIPs

TRIPs were instrumental in encouraging collaborative practice and played an important role in helping providers to better understand some T Level implementation challenges. Some perceived that the time allowed to deliver projects was too short. Some also noted limitations of funding meant some providers were unable to access more specialist training which was excluded from the TLPD offer.

Recommendation 4: A longer timeframe may allow providers to understand the relevance and specificity of findings to the subject they teach. However, this consideration would need to be weighed up against the cost of funding. Further, some flexibility in use of the remission funds to include access to specialist courses could help staff develop the specialist skills required to teach the curriculum. Some involved in TRIPs would welcome more information from ETF explaining how providers can use remission awards for TRIPs.

Industry Insights

Some senior leaders felt the application process for Industry Insights could be improved. These leaders felt the selection process was opaque and biased towards those who already had good existing knowledge of an occupation or industrial sector.

Recommendation 5: More feedback on selection and rejection decisions for Industry Insight placements would help participants to understand the decision making process in awarding funding and help to improve future applications.

Programme level performance

TLPD is designed to deliver improvements for teachers in pedagogical knowledge (for target subjects in addition to English, maths and digital), teaching practice, and industry knowledge and practice. Current measures used in ETF monitoring forms for Strands 2 through 5 only are broad brush and lack detail¹². There are no existing metrics for most Strands that measure skills to assess skills or comfort for partnership working.

Recommendation 6: Increase the number of performance indicators that monitor programme and Strand objectives. For some staff, the existing measure on improving knowledge of T Levels should be supplemented with metrics on the specific impact and

¹² The closest relevant ETF monitoring form measure is whether a delegate agrees or disagrees that "participating in the course has built my confidence to deliver T Levels".

improvements in their ability to offer IAG to prospective and current learners. Organisations should also be able to self-report how they are progressing on similarly granular measures. In addition to improving evaluation outputs, these changes should help ETF and its partners better monitor progress and outcomes. Such data should also help ETF manage sub-contractors via improved evidence of the impact of programmes and value for money.

Data architecture

ETF used an Excel template to collate their management information for subsequent analysis (see Review of ETF monitoring data, pp.34-35). Each event used a separate Excel workbook for this evidence. However, there were differences in data architecture between strands. For example, Excel templates differed between and within Strands as a few questions were deleted or added. Similarly some of the items used to measure outcomes differed between strands and hence measures were inconsistent. Data was also provided in aggregate rather than individual delegate form which limits the analytical value of the data. Such differences create barriers to deriving value and improving delivery processes.

Recommendation 7: Create a consistent, linked management information system for the programme as a whole. Improving this data could provide significant benefits to ETF, sub-contractors and evaluators. It will also allow ETF and evaluators to understand whether there are any additive benefits for individuals and organisation that access more than one programme, deeper analysis by individual type (i.e. staff role) and link management information between Strands.

1. Introduction

T Levels are new two-year courses which will provide young people with a high-quality technical alternative to A Levels. They have been developed with employers and will combine classroom study with workplace experience from which students can progress directly into work or further study. The first three T Levels¹³ will be delivered from September 2020 by 44 providers across the country. The remaining T Levels¹⁴ will be introduced in stages from September 2021 and the aim is for all to be introduced by September 2023.

CFE Research was commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to undertake a process evaluation of the initial phase of the T Level Professional Development (TLPD) offer. The evaluation will help DfE develop its understanding about whether the TLPD offer was implemented as intended; aspects of the offer that work or do not work well; whether all of the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) was necessary; and identify any gaps in the offer. This will provide DfE with an understanding of how TLPD can be adapted and improved before the next phase of delivery. CFE's evaluation of TLPD also helps to develop an understanding of what represents effective professional development in a technical education setting – particularly in the area of subject-specific pedagogy.

1.1. Background to this research

Rationale and purpose

DfE appointed the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) to design and deliver the initial phase (up to March 2020) of a comprehensive and centrally-funded programme of professional development called T Level Professional Development (TLPD). TLPD's initial phase was aimed primarily at the first wave of T Level providers in 2020. However, other providers outside this cohort could access some aspects of the programme where capacity allowed. A summary of the support offered to providers through the TLPD offer includes:

¹³ The first three T Levels delivered from September 2020 are Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction; Digital Production, Design and Development; and Education and Childcare.

¹⁴ A full list of T Levels to start, up to September 2023 can be found via:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-t-levels/introduction-of-t-levels>

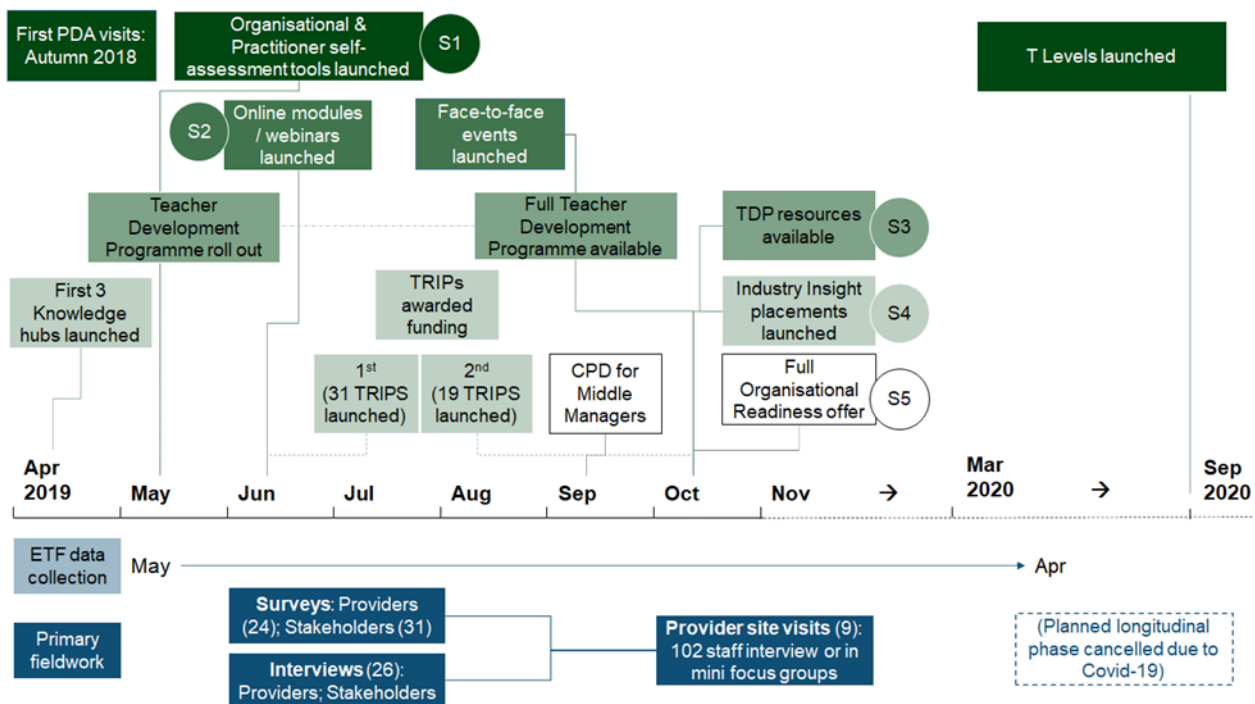
- understanding what a T Level is for everyone who plays a role in delivering them, and preparing them to deliver the significant change programme;
- raising standards of pedagogy both generally and within teachers' subject-specific areas;
- ensuring currency and industry relevance of teachers' subject knowledge;
- strengthening the teaching of English, mathematics and digital delivered within subject specialisms; and
- facilitating and supporting the development of greater collaboration between T Level providers.

The TLPD offer was intended to support providers with the specific technical knowledge that staff were likely to need to deliver T Levels as informed by the Technical specifications. However the specifications for the new qualifications are drafted by the Awarding Organisations and the timetable for publishing them falls outside the remit of TLPD.

1.2. Overview of TLPD offer

The core elements of the TLPD offer incorporate five Strands of activity, which are aimed to collectively support providers' readiness to deliver T Levels from September 2020. Figure 1 shows when each element of each Strand became live. The point at which ETF management information was collected is shown below the date line, as are the timings for the primary research activity. More detail on the fieldwork method and the impact of fieldwork cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic is provided in the Methodology (Section 1.4).

Figure 1: Delivery timelines for the initial phase of TLPD and data collection



Further details of the support which can be accessed through each of the five Strands of activity are provided below. In all Strands, CPD was delivered through a mixture of online and blended learning, webinars, and face-to-face activity (such as workshops and in-house CPD events). Strand 3 also offered a series of videos plus an online subject reference database and Strand 5 offered mentoring.

Strand 1 - Assessing organisational needs and planning for workforce CPD:

This Strand supported providers to build a clear and rich understanding of organisational and staff professional development needs through support offered by Professional Development Advisers (PDAs) and two self-assessment tools.

10 PDAs were appointed by the ETF to help providers identify their organisational and workforce development needs and to access the most relevant aspects of the overall programme. The PDAs worked with an average of five providers each from the 2020 cohort.

The online self-assessment tools helped organisations and individuals to assess their readiness to deliver T Levels. These self-assessment tools helped providers consider what was ahead, identify priorities and plan for the introduction of T Levels. The two tools were designed to do the following:

- The *organisational tool* was comprised of two parts: the first (tool A) targeted those with an overview of their organisation, while the second (tool B) focused on readiness to deliver routes and pathways, targeting department heads or curriculum managers. The tool assessed whether necessary systems and processes were in place to deliver T Levels such as workforce development systems, curriculum planning and employer engagement. This tool also assessed providers' current readiness and signposted to other elements of the TLPD offer. A total of 180 tool part A and 59 tool part B self-assessments were completed.
- The *practitioner tool* targeted teachers and trainers and posed questions about the areas staff need to understand to successfully deliver T Levels including pedagogy, professional knowledge and assessment. The tool generated a personalised action plan by assessing an individual's strengths and areas for improvement; generated advice on next steps and signposted the user to online and face-to-face CPD across the other Strands of the TLPD offer. A total of 339 practitioner self-assessments were completed.

Strand 2 - Understanding T Levels:

This Strand provided CPD directly to all provider staff involved in the delivery of T Levels during 2020 and some of those in 2021. The staff covered included curriculum managers, administrative staff and exams officers as well as teachers and leaders. Careers leads in schools and colleges were also targeted in this Strand. One purpose of CPD was to ensure delegates understood T Levels and the implications for their role. Another was to ensure delegates could advise students including those with SEND about T Levels. Delegates therefore needed to understand the vision and structure of T Level programmes; and what the introduction of T Levels meant for their job. Of those who undertook Strand 2 CPD, an estimate of 1,100 delegates completed feedback forms.

Strand 3 - Teacher Development Programme:

Support offered through the Teacher Development Programme aimed to meet the diverse professional development needs of teachers across the range of T Level providers. Professional development offered through this Strand of activity focused on:

- pedagogy (core teaching skills and methods);
- practice (subject knowledge and subject-specific teaching);
- professional knowledge (industrial and employability understanding for teachers); and
- developing teachers' capacity to develop student's English, maths and digital skills in technical teaching environments.

Of those who undertook Strand 3 CPD, 350 delegates completed feedback forms.

Strand 4 - Knowledge Hubs:

Knowledge Hubs support longitudinal peer-to-peer collaboration and sharing. The Hubs were responsible for the dissemination of all national information regarding T Level curricula as it became available, and the contextualisation of this information for local teachers. They also played a role in facilitating partnerships between providers and CPD activities. Knowledge Hubs planned four meetings a year.

Developing professional practice through Teacher Regional Improvement Projects (TRIPs) and Industry Insights placements was also an element of Strand 4 activity. Industry Insight placements were facilitated through Knowledge Hubs via new and existing networks. The placements provided high-quality professional learning and development for teachers.

TRIPs were collaborative projects undertaken by one or more providers. Project topics included: assessment strategies to motivate and retain students; employer engagement in designing the curriculum; effectively embedding maths, English and digital skills; and relating industry placements to provider-based learning.

The Industry Insight placements aimed to impart the subject knowledge, skills and confidence needed to deliver high-quality T Level programmes to teachers and trainers. There were three types of Industry Insight placements:

- **Work shadowing** (half to full day): Observing industry colleagues in their day-to-day roles. The purpose was to better understand the workplace and possible progression route opportunities for students and how to support students' occupational aspirations within the classroom.
- **Work placements** (one to two days): Observations and interactions within a workplace relevant to a T Level relevant sector and pathway. Placements provided an opportunity for teachers or trainers to experience working in a specific position, improving understanding of the knowledge, skills and behaviours required for an occupation.
- **Staff placements** (three to ten days): Allowed teachers an immersive experience within organisations to improve their understanding of current industry practice and the requirements of specific roles. Staff placements also offered an opportunity to obtain practical experience, and support collaborative working between staff and company employers to co-design and plan T Level curricula.

Based on completed feedback forms, an estimate of 800 delegates undertook Strand 4 CPD.

Strand 5 - Organisational Readiness:

This Strand focused on leading and managing educational change. The design focused on developing the leadership and management skills of leadership and governance teams. Strand activities targeted curriculum and timetabling planning, partnerships, employer engagement and the cultural aspects of leadership during change. Based on completed feedback forms, an estimate of 140 delegates undertook Strand 5 CPD.

1.3. Aims and objectives of the evaluation

The overall aim of the evaluation is to understand the impact of the TLPD offer on providers involved in the first stage of T Level delivery. The specific evaluation objectives were to:

- provide information on which aspects of the TLPD offer reportedly worked well and aspects of TLPD that participants felt could be improved;
- understand if participants felt any of the TLPD offer was superfluous;
- assess whether the TLPD programme was implemented as intended; and
- solicit views on how the TLPD programme could be refined, adapted and/or improved prior to rollout of the next phase of delivery.

1.4. Methodology

The evaluation methodology used quantitative and qualitative methods including surveys and interviews with TLPD provider leads and key stakeholders including ETF, DfE, PDAs and TLPD delivery partners. These activities were complemented by site visits to nine T Level providers where interviews and focus groups were conducted with a total of 102 provider staff including senior leaders, subject leads, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. A review of ETF monitoring data was also completed to further enhance understanding of provider engagement with the TLPD offer.

The original evaluation design also included longitudinal interviewing to learn more about changes in the implementation of TLPD's initial phase over time. This fieldwork was not undertaken as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Fieldwork does therefore not cover the whole duration of the TLPD initial phase rollout.

Provider and stakeholder surveys

Two separate online surveys were administered; one to key stakeholders and one to 2020 T Level providers, between June and July 2019. The surveys aimed to capture data on the perceived strengths, opportunities and challenges of the TLPD offer. The key

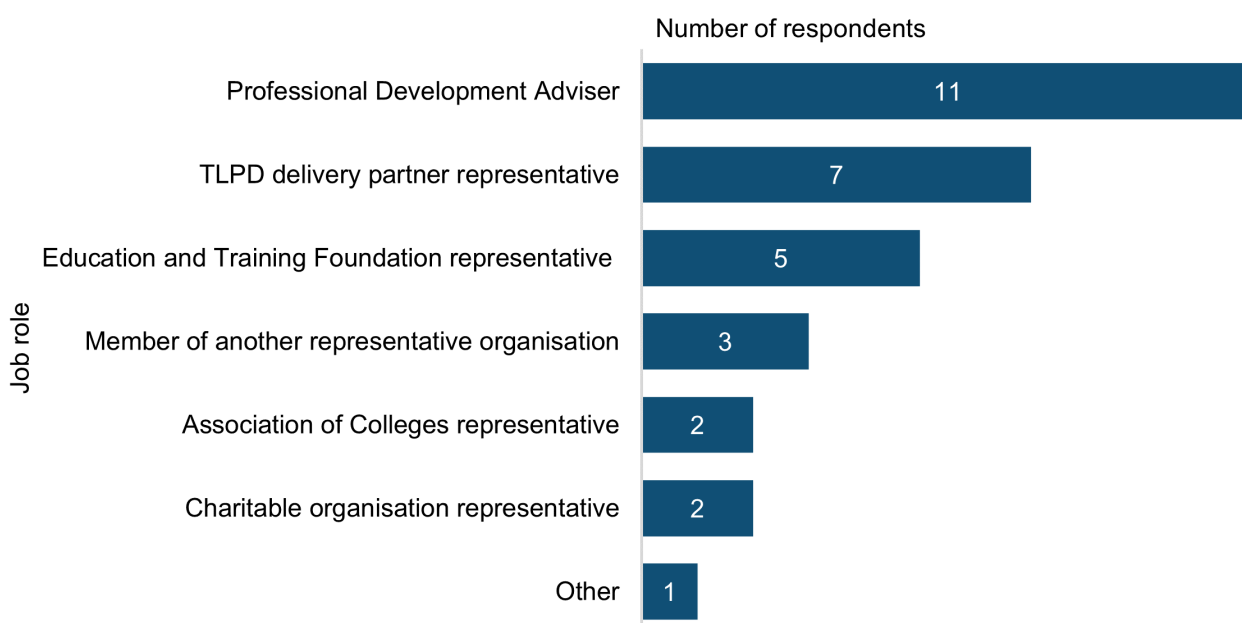
objectives of the surveys were to understand whether representatives from 2020 T Level providers and stakeholders thought the design of TLPD was suitable for purpose and to gauge attitudes towards the effectiveness of the offer and TLPD activities. Questions related to all five Strands of activity were posed.

Individuals from 24 of the 48 providers responded to the provider survey. A large proportion of survey respondents were senior leaders (10); seven were managers and six were head of departments/subject curriculum. One respondent specified their job role as other.

Thirty-one of the 40 stakeholders who were sent a link completed a survey. Respondents represented several stakeholder groups, including PDAs, delivery partners, representatives from the ETF and other representative organisations (see Figure 2).

As the number of respondents in both surveys was low, the report presents absolute figures rather than percentages in charts and explanatory text.

Figure 2: Job role of stakeholder survey respondents



Source: Provider survey. Base = 31

In-depth interviews with providers and stakeholders

A total of 26 in-depth, qualitative interviews with providers and stakeholders were completed between June and July 2019. The key purpose of these interviews was to understand views on the suitability of TLPD and the perceived effectiveness of the offer and individual activities. The qualitative interviews captured evidence covering the following areas:

- understanding the aims of the offer;
- views on communication and marketing activity;
- providers' current knowledge and their workforce's skills to deliver T Levels;
- assessing organisational needs and planning for workforce CPD; and
- participants' and providers' expectations of the offer.

Of the stakeholders who were interviewed, 11 were delivery partners, five were ETF representatives, four were PDAs and two were DfE representatives. A further four interviewees were senior leaders from T Level providers.

Provider visits

Nine one-day site visits were conducted in October and November 2019 featuring interviews or mini-group discussions with senior leaders, subject leads, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. In total, 102 members of staff were interviewed: 25 senior leaders, 19 subject leads, 26 teaching staff and 32 non-teaching staff¹⁵. The interviews captured evidence covering the following areas:

- understanding the aims of the TLPD offer and how it has been marketed;
- participants' views on current knowledge about, and skills to deliver, T Levels; and
- engagement with TLPD Strand activities and expectations.

Table 1 describes the range of providers visited. Four of the nine providers planned to deliver all three T Levels in September 2020. Another four providers planned to deliver two T Levels and one provider planned to deliver a single T Level. All of those planning to deliver two T Levels were offering Digital Production, Design and Development and Education and Childcare. Five providers were based in urban areas, with the remaining four in rural areas. There was significant variation in size, with the largest college having close to 15,000 students and the smallest with 300 students.

¹⁵ Non-teaching staff were from a range of departments, including student recruitment, student support services, exams, IT, business development, finance, human resources, work experience, volunteering and employer engagement, careers and guidance and administration.

Table 1: Characteristics of T Level providers who participated in case study visits

| Type of Institution / Urban or Rural location | Number of T Levels | T Levels to be offered | Student population |
|--|---------------------------|--|---------------------------|
| FE college / Rural | 3 | Design, Surveying & Planning for Construction; Digital Production, Design & Development; Education & Childcare | >10,000 |
| FE college / Rural | 2 | Digital Production, Design & Development; Education & Childcare | 5,000 – 10,000 |
| FE college / Rural | 3 | Design, Surveying & Planning for Construction; Digital Production, Design & Development; Education & Childcare | 5,000 – 10,000 |
| FE college / Urban | 2 | Digital Production, Design & Development; Education & Childcare | 1,000-2,000 |
| FE college / Urban | 1 | Digital Production, Design & Development | < 1,000 |
| FE college / Urban | 2 | Digital Production, Design & Development; Education & Childcare | < 1,000 |
| FE college / Urban | 3 | Design, Surveying & Planning for Construction; Digital Production, Design & Development; Education & Childcare | >10,000 |
| School / Rural | 3 | Design, Surveying & Planning for Construction; Digital Production, Design & Development; Education & Childcare | 1,000-2,000 |
| School / Urban | 2 | Digital Production, Design & Development; Education & Childcare | <1,000 |

Review of ETF monitoring data

ETF's monitoring data was provided in two different formats. All organisational and practitioner data for Strand 1 activity was collected at the individual level: each data record represented the views of one person. Feedback forms for events for all other Strands were provided in aggregated format in a single Excel file for each individual event. The structure of the data differed slightly between events. Only four feedback questions were relevant for analysis for this evaluation; other questions relate to the venue and facilities at which events were held and are not germane to this evaluation.

Structurally, Strand 1 data was more suitable for statistical analysis although gaps in data coverage were still present. For example, no data was collected on job role for those completing the practitioner self-assessment form.

For all Strands, data was collated to present an analysis of the full cohort per Strand. Where the structure of data and the number of responses allowed, sub-group analysis was also conducted. More data on the profile and data cleaning undertaken for the organisational and practitioner tools is presented in the Appendices.

1.5. Limitations of findings

The research design originally included longitudinal fieldwork, however, the advent of COVID-19 meant this fieldwork could not be completed. The findings herein are therefore derived from the baseline interviews, surveys, case study visits and ETF monitoring data only. These were designed to collect early data on providers' current skills, knowledge and expectations of engagement with the programme. At the point of data collection, providers were in the very early stages of engagement with the offer. The discussion on the impact of TLPD is therefore much more limited than originally envisaged. Similarly, it is not possible to measure how views changed after the Autumn 2019 fieldwork as later fieldwork was cancelled in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

ETF monitoring data was provided to the evaluators in aggregated form rather than individual delegate data. This means the precise number of attendees for events is unknown to the evaluators, who understand it was not compulsory to complete feedback and data validation was not used on the ETF forms. Individual delegate data would also be necessary for sub-group analysis by delegate type. Data protection legislation may limit access to individual delegate data for evaluators.

1.6. Report structure

Chapter 2 reports on *stakeholder and provider understanding of T Levels and the TLPD offer*, attitudes towards the overall objectives for T Levels, views on barriers to achieving

the aims of TLPD and providers' knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels. Views on the impact of T Levels on provider staff and how the offer has been communicated among provider staff is also presented in Chapter 2.

Chapters 3-7 each cover one of the five Strands of TLPD. This report has been set out so that each Strand has its own chapter that can be read independently of the others. Strand chapters must be read alongside Chapter 1 (Introduction) in order to understand the context in which the findings are situated and the methodology, limitations and timescales of the evaluation.

Chapter 3 presents findings on *Assessing organisational needs and planning for workforce CPD* (Strand 1). In this chapter, we discuss the extent of engagement with Strand activities and present findings related to the effectiveness of PDAs and professional development plans. Findings related to the usefulness of the online organisational self-assessment tool and the practitioner self-assessment tool are also discussed. Data collected via Strand 1's online tools is also analysed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 presents findings on *Understanding T Levels* (Strand 2). Engagement and perceptions of the CPD are discussed along with the usefulness of CPD for providers and suggested improvements. Analysis of ETF's Strand 2 delegate feedback forms is also presented.

Findings related to the *Teacher Development Programme* (Strand 3) are presented in Chapter 5. Teachers' engagement with the Teacher Development Programme, along with their views about the usefulness and effectiveness of the separate elements of the programme, are covered. The extent to which the programme prepared participants to deliver T Levels in September 2020 is included, as is analysis of ETF's Strand 3 delegate feedback forms. The chapter concludes with suggested improvements to Strand 3 activities.

Chapter 6 presents findings related to *Knowledge Hubs, TRIPs and Industry Insights* (Strand 4). In this chapter, provider staff perceptions of, and engagement with, these activities is covered. Enablers and barriers in engaging with industry are also presented, as is analysis of ETF delegate feedback forms. The chapter concludes with suggested improvements to Strand 4 activities.

Chapter 7 presents limited findings related to *Organisational Readiness* (Strand 5) which was launched at the same time as the primary research fieldwork. The COVID-19 pandemic meant no later fieldwork was possible through which more views on this Strand could be collected.

Throughout this report, in reporting findings we refer to people who attended ETF CPD as 'delegates'. Provider staff and stakeholders who were interviewed are referred to as 'interviewees', and those who responded to a survey are referred to as 'respondent'.

2. Understanding and communication of TLPD

2.1. Introduction

This chapter presents common findings related to stakeholder and provider staff's views on the T Level Professional Development (TLPD) offer across all Strands of activity. All findings are derived from provider fieldwork conducted between June and November 2019. This means any subsequent change in views after that point is not captured in data collected via primary research methods. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic meant follow-up fieldwork scheduled for Spring 2020 could not be completed. Stakeholder fieldwork was completed in May and June of 2019.

The first section details interviewees' understanding of TLPD, including their awareness, understanding of the main aims, objectives and purpose at the time of interview. The second section presents findings relating to the barriers to achieving TLPD's wider objectives, after which views on providers' knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels is discussed. Views on how the offer was communicated and the effectiveness in reaching the right audiences are presented, and the chapter closes with suggested improvements based on testimony at the time.

2.2. Summary of key findings

All findings in this chapter solely represent views given in summer 2019 by survey respondents and interviewees who participated in fieldwork between September and November 2019. As per the earlier timeline (Figure 1), the initial phase of TLPD became operational in stages between May and October 2019.

Awareness and understanding of TLPD

- Senior leaders had a strong understanding of the five Strands of TLPD and what the Strands aimed to achieve. Student-facing staff were less able to connect CPD and development activity specifically to TLPD.
- The primary reason for limited awareness of TLPD among teachers and administrative staff was the decision by senior management to cascade selective information about TLPD to staff.
- Provider staff and stakeholders held three overall views about the purpose of TLPD:
 - preparedness: TLPD supported providers' preparation and readiness to deliver T Levels from September 2020;
 - collaboration: TLPD encouraged collaboration through shared learning, peer support and collaborative projects; and

- holistic approach: delivery via the five Strands of activity facilitated a customisable offer.

Barriers to achieving TLPD aims and provider readiness

- The short time for implementation and the scale and complexity of the change were identified as the two main barriers to achieving the main objectives of the programme.
- Timings associated with the publication date of technical specifications was a key concern for provider staff. These specifications were important for planning CPD, developing course materials and assessments, resource planning, organising estate changes and informing and engaging employers.
- The scale and complexity of the changes required to successfully implement T Levels, and the associated risks to implementation, were also identified as a barrier to achieving TLPD aims and provider readiness. The scale and complexity of change were deemed to be exacerbated by: timeliness of when CPD activities would be available; potential resistance to engagement with CPD; and workforce challenges which were associated with the recruitment and retention of staff.

Knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels

- Provider staff perceptions of their knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels varied. Senior leaders and subject leads were positive about their organisation's ability to implement and manage changes brought about by T Levels.
- The majority of teaching staff were confident in their pedagogical knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels. Teachers identified developing exam-based assessments and in-depth industry knowledge as gaps in their knowledge.

Communication of the offer

- TLPD was largely promoted to providers through the newsletters, the ETF bulletin and PDAs.
- A top-down approach to communicating TLPD to staff was preferred by some senior leaders who:
 - wished to avoid overburdening staff with information;
 - recognised that not all Strands of activity applied to all staff; and
 - noted that different Strands of activity went 'live' at different times throughout the year.

- Where information was cascaded, it was prioritised by need based on the judgement of senior staff; only information about Strands of activity relevant to their own professional development was cascaded.
- Providers suggested several ways in which communication could be improved:
 - all communication about TLPD to be combined and sent from one organisation rather than different Strand contractors; and
 - include an online calendar on the ETF website with details of upcoming events and simplified access to online CPD resources (i.e. webinars, slides from events, learning materials, etc.). To note an online calendar was in place by June 2019 at the request of providers and for ETF's internal purposes. These findings suggest better signposting / prominence to the diary may be valuable.

2.3. Understanding of TLPD

Awareness and understanding of TLPD

Stakeholders had a detailed understanding of TLPD because they were either involved in its design, the design of T Levels more widely, or played an instrumental role in the delivery of the offer (i.e. as a delivery partner).

All provider staff understood some of the purpose of TLPD. However, differences in knowledge correlated with the seniority of the staff. Senior leaders had a strong understanding of all five Strands of TLPD and what each Strand aimed to achieve. They were more able to articulate the purpose of the five Strands and who they targeted than teaching and administrative staff.

“I think the main objectives are to prepare key stakeholders but also different levels of the [provider] organisation for T Level implementation. So, the offer that’s there is support to teachers and trainers and assessors, there’s stuff there for middle managers, people form a strategic overview, there’s things on there for support areas.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

Senior leaders acknowledged that staff within their organisations had a varied understanding and knowledge of T Levels. Senior staff reported attending several CPD events, which were described as useful in raising awareness of T Levels and TLPD. One senior leader spoke about attending meetings with DfE officials and ETF contacts as well as participating in webinars.

“We’ve been regularly going down to London for DfE meetings, and [awarding organisation] meetings since they’ve been awarded the contract for it. We’ve had meetings with ETF, with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), and attended webinars. It seems there’s almost something on most weeks, to be honest.”

Senior Leader (November 2019)

Teaching and non-teaching staff had some awareness of TLPD at the time of case study fieldwork (autumn 2019). Most knew that there was a programme for support being offered to T Level providers but many were unable to provide an overview or describe the five Strands of activity. The majority of teaching and non-teaching staff said their awareness and knowledge of TLPD came from information that had been shared at staff/departmental meetings or directly from senior colleagues.

“We’ve had some information cascaded to us in our meetings, and those people who are directly involved in it first-time round have been having lots of meetings and training. The rest of us haven’t really. We know the bare minimum.”

Teaching Staff (November 2019)

Limited awareness of TLPD among teaching and non-teaching staff largely resulted from decisions by provider senior management teams to limit the information given to staff. As described later under *Section 2.5: Communication of the offer*, senior management did not wish to overburden staff, or target information to specific staff roles.

Some providers packaged TLPD with other DfE initiatives such as the Transition and Taking Teaching Further. This resulted in most teaching and non-teaching staff being unable to distinguish elements of CPD offered through various Strands.

Understanding the main aims and objectives of TLPD

Provider staff and stakeholders recognised the overarching strategic objective of TLPD was to make providers ready to deliver T Levels and smooth their introduction into providers’ course offers. Views about T Levels informed wider perceptions regarding the TLPD offer. These views are summarised in the points below.

- T Levels were significantly different from existing vocational education programmes. For instance, T Levels required the student to understand more theoretical or academic concepts compared to apprenticeships or other vocational programmes.

- T Levels were complex to deliver, due to requirements of pedagogy, practice and professionalism, and inter-relationships between these factors.
- There was a necessity to reflect the demands of employers more effectively than had been done in some existing vocational programmes and apprenticeships.

Senior leaders and stakeholders alike identified three main purposes of TLPD based on their knowledge of the policy and experiences of TLPD to date:

- **Preparedness:** T Levels were designed to differ markedly from existing vocational education, which was why providers needed support to ensure they were prepared and ready to deliver by September 2020;
- **Collaboration:** working with others was deemed to be an effective way to improve understanding for a wide range of audiences and was therefore built into TLPD; and
- **Holistic approach:** delivery via Strands of activity and differentiated within-Strand content facilitated a customisable offer.

Preparedness

Both provider staff and stakeholders acknowledged that the Design, Surveying and Planning and Digital Production, Design and Development T Level pathways differed considerably to existing vocational programmes covering the same subject areas. Some provider staff felt differences between the Education and Childcare pathway and existing childcare apprenticeships were slight. The amount of professional development activity required by staff to prepare for the Education and Childcare pathway was therefore deemed less compared to the other two pathways.

The majority of provider staff in all roles noted a central aim of TLPD was to ensure providers as organisations were prepared and ready to deliver by September 2020. Stakeholders also noted that TLPD would support providers not involved in the initial phase, helping identify any gaps in skills and knowledge among staff and through focussed and tailored CPD activity. Up-skilling staff so that they had the necessary industry-related skills was also identified as part of a wider objective by some.

“My interpretation is that the full offer is for workforce development in terms of T Levels, so it’s very much looking at preparing staff across the sector to be able to successfully deliver T Levels when they’re implemented. Obviously, that’s in 2020, but going beyond the years as well. It’s very much a full sector workforce development CPD offer.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Collaboration

All stakeholders and the majority of senior leaders said that collaboration was one of the main aims of TLPD. Collaboration was also considered a key strength, particularly in supporting partnership working between the sector and employers/organisations. Strand 4 (Knowledge Hubs, Teacher Regional Improvement Projects (TRIPs) and Industry Insights) was noted to be extremely important in encouraging collaboration through shared learning, peer support and TRIPs (discussed in more detail in Chapter 6).

“[An important element of] Knowledge Hub activity is the TRIP. People can think, ‘What is it that we need to work on to improve the quality of teaching and learning?’ It’s about bringing them together with other providers so that you can [share] effective learning and practice that has an evidence base.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

Holistic approach

TLPD’s holistic approach was perceived as a strength by several stakeholders and senior leaders. For instance, TLPD catered for a variety of CPD needs which operated together to support T Level delivery. Another perceived strength of the offer was the five-Strand design which addressed the CPD needs of senior leads, middle managers, teaching staff and non-teaching staff. In practice, this meant that providers could tailor CPD according to staff need.

“I think the longer view is making sure that T Levels are world class and excellent and doing that through the preparation and development of the workforce. Then you take it down a level from that and look at the different roles within the workforce, starting with leaders and managers, then going through to all the different roles in the organisation. So, it’s about preparation and development of the people who are going to make T Levels happen, at all those levels. The five Strands do that.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

Understanding the rationale for TLPD

All interviewees noted that TLPD was necessary to ensure that providers were ready to deliver T Levels from September 2020. There was a consensus view among stakeholders and senior leaders around the importance of TLPD, which resulted from two factors:

- T Levels offered an alternative qualification to existing vocational and academic options, which required providers to develop new ways of working; and
- the end objective of T Levels (students with greater employability skills and technical knowledge) required provider staff to have the technical and industry knowledge to deliver the curriculum. TLPD could address relevant skills gaps.

All stakeholders and the majority of provider staff recognised T Levels as an alternative to existing vocational and academic qualifications. Teaching staff in particular recognised T Levels as a new qualification designed to differ from existing vocational courses such as GNVQs, BTECs and apprenticeships. Some noted that T Levels were a mixture of apprenticeships and A Levels – bridging the gap between academic and workplace experience. Stakeholders and most provider staff said teachers needed some different skills to deliver T Levels, although some teaching staff were able to identify fewer differences in the case of the Education and Childcare pathway. One stakeholder felt T Levels were a ‘step change’ in the delivery of technical education.

The introduction of T Levels requires providers to implement changes at the strategic, operational and delivery levels. In the eyes of stakeholders and senior leaders, TLPD provided T Level providers with the CPD and tools to adapt to these changes. For example, one senior leader described TLPD as offering a whole package to give staff the relevant skills, knowledge and industry insights to deliver a T Level curriculum. TLPD covered all their needs, from market positioning to teaching delivery.

“The whole organisation needs to get ready to market and deliver brand new qualifications, and the implications for that are wide. You have to have senior management teams who know what needs to be done in terms of planning [...] you need people on the front line in an organisation who know how to talk to students or parents when they come in. You need to know how to work with the industry placements and how to engage with employers. So, the whole of the TLPD programme is to prepare whole organisations.”

Senior Leader (June 2019)

By the time students finish their T Level courses, they should have the necessary academic and technical knowledge and employability skills to enter the workplace. Interviewees noted that students would gain some of this knowledge and skills through industry placements. However, stakeholders and senior leaders said it was important that staff delivering T Levels had the relevant skills and knowledge to deliver technical aspects of the curriculum. Some interviewees commended Strand 4, and particularly the Industry Insight element, in developing the skills base of teaching staff in this regard.

2.4. Barriers to achieving TLPD aims and provider readiness

Overall, provider staff and stakeholders identified two main barriers at the time of interview that could impact on TLPD achieving its overall aims and provider readiness to deliver T Levels: the short time between publishing technical specifications and the T Level start date; and the scale and complexity of the change.

The short time for implementation

The majority of senior leaders, subject leads and teaching staff articulated strong concern over the short time for implementation of TLPD.

Publication of technical specifications

Technical specifications for the new qualifications are drafted by the Awarding Organisations and the timetable for publishing them falls outside the remit of TLPD. Due to the timescales involved, the launch of TLPD could not be delayed to coincide with the publication of the specifications or insufficient time would have been available to complete the training prior to providers delivering the first T levels to students. The evaluation makes it clear that future iterations of TLPD would benefit from earlier publication of detailed specifications.

Within this evaluation, the publication date for technical specifications was seen as the main barrier to the successful implementation of the TLPD programme as a whole as there were several implications on:

- planning for staff CPD;
- using draft specifications
- curriculum planning and timetabling; and
- informing and engaging employers.

Planning CPD

Without finalised technical specifications (concerns regarding the draft specifications are discussed below), senior leaders and subject leads felt unable to make accurate assessments of their staff's CPD needs. Senior provider staff were frustrated with the five-month window between the publication date of final technical specifications (April 2020) and start of T Levels in September 2020. Many leaders feared they would not have enough time to engage with TLPD. The technical specification publication date left many senior leaders and subject leads feeling unable to assess the specifications nor plan CPD.

“Until the specifications are out, what can you really teach about pedagogy? I don’t know, I don’t know a lot about that one because I don’t actually think [the specifications] are available yet.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

“The big thing that’s holding us back at the moment is getting [the subject specifications]. We’re now treading water really until we get that. Once we’ve got it, then you can really start thinking about planning.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Finalised and detailed technical specifications were also deemed necessary to assess whether some staff needed CPD on specific technical experience or knowledge. The specifications define the curriculum and the skills needed to deliver the curriculum. The short timescale was expected to be a challenge in specialist topics within the Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction and Digital Production, Design and Development pathways as staff were more likely to require time to learn new areas of knowledge. Some senior leaders and subject leads noted that staff would complete CPD while still delivering to students in the current academic year. Others noted that the specification publication date coincided with their busiest time of the year, and would result in pushing preparation for the delivery of T Levels into the summer break.

“We’ve got from March to the end of June to nail it. Exam season. Yet again, that’s a scary time of year. I don’t see it happening.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

Using draft technical specifications

The draft technical specifications issued by awarding organisations were made available to all 2020 T Level providers in the months before their formal release in April 2020. At the time of fieldwork, not all provider staff had seen draft specifications. For those that did, the drafts gave teachers and leaders an early indication of what the curriculum and assessment criteria might look like, and the potential skills and knowledge gaps among their staff. The draft informed some earlier CPD activity. In the case of the Education and Childcare pathway, some senior leaders and teaching staff said the draft specifications were similar to other programmes they teach.

“The [Awarding Organisations] conference really showed us that it’s not changing too much from what we do [...] and that the topics are still the same. That was a big concern to begin with, whether it was

changing from what we do already. It's not, though. That filled us with confidence.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Curriculum planning and timetabling

Curriculum design and timetabling was contingent on technical specifications. Some subject leads outlined their need to plan the curriculum, provide staff with details of how much resource was required and allow staff time to prepare for delivery.

“How much delivery time does it need? Where's it going to be? And if we don't know the detail, from where I am, I can set up a curriculum line in a spreadsheet that says T Level, but then everybody looks at it and says, 'Okay, but what does that mean? What do I need to do? How much resource do I need to throw at it?' and so, if you're asking me when do we need to have this understanding, it's really quite soon.”

Subject Lead (November 2019)

Technical specifications were regarded as important to help teaching staff develop the right curricula, lesson and learning materials and assessments. Despite early sight of draft technical specifications released in November 2019, most provider staff were uncertain of what the assessment criteria would look like. Provider staff noted that the full technical specifications publication date of April 2020 would mean they had a limited timeframe to consider assessment requirements for T Levels.

“Some of the information that we're getting from the DfE is that the outline content that will be released by the awarding organisations won't be much different from what we've already had. What will be different will be the assessment and how that will look. If we can get some more information, staff will feel a lot more confident. [We can then] start planning properly.”

Senior Leader (November 2019)

Some subject leads and senior leaders noted that they would have to plan for lessons without the aid of textbooks and ready-made teaching materials, due to the short timeframe between the release of the specifications and course start dates.

“[The awarding body] are not going to release their specifications until February¹⁶, and we’re teaching six months later, there just isn’t time for them to write textbooks and write support materials. So, again, we’re in that position whereby actually we’ve got to start everything from scratch.”

Subject Lead (November 2019)

Informing and engaging employers

Some provider staff noted that technical specifications would inform industry engagement. A few provider staff noted that employers would like to know details such as length of placements and the nature of assessments. Some providers were not confident in approaching employers without this information. Technical specifications were also important for course planning. For example, one subject lead noted that the absence of final assessment specifications impacted the timings for the design of assessments and preparatory planning for teachers’ work with students, timetabling and the curriculum.

“It’s not just the assessment. It’s also timescales. When are the exams? When do we need to be preparing students? That helps us with our timetabling and our curriculum planning to what’s going to be delivered when. While all that information’s still missing, it’s difficult to plan.”

Subject Lead (November 2019)

Perceptions of the scale and complexity of change

Some senior provider staff and a few stakeholders were apprehensive about the scale and complexity of the changes required to successfully implement T Levels, and the associated risks to implementation. The scale and complexity of change were deemed to be exacerbated by:

- provider staff capacity to engage with TLPD¹⁷;
- timeliness of when CPD activities would be ready to access¹⁸;

¹⁶ February 2020 was the scheduled date at the time of interview – the final date was April 2020.

¹⁷ Evidence for provider capacity to engage with CPD was found from provider case studies. Relevant findings are presented in Chapters 5 and 7.

¹⁸ Evidence for timely access to CPD activities was found from provider case studies. Relevant findings are presented in Chapter 7.

- potential resistance to engagement with CPD, and
- workforce challenges.

Staff capacity

The capacity of provider staff to engage with the offer was seen to be a barrier to the success of TLPD. Several stakeholders noted that teachers faced many demands on their time and may therefore find it difficult to find the time to engage with TLPD. Another stakeholder made a wider point about the large volume of information T Level providers had received. Stakeholders generally raised concerns about whether the right information about relevant Strands of activity would reach the right audiences.

“I think probably the main risk will be that information is coming out quite quickly. I know from my point of view because I’m one of the delivery partners, if I step back and look at it from the institute’s point of view, there could be too much information [...] you could miss.”

Stakeholder (July 2019)

Timing of CPD activity

Secondly, some stakeholders were concerned about when CPD would be available¹⁹. One stakeholder noted that the offer was still in the development phase (June 2019). Communication about TLPD was therefore difficult when key decisions about its structure had yet to be made. Another stakeholder noted that Strand 1 was the most developed. For Strands 2 to 5, decisions had been made about the CPD activities and target audiences, but much of the content had still to be developed.

“The offer’s still developing, so that makes it very hard to articulate it to the wider sector and there’s still a lot of stuff to be decided about it now. In an ideal world, it would be a whole product that we could all learn about and then we could all be delivering together.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

Resistance to engagement

Some stakeholders spoke about potential resistance to engagement with CPD. One senior leader noted the impact on teachers of a further significant change to the structure of technical education which had resulted in scepticism among some practitioners. To counter this scepticism, they suggested that TLPD CPD needed to challenge teachers to

¹⁹ Roll out of TLPD began in May 2019 to become fully operational by Autumn 2019

think about the implications for their subject area, their expertise and their skills to deliver T Levels, and the pedagogical decisions they make.

“There is a great deal of cynicism about yet another new set of qualifications. [...] Many people have worked in further education (FE) for a long time, but even if you’ve only had a career in FE for fifteen years, this will be the second or possibly the third major overhaul of technical education during that period. So, if that cynicism is to be prevented, so that there is a genuine positive engagement with the T Levels, really [the CPD] has to be very, very high quality.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Workforce challenges

Subject leads and senior leaders noted the challenges of recruiting new staff was made harder without the final published technical specifications; as only by reviewing the specifications would they identify skills and knowledge gaps within the organisation. Some senior staff also noted a significant skills deficit in exam-based assessment, which would affect organisational readiness.

“Other challenges I think are moving onto more exam-based qualifications so we need to make sure that staff are prepared for that.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

Senior leads responsible for the Design, Surveying and Planning pathway said it was extremely difficult to recruit staff with industry knowledge. One subject lead noted the contradiction in the expectation that someone from industry would have the necessary teaching skills to deliver T Levels. Another interviewee noted that, in the past, it had been difficult to recruit staff to deliver construction-based courses, largely because industry offers a better salary than teaching.

“In the area of professional construction, to recruit staff is nigh-on impossible. It took me 3 years to recruit a tutor in that area, with adverts that kept going out and out again. [...] there’s such a massive skill shortage, and because they’re paid so well in my industry, we can’t get people in [...] it’s a big issue for us.”

Senior Leader (November 2019)

Schools faced additional recruitment challenges. One senior leader noted that school staff have multi-faceted roles, often teaching several year groups, different curriculums

and sometimes two distinct subjects. The interviewee said employing teachers who would bring the specific skills and knowledge required to teach T Levels and adapt to teach other subjects and across a number of year groups was difficult.

“We have to recruit teachers because their role will not just be T Levels, it’s going to be other things in the school as well, and that certainly is a different slant completely, because if you recruit teachers, they know about the pedagogy because they had that as part of their training.”

Senior Leader (November 2019)

Some senior leaders and subject leads were also concerned about the retention of staff who undertake CPD and would be responsible for delivering T Levels. One computing subject lead was concerned about retaining staff who had developed practical skills and professional knowledge from the CPD they had undertaken, because industry employment offered a better salary than teaching. Others spoke about the difficulties they would face if staff chose to leave close to the launch of T Levels.

“My main concern about all this, it’s great getting a world-class qualification that’s got the latest and greatest content, but if a member of staff gets trained in that then they are eminently employable in the software industry, and they’re going to leave.”

Subject Lead (June 2019)

“My concern [...] we don’t finish planning the curriculum until the 12th of February and then who knows if this ICT teacher or that media teacher or that business teacher leaves, suddenly, we haven’t got a staff.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

2.5. Knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels

Current knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels

Interview findings showed that provider perceptions of their knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels varied²⁰. Senior leaders and subject leads were positive about their organisation's ability to implement and manage changes brought about by T Levels. Some senior leaders referred to their staff's ability to respond to changes in technical education. Senior leaders noted that both teaching and non-teaching staff were familiar with changes in curriculum and would adapt to the changes with ease. Adapting to change was perceived as being key to the role of all FE staff.

“Three years ago, or four, we changed from a BTEC to an OCR Cambridge Technical²¹. We are settling in with OCR Cambridge Technicals. We are always improving. I don't think the change is a problem. I think we all are professionals. We can adapt to the change effectively.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

For some providers, confidence in their knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels was dependent upon the T Level subject. Senior staff were more likely to articulate confidence in skills and ability to deliver T Levels if the organisation offered vocational courses in a similar subject. For example, some senior leaders expressed greater confidence about delivering the Education and Childcare pathway than the Digital Production, Design and Development pathway, which had greater perceived staff development needs.

“We're very lucky in childcare that our current technical offer is very closely aligned to a T Level, and the transition from that to the Childcare T Level is probably the smallest compared to the digital staff moving from the current provision to a T Level. So, in childcare the transition is much smaller, because it's like a mini T Level now.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

Generally, teaching staff were confident in their ability to adapt to any changes in the curriculum. The majority of teaching staff felt confident in their pedagogical knowledge and skills to teach T Levels (which was also reflected across ETF event feedback for all

²⁰ It is important to note that interviewee's perceptions of their knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels was before the majority of them had undertaken TLPD activity.

²¹ Cambridge Technicals are vocational qualifications at Level 2 and Level 3 for students aged 16+. They're designed with the workplace in mind and provide an alternative to A Levels.

Strands). Many felt that they had already developed pedagogical skills during their careers as FE teachers. However, teachers mostly spoke about the need for further pedagogical support to understand more about exam-based assessments, as it would require a different skillset to support students to prepare for exams.

While some providers were confident in their ability to manage and implement changes brought about by T Levels, they recognised a strong need for more industry knowledge, skills and experience.

A few providers had recruited industry professionals to train as teachers and support T Level planning and delivery. Using ready-made industry skills and knowledge was beneficial for several reasons. Firstly, these employees contributed to the design and development of technical modules which would be used in T Level courses. Secondly, they provided insights into how to successfully engage with employers, especially where providers had been unsuccessful in the past when trying to engage with industry. Finally, employees from industry were able to share their knowledge with other teachers.

“We managed to [recruit] a guy from industry [...], who’s highly experienced at running construction builds in the pharmaceutical industry. He’s taken the T Level specification and converted into a deliverable model. That’s really handy.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Existing teachers noted that they required further in-depth industry knowledge. Again, this was more salient for those who were to assume responsibility for teaching the Digital Production, Design and Development and the Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction pathways than those who were to teach on the Education and Childcare pathway. The majority of teaching and non-teaching staff noted that in the absence of technical specifications, they were unable to provide an accurate assessment of their abilities to cover the industry-facing aspects of T Levels.

Impact of T Levels on job roles

All senior leaders noted that the introduction of T Levels would impact their role, as their organisation would need to adapt to change. This included ensuring T Levels are resourced with staff with the relevant knowledge (especially of industry) and skills to deliver them.

A small proportion of teaching and non-teaching staff reported that the introduction of T Levels would have little or no impact on their delivery role with students. They were familiar in adapting to curriculum changes and envisaged T Level delivery would be similar to other Level 3 courses. These staff accepted that up-skilling and CPD was a key aspect of teaching.

“In some respects, [the TLPD is] just another programme. It won’t generally change the way we approach any provision that we would have in the college in terms of the way we would look at the processes around it, the way that we would evaluate it, the way that we would monitor it, the way that we would enrol people to it.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Most teaching and non-teaching staff believed that T Levels would result in additional responsibilities outside of delivery. For many, those additional responsibilities were related to greater engagement with employers, including more contact time with employers, as well as visiting students while on placement. Although the majority embraced the additional engagement with industry, a few feared increased workloads in addition to preparing and delivering a new curriculum and managing external assessments.

“I think it’ll expand my role because I’ll have more contact with employers, which we haven’t really had previously. Now, we’re going out on visits. I’ll be going out on the placements, to see what students will experience.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Non-teaching staff also perceived that the introduction of T Levels would impact on their role because of greater engagement with employers. Many noted that additional responsibilities from the introduction of T Levels would come from a greater involvement with student placements. For example, some noted that there would be an increase in administrative work associated with student placements.

2.6. Communication of the offer

Sources of communication

TLPD communications mentioned by provider staff were newsletters, the ETF bulletin and PDAs. Newsletters were the most common method by which provider staff accessed up-to-date information about TLPD. Other promotional activities mentioned during fieldwork were TLPD-launch events hosted by ETF and DfE, and events hosted by Knowledge Hubs. Communication via these activities largely targeted senior staff. Promotion of Strand activity was also communicated through the ETF bulletin. ETF representatives and delivery partners made a strategic decision to solely use the bulletin to avoid overburdening providers with communication material.

Internal communication with provider staff

Several providers instigated a top-down approach to disseminating TLPD information to their staff. Some senior leaders chose not to cascade all the information they received about TLPD to staff because:

- they wished to avoid overburdening staff with information;
- they felt not all Strands of activity applied to all staff; and
- different Strands of activity became 'live' at different times throughout the year.

The subsequent COVID-19 pandemic would also affect the ability of leadership teams to effectively cascade relevant information.

Information shared was prioritised by need as judged by senior staff (i.e. only information about Strands of activity relevant to their own professional development was cascaded). One interviewee noted that they had been cautious about what information to share with teaching staff, particularly since staff had not had sight of the final technical specifications.

“There are so many changes happening with the specification and what Pearson is bringing on, I’m choosing what information to give to my team at what stage, and what not to. Things that are changing, I don’t need to burden them.”

Subject Lead (November 2019)

Some providers had members of staff who were responsible for managing information about the offer. Sometimes these individuals played an important role in implementing the TLPD offer, attending meetings and conferences or had contacts at the ETF with whom they regularly liaised. One senior leader noted that a key component of their role was to cascade all information about the offer to the relevant staff.

Teaching and non-teaching staff agreed with a top-down approach, as most noted that they could miss important information if dissemination was uncontrolled. However, a handful of teaching and non-teaching staff were concerned with the limited information they had received about TLPD at the time of interview. Many of these interviewees had little knowledge about the CPD being offered.

“This T Level professional development, there’s extra money going in and opportunities to get some training. I’m not exactly clear what TLPD is.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Challenges associated with communication materials

Several interviewees reported confusion about what CPD was being offered via TLPD. This was largely attributed both to the volume of information they received and the combining of TLPD activity with other non-programme offers. Some senior leaders and subject leads received information from different organisations about T Levels and TLPD. Many spoke about the number of emails they received from a range of organisations offering information and CPD, many of which were unrelated to TLPD.

“I get so many emails around T Levels, and quite often it’s confusing as to what is coming from where, and who is responsible for what.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Most stakeholders spoke about the need to have a single centralised system in providing information about TLPD, because of its complexity. One senior leader described a centralised spreadsheet they created which provided details of all CPD available, the relevance for different groups of staff, and links to booking forms. This helped the provider to avoid overburdening staff with too much information and ensured that staff were accessing the right CPD.

“I’ve asked HR to collate all the training available. There was something that came through that I liked the idea of and it showed you, if you were a support member of staff, what training was available for you [and] links to the training. So, if you are an exams officer, the training available to you is this, and this is a link to how you can book it. If you’re a teacher, the training available is this and here’s a link. [...] everyone across the college relevant to T Levels has the opportunity to undertake relevant training, and it’s easy to find rather than then having to look it up.”

Senior Leader, (October 2019)

Most interviewees cited the ETF newsletter as an effective tool to communicate information about TLPD, as it provided all the relevant information in one place. However, one of its main drawbacks was the embedded links. Many staff spoke about having to click on several links and go through several webpages before accessing the relevant information. This process was deemed to be time-consuming.

“You click on [a link] and then you get sent to another page and another page, so it highlights something and then you’re trying to find where it is. Is it a webinar? What is it? What’s happening this month and next month? Be really clear to say, ‘Actually, there are some key webinars for HRMIS finance. Click here.’”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

There was a consensus among provider staff that the ETF website was the least effective method of communicating TLPD. Most provider staff were critical of the website and highlighted difficulties in navigating and finding relevant information. This caused issues for some providers in finding the correct information about CPD available.

“It doesn’t seem to be easy to access, or simple. I’m having to find my way around everything to do with ETF, and I’ve got a lot of staff emailing for webinars they’ve been asked to go on, asking how it works, and what’s happening. I’m more than happy to help, but I don’t understand quite what’s going on here. Also, we had issues getting onto webinars because of our IT issues.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Several interviewees agreed that the website needed to be simplified and made easier to navigate, so relevant information was easily accessible. Access to online CPD resources such as webinars, slides from events and other CPD material should be signposted. A few providers also suggested an online calendar, which would allow provider staff to see upcoming events and CPD activity. An online calendar was put in place by the ETF in June 2019 at the request of providers. These findings suggest better signposting / prominence to the diary may be valuable.

A small number of interviewees reported attending ETF launch events. However, all were dissatisfied with the information they received. For instance, one senior leader noted that ETF was unclear about when CPD would be available. The interviewee would have preferred receiving information about what CPD would be available and when their staff would be able to access it.

“We were invited to launch events for this Education and Training Foundation Professional Development package, but most of the stuff wasn’t even there yet, they were saying, ‘This is going to come, this is going to come, and we’re not sure when, this is going to come here, but then it’s been delayed.’ From that perspective, it’s not ideal.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

This dissatisfaction contrasts with the feedback form data collected directly after events by ETF. As shown in the following chapters, a strong majority of ETF event delegates were satisfied with the events they attended.

3. Assessing organisational needs and planning for workforce CPD (Strand 1)

3.1. Introduction

Professional Development Advisers (PDAs) offered dedicated support to providers in the implementation and use of organisational and workforce self-assessment tools, interpreting and applying the results to support T Level implementation and assisting providers to develop professional development plans (PDPs). Such plans included advice and signposting to other Strands of the TLPD programme and complemented ESFA implementation plans.

Two tools were designed to support organisational and workforce planning.

The **Organisational Assessment Tool** was split into two parts. **Part A** helped senior leaders assess readiness to deliver T Levels in four areas: strategic planning; leadership preparedness; the position of systems and organisational procedures; and workforce readiness. **Part B** targeted curriculum managers and leaders. This tool also delivered an organisational self-assessment of current curriculum planning for a specified T Level. Part B covered similar areas as Part A, with an increased focus on employer engagement and curriculum planning preparedness.

The **Practitioner Self-Assessment Tool** targeted technical teachers of T Levels and assessed capabilities in pedagogy, practice and professional knowledge. Self-reported views on assessment practices and techniques, developing students' key skills plus skills to ensure student progression were also collected as part to the tool. Taken together, these activities comprised Strand 1 of the TLPD: the ongoing needs analysis.

This chapter is structured slightly differently to the others because the volume of ETF management information collected via the two tools suitable for analysis is much greater compared to the other Strands. This data was also collected up to April 2020 so provides more recent evidence than the qualitative data. Further, the amount of qualitative data describing the value of the self-assessment tools is limited. The discussion on the role of PDAs follows a similar structure to the rest of the report, concentrating mainly on primary evidence. The sections on the self-assessment tools mostly analyse the secondary management data, with some explanatory text drawn from the qualitative evidence presented where appropriate.

All primary quantitative fieldwork with providers was completed in June 2019 and qualitative fieldwork between September and November 2019. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic meant follow-up fieldwork scheduled for Spring 2020 could not be completed. Stakeholder fieldwork was completed in May and June of 2019. This means

any subsequent change in views after that point is not captured in data collected via primary research methods.

3.2. Views on the purpose and design of Strand 1's ongoing needs analysis

Stakeholders and provider representatives alike viewed all elements of Strand 1 as an initial assessment. Strand 1 provided a starting point from which wider development needs could be identified and subsequent actions devised. The Strand was viewed as an initial diagnostic for practitioners and organisations to understand their current stage of development regarding T Level implementation.

As a self-assessment, the online tools could be used on their own or they could form part of a more structured conversation with PDAs. As indicated later, there were limited examples in the management information of providers using the tools longitudinally to gauge their progress towards preparedness.

Strand 1 activity was designed to signpost providers towards other Strands of the TLPD offer. By identifying the current position of a provider's readiness to deliver T Levels, the outputs from the assessment tools and advice from PDAs could be used to make decisions about wider development and CPD.

Interviewees also perceived value in initial planning so staff understood the scale of the task ahead. Some interviewees felt that the needs analyses would ideally help providers and practitioners appreciate the amount of CPD activity necessary to deliver T Levels. This would inform subsequent decisions and planning at the organisational and practitioner level.

“Teachers might not know what it is that they need to focus on if they don't have Strand 1, which is around the ongoing assessment of their needs. None of that will be delivered if those involved in delivering a T Level don't understand how T Levels fit within the wider scheme of options that are available.”

Stakeholder (May 2019)

Challenges

The key challenges, according to stakeholders and providers, related to the timing of activity. A couple of stakeholders noted that Strand 1 was being developed concurrently with other TLPD Strands. This made it difficult to use the outcomes from online tools and, to a lesser extent, the knowledge acquired by PDAs to develop other elements of the offer.

Some providers found it hard to self-assess their readiness because wider knowledge of content and design of T Levels was unknown at the time. A couple of stakeholders said feedback given by providers quickly identified one of the key issues running throughout the whole report: creating a plan for workforce development needs is difficult without knowing the specifics of policy and especially the T Level offer.

“What I’ve found through Strand 1 is people saying: ‘until this bit of policy has been set in stone or we know that there is clarity on this, we can’t look at our workforce development needs.’”

Stakeholder (May 2019)

3.3. Working with Professional Development Advisers (PDAs)

Role of PDAs

Some PDAs summarised their role in collecting data from providers (including that from practitioner and organisational tools) and using that in the T Level planning cycle. One PDA said tool data was assessed and the collective results were used by the ETF to plan CPD needs. Initial discussions were also undertaken between PDAs and senior leaders to consider high-level strategic issues at the provider level. As time progressed, the PDAs planned to work more with delivery teams and practitioners using the draft T Level specifications to work through details.

“We’re about to have our third meeting where we’re going to try a deeper dive into those organisations to identify continual professional development needs that are coming about because of T Level implementation. The first couple of meetings were focused on challenges as identified by more senior leaders. As we get closer to the draft specifications, which are out next week, I expect to work more closely with people further down the organisation.”

PDA (June 2019)

The feedback elements supported by PDAs were a central design element of the ongoing needs analysis. One stakeholder noted two key roles of PDAs: providing ongoing feedback to shape the continued development of all TLPD activity; and to signpost providers to support, including other Strands of the TLPD offer as it became available. This stakeholder said the initial feedback on PDA activity received in Spring 2019 was mostly positive because PDAs were adding value through explaining the wider policy and future implementation programme. However, not all providers took up offers of support.

“I think on Strand 1 we’re far enough into it now to know that it’s delivering. We’ve had very positive feedback about PDA visits. People feel it’s adding a lot of value. There are a few providers who’ve decided that that’s not the type of support that they want, and that’s absolutely fine. None of it’s mandatory.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

Support provided by PDAs

Several providers gave good reports of experiences with PDAs. Some of the areas in which PDAs offered support were:

- guidance or support regarding the core functions of providing information, advice and guidance to other elements of the TLPD programme;
- developing personal development plans and providing guidance about the relevance of TLPD to different members of staff; and
- signposting relevant CPD, events and networking opportunities.

Developing professional development plans

There was also some early help with the development of professional development plans (PDPs), although senior leaders were at an early development/adaptation stage at the time of the interviews. Some leaders reported new PDPs related to T Levels were discussed with PDAs. However, most providers integrated T Level CPD into their existing professional development planning. The reasons why existing planning systems were adapted included:

- familiarity of an existing approach within the provider;
- perceived overlap with some elements of T Levels with other qualifications;
- a limited amount of time dedicated to discussing T Level PDPs in meetings; and
- unknown specific CPD needs awaiting detail from final subject specifications.

Signposting to other activity, including other TLPD Strands

For one senior leader, the PDA proactively mentioned an upcoming Teacher Regional Improvement Project (TRIP, see Chapter 6) and conducted networking on behalf of the provider. Another stakeholder noted the role feedback from PDAs played in adapting and redefining Strand 5 (Organisational Readiness, see Chapter 7) to ensure training for governors was offered. PDAs highlighted that provider leadership teams were asking for governors to receive some CPD on the T Level offer to understand the wider policy. PDAs identified a gap in the TLPD offer.

“However, when the professional development advisers have been working with the providers, some of the feedback that we got was that actually governors needed to access that training as well. We had a short business case as to why that would be needed and have now incorporated governors as an addition to the programme.”

Stakeholder (May 2019)

PDA's were also helpful to some providers in supporting some of the more challenging elements of T Level planning, such as securing staff industry placements. One member of non-teaching staff said PDA's achieved this through using wider networks and developing relationships with employers.

"The placements that we've got so far has been directly through one of the offers that's come through from the PDA."

Non-Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Frequency of contact between PDA's and providers

The majority of senior leaders said they had engaged with a PDA and, at the time of interview, most reported termly meetings with their PDA as per the design of this offer. Meetings generally covered how to engage staff with the offer, advice on provider readiness and signposting to relevant information and CPD. A couple of providers said they had met less frequently.

One provider had yet to engage with their PDA by November 2019, while another said they had heard nothing from their PDA in “four or five months” (October 2019).

During the early stage of TLPD's initial phase covered in interviews, PDA's provided an informal promotional role for the broad TLPD policy aims. At this point, less detail was available on other TLPD Strands, some of which were still in development. For some providers, the lack of detail was problematic because it placed a barrier towards effective planning. For a few, this impacted on their perceptions of the work of PDA's as they were unable at that point to provide the level of detail some providers wanted.

“[The PDA] is very supportive but it's all [...] pie in the sky strategic level, rather than, actually, ‘This is the sort of stuff you need to be doing. This is someone that can come in and teach you about, I don't know, coding.’ We don't have any, kind of, input on that level, which is where our CPD really needs to be focussed, about how you would teach something specific rather than generic teaching skills.”

Senior Leader (June 2019)

Challenges in support provided by PDAs

Some provider representatives reported a number of challenges in working with PDAs. The recurring theme raised by respondents was a lack of detailed knowledge in some aspects of the advice and guidance given. This manifested in several ways:

- strategically focused rather than practical advice;
- offering little new information;
- not having the relevant/up-to-date information about TLPD CPD;
- some providers were not signposted to available CPD materials which others had accessed; and
- a lack of regional and local knowledge.

Lack of detail or focus in practical advice

Several interviewees noted the depth of advice provided by PDAs (at the time of fieldwork) was limited. For these interviewees, PDAs spoke about the policy, its strategic implication and what that meant in general terms. While PDAs could signpost to advice and use tools, the direction PDAs provided by autumn 2019 offered limited detailed guidance and support on CPD.

However, a couple of interviewees noted that PDAs could only work with the information they had available. These providers said lack of published detail about CPD activity they could access made it difficult for PDAs to provide any detailed advice and guidance at the time.

“[The PDAs] engaged, but ... because the information [about CPD activity] doesn't exist yet, it's going to be challenging to her to give us any more of a steer.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Use of information collected from providers

There was some limited evidence from providers that Strand 1 data was not always used by PDAs for feedback. When asked about how the organisational tools could be improved, one senior leader noted that their PDA had not yet used findings from the tool to assess subsequent CPD needs. Another interviewee from the same provider said their PDA was unprepared for meetings using data from self-assessment forms. Specifically, this senior leader felt their PDA did not use the data provided to advise on the actions they could take to address organisational needs. They felt that nothing had been done with their data to help them with their planning.

Another senior leader felt some basic communication activity was not present in their PDA relationship. They said simple actions such as a regular, personalised contact (call or email) tailored to their needs would effectively signpost to useful CPD or other development activity.

Differential response by provider

Another senior leader said advice was not tailored towards their organisation, nor gave them any direction for next steps. The interviewee described outputs they had seen given to other providers that provided some guidance on suitable CPD. A training matrix was promised to them but had not materialised at the time of interview.

“All we’ve got from [the PDA] is what the problems are at other colleges in the report. We already knew those problems because we said that as well... There was something that our PDA promised they'd do, some kind of training matrix, and they still haven't done it... We had to do a lot of the legwork ourselves to find out what's on offer.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Lack of regional or local knowledge

One senior leader felt PDAs need good local knowledge to fulfil their professional development signposting role. Such knowledge would simplify and reduce the work of managers when developing and planning relevant staff training.

“[When] there's a local digital employers network forum, then that's something that our staff can go to. [Knowing this is] local knowledge really, which is useful ... that's something that PDAs perhaps lack, that local or regional knowledge.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

3.4. Online organisational and practitioner self-assessment tools

The organisational and practitioner self-assessment tools were mainly used as initial diagnostics by providers to inform their own planning. The discussions in qualitative interviews of the value of both tools was, therefore, limited to how the provider used the data to design and implement processes, systems and procedures for organisational and staff development. In the main, interviewees made no distinction between the two organisational tool parts during interviews, hence the lack of any comparative qualitative

analysis. For ease of reading, shorthand is used for the two parts of the Organisational Self-Assessment tool:

- Part A, referred to as the “leadership tool”;
- Part B, referred to as the “curriculum tool”;
- "Organisational tool" is used when referring to both parts together.

Further, views on the Practitioner Self-Assessment Tool (or “practitioner tool”) were also often included in wider discussion about the organisational tool. This section incorporates a brief review of the findings from the qualitative interviews, followed by a detailed analysis of the management information data collected through the initial phase.

The use of the tools varied and the number of relevant observations for each ranged from 28 (the curriculum tool) to 304 (the practitioner tool). Those completing tools also tended to provide positive responses which means the result data is a) skewed and b) fairly similar between items. For this reason, the analysis presented mostly uses mean scores to offer a consistent measure between tools and hence easier comparison.

Usefulness

All providers taking part in the qualitative interviews had completed the leadership tool at the time of the interviews. A number had yet to complete the curriculum tool or distribute the practitioner tool to staff. The reasons why the latter tools had not been used by that point were due to wider timetabling planning. Many providers wanted more information on the technical specifications so staff were better able to assess gaps in knowledge. More detail on the issues of technical specifications is provided in Section 2.4.

Where used, both parts of the organisational tool (and the practitioner tool) were useful for:

- summarising all the information inputted, which helped senior leaders’ planning;
- documenting the strengths and areas for focus to ensure provider readiness to deliver T Levels; and
- helping some identify skills gaps in their existing workforce and focusing recruitment efforts.

Providers have used outputs from the organisational tool in planning activities. Interviewees often used names such as “audit tool”, “self-assessment tools” or simply “the tool” as identifiers. The use of “audit” provides insight as to how the parts of the organisational tool were regarded: as ways to document and isolate specific needs relating to T Level implementation.

The Organisational tool was also used in a wide range of planning activity. Interviewees discussed using outputs to identify particular CPD requirements and gaps in workforce

knowledge. Some also mentioned using outputs to inform inter-departmental meetings aimed at developing T Level implementation strategies.

“[The leadership tool] has been good to set actions and targets that are reviewed at specific dates, to check that we have done what we need to do to upskill our knowledge on the key areas, and just making sure that as an organisation, we’re fully ready.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

Improving the usefulness of the tools

A couple of interviewees felt the usefulness of organisational and practitioner tools could be improved if all responses from a provider could be collated together. This would allow the provider to understand collective views and disagreements about organisational targets and provide a better holistic view of what the organisation and its practitioners deemed important goals and targets. One staff member used a low-tech method of achieving this.

“I’ve got a meeting this Thursday where we’re all going to bring our printed reports and have a conversation about are we all thinking the same, where the differences lie. [The tools are] missing that collation of responses to triangulate things.”

Non-Teaching Staff (November 2019)

All self-assessment tools were perceived by some as a means to an end. For one provider, the tools were a useful way of developing their implementation plan. However, they felt there was no further use for the tools once the implementation plan was set because the plan would guide future developments.

“I think curriculum teams would... use their own implementation plans more than the self-assessment tool because ...once you’re on that journey, it’s more about the plan [than the tool].”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Some provider staff said the tool was not user-friendly, citing navigation and technical issues. The tool was, therefore, unable to provide actionable recommendations. The value of outputs was described as limited because constantly evolving policy soon rendered findings out of date. Several senior leaders also said they could not interpret results effectively without sight of subject specifications.

“There would perhaps be little point or value in doing a self-assessment constantly to see what is happening because the pace of change is just too quick.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Several provider interviewees also said the tool would be more useful if used in combination with more detail data on assessment criteria and structural detail for individual T Levels.

“It would be nice to have an assessment criteria or a structure of the breakdown of the course that might be delivered, so we know what will be assessed.”

Subject Lead (November 2019)

3.5. Findings from the organisational self-assessment tools

Leadership tool (part A of the organisational self-assessment tool)

Design of leadership tool

The leadership tool asks provider representatives (“respondents”) to self-assess their level of readiness to offer T Levels on 24 dimensions. These dimensions were organised into four categories.

- **Strategic issues.** Personal confidence about the organisation-level strategy, plans, processes and communications in place to deliver T Levels.
- **Leadership issues.** Personal views on the governance and management structures in place to deliver T Levels.
- **Readiness of systems.** Views on an organisation’s preparedness to deliver, including views on funding arrangements, infrastructure, systems and planning.
- **Workforce readiness.** Views on whether the organisation’s staff were ready to deliver based on the teaching and industry-specific skills.

The self-assessment scale ranges from scores of 1 (low) to 4 (high). The charts within this section use mean scores to compare between measures. Where percentages are used, totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding, or due to a small number of cases where “not applicable” responses were given by respondents.

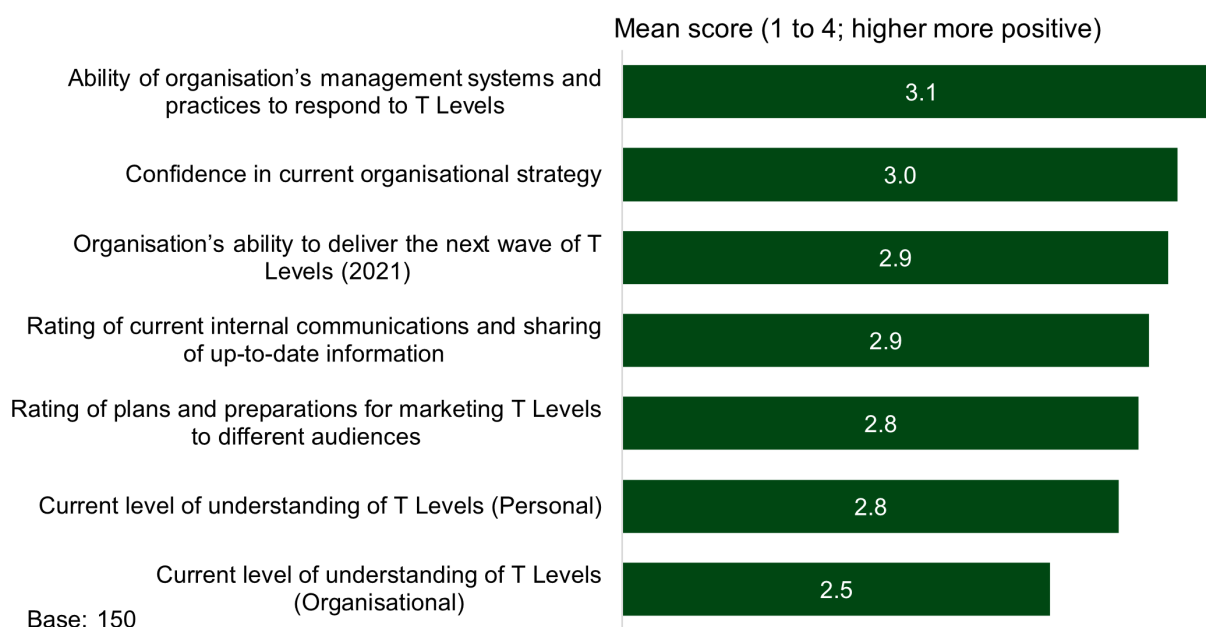
All questions used in the tool are presented in Annex 1. After data cleaning, 150 self-assessment forms were available for analysis. All forms were completed between May 2019 and April 2020.

Views on the current strategic position

Most respondents self-assessed their strategic position as a three for every measure (see Figure 3). The highest rating was given for the statement *how would you rate the ability of your organisation’s change and programme management systems and practices to respond effectively to T Levels?* A quarter of respondents (24%) gave an “excellent” rating; half (51%) rated their organisation’s ability as “reasonable”.

The lowest rating was found for the statement *how would you rate the current level of understanding of T Levels across your entire organisation?* Two-fifths of respondents selected “reasonable” and the same proportion “quite limited” (both 39%). One in ten (10%) gave “excellent” ratings and one in eleven (9%) a “very limited or none” rating.

Figure 3: Respondents' assessment of the strategic readiness to implement T Levels - strategic position



Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected May 2019 to April 2020)

The mean score differences suggest respondents felt most positive towards delivery and operational strategies and less confident about the wider and personal understanding of the T Level offer.

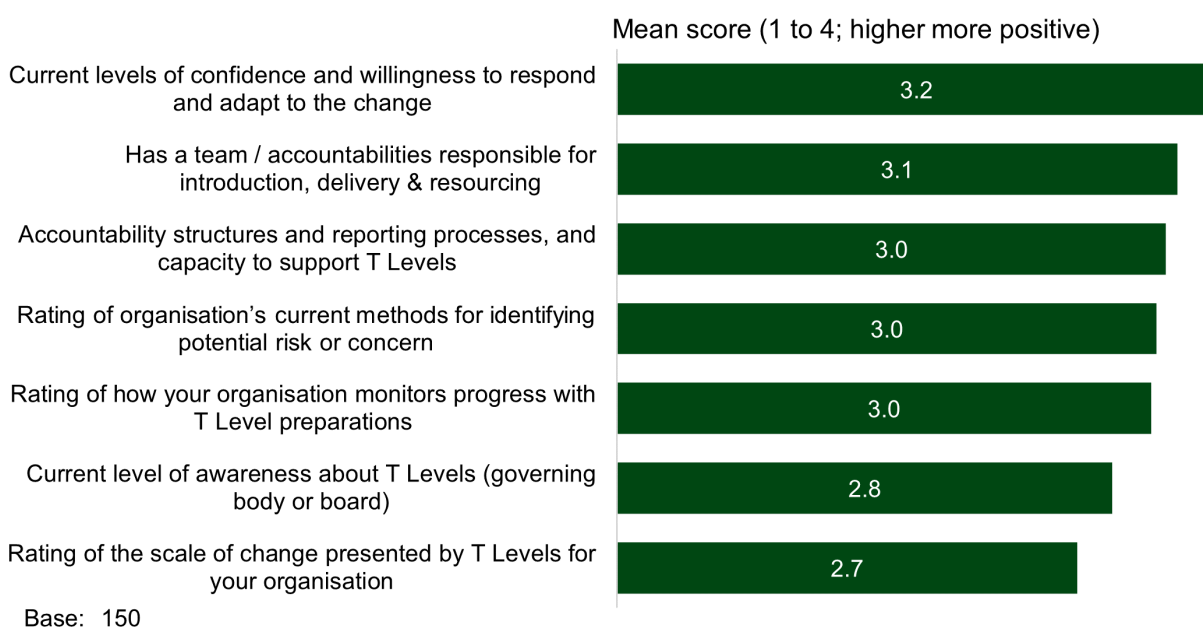
Views on leadership issues

At the time of data collection, 45% of respondents said their organisation had a *dedicated team (or role-specific accountabilities) responsible for the introduction, delivery and resourcing of T Levels*. A further one in five were either “setting up a team” (22%) or doing “some scoping” work (20%). One in eleven (9%) responded “no” to this question. Six of the fourteen “no” responses were given from January 2020 onwards.

Strong levels of *confidence and willingness within your organisation to respond and adapt to the changes presented by T Levels* were present in the data (see Figure 4). Over a third (36%) rated this measure as “excellent” and half (49%) gave a “reasonable” rating. Only 2% of respondents rated this measure as “very limited or none”.

Most respondents recognised the *scale of change presented by T Levels for [their] organisation* was large. Nearly one in five rated the scale of change as either “considerable” or “significant” (18% combined). More than half of respondents (55%) said “some change” would be necessary.

Figure 4: Respondents' assessment of leadership measures



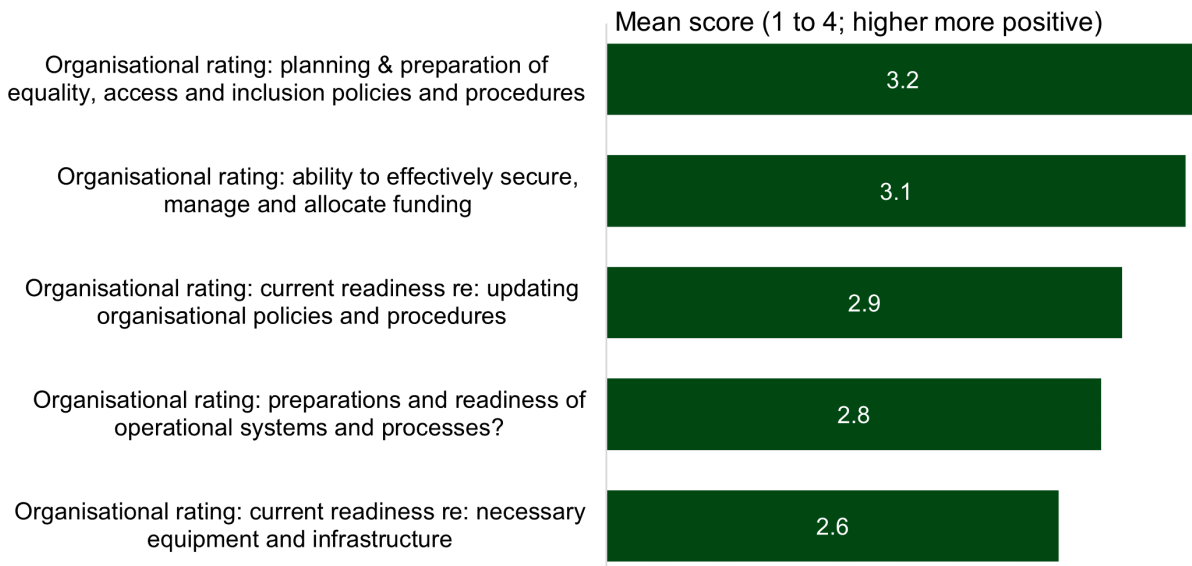
Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected May 2019 to April 2020)

Development of policies and procedures

In this section, respondents were asked to rate their readiness for a range of factors at the point of completing the assessment. The top two bars in Figure 5 show the highest levels of self-reported readiness in the organisation's *current planning and preparations for T Levels, in terms of appropriate equality, access and inclusion policies and procedures* and in its *ability to effectively secure, manage and allocate funding for T Levels*. Over a third of all respondents gave an “excellent” rating (35% and 37% respectively for those questions). More than four in ten rated themselves “reasonable” (45% and 41% respectively).

There were more concerns regarding the *organisation's current readiness for T Levels in terms of necessary equipment and infrastructure*. While the proportion providing a “reasonable” rating was similar at 51%, only one in eight (13%) respondents gave their organisation an “excellent” rating.

Figure 5: Respondents' assessment of their organisation's readiness to implement T Levels



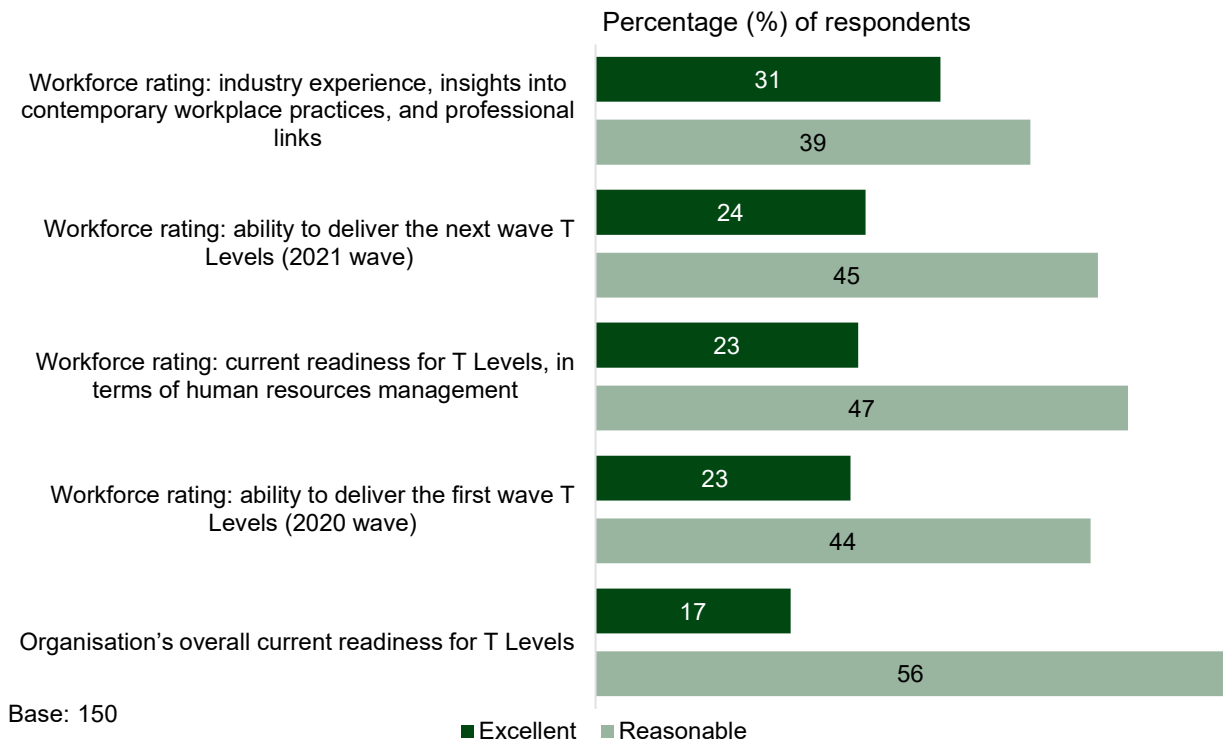
Base: 150

Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected May 2019 to April 2020)

Readiness of the workforce to deliver T Levels

Mean levels of readiness for all of the five workforce measures were broadly the same (mean scores between 2.8 and 3.0) However, there was some variance in the proportions of respondents rating each measure as “excellent” or “reasonable” (see Figure 6). Just one in six (17%) gave an “excellent” rating for their *organisation’s overall current readiness for T Levels*. This rating was possibly influenced by the other listed factors. A relatively high proportion of respondents (31%) gave an “excellent” rating for the workforce’s *current industry experience, insights into contemporary workplace practices, and professional links compared to the overall view*.

Figure 6: Respondents' assessment of their workforce's readiness to implement T Levels



Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected May 2019 to April 2020)

Conclusions from leadership tool assessments

At the time self-assessments were completed (May 2019 to April 2020), most respondents felt their organisation had further work to do to ready themselves for the introduction of T Levels. However, as assessments were made between six and twelve months prior to implementation, some level of caution when interpreting this data is sensible.

Respondents were least positive regarding awareness and understanding measures of their organisation's staff. This suggests it was correct for TLPD to target these issues.

Conversely, respondents were most positive about some of the procedures and systems they had in place at the time, especially *equality, access and inclusion procedures* and *management practices and systems* to deliver T Levels. Organisational planning was a little further forward at the time than workforce and staff planning.

The curriculum tool (Part B of the organisational self-assessment tool)

Design of the curriculum tool

The curriculum tool self-assessed providers' level of readiness to offer specific T Levels on 23 dimensions. These dimensions were organised into four categories, with some difference from the leadership tool:

- **Curriculum and delivery planning issues.** Personal views on the preparedness of the organisation and its staff to design, teach and assess T Levels.
- **Engagement issues.** Personal views on working arrangements with employers and wider sector bodies to deliver T Levels.
- **Workforce readiness.** Views on whether the staff were ready to deliver T Level specific and key skills requirements.
- **Readiness of delivery systems.** Views on an organisation's preparedness to deliver including views on timetabling, risks and quality assurance.

The self-assessment scale ranges from scores of 1 (low) to 4 (high). The charts within this section use mean scores to compare between measures. Due to the small number of completed forms for the three T Levels covered in the initial phase, numbers are used here rather than percentages.

All questions used in the tool are presented in Annex 2. After data cleaning, 28 self-assessment forms were available for analysis. All forms were completed between June 2019 and March 2020.

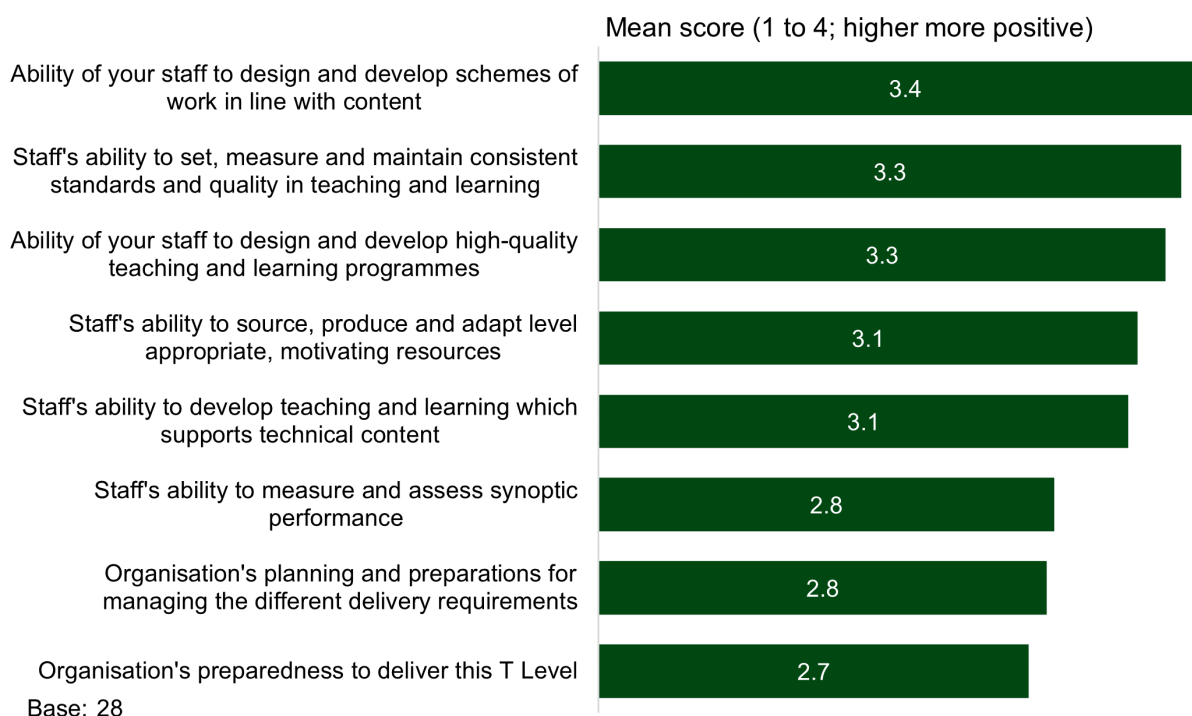
Views on the current strategic position regarding the target T Level

Albeit from a low base, the curriculum tool assessment forms highlighted three areas of relative concern for respondents:

- nine respondents rated their *organisation's preparedness to deliver this T Level* as either "limited" or "very limited";
- eight respondents rated their organisational *staff's current ability to measure and assess synoptic performance for your T Levels* as either "limited" or "very limited"; and
- seven rated their *organisation's planning and preparations for managing the different delivery requirements for this [specified] T Level* as "limited" or "very limited".

The comparative mean scores for all other measures presented in Figure 7 were higher because fewer respondents rated their staff's abilities as "limited" for these measures.

Figure 7: Respondents' assessment of the strategic readiness to implement specific T Levels



Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected June 2019 to March 2020)

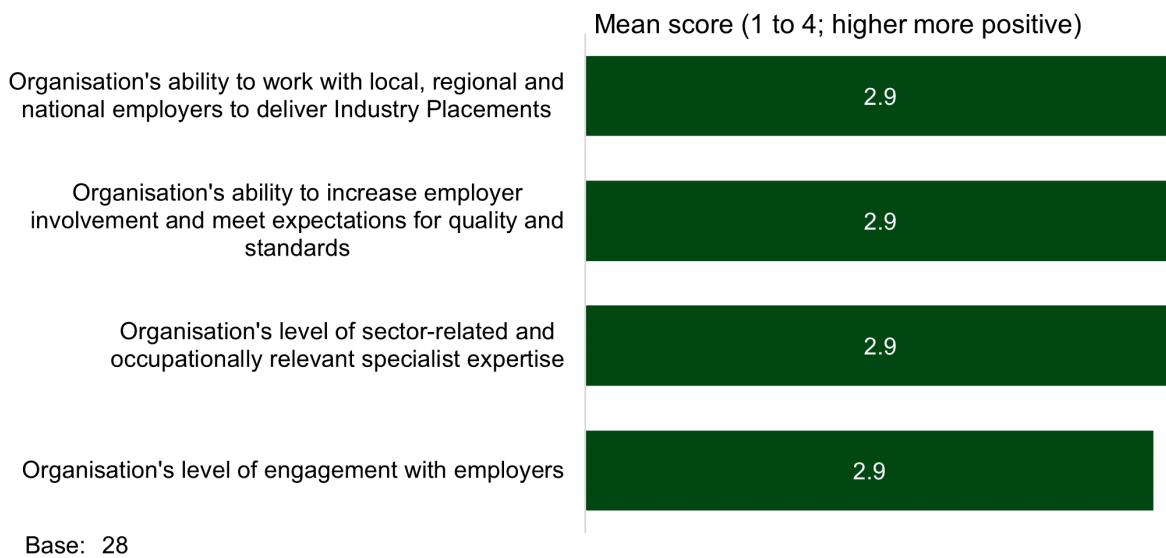
Views on employer engagement

There was no difference in views between the four measures of employer engagement included in the curriculum tool assessment form (Figure 8). The data suggests (rather than significantly shows) that respondents considering the Childcare pathway were more positive than those on the other two pathways. For example, no Childcare respondent gave a “limited” rating to either their organisation’s...

- ... current ability to work with local, regional and national employers to source, confirm and manage industry placements from 2020; or
- ... current level of engagement with employers relevant to those T Levels, including their occupational specialisms to be introduced in 2020 and 2021.

These findings chime with other qualitative evidence (see Chapter 6) suggesting providers offering the Childcare pathway could leverage their existing employer networks when developing T Level provision.

Figure 8: Respondents' views on readiness to engage with employers

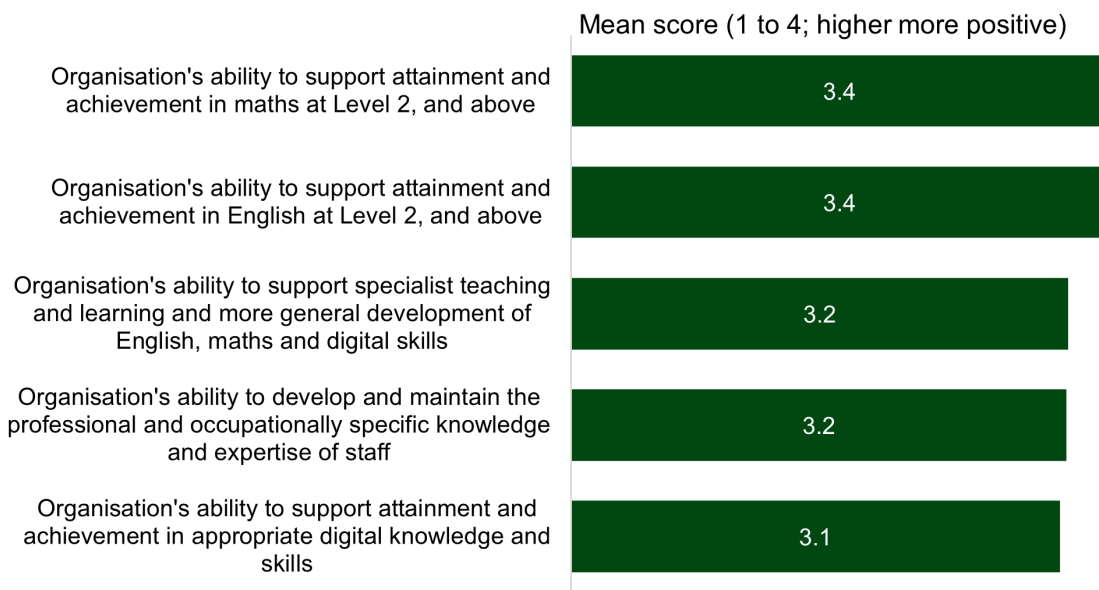


Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected June 2019 to March 2020)

Supporting teaching and attainment

This section of the assessment asked about an organisation's ability to support attainment for English, maths and digital skills through T Levels and whether the organisation was able to support specialist industry knowledge. Very few respondents gave the lowest "very limited" response to any measure (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Respondents' assessment of the workforce's readiness to support key attainment and maintain industry knowledge



Base: 28

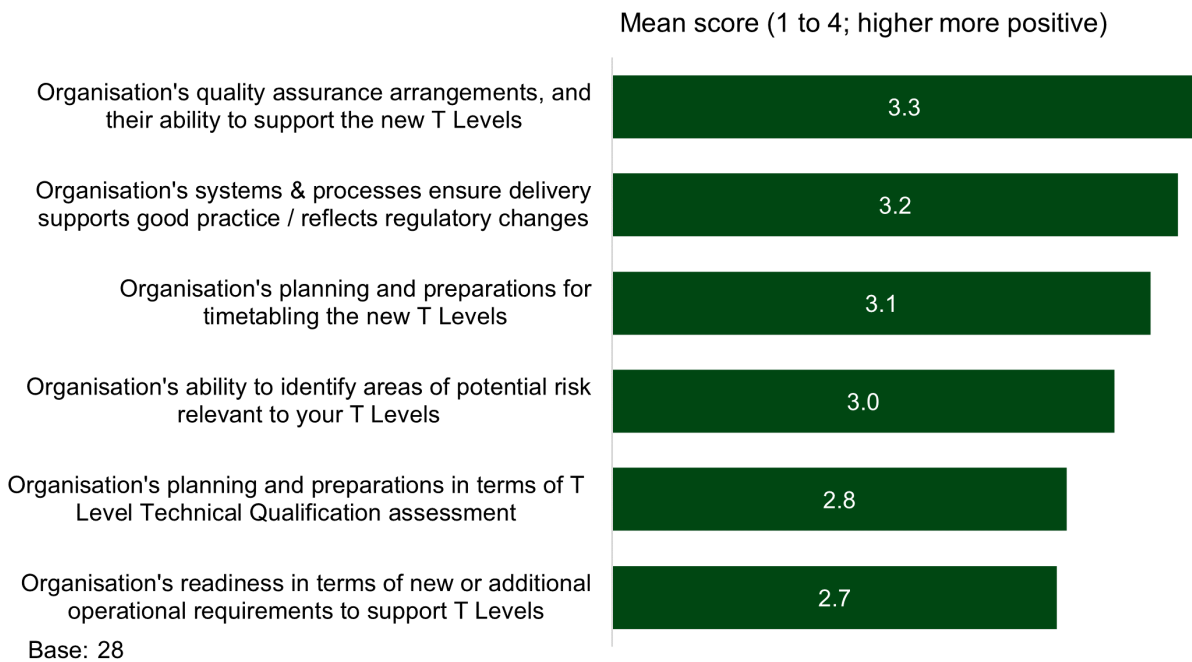
Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected June 2019 to March 2020)

Readiness of the workforce to deliver T Levels

The limited data shows respondents were most confident on issues of quality and operating using good practice (Figure 10). Twenty-five of 28 respondents rated their *organisation's current systems and processes for ensuring that delivery supports good practice and reflects regulatory and legislative changes* as either "reasonable" or "excellent". Twenty-four of 28 rated the same for their *organisation's current quality assurance arrangements, and their ability to support the new T Levels*.

Respondents were least confident about some technical and operational requirements. Nine of 28 rated their *organisation's planning and preparations in terms of T Level Technical Qualification assessment scheduling and delivery* as either "limited" or "very limited". Ten of 28 rated their *organisation's readiness in terms of new or additional operational requirements to support T Levels* the same way.

Figure 10: Respondents' assessment of their organisation's readiness to implement T Levels - views on planning and systems



Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected June 2019 to March 2020)

Conclusions from the curriculum tool assessments

The small number of completed curriculum tool assessment forms related to the first three operational T Levels were completed between June 2019 and March 2020. The low number of relevant assessments made drawing meaningful conclusions challenging. However, the anecdotal data does support some of the wider conclusions drawn from the qualitative data. There was some concern regarding organisational readiness and preparedness for technical and T Level assessment activity. Conversely, respondents felt more positively towards some of the wider organisational and planning elements in place to deliver T Levels.

3.6 Findings regarding the practitioner self-assessment tool

Qualitative findings

Some specific qualitative feedback regarding the practitioner tool is provided in addition to the generalised feedback discussed under organisational tools (Section 3.5). At the time the qualitative fieldwork took place (September to November 2019), few practitioners had completed the tool, resulting in limited primary research evidence. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic meant follow-up fieldwork scheduled for Spring 2020 could not be completed.

Usefulness of the practitioner tool

For some senior leaders, the practitioner tool was valuable in highlighting areas of staff weakness and developing subsequent plans to strengthen skills or confidence. In such cases, the ability of the tool to look at a number of staff and identify gaps across the workforce was its key strength. It allowed managers to consider and develop ways to address wider staff needs.

“We had nine staff complete [the practitioner self-assessment tool. The manager has] started to cross reference and look at where staff lacked confidence, or had confidence, and is pairing staff up to help develop each other’s confidence, so that’s been useful.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

During one case study, an interviewee said they had embedded the practitioner tool into their appraisal process. The tool was used to identify skills and knowledge gaps and hence inform wider development activity on a formal (practical sessions) and informal (wider reading) basis. This allowed the provider to create bespoke development and CPD based on individuals’ needs and hence effectively target development requirements.

“Because everyone’s at different levels you see... different things and having a one-size-fits-all doesn’t really work. So, it’s been good to break it down into that for the practitioner self-assessment.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

Other providers were also using the tool as a diagnostic in conjunction with other staff development activity. Examples given included understanding the baseline competencies of staff in order to develop suitable training and CPD solutions and embedding the tool into the appraisal process.

The practitioner tool was not a stand-alone resource for some providers. They integrated its use into existing systems and management practices. Several providers noted that the practitioner tool was one of a number of options they could use to improve their preparedness for T Levels. The tool could be used alongside existing internal systems to improve overall planning.

“[Planning is] only going to be successful if we incorporate the T Level external stuff into what we already do. We have excellent systems and processes. We have excellent quality. We have excellent plans for organisational development, so anything external has to just fit into that. We can’t just take that model and follow it because we have our own model.”

Senior Lead (October 2019)

Areas for improvement with the tool

Senior leaders and the few staff using the tool noted a couple of issues with the tool. The first was too much focus on pedagogy, as experienced teachers felt they already had those skills and were able to adapt their pedagogical knowledge to deliver different curricula.

“I think a lot of [the practitioner tool] was related to pedagogical practices ... and if you’ve been teaching for a long time then to do a self-reflection on those... When we do our appraisals we always reflect as a team, we work very closely together to decide on the best ways to deliver our practice within the classrooms, to get the best outcomes. I don’t think that [the practitioner tool] actually added anything to it.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

The second was the value of the tool within the context of wider policy changes. At the time of fieldwork, there was still a year to go before the start of the first three T Levels. A couple of senior leaders made a connection between an evolving policy and whether autumn 2019 was the right time to conduct the self-assessment, especially for all the staff involved in T Levels.

“How quickly things are changing. We’ve not been saying to staff that it’s mandatory to complete [the practitioner tool]. I would be fairly confident that some staff have because they’ve been very close to this and they would want to know what’s happening, but similarly for them the world is moving on at such a pace, that actually they wouldn’t be completing that self-assessment constantly.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Design of the practitioner self-assessment tool

The practitioner tool asks provider staff (“practitioners”) to self-assess their level of readiness to deliver T Levels on 18 dimensions. These dimensions were organised into six categories.

- **General issues.** Familiarity with T Levels and their readiness/confidence to deliver them.
- **Pedagogical issues.** Self-rating on pedagogical detail such as producing schemes of work, assessing, etc.
- **Practical application.** How the practitioner feels about the elements of T Levels relevant to employment and employers.
- **Assessment.** How the practitioner feels about systems and processes for assessing students' progress and achievement.
- **Developing supporting skills.** Self-rating ability to deliver English, maths and digital elements of T Level curricula.
- **Progression.** Ability and understanding of progression routes into employment and higher education.

The self-assessment scale ranges from scores of 1 (low) to 4 (high). The charts within this section use mean scores to compare between measures. Where percentages are used, totals may not sum to 100% due to rounding, or due to a small number of cases where "not applicable" responses were given by respondents.

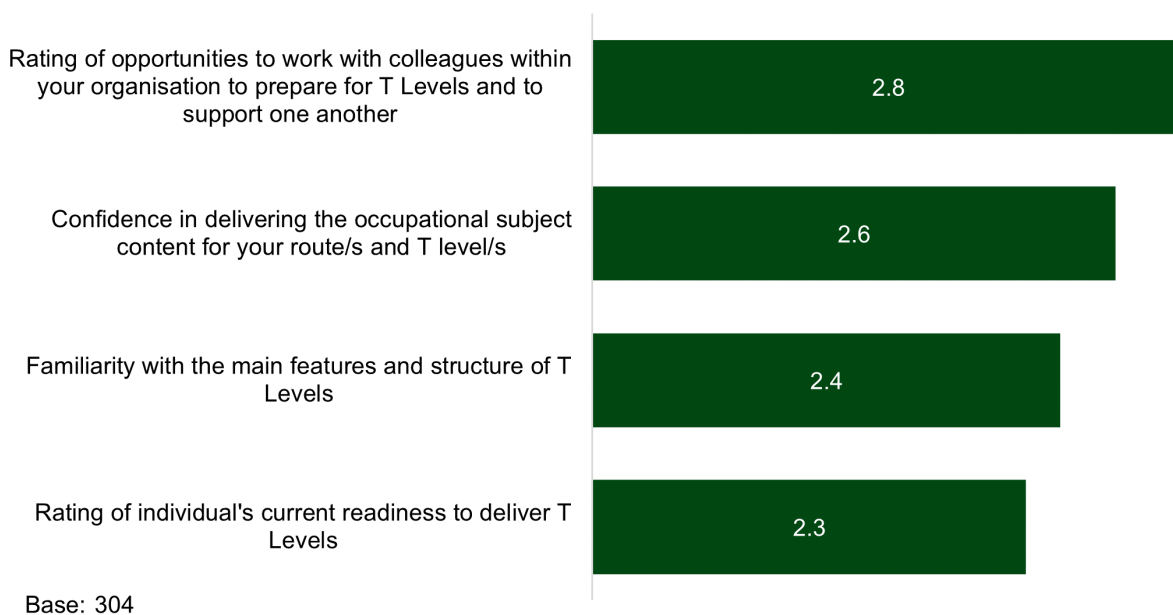
All questions used in the tool are presented in Annex 3. After data cleaning, 304 practitioner self-assessment forms were used in the analysis. All forms were completed between May 2019 and March 2020.

Views on general readiness to deliver T Levels

Compared to the earlier discussion, practitioners usually rated themselves less ready than organisational respondents on most comparative measures throughout the whole

practitioner tool assessment form. The highest mean rating in the general section was given for their *opportunities to work with colleagues within your organisation to prepare for T Levels and to support one another*. As seen from Figure 11, one in five practitioners (21%) gave an “excellent” rating; while two in five (42%) gave a “reasonable” rating (42%). Nearly one third (31%) said they had “limited confidence” for this measure.

Figure 11: Practitioners' assessment of their general readiness to deliver T Levels



Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected May 2019 to March 2020)

The lowest mean rating was found for the statement *how would you rate your current readiness to deliver T Levels?*. Half of respondents (50%) selected “I know of some changes but am unclear what I need to do to prepare”. A third (33%) chose the “I am aware of the key changes and am starting to plan and prepare” option. One in nine (11%) selected the “I don't know what will change for T Levels, or how to find out” option and only 3% said “I feel ready to deliver T Levels”.

Noting the self-selecting nature of the sample, there were also marked differences in readiness by job role. Seven in 10 (71%) teachers/trainers selected either “I know of some changes but am unclear what I need to do to prepare” (55%) or “I don't know what will change for T Levels, or how to find out” (13%). By comparison, 40% of curriculum managers/leaders were unclear and 4% did not know what would change.

A similar difference of opinion between teachers/trainers and curriculum managers/leaders was found in responses to the question *how familiar are you with the main features and structure of T Levels?* Seven in 10 (69%) teachers/trainers gave “no

knowledge” or “not familiar” responses compared to fewer than two in five (38%) of curriculum managers/leaders.

Some inconclusive differences based on when an assessment was completed were also found. However, there was also a difference in the profile of respondents between 2019 and 2020. A larger proportion of practitioners in roles other²² than teachers/trainers or curriculum managers/leaders were present in the 2020 data. This may explain why some of those completing the practitioner self-assessment in 2020 said they were less familiar with the structure of T Levels and less ready to deliver them.

Views on pedagogical skills

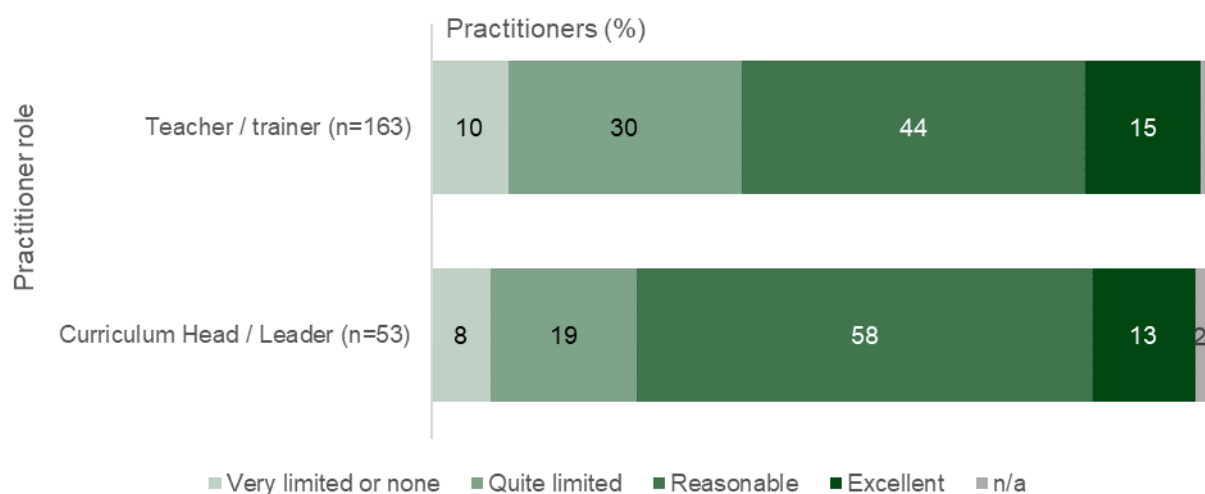
The mean responses to all four questions in this section did not differ greatly. Mean rating responses ranged from:

- 2.9 for *your current ability to use formative assessment with occupational content at Level 2 and Level 3*, down to
- 2.6 for *your current ability to use initial or diagnostic assessment for technical content at Level 2 and Level 3*.

However, there were some differences between teachers/trainers’ rating of some of their abilities compared to curriculum managers/leaders. For example, two in five (40%) teachers/trainers felt their *ability to use initial or diagnostic assessment for technical content at Level 2 and Level 3* was “quite limited” or “very limited”. Only a quarter (27%) of curriculum managers/leaders felt the same (Figure 12). A similar difference in confidence was registered regarding *developing and improving synoptic performance*. Over a third (36%) of teachers/trainers expressed “limited confidence” or “no confidence” in this measure compared to one in five (21%) of curriculum managers/leaders.

²² The ETF data lists such individuals as “other”; the precise nature of these roles is unknown.

Figure 12: Practitioners' assessment of their *ability to use initial or diagnostic assessment for technical content at Level 2 and Level 3* by role



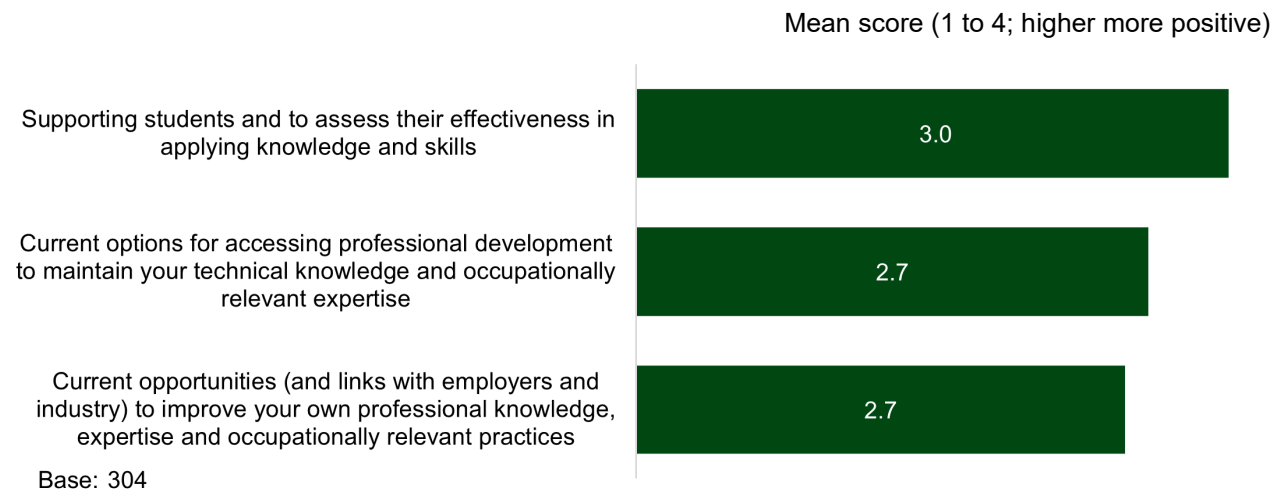
Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected May 2019 to March 2020)

Developing skills relating to technical knowledges and industry

There was little difference between the three measures in this section (see Figure 13). The mean score given by practitioners for their *ability to support students and to assess their effectiveness at integrating and applying knowledge, skills and behaviours for realistic tasks* was slightly higher than for the other two measures. A lower proportion of practitioners rated themselves “quite limited” or “very limited or none” in this regard (aggregate of 18%) compared to self-ratings for their:

- *current options for accessing professional development to maintain your technical knowledge and occupationally relevant expertise* (33% either “very limited” or “quite limited”); or
- *current opportunities (and links with employers and industry) to improve your own professional knowledge, expertise and occupationally relevant practices* (37% overall for those responses).

Figure 13: Respondents' assessment of developing their skills relating to technical knowledges and industry



Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected May 2019 to March 2020)

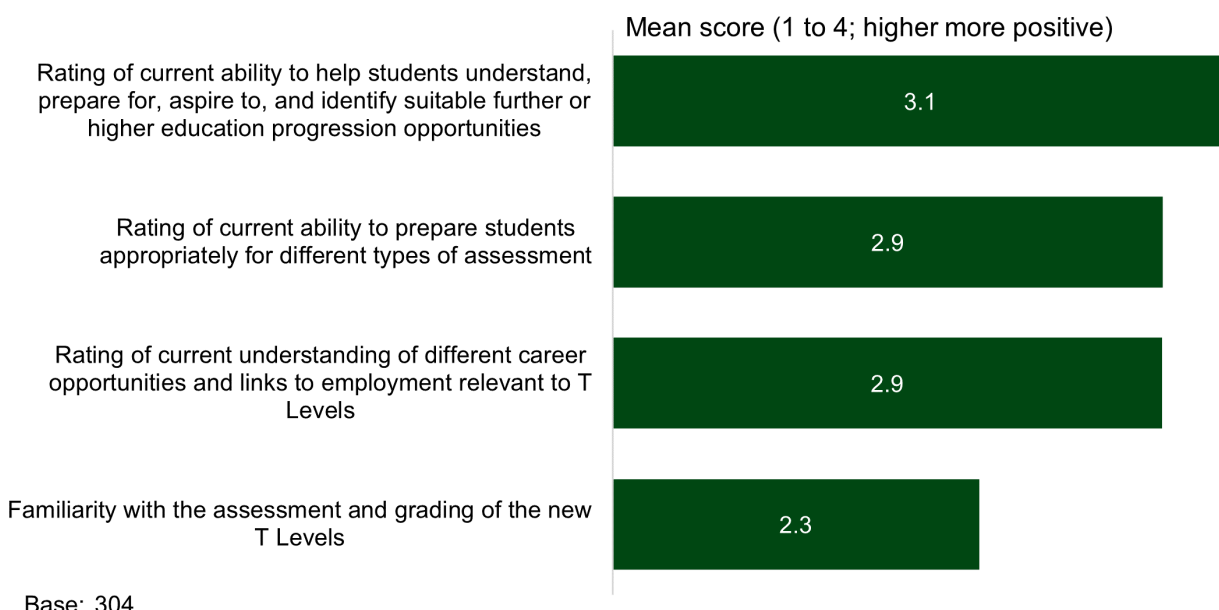
Assessing and progressing students

The key challenge recognised by practitioners in the whole assessment was their unfamiliarity with *assessment and grading of the new T Levels* (see Figure 14). Two in five (39%) said they were “not familiar” with assessments and grading; a further one in five (19%) said they had “no knowledge”.

Teachers/trainers were less familiar with *assessment and grading of the new T Levels* than curriculum heads/leaders. One in five (21%) teachers/trainers said they had “no knowledge” compared to 9% of curriculum heads/leaders.

Mean scores for the other assessment and progress measures were similar (between 3.1 and 2.9). Curriculum heads/leaders were more likely than teachers/trainers to rate as “excellent” (42% versus 27%) their *current ability to help students understand, prepare for, aspire to, and identify suitable further or higher education progression opportunities*.

Figure 14: Respondents' assessment of their organisation's readiness to implement T Levels – assessing and progressing learners



Source: ETF self-assessment data (collected May 2019 to March 2020)

Developing students' English, maths and digital skills

There were no major differences in responses to any of these three measures from practitioners except a greater variation in practitioners' abilities to *develop digital skills through T Level programmes*. Fewer practitioners rated their ability in developing digital skills as "reasonable" (43%) compared to English and maths (both 54%). For digital, practitioners were more likely to select either "excellent" or "quite limited" compared to English and maths: digital skills were, therefore, a little more specialist.

Conclusions from Practitioner Self-Assessments

At the point self-assessments were completed (May 2019 to March 2020), the area requiring the most development was assessment and grading for T Levels. More than half of practitioners (58%) were "not familiar" or had "no knowledge" of assessment and grading. Significantly more teachers/trainers (21%) reported "no knowledge" than curriculum heads and leaders (9%). Developing ways to increase knowledge among practitioners in assessment and grading for T Levels is, clearly, a priority.

Around a third of practitioners felt their opportunities to improve their occupational knowledge (33%) and undertake CPD (37%) to increase such knowledge was limited. This could be addressed through wider access to Strand 4 activity.

These two factors most likely contributed to the relatively high level of reported unpreparedness to deliver T Levels. In response to the question of preparedness, half of

respondents (50%) selected “I know of some changes but am unclear what I need to do to prepare”. One in nine (11%) selected the “I don't know what will change for T Levels, or how to find out”. At the time of the assessments, this represented three in five of all practitioners completing a self-assessment.

The curriculum tool included respondents delivering T Levels other than the three due to begin in 2020 (these were excluded from this chapter's earlier analysis). The same may be true for the practitioner tool, however, no data was collected to show the particular T Level of interest. The quality of data for subsequent T Level Professional Development Programmes should be improved, to capture more detail about the practitioner.

3.6. Suggested improvements to Strand 1

Suggested improvements to how PDAs operate and the organisational and practitioner tools are summarised below.

Improvement: Increase the volume and detail of supporting information that PDAs can access.

Detail: Many interviewees noted that PDAs were encouraging, but were unable to provide much by way of detailed information about T Levels. The general information they could provide could be accessed elsewhere.

Improvement: Allow providers to collate results from all tools together.

Detail: Some providers wanted to look at all results to gauge a holistic view of any issues as perceived by staff. A couple of interviewees described how they collated data in a manual way to inform their planning. A function allowing the provider to pool data would increase the collective value of all the organisational tools.

Improvement: Tie the tool into the T Level specifications.

Detail: Designing tools to detailed T Level specifications would make them more useful. At the time of fieldwork, the tools provided a general overview of readiness based on a higher-level policy purpose. However, they lacked specific detail from which to make detailed staff development planning. More specific tools were felt to provide better gap analyses of skills for providers.

3.7. Chapter summary

- Professional Development Advisers (PDAs) were valued by provider staff for the overall support and guidance they provided at the point of interview (autumn 2019). They offered sound, strategic advice to most interviewees working for providers. They also effectively signposted provider staff to CPD that could support staff development.
- However, the content of guidance given by PDAs was sometimes criticised for lacking detail and/or relevancy. A common overall theme through all Strands of activity was a desire by provider staff to understand details regarding the design, content and assessment methods for T Levels. Noting this was not part of their role in the design of TLPD, PDAs were generally unable to provide guidance on the detail, however where appropriate they were able to signpost providers to T Level policy colleagues and the ESFA field force. This suggests a specific policy gap at the time interviews were completed which may have subsequently been filled. A few senior leaders made a connection between the perceived gap in support and the limited published detail at that point in the development cycle.
- The organisational and practitioner online tools offered through Strand 1 were used for initial planning regarding organisational and staff readiness at the time of completion. The ETF management information data shows there were very few instances of provider staff using the tools in an ongoing, iterative basis.
- Data for Organisational Self-Assessment Tool Part A (the leadership tool) was collected between May 2019 and April 2020. Respondents were relatively concerned about the awareness and understanding of staff regarding T Levels. Respondents were most positive about some of the procedures and systems they had in place at the time, especially equality, access and inclusion procedures and management practices and systems to deliver T Levels. Organisational planning was a little further forward at the time than workforce and staff planning.
- There was limited use of the Organisational Self-Assessment Tool Part B (the curriculum tool) amongst 2020 T Level provider staff (a total of 28 self-assessments collected between June 2019 and March 2020). This anecdotal data supports some of the wider report findings regarding organisational readiness and preparedness for technical and T Level assessment activity.
- Practitioners were most likely to suggest assessment and grading for T Levels as a development requirement, especially for teachers and trainers. Around a third of practitioners felt their opportunities to improve their occupational knowledge (37%) and undertake CPD to increase such knowledge was limited (33%) (Strand 4 covers such activities). These two factors most likely contributed to the relatively high level of reported unpreparedness to deliver T Levels.

- Further, there is some evidence that preparedness decreased between 2019 when 45% selected “I know of some changes but am unclear what I need to do to prepare”, and 2020 when 57% said the same, but it is unclear from the data collected why this is the case. A number of factors may account for this difference, but the coverage of data in the assessment form is insufficient to offer strong indications of cause.

4. Understanding T Levels (Strand 2)

4.1. Introduction

The professional development activity delivered under Understanding T Levels (Strand 2) was designed to explain the vision and structure of T Level programmes, and what the introduction of T Levels would mean for different staff roles. This chapter opens with a discussion about the perceptions of, and provider engagement with, the CPD delivered by this Strand. The usefulness of the CPD is then discussed. The chapter concludes with suggested improvements to Strand 2 activities and a summary of key findings. All primary quantitative fieldwork with providers was completed in June 2019 and qualitative fieldwork between September and November 2019. This means any subsequent change in views after that point is not captured in data collected via primary research methods. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic meant follow-up fieldwork scheduled for Spring 2020 could not be completed.

4.2. Perceptions of Understanding T Levels

Understanding T Levels (Strand 2) included face-to-face and webinar content describing the overall purpose of the policy and the qualification. One purpose was to raise awareness of T Levels and a number of senior leaders said Strand 2 was used in conjunction with other CPD and awareness-raising content.

The ETF data collected after events was therefore useful in isolating perceptions of Strand 2 and is more useful for discussing perceptions. Aggregated delegate feedback forms from 66 separate ETF Strand 2 events were available for analysis. The precise number of attendees for events is unknown because it was not compulsory to complete feedback forms and data validation was not used on the ETF forms.

The total number of delegates completing a form was estimated at ~1,100. To summarise the profile of these delegates:

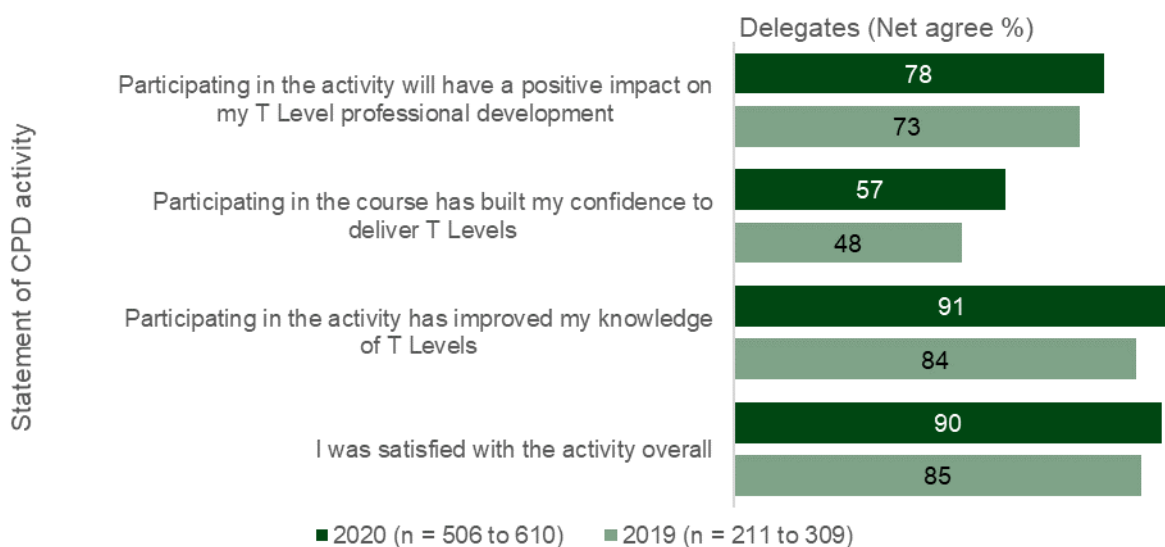
- around two-thirds attended events in 2020, mostly in January and February;
- three-quarters of delegates who answered the question said they worked for General FE Colleges; and
- a quarter of delegates worked for a 2020 T Level provider, three-quarters did not.

Because data was supplied in aggregated format, it was not possible to identify and analyse only those delegates from 2020 T Level providers.

The feedback data suggests that Strand 2 activity successfully raised awareness of T Levels (Figure 15). Net agreement²³ with the statement *participating in the activity has improved my knowledge of T Levels* increased from +84% among delegates attending in 2019 to +91% among 2020 delegates. Net agreement with the overall satisfaction and impact on T Level professional development measures were also high.

There was a lower net agreement with the statement *participating in the course has built my confidence to deliver T Levels*, although this improved between 2019 (+48%) and 2020 (+57%).

Figure 15: Net agreement with statements regarding ETF Strand 2 events, 2019 versus 2020



Source: aggregated ETF event feedback data

4.3. Engagement with Understanding T Levels

Findings about engagement from qualitative interviews

At the time of interviews with provider staff in October/ November 2019, the majority of senior leaders, subject leads, teaching and non-teaching staff had engaged with Strand 2 activities. However, findings show that senior leaders had a more in-depth understanding of T Levels, their structure and delivery when compared with teaching and non-teaching staff. The latter were also less likely to recognise CPD under the Understanding T Levels

²³ The proportion of delegates who "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with each statement minus the proportion who "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed".

name. Strand 2 was unrecognised by them as several senior leaders integrated Strand 2 activity into their existing CPD and training programmes. This resulted in an inability in some teachers and support staff to identify CPD that was specifically labelled as part of the Understanding T Levels Strand. Other qualitative data on the perceptions of this Strand is limited to because interviewees could not typically differentiate its content from other CPD. Some leaders perceived their own training and knowledge as beneficial in supporting them to prepare their staff for the initial implementation of T Levels.

Teachers and senior leaders interviewed during case studies identified two key reasons for limited engagement from teachers with Strand 2. Firstly, some were awaiting the publication of technical specifications. Most subject leads and teaching staff noted that they were unable to plan and prepare for the implementation of T Levels in relation to their specific role without understanding the implications it will have on their subject curriculum (see section 2.4.).

Secondly, a few said they chose not to engage with Strand 2 activities because they were already confident that they had enough existing knowledge of their subject to transition to the T Levels, or that the transition was slight. This was especially the case for Childcare teachers and subject leads who said their T Level was similar to existing courses, based on details that had been published up to that point. Therefore, they felt that it was unnecessary for them to engage with any further CPD (TLPD or otherwise) as they were already updated with the relevant changes.

“[Some staff have] looked at the outline content, and they’ve gone through that, and education and childcare is fine. They’re all up to speed with [the changes], [and] it’s not massively different.”

Subject Leader (November 2019)

These reasons to not engage were contradictory, as one was based on an absence of knowledge (awaiting technical specifications – see Section 2.4) and the other was based on applied knowledge (the similarity of T Levels to existing qualifications). As noted in Chapter 2, this difference is a function of the relevant T Level pathways, as the draft specifications for Education and Childcare were described as broadly similar to existing provision.

The ETF delegate data showed that 48% of those completing a feedback on Strand 2 events were non-management staff²⁴. Most of the equivalent staff interviewed during case studies said that they only had a basic overall knowledge of T Levels. Staff highlighted the lack of detail available in draft technical specifications (especially for the

²⁴ Teachers, support and administrative staff, base = 1,014

Design, Surveying and Planning and Digital Production, Design and Development pathways) and expressed concern over the technical demands of the curriculum.

Staff found awareness CPD useful in building their understanding of T Levels; CPD as a whole (noting that Strand 2 activity was often integrated with other awareness CPD) had a positive influence on their roles. For example, a non-teaching staff member spoke articulately about the recent changes that had occurred to their staff briefing sessions in response to upcoming T Levels. They suggested these now form an integral part of their quarterly CPD briefings, as senior management provided a general update of T Levels to all staff. This was further reiterated by staff at other providers where the T Levels have now become an important aspect of staff's overall professional development.

“We have full-staff briefings three or four times a year in our theatre. So, at a top level, we talk about T Levels, give a top-level overview of what a T Level is about.”

Non-Teaching Staff (October 2019)

4.4. The usefulness of Understanding T Levels CPD

On the whole, the majority of staff were positive about the Strand 2 workshops and briefing sessions they had attended. The activities were particularly helpful for staff to gain an overarching overview of T Level aims, as well as the structure of the qualification and the challenges faced in developing T Levels. Teaching staff often noted that sessions included staff from across their organisation, even those who were not directly involved in delivery. They perceived that this was important, as it showcased the willingness of all staff to embrace the change in the curriculum.

“The spread of people who were in the room, you know, was massive, because, you know, there were so many questions around what does a T Level actually mean?. [For example] we had people from our Estates teams there.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Staff who had attended T Level awareness CPD, into which Strand 2 activity was embedded, said that it helped to improve their understanding of T Levels. The majority of those engaged were able to outline the key aims and objects of T Levels and discuss the overall purpose of the programme. Most teaching staff spoke about initially undertaking the introductory sessions with little or no knowledge of T Levels, so they particularly valued the impact of the activities in developing their own knowledge.

Senior leaders and provider staff noted the benefits of accessing the Strand 2 training face-to-face and via webinars. Senior leaders specifically highlighted the importance of undertaking face-to-face CPD. They valued the opportunity to liaise and network with other providers and share different experiences. Face-to-face CPD encouraged providers to actively work collaboratively with each other, as most shared similar concerns as well as had positive examples in preparing their organisations to implement T Levels.

“It’s an opportunity for free training, and an opportunity for them to network nationally, I think it helps them understand the importance of T Levels and the necessity, and they take it seriously.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Similarly, staff were also able to allude to the particular strengths and weaknesses of the webinars they were involved in. The overwhelmingly majority of staff valued the flexibility of the webinars, not just for accessibility purposes but also for their content. This was, in fact, highlighted as a key difference between the webinars and the ETF workshops. Senior leaders particularly spoke about the ability to adapt the webinars to help cascade the relevant knowledge to specific members of staff.

“Our ETF contact, and he’s given us some links to videos and websites to help, that’s been quite useful. There are some good videos on there from different perspectives, not only from the teachers’ point of view but also the managers, from assessors, from students. It’s put more meat on the bones, that’s been useful.”

Subject Lead (November 2019)

Senior leaders used webinars as an efficient way to target people more distant from the actual delivery of T Levels, such as governors and operational staff. As the webinars were available online, they offered people flexibility to access CPD at their own convenience and gave them a good overview of the overall scope of T Levels.

Limitations of Understanding T Levels

Although staff were mainly positive about workshops and briefing sessions, some were concerned that the CPD was generic and repetitious. This was specifically expressed by senior leaders, as they often did not see the value of staff attending multiple T Level awareness Strand 2 CPD sessions. Some teaching staff felt the CPD did not go into detail about their specific subject.

At the time of interviews²⁵, most staff were unable to describe the impact of T Levels on their role. Teaching staff suggested that this was because CPD covered generic T Level policy (general awareness) rather than the impact on their specific role. Some staff also made a connection between limited detail about the impact on their role and unpublished technical specifications.

In the case of webinars, some accessibility issues were mentioned. Most staff highlighted issues accessing webinars which were either not working or were blocked on the providers' computers. This negatively impacted on staff who had not attended any other CPD sessions in engaging with Understanding T Levels.

However, there was some agreement among staff that Strand 2 activity helped increase their confidence in their own ability to deliver T Levels (which is supported by ETF feedback data, Figure 15). The confidence of teaching staff regarding the overall assessment process reportedly increased due to Strand 2 CPD.

“[Strand 2 CPD] has given us the information we need up to this point. So, yes, it has helped increase our confidence because we have as much information as there is there to be given to us.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

There was a disparity in knowledge and understanding of the purpose and structure of T Levels between senior leadership and non-management staff. Most non-management staff were only able to outline key details of T Levels, while leaders were able to discuss the programme in more detail. However, senior leaders' increased engagement was important to providers, as most had responsibilities to cascade the information to colleagues and had completed more CPD. One senior leader described a vlog they developed as a result of attending Strand 2 training which met with positive feedback from teaching staff. The vlog presented the key elements of policy alongside the priorities of the provider.

²⁵ Autumn 2019

4.5. Suggested improvements to Strand 2

Suggested improvements to the Strand 2 CPD activities are summarised below.

Improvement: Consider how Strand 2 activity sits with other available CPD.

Detail: Understanding T Levels CPD sometimes came across as “generic” and “repetitive”. However, this is likely to be a reflection of the volume of more general awareness CPD available and how providers embedded Strand 2 with other content. Some overall guidance to senior leaders about the content of Strand 2 may help them make judgements about how to effectively combine content with other CPD.

Improvement: Develop aspects of Strand 2 that are specific to different staff roles.

Detail: While ETF feedback forms show Strand 2 effectively raised awareness, some qualitative feedback suggested CPD lacked detail regarding different staff roles (a stated aim of the Understanding T Levels Strand). The extent to which the content of this Strand should be changed, or effective signposting to more specific CPD, could be considered.

Improvement: Clearly demonstrate how Strand 2 can help all staff.

Detail: Some staff could not perceive much difference between the delivery of current vocational programmes and T Levels (especially for the Education and Childcare pathways). Clearer signposting for all staff on the main points of difference may generate more interest.

4.6. Chapter summary

- Some of the evidence regarding Strand 2 is contradictory, partly due to the different methods of collecting data and partly due to the way Strand 2 activity was delivered in combination with other professional development activity.
- The four measures captured in ETF's post-event feedback forms show high levels of satisfaction with CPD. They also illustrate Strand 2 events as particularly effective in raising awareness of T Levels.
- Qualitative evidence mirrors these positive perceptions towards the contribution of Strand 2 in raising awareness of T Levels.
- Awareness of the Strand itself was lower, especially as content from Understanding T Levels was often used in combination with other CPD. Whether 'brand recognition' matters is another question. However, some of the less positive views of Strand 2 activity (that CPD is generic and repetitive) may result from breadth of other awareness-raising CPD that staff accessed.
- Senior leaders and subject leads usually displayed greater awareness of T Levels than teaching and administrative staff. This was, however, more a reflection of providers' implementation cycles at the time of fieldwork rather than the content of the Strand. Senior leaders and subject leads needed to plan earlier than other staff in order to put CPD and other development actions in place.
- The qualitative evidence showed that Strand 2 activity was less effective in explaining different staff roles in relation to T Levels. In common with much of the early evidence, the main reason given was a wish to align CPD with T Level technical specifications. The specifications would identify how a role might change, or remain similar, based on the curriculum needs of T Levels. Many staff felt the specifications were vital in designing suitable CPD that described the future role of teachers and support staff.

5. The Teacher Development Programme (Strand 3)

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents findings related to Strand 3 of the offer: the Teacher Development Programme. In this chapter, we discuss perceptions of, and provider engagement with, the Teacher Development Programme along with the strengths and weaknesses of courses undertaken by teachers. Engagement and usefulness of T Level CPD offered by other organisations, such as Awarding Organisations, are also discussed along with suggested improvements to the Teacher Development Programme.

Because the Teacher Development Programme was in the early stages of roll-out, small numbers of teaching staff had participated at the point of data collection²⁶. All primary quantitative fieldwork with providers was completed in June 2019 and qualitative fieldwork between September and November 2019. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic meant follow-up fieldwork scheduled for Spring 2020 could not be completed. Nevertheless, provider survey findings and qualitative data derived from interviews with senior leaders, subject leads and teaching staff provided some useful programme insights. Findings derived from ETF monitoring data collected between June 2019 and March 2020 also contextualise some of the key findings presented in this chapter.

5.2. Perceptions of the Teacher Development Programme

Importance of the Teacher Development Programme

Interviewees noted that the Teacher Development Programme was the largest Strand of activity in the offer, and covered CPD in pedagogy, professionalism, practice, assessment and developing embedded maths, English and digital skills. Interviewees also recognised that the other Strands of activity complemented and supported this activity. The Teacher Development Programme was deemed as important in ensuring that teachers had the right skills and knowledge to effectively deliver T Levels.

“The most important [is] Strand 3 and our primary purpose was that teachers had the skills and knowledge to deliver T Levels. All teachers will need some kind of up-skilling to be able to teach a more difficult qualification. The teachers having the right skills and knowledge was a priority. There are other bits of work going on to

²⁶ In total, as part of the case study visits, 102 members of staff were interviewed: 25 senior leaders, 19 subject leads, 26 teaching staff and 32 non-teaching staff. At time of data collection, around 15 provider staff had participated in TDP CPD.

support the leaders on how to lead the change and general awareness-raising.”

Stakeholder (May 2019)

Teaching staff were viewed as central to the success of T Levels by stakeholders. Ensuring teachers had the knowledge and skills to deliver T Levels was vital to the success of the qualification and student experience. Interviewees felt the Teacher Development Programme was pivotal to achieving the T Level qualification outcomes.

“The quality of T Levels is only as good as the teaching. We can produce the most amazing qualification with all these great elements to it, but if the right teachers with the right skills and knowledge aren’t in place to deliver it, it doesn’t matter what the product is. What the students are receiving won’t give them the outcomes we want from this new qualification.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

Challenges to the delivery of the Teacher Development Programme

Stakeholders and senior leaders were asked about the challenges they foresaw to the delivery of the Teacher Development Programme. Interviewees said:

- providers would be unable to plan for teacher CPD early on in the academic year as subject and assessment specifications would not be finalised until April 2020; and
- the engagement of T Level delivery staff may be difficult because staff were unaware of the substantive differences between T Levels and existing technical education courses.

As noted in Section 2.4, without final subject and assessment specifications, providers felt unable to make accurate assessments of the areas in which their staff would need to upskill. Providers who had not yet participated in CPD cited frustration with the tight timescale and feared they would not have enough time to engage with the offer. This made planning teacher CPD difficult.

At the time of interview, the possibility of limited teacher engagement was a primary concern raised by stakeholders²⁷. The Teacher Development Programme was designed to offer CPD to address gaps or improve knowledge in:

²⁷ As a proxy for engagement, a total of 334 Teacher Development Programme participant feedback forms were completed by March 2020

- **Pedagogy** (core teaching skills and methods);
- **Practice** (subject knowledge and subject specific teaching); and
- **Professional knowledge** (industry and employability understanding for teachers).

Stakeholders' and senior leaders' main concerns were how to engage teaching staff who felt their experience and prior training in one or two of these areas was extensive and they did not require further CPD. Some providers were concerned that teachers delivering existing technical qualifications would be difficult to engage because of their existing knowledge, skills and experience. Other providers noted it would be difficult to engage experienced and/or confident teachers in pedagogy modules.

“So, I can envisage now a teacher that’s been doing this forever, they’ve been teaching [...] and they think, ‘Oh, I’m not doing a [...] pedagogy course. I’ve done that a million times before.”

Senior Leader (May 2019)

These comments suggest that providers missed the Teacher Development Programme’s intended purpose of addressing teachers’ and trainers’ “spiky profiles”: that many delivery staff held good knowledge in some aspects of delivery, but would benefit from CPD to address a specific shortfall.

Other stakeholder and provider senior leaders noted that the Teacher Development Programme may not target the right teachers at the right time. Planning for the delivery of T Levels was still in the early stages at the beginning of the 2019/20 academic year and decisions had still to be made about the teachers who would have responsibility for teaching T Levels. Additionally, as noted by a few stakeholder interviewees, some providers were planning to recruit teachers from industry much later in the academic year.

“I think the fact that we’re sitting in 2019/20 before the courses start means that we’re potentially trying to reach an audience who isn’t there yet. If they’re still sitting in industry they don’t have to decide now that they’re going to become a T Level teacher, that might be a decision they make next July, and we’re starting our [Teacher Development Programme] courses right now. I think a barrier is ensuring we get out to the teachers that are actually going to do it.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

5.3. Engagement with the Teacher Development Programme

Engagement was low at the time of the baseline fieldwork because provider leadership teams wanted to align staff CPD to subject and assessment specifications²⁸ (see Section 2.4). At the time of interview, most teachers said they had not yet engaged with the Teacher Development Programme because their organisations were still in the planning phase for the delivery of T Levels, and undertaking CPD was not yet a priority. A few teachers said they had yet to engage because they had not had time to access learning resources, or they had experienced problems in accessing ETF online learning resources.

“It’s not relevant to what we’re doing at the moment. As a college, I know we’re signed up to do the childcare one, so maybe the focus is purely on figuring that out.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Most of those yet to engage with the programme intended to do so and saw some value in the Teacher Development Programme. However, there were questions about the relevance and purpose of the CPD. This may be related to the finding cited earlier (Chapter 2) where some provider senior management teams had taken the view not to cascade information about the offer down to their staff in an attempt not to overburden them with information.

“Before starting my whole training, I want to be a little bit more critical about it and why, as a teacher, that I should be learning it. It’s not you who are offering it, why should we be taking this course on? What’s useful for us? What’s in it for us?”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Six of the 24 providers who completed the provider survey²⁹ said that their teachers had undertaken Teacher Development Programme CPD. Interviews undertaken during case study visits with providers who were due to deliver T Levels in 2020³⁰ showed that the majority of staff who had engaged with the Teacher Development Programme had completed subject-specific CPD (the “practice” elements of the Teacher Development Programme). Some staff had also engaged with the Teacher Development Programme

²⁸ Subject and assessment specifications were released in April 2020. Note no longitudinal wave could be completed to assess if and how views changed.

²⁹ The survey was in field in June 2019.

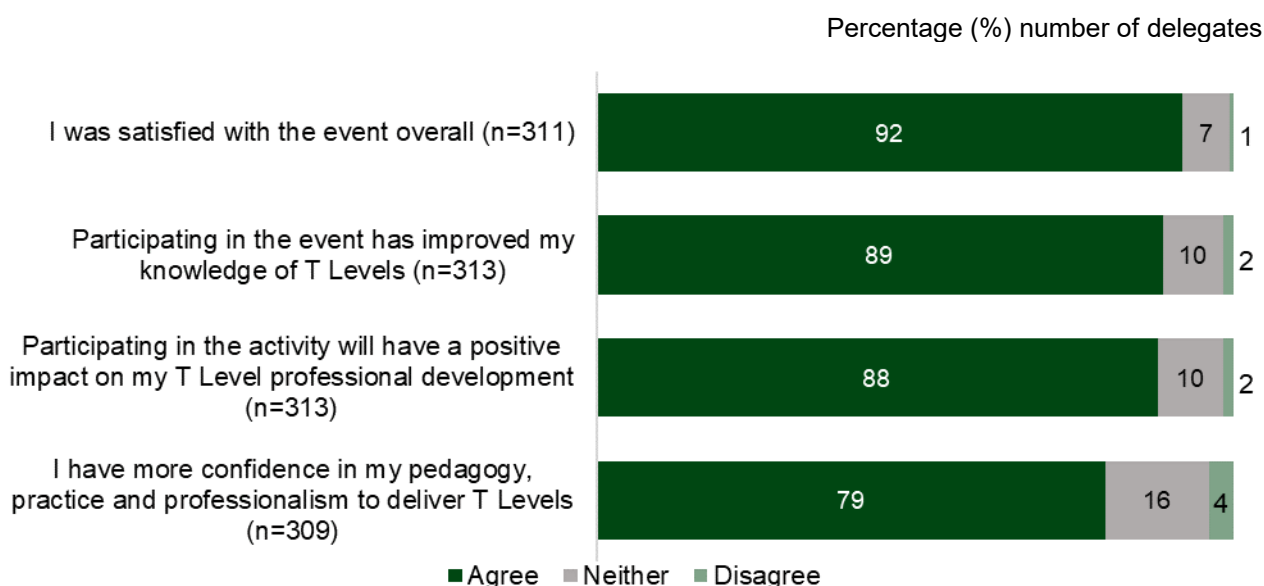
³⁰ Provider visits were conducted in October/ November 2019.

modules in assessment and developing embedded maths, English and digital skills in teaching.

5.4. The usefulness of the Teacher Development Programme

Findings from ETF monitoring data between June 2019 and March 2020 showed that nine-tenths (92%) of delegates were satisfied³¹ with the CPD event they had attended (see Figure 16). The majority of CPD delegates agreed with the statements that participating in the activity had *improved their knowledge of T Levels* (89%) and that the event would have a *positive impact on their T Level professional development* (88%). Around four-fifths (79%) of delegates reported that their *confidence in pedagogy, practice and professionalism to deliver T Levels had increased*. Only small numbers of delegates disagreed with these statements.

Figure 16: Delegate satisfaction with Teacher Development Programme CPD



Source: All ETF monitoring data. Bases: variable

The ETF monitoring data shows a relatively weaker impact on confidence. However, comparing data between 2019 and 2020 Teacher Development Programme cohorts showed an increase in confidence. Net agreement³² with the statement *I have more*

³¹ Aggregate of "strongly agree" and "agree" with the statement "I was satisfied with the event overall" in relation to Teacher Development Programme CPD attended.

³² The aggregate proportion of delegates who "disagreed" and "strongly disagreed" with the statement subtracted from the aggregate proportion who "agreed" or "strongly agreed".

confidence in my pedagogy, practice and professionalism to deliver T Levels increased by 8 percentage points from +71% in 2019 to +79% in 2020.

The provider survey findings (n=6) from June 2019³³ showed that almost all providers felt that the CPD had been either “very useful” or “fairly useful” in:

- helping their teachers to update their knowledge about the relevance of their subject to industries/occupations (n=5);
- had improved teachers’ pedagogical skills (n=5);
- teachers had learnt more about the technical aspects of their subjects (n=5);
- teachers had updated their industry knowledge (n=5); and
- teachers had learnt how to develop their student’s maths/English/digital skills in an embedded context (n=5).

Three providers said that their teachers had found the general information around the subject they teach to be useful, while two providers stated that their teachers had not found that information to be useful.

Interviews with provider staff supported the view from provider survey findings that the Teacher Development Programme improved understanding of T Levels and practice. One interviewee spoke about how the CPD was specific to the areas of expertise needed among teaching staff to enable them to be ready to teach T Levels in September 2020. Albeit anecdotal in nature, the views of some who directly experienced the Teacher Development Programme were more positive than those who had yet to complete the programme. For example, observations were made that the underlying design can adapt with the needs of delegates, which was a key feature of the Programme.

“I think things are getting quite technical now. You’ve got your initial awareness. [...] the curriculum stuff which is a whole thing in itself, because your curriculum teams have got to be ready to be able to teach exams, [...] support the delivery of maths, English and digital skills, the general pedagogy and that kind of thing. So [...] I think that’s absolutely crucial. [...] I think for us, as 2020 providers, [the training is] becoming quite technical and specific.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

³³ One provider had stated ‘don’t know’ for all the statements detailed for this question.

Another benefit of attending Teacher Development Programme events was the opportunity to network with other teachers who had responsibility to deliver T Levels. Some interviewees found it useful to talk to other practitioners about T Levels and hear about how other organisations were approaching planning for delivery of the qualification.

“Absolutely at those events, there is a richness and a value from talking to other people in terms of what they’re doing [...] I think that’s just because of where we are within the mechanisms of the new qualification.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Networking at CPD events also provided teachers with the opportunity to stay up to date with developments and ask questions. For instance, one interviewee noted that they had found out about scanner technology, relevant to the Digital Production, Design and Development T Level programme, from another teacher at a CPD event. This is information they were unlikely to hear of otherwise, especially in the context of some providers holding back CPD and awareness raising of T Levels as part of wider CPD planning.

“It actually shows you what’s going on, what’s current. [...] There’s a guy walking through with a scanner and he says, ‘There are only two in the country, we’ve got one, and one’s out on loan for trial.’ Obviously, that is brand new up-to-date stuff that we probably wouldn’t know because it’s been developed and manufactured in America.”

Teaching Staff (November 2019)

However, some of the concerns raised earlier in this chapter regarding the wider value of the Teacher Development Programme appeared to be supported in the evaluation evidence. The reported weaknesses of the Teacher Development Programme by some participants concerned the relevance, content and delivery of the course. Some interviewees who had attended the CPD said it was ‘generic and repetitive’ and hence had little value. Interviewees teaching in sixth-form providers noted that there was little mention of delivery of T Levels in schools and that teaching and learning materials largely focused on FE colleges.

“A lot of the materials are written for colleges [...] and there is a lack of information on the delivery in schools, and [...] on understanding the implications for schools and how this differs for schools”.

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Most interviewees who had undertaken Teacher Development Programme modules felt the content on assessment and pedagogy as generic. Others noted that the examples used in online webinars had not been relevant to their T Level subjects: Interviewees who attended face-to-face workshops raised similar concerns. Several questioned the relevance of the modules to their specific areas for development and suggested that the content of the modules should be tailored to T Level subject areas.

“I had a look at some of these [webinar videos] and they’re not in my subject sector or they’re not giving me anything new in the subject sector at the moment. [...] There’s a lot about teaching styles and delivery methods, which is what we do day to day anyway.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

“I went to one [CPD event] it was about the assessment process within early years, which I was quite excited about, because it would hopefully give us new information, but again it was just repeating what we currently already do [...] it is following along the lines of what we already received, [from] our own staff development training. We’ve been doing this for years.”

Teaching Staff (November 2019)

Several staff spoke about their need for more detailed CPD in assessment practices. In particular, staff accustomed to coursework-based technical education (a couple referred to BTECs, for example) required more detail and content on exam and assessment practice and theory. Some interviewees said they required more information about the points during the T Level course at which assessments should be conducted. Others expressed the need for further information about standardisation among Awarding Organisations and how assessments would be moderated with employers.

“Another big worry for me is the validity of certification of those students, and checking the employer part is fair and valid. Because you could have a T Level student go to an employer, and the employer has to say, ‘Yes, they’ve achieved X’, you could have got on great with the employer, but not actually been very good. Or the other way around. Who’s going to moderate that and check that, and how is that done?”

Senior Leader (November 2019)

The qualitative data showed that teachers had mixed views about the pedagogy modules. Some provider staff noted that the modules were useful in re-capping what they already knew about pedagogy. However, other interviewees felt that pedagogy was not an area in which they needed to upskill. Many were established lecturers and said they

had the pedagogical skills to successfully teach T Levels, yet identified that they were less familiar with the incorporation of technical aspects in the delivery of T Levels.

“A lot of the TLPD offer is around pedagogy. We’re already teachers. We know how to teach. What we don’t know is how to use a drone in construction.”

Teaching Staff (November 2019)

The individuals delivering CPD was raised as another area of weakness by some interviewees. Some said trainers lacked knowledge of the FE sector and had been unable to answer FE context-specific queries or had no knowledge of the subject area. Some interviewees said they left the event with more questions than answers and therefore questioned its overall value.

“The gentlemen who delivered it, he had no early years background, so it wasn’t even relevant to early years. He just chucked the words early years in there every now and then, to make it, kind of, look like it was early years, so that was a wasted trip.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Although the convenience of accessing online CPD was recognised, some interviewees expressed a desire for more face-to-face CPD. The value of being able to interact with other delegates and the trainers, to ask questions and cover material in depth were noted as the benefits of face-to-face CPD. However, some face-to-face CPD events were reported to be difficult to get to, particularly by those based in rural locations. Logistically, this meant that staff would have to take two days out of their teaching schedules to attend a one-day event. Smaller providers struggled to find teaching cover, which was exacerbated by the distance-to-travel issues noted above.

It is important to note that the weaknesses of the Teacher Development Programme identified in this section contradicted some of the positives identified through the ETF monitoring data. This may be due to the fact that interviewees had commented on the CPD they received quite early on in the offer. As such, they may not have engaged with the full Teacher Development Programme offer – as is reflected in the ETF data. Additionally, early engagers would not, at the time, have had sight of the subject and assessment specifications and may not have realised the relevance of the CPD to the T Level subject they were assuming responsibility for. Finally, as a wider point about the relevance of Teacher Development Programme CPD, there appears to be some misunderstanding from interviewees about the relevance of the Teacher Development Programme to them. Individuals are not expected to engage with all Teacher Development Programme CPD but address gaps in pedagogy, practice or professionalism.

5.5. Experiences of other CPD opportunities

Some provider staff had attended training or CPD offered by Awarding Organisations³⁴ and gave mixed feedback. Attendees said the chance to provide feedback on draft subject and assessment specifications was a positive aspect of the awarding body's events (see Chapter 2). Some of those who attended training offered by awarding organisations said that the training complemented TLPD CPD. However, others noted that there was repetition between TLPD and awarding body training content. Although Awarding Organisations and ETF had worked in collaboration to develop training content, some providers felt there was scope to minimise duplication of effort.

“The [information we have had through] the PDA, and then ETF's training [...] all the stuff that's online, that's great. The awarding body's [...] complimenting that [...], so we're doing the generic stuff and then we're going to the awarding body's specific training as well. That's complimenting each other quite nicely.”

Subject Lead (November 2019)

There was some evidence that a few providers had worked with other local organisations to share skills and train staff in areas where they lacked expertise. For example, one provider collaborated with their local university to access specialist training and support skills development. They recognised the value of accessing local expertise to ensure that staff received training relevant to their knowledge and skills gaps.

“We work with [a local] university. They're looking at their degree and putting apprenticeship in the construction industry as a progression for us. They're helping us train some staff where we've got gaps. They've got AutoCAD specialists and architectural specialists. So, we're drawing from our partner universities as well to support skill development.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

³⁴ For example, Pearson and CACHE.

5.6. Suggested improvements to the Teacher Development Programme

Suggested improvements to the Teacher Development Programme are summarised below.

Improvement: Make CPD materials subject-specific.

Detail: Ensure the content of teaching and learning materials is relevant to the subject area and subject-specific examples are used so that teachers can utilise in practice.

Improvement: Ensure learning materials are inclusive of sixth form providers.

Detail: Learning and teaching materials should include a more balanced mention of sixth-form providers to make the CPD more relevant for them.

Improvement: More face-to-face CPD opportunities.

Detail: While the convenience of online CPD activity was recognised, staff would benefit from more face-to-face CPD opportunities. This would:

- allow for content to be covered in depth;
- allow for delegates to ask questions; and
- provide networking opportunities.

Improvement: Greater regional face-to-face CPD opportunities.

Detail: More regional face-to-face CPD opportunities would make CPD accessible to staff based at colleges/sixth forms in rural locations.

Improvement: Give teachers and leaders timely opportunity to review the subject and assessment specifications.

Detail: This would enable providers to:

- identify staff CPD needs and ensure that staff are investing time in the CPD required to meet their needs;
- consider their approach to teaching the curriculum and gain specific technical CPD to plug gaps in knowledge; and
- provide sufficient time for teachers to develop curriculum and assessment materials ahead of teaching T Levels.

5.7. Chapter summary

Perceptions of the Teacher Development Programme

- The Teacher Development Programme ensured that teachers had the right skills and knowledge to effectively deliver T Levels. T Level teaching staff were seen to be central to the success of T Levels and therefore Strand 3 activity was important in ensuring that teaching staff had the right skills and knowledge in order to deliver these effectively.
- Stakeholders perceived the following challenges to the successful delivery of the Teacher Development Programme:
 - providers would be unable to plan for teacher CPD early on in the academic year due to subject and assessment specifications not being finalised until April 2020; and
 - the engagement of T Level delivery staff may be difficult.
- Management information collected from attendees registered high levels of satisfaction with Teacher Development Programme events. Directly after completing a Teacher Development Programme event, more than nine-tenths (92%) of delegates agreed with the statement *I was satisfied with the event overall*.

Engagement with the Teacher Development Programme

- At the time of fieldwork³⁵, the majority of teaching staff had not engaged with the Teacher Development Programme primarily because their leaders wanted to align CPD to subject and assessment specifications.
- Of those who had begun to access CPD, they had mainly undertaken subject-specific CPD. Some staff had also engaged with the assessment modules and modules concerned with developing their student's maths, English and digital skills in an embedded context.

Usefulness of the Teacher Development Programme

- The overwhelming majority of delegates report that TDP has both improved their knowledge of T Levels and impacted on their professional development.
- Qualitative findings provided further insights into the usefulness of CPD, namely improved understanding of T Levels and practice and the opportunity to network with

³⁵ September to November 2019

other teachers who had responsibility to deliver T Levels. Weaknesses of the Teacher Development Programme were concerned with the relevance, content and delivery of CPD.

6. Knowledge Hubs, Teacher Regional Improvement Projects and Professional Practice (Strand 4)

6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents findings relating to Strand 4 of the offer: Knowledge Hubs, Teacher Regional Improvement Projects (TRIPs) and Professional Practice. In this chapter, we discuss perceptions of, and provider engagement with all elements of, Strand 4. The usefulness of Knowledge Hubs and TRIPs are then discussed.

The second half of the chapter presents findings relating to Professional Practice, which includes a discussion about providers' engagement with employers and insights into the effectiveness of Industry Insight placements. The chapter concludes with suggested improvements to Knowledge Hubs, TRIPs and Industry Insight placements, and a summary of key findings is presented.

All primary quantitative fieldwork with providers was completed in June 2019 and qualitative fieldwork between September and November 2019. The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic meant follow-up fieldwork scheduled for Spring 2020 could not be completed. This means any subsequent change in views after that point is not captured in data collected via primary research methods. Stakeholder fieldwork was completed in May and June of 2019.

6.2. Perceptions of Knowledge Hubs, TRIPs and Professional Practice

The value of Knowledge Hubs and TRIPs in promoting collaboration and sharing of learning across the sector was acknowledged by providers and stakeholders alike. Stakeholders noted that Strand 4 activities provided vital opportunities for providers and industry to work more closely together.

Most stakeholders recognised that Knowledge Hubs provided “coherency” to the TLPD offer, and were a mechanism to embed CPD from the other Strands of activity. Knowledge Hubs were designed to bring together the learning from Strands 1, 2, 3 and 5. For instance, several stakeholders said that Knowledge Hubs would be important in consolidating the knowledge and skills that teachers developed as part of Strand 3 CPD.

“Strand 4 [...] if we didn’t have Strand 4, then the CPD that we deliver in Strand 3 would be much less effective. The purpose of Strand 4 is to really embed the skills and knowledge that people are developing through Strand 3.”

Stakeholder (May 2019)

Stakeholders and providers alike recognised that a key role of the Knowledge Hubs was to develop existing provider networks and partnership activity. Enhancing existing networks would bring together other providers at the same stage of planning for delivery and implementation of T Levels; and practitioners responsible for the delivery of T Levels. The other focus of Knowledge Hubs, identified by some stakeholders and providers, was in providing a platform for providers to share knowledge, provide opportunities for informal discussions to allow providers to provide peer-to-peer support. It was hoped that Knowledge Hubs would result in an ongoing support network for providers after the TLPD offer had ended.

“The [Strand] that I think is probably the most unique is Strand 4 [...] it’s not CPD in the traditional sense, it’s not really workshops or online modules or anything. Strand 4 is very much about CPD through networks, peer learning and collaboration and it’s very much about embedding the CPD from the other Strands, so I think that one’s quite unique.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

It was envisaged that the Knowledge Hubs would also encourage collaboration among T Level providers through opportunities to network and discuss ideas, and thus develop collaborative projects (i.e. TRIPs). TRIPs were described as ‘non-traditional CPD’, ‘new’ and ‘innovative’. Their design encouraged evidence-based problem-solving, with the overall objective to help improve the quality of teaching and learning. The sharing of effective learning and practice among practitioners more widely was also seen to be an objective of the TRIPs.

“Strand 4 [...] where there are TRIPs [...] where [...] someone in a region can say, ‘I’m having trouble engaging employers around this aspect of my curriculum or I’m struggling with co-design.’ I think that’s something that’s still pretty innovative and that will be really interesting to see how that one goes.”

Stakeholder (July 2019)

Some stakeholders also said TRIPs overcame some of the financial barriers associated with staff undertaking CPD. TRIPs allocated remission payments to lead and partner providers to help overcome costs associated with CPD.

“The key about that is that there’s actually remission to do [a TRIP]. One of the barriers to teachers and managers being able to come to CDP has always been that they have no cover money and no travel money. That’s been addressed, and that’s been good.”

Stakeholder (May 2019)

Stakeholders and providers alike noted that Knowledge Hubs would play an important role in bridging the gap between the FE sector and industry. Stakeholders perceived that Knowledge Hubs would also afford access to industry and employers. It was anticipated that the Knowledge Hubs would help providers to connect with current practices in industry to ensure that their T Level provision was relevant to the workplace. It was perceived that Industry Insight placements would complement this activity.

6.3. Engagement with Knowledge Hubs, TRIPs and Professional Practice

Survey data

Due to the small number of responses, the early provider survey data offered little analytical value. Eleven of the 24 providers surveyed³⁶ were members of, or had contributed towards, a Knowledge Hub. Two of the 11 providers were members of a Knowledge Hub but had yet to engage with it. Three of the four providers interviewed were a member of, or had contributed to, a Knowledge Hub. The fourth provider felt that Knowledge Hubs were not relevant to them.

Seven of the 24 providers surveyed had registered an interest in participating with other providers in a TRIP:

- one had registered an interest to be a lead provider;
- three had registered an interest to be a project partner; and

³⁶ The provider survey only asked questions about engagement with Knowledge Hubs and TRIPs, not Industry Insight placements. Therefore engagement data from the survey is only presented for Knowledge Hubs and TRIPs.

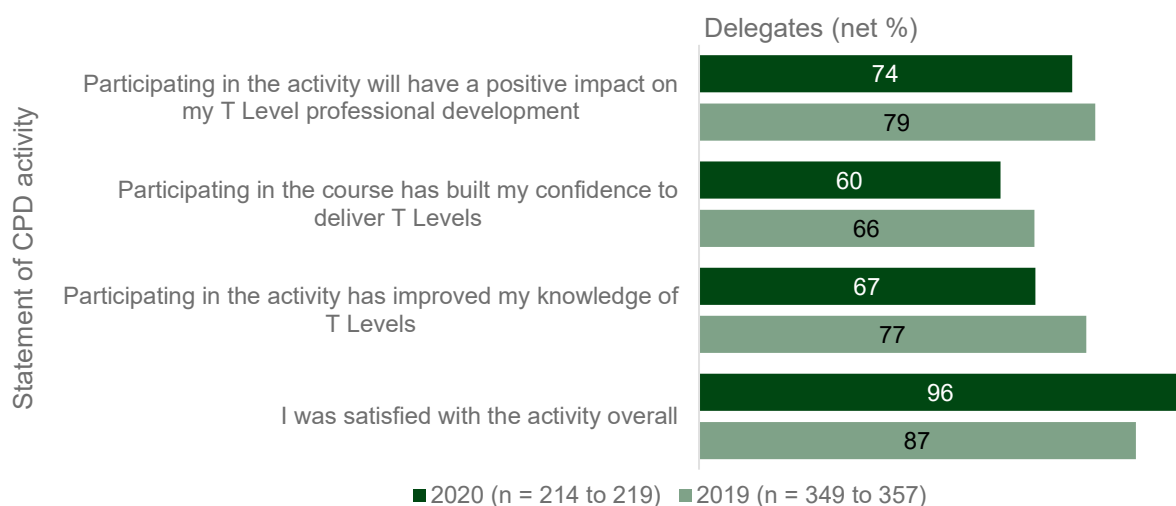
- a further three had registered to be a project partner on one project and a project lead on another.

ETF event feedback

Data from ETF’s feedback monitoring forms was useful in understanding broader engagement with Strand 4 activity. ETF events offered a mix of content. Many of the earlier launch events (May to June 2019) offered an overview of Knowledge Hubs. These were followed by a range of more targeted events covering Industry Insight, TRIPs and Professional Practice. A number of employer-led events were also convened.

The timing of the differential offer explains the between-year variance shown in Figure 17. Net agreement³⁷ on satisfaction with events held in 2020 (+96%) was higher compared to those held in 2019 (+87%). However, net agreement for all the other measures (especially improving knowledge of T Levels) was lower in 2020.

Figure 17: Net agreement with statements regarding Strand 4 ETF events, 2019 versus 2020



Source: aggregated ETF event feedback data

Part of this difference is explained by the types of event held each year (Table 2). Event types were defined based on the name of the file sent by ETF for analysis. The lowest relative net satisfaction was found for those entitled Knowledge Hub events: a +81% satisfaction rating is a very high figure, but markedly lower than those of other events. Twelve of these 16 events were held in 2019.

³⁷ The proportion of delegates who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with each statement minus the proportion who “strongly disagreed” or “disagreed”.

Six of the 11 employer-led events were held in 2019 and delegates gave the lowest net agreement ratings for the three statements on the impact of participation on knowledge, confidence and professional development. Furthermore, the Professional Practice events were regarded very highly on all measures and most of these events (nine of 12) were delivered in 2020.

Table 2: Differences in net agreement with statements by event type

| Net agree trends - Monthly | Launch | Industry Insight | Knowledge Hub | Professional Practice | Employer-led events |
|--|------------|------------------|---------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| I was satisfied with the activity overall | 97% | 93% | 81% | 99% | 91% |
| Participating in the activity has improved my knowledge of T Levels | 73% | 79% | 73% | 90% | 52% |
| Participating in the course has built my confidence to deliver T Levels | 56% | 76% | 59% | 85% | 42% |
| Participating in the activity will have a positive impact on my T Level professional development | 82% | 88% | 77% | 90% | 57% |
| Base range | 187 to 191 | 80 to 81 | 202 to 211 | 108 to 111 | 145 to 149 |

The issue of confidence has featured a number of times in the analysis. Delegates to events labelled as Industry Insight and Professional Practice were particularly positive towards the impact on confidence. For example, the difference in net agreement between Industry Insight and Knowledge Hubs with the statement *participating in the course has built my confidence to deliver T Levels* was +17 percentage points; the equivalent difference between Professional Practice and Employer-led events as +43 percentage points.

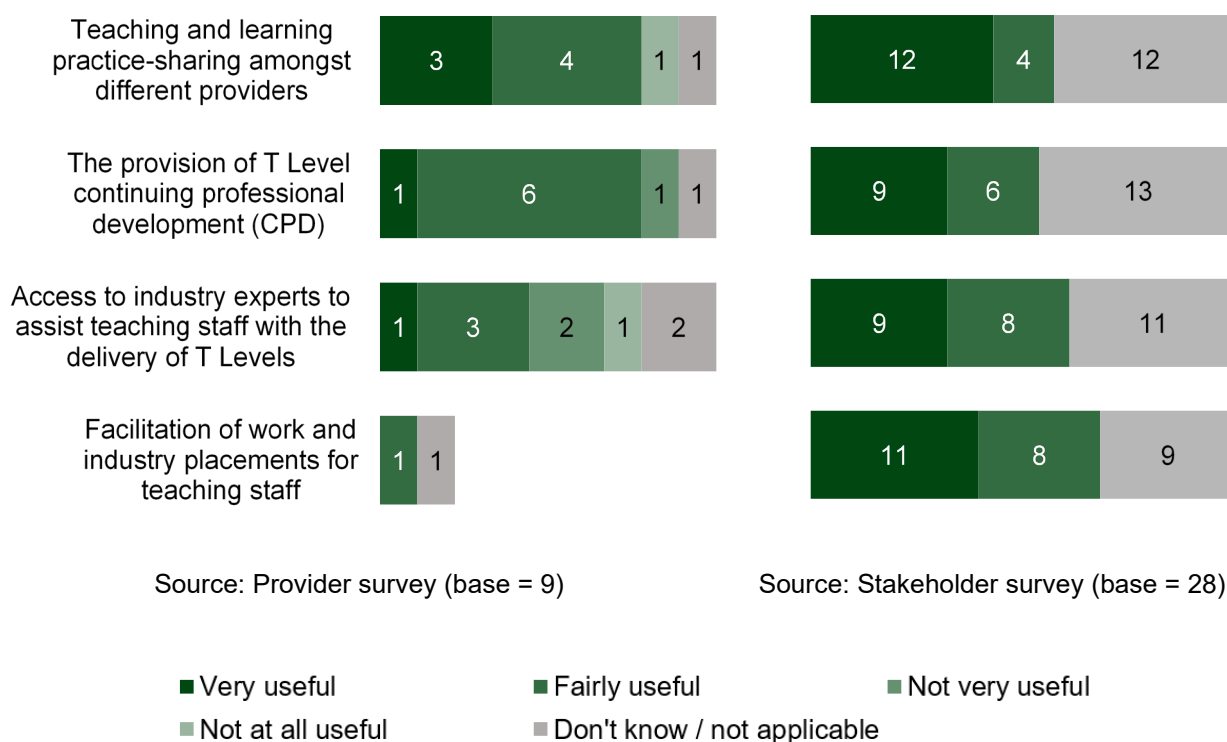
6.4. The usefulness of Knowledge Hubs and TRIPs

Knowledge Hubs

Sharing learning and practice

For providers, the most useful aspects of Knowledge Hubs was the sharing of teaching and learning practice among different providers and the provision of T Level CPD by Knowledge Hubs (seven of nine respondents confirmed this for both measures, see Figure 18³⁸).

Figure 18: Usefulness of the Knowledge Hubs in helping providers offering the first T Levels to identify and measure the following aspects



Findings from case study visits supported the value of sharing and learning from others. Provider staff commented that opportunities to network, share knowledge and have a space for informal discussions were an effective way of learning about, and preparing for, T Levels. For instance, one provider noted that in one of the first Knowledge Hub meetings they attended, delegates' understanding of T Levels varied between basic and

³⁸ Base sizes are small for both provider and stakeholder surveys. As such the evidence presented is anecdotal.

detailed knowledge. The interviewee noted that through the sharing of information, all delegates developed a better understanding and awareness of T Levels, and the potential implications for their organisations and job roles, by the end of the meeting.

“It’s more a collective of us coming together, sharing what we know already, and developing and building upon that [...]. On Tuesday, some teachers had a basic knowledge of T Levels [...] By the end of the day, they built up their knowledge a lot more. What was really good was that if anyone wasn’t sure of anything, they could stop and ask. From doing that, their knowledge of it, how it’s going to be offered, and how it’s going to be broken down, is a lot more secure, including for myself.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Senior leaders noted that working with others via Knowledge Hubs stimulated shared learning and offered providers a source of support. Providers valued the opportunity to meet other providers, to share experience, ideas and resources. Knowledge Hubs had also provided an opportunity to network with schools and colleges that were not 2020 providers³⁹ and for them to share their experiences of planning for T Level delivery with other schools and colleges.

“It’s people being able to go and speak to other colleges or people who are delivering similar things. [...] I think that engagement for the teams who will be delivering [T Levels] to be involved has been useful.”

Senior Leader (November 2019)

Interview findings shows that most providers had not yet engaged much with industry through the Knowledge Hubs⁴⁰. Most said that they would value greater opportunities to gain industry insights through the Knowledge Hubs and access to industry experts. The feedback from ETF forms presented earlier (Table 2) supports the value placed by providers on Industry Insight activity.

³⁹ These providers were 2021/22 providers or providers who were in the process of understanding T Levels and deciding if and which T Levels they may offer in the future.

⁴⁰ It is important to note that at the time of data collection providers had only had one or two Knowledge Hub meetings and had not yet had the opportunity to engage with industry due to the early stages of the Knowledge Hubs.

Limitations to school-based providers

One of the main reported limitations of the Knowledge Hubs was the limited relevance to school-based providers. Senior staff in schools reported that, in practice, one person could fulfil multiple support roles. However, roles such as career advisers, T Level tutors, and industrial placement administrators were discussed as single posts during Knowledge Hub meetings, as was typical for colleges. Staff in schools wanted more recognition that the school structure and role responsibility was different from that of colleges. Interviewees believed that schools required more tailored support to help them deliver T Levels successfully than the Knowledge Hubs had offered to date.

“We wear multiple hats. T Levels is one small part of my job, and when we go along to these things I’m thinking, ‘well, actually, that doesn’t fit with the kind of roles that I do, or... anybody else in the school does.’ Schools are very different to colleges, and if schools are to make T Levels work, they must centre the CPD for schools, not for specific roles within colleges.”

Senior Leader (November 2019)

Teacher Regional Improvement Projects (TRIPs)

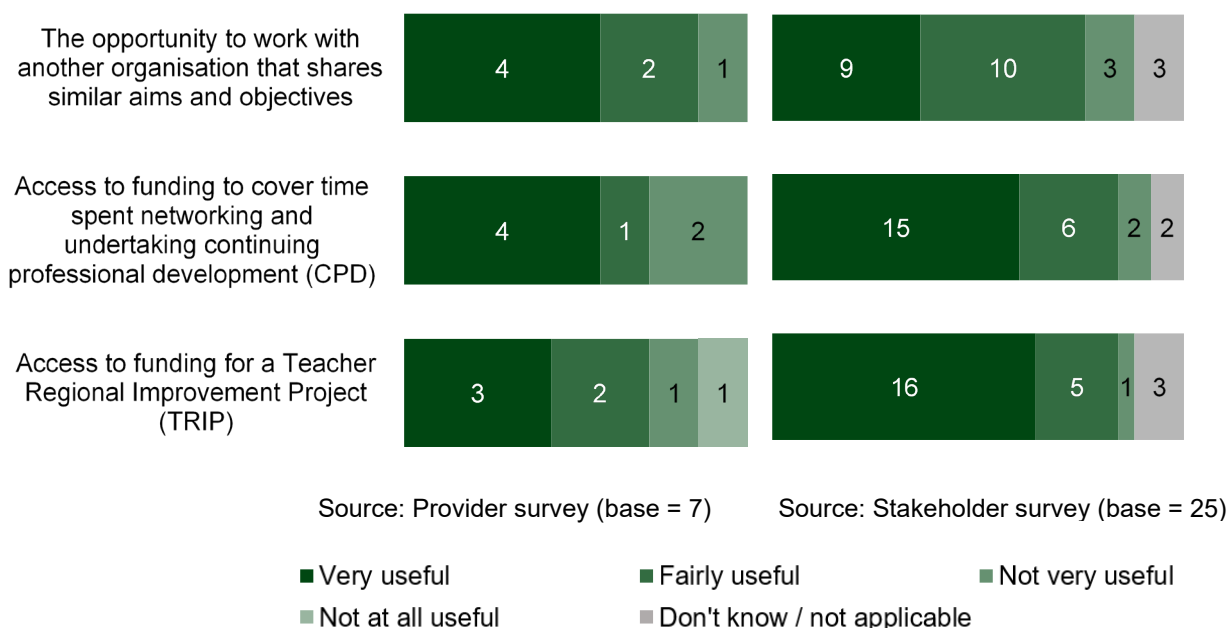
Strengths of TRIPs

Interview findings showed that most of the case study providers had been part of a TRIP, either as a lead or a partner. Some providers had been involved in several TRIPs, as a lead on one and as a partner on others. A few providers had opted to lead, or participate in, just one TRIP.

Providers participating in a TRIP were asked if the statements detailed in Figure 19 (overleaf) influenced them to apply. The opportunity to work with other organisations that shared similar aims and objectives had influenced most of the seven surveyed. More of the 25 stakeholders surveyed believed that access to funding would “strongly influence” providers compared to the opportunity to work collaboratively.

Provider interviewees deemed TRIPs useful for several reasons but mainly because they encouraged collaboration among providers. Provider staff valued the opportunity to develop and carry out projects relevant to the delivery and the student experience of T Levels. This reflected TRIP aims and objectives, such as improving placement experiences for students, the use of digital technologies to engage students and embedding maths, English and digital in placements.

Figure 19: Factors influencing providers' decision to apply to participate in a TRIP⁴¹



Providers who had been awarded TRIPs noted that their projects would help to develop an evidence base, and hoped that findings would help to inform future practice. Some interviewees commented that although providers had been delivering vocational courses for some time, T Levels presented “new uncertainties” related to the delivery of courses and the student experience. TRIPs also provided an opportunity to explore new ideas. For instance, one senior leader noted that they were curious about how ‘blended’⁴² and ‘flip’⁴³ approaches to learning could be applied to the delivery of T Levels. The provider felt that their TRIP would help contribute to the evidence base and would develop a flexible approach to delivering T Levels.

“There are so many unknowns with T Levels. One of the knowns is that it’s going to require a more flexible approach to deliver and, therefore, we want staff to understand ‘blended’ and ‘flip’ learning beyond being a concept.”

⁴¹ Low base sizes for both provider and stakeholder surveys. As such the evidence presented is anecdotal.

⁴² Where online and face-to-face learning are delivered together.

⁴³ Where face-to-face learning is preceded by online or video activity.

Limitations of TRIPs

Limitations of TRIPs were associated with the short timeframes providers were given to deliver projects and DfE/ETFs stipulations which related to how providers could use the remission funding⁴⁴. Some providers felt that the short timescales to deliver projects prevented medium to long-term benefits from being realised, and would have liked the projects to run for longer. Another provider noted that the TRIPs were due to be completed before the final technical specifications were released. This meant that providers could not align their TRIP outcomes with the curriculum and assessment objectives.

“The TRIP that we’ve written would perhaps have been more beneficial to go across an entire academic year [...] We opted to lead a TRIP and we’re also involved in a second as well, but getting everything done by February, there is a risk that we’re going to finish that TRIP, again, before we’ve got a specification in our hands.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

The remission funding awarded for TRIPs was felt by some provider interviewees to be insufficient to cover the associated costs, particularly once it had been split between the partner organisations. One provider said that their organisation had to make a substantial financial contribution to cover the costs associated with staff CPD.

“Divided by 4 colleges, it’s not a lot of money. And it actually pays for one person out of management information systems, one person out of finance, 2 people out of careers, per college. In reality, I’m sending 5 people out of management information systems, 2 people out of HR, 4 people out of data. In reality, it’s not even paying for the activity that is actually happening, so it’s just contributing towards that activity.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Conversely, other provider senior leaders said they sent staff unnecessarily on CPD to ensure that the remission funds were used. These interviewees would have valued more autonomy to decide how to spend the funding. One senior leader noted that splitting the

⁴⁴ Organisations involved in the Knowledge Hub; Teacher Regional Improvement Projects (TRIPs) were allocated £25,000 to be used for remission to allow staff from across their organisation to access the full T Level Professional Development (TLPD) offer. Those involved in TRIPs were expected to engage in the wider support offer and use their learning to realise their key project outcomes, which supported their preparedness for T Level delivery.

funding into pots to cover staff CPD had not provided value for money. Stipulations associated with remission funding meant it could only be spent on recuperating costs against staff attending CPD, as such some providers felt they had sent staff unnecessarily on CPD, just to ensure the money was used.

“We’ve got to use this £25,000 on remission. I’ve mentioned all that CPD that people are going on and a lot of it is relevant and important but there’s probably some under the edges where you think it’s not massively necessary, but because we need to claim this money, we might as well send you on it.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Some interviewees noted that the remission funds could only be used for TLPD CPD and not CPD offered by other organisations. These interviewees noted that it would have benefited staff to attend specialist CPD not included in the TLPD offer, which would have helped to meet staff’s specialist skills gaps.

“The [staff] found some online courses that they would like to undertake... about £250 a person, so £1,000 spend that would be perfect for that TRIP fund to be spent on. It would add value, it would certainly move us forward in terms of their skills within that arena, but at the moment I can’t spend it on that.”

Senior Leader (November 2019)

6.5. Professional Practice

Employer engagement

A few stakeholders felt providers increasingly understood the importance of developing relationships with industry and that implementing the T Level offer had compelled more providers to engage with employers. However, stakeholders noted that some providers had struggled to forge links with industry. Interviewees identified the following challenges providers had faced in engaging employers to secure staff and student placements:

- an absence of existing industry contacts which made it difficult to build connections;
- local competition for placements (i.e. local providers targeting the same employers); and
- access to large employers depending on geography (particularly relevant for rural providers).

An absence of existing contacts

Some provider interviewees reported little or no existing relationships with employers. This was more common among those providers developing the Digital Production, Design and Development and the Design, Surveying and Planning for Construction T Levels. These providers felt less confident and knowledgeable about engaging with industry, largely because they had not previously offered courses with a placement option. The providers articulated concerns about reaching out to employers 'cold', the time it took to explain T Levels and the challenges in selling the potential benefits to employers.

“Employers want to know what’s expected of them as well, and how does this differ to having an apprentice, and why [they] should choose this? A lot of employers will deliberately not pick up the phone because they just don’t want to get involved.”

Subject Lead (November 2019)

By comparison, interviews with some providers offering Childcare described well-developed, existing relationships with employers. These interviewees were able to leverage those existing relationships and build on them as they developed the Childcare T Level.

“Students have to do huge amounts of hours [for placement] already with the BTECs we currently offer, they have to do way more hours than the T Levels, so we've already got those relationships with employers.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Another senior leader reported existing strong relationships with employers as a result of all their teaching staff undertaking CPD industry placements every year. The provider envisaged that they would use the same employers for staff and student placements.

“On our annual appraisals, our staff have to go and do three days back in their industry. So, we already have good connections with employers and we’re looking at it from the point of view of Industry Insight placements and student placements, utilising those existing employers and connections.”

Senior Leader (November 2019)

Geographical issues

The majority of interviewees noted that there was local competition for placements, which resulted in providers targeting the same local employers. Although recognised as an issue among most providers, it was one particularly relevant to those located in rural areas. These providers also faced the added barrier of the cost of travelling to larger cities to access employers.

“Where we live, it’s very rural. There are only so many employers. And then we’ve got some key competition players that we’re fighting against ... And it’s expensive to travel (nearest cities), they’re too far away.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Providers based in rural areas also noted that there was a limited number of medium-sized employers in their locality, meaning there was increased competition among providers. Senior leaders and subject leads noted that small businesses could only host small numbers of staff and student placements and they met with limited success when approaching these employers. Stakeholders agreed and added it was more challenging for providers to engage smaller employers due to their size and their limited capacity to liaise with colleges/schools.

One senior leader attended an event hosted through the Knowledge Hubs where challenges to employer engagement were discussed. During the event, it was suggested that providers start by engaging with smaller businesses. The senior leader found that advice on how to approach and engage such employers to be useful. For instance, the interviewee noted that information about the importance of developing relationships with employers and providing details about the benefits to the employer quite early on was useful.

“There was quite a lot of insight [at the event] in how to approach some of the businesses. It was advising us to aim low, go for the smaller businesses, and hopefully, we’ll be able to engage with the bigger employers in the future.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Strengths of Industry Insights

Stakeholder and provider staff alike agreed that strong links with industry are vital for T Level success. Qualitative data from interviews with stakeholders and providers showed that Industry Insight was deemed to be the ‘most’ important aspect of the TLPD offer because placements offered dual professionalism; that is, knowledge, conceptual understanding and expertise in teaching and learning, matched with expert subject

knowledge and skills. The feedback from Table 2 illustrates that most delegates valued ETF Industry Insight events.

Industry Insights were valued because they provided current industry knowledge and consequently helped to increase staff confidence in teaching technical qualifications. Importantly, they provided staff with up-to-date, hands-on industry experience, and for some, the opportunity to start mapping the course structure and curriculum against the technical specifications, as discussed below.

Most provider interviewees said they received funding to undertake Industry Insight. Some had been awarded funding for work-shadowing placements⁴⁵, others work placements⁴⁶ and some staff placements⁴⁷. Provider staff identified a number of benefits of undertaking Industry Insight, including:

- staff developed first-hand industry experience;
- staff forged links with employers; and
- the placements helped provider staff to understand how T Level technical specifications could be mapped onto curriculum design.

Developing first-hand industry experience was deemed important for those who undertook placements. Interviewees who had previously been employed in industry before teaching spoke about the quick pace of change in industry and how knowledge can quickly become outdated. The opportunity to spend time with an employer to gain up-to-date industry knowledge was seen to be invaluable.

“Having worked in industry years ago, it’ll be interesting to see the difference compared to now, and how much it’s advanced.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

Industry Insight was also seen as valuable in helping provider staff understand the skills, knowledge and qualities that employers were seeking from employees. Teachers also noted that the knowledge resulting from undertaking the placement would be used to contextualise their teaching by using industry-relevant examples.

⁴⁵ Work shadowing, lasted a day or half a day. This was an opportunity for staff to observe industry colleagues in their day-to-day roles in order to gain a better understanding of the workplace.

⁴⁶ Work placements lasted one or two days and involved both observation and interaction.

⁴⁷ Staff placements in industry were of a longer duration and provided a more immersive opportunity and practical experience.

“Particularly for digital because it’s so fast-paced... It just gives that credibility, perhaps, when talking to students and to say, ‘Here’s an example that I saw on my industry placement.’”

Teaching Staff (November 2019)

Other providers noted that the Industry Insights provided an opportunity to raise awareness of T Levels among employers. Engagement with employers through the placements provided the opportunity to communicate information about what T Levels involve and what role their organisations could play in their delivery, through the offer of placements for students.

“It will hopefully be a good thing in terms of us getting into industry and seeing what industry is doing, updating our skills and updating our perception of industry. And not only that, but the other way around also. Allowing industry to see what we’re doing and also what T Levels are about a little bit, and hopefully that will pay dividends in terms of recruiting placement employers as well.”

Teaching Staff (October 2019)

One of the main benefits from provider staff taking part in a placement was the opportunity to forge relationships with new employers. This was particularly important for those providers implementing the Digital Production, Design and Development T Level without existing links with industry.

Industry Insights also helped provider staff to understand how T Level technical specifications could be mapped in to curriculum design, to better inform students⁴⁸. Some providers had used placements to help them understand the expectations employers will have about students who undertake placements with them. This was seen to be important in providing students with details of what would be expected of them if they wished to pursue a T Level.

⁴⁸ The final technical specifications were not released until April 2020. However several interviewees had seen draft specifications circulated for feedback at events held by awarding organisations.

“Having an awareness and being able to give [students] the advice and guidance, when they join the T Level, [about] the type of expectations of them, the kind of things they might have to do in a placement, or the role they’ll play, because they’ve only ever been in education for quite a long time.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

Some provider staff agreed that the scheduled release date of the final T Level technical specifications had meant that they were unable to maximise the placement opportunity. However, other interviewees had used draft technical specifications to consult with employers to ensure that they and students would get the most out of their placements. One senior leader stated that they had approached the employer before the placement started to outline the areas they would like to cover throughout the placement. It was envisaged that speaking with host employers beforehand would result in staff getting the most out of their placements. For example, one teacher noted that they had spoken to the host employer beforehand and explained that they would like to dedicate some time to scoping student placements.

“We’re doing a 3-day placement during our half-term break. I spoke to [the employer] about the specification. I wanted to make it more meaningful... rather than just going in and being shown around, which is not really helpful. I wanted to go through the current spec we have, look at the details, and clarify whatever it is we’d like to see. Hopefully, that’s what our students will then go and see, and it’ll be more precise, and more effective for them.”

Teaching Staff (November 2019)

Limitations of Industry Insights

Provider staff identified several limitations of Industry Insight. These included:

- a wish for further clarity on the application process and the outcomes of applications; and
- ensuring that staff who were in greatest need of a placement were prioritised.

A few senior leaders said the guidance issued by ETF was unclear. They were unsure whether all staff who wished to undertake a placement were required to submit separate application forms, as opposed to whether a single application per provider was required. Multiple applications duplicated effort and took a significant amount of time to write.

Others stated that they had to chase ETF for the outcome of their application. Those who had not been successful were often not notified and would have liked some feedback as

to why their applications were unsuccessful. Some had contacted ETF for specific feedback but received no response. Others who had been successful were also not notified.

A few providers expressed concern over the assessment criteria for applications. They observed that staff who were in greatest need of an Industry Insight (because of a lack of industry experience) had been rejected. In contrast, other staff, for whom Industry Insight participation was a lower priority (e.g. senior leaders and teachers who had recent experience in industry) were successful. As such, staff were puzzled about how decisions were made about the award of placement grants.

“I was the only one that was successful, so I raised it with ETF to say, ‘Am I the right person?’ Because I’m not a practitioner, I manage the department... Out of all of my team, the guy who spent 30 years working as a programmer was the only one who got awarded it. So, he’s the one who least needs it out of the team.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

Finding an employer to host a placement was challenging for a few staff who had been awarded an Industry Insight placement. These interviewees noted that their organisation had few connections with local employers. The interviewees had to dedicate a lot of time to develop relationships with employers and they expressed concern over the amount of time and effort that was required. It is important to note that regional Knowledge Hubs had the remit to support staff to locate and secure placements. However this may not have materialised due to the Knowledge Hubs being in the early stages of delivery⁴⁹.

“I can contact a company and organise a day for myself to spend in industry shadowing or working at that place and then they’ll fund that for me... Yes, the only thing I was struggling with was finding the placement... because I have not got that many contacts.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

⁴⁹ Longitudinal interviews would have provided further insights in to whether Knowledge Hubs were successful in supporting staff in locating and securing placements.

6.6. Suggested improvements to Strand 4

Suggested improvements to the Knowledge Hubs, TRIPs, Professional Practice and Industry Insight are summarised below.

Improvement: Help to forge closer links with industry.

Detail: Additional support could include centralised communication material from ETF to help in building knowledge of T Levels among employers, and help to facilitate initial contacts with employers.

Improvement: Greater support to arrange placements with local companies.

Detail: Some staff would like ETF to assist with finding placement opportunities locally. More support in helping providers to match staff background and skill sets to appropriate placements would also be helpful.

Improvement: Timing of Industry Insights placements.

Detail: Placements had to be completed in a relatively short time window, which was challenging for those who did not already have good industry links.

Provider staff felt that attending placements after the final technical specifications had been released would have been even more useful.

Improvement: Application feedback.

Detail: Staff would value feedback when Industry Insight applications have been rejected.

6.7. Chapter summary

This chapter presented evaluation findings related to Knowledge Hubs, Teacher TRIPs and Professional Practice (Strand 4).

Perceptions of Knowledge Hubs, TRIPs and Professional Practice

- The value of Knowledge Hubs and TRIPs in promoting and encouraging collaboration and sharing of learning across the sector was acknowledged by providers and stakeholders alike.
- Knowledge Hubs provided “coherency” to the TLPD offer and were a mechanism to embed CPD from the other Strands of activity, and to develop more innovative CPD.
- TRIPs encouraged collaboration among T Level providers through evidence-based problem-solving, with the overall objective to help improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Industry Insight was deemed to be the ‘most’ important aspect of the TLPD because placements offered dual professionalism; that is, knowledge, conceptual understanding and expertise in teaching and learning, matched with expert subject knowledge and skills.

Engagement with Knowledge Hubs, Teacher TRIPs and Professional Practice

- Most of the providers who provided primary evidence for the evaluation were part of a Knowledge Hub, and seven of the 24 providers surveyed had registered to be part of a TRIP.
- Most providers participated in TRIPs because they wanted an opportunity to work with another organisation sharing similar aims and objectives. Access to funding was influential for some but not all.
- ETF feedback forms recorded high levels of satisfaction among delegates for all events. Industry Insight and Professional Practice events were rated particularly highly for all measures, including improving knowledge of T Levels, building confidence to deliver them and positively impacting on professional development.

The usefulness of Knowledge Hubs and TRIPs

- Anecdotal survey findings suggest that providers felt the most useful aspects of Knowledge Hubs were the sharing of teaching and learning practice among different providers and the provision of T Level CPD by Knowledge Hubs.

- Qualitative interviewees noted that the benefits of Knowledge Hubs were developing existing networks and sharing learning and support.
- Some school-based providers felt hub activity was less relevant to them and was more targeted to colleges and independent CPD providers.
- TRIPs encouraged collaboration among providers; and projects helped to develop an evidence base and inform future practice. However, providers had short timeframes to deliver projects and the ETF placed limitations on how providers could use the remission funding.

Employer engagement and usefulness of Industry Insight

- Providers reported considerable variation in existing relationships with industry. The key challenges identified in engaging employers to secure staff and student placements were the local competition for placements (especially in rural areas) and the absence of existing industry contacts through which to build partnerships.
- Provider staff identified a number of benefits arising from Industry Insight, including first-hand industry experience for staff, the links with employers developed by staff and then making connections between T Level technical specifications and curriculum design.
- Limitations identified included an unclear application process and failing to ensure staff with the greatest need were placed.

7. Organisational Readiness (Strand 5)

7.1. Introduction

Organisational readiness was the last Strand to launch. The first events were held in September 2019. The first event feedback forms received from the ETF for Strand 5 are dated October 2019. This means there was little chance for interviewees to engage with Strand 5 prior to the end of the fieldwork so there is no qualitative evidence on the Strand's strengths and limitations. We do, however, present analysis of feedback data from ETF monitoring forms. Qualitative findings from October 2019 cover provider staff's initial perceptions about organisational readiness to deliver T Levels in September 2020. This means any subsequent change in views after that point is not captured in data collected via primary research methods. The chapter concludes with suggested improvements and a summary of key findings. Perceptions of Organisational Readiness

7.2. Perceptions of Organisational Readiness

Several stakeholders stated that Organisational Readiness was an important Strand of activity. Many said it was important that middle managers were supported in understanding the implications of T Levels for their organisations as a whole, as well as for the teams they lead. Several stakeholders recognised that T Levels would bring about significant changes. Successful implementation of these changes required strong leadership and management from middle managers.

“Strand 5 [focusses] on middle managers. If that isn't right, then T Levels aren't going to happen. That middle manager role, I'm thinking curriculum leader, head of department, is going to be absolutely key for T Levels, and quite a lot hinges on middle managers.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

Middle managers were described as being key to the successful implementation of T Levels because they managed the capacity to deliver them, planned timetables and the curriculum and managed staff requirements for CPD. One stakeholder noted that middle managers would need to assess the skills and knowledge of their current workforce, understand any skills and knowledge gaps, plan CPD for staff and recruit new members of staff. Another stakeholder noted the T Level delivery teams might be composed of staff with a variety of skills and experience. New staff might be recruited from industry and have different skills and experience to existing teaching staff. CPD for middle managers was, therefore, necessary to ensure that they had support, and the skills and knowledge to navigate changes to their role.

“For middle managers, I think it’s about making sure that they’ve got the right skills to be able to plan a timetable and to plan their curriculum for something that looks very different. And also, to potentially manage a group of staff that is very differently constituted. If you’ve got people coming in from industry, they will have different skills and experience, different expectations and be probably recruited through other routes, so I think that’s the need.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

Strand 5 also targeted governors, although there was little mention of this audience during interviews, possibly because this was a later adjustment to the Strand’s target audience. One stakeholder did talk about the role of governors and the importance for them to be involved in TLPD CPD activity. They noted that it was important that governors understood T Levels as a qualification, and the implications for preparation and delivery of T Levels. It was anticipated that Strand 5 CPD would enable governors to contribute to informed decisions at executive meetings.

“Governors, I think, need to understand what T Levels are about, so that they can effectively guide the Executive on the decisions that they make about T Levels.”

Stakeholder (June 2019)

7.3. Barriers to Early Engagement with Organisational Readiness CPD

At the time of case study visits, all subject leads and senior leaders said they had not taken any Organisational Readiness modules. It is important to note that of the wider reasons for engagement with Strand 5 activity was that CPD modules were not released until mid-September 2019 and only three events occurred in 2019. As noted earlier qualitative fieldwork was conducted during October/November 2019 thus subsequent engagement with Strand 5 CPD was not captured. Other reasons offered for non-engagement were:

- the costs associated with travelling to face-to-face CPD events;
- not wanting to engage until staff had seen the subject specifications; and
- staff being unaware that modules existed.

A few providers said that they had not yet engaged with Strand 5 CPD due to the costs associated with travelling to face-to-face CPD events. Two provider staff noted that most

of the CPD events were held in London⁵⁰. The cost of travelling to London for a few members of staff was costly and was not deemed to be cost efficient for these providers.

“A lot of the events are in London, and when you live and you work down in the South West, it’s not even actually the time because nobody begrudges giving up the time [...] but it’s so expensive. So if we want to send a couple of people to London for the day for the event, even if the T Level events are free, we’re talking £500 and actually, that money needs to be spent on our students.”

Senior Leader (October 2019)

A few providers had not yet engaged with Strand 5 CPD because they did not have enough functional information about the T Level curriculum, assessments and funding. These interviewees felt that they were not missing out on the CPD and said they would engage when they had more detailed information.

Technical specifications were again raised as an issue for Strand 5 because of the challenges in accurately assessing skills and knowledge gaps and develop CPD plans without the full specification details. One senior leader noted that they would be unable to assess which members of staff would be suitable to teach the curriculum, and what extra CPD may be required, without the technical specifications.

Another senior leader noted that the planning for staff CPD and engagement with TLPD will depend on the similarity between T Level content and assessment and the existing vocational courses. More CPD would be required if their analysis of technical specifications identified knowledge and skills gaps.

“If those [specifications] come back and they are starkly different to what we are currently doing, I think then the engagement with the CPD will ramp up rapidly. [...] If the standardisation and moderation looks very similar to technical qualifications that we already have, [...] I think [...] a webinar [would be sufficient] to engage with, get the facts and then move forward.”

Subject Lead (October 2019)

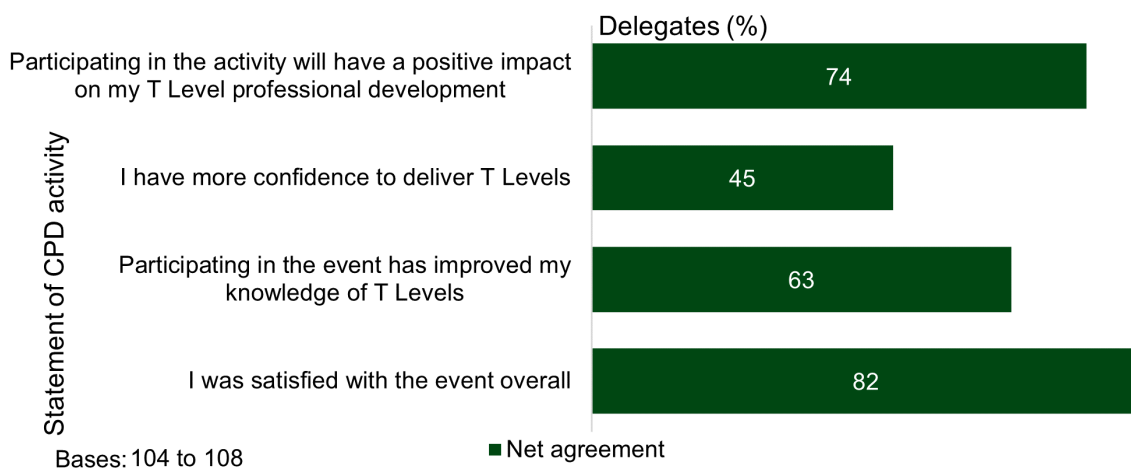
A few interviewees were unaware of modules or CPD activity targeting middle managers. This was likely the result of the timing of these interviews (May 2019) when the TLPD

⁵⁰ Two of the three events in 2019 were in London, the other was in Greater Manchester

offer was under development, or because senior leaders had not cascaded the information down yet (see Chapter 2).

The limited engagement inherent in the qualitative evidence was confirmed in ETF's monitoring data. Feedback forms from a total of 12 events were provided by ETF and nine of these events were held after qualitative fieldwork was concluded. An estimated 140 delegates attended these twelve Strand 5 events. As with other Strands, overall satisfaction was high with a net agreement of +82%. The events had less of an impact on confidence to deliver T Levels and improving knowledge of T Levels.

Figure 20: Delegate views of Organisational Readiness events



Source: aggregated ETF event feedback data

7.4. Suggested improvements to Organisational Readiness

Suggested improvements to Organisational Readiness are summarised below.

Improvement: Provide travel reimbursement for smaller providers to attend CPD events.

Detail: Travelling to face-to-face events was costly and not cost-effective for smaller providers, who often decided to not attend CPD.

Travel reimbursement would help to increase engagement with Strand activities.

7.5. Chapter summary

Perceptions of Organisational Readiness CPD

- Interviewees felt middle managers would play an instrumental role in the successful implementation of T Levels. They managed the capacity to deliver T Levels, planned timetables and curriculum and managed staff requirements for CPD.
- CPD activity for middle managers was vital to provide the guidance, skills and knowledge to navigate changes to their role.

Engagement with Organisational Readiness CPD

- Interviewees were yet to engage with Organisational Readiness CPD, primarily due to the timing of the interviews. This Strand became operational just prior to the conduction of most qualitative fieldwork with providers (September to November, 2019). The main reasons offered for non-engagement were:
 - the costs associated with travelling to face-to-face CPD events;
 - delaying engagement until staff had seen the subject specifications; and
 - staff being unaware that modules existed.

8. Appendices

Annex 1: Organisational Tool A data analysis

A total of 186 assessments were completed between May 2019 and April 2020. However, two types of duplicate data were present. The first type was duplicate responses from the same person within a week of each other: many of these were received at the same time. These have been treated as multiple entries and the most recent was retained for analysis.

The second type was a small number of duplicate responses received a few weeks or months apart. Although suitable for analysis of change, only nine such responses were received, which is too small a sample size for meaningful analysis of change. Again, the most recent response from these individuals was selected for analysis.

Finally, several responses from ETF staff or delivery organisations were identified and removed.

The data cleaning resulted in 150 completed leadership tool assessment forms. The following analysis looks at respondents' views for each of the four categories in turn, then summarises the key conclusions drawn for all leadership tool assessments. (Note: the unit of analysis is respondents, not the organisation they represent. The wording of the self-assessment questions specifically ask for an individual's view of their organisation's position. Deriving an organisational view by, for example, using the average position of all multiple responses would be technically possible. However, such analysis is not guaranteed to genuinely represent the view of the organisation as a whole.)

Several scales were used by ETF depending on the question:

- "Understanding" of issues, "ability" to deliver, preparedness, awareness, etc.: 1 = very limited, 2 = quite limited, 3 = reasonable, 4 = excellent;
- Confidence: 1 = not confident, 2 = limited confidence, 3 = quite confident, 4 = very confident;
- Rating of the depth of changes required to be ready to implement T Levels: 1 = significant change needed, 2 = considerable change needed, 3 = some changes needed, 4 = limited change needed; and
- Whether teams or responsibilities for delivering T levels had been set up: 1 = no, 2 = some scoping, 3 = setting up a team, 4 = yes.

Annex 2: Organisational Tool A self-assessment questions

Strategy section

- Q1. How would you rate your **current level of understanding** of the new T Levels?
- Q2. How would you rate the **current level** of understanding of T Levels across your entire organisation?
- Q3. How would you rate your organisation's **ability** to deliver the next wave of **T Levels** that will be introduced from **2021**?
- Q4. How **confident** are you that your **current organisational strategy** addresses the requirements of# the new T Levels from **2020 to 2025**? (You will be able to explore this in more detail in the rest of your self-assessment.)
- Q5. How would you rate the **ability** of your organisation's **change and programme management** systems and practices to respond effectively to T Levels?
- Q6. How would you rate your organisation's **plans and preparations** for marketing T Levels to different audiences?
- Q7. How would you rate your organisation's **current internal communications** and **sharing of up-to-date information** about the new T Levels?

Leadership section

- Q1. How would you rate the **current level of awareness** about T Levels across your **organisation's governing body or board**?
- Q2. How would you rate your organisation's **accountability structures and reporting processes**, and their capacity to support T Levels?
- Q3. Does **your organisation** have a **dedicated team** (or **role-specific accountabilities**) responsible for the introduction, delivery and resourcing of T Levels?
- Q4. How would you rate current levels of confidence and willingness within your organisation **to respond and adapt to the changes** presented by T Levels?
- Q5. How would you rate how your organisation monitors progress with T Level preparations, including **measuring progress and readiness** at different levels in your organisation?
- Q6. How would you rate your organisation's **current methods** for **identifying potential risk or concern** relevant to T Levels?
- Q7. How would you rate the **scale of change** presented by **T Levels** for your organisation?

Systems section

Q1. How would you rate your organisation's ability to **effectively secure, manage and allocate funding** for T Levels?

Q2. How would you rate your organisation's **current preparations and readiness** for T Levels in terms **of its operational systems and processes**?

Q3. How would you rate your organisation's **current readiness** for T Levels in terms of **necessary equipment and infrastructure**?

Q4. How would you rate your organisation's **current readiness** in terms of updating **organisational policies and procedures** to support T Levels?

Q5. How would you rate your **organisation's current planning and preparations** for T Levels, in terms **of appropriate equality, access and inclusion policies and procedures**?

Workforce section

Q1. How would you rate the **current ability** of your **workforce** to deliver the **first wave T Levels**?

Q2. How would you rate the **ability** of your **workforce** to deliver the **2021 T Levels**?

Q3. How would you rate your organisation's overall **current readiness** for T Levels?

Q4. How would you rate your **workforce** in terms of **current industry experience, insights into contemporary workplace practices, and professional links**?

Q5. How would you rate your organisation's **current readiness** for T Levels, in terms of **human resources management**?

Annex 3: Organisational Tool B data analysis

A total of 63 assessments were completed between May 2019 and April 2020. As with the leadership tool data, duplicates were present. Responses from ETF staff or delivery organisations were identified and removed. Data cleaning resulted in 52 unique, completed curriculum tool assessment forms.

Responses were also received from those interested in T Level pathways outside of those covered in TLPD's initial phase. This analysis covers only those three pathways set to start September 2020: Design, Surveying and Planning (Construction); Digital Production, Design and Development (Digital); and Childcare (Education)⁵¹. Twenty-eight of the 52 unique forms were completed by an organisational representative from one of those three pathways. The low volume of responses relating to TLPD's initial phase make sub-group analysis inadvisable.

The following analysis looks at respondents' views for each of the four categories in turn, then summarises the key conclusions drawn for all curriculum tool assessments. As per the leadership tool data, the unit of analysis is curriculum assessment respondents, not the organisation they represent. Two scales were used by ETF depending on the question:

- All but two questions asked about "understanding" of issues, "ability" to deliver, awareness, etc. using this scale: 1 = very limited, 2 = quite limited, 3 = reasonable, 4 = excellent;
- The other two questions considered preparedness where: 1 = very limited preparations at this stage, 2 = limited preparations at this stage, 3 = preparations underway but early stages, 4 = well prepared;

⁵¹ The data only labels this pathway as "Education" – the childcare element is assumed to be correct

Annex 4: Organisational Tool B self-assessment questions

Planning section

- Q1. How would you rate your organisation's **preparedness to deliver** this T Level?
- Q2. How would you rate your organisation's **planning and preparations** for managing the **different delivery requirements** for this T Level?
- Q3. How would you rate the ability of your **staff** to **design and develop** high-quality **teaching and learning programmes** to support this T Level?
- Q4. How would you rate the ability of your **staff** to **design and develop schemes of work** in line with the outline T Level content?
- Q5. How would you rate your staff's **current ability** to **source, produce and adapt** level appropriate, motivating **teaching, learning and assessment resources** to support this T Level?
- Q6. How would you rate your staff's **current ability** to develop teaching and learning programmes which support **integrated performance** of technical content to prepare students for this T Level?
- Q7. How would you rate your staff's **current ability** to set, measure and maintain **consistent standards and quality** in teaching and learning (and preparation for assessment) for this T Level?
- Q8. How would you rate your staff's **current ability** to measure and assess **synoptic performance** for your T Levels?

Engagement section

- Q1. How would you rate your organisation's current level of **engagement with employers** relevant to those T Levels, including their occupational specialisms to be introduced in **2020 and 2021**?
- Q2. How would you rate your organisation's **current** level of **sector-related and occupationally relevant specialist expertise** for your T Level/s?
- Q3. How would you rate your organisation's **ability to increase employer involvement** for this T Level delivery and to meet their expectations for **quality and standards**?
- Q4. How would you rate your organisation's **current ability** to work with local, regional and national employers to **source, confirm and manage** Industry Placements **from 2020**?

Workforce section

- Q1. How would you rate your organisation's **current ability** to support **attainment and achievement in English** at Level 2, and above (as part of T Levels)?
- Q2. How would you rate your organisation's **current ability** to support **attainment and**

achievement in maths at Level 2, and above (as part of this T Levels)?

Q3. How would you rate your organisation's **current ability** to support **attainment and achievement in digital knowledge and skills** appropriate for development, use and application in T Levels?

Q4. How would you rate your organisation's **current ability** to support **teaching and learning** by specialists in these areas, and to support more general development of English, maths and digital skills through T Levels?

Q5. How would you rate your organisation's **ability to develop and maintain the professional and occupationally specific knowledge and expertise** of staff, and to reflect current commercial and industry standards and specialist practices?

Systems section

Q1. How would you rate your organisation's **planning and preparations for timetabling** the new T Levels?

Q2. How would you rate your organisation's **planning and preparations** in terms of T Level Technical Qualification **assessment scheduling and delivery**?

Q3. How would you rate your organisation's **readiness** in terms of **new or additional operational requirements** to support T Levels?

Q4. How would you rate your organisation's **current ability** to **identify areas of potential risk** relevant to your T Levels?

Q5. How would you rate your organisation's **current quality assurance arrangements**, and their ability to support the new T Levels?

Q6. How would you rate your organisation's **current systems and processes** for ensuring that delivery supports **good practice** and reflects **regulatory and legislative changes**?

Annex 5: Practitioner Tool data analysis

The self-assessment scale ranges from scores of 1 (low) to 4 (high). The charts within this section use mean scores to compare between measures. Several scales were used by ETF depending on the question:

- Most measures cover "understanding" of issues, "ability" to deliver, preparedness, awareness, etc.: 1 = very limited, 2 = quite limited, 3 = reasonable, 4 = excellent;
- Confidence: 1 = not confident, 2 = limited confidence, 3 = quite confident, 4 = very confident;
- Familiarity: 1 = no knowledge, 2 = not familiar, 3 = quite familiar, 4 = very familiar; and
- Rating of readiness to deliver T Levels: 1 = I don't know what will change for T Levels, or how to find out, 2 = I know of some changes but am unclear what I need to do to prepare, 3 = I am aware of the key changes and am starting to plan and prepare, 4 = I feel ready to deliver T Levels;

A total of 348 practitioner assessments were completed between May 2019 and April 2020. As in the organisational data, duplicates were present, and responses from ETF staff or delivery organisations were identified and removed. Data cleaning resulted in 304 unique, completed Practitioner Self-Assessments.

Given the larger response, some cross-analysis has been completed comparing views by role (curriculum managers/leaders compared to teachers/trainers and other staff) and time of assessment (2019 versus 2020).

Annex 6: Practitioner Tool self-assessment questions

General questions

- Q1. How familiar are you with the main features and structure of T Levels?
- Q2. How would you rate your current readiness to deliver T Levels?
- Q3. Looking at the outline content published so far, how confident are you about delivering the occupational subject content for your route/s and T level/s?
- Q4. How would you rate your opportunities to work with colleagues within your organisation to prepare for T Levels and to support one another?

Pedagogy questions

- Q1. How confident do you feel about producing schemes of work and learning resources that take account, for example, of the substantial size of the technical qualification the level of demand and the synoptic nature of key assessments?
- Q2. How would you rate your current ability to use initial or diagnostic assessment for technical content at Level 2 and Level 3?
- Q3. How would you rate your current ability to use formative assessment with occupational content at Level 2 and Level 3?
- Q4. How confident are you about developing and improving synoptic performance?

Practice questions

- Q1. How would you rate your ability to support students and to assess their effectiveness at integrating and applying knowledge, skills and behaviours for realistic tasks?
- Q2. How would you rate your current opportunities (and links with employers and industry) to improve your own professional knowledge, expertise and occupationally relevant practices?
- Q3. How would you rate the current options for accessing professional development to maintain your technical knowledge and occupationally relevant expertise?

Assessment questions

- Q1. How familiar are you with the assessment and grading of the new T Levels?
- Q2. How would you rate your current ability to prepare students appropriately for different types of assessment?

English, maths and digital skills questions

- Q1. How would you rate your ability to develop skills in English through T Level

programmes?

Q2. How would you rate your ability to develop skills in maths through T Level programmes?

Q3. How would you rate your ability to develop digital skills through T Level programmes?

Progression questions

Q1. How would you rate your current understanding of different career opportunities and links to employment relevant to T Levels?

Q2. How would you rate your current ability to help students understand, prepare for, aspire to, and identify suitable further or higher education progression opportunities?



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