

DfE's Implementation of T Level Programmes – Central Government's Consultation Response

This Summary

This summary presents the main findings of the consultation, central government's response to the consultation, the key changes and decisions made and the Department for Education's (DfE) next steps.

Main findings

The main findings from the consultation responses included:

1. The DfE outlined that there was strong support for T Levels across different groups of respondents and optimism about the potential of T Levels to transform the technical education system. There were also constructive suggestions to improve the design and implementation of T Levels.
2. Respondents wanted the DfE to be clearer about the purpose of T Levels and their positioning within the education system. This includes their target audience in relation to A levels and apprenticeships, and how a student with a T Level will compare to a student with a level 3 apprenticeship in a similar occupation.
3. There is support for simplification of the existing qualifications system, but only where this is employer-led and does not leave gaps in high quality provision.
4. The need for T Levels to be rigorous, adding value for employers, as well as inclusive of students with additional needs.
5. T Levels need to be as accessible as possible to students with special educational needs or a disability (SEND), including reasonable adjustments in assessments and industry placements.
6. Industry placements are an important part of T Levels, but will be challenging to deliver on a national scale. The DfE outlined that it will need to take action to mitigate inequality of opportunity.
7. There is support for a transition offer to support progression to level 3 provision.
8. There is general support for using an 'in year' funding model initially, rather than a lagged system. This will give providers the additional funding needed to deliver T Levels at the time as they are taught.
9. T Levels will require supportive infrastructure, extensive marketing and time for the benefits to be realised.

Central Government's Response

T Level Design

A series of commitments have been made:

- 1. Technical Qualifications will be externally assessed and graded with an overall Pass grade** - The DfE has decided that the Technical Qualifications will include a six-point grading scale for the core (A* - E) and a three-point grading scale for each occupational specialism (Distinction, Merit, Pass). However, in response to the desire for simplification and ensure the qualification is recognised, the department will introduce an overall T Level Pass grade.
2. For those students that transfer onto another T Level route, the core component will be recognised, as well as partial attainment for those that do not complete the qualification.
- 3. Additional occupation-specific requirements will be included, if they are essential for skilled employment.**
- 4. Support to deliver the industry work placements** - The DfE recognises that there are concerns over the capacity of some employers and providers **to offer industry placements**, as well as the availability of industry placements in some areas with limited numbers of relevant employers. **As a result, the department is putting in place a comprehensive programme of support to address these concerns, which includes:**
 - a. investing significant funding in building the capacity of providers to deliver industry placements through the Capacity and Delivery Fund
 - b. offering an advice and support service for employers, including a simple referral and matchmaking service to providers through the National Apprenticeship Service (NAS)
 - c. providing additional bursary funding in the 2018/19 academic year to help students travel to industry placements
 - d. engaging small employers to establish what support they need to offer industry placements
 - e. clear and simple 'how to' guidance for employers and providers
- 5. Fund maths and English for students who have not yet achieved level 2 in addition to the hours required for other parts of the course.**
6. The DfE will provide additional bursary funding in the 2018/19 academic year to **help students travel to industry placements.**
- 7. The DfE acknowledges that T Level industry placements need to be flexible to accommodate different industries' needs, as well as geographical limitations**, so will adopt a range of models and approaches across different routes and occupations. However, the requirement for a minimum of 45 days for each placement remains and there is flexibility on how it can be delivered.
- 8. Progression onto apprenticeships and higher education** – The DfE acknowledged that some routes may require students to do additional training to reach the full occupational competence before they progress from T Levels onto apprenticeships at level 4. It has committed to considering the best way to achieve full competency once the T Level content has been finalised. It is also working with higher education (HE) providers to facilitate progression from T levels to relevant HE courses, via a bridging course.
- 9. Simplifying the current system - the review of level 3 and below qualifications.** In designing the review, the DfE wants to ensure that continued funding is only available for the group of qualifications that serve a genuine and useful purpose, are of high quality and enable students to progress to meaningful outcomes. The department will set out further details about the review shortly and publish a consultation on the principles by which the review will be guided in due course.

10. **Quality assurance and regulation** - A joint model based on a collaborative arrangement between the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) and Ofqual will be introduced whereby these Technical Qualifications will become a recognised category of qualification and, subject to appropriate consultation, Ofqual's accreditation decisions will form part of a joined up approval process.
11. **Proposed accountability measures** will include destination measures that provide the strongest evidence that T Levels are fit for purpose, as well as measuring completion rates.



T Level Delivery

A further series of commitments have been made:

12. **Supporting providers to deliver T Levels** – The DfE, as a result of the consultation response, has decided to work closely with the sector to develop a programme of support to help providers prepare for the delivery of T Levels. This will include an investment of up to £20 million to improve the quality of teaching over the next 2 years.
13. **Outline content of the first three T Levels has been made available on the IfA's website.** Final **sequencing of the roll-out of other T Levels** will begin once the outline content has been finalised.
14. **Making sure providers' skills needs are met** - There are plans to make sure that skills provision, including T Levels, meets local skills needs. These include plans to introduce Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) and Local Digital Skills Partnerships (LDSPs). These will work within existing local infrastructures, such as Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCAs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), to bring together local businesses and providers to work together to meet current and future skills needs.
15. **The DfE is ensuring it is learning lessons from previous attempts to reform vocational and technical qualifications, particularly from the 14-19 Diplomas.**

Next Steps

The high level T level implementation time line is outlined below.

Key Activities	Spring/ Summer 2018	Autumn/ Winter 2018	Spring/ Summer 2019	Autumn/ Winter 2019	Spring/ Summer 2020	Autumn/ Winter 2020
Work placements delivered with capacity funding		X				
Launch ITT for the procurement of the qualifications		X				
Development of the provider support programme						
Award contract with successful Awarding Organisations			X			
Development of T Level qualifications of AOs						
First teaching of 3 pathways in 2020						X