

# T Level Consultation

## The impact of our consultation response

### Question 3: Do you agree with the proposed approach to assessing technical qualifications?

The Department for Education (DfE) has listened to our concerns about the importance of external, impartial assessments. Licensed AO's will help develop this, subject to an assurance framework from Ofqual, which will be developed once overarching T Level content and requirements are finalised. While our ask for external moderation has been heard, we will continue to press to ensure the system is piloted before full roll out to ensure sustainability and suitability.

### Question 4: Do you agree with the approach to grading technical qualification components?

Following our recommendations in our consultation response, DfE have committed to making the structure simple and less confusing by awarding an overall pass grade. However different elements of the qualification will be graded separately on the certificate, with a six point grading scale (A\* - E) for the core and a three point grading scale (Distinction, Merit, Pass) for occupational specialisms. This will enable businesses to measure and understand a potential candidate's ability and performance.

### Question 5: Do you agree with the approach to maintaining comparable standards of performance for technical qualifications?

The consultation supports our argument for maintaining comparable standards, however the arrangements for how this will be achieved and how, most importantly, employers can be involved, will be set out through the licensing and quality assurance arrangements.

### Questions 6: Do you agree that prior attainment of the core could count if students switch to another T Level within the same route?

DfE plans to proceed with proposals to allow students to transfer their previous attainment for the core to other T Levels in the same route, however these details will be determined once the qualification specifications and assessments have been developed. Employers have called for a clear rationale and equivalence before switches take place, as not all skills are transferable in industries which have different needs and demands.

### Question 7: Do you agree with the proposed approach integrating the work placement within the T level programme?

While we support work placements as part of T Levels, employers in the sector expressed the view that until the T level cluster curriculum/syllabus is available, it is difficult to establish whether a meaningful work placement would be possible. To address this, the DfE advises that it will introduce industry placements on a small scale to begin with and then gradually reach full scale. DfE is currently pilot testing different approaches to the placements and plan to share this information with providers and employers.

### Question 8: Do you agree with the proposed method of appraising the student's performance on their work placement, including the Employer Reference?

As recommended in our response, DfE will now be publishing 'how to' guidance for employers and providers on implementing T Level industry placements. There will also be an advice and support service for employers through the National Apprenticeship Service, as well as looking into what additional support may be needed for employers. This is a great opportunity for Energy & Utility Skills to provide expertise, including offering the support of our employer Apprenticeship & Technical Education Advisory Group.

### Question 9: Do you agree with the proposed approach to quality assurance set out above?

We raised some significant concerns about the role of Ofsted in inspecting work placements, such as whether they have sufficient capacity, understand the nuances of different industries and whether there will be additional funding for these inspections considering the struggles experienced within the apprenticeship framework. DfE heard our concerns and are going to work closely with Ofsted, to agree their role in ensuring high quality T Level work placements. More information on this will be published in the near future and we will ensure we get this information out to the sector.

### Question 11: How can the Government support students to access work placements relevant to their course in areas where there are no employers to offer work placements nearby?

We asked central government to take a leading role in ensuring a strong network of work placements which can be accessed by all. This can only happen by supporting travel and subsistence costs for those who need it. The DfE has agreed to open up the ESFA 16 – 19 Bursary funding to institutions delivering T Levels for the 2018 / 2019 academic year. This is a great step, but it must be continued after its initial year to avoid excluding large proportions of the UK workforce.

### **Question 23: How can T levels be built to provide a solid grounding for, and access to, higher levels of technical education?**

Since the conception of T Levels, there have been desires to enable the route to easily lead on to Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE). We called for clear progression routes to ensure not only students, but employers as well, can understand what requirements are necessary. Naturally, a suitable approach would be to attribute UCAS points for T Levels and it is vital that HE Institutes must be involved at the earliest opportunity to determine this. The DfE have listened to our concerns and have committed to clear progression routes, involving HE and FE in content development and will explore the concept of T Level tariff points with UCAS.

### **Question 26: How should we adapt T Levels for adults so that they meet the needs of adult learners?**

The DfE has acknowledged that a 'one size fits all' approach will not meet the needs of adult learners; recognising that 19 – 23 learners who do not yet have a level 3 qualification could benefit from the same T Level programme as 16 – 19 year olds. The department will take into account wider reviews of technical education, including reviewing qualifications at level 3 and at levels 4/5, as they consider any specific adaptations that will improve accessibility. While there is still some way to go, we will continue to champion the opportunities for adults to retrain and upskill throughout their lives, a commitment supported in the Industrial Strategy.

### **Question 31: Should we seek to further influence which T levels are offered by providers, according to local and national skills needs?**

We continue to call for T Levels to be driven by a strategic UK skills and workforce development plan, but in the short term the consultation has concluded that there is more influence to be had on which T Levels are offered. UK government has committed to listening to businesses via the Skills Advisory Panels (SAPs) and Local Digital Skills Partnerships (LDSPs), facilitated through Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA) and Local Enterprise

Partnerships (LEPs). While this will highlight and respond to regional differences, there is still a clear need for a sector focus.

**Question 38: Which of proposed performance measures are most important? Please explain. Are there any other measures, such as student and employer feedback, that should be part of the accountability system for T levels?**

Dfe has agreed that all four measures are valid and necessary for accountability purposes, with the right measurement metrics in place. We also suggested that the DfE introduces a national T Level survey, which would provide the meaningful and robust student and employer feedback that the DfE desires. This is an option the department is considering for the future.