

# Policy Updates – August 2019

## Apprenticeships standards review and T-Level development

### Apprenticeships

#### Apprenticeship standards review

[The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#) (IfATE) previously announced that work to review the apprenticeship standards within the Engineering and Manufacturing route will begin in October this year. The expected format for the review is a public consultation between October 2019 and January 2020 on the Engineering and Manufacturing occupational route and on the range of apprenticeship standards falling within scope, followed by the IfATE's internal panel review process during 2020, with a further consultation on IfATE's proposed changes during 2021.

Senior representatives from IfATE's review team are meeting with Energy & Utility Skills Apprenticeship and Technical Education Advisory Group (ATEAG) on 2<sup>nd</sup> September to confirm the details of this approach and to initiate members' involvement in the review. The review will ultimately recommend which sector apprenticeship standards are to be retained, revised, withdrawn or combined.

This review of apprenticeship standard content is separate to the funding band reviews that apprenticeship standards are also subject to, and its impact will be felt predominantly in England as skills policy is a devolved matter and Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland operate national apprenticeship systems in which apprenticeship frameworks rather than standards continue to be delivered.

#### Apprenticeship Policy outlook

New Secretary of State for Education Gavin Williamson has responsibility for apprenticeships and vocational education in his remit following the abolition of the dedicated skills minister post. Both he and Prime Minister Boris Johnson have spoken publicly of their support for apprenticeships and the importance of technical education. The most immediate pressures on apprenticeship policy are the programme's levy-supported budget, which some projections suggest will fall short, and the devolution of apprenticeship policy which means that while apprenticeship standards only are to be delivered in England, the Scottish, Welsh and Northern

Irish administrations continue to support apprenticeship frameworks and manage apprenticeship levy returns.

A number of stakeholders have contributed to the debate on whether the eligibility threshold for the apprenticeship levy should be lowered, the levy rate increased, or apprenticeship expenditure prioritised or targeted on specific levels and specific occupational roles. Energy & Utilities policy team will shortly be contacting members to hear their experience of optimising the apprenticeship levy. If you have particular experience that you would like to contribute, please contact [somia.nasim@euskills.co.uk](mailto:somia.nasim@euskills.co.uk) or [carl.jordan@euskills.co.uk](mailto:carl.jordan@euskills.co.uk)

## T-Levels

Confirmation on whether the three new English T-Level programmes within the Engineering and Manufacturing route will be delivered from September 2022 or 2023 is awaited. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) has begun work on the content of the new programmes. Energy & Utility Skills supports the development of an energy and utilities sector specialism. Please contact Energy & Utility Skills Policy Manager Carl Jordan [carl.jordan@euskills.co.uk](mailto:carl.jordan@euskills.co.uk) for further information.

## T-Level action plan

The DfE have published a T Level policy update, it provides information on aspects of the T Level qualification. It covers the following areas:

- T Level grading and certification
- Confirmation of the UCAS tariff for T Levels

The department's T Level Action Plan has also been revised and gives an update on government's progress in reforming technical education in England as set out in the [Post-16 skills plan](#). It confirms the next steps and opportunities for engagement by interested parties. The updated plan can be found [here](#).

## Policy Outlook

### Energy & Utilities Skills Partnership CEO Council Meeting

The Chief Executives that built and launched the inaugural [Energy & Utilities Workforce Renewal & Skills Strategy](#) in early 2017, meet again on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2019. The group of industry leaders set the strategic direction for ensuring that the gas, power, water and waste management sectors have a skilled, diverse and sustainable workforce for the future, including for the supply chain. Their direction is then implemented by a Delivery Board representing 30 organisations from across the UK sectors. At the September meeting, the leaders will hear from the [Workforce Disclosure Initiative](#), that is seeking better reporting and transparency on human capital investment. The initiative represents 130 institutional investors with £10 trillion under management. The senior group will also be updated on the second year performance of the [Procurement Skills Accord](#) initiative to drive training investment through the supply chain, and give their macro-level input to the developing 2020-2025 version of the Workforce Renewal & Skills Strategy.

### UK workforce and labour market policy update

The UK government is reviewing its approach to the existing [Industrial Strategy](#), [Infrastructure priorities](#) and [immigration and migration policy](#). Energy & Utility Skills met with the No.10 Policy Unit in the first week of the new Prime Minister's term of office, to set out the workforce needs for the energy & utilities sector as a priority and explain the work of the [Energy & Utilities Skills Partnership](#). Follow up meetings are now being set up with the newly appointed Directors and Special Advisers within the Industrial Strategy unit of the Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS), and discussions are underway with the Home Office to deliver a members-only session on migration, immigration and skills policy with sector employers later this year.

### Ofwat new Vision for the Water Industry

Further to the successful inclusion of workforce resilience within the '[Resilience in the Round](#)' strategic approach, and as part of business plan requirements for the [PR19 water price review methodology](#), Energy & Utility Skills met with Ofwat to seek to have UK labour market risks and workforce resilience included in the new [Vision for the Sector](#) in England & Wales. The Ofwat Chief Executive recently included human capital and wider skills issues in her briefing to the [main water investors](#) for the first time, as part of setting the context for the future vision. Copies of the submission are available on request.

### Sector deal for waste management consultation

The UK Resources Council (UKRC) has opened a consultation on proposals for a waste sector deal. The [consultation](#) details investment asks of the government to support the waste sector which include a doubling of the apprenticeship levy rate, priority targeting of apprenticeship levy funds on waste sector businesses, and a dedicated sector skills strategy.

## National Retraining Scheme update

The National Retraining Scheme was initially a manifesto commitment for the Conservative Party at the last election and is now their flagship programme to help adults retrain into better jobs and be ready for future changes to the economy, including those brought about by automation. By helping adults to retrain into better jobs, the scheme will also help to meet the needs of businesses for a multi-skilled workforce for the future. In England, the policy approach has been designed and built in close partnership with the CBI and TUC.

To support the development of the scheme, the government announced £100 million in the [autumn budget 2018](#). This is for the continued testing and development of the scheme, as well as delivering the first parts of the scheme to the public in England. The scheme is part of the government's [industrial strategy](#) to improve productivity and build a country that works for everyone.

This scheme is available to people and businesses in England. Further information about the scheme, pilot areas and sectors involved can be found [here](#). To facilitate the scheme the Government this week launched the [Get Help to Retrain Digital Service](#). Get Help to Retrain is designed to help adults to identify their existing skills, explore the different types of jobs and find training courses to gain the skills they need to progress. Dedicated support is also on hand from qualified careers advisers to guide people through the process and provide expert information and advice.

## Improving higher technical education consultation

The DfE launched a [consultation](#) on Higher Technical Education. This review looks at Level 4 and 5 qualifications in subjects aligned to technical routes. The aim is to ensure there is a high-quality progression route for students achieving T levels, as well as those already in work looking to upskill or retrain. The proposals in this consultation cover higher technical education in England.

The consultation sets out the department's proposed approach to creating a system of employer-led national standards and invites views on the principles and processes underpinning this. Specifically, the consultation covers three key recommendations:

1. Creating a new system to make it clearer which higher technical qualifications provide the skills employers want
2. Working with the [Office for Students](#) (the independent higher education regulator) to recognise and develop high-quality provision of higher technical education
3. Make higher technical education a more positive and popular choice by raising the awareness and understanding of it among potential students and employers

The consultation closes on 29th September 2019 and the results of the consultation and the department's response will be published on GOV.UK in early 2020.