

RSB Policy Briefing:

1. **Introduction of T Levels**
2. **Department for Education response to the T Level consultation**

Based on the Department for Education documents available at

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

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/711472/Implementation_of_T_Level_programmes-Government_consultation_response.pdf

1. **Introduction of T Levels**

What are they?

- T Levels are new 2-year, level 3 technical programmes designed with employers to help students get a skilled job, and simplify choices for post-16 technical education.
- T Levels will become one of 3 main options when a student reaches 16, alongside:
 - Apprenticeships for students who wish to learn a specific occupation 'on the job'
 - A levels for students who wish to continue academic education
- Students who achieve a T Level will get a certificate recognised nationally by employers.
- After completing a T Level, students will be able to choose between the following options:
 - A skilled occupation
 - Higher or degree level apprenticeships
 - Higher level technical education (including higher education)
- The two science T Level pathways are: Health and Science, and Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care

When will they start?

- T Levels will be phased in from the 2020/21 academic year with a small number of providers, which means that children entering Year 10 in September 2018 will be the first to be able to study them.
- The first subjects that can be studied in 2020 will be digital, construction and education and childcare.
- Eventually T levels are expected to replace many of the vocational and technical education qualifications currently offered to post-16 technical education students.

T Level structure

- T Levels will offer a mixture of classroom or workshop-based learning and 'on-the-job' experience, including:
 - Core technical knowledge and practical skills specific to their chosen industry or occupation

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- An industry placement of at least 45 days in their chosen industry or occupation
- Relevant maths, English and digital skills
- Common workplace skills
- The 'core' will be split into 2 parts:
 1. One part will develop 'underpinning' technical knowledge and skills relevant to all occupations within the T Level's industry
 2. The other part is an employer-set project which will require students to apply their core knowledge and skills to achieve an employer-set brief or challenge.
- Industry or occupational specialisms will be based on the same standards as apprenticeships but will be 'classroom-based' for T Levels and students may study 1 or 2 occupational specialisms.
- T Level students will aim to achieve 'threshold competence' which will provide evidence of achievement in work-specific skills that shows they can work in their chosen industry.
- The time taken to reach 'threshold competence' will vary between T Levels.
- Both T Levels and apprenticeships will be based on the same standards for their relevant occupations, approved by the Institute of Apprenticeships (IfA).
- T Levels are broader in content than apprenticeships and may have a different duration.
- The subject range of T Level programmes will be defined by IfA's [occupational maps](#).
- Groups of employers define the skills and requirements for T Levels for each industry in [T Level panels](#).
- The T Level panels also develop the outline content for the qualifications, based on the same standards as apprenticeships.
- Individual education providers will decide how to structure the T Level course they offer.
- Total time for a T Level is expected to be around 1,800 hours over 2 years (including the industry placement of at least 45 days).
- The Department for Education (DfE) plans to offer a 'transition' for students not ready to start a level 3 programme, to get the standard required to start a T Level.

Work placement

- T Levels must contain a meaningful work placement of at least 45 days in their chosen industry or occupation (but can last up to 60 days)
- Different ways of carrying out T Level work placements are being piloted to see which work best for specific industries and providers. DfE will confirm how work placements should be delivered when the pilots have been completed.

Grading T Levels

- If students achieve all the required components of a T level they will get on overall pass grade on their certificate
- The core components and occupational specialisms will also be listed separately on the certificate

Important dates

Spring 2018

Publication of government responses to the:

- [Implementation of T Levels consultation \(Department for Education\)](#)
- [Occupational maps consultation \(Institute for Apprenticeships\)](#)

Funding starts to be released from the [Industry Placement Capacity and Delivery Fund](#) for industry placements during the academic year 2018 to 2019.

[Providers selected to deliver the first 3 T Levels](#) in the academic year 2020 to 2021 announced.

A [data collection exercise](#) has launched for providers to tell DfE what support they will need to deliver T Levels successfully.

Information will be published about how providers can express an interest to deliver T Levels in the academic year 2021 to 2022.

Autumn 2018

First work placements funded by the [Work Placement Capacity and Delivery Fund](#) begin.

Autumn 2020

First T Level programmes start for specific occupations in 3 industries:

- Digital industry
- Construction
- Education

2. Department for Education response to the T Level consultation

Considerations and amendments following the T Level consultation period

Grading

- The DfE are exploring how higher overall grades could be awarded above an overall Pass, i.e. Merit and Distinction
- A T Level Pass grade will only be awarded if a student successfully completes the industry placement, attains the Technical Qualification, and achieves the other specified elements of the T Level programme.
- The Technical Qualification will include a 6 point grading scale for the core (A*-E) and a 3 point grading scale for each occupational specialism (Distinction, Merit, Pass).
- For each occupational pathway there will be one T Level that meets employer-set standards, including a Technical Qualification.
- The assessment of the Technical Qualification will be externally set tests, and licensed awarding organisations will develop the full details of the assessments.
- Where students transfer onto another T Level within the same route, where possible, the DfE will make sure the core component is recognised in their T Level.
- For students who do not complete their T Level, partial attainment will be recognised through a transcript.

Additional qualifications

- A student can take an A level alongside their T Level, particularly if it supports progression outcomes for their chosen T Level.
- The DfE are supportive of high attaining students who may want to take Core maths or maths A level alongside their T Level. The advanced maths premium will help providers deliver this.
- The DfE will review non-GCSE qualifications available at 14-16.
- The DfE will work with HE providers, once the T Level content is finalised, to identify where bridging provisions might be needed – for students wishing to progress from the technical to academic route. For example, through allocating UCAS points to T Levels.

Industry placement

- The work placement element of the T Level will now be known as 'T Level industry placements'
- Students on a T Level industry placement should not be entitled to a salary as the placement is forming part of a course of further education. There is no legal requirement or expectation that T Level students will be paid but employers can pay students if they wish to.
- A pilot scheme is running through the 2017/18 academic year to test different approaches and models of industry placement. Early indication from the pilots show that a range of models and approaches need to be adopted across different routes and occupations.
- Providers can work with employers to determine if the minimum 45 day work placement is best delivered through day release, a single 3-month placement, or a number of blocks at different times during the programme, potentially with different employers.
- The DfE will provide additional support to enable T Level industry placements to be successfully delivered, including providing guidance to help providers plan industry placements into the curriculum.
- Widening the remit of the National Apprenticeship Service to provide a 'one stop shop' for advice and support to employers

Supporting providers

- The DfE will work closely with providers delivering the first T Levels to co-create programmes and address concerns raised by respondents to the consultation.

- The DfE will increase the level and pace of their communication on T Levels and show how they are learning lessons from previous attempts to reform vocational and technical education, particularly from the 14-19 Diplomas
- The main challenge identified in the consultation was making sure staff have sufficient expertise, as providers will need to upskill current teaching staff and recruit additional skilled staff. The DfE will work closely with the sector to develop a programme of support to help providers prepare for the delivery of T Levels.
- The DfE will invest up to £20m to improve the quality of teaching over the next 2 years.
- Providers delivering in the 2020/21 and 2021/22 academic year will have the opportunity to work with the DfE to shape and influence T Level courses. This will be used to identify the best way to support providers from 2022 onwards.

Transition to T Levels

- The DfE will work with the IfA, providers and sector bodies in 2018 to gather evidence on existing good practice of similar 'transition' programmes.
- The DfE will fund maths and English for students who have not yet achieved level 2

Lessons learned from abroad and previous attempts at reform

- The DfE have conducted a review of recent attempts at reforming the technical/vocational education system, particularly the 14-19 Diploma and have identified some reasons why T Levels are better placed to succeed.
- The Diplomas were not taken up as they lacked a clear purpose, attempting to create a 'middle course' between vocational and academic qualifications.
- Diplomas had contextual differences. The government opted to implement just a selection of Tomlinson's 2004 recommendations on wholesale changes to the 14-19 education system. This led to Diplomas adding complexity rather than simplifying.
- The Diplomas were programmes that were broadly relevant to whole sectors and did not reflect the specific knowledge and skills employers want.