

Spotlight on T LEVELS

Welcome to OCR's regular update on T Levels. This newsletter will keep you informed as T Levels develop and provide food for thought, both from OCR and from other interested stakeholders keen to be involved at the start of this exciting time for technical education.

This edition includes:

- **Latest T Level developments**
- **What do stakeholders think of T Levels?** A report from the OCR T Levels Forum.
- **Securing employer involvement in T Levels:** the role of employers in development and delivery.
- **The Last Word:** occupations and opportunities. Could T Levels highlight job opportunities for young people?



If there is anything you'd like us to cover in *Spotlight on T Levels*, or perhaps your organisation would like to contribute to future editions, we'd love to hear from you via policy@ocr.org.uk.

SAY HELLO TO T LEVELS!

The DfE has produced a one-minute animation video providing a brief introduction to T Levels. The video shows T Levels as an alternative to A Levels, providing both a qualification and experience to move into further study or the world of work. The video is available on [YouTube](#).



FUNDING ANNOUNCED FOR T LEVEL PROVIDERS

Providers delivering the first tranche of T levels from 2020 will be able to apply for capital funding, according to announcements made by the Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds.

£38 million will be made available to help ensure that providers have the equipment and facilities necessary to deliver T Levels.

The method for selecting eligible providers will be known in January 2019 with the funding following in the Spring, ready for use in September 2020.

The updated [list of providers](#) for the first phase of T Levels currently stands at 52.

The [providers short-listed](#) to benefit from the [Taking Teaching Further](#) funding have also been announced. This national initiative aims to attract experienced industry professionals with expert technical knowledge and skills to work in Further Education. The priority sectors for the initiative include the first T Level subjects: construction; education & childcare; and digital.

As well as teacher training, the programme will also provide funding for projects to explore how industry and FE can work together to develop local partnerships and collaborations.

CONSULTATION UNDERWAY ON T LEVEL CONTENT

The Institute for Apprenticeships has launched a [consultation](#) on three new T Levels for the construction and digital sectors.

Draft outline content is now available for three technical qualifications which are part of the second phase of T Level implementation, to be available for teaching from 2021. The content covers:

- On-site construction
- Building services engineering
- Digital support services.

The deadline for submitting responses to the consultation on the draft content is 12 November 2018, with the Institute for Apprenticeships due to publish the final content in Spring 2019.



CALLING ALL INDEPENDENT TRAINING PROVIDERS

The AELP is hosting complimentary events for training providers on using T Levels to plan occupational provision. Updates on the latest developments will be provided and delegates will be introduced to occupational maps and how to use them in planning provision. Supported by the DfE and the Gatsby Foundation, these events will be held from November to January at venues across the country. For further information, visit the [AELP website](#) or contact events@aelp.org.uk.

“T LEVELS REPRESENT A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE DESPITE THE CHALLENGES”

We dropped in at the recent T Levels forum hosted by OCR to hear at first hand what stakeholders think about T Levels.

T Levels could offer new and meaningful opportunities for young people. This was the over-riding view from those attending the recent OCR T Levels forum – a wide-ranging group of engaged and committed stakeholders representing employers, students, providers and Higher Education, all taking an early interest in T Level developments.

The forum provided the chance to get an update on the principles and purpose of T Levels, to engage with the process and to share thoughts on some of the many related topics. These included the 11 sectors, the transition year, parity of esteem, preparations for delivery, and the forthcoming review of existing vocational qualifications to name but a few. Paramount to the discussions was the question of what we can all do to ensure T Levels provide 16-19 year olds with a high-quality learning experience and real progression opportunities.

The group did not ignore the challenges. There was much discussion around the capacity for T Level industry

placements as one of the key issues, but, if delivered successfully, it was felt that placements could become one of the most attractive and unique aspects of T Levels. Employers in the group certainly saw the potential of T Levels to help them develop the next generation of skilled employers.

Despite the positive nature of the discussions, delegates at the forum remained realistic; T Levels would have to be rolled out carefully to a manageable scale with the emphasis always on quality rather than quantity.

OCR Stakeholder Relationships Manager, David Summers said: “It was great to have such an extremely positive group of stakeholders together in one room to debate the factors that will make T Levels a success for all concerned, but particularly for learners. The contributions at the forum certainly gave us all lots to think about”.

For further information, or if you are interested in attending a future T Levels forum, please contact policy@ocr.org.uk.



JOIN THE CONVERSATION: SHAPING VOCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

If you're interested in hearing about the latest vocational qualification policy developments in relation to Applied General Qualifications, T Levels and other VQs, why not join us for a free, one-off symposium on 29 November 2018 at Warwick University. We'll be exploring and debating how vocational qualifications can shape the future workforce and would love to hear your views. Contact policy@ocr.org.uk for further information. Last few places remaining.

SECURING EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT IN T LEVELS

Professor (Emeritus) Prue Huddleston, Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick, considers the role of employers in qualifications development and delivery.

The introduction of T levels brings employer engagement centre stage. Employers are expected to contribute, through employer panels, to delineating the content of qualifications and, to a substantial extent, assist in the delivery of the resulting qualifications by offering extensive periods of work placement (45-65 days) to students. They are also expected to contribute to the development of industry focused assignments. Such demands have significant resource implications and may be beyond the capacity of employers, particularly self-employed and SMEs, even assuming that they have the expertise to engage in such a substantial way.

Despite these 'health warnings' it is worth considering, what employers can reasonably contribute and how such contributions can be optimised.

THINK ABOUT THE LEARNING

Work placements imply that the student undertakes on an employer's premises the role, tasks and duties, more or less as would an employee, but with the emphasis on the learning experience. In order to provide useful and meaningful work place experiences, several questions require consideration:

- What are the intended learning outcomes?
- What types of learning opportunities are available within the contexts being offered?
- How can learners make sense of these experiences?
- What links young people's workplace-learning with their classroom learning?
- What sort of evidence will be used to confirm learning; how will this evidence be assessed and by whom?

WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO?

Research into employer engagement suggests that employers can make a useful contribution to the education system, but there must be clarity about what is expected and what realistically can be achieved. Employers can suggest model qualification content, but the development of content into robust and reliable qualifications requires technical expertise. Employers should not be disappointed when the resulting qualifications do not look as they expected.

Clarity is crucial when setting out what employers seek from those leaving the education system. Views can be confusing, conflated and even contradictory. Do employers expect qualifications to reflect: knowledge (knowing that); skills (knowing how); 'employability skills' (knowing where);

behaviours; attitudes (knowing how to become) or a combination of these? Can a qualification reliably reflect, let alone measure, all these?

Evaluations demonstrate that, in the best cases, employers can endorse the authenticity of tasks and assignments and provide relevant content for project-based learning. They can offer work placements that encourage good quality workplace learning by providing authentic work tasks in real work settings. They can identify the departments, posts and tasks most suitable for placements. They can assist learners in developing workplace skills through engagement with communities of practice – learning from professionals and craftspeople. Employers should not overlook the potential benefits to the company as well.

EMPLOYER INVOLVEMENT IS ONLY PART OF THE PICTURE

Worthwhile employer engagement involves time, effort, competence and commitment. Employers should be told precisely the nature and extent of the involvement; they should be taken seriously and not dismissed after early consultations are over. It should be made clear that changing and reforming qualifications, even with employers' involvement, is only part of the picture. Real reform requires attention to much wider curriculum issues. Ultimate employer commitment will be demonstrated by a willingness to employ those who have achieved the T Levels.



Jointly edited by Professor Huddleston, [Essays on Employer Engagement in Education](#) explores how employer engagement is delivered and assesses employment and attainment outcomes linked to participation.

T LEVELS INFO

Visit the [OCR website](#) for further information on T Levels.

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THE LAST WORD: OCCUPATIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

How do young people know about the job opportunities available to them? Our guest commentator, Catherine Sezen of the Association of Colleges, takes a look at how T Levels could help to provide the answer.

What do a maritime defence engineering technician or an archive services assistant do as part of their jobs and what qualifications would be needed to do these roles? Since the publication of the occupational maps which underpin the Government's work on both apprenticeship standards and T Levels, I have been mulling over this question and one other; how do young people know about the varied and diverse job opportunities available?

It was a question I came back to at a recent AoC South West workshop held in collaboration with the NHS. The event had been set up to encourage greater collaboration and partnership working between colleges and the NHS, especially with a focus on training, apprenticeships and study programme work experience or T Level industry placement opportunities.

As we went around the room doing introductions, I was struck by how many different occupations there are within that one organisation. Of course, the NHS is reputed to be one of the largest, if not the largest, employers in western Europe, but I suspect for many, like me, if you think about jobs in the NHS your vision is shaped either by personal experience or by TV dramas full of doctors, nurses, midwives and paramedics. At this event, I found myself speaking to 40 or more professionals who work in the health service. Not one of them worked as a doctor or a nurse. There were trainee hospital managers; those responsible for managing primary and acute care systems; health and social care lecturers and many others.

At the workshop, we took a closer look at the health and science map. What meeting the NHS and college delegates and exploring the health and science map clearly demonstrated is that there are many job opportunities out there that many of us may not know exist: community health and support officer; bioinformatics technician; clinical data manager, to name but three for me in that one route.



T Levels with their focus on occupational pathways and specialisms present the opportunity to highlight the variety of roles available, not only in health and science, but also across all 11 routes and 26 T Level pathways. Potentially this offers an opportunity for colleges to diversify and offer new specialisms that they haven't offered before. It also highlights how important it will be to ensure young people are aware of this variety. Impartial and informed information, advice and guidance is crucial to the success of T Levels.

First and perhaps most challenging is dispelling the myth that A Levels and university is the 'best' route. It may well be the route if you want to study history or aspire to be a barrister, but if you want to be an accountant or a hotel manager, a paralegal or a maritime defence engineering technician then T Levels should be the 'best' option. We all know that children and young people change their minds regularly about what they want to do; few keep to the path they first thought of at eight years old. However, exposure to different occupations through inspirational guest speakers and role models (especially for females in traditionally male dominated roles such as engineering and for males in female dominated roles such as early years), work place visits, work experience and placements or discussing links to job opportunities during a science lesson can all help young people consider their future career plans.

The Gatsby benchmarks, the work of the Careers Enterprise Company and the careers strategy, including the Baker amendment which requires schools to allow technical/vocational providers access to speak to pupils from the beginning of secondary, have kick-started a renewed focus on careers, but there is still a way to go before all young people in every school are given comprehensive education and guidance on all the amazing technical, vocational and professional opportunities out there and how best to access them. To make a real impact this is an issue that the Government must address.

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