

Major overhaul of higher technical education announced

Measures to boost the quality and take-up of higher technical education to help plug skill gaps, level up opportunities and support the UK's economic recovery have been announced by Education Secretary Gavin Williamson today (14 July).

A major review last year revealed that higher technical education – technical qualifications like Higher National Certificates and Higher National Diplomas that sit between A Level and degrees – can unlock the [skills employers need](#) and lead to highly skilled, well paid jobs. Despite this, not enough people are studying them which is leading to skills shortages in sectors like construction, manufacturing and digital.

The package of measures announced today marks the next step in establishing a system of higher technical education where students and employers can have confidence in high-quality courses that provide the skills they need to succeed. The package includes:

- Introducing newly approved higher technical qualifications from September 2022 supported by a government-backed brand and quality mark – qualifications will only be approved where they provide the skills employers need, providing much needed clarity for students and employers.
- Working with Ofsted and the Office for Students to make sure the quality of courses is consistently high across HE and FE institutions – building on our Institutes of Technology so students and employers can be confident courses will be high quality.
- Launching a new public awareness campaign – working in partnership with employers and careers advisers to showcase the benefits and the wide range of opportunities that studying a higher technical qualification can open up and making sure students get the right information, advice and guidance to make informed choices.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

For too long we have been training people for the jobs of yesterday instead of the jobs of today and tomorrow.

Employers are struggling to find the computer programmers, engineers, electricians and technicians they need, and students of all ages are missing out on the high skill, high wage jobs that

higher technical education can lead to.

The measures I have announced today will boost the quality and take-up of these qualifications to help plug skill gaps, level up opportunities and support our economic recovery.

Matthew Percival, CBI People and Skills Director, said:

Higher technical qualifications help people develop the skills that build careers. It's fantastic to see this commitment from Government to boost their uptake.

Putting employers in the driving seat will give them confidence that courses on offer meet their needs.

With four-fifths of employers expecting to increase higher skilled roles in the coming years, offering clear progression routes through higher technical qualifications will be essential to creating a sustainable and inclusive future economy.

Lord Sainsbury of Turville, chair of the Independent Panel on Technical Education, said:

At the present time there is a serious mismatch between the skills and knowledge delivered by our education system and the needs of our economy and society (34% of graduates are in non-graduate jobs, and industry faces a persistent shortage of technical skills). This announcement of a major reform of higher technical education, together with the introduction of T Levels, should go a long way to ending this mismatch and should be strongly supported by all political parties and industry.

Today's announcement follows the [Education Secretary's FE speech](#) where Gavin Williamson pledged to publish a White Paper that will set out our plans to build a world-class, German-style further education system in Britain, which will strive toward high quality qualifications based on employer-led standards. It also follows the significant [investment announced](#) by the Chancellor to support young people's employment prospects – which includes a new 'kickstart' scheme to create work placements for young people on Universal Credit, £111 million investment to triple the number of traineeships available across England, supporting employers to create more apprenticeship opportunities, new investment to support an additional quarter of a million people with careers advice, and more.

These reforms build on work already underway to transform technical and vocational education in this country, including the introduction of new T Levels from September, working with employers to create more high-quality apprenticeship opportunities and establishing a network of Institutes of

Technology, backed by up to £290 million. Higher technical qualifications will provide a natural progression route for young people taking new T Levels from 2020 or A Levels, and adults looking to upskill or retrain, enabling them to take the next step up and gain higher technical skills in key subjects like STEM.

Higher technical courses are offered at universities and FE colleges– such as Nottingham Trent University and New College Durham– and National Colleges, like the National College for Digital Skills, are well placed to expand in this area. The [Government's network of Institutes of Technology](#) – unique collaborations between universities, FE colleges, and leading employers – also specialise in delivering high-quality higher technical education and training in STEM subjects, such as digital, advanced manufacturing and engineering that will provide employers with the skilled workforce they need.

The measure announced today will complement the Government's review of post-18 education to ensure the system is joined up, accessible and encourages the development of the skills the country needs.