

News story: New T Levels mark a revolution in technical education

The first 52 colleges and post-16 providers to teach new T Levels were named today (27 May) as Education Secretary Damian Hinds set out his vision for a world-class technical education system.

T Levels are courses, which will be on a par with A levels and will provide young people with a choice between technical and academic education post 16.

Courses in construction, digital and education & childcare will be first taught from September 2020. A further 22 courses will be rolled out in stages from 2021, which will cover sectors such as finance & accounting, engineering & manufacturing, and creative & design.

In his response to the T Level consultation, also published today, the Education Secretary committed to working with businesses and learning from our international competitors to ensure these new qualifications lead to a generational shift in technical education.

As the new colleges and other post-16 providers were named today, the Prime Minister said:

Everyone should be able to have access to an education that suits them, but we know that for those that don't choose to go to university, the routes into further technical and vocational training can be hard to navigate.

That's why we're making the most significant reform to advanced technical education in 70 years to ensure young people have gold standard qualifications open to them whichever route they choose.

T Levels provide a high-quality, technical alternative to A levels ensuring thousands of people across the country have the skills we need to compete globally – a vital part of our modern industrial strategy.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

T Levels represent a once in a lifetime opportunity to reform technical education in this country so we can rival the world's best performing systems.

For too long young people have not had a genuine choice about their future aged 16. Whilst A levels provide a world class academic qualification, many technical education courses are undervalued by employers and don't always provide students with the skills they

need to secure a good job – that has to change.

Naming the first 52 colleges and providers where young people will be able to study the first T Levels is an important step forward, and we will continue the work with business and the education sector so everyone can benefit from these vital reforms.

Technology and the world economy are fast-changing, and we need to make sure our young people have the skills they need to get the jobs of tomorrow. This is at the heart of our modern Industrial Strategy.

The consultation response confirms the high-quality nature of these new qualifications – with:

- course content created by expert panels of employers to make sure young people have the knowledge and skills needed;
- 3 month compulsory industry placements that will give young people the experience and wider skills they need to be ready for the world of work;
- standards assured by Ofqual and the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) so that T Levels remain high-quality and are valued by employers

Lord David Sainsbury, Chairman of the Independent Panel on Technical Education, whose 2016 report led to the current reforms said:

I am delighted with the excellent progress being made with the implementation of T Levels. For too long the only educational opportunity that many young people have had is to take technical qualifications that fail to equip them with the knowledge and skills that employers value, and that are needed to progress to higher technical education.

We now face a major communication challenge, and all of us, who understand how valuable and important these reforms will be to the lives of young people, must now reach out to young people, their parents and carers, and employers, to let them know these changes are coming, and the exciting opportunities they will bring.

The wide-ranging T Levels consultation sought views from across the world of business and education, as well as young people themselves. Leading employers including Lloyds, IBM and Skanska all responded to the consultation underlining their strong support for new T Levels.

Content for the first three T Levels – co-created with employers to make sure young people get the right knowledge and skills needed to get a skilled job –

has also been published by the IfA this week.

T Levels are just one part of a wider programme of work to transform technical education in this country to give people genuine world class choices when they are deciding on an academic or technical route.

Alongside T Levels and the introduction of more high-quality apprenticeships, the Government is creating a network of prestigious Institutes of Technology (IoTs) across the country. IoTs will offer top-quality training and apprenticeships in higher-level technical skills – A level equivalent up to degree level and above – helping to bridge a vital skills gap in our economy in areas like advanced manufacturing, infrastructure and digital.

The Government took another step towards establishing IoTs this week by announcing the [16 proposals](#) that will now move on to the final stage of the Government's competition.

Find out [more](#) about T Levels and view the full list of colleges to teach them.

Supportive statements:

Mark Dawe, Chief Executive, Association of Employment and Learning Providers said:

We strongly support T Levels – it is clear that high quality work placements are fundamental to the success of the T Levels and apprenticeship training providers are ready to use their capacity and established relationships with employers to give young people a great opportunity to start developing the skills they need in the workplace

Sir Gerry Berragan, Chief executive, Institute for Apprenticeships said:

T levels signal real change in the qualifications landscape – offering school leavers an alternative to a purely academic route.

In support and anticipation of the introduction, we have been consulting on the occupational maps which we have published today. The maps will support the Institute and ensure that both T level and apprenticeships are of the highest quality.

Mark Lawton, Construction T level Panel member at Skanska said:

We continue to support efforts which increase the accessibility of opportunities to people from all backgrounds – helping to develop a more diverse and inclusive industry.

Jane Gratton, Head of Skills Policy, British Chambers of Commerce said:

Business communities across the country tell us that improved technical education and stronger workplace experience are needed to help them fill the skills gaps they face.

T-levels will be an important part of the solution, giving young people a high quality route to gaining the employability and technical skills they will need to succeed in their chosen career. Ensuring that businesses of all sizes, and in all regions, have an input into the design and content of the new system will be crucial to its success.

Business, educational institutions and government need to work together over the coming years to ensure that parity of esteem between academic and technical education is achieved.

David Hughes, Chief Executive, Association of Colleges said:

The introduction of T Levels as part of a wider reform of technical and professional education is vital for a more inclusive and successful economy. The implementation plan sets out a good package of reforms that should help to improve the prestige and the take-up of technical professional education. The plan recognises the need for real clarity of purpose, strong alignment with employers and the labour market, better understanding amongst schools and investment in colleges to be able to deliver.

We have worked closely with DfE and it is clear from the tone of the document, the pledges to work with colleges and employers through the implementation and the changes that have been made that this is a thoughtful and sensible change programme. That bodes well because this is a complex and long term change which will need agile leadership to steer through the complexities and the difficulties to come. Colleges are ready and planning to meet the challenges and AoC is happy to be a partner in the implementation.