

## **T-levels: A guide**

### **What are T-levels?**

A L3 (3 A-level equivalent) technical study programme, spanning 2 years where the student focuses on skill acquisition and increasing their knowledge in their chosen single subject area and applying those skills on an industry placement. Student will usually only do one T-level at L3 as the guided learning hours are the equivalent of studying 3 A-levels therefore there will not be time for additional qualifications to be taken. The exception to this is Maths, English and functional skills level 2s being studied alongside T-levels, which many colleges have suggested will be offered alongside T-levels for those who haven't achieved them at GCSE, similarly to how they are run alongside extended diploma programmes at present.

### **How do they fit in with other qualifications?**

They follow on from GCSEs and are equivalent to 3 A levels or a level 3 qualification. T levels will become one of the main choices for post 16 study options alongside Apprenticeships and A levels and under current plans are set to replace other vocational and technical qualifications such as BTECs and equivalent. There is discussion of single BTECs and some extended diplomas continuing where there is no cross over with new T-level qualifications. Access courses are set to continue also. T-levels were introduced to simplify the level 3 landscape and were created with employers and HEIs on the panel during conception.

T levels in time will offer a wide range of subject areas: From Sep 2020 first 3 courses started: Design, Surveying & Planning for Construction, Digital Production, Design & Development and Education & Childcare, a further 7 in 2021 and 6 in 2022 and final 7 in 2023 to total approx. 23\* overall.

\*Offered subjects:

### **Timeline:**

September 2020 – First cohort Finishing June 2022

The first T Level courses start in these subject areas:

- design, surveying and planning for construction
- digital production, design and development
- education and childcare

September 2021- First cohort Finishing June 2023

T Level courses start in these subject areas:

- building services engineering for construction
- digital business services
- digital support and services
- health
- healthcare science
- onsite construction
- science

September 2022- First cohort Finishing June 2024

T Level courses start in these subject areas:

- accounting
- design and development for engineering and manufacturing
- engineering, manufacturing, processing and control
- finance
- maintenance, installation and repair for engineering and manufacturing
- management and administration

September 2023 – First cohort Finishing June 2025

T Level courses start in these subject areas:

- animal care and management
- agriculture, land management and production
- catering
- craft and design
- hair, beauty and aesthetics
- legal
- media, broadcast and production

### **How are they structured?**

Expected total time for a T level to be 1,800 hours over a 2 year period, with 80% of the time learning knowledge and skills with a training provider (usually a college or sixth form college) and 20% applying skills on an industry placement.

Offer students a mixture of classroom learning and industry experience during an industry placement of at least 315 hours which equates to around 45 days of experience. The provider will usually find the placement for the student through local connections.

### **How are they graded?**

Students must get at least an E grade on the core, pass the occupational specialism, achieve L2 English and maths (if not already achieved at GCSE), and successfully complete the industry placement to receive their overall grade.

Overall T level grades: Pass, Merit, Distinction, Distinction\* (single grade as opposed to DMM or ABB at Btec and A-level)

Overall grade is worked out from the grades achieved in the core component (A\*-E) and the occupational specialism (pass/ merit or distinction)

If not all elements are met, students receive a statement of achievement detailing which elements they have completed.

UCAS tariff points	T level overall grade	A level
168	Distinction* (A* on the core and distinction in the occupational specialism)	AAA*
144	Distinction	AAA
120	Merit	BBB
96	Pass (C or above on the core)	CCC
72	Pass (D or E on the core)	DDD

- According to gov.uk and UCAS tariff/ T level/ A level equivalencies

### Example in practice

## 1. Qualification summary and key information

T Level Technical Qualification in Construction: Design, Surveying and Planning							
<b>Total Guided Learning Hours (GLH)</b>		1200 GLH					
<b>Total Qualification Time (TQT)</b>		1470 TQT					
<b>First registration:</b>	September 2020	<b>Recommended age range:</b>				16-19	
<b>Core Component:</b>	600 GLH 810 TQT	<b>Grade:</b>	A*-E				
Assessment component	Assessment method	Duration	Marks	Weighting	Timetable	Availability	Marking approach
Core Paper 1: Science and Building Technology	Written examination paper	2.5 hours	100	33.33%	Set date and time	May/June November	Externally marked
Core Paper 2: Construction Industry and Sustainability	Written examination paper	2.5 hours	100	33.33%	Set date and time	May/June November	Externally marked
Employer Set Project	Externally set project	15.5 hours	100	33.33%	Window	May/June November	Externally marked

<b>Occupational Specialist Component:</b>	600 GLH 660 TQT	<b>Grade:</b>	P, M, D				
Surveying and design for construction and the built environment	Externally set project	30 hours	180	100%	Task-specific: window/set date and time	May/June	Externally marked
Civil engineering	Externally set project	25 hours	180	100%	Task-specific: window/set date and time	May/June	Externally marked
Building services design	Externally set project	20 hours, 40 mins	180	100%	Task-specific: window/set date and time	May/June	Externally marked
Hazardous materials analysis and surveying	Externally set project	15 hours, 30 mins	180	100%	Task-specific: window/set date and time	May/June	Externally marked

### What are their academic benefits?

The programme has been developed in collaboration with employers, businesses and educational providers so that the content meets the needs of industry but also prepares students for work, further training, or Higher Educational study through a mixture of both classroom learning and practical work place experience.

When a student passes their T level they receive a nationally recognised certificate with a breakdown of what areas were covered in the qualification to help students move into skilled employment, further and higher education or higher apprenticeships.

Several HEI members sat on the original panels to ensure they were academic enough when the course content was written and therefore suitable for Higher level learning.

T levels are worth UCAS points and have widely been regarded as more academical rigorous than current alternative qualifications such as VTQs (BTECs etc), which are currently accepted by majority of HEIs, due to the examination elements and more academic content being written into these courses.

Also, more than 250 businesses were involved in the launching of T levels with the aim of ensuring the T level has students industry ready by preparing them with the right knowledge and skills. It is part of the governments plans to 'level up' the UK and close the skills shortage gap.

The 45 day industry placement intends to give students the chance to learn a what a real career is like whilst continuing their studies.

### How many people take them and in what subjects?

DfE announced that 2020/21 cohort accounted for an overall cohort of 1,363 T level students on the first wave of Education, digital and construction T-levels

2020/21 T level offering in 3 subject areas was provided at 44 providers.

Full breakdown of early adopters for these and future years here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/providers-selected-to-deliver-t-levels>

### **Transition programme**

In addition to the main level 2. As the T-levels are more academically rigorous than previous vocational and technical qualifications, a transition course taken prior to the full I3 has been designed and implemented. It is a year long course which should also allow students the time necessary to complete L2 maths and English as this is an entry requirement for the full T-level. This is aimed at those who don't quite have the requirements for the main course as of yet and can be seen as a foundation year.

### **What are their current WP make up?**

In the largest early adopter colleges there were a large percentage of BAME students

- Havant and South Downs College (HSDC) reported that 11.9 per cent, or five, of its 42 T Level students in the first year were from a BAME background. Of its 207 T Level students recruited up to now, 12.6 per cent, or 26, are from a BAME background. This is higher than the proportion of BAME students across the whole college – 9.4 per cent, or 588 of 6,268.
- Dudley College of Technology had an average of 31.25 per cent of BAME learners across its three T Levels last year. This compares with 33.5 per cent this year, although it did not provide total student numbers.
- Of Derby College's 32 T Level learners from 2020, three (9 per cent) were BAME. But 38 per cent of its total of 192 T Level students now recruited are from a background other than white, the college said.

For 2020/21 cohort – construction had the lowest proportion of ethnic minority learners at 10.2%. Black, Asian and minority ethnic students were alarmingly underrepresented in the first year of T levels. Some providers have however noted a rising uptake among non-white learners starting the second wave.

14.2% (193) were from a BAME background

84% of students (1145) were from a white background

1.7% unknown ethnicity

ETHNIC BREAKDOWN OF T LEVEL STUDENTS		Source: Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and School Census data June 2021		
ETHNIC GROUPINGS	EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE T LEVEL	DIGITAL PRODUCTION, DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT T LEVEL	DESIGN, SURVEYING AND PLANNING FOR CONSTRUCTION T LEVEL	TOTAL STUDENTS
White English/ British/Irish or other white background	597 (88%)	309 (75.4%)	239 (86.9%)	1,145 (84%)
Not provided/ unknown	7 (1%)	10 (2.4%)	8 (2.9%)	25 (1.8%)
Black and other minority ethnic groups / mixed	74 (11%)	91 (22.2%)	28 (10.2%)	193 (14.2%)
Totals	678	410	275	1,363

We can also assume that this might increase to be more in line with the number of BAME students taking BTECs (if T-levels replace BTECs). This is extremely high with almost half (48%) of black students are accepted with at least one vocational qualification, and more than a third (37%) enter with only vocational qualifications.

In addition to BAME learners we can also make an assumption that if these qualifications replace other VTQs such as BTECs we can assume they will have a similar WP make up of those with other WP characteristics (FSM, Disabled etc) as is on these qualifications:

- BTEC learners come from a range of socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. However, the proportion coming from lower-socio economic groups is significantly higher than those taking A-level programmes only.
- Their parents work(ed) in routine or manual occupations, with students twice as likely to enter having studied at least one vocational subject compared with those whose parents work(ed) in higher managerial or professional roles.
- They are more likely to be the first in their family to have attended HE
- They come from an area that sends a low proportion of its young people onto university