

Providers committed to making T levels a success, but challenges remain

Ofsted has today published an interim report evaluating the quality of the new T-level courses. It finds that providers are working hard to ensure that T-level courses equip learners with the knowledge, skills and experiences needed for future study or employment. However, the first providers to offer these new qualifications have faced some challenges.

The review also finds that the T Level Transition Programme (TLTP) is not always resulting in learners progressing to a T level as intended.

The interim report was commissioned by the Department for Education and is the first stage in a two-year evaluation of T-level courses. It draws on evidence from visits to 24 providers, 10 of which also offered the transition programme, between December 2021 and April 2022.

Overall, Ofsted found that learners were appreciative of the quality of teaching on their T-level course. However, not all learners felt prepared for how much work they had to do. Effective industry placements gave learners broad, high-quality and appropriate experiences that helped them to make informed decisions about their future career path. However, many learners experienced delays in going on placements.

Work experience is a fundamental component of the transition programme that gives learners the opportunity to gain the skills needed to progress to a T-level course.

In some cases, providers failed to help learners secure meaningful work experience relevant to their course, which resulted in learners sourcing their placements independently.

The review also found that many teachers did not receive comprehensive training and some found teaching the new curriculum challenging. Providers did not always have access to the resources they needed from awarding bodies in good time.

The recruitment and retention of staff with sufficient knowledge and experience were also a challenge, due to sector shortages and the effects of the pandemic. The more effective T-level curriculums involved frequent collaboration between education providers and employers.

Inspectors found that, although teaching on the transition programme was generally of a high standard, most learners appeared unlikely to progress on to a T-level course on completion.

Ofsted's interim report recommends that all T-level and T Level Transition Programme providers:

- provide initial advice to learners before they start a T-level course to

help them decide which pathway to follow

- collaborate with employers to make sure the design and delivery of the curriculum is of a high quality
- make sure that the curriculum sequences the different components of a T level in a coherent way that develops learners' knowledge and skills
- reduce delays to learners work placements
- ensure that learners in the transition programme get relevant work experience
- monitor learners' achievements and progress and the impact of work placements on their knowledge and skills

Ofsted also recommends that employers provide placements that give learners experiences relevant to their T level.

The Department for Education should evaluate the effectiveness of the transition programme in helping learners progress to T-level courses, and work with universities to make sure they accept T levels for entry to relevant courses.

In addition to this, awarding bodies should make sure that teachers and learners have the resources they need, in good time.

His Majesty's Chief Inspector, Amanda Spielman, said:

It's clear that T-level courses are giving learners career-building pathways. The right balance of theory and practical elements helps learners gain the skills, knowledge and confidence they need to enter the workforce. However, we have also identified a number of concerns that need to be addressed.

I am looking forward to seeing the progress providers have made at our next visits in 2023, and to see the additional courses added into the scheme in the next few years.

A full report will be published in 2023. Providers visited for this interim report will be visited again next year, along with others, to see how T-level courses and the T Level Transition Programme have developed.