

News story: Skills Minister calls on employers to join new T level panels

Leading businesses are being urged to grasp the opportunity of working with the government to develop prestigious new T level qualifications.

Skills Minister Anne Milton has called on industry experts from agriculture, environmental and animal care; business and administration; hair and beauty; creative and design; and catering and hospitality to join the influential T level employer panels and help develop the outline content for new qualifications.

T levels are new courses, which will be on a par with A levels and provide young people with a genuine choice between technical and academic education post 16. The first subjects in digital, education and childcare, and construction will be taught from 2020.

Skills Minister, Anne Milton said:

T levels are about giving greater choice to young people to get the skills they need to achieve good jobs. It is also about businesses – we know they are crying out for a skilled workforce and T levels will create the next generation of talented employees for them.

We are already working with top industry leaders and want even more to join us to make this a success for individuals, businesses and the economy.

T level content is already being developed with the help of top firms like Rolls-Royce, IBM, Lloyds and Morphy Richards, among others.

The Department for Education wants business representatives to step-up and help design the new qualifications in T level routes which will be delivered from 2022:

- agriculture, environmental and animal care
- business and administration
- hair and beauty
- creative and design
- catering and hospitality

Businesses can [apply](#) to be part of the T level qualification panels. The closing date for applications is 5pm Tuesday 8 May 2018.

News story: Ilford pupil celebrated in international short story competition

A school pupil recognised in an international short story competition has today (Monday 26 March) been awarded a prize for her success by Education Minister Nick Gibb, as part of the ongoing celebration of the history of the Commonwealth.

Alyssa Malley, aged ten, a pupil at Churchfields Junior School in Ilford, scooped third place out of 1,600 entries from across the Commonwealth. Alyssa's prize-winning story focused on ending conflict through recognition of the common values shared by people across the globe.

The annual Commonwealth Class Writing Competition – which is run by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the British Council – was themed around 'peace' this year and the first and second prizes were awarded to pupils from India and Pakistan.

This international recognition builds on the rising standards in our schools, with over 15,969 more pupils in Ilford in schools rated good or outstanding than in 2010 and 95 per cent of Ilford schools given this rating at their last inspection.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Congratulations to Alyssa on this achievement. Despite fierce competition, it is brilliant to see a pupil from Ilford recognised on the global stage.

Thanks to the hard work of teachers and our reforms, academic standards are rising in England, with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

This determination to offer every pupil a world-class education was evident at Churchfields Primary School, where I saw first-hand how pupils were broadening their understanding of the Commonwealth and its unique history.

In a visit to the school, Minister Gibb presented Alyssa with a certificate and a £30 book voucher to celebrate her achievement.

Nick Gibb presented the pupil with an award recognising her success in the Commonwealth Writing Competition. This is the second consecutive year in which pupils from Churchfields Junior School have been successful in this prestigious event, in which so many other students throughout the world take part. Alyssa commented that she was proud so many people across the world would hear her message of peaceful problem solving and she was looking forward to writing more stories in the future.

Mr Gibb also visited a lesson where pupils were being taught about the Commonwealth and what it means to be a member of this unique historic institution. Teachers were using an [education resource pack](#) – produced by the Department for Education – which aims to illustrate the importance of the Commonwealth to young people today.

Headteacher Mrs Emeny said:

Writing is a strength of Churchfields Junior School and the ministerial visit was a great opportunity for Nick Gibb to see our world-class school in action. As he toured the classrooms, I was pleased by his comments about the high levels of achievement and excellence he witnessed across the curriculum. During his visit, the Minister spoke to staff and pupils about our school ethos and how the wealth of opportunities we provide enable pupils to develop outstanding language and maths skills, as well as a deep cultural understanding.

Today's focus on the Commonwealth comes ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which will be hosted by Britain in April. Leaders, business, civil society and young people from around the world will meet to discuss a common future.

Sinead Russell, Senior Literature Programme Manager and Joe White, Literature Coordinator at the British Council from the judging pane said:

It was a privilege to read so many excellent stories from around the world. Although every story differs in its approach to this year's theme, what they all have in common is a depth of humanity and a feel for language which, quite frankly, humbled us.

All of the winning stories and highly commended entries, each illustrated by Tarsila Kruse, Children's Book Illustrator, can be seen on the British Council's Commonwealth Class [website](#).

Writing tips from Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland, Myra Zepf and former Children's Laureate, Anne Fine can be downloaded [here](#).

The Commonwealth Class initiative enables schools to take part in online competitions and work on projects with the aim of giving young people a hands-on international learning experience based around the Commonwealth family of countries.

Press release: Relatives of Argentine soldiers killed during the Falklands War visit the Argentine cemetery at Darwin

More than 200 relatives of 90 recently identified Argentine soldiers who lost their lives in the 1982 Falkland war visited the Falkland Islands today (Monday 26 March) to visit their newly marked graves.

As part of a joint project between the UK, Falkland Islands and Argentine Governments and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), a forensic team exhumed, analysed and documented the remains in each of the unidentified graves in the Argentine cemetery at Darwin in the Falkland Islands.

Argentina's Secretary for Human Rights, Claudio Avruj, will accompany the families. Retired British Army Colonel Geoffrey Cardozo, who was responsible for burying the Argentine dead with sensitivity and respect immediately after the conflict, will also accompany the group.

Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan MP said:

I welcome this visit to the Argentine cemetery at Darwin by family members of the recently identified Argentine soldiers. This important humanitarian project, facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross, will provide some comfort to the families of the deceased. When visiting the cemetery the families will find their loved ones properly identified and in a place of great dignity.

I am grateful to the Falkland Islands Government who coordinated the visit, in cooperation with the Argentine Families Commission, and with support by the UK and Argentine Governments. It marks an important development in the UK-Argentina relationship and demonstrates what can be achieved with a positive and constructive relationship.

Notes for Editors:

- The visit will include a religious ceremony jointly conducted by Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires, Bishop Eguia Segui, and the Right Reverend Abbott Hugh Allan from the United Kingdom.
- Brigadier Baz Bennett, Commander of the British Forces South Atlantic Islands, will deliver military honours for the ceremony. A Scottish Piper and a British military guard will be present.

- The DNA identification project was funded by the UK and Argentine Governments. This is a humanitarian initiative that we support in line with our wider obligations under international law.
- In the UK-Argentina Joint Communique of 13 September 2016, both countries expressed their full support for a DNA identification process in respect of unknown Argentine soldiers buried in the Falkland Islands.
- Over a seven week period (7 June – 20 August 2017), an ICRC forensic team exhumed, analysed and documented the remains of each of the unidentified soldiers. 90 Argentine soldiers were positively identified.

Further information

- Follow the Foreign Office on Twitter [@foreignoffice](#) and [Facebook](#)
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[News story: Yemen needs inclusive peace talks, UK says as conflict enters its fourth year](#)

The Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, and International Development Secretary, Penny Mordaunt, have issued a statement on Yemen:

Today, as the Saudi-led Coalition's intervention in Yemen enters its fourth year, we call on all parties to return to the negotiating table to find an inclusive political solution that delivers the peaceful future the people of Yemen deserve.

The humanitarian crisis triggered by the conflict has left over 22 million people in need of assistance. In the last eight months alone, an additional one million people found themselves without the necessities such as food and medicines that they need to survive.

With the rainy season fast approaching, the crisis could be made even worse if there is another surge in the cholera outbreak – the number of suspected cases reported over the last year is already well over one million.

The UK has been at the forefront of the international response and is the third largest humanitarian donor to Yemen. We are delivering life-saving interventions including food for 3.4 million people, nutrition support to 1.7 million people, and clean water and sanitation for an expected 1.2 million people. UK aid is also funding a new cholera response programme that aims to vaccinate 1.1 million people against the preventable disease.

But without de-escalation and a political settlement millions of civilians risk starvation. Saudi Arabia has the right to defend itself against security threats including missiles launched from Yemen, and we support the Saudi-led Coalition's efforts to restore legitimacy in Yemen, as accepted by the UN Security Council. We have worked hard with Saudi Arabia and other international partners to strengthen the UN shipping inspection mechanism to ensure that all ports can remain open to all commercial and humanitarian supplies. All sides must redouble their support for the UN's efforts to reach an inclusive political settlement which addresses the root causes of the conflict. We welcome the appointment of the new UN Special Envoy, Martin Griffiths, who brings with him extensive experience in conflict resolution.

A UN Panel of Experts has concluded that Iran is in non-compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions for failing to take measures to prevent the supply of Iranian-made ballistic missiles to the Houthis. If Iran is genuinely committed to supporting a political solution in Yemen – as it has publicly stated – then it should stop sending in weapons which prolong the conflict, fuel regional tensions, and pose threats to international peace and security. We question why Iran is spending significant revenue in a country with which it has no real historical ties or interests, rather than using its influence to end the conflict for the good of the Yemeni people.

We call upon countries of the region and the international community to redouble their efforts in support of this goal, and for parties to the conflict to allow unhindered commercial and humanitarian access throughout Yemen, including for fuel, and for the Government of Yemen to pay public sector salaries across the country. We will continue to play our part in restoring the peace and security needed for Yemenis to resume normal lives.

Penny Mordaunt, International Development Secretary

Boris Johnson, Foreign Secretary

Press release: Government action on councils failing to plan new homes

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid has today (23 March 2018) [written to 15 local authorities](#) in England to inform them of decisions on intervention following their continued failure to produce a local plan, which are key to setting out how and where they expect to meet residents' needs for new homes, for more than a decade.

In [November 2017](#), the government confirmed it would commence the consideration of intervention in 15 local authorities where there has been a failure to produce a local plan.

Local Plans are a key part of the government's comprehensive programme of planning reform and targeted investment to ensure the homes local communities need are built.

The councils had until 31 January 2018 to explain why they hadn't yet published a plan, providing any exceptional circumstances for why the government shouldn't intervene.

Following their submission, the government is now setting out next steps.

Of the 15 local authorities:

- in Castle Point, Thanet, and Wirral, the government's Chief Planner and a team of experts will be sent in to assess if the government needs to take over the process of producing the local plan
- in Northumberland the government has instructed the council to produce their plan earlier and to make the timetable clearer
- in Basildon, Bolsover, Brentwood, Calderdale, Eastleigh, Mansfield, St Albans, which have all committed to publishing draft plans before the end of September 2018, the government has made clear it will monitor their progress and that any further significant delay to meet this timescale will lead to the case for intervention being reconsidered
- 4 local authorities – Liverpool, North East Derbyshire, Runnymede, York – have since published their plans

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid has written to them to welcome this progress, but has made clear that should there be any further significant delays to

their timetable to submit the plan, the government will not hesitate to act.

The government has abolished top-down regional planning. But a locally-led planning system requires elected local representatives to take the lead, listen to local residents and business, and set out a clear framework to build new homes, provide key infrastructure, support the local economy and protect the environment.

Most councils have seized the opportunity that localism presents – however a small minority have not and do not have a local plan in place. This can mean uncertainty for local people, have a negative impact on neighbourhood planning groups, result in piecemeal speculative housing development and communities having no plans in place for crucial local infrastructure and services.

Housing Secretary Sajid Javid said:

Whilst most councils rightly recognise their responsibilities and most have worked hard to meet the housing challenge, some have failed.

I expect those authorities we identified in November to continue to make progress. I'm also stepping it up with 3 councils in particular, sending in a team of experts to make a direct assessment, ensuring they plan properly for the future or we'll have to do it for them.

The department has also commenced preparations to take over plan production so that work can begin as soon as possible, subject to decisions taken after the Chief Planner and his experts report back.

A procurement process is currently underway to secure planning consultants and specialists who will swiftly undertake the work on plan production should these councils not comply in the time required.

The department will also make contact with county councils and combined authorities in the areas concerned about the possibility of inviting those authorities to write plans.

Further information

See the [letters sent to the relevant local authorities](#).

The [housing white paper](#) set out how the government would prioritise intervention – where:

- the least progress in plan-making has been made
- policies in plans had not been kept up to date
- there was higher housing pressure
- intervention would have the greatest impact in accelerating local plan production

The strategy also made clear that decisions on intervention will also be informed by the wider planning context in each area (specifically, the extent to which authorities are working cooperatively to put strategic plans in place, and the potential impact that not having a plan has on neighbourhood planning activity).

Planning experts – Castle Point, Thanet, and Wirral

The government's Chief Planner, Steve Quartermain CBE and a team of experts will report back to the Secretary of State who will then take a final decision on formal intervention later this year.

In addition, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government will conduct formal discussions with relevant county councils and city regions to see if they could take over plan production on the Secretary of State's behalf.

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