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T Levels	August 2019

... the biggest change to technical education in a generation. T Levels will help young people to fast-track their career and help them get to the next level, giving them a head start in the world of work.

Anne Milton, Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships

T Levels are being introduced in England to be highly-regarded technical qualifications, primarily taught to school-age pupils, and as highly-valued as A Levels. They will not be created for transport subjects (we are to focus on apprenticeships instead), so the maritime sector’s main interest lies in the engineering T Level, which will be available for first teaching from 2022.

It was Lord Sainsbury’s 2016 Review - [Report of the Independent Panel on Technical Education](#) - which recommended what are now known as T Levels. Sainsbury’s ambition was to create a highly-regarded technical equivalent to A Levels which would reverse the shortage of higher-level technical skills in the economy. T Levels apply to England only.

Sainsbury divided the economy into 15 sectors and recommended that for 12 of them new qualifications should be created which did that job. For the remaining three – including ‘transport and logistics’ – his recommendation was that these sectors should focus instead on the more practical apprenticeship route. The 80:20 formula helps make that distinction clearer:

- with T Levels 80% of a learner’s time should be in the classroom¹, 20% in the workplace
- with apprenticeships it should be the opposite: 80% in the workplace, 20% in the classroom

T Levels are therefore primarily education-based qualifications, technical counterparts to the academic A Levels, also taught over two years like A Levels, and quite distinct from work-based apprenticeships.

The Department for Education has recently said that “The size and rigour of a T Level programme is comparable to a 3 A Level programme” and that therefore, for those who go on to higher education, “T Levels will attract UCAS points in line with those allocated to 3 A Levels”. [DfE’s briefing note](#) says more on how T Levels will be graded, and on UCAS tariff points.

DfE says that students will, in time, be able to take T Levels in the following subjects:

- accountancy
- agriculture, land management and production
- animal care and management
- education
- financial
- hair, beauty and aesthetics
- health

¹ “classroom” here is shorthand for any kind of off-the-job training
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- building services engineering
- catering
- craft and design
- cultural heritage and visitor attractions
- design, development and control
- design, surveying and planning
- digital business services
- digital production, design & development
- digital support and services
- healthcare science
- human resources
- legal
- maintenance, installation and repair
- management and administration
- manufacturing and process
- media, broadcast and production
- onsite construction
- science

Work is being done by panels of employers to design these new qualifications. (British Marine's Blue Davies, and Liverpool John Moores University Marine Engineering professor, Ian Jenkinson, are members of two of the three engineering panels). T Levels are being designed like Trailblazer apprenticeships with the focus on the *outcome* to be achieved; both will work to the same standards, set by employers within Government guidelines.

All T Levels will have the same core structure:

- a technical qualification, which will include
 - core theory, concepts and skills for an industry area
 - specialist skills and knowledge for an occupation or career
- an industry placement with an employer (which should last at least 315 hours / 45 days). This is the most controversial part of the reforms, with real concern about how realistic it is to arrange enough high quality placements of this length.
- a minimum standard in maths and English if students have not already achieved them

The first three T Levels have been designed and will be available for first teaching from September 2020. They are:

- digital production, design and development
- design, surveying and planning
- education

In 2021 the following will be added:

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

Engineering (which is where our interest lies) will be in the third phase, for first teaching in 2022.

The Government's web page relating to T Levels is [here](#).

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