***DEVELOPING AN EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY***

***A guide for colleges***

***INTRODUCTION***

***A strategic approach to employer engagement within a college provides direction, focus, and accountability.***

It is likely to lead to more efficient and impactful efforts in engaging with employers to support the T Level delivery and other employer facing programmes as applicable e.g. Foundation programme. It will prepare students for the workforce whilst strengthening the college's overall reputation. A well-defined strategy serves as a roadmap for achieving organisational goals and objectives.

As a college you will most likely have an existing employer engagement strategy.

Take some time to review your existing strategy to make sure that it fully captures and is explicit about employer engagement for T Levels and Foundation Programmes.

***HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE***

An example of an employer engagement strategy has been provided for your use.

You can use it as a starting point for developing your own strategy.

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| **In the document annotations offer further guidance and considerations as you develop your own strategy.** |

Where relevant additional notes have been added at the end of the sections to support you with implementing the strategy including links to support materials to help you in the process.

Although this document and its guidance are tailored to assist you in implementing and successfully delivering T Levels, you might want to consider expanding its scope to include other employer engagement activities and programs for your school. Your college may already have a strategy for engaging with employers for other programmes such as apprenticeships, before embarking on the development of your strategy, it is advisable to review what is currently available. Developing a unified employer engagement strategy will create a coordinated and well-structured approach for your employers.

An editable version of the example strategy can be accessed [here](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/article_attachments/18783473336466).

**Employer Engagement Strategy**

*Example*

**Introduction**

Employer engagement is a key component of preparing students and learners for the world of work and enhancing their employability skills.

Connecting with employers, <college> can provide students with valuable insights into industries and occupations, exposing students to real-life work scenarios and challenges through employer led curriculum and industry placements, and inspire them to pursue their aspirations and interests. Employer engagement also benefits the college by strengthening our reputation, expanding our network, and attracting more resources and support from the community.

This document sets out <college’s> strategy to Employer Engagement to support the implementation and delivery of T Levels, Foundation Programme <add other employer programmes in your offer as applicable>.

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# Context and Rationale

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| **Use this section to set out what T Levels your college is planning. Articulate the importance of employer engagement in T Levels and demonstrate how it aligns with the broader goals and objectives of your college and the wider education system.**  **Note: If you are delivering Early Years Educator or Dental Nursing you will need to change/add further detail about the minimum number of industry placement hours.**  **If you have a small/niche T Level offer it is suggested the rationale/benefits can be adapted to be more specific to the specific T Level occupation/industry.**  **For a college with multiple employer programmes, e.g. apprenticeships, you may want to add the context and rationale to outline why they are important to your offer.** |

T Levels were first announced in the government's Post-16 Skills Plan in 2016 and officially launched in September 2020. At <college> from we will be offering the following T Levels:

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| **T Level** | **From Academic Year** |
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T Levels are designed to offer students a vocational alternative to A Levels, providing a blend of classroom learning and on-the-job experience through industry placements. As well as completing their classroom-based studies and assessments, every T Level student must complete a minimum 315-hour industry placement to achieve. Without robust employer and relationship management students will not be able to achieve.

# Benefits of T Levels and Industry Placements

**for students**

* It exposes them to the world of work and helps them develop relevant skills and knowledge for their future careers.
* It enhances their motivation, confidence, and self-esteem by showing them the value and relevance of their learning.
* It broadens their horizons and aspirations by exposing them to a variety of sectors, roles, and pathways.
* It provides them with opportunities to network, interact, and learn from professionals and role models in different fields.
* It improves their employability and readiness for the labour market by providing them with practical experience, feedback, and guidance.

**for employers**

* It enhances their corporate social responsibility and reputation by contributing to the education and development of young people in their community.
* It helps attract, recruit, and retain talent by raising awareness of their industry and career opportunities among potential future employees.
* It fosters innovation and creativity by exposing them to fresh perspectives and ideas from students with diverse backgrounds and interests.
* It develops their own staff's skills and competencies by providing them with mentoring, coaching, and leadership opportunities.
* It provides short-term labour resource (work experience / industry placements) which can contribute alongside their existing workforce.

**for our College**

* It enhances our curriculum and learning outcomes by providing real-world examples and applications of the knowledge and skills students acquire in the classroom.
* It strengthens our links with the local community and economy by building mutually beneficial partnerships with employers who can offer support, resources, and opportunities for our students.
* It prepares our students for the future by exposing them to various career paths and sectors, developing employability skills, and increasing motivation and aspirations.
* It increases teacher and careers leaders’ knowledge about different pathways into the workplace.
* It develops our teaching expertise by providing industry insights and opportunities to upskill our teaching practitioners ensuring our teaching is up to date with the latest industry standards and practices.

# Aims and Objectives

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| **This section should be used to describe your college’s aims and objectives of the employer engagement strategy. You will already have a mission and vision for your college, think about how these two connect and align.**  **The example text focuses on T Levels but you will want to incorporate your other employer-related programmes for completeness.** |

Our aim is to create a network of strong and sustainable relationships with local and national employers who can support the delivery and development of high-quality technical education (T Levels) for our students this includes:

* Providing meaningful industry placements for all T Level students aligned to their programme.
* Involving employers in the design and review of the T Level curriculum to ensure they meet their current and future needs.
* Enhancing the professional development of our teachers and staff by facilitating knowledge exchange and collaboration with industry experts and practitioners.
* Inspiring and informing our students about the range of career opportunities and progression routes available in different sectors and roles.
* Ensuring that employer engagement activities are accessible to all students, including those from underrepresented groups or disadvantaged backgrounds. Taking steps to address barriers to participation and promote diversity and inclusion within industry placements.
* Fostering the college's collaboration and partnership with the community, by establishing and maintaining positive and mutually beneficial relationships with employers.
* Contributing to economic development by positioning the college as a key partner in driving regional economic growth and prosperity by equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to contribute to local industries. Forging strategic partnerships with employers, industry associations, and employer representative bodies to maximise impact.

# Stakeholder Analysis

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| **In this section you should describe your commitments to stakeholder analysis. You may be able to reference what labour market information (LMI) you intend on using and how frequently you will update this.**  **Where you have already conducted analysis, you may wish to attach this to the strategy as an annex.**  **It’s helpful to set out what your forecast enrolments are by T Level. The targets and measures provided are common targets which can be used to measure success of employer engagement. Review whether these are appropriate for your college and amend accordingly.**  **When determining your targets you may wish to think about:**   * **Do you need to secure more industry placements than you need to mitigate any risk of employers dropping out?** * **Is the industry / occupation likely to be dominated by larger employers who may host multiple students or SMEs who can only take one?** * **What are your planning risk assumptions, what is your readiness timeframe?** * **Broadening to incorporate other employer related KPIs, e.g. apprenticeship starts** |

For each planned T Level <or new employer-facing programme> we will undertake a full analysis of available labour market information to identify, assess and prioritise suitable employers for each of our engagement activities. Furthermore, we will use this analysis to determine suitable targets for each T Level and monitor progress against this.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) has been used strategically to inform the T Level offer and as part of our analysis we will continue to focus on employers in areas of priority.

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| **IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING**  **Tools and resources to support you:**   * [**Internal stakeholder mapping – routes to employers**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18075345605906-Internal-stakeholder-mapping-routes-to-employers) * [**Employer mapping**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18075604921746-Employer-Mapping) |

**Student Industry Placement Forecast / Targets**

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| **T Level** | **AY 2024/25** | **AY 2025/26** | **AY 2027/28** | **AY 2028/29** |
| *T Level name* | *Target enrolments* | xxx | XXX | XXX |
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# Our Targets and Measures

The success of ***employer engagement*** for T Levels will be managed against the following targets:

* Forecast enrolments.
* Number of industry placements needed.
* Number of employers needed to fulfil.
* Number of industry placements secured at least 6 months prior.
* Number of industry placements (actual)

Targets will be determined for each T Level using the findings of the stakeholder analysis.

# Guiding Principles

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| **Using the examples provided below, think about your own college’s guiding principles – what are the basic concepts that shape how this strategy is developed, implemented, and evaluated? What would you like employers locally to be saying about their work with you? Setting out these principles in this strategy will guide your college’s actions and decisions, ensuring alignment with the overarching goals and values of the strategy.** |

**Establishing Long-Term Partnerships:** We are committed to building lasting relationships with employers, providing consistent, and high-quality support through our programmes. Each employer will have a dedicated point of contact, ensuring effective communication and involvement in all stages of planning, delivery, and evaluation.

**Valuing Feedback and Engagement:** We value the input and contributions of our employer partners, promptly addressing any issues or concerns they may have in a professional manner. Their feedback will be appreciated and used to enhance our practices.

**Recognising Success:** We will celebrate the achievements of both employers and students through various means such as celebratory events, case studies, and promotions on press and social media platforms, highlighting the positive impact of their involvement.

**Expanding and Diversifying Networks:** We are committed to expanding and diversifying our network of employers, leveraging existing partnerships to create new opportunities and referrals in support of T Levels and other programmes, ensuring broad access to quality placements and progression routes.

**Clear and Effective Communication:** Our commitment to employers includes making our whole offer simple and accessible to them. We will deliver clear and timely communication, providing relevant information, responding to queries, and offering necessary support and guidance to ensure a successful and rewarding experience with the college and its students.

**Collaborative Learning and Sharing:** We will collaborate with other providers to find solutions for employers, share best practices, resources, and insights on employer engagement. Through regular meetings, forums, and events, we will ensure a coherent and consistent approach to employer engagement, avoiding duplication and fostering collective learning and improvement.

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| **IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING**  **When working through how you will achieve these guiding principles the following tools and resources may assist you:**   * [**Developing your customer journey**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18234455282322-Developing-your-customer-journey) * [**Employer enquiry handling**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18231803693714-Employer-Enquiry-Handling) * [**Preparation questions for curriculum**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18061474008210-Preparation-ahead-of-Employer-Engagement-Questions-to-ask-Curriculum-Colleagues) |

# Roles and responsibilities of the college staff, students, and employers

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| **For most colleges, there will be a range of colleagues and departments involved in engaging with employers from senior leaders, curriculum staff through to industry placement co-ordinators, use this section to set this out.**  **Clearly defining the roles and responsibilities will support and improve internal collaboration, communication, and efficiency by reducing conflicts, misunderstandings, or delays, ultimately resulting in a better experience for employers and students. For support in reviewing roles and responsibilities you could deliver a RASI matrix, this involves identifying the key roles and responsibilities within the processes of employer engagement and assigning them appropriately. You can access support to do this** [**here**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18061144628626-Employer-engagement-roles-and-responsibilities)**.**  **Given the importance of employer engagement in T Levels it may be helpful to understand within T Level funding there is a total of £550 per student for the industry placement element of the T Level programme, £275 per student in each of the 2 years of the T Level. This funding is intended to support the *infrastructure and resource required to plan, source, deliver and monitor industry placements*. It is not to support employer costs for hosting placements. If you haven’t already when developing your strategy, you may wish to consider how you will best utilise this funding. A calculator is available to support you.**  **If you are yet to resource employer engagement activity within your college you may wish to review an example job description which can be found**  [**here**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18061257545362-Employer-Engagement-Job-Description)**.** |

**College staff**

The <JobRole> will be accountable for this strategy and its delivery; they and the senior leadership team will facilitate strategic engagement activities as part of the implementation plan.

<JobRole/Team> will be responsible for planning, coordinating, and implementing employer engagement activities, in consultation with students, employers, and other stakeholders.

<JobRole/Team> will act as a broker between curriculum and employers to ensure student and employer needs are always considered.

<JobRole/Team> will be responsible for providing support and guidance to students and employers throughout the engagement process and whilst students are on placement, and for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and impact of employer engagement activities.

<JobRole/Team> will be responsible for working with students to develop employability skills and work readiness ahead of the industry placement.

**Students:** Students will be responsible for participating in the various employer activities, in accordance with their interests, abilities, and goals. Students will also be responsible for preparing for and reflecting on their employer experiences, and for providing feedback and suggestions to the college staff and the employers.

**Employers:** Employers will be responsible for providing opportunities and resources, for and in collaboration with the college staff and students. Employers will also be responsible for mentoring and supervising students, and for providing input and feedback to college staff and students.

# Approaches to Employer Engagement

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| **Use this section to outline the types of activities and approaches you will be taking to promote, raise awareness and engage with employers. The example provided covers a range of key areas but make sure this is specific to your employer engagement approaches.** |

Our employer engagement approach will use a range of methods and activities to build employer relationships and trust. This will include:

* Dedicated webpages for employers to understand the offer.
* Updating and maintaining the Course Directory and the Connect service.
* Increased usage of LinkedIn to reach and engage the business community.
* Attendance at local business and networking events to promote our T Level offer.
* Establishment of industry specific employer partnerships and forums.
* Host networking events and workshops.
* Employer-led guest lectures and workshops.
* Email and telephone campaigns.
* Local press, radio, media campaigns
* Showcase our offer using case studies.
* Develop a T Level newsletter.
* Maximise existing connections, partnerships and relationships e.g. governors, parents, local community groups.

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| **IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING**  **There are several tools and resources which will assist you in your implementation of these activities including:**   * [**Social media content to get you started**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18110392895378-Social-Media-Content-To-Get-You-Started) * [**Promote your T Level offer on your website**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18110430537746-Promote-your-T-Level-offer-on-your-website) * [**Guidance on digital promotion**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18247082361746-Setting-up-and-maintaining-digital-promotion-tools-for-employers) **including course directory and the connect service** * [**Introductory employer facing presentations**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18061662934162-Introductory-presentation-for-employers) * [**Newsletter template and sample content**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18110570948626-Newsletter-template-and-content) * [**Campaign email templates**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18074978820754-Email-campaign-templates-targeted-employers-no-relationship) * [**Telephone script**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18075073385490-Phone-script-elevator-pitch) |

# Evaluation and monitoring of employer engagement activity and outcomes

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| **Whilst you will no doubt have plans to gather feedback and evaluate T Levels and industry placements don’t forget to monitor the implementation of this strategy. You will want to identify what has worked well and where improvements can be made for each cohort of students. Use this section to set out what you will evaluate and monitor.** |

We will evaluate and monitor our employer engagement activity and outcomes through various methods, including

* Tracking the number and types of engaged employers
* Surveying their satisfaction and intentions for future involvement
* Conducting interviews to understand motivations and impacts
* Analysing student outcomes post-placement
* Comparing our performance with benchmarks
* Sharing findings with stakeholders for continuous improvement

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| **IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING**  **A template for capturing feedback on employer engagement is available** [**here**](https://support.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/18110683957010-Employer-engagement-feedback-template) |