



Department
for Education

Level 3 Pathways in Education and Early Years.

Education and Early Years T Level

T Level

The T Level in Early Years Education and Early Years is a great option for young people because it provides the skills, knowledge and behaviours for skilled employment, higher level training or further study in the education and early years sector. It includes two specialisms: Early Years Educator and Assisting Teaching, both combining classroom and practical learning.

Why choose the Education and Early years T Level?

Balanced learning approach– it combines classroom-based learning with on-the-job experience, giving learners both theoretical knowledge and real-world practice.

Industry placement– learners complete an industry placement in childcare settings, helping them develop practical skills and confidence.



Recognised by employers and universities– the qualification is designed in collaboration with employers, ensuring that learners learn skills that are in demand. It's also recognised by universities, so learners can progress to higher education if they choose.



Pathways to careers & Higher Education– it provides direct routes into careers such as: Early Years Educator, Nursery Assistant, Teaching Assistant or Childminder amongst others. Alternatively, learners can use the T Level to apply for university courses in education, childhood studies, or social work.

The T Level in Education and Early Years opens doors to a range of careers and study options, making it a flexible and valuable qualification for anyone interested in working with children.



Department
for Education



Myth Busting!

Myth: I've heard that learners are responsible for finding their own placement, is this true? How does the industry placement work, and how long is it?

Myth busted: The industry placement in the T Level in Early Years Education and Early Years is a key part of the qualification, designed to give learners real world experience working with children.

Recent reforms have introduced more flexibility in the delivery of T Level industry placements to enhance accessibility and reflect modern working practices. However, it's important to note that these changes do not apply to the Early Years Educator specialism due to specific licensing requirements. These specific requirements ensure that Early Years Educator learners acquire the practical experience essential for their professional roles.

For the Early Years Educator specialism, learners complete a minimum of 750 hours in an early years setting (such as a nursery, preschool, or reception class). It is structured to meet the requirements of the Early Years Educator (EYE) qualification, which means learners finish with a license to practice. The placement is mandatory, and learners must complete it to qualify as an Early Years Educator.

For the Assisting Teacher specialism, learners must complete at least 45 days in an approved education setting.

Some providers may arrange placements in multiple settings, giving learners a broader experience. Learners work under supervision but gradually take on more responsibilities, such as supporting children's learning and development, observing and assessing children's progress and assisting with play-based learning activities. Additionally, some providers help arrange placements, while others encourage learners to find their own (with support).

Why is the Industry Placement Important?

- Helps learners gain practical, hands-on experience
- Increases employability with practical skills
- Meets the requirements for an Early Years Educator qualification (if this specialism has been chosen).
- Builds confidence and professional networks

This real-world experience makes T Level graduates job ready or prepared for further education.



Department
for Education



Myth: T Levels don't offer the option for young people to pursue different careers in this sector.

Myth Busted: A common misconception around T Levels is that they limit those studying to certain career paths, with very little room for change. T Levels are qualifications that are designed to be broad within sectors, teaching a range of transferable skills that can be applied across various roles within that industry.

In the Education and Early Years T Level, learners have the option to specialise in one of two occupational pathways, offering different career options. Learners who change career goals can also still use their qualification to access alternative education or training. Specialisms within the Education and Early Years T Level:

Early Years Educator

- Focuses on working with children from birth to 5 years.
- Covers child development, safeguarding, play-based learning, and early education strategies.
- Requires 750+ hours of industry placement in early years settings.
- Leads to roles such as Early Years Educator, Nursery Practitioner, Social Worker, Health Visitor or Preschool Assistant, amongst others.

Assisting Teaching

- Prepares learners for supporting children in primary, secondary, or special education needs (SEND) settings.
- Covers classroom support strategies, behaviour management, safeguarding, and child development.
- Industry placement involves assisting teachers, working with small groups, and supporting individual learners.
- Leads to roles such as Teaching Assistant, Learning Support Assistant, or SEN Support Worker.

Both pathways provide practical experience and direct routes into employment or further study in education and childcare.

Myth Busting!



Explore more resources:

Bridgwater and Taunton College: Education and Early Years T Level Case Study

Dina & Katy talk T Levels





Department
for Education

Exploring Alternative pathways in Education and Early Years

While T Levels provide a comprehensive blend of theoretical knowledge and practical experience, alternative pathways can offer a range of options for learners with varying preferences, career aspirations and starting points.

T Level Foundation Year

The T Level Foundation Year provides a high-quality route onto T Levels for learners who would benefit from the additional study time and preparation before they start their T Level. It includes a diagnostic period to identify the learner's development, learning and support needs and help them make an informed choice about their chosen T Level route.



Apprenticeships: Hands-on learning

For learners seeking practical, workplace-based training, apprenticeships offer a valuable alternative. Level 3 apprenticeships, such as the Early Years Educator provide practical experience while earning a qualification, aligning with both industry needs and individual career goals.

See more information on possible qualification pathways in the Education and Early years sector.



Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs)

Learners have the option to pursue an Alternative Academic Qualification (AAQ) in this area. There are 8 AAQs available for first teach from 2025, with more to follow in 2026.

Designed primarily to support entry into Higher Education, AAQs also provide a strong foundation to continue onto apprenticeships and work. 60% of their content is mandated by the awarding organisation but 40% can be made up of optional components which provide opportunity to meet differing learner needs. They contain space for applied learning as well as more traditional academic learning, and they provide scope for a variety of assessment methods, further meeting the individual needs of learners.

A small AAQ is the equivalent of one A level and learners could study a small AAQ in Early Childhood Development alongside A levels in subjects such as English Language and Psychology, to lead to a career in working with young children as a teacher. Together with enrichment activities, that could include work experience, this would prepare learners for a pathway for those who wish to progress to study at level 4 and above in Higher Education.



Exploring Alternative pathways in Education and Early Years

Level 2 Reformed Technical Qualifications

At level 2, there are two types of occupational entry qualifications, available from 1 August 2025:

Occupational Entry Qualifications—These align with Level 2 occupational standards and help learners move into employment. Extended Occupational Entry Qualifications are slightly larger, including the same technical content plus extra sector knowledge and employability skills. They are available for both 16–19 and adult learners and include "Extended" in the title.

Additionally, **Technical Specialist Qualifications** are available in the Education and Early Years route at level 2. These help learners gain extra knowledge and specialise within a sector. These qualifications will build on knowledge covered by another occupational entry qualification. For example, a specialist course in early years nutrition might expand on a larger early years practitioner qualification.

Click on this [link](#) to find out more about these qualifications.



Reformed Technical Qualifications

Level 3 newly reformed technical qualifications are available to be taught for the first time from 1 August 2025 in the Education and Early years route. These include Technical Occupation qualifications and Additional Specialist qualifications in Childhood development and Well-being and Direct Learning Support.

Technical Occupation qualifications deliver competence against an occupational standard not covered by T Levels at level 3 for 16–19-year-olds and all occupational standards for adults. These qualifications aim to support a learner to enter, or to progress within, a role.

Technical Occupation Additional Specialist qualifications are specialist level 3 technical qualifications for post 16 learners and adults, which go beyond the contents of an occupational standard and allow a learner to develop additional knowledge and competencies and specialise within a sector. These qualifications will build on knowledge covered by a T Level or other occupational entry qualification.

