***IMPLEMENTING SMALL TEAM PROJECTS IN T LEVEL INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS***

**A practical implementation guide for providers**

This guide has been developed to support providers in planning and delivering small team projects as a part of a T Level industry placement. It includes advice on staffing, logistics, employer engagement, curriculum alignment, and risk management.

This model is designed to be employer-led. Students should be working under the direct supervision and support of the employer for the majority of the project duration, even if the activity is based on the provider site.

1. ***Introduction***

Small team projects provide a flexible approach to industry placements, especially where full-length (315-hours) individual placements are difficult to secure. They allow students to work in groups of 3–5 on real employer-set challenges for up to 105 hours. These projects are employer-led, must involve genuine work tasks, and can be delivered remotely, on-site, or as a hybrid.

**Why use this model?**

* Suitable for emerging sectors or small employers
* Supports SEND and accessibility considerations
* Enables shared employer projects between providers
* Offers structured opportunities for collaboration and cross-cohort engagement
* Can be used to develop key employability skills ahead of a physical placement

1. ***Planning and design***

When preparing to run a small team project, providers should carefully consider the following factors to ensure the experience is meaningful, well-structured, and aligned with both employer needs and curriculum expectations:

* **Which students are ready and suited for this model?**

Consider their stage of learning, level of independence, and ability to manage a project within a team.

* **Are there sectors or employers already engaged that could sponsor a project?**

Focus on organisations open to creative or advisory-style tasks, even if they cannot offer traditional placements.

* **Is the project challenge clearly defined and deliverable within 105 hours or less?**

Ensure the task is scoped appropriately so that students can achieve meaningful outputs within the time available.

* **Can the format (e.g. weekly, block, hybrid) meet the employer’s and students’ needs?**

Flexibility is key - structure the timetable around what works best for employer input, student access, and teaching commitments.

* **Are the expected outputs and success criteria clear?**

Define deliverables early (e.g. a report, presentation, set of materials) and agree how quality and completion will be measured.

1. ***Staffing and support needs***

The successful delivery of a small team project relies on appropriate staffing and support structures. Providers should consider the roles required and the level of support students will need throughout the project:

* **Project coordinator or tutor:**

A named staff member should act as the main liaison with the employer and help coordinate the placement, but direct supervision and project guidance must primarily come from the employer

* **Curriculum or subject lead:**

Someone should ensure the project aligns with the relevant T Level occupational specialism and learning outcomes.

* **Safeguarding lead:**

Projects, especially those delivered remotely or off-site, must be overseen by staff who can ensure appropriate safeguarding measures are in place.

* **Time for planning and review:**

Staff will need dedicated time to scope the project with the employer, brief the students, check in on progress, and review outputs.

* **Regular student check-ins or milestone reviews:**

Scheduled points of contact to help students stay on track, reflect on learning, and address any issues early.

* **Access to pastoral and additional learning support:**

Some students may need additional help managing workload, accessing digital tools, or navigating group dynamics.

1. ***Facilities and equipment***

To enable students to complete their project effectively and professionally, providers should ensure access to appropriate facilities and resources. The specific requirements will depend on the nature of the project, but might include:

* **A suitable workspace:**

A quiet room, project space, or meeting area where students can work collaboratively, either on-site or remotely.

* **Laptops or PCs with relevant software:**

Students may need access to tools such as Microsoft Office, Google Workspace, or industry-specific software to complete their tasks.

* **Project planning and collaboration tools:**

Platforms such as Trello, Teams, or shared drives can support task management and communication, especially in hybrid or remote projects.

* **Printing and presentation equipment:**

For final deliverables, students may require access to printers, display materials, or presentation software to showcase their findings professionally.

* **Research and reference access:**

Depending on the brief, students may benefit from access to legal databases, policy libraries, or previous organisational materials.

1. ***Employer engagement and expectations***

Small team projects should be shaped by employer input and aligned to real workplace tasks. Providers should support employers to understand their role and set clear expectations from the outset to ensure a positive experience for all involved:

* **Define a clear project brief:**

Employers should outline the business challenge, key tasks, and expected outputs in a way that is accessible to students.

* **Clarify time commitment:**

Employers are expected to provide regular and focused support and intervention throughout the project. While they are not required to supervise students continuously, they should aim to work face-to-face with the student team for all or a significant proportion of the placement. Outside of this, clear and accessible routes for clarification and feedback must be in place.

* **Agree communication arrangements:**

Establish how and when the employer will engage with students (e.g. via email, video calls, or in-person meetings) and who the main point of contact will be.

* **Provide context and materials as needed:**

Employers may wish to share existing documentation, brand guidelines, or policies to support students’ understanding of the task.

* **Be realistic about student capabilities:**

Emphasise that students are working at a learning level and are not offering professional advice—they will be supported by tutors and producing a learning-informed response.

* **Give optional feedback at the end:**

A short review of the students’ outputs or a reflective conversation can add significant value to the students’ experience and development.

1. ***Matching to the curriculum***

To ensure that small team projects contribute meaningfully to a student’s T Level programme, providers should plan how the project links to relevant performance outcomes, technical skills, and broader learning goals:

* **Map the project to relevant performance outcomes (POs):**

Identify where the tasks align with specific POs or key learning objectives in the technical qualification specification.

* **Plan supporting classroom activities:**

Ensure students are well-prepared with relevant knowledge, terminology, and skills before the project begins, and consider follow-up sessions to consolidate learning.

* **Highlight opportunities for skill development:**

Projects offer rich opportunities to develop transferable skills such as teamwork, communication, time management, and critical thinking - make these explicit to students.

* **Build in opportunities for reflection:**

Encourage students to reflect on what they’ve learned and how it connects to their qualification and future aspirations, either through journals, logs or group debriefs.

* **Use the project for informal assessment or evidence gathering:**

While formal grading isn’t usually required, the project can provide useful insight into students’ capabilities and help inform progress tracking or mock assessment preparation.

1. ***Risk management and compliance***

Even though small team projects offer greater flexibility, they still form part of a structured industry placement and must meet compliance expectations. Providers should ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to protect students, employers, and the integrity of the programme:

* **Establish a clear placement agreement:**

Set out the responsibilities of the provider, employer, and student. This should include safeguarding measures, communication protocols, and escalation points.

* **Undertake a risk assessment:**

Even if the project is largely desk-based or remote, consider health and safety, digital safety, lone working, and data protection risks.

* **Confirm safeguarding arrangements:**

Named staff should oversee safeguarding and pastoral support. Where employers are engaging directly with students, basic checks and clear expectations should be in place.

* **Set expectations for conduct and professionalism:**

Students should be briefed on how to engage with the employer, manage their time, protect confidential information, and uphold appropriate behaviours - even when working remotely.

1. ***Tools to support***

* ***Sample*** small team project briefs
  + [Agriculture, Land Management and Production - *Agriculture, Land Management & Production - Enhancing biodiversity on the farm*](Small%20Team%20Project%20-%20Agriculture,%20Land%20Management%20&%20Production%20briefs%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges)
  + [Craft and Design – Furniture Making - Design Prototype for Community Space Exhibit](Small%20Team%20Project%20-%20Craft%20and%20Design%20Furniture%20briefs%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges)
  + [Craft and Design – Textiles and Fashion - *Sustainable Fashion Accessories for a Local Cause*](Small%20Team%20Project%20-%20Craft%20and%20Design%20Textile%20briefs%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges)
  + [Digital – Digital Business Services - *Building a performance dashboard to support decision-making*](Small%20Team%20Project%20-%20Digital%20-%20DBS%20briefs%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges)
  + [Legal Finance and Accounting – Legal Services -](Small%20Team%20Project%20-%20Legal,%20Finance%20&%20Accounting%20-%20Legal%20briefs%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges) *[HR documentation review – onboarding and policies refresh](Small%20Team%20Project%20-%20Legal,%20Finance%20&%20Accounting%20-%20Legal%20briefs%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges)*
  + [Legal Finance and Accounting – Legal Services - *Enhancing student and governor engagement in governance*](Small%20Team%20Project%20-%20Legal,%20Finance%20&%20Accounting%20-%20Legal%20Governance%20briefs%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges)
  + [Legal Finance and Accounting – Accounting -](Small%20Team%20Projects%20-%20Legal,%20Finance%20&%20Accounting%20-%20Accounting%20briefs%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges) *[Financial performance review and budgeting toolkit](Small%20Team%20Projects%20-%20Legal,%20Finance%20&%20Accounting%20-%20Accounting%20briefs%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges)*
* [Creating your own small team project briefs using AI](Small%20Team%20Projects%20-%20Create%20your%20own%20briefs%20-%20Artificial%20Intelligence%20(AI)%20prompting%20guide%20–%20T%20Levels%20support%20for%20schools%20and%20colleges)