

T-LEVELS

THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

Strengthening T Level Industry Placements

THE T LEVEL INDUSTRY PLACEMENT JOURNEY

Industry placements are not an ‘add-on’ to a T Level programme. They are a core part of the qualification and one of the most important opportunities young people have to experience real work, develop professional behaviours and apply their learning in industry. When placements work well, students grow in confidence, employers see value in engaging and schools and colleges build stronger relationships with industry. When they do not work well, the impact is felt by everyone involved.

Through discussions with employers, schools and colleges, a consistent message emerges - successful placements rarely happen through isolated activity or last-minute preparation. They are usually the result of an intentional organisational approach, where employer engagement colleagues, curriculum staff, tutors and leaders work together to prepare students, support employers and reinforce expectations consistently throughout the programme. Employers repeatedly tell us that technical skills matter, but that confidence, communication, reliability, professionalism and readiness to learn are often the factors that shape their experience most strongly.

This guide has been developed to support schools and colleges to reflect on what strong practice looks like across the employer journey, where confidence can dip and what practical approaches can strengthen the experience for employers and students alike. It is not intended to be a compliance manual or a checklist of additional tasks. Instead, it aims to help providers think more intentionally about how industry placements are planned, supported and embedded as part of the wider T Level experience.

The guide also recognises the reality of delivery. Many providers are balancing large numbers of students, varying levels of employer engagement capacity and increasingly complex placement models, including student-sourced opportunities. The examples, reflections and tools included are therefore designed to be practical, realistic and immediately usable, helping providers strengthen placement quality and employer confidence without creating unnecessary burden.

PHASE 1: GETTING STARTED

Initial interest → Early engagement



What typically happens

This stage begins when an employer first shows interest in offering an industry placement.

This might come from:

- an event or employer network
- outreach activity – phone calls, emails, LinkedIn
- student or parent introduction
- an existing relationship
- or word of mouth from a colleague, governor or another employer

At this point, interest is usually curious but tentative.

Employers are trying to understand:

- what a placement involves
- how much time it will take
- what they would need to do
- whether it is realistic for their business

For employer engagement colleagues, this stage is about: turning interest into informed intent without overwhelming the employer

Why this stage matters

This is where employers form their first impression of:

- how clear the process is
- how supported they will feel
- whether this is something they can realistically do

If this stage feels complicated, unclear or too demanding, employers are unlikely to continue.

Where employer confidence can dip

Confidence often drops when:

- the process is not explained clearly
- too much information is shared too early
- compliance requirements are introduced upfront without context
- the benefits are not made explicit
- employers cannot see how this fits into their business

These early perceptions are important.

If confidence drops here, it is difficult to recover later.

What builds confidence

Employers are more likely to progress when they:

- understand what is involved in simple, practical terms
- feel that expectations are manageable
- can see the benefit to their organisation
- know they will be supported throughout
- have a clear idea of what happens next

Clarity and reassurance matter more than detail at this stage.

What you need to do in practice

Focus on making this stage simple, clear and achievable:

- start with the employer's business, not the placement model
- ask about workforce needs, skills gaps and future recruitment
- talk about your students and their sector interests and ambitions
- explain placements in practical terms, not policy language
- avoid leading with hours, rules or paperwork
- introduce requirements gradually, not all at once
- use examples to show what a placement could look like
- offer flexible starting points (e.g. talk, visit, short project)
- agree a simple, clear next step

The role of the employer engagement colleague

At this stage, your role is to:

1. shape the employer's first impression
2. translate the placement into something realistic and manageable
3. build confidence without over-promising
4. keep momentum without creating pressure

This is not about 'selling placements', it is about helping the employer see how this could work for them.

Tools and resources that support this stage

Staged employer conversations about industry placements	QR code & link:
Supports more confident, consistent conversations by helping to: • understand what employers are really saying • respond to hesitation and concern • move from transactional asks to workforce-focused discussions • show the value to the employer • visualise how a placement could work	Use to strengthen: • early conversations • responses to 'we're too busy' / 'not ready' • confidence-building dialogue Employer conversation about T Level industry placements 

Compliance and 'must do' activity

At this stage, formal compliance requirements are limited, but it is important to:

- introduce that there are health and safety and safeguarding requirements
- reassure employers that these will be explained and supported
- avoid overwhelming employers with full compliance detail too early

Relevant guidance

[T Level industry placements: guidance for education providers](#) – This guidance explains the different ways industry placements can be structured and delivered, including where there is scope to tailor the approach to the employer, student and local context.

Understanding the guidance will help you have more confident conversations with employers from the start. It will also help you discuss realistic delivery options during the design and matching phase, without over-promising or creating unnecessary barriers.

Signs this is working

- Employers continue the conversation rather than disengaging after first contact
- Early conversations focus on workforce benefit and opportunity, not just process
- Employers understand the placement model at a high level without feeling overwhelmed
- Employer engagement colleagues feel confident handling early questions and concerns
- Initial interest converts into meaningful next steps and follow-up activity

This sets up the next phase - commitment and design with a much stronger foundation.



Reflection: Are we helping employers understand what's involved or unintentionally making it feel more complex than it needs to be?

PHASE 2: COMMITTING TO PLACEMENT



Agreement to support → Role design

What typically happens

At this stage, an employer moves from interest to deciding whether they will offer support and/or a placement.

This involves:

- confirming their willingness to host
- beginning to shape the placement opportunity
- working through initial requirements (e.g. health and safety, safeguarding)
- understanding what hosting a student will involve in practice

This may also involve:

- student-sourced placement opportunities, which have been introduced to the provider for approval

This changes the dynamic. The role of the provider shifts from purely “matching” to validating, shaping and strengthening opportunities so they meet quality and compliance expectations

This is where early conversations become more concrete and where employers begin to test whether this is realistic for them.

Why this stage matters

This is the point of commitment. Employers are deciding:

- whether they can make this work
- whether expectations feel manageable
- whether they feel confident enough to proceed

Where employer confidence can dip

Confidence often drops when:

- administrative or compliance requirements feel excessive – ‘too many hoops’
- expectations are unclear or inconsistent
- inflexible on days or timing
- employers are unsure what a student will be able to do
- processes feel like a barrier rather than support
- curriculum teams are not involved early enough

What builds confidence

Employers are more likely to commit when they:

- understand requirements in clear, manageable steps
- feel supported through compliance processes
- can see how a student could realistically contribute
- are involved in shaping the placement
- have clarity on roles, responsibilities and next steps

What you need to do in practice

Focus on reducing friction and increasing clarity:

- break requirements into simple steps and explain them clearly
- introduce compliance gradually, not all at once
- support employers to complete checks (don't just send forms)
- use real examples to show what placements look like
- involve curriculum early to shape realistic opportunities
- talk through what a student can likely do at the start, and by the end
- confirm named contacts and how support will work

The role of the employer engagement colleague

At this stage, your role is to:

1. guide the employer through the process
2. translate requirements into practical steps
3. reduce perceived burden
4. maintain momentum and confidence
5. ensure expectations are aligned across all parties
6. validate and shape self-sourced placements

Where the team approach matters

This is a key point where early curriculum involvement strengthens the process.

When curriculum teams are involved:

- placement design is more realistic
- student capability is clearer
- employer confidence increases

Tools and resources that support this stage

“What a student could bring to your organisation” Route and T Level-specific examples	Employer guides - stage 2 (Route) & 3 (T Level examples)
Helps employers understand: • what students are likely to be capable of • how they can contribute • what support may be needed	

Typical tasks (T Level specific examples)	Typical tasks for industry placement students checklist
Supports employer engagement colleagues to: • bring placement activities to life in employer conversations • tailor discussions using employability skills and specific T Level curriculum examples • help employers move from “I’m not sure what they could do” to a practical placement outline	

Compliance and ‘must do’

At this stage, formal checks begin. These must be completed and supported, not simply issued.

The following must be in place:

- employer agrees in principle to host a placement
- initial employer due diligence checks are completed
- workplace suitability is confirmed safeguarding arrangements are understood
- employer liability insurance is confirmed
- roles and responsibilities are clearly understood

Key DfE documents:
[Employer Due Diligence Checklist](#)

What this means in practice

This is where compliance becomes visible, but it should feel:

- supported, not burdensome
- clear, not complex
- proportionate, not excessive

How this is handled directly affects whether the employer continues.

Signs this is working

- Employers feel supported through compliance and planning activity
- Placement opportunities begin to feel realistic and purposeful
- Curriculum teams are involved early enough to shape meaningful opportunities
- Questions from employers reduce as confidence and clarity increase
- Employers progress through the process without significant drop-off



Reflection: Are we making it easy for employers to say yes, or unintentionally giving them reasons to step back?

PHASE 3: DESIGNING & MATCHING

Matching → selection → alignment



What typically happens

At this stage, the placement begins to take shape around real students and real opportunities.

This includes:

- identifying or confirming the placement opportunity
- matching a student to that opportunity (if not matched via student sourcing)
- sharing information about the student's strengths and development needs
- aligning expectations between employer, provider and student

Why this stage matters

This is where confidence becomes specific and personal.

Employers move from “Can we offer a placement?” to “Can this student succeed here?”

Students begin to:

- understand expectations more clearly
- form early impressions of the workplace
- build (or lose) confidence

A strong match builds momentum; a poor match creates risk from day one.

Where employer confidence can dip

Confidence often drops when:

- the student does not feel like a good fit for the role
- expectations are unclear or not aligned
- the student's readiness is overestimated
- employers are unsure what support they will receive
- self-sourced placements are not properly validated
- curriculum input is missing or limited

What good looks like

At this stage, strong practice means:

- matching is informed, not convenient
- employers understand what the student can realistically do
- students are prepared to present themselves professionally
- curriculum staff actively contribute to decisions
- self-sourced opportunities are quality assured, not just accepted
- expectations are realistic and clear on all sides before the placement begins

Confidence at this stage comes from honesty, preparation and alignment, not optimism.

What you need to do in practice

Focus on creating high-quality, realistic matches:

- use meaningful student profiles (not just CVs)
- include behaviours, strengths and development areas
- consider SEN requirements/adaptations
- involve curriculum staff to validate suitability
- prepare students for employer interaction (interviews, conversations)
- support employers to understand student capability at this stage
- challenge placements that are not appropriate or meaningful
- treat self-sourced placements the same as provider-sourced opportunities
- confirm expectations around behaviour, communication and support

The role of the employer engagement colleague

At this stage, your role is to:

1. ensure the opportunity is appropriate and meaningful
2. support employers to feel confident about the student
3. act as a bridge between employer and curriculum
4. prevent mismatches that create issues later

A well-matched placement is one of the strongest predictors of success and repeat engagement.

The role of curriculum staff (critical at this stage)

Curriculum involvement is essential to:

- assess whether the student is ready for the role
- provide insight into technical capability and behaviours
- ensure the placement aligns with learning outcomes
- support realistic expectation-setting

Without curriculum input, matching becomes guesswork.

Introducing flexibility (where appropriate)

For some employers, committing to a full placement can feel significant.

Flexible approaches to industry placement design can help build confidence and engagement, particularly at this stage.

Examples of flexibility include:

- different delivery patterns (block, day release, blended)
- remote or hybrid elements (where appropriate to the route)
- project-based or team-based models
- shared placements (supply chain)
- staged approaches that build responsibility over time

What this means in practice

Flexibility should be used to:

- enable participation, not reduce quality
- support employers to start with confidence
- maintain a focus on meaningful work and real experience

Flexibility can open the door, but the placement must still be purposeful.

Tools and resources that support this stage

Creating objectives and learning goals	Creating industry placement objectives and learning goals
Supports providers to: • create clear, specific objectives and learning goals • match student development needs to placement opportunities • align employer expectations with student technical capability • shape discussions with employers	

Student talent card	The Student Talent Card
Supports: • clearer communication of strengths, behaviours and interests • more confident matching conversations • helping employers see the individual, not just the placement	

Student industry placement preparation	Industry placement preparation pack for T Level students
Supports: • preparing students for employer interaction • reinforcing expectations early • improving confidence before placement starts	

Provider Guide to student readiness	Helping Students Be 'Ready Enough' to start an Industry Placement
Supports: • reflect on what student readiness means in practice • developing school/college joined up approaches to industry placements • build confident approaches to preparing students	

Compliance and 'must do'

At this stage, the placement must be appropriate, achievable and clearly defined before moving into formal agreement.

The following must be in place:

- placement role or opportunity clearly outlined
- student suitability considered and discussed
- reasonable adjustments identified where required
- expectations aligned between employer, provider and student
- readiness for formal agreement (next phase) established

Key DfE documents:
[Progress Indicators for T Level industry placements](#)

What this means in practice

This stage is about ensuring the placement is fit for purpose before it is formalised

Strong alignment here reduces:

- issues at the start of placement
- employer concern
- risk of early disengagement

Signs this is working

- Matching decisions are based on suitability, not simply availability
- Employers understand the student's strengths, development areas and support needs
- Students are prepared to engage confidently with employers
- Self-sourced placements are reviewed consistently and meet the same quality expectations
- Employers feel confident the placement is achievable and worthwhile before it begins



Reflection: Are we matching for success or hoping it will work out once the placement begins?

PHASE 4: PREPARING & STARTING

Preparation → Day 1 / induction



What typically happens

This stage bridges the gap between planning and reality.

It includes:

- preparing the student for the workplace
- confirming practical arrangements
- ensuring the employer is ready to receive the student
- delivering a clear and supportive start to the placement

This is the point where:

- expectations become visible
- behaviours are tested in a real setting
- early impressions are formed on both sides

Why this stage matters

This is where confidence either builds quickly or drops very early

A strong start:

- reassures the employer
- builds student confidence
- sets the tone for the placement

A weak start:

- creates doubt
- exposes gaps in preparation
- can lead to early disengagement

The first few days often shape the whole placement experience.

Where employer confidence can dip

Confidence often drops when:

- students arrive unprepared for basic expectations (timekeeping, communication, behaviour)
- employers are unsure what to do with the student on Day 1
- expectations have not been clearly set on either side
- there is no clear point of contact if issues arise
- preparation has focused on paperwork rather than behaviour and readiness

What good looks like

At this stage, strong practice means:

- students understand what is expected of them in a workplace
- expectations are clear, consistent and reinforced
- employers feel confident about how to start and support the student
- day 1 is structured and purposeful
- curriculum learning connects to placement expectations
- students know where to go for help or support

Being “ready enough” means being able to show up, take part and learn, not knowing everything.

What you need to do in practice

Focus on practical, repeatable preparation:

Preparing students	Preparing employers
• reinforce behaviours expected in the workplace (timekeeping, communication, attitude) • give clear guidance on day 1 (travel, arrival, who to ask for, what to bring) • practise real scenarios (introductions, asking questions, communication) • make expectations explicit, not assumed • ensure students know who to contact if something goes wrong	• confirm day 1 arrangements and expectations • support employers to plan a simple, structured induction • ensure they have initial tasks or activities ready • confirm supervision and contact points

Working as a team

- align messaging between curriculum and IPCo team members
- reinforce expectations consistently in the classroom
- use employer input where possible (talks, visits, examples)
- ensure preparation is not a one-off session but part of the programme

The role of the employer engagement colleague

At this stage, your role is to:

1. ensure both employer and student feel ready
2. confirm practical arrangements are clear
3. reduce uncertainty on both sides
4. act as a visible point of support
5. prevent avoidable issues at the start

The role of curriculum staff

This is where classroom practice directly impacts placement success.

Curriculum staff play a key role in:

- reinforcing behaviours expected in the workplace
- making the link between classroom expectations and employment
- preparing students through repetition and practice
- using real examples and employer input to bring expectations to life

What behaviours and attitudes are accepted in the classroom often becomes what shows up in the workplace.

One of the most effective (and often underused) approaches is using student and peer experience.

Examples:

- drawing on students with part-time work experience
- sharing real examples of workplace expectations
- using second-year students or alumni to talk about placements
- reflecting on early placement experiences within groups

Students are often influenced best from other students who have already experienced it.

Engaging parents, carers and supporters

Parents and supporters can play an important role in:

- encouraging independence and responsibility
- supporting practical preparation (travel, routine, organisation)
- reinforcing expectations

It is important to:

- position this support clearly and positively
- help them understand the value of placements
- reassure them about expectations (including working patterns)

Tools and resources that support this stage

Student industry placement preparation	Industry placement preparation pack for T Level students
Supports students to: • understand what “ready enough” looks like • build confidence before placement • prepare for real workplace expectations	

Provider Guide to student readiness	Helping Student Be ‘Ready Enough’ to start an Industry Placement
Supports schools and colleges to: • reflect on what student readiness means in practice • developing school/college joined up approaches to industry placements • build confident approaches to preparing students	

Student supporter guide	Guide for parents, carers and other trusted adults explaining the purpose and value of T Level industry placements
Supports parents/carers/supporters to: • understand placement expectations • give encouragement and practical support • reinforce independence	

Student talent card	The Student Talent Card
Supports: • confidence in presenting strengths • helping employers understand the student • stronger early conversations	

Compliance and 'must do'

This is a major compliance point before placement begins.

At this stage, the following must be in place:

- industry placement agreement agreed by all parties
- employer, provider and student roles clearly defined
- insurance and safeguarding requirements confirmed
- supervision and support arrangements in place
- student prepared for workplace expectations

Key DfE documents:

[Industry Placement](#)

[Agreement](#)

[Employer due diligence](#)
[checklist](#)

What this means in practice

This is where preparation moves from planned to confirmed.

Strong preparation at this stage reduces:

- issues on day 1
- employer concern
- risk of early placement breakdown

Signs this is working

- Students arrive on placement understanding basic workplace expectations
- Employers feel prepared and confident for Day 1 and induction activity
- Expectations around behaviour, communication and support are clear on all sides
- Students know where to go for help or advice if needed
- Early placement issues reduce because preparation has been practical and consistent



Reflection: Are we preparing students for placement or assuming they will work it out when they arrive?

PHASE 5: DELIVERING & SUSTAINING

Placement delivery → review → repeat / exit



What typically happens

At this stage, the placement is underway and moving towards completion.

This includes:

- the student carrying out tasks and gaining experience
- the employer supporting and supervising day-to-day activity
- the provider maintaining contact and monitoring progress
- formal and informal reviews taking place

Towards the end of the placement:

- a final review is completed
- feedback is gathered
- decisions are made about future engagement

Why this stage matters

This is where the placement becomes an experience that builds confidence and capability or an experience that feels difficult, unclear or not worthwhile

Employers decide whether to return based on the experience, not the intention.

This stage directly influences:

- whether the employer offers another placement
- how they talk about the experience to others
- the strength of the ongoing relationship

Where employer confidence can dip

Confidence often drops when:

- support from the provider is inconsistent or unclear
- issues are not addressed quickly
- expectations change or are not reinforced
- the student struggles without visible support
- feedback is not captured or acted upon
- the experience feels one-sided or low value

What good looks like

At this stage, strong practice means:

- regular, consistent contact between provider and employer
- clear support routes if issues arise
- structured reviews that feel purposeful, not procedural
- meaningful work for the student
- strong connection between placement and learning
- feedback captured and used to improve
- employers feeling valued and listened to

A positive experience leads to repeat engagement. A weak experience leads to drop-off.

What you need to do in practice

Focus on maintaining quality and relationship:

Supporting the placement

- maintain regular contact with employer and student
- respond quickly to issues or concerns
- reinforce expectations throughout, not just at the start
- ensure students remain engaged and supported

Making reviews meaningful

- use review points to check progress and adjust arrangements & goals if needed
- involve employer, student and provider meaningfully
- focus on development, not just completion
- link progress to expectations and objectives

Strengthening the relationship

- check in on employer experience, not just student progress
- recognise employer contribution and effort
- keep communication open and responsive

Capturing learning and improvement

- gather structured feedback from employers and students
- identify what worked well and what could improve
- feed learning back into delivery and planning

The role of the employer engagement colleague

At this stage, your role is to:

1. maintain a visible and supportive presence
2. act quickly to resolve issues
3. ensure the employer feels supported throughout
4. manage the relationship beyond the placement itself
5. position the experience as part of an ongoing partnership

Strong relationships are built during delivery, not just at the start.

The role of curriculum staff

Curriculum plays a key role in ensuring the placement is not isolated from learning.

This includes:

- connecting placement experience back to teaching
- supporting students to reflect on what they are learning
- reinforcing behaviours and expectations
- using placement insight to inform future delivery

Placement learning should not sit outside the curriculum; it should strengthen it.

Using student and peer experience

This stage provides rich opportunities to:

- bring placement experience back into the classroom
- encourage students to share learning with peers
- build confidence through reflection
- support future cohorts through real examples

Students who have experienced placement are one of the most powerful learning resources available.

Tools and resources that support this stage

Final review of placement	Template for final review of industry placement student
Supports schools and colleges to: • structure the end-of-placement review process • capture feedback from both employer and student • review progress against learning goals • record evidence from employer appraisal and student reflection	

Gather valuable employer feedback	Gather valuable employer feedback
Supports schools and colleges to: • understand what changes can inform future engagement • gather employer insights	

Progress indicators for T Level industry placements

Support:

- structured monitoring of development
- consistent review conversations
- tracking progress over time

Compliance and 'must do'

This is the final major compliance stage.

The following must be in place:

- regular monitoring / review activity completed
- final review meeting conducted with all parties
- student completion formally confirmed
- employer feedback gathered
- placement outcome recorded

Key DfE documents:

[T Level industry placements: guidance for education providers](#)
[Progress Indicators for T Level industry placements](#)
[Student Completion Declaration](#)
[Industry placement continuation notification form \(if required\)](#)

What this means in practice

This stage ensures that the placement is completed, reviewed and recorded properly. It should also provide insight to improve future delivery

Looking beyond completion

Completion is not the end of the journey.

This is the point to:

- thank and recognise the employer
- discuss future placement opportunities
- build on the relationship
- identify opportunities for repeat engagement

Repeat placements are one of the strongest indicators that the experience is working.

Signs this is working

- Employers feel supported throughout the placement, not just at the start
- Review activity feels purposeful and leads to action where needed
- Students can clearly articulate what they are learning and developing
- Feedback from employers and students informs future delivery and improvement
- Employers are open to offering future placements or recommending the experience to others



Reflection: Are we delivering placements or creating experiences employers want to repeat?

Annex A: Employer Journey Reflection & Self-Assessment Tool

This tool is intended to support schools and colleges to reflect on current practice across the employer journey for T Level industry placements.

It is not designed as a compliance audit or grading tool. Instead, it can help teams identify:

- where practice feels strong and consistent
- where employer or student confidence may dip
- where improvement activity may have the greatest impact

This reflection may be most useful when completed collaboratively by:

- employer engagement / IPCo staff
- curriculum teams
- quality colleagues
- leaders responsible for T Levels or industry placements

Phase	RAG	Signs this is working	Areas to strengthen / risks	Possible next steps
1. Getting Started Interest → Early engagement	● ● ●	Employers continue conversations positively and understand the placement offer at a high level		
2. Committing to Placement Agreement → Role design	● ● ●	Employers feel supported through planning and compliance activity and opportunities feel realistic		
3. Designing & Matching Matching → selection → alignment	● ● ●	Students are matched thoughtfully and expectations are aligned before placement begins		
4. Preparing & Starting Preparation → Day 1 / induction	● ● ●	Students arrive prepared for workplace expectations and employers feel confident about Day 1		
5. Delivering & Sustaining Delivery → Review → Repeat / exit	● ● ●	Employers feel supported throughout and are open to repeat engagement		

RAG guide

● = Significant inconsistency or risk ● = Some strong practice, but inconsistent or developing ● = Strong, embedded and generally consistent practice

Reflection prompts

1. Where are employer confidence dips most likely in our current process?	
2. Are curriculum and employer engagement teams working closely enough together?	
3. How consistently are workplace behaviours and expectations reinforced across the programme?	
4. What feedback are employers and students giving us?	
5. Are repeat placement offers increasing or reducing?	
6. Which phase of the journey would benefit most from improvement or additional support tools?	

Summary discussion prompt

If we improved just one phase of the journey this year, which would have the biggest impact on employer confidence and student success?