T-Level Work Experience Placements

Case Studies and Shared Resources

April 2022

Foreword

NFEC held a number of webinars during 2020-2021 academic year focussed on preparing for the launch in September 2022 of the three T-Levels planned for the Engineering sector;

- T Level technical qualification in Design and Development for Engineering and Manufacturing
- T Level technical qualification in Maintenance, Installation and Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing
- T Level technical qualification in Engineering, Manufacturing, Processing and Control

During the course of these webinars it became clear that one of the foremost challenges facing NFEC members in delivering the new T-Levels would be in the sourcing, management and measurement of the substantial work placements of 315 hours which form part of the overall T-Level qualification.

NFEC committed to putting together some case studies contributed from NFEC member colleges to illustrate the strategies that had been employed so far to build capacity for work placements, ahead of T-Level launch, and to provide shared resources to aid all members in their own planning and implementation.

This report is the result of that project, consisting of three cases studies and shared resources from three NFEC member colleges representing various settings, geographies and demographics.

NFEC would like to thank and acknowledge the contributions made from the following colleges;

- South Devon College
- Walsall College
- Herefordshire, Ludlow & North Shropshire College

We trust that this will provide you with some useful information and a reminder that "we are all in this together"!

Jon Gill

NFEC Chair

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Case Study One: Walsall College

EMPLOYER DETAILS			
College / Training Provider Name:	Walsall College		
Are you planning on offering the Engineering & Manufacturing T-Level for 2022-23 or are you delaying until later?	Yes, we are looking to run Engineering T-level 22-23, the two options we are currently looking to run are either Production or Processing there will be only one cohort.		
What are your approximate target numbers for each route and pathway you are offering?	**Manufacturing, Processing and Control**	Production	16
		Manufacturing	
		Processing	16
		Materials	
	Maintenance, Installation & Repair	Mechanical	
		Mechatronic	
		Electrical & Electronics	
		Control & Instrumentation	
		Vehicles	
		Energy & Utilities	
	Design & Development	Mechanical	
		Electrical & Electronic	
		Control & Instrumentation	
		Structural	

What is the nature of your employer & student base relevant to the T-Levels you are offering? (eg Levy / SME, proportion of apprentices from larger employers, reliant on a few larger employers or range of SMEs?)	- We do not have the capacity of staff or space to offer more than one pathway. - Predominantly FT students who would be looking to do a Btec level 3 in engineering would be suitable. - Some Level 2 Machinist students may be suitable to progress onto T-level with the correct grades. - Small number of apps within Engineering. - Very geographically close to a few competitors who will be offering same T-level programmes. - Inner city deprived area where lack of core Maths and English skills are very high. - Locally there are small holding companies to the college, there are no large engineering companies within the Walsall area. The companies a very diverse from traditional skills to new processing technologies and press works. - Surrounding areas do have larger companies however this then falls into a competitor's catchment area.

How have you used your CDF funding to generate and evidence T-Level size work placements?	
What, if any, additional resource have you deployed?	- IOP's (Industry placement officers) are in place across the college to engage employers with T-level placements, however more IOP's are needed as they are under extreme pressure due to the role also deals with across college Work placements not just T-levels. - There are two IOP current roles in need of replacing, which has spread the current IOP's even more thinly across areas. - CDF used for transport for students to get to placements across west-midlands.
What has been the delivery model for work placements (days, blocks etc.)	- Delivery model will need to be flexible to suit needs of employers where possible, due to the struggles with securing placements. - Current T-levels that are running have adopted block placements of 2-3 weeks for all students at the same time with one large employer BBV, due to this being very beneficial and adds value towards the impact on learner exams and the employer set project. - The employer has received overviews of SOW for planning their end to ensure the placement has the most impact for the students in their learning journey.
Approximately how many placements per year have you managed to achieve?	- Our current cohort within Design surveying and planning we secured 20 placements with one employer. - Our aim for Engineering is to offer 16-18 placements. - There is emphasis to also drive students towards finding own placements where possible linking to Engineering Qualification, there are around 19% of student enquires around placements where parents/family work in industry and are looking into offering placements with those companies.
What strategies have worked well for engaging with employers and securing work placements?	- Student have been very eager to attend work placements as organisation is working with a high-profile company on a very large project which is all over news (HS2) - Employer has possible opportunities available for some students after completing the two-year T-level to gain a higher apprenticeship with the company. - T-level programme could be a feeder through to company's higher apprentice programme.

What strategies have worked less well for securing work placements? What have been the barriers?	• Barriers for engaging employers are the education side of T-levels programmes for employers. • Employers vary • Geography of projects companies are involved in and size of companies have also been a barrier to securing placements. • Local competitors to the organisation have impacted number of placements one employer can offer as employers are working with multiple organisations.
What do you think will need to be in place for the successful roll-out of T-Level work placements from 2022-23? Lessons learned?	• More IOP specialised for T-level placements only. • More promotion to employers and parents, events set up for this to take place. • More promotion in schools such as attending careers events for year 10-11 students. • More marketing from organisation in local areas. • Local Employer events at the organisation to promote understanding T-levels. • Clearer, transparent process to ensure support for learners are supported with travel costs while on placements. • IOP needs to attend sessions more with learners to ensure clear expectations of what is needed to be completed ahead of placements taking place.
Work Experience Placement Preparation	
How have you prepared students for work experience placements? **Has this been effective?**	• System is in place to prepare students for placements from the start of the programme, activities and tasks take place with IOP's to ensure this is understood. Lessons learned, this needs to be a smoother process, more contact from IPO in sessions for the learners is needed to go through what is exactly required for WCG (Walsall college graduate). • System in place for IPO's to communicate with employers for all required legal documentation needed prior to learners go out on placement. Same as above smoother process is needed (back ground detail and communication with staff needs to be smoother). • Interviews F2F where possible with potential students and employers to set the standards for what is expected for placements, very successful for last cohort in Design planning and Surveying. • Due to Covid virtual events were set up with the employer as no F2F work placements could take place, the events were set up to keep students warm and introduce them to different areas of the business. • Set up of virtual meet and greet meetings with different managers from different areas of the business who would be overseeing each student/student's, this was to help prepare each individual student prior to actual onsite work placement taking place.
Work Experience Monitoring	
How have you monitored student progress on work experience placements?	• Communication with IPO daily of student's attendance from employer, which fed back to staff who followed up and fed back to IOP and employer. • Communication weekly from the education and careers lead at BBV on all students' progress with coordinator of programme, which is shared with the team including IPO. • Targets set by employer and shared with the college as part of the work placement process for learners to log, review and reflect upon on WCG. • Final feedback from BBV of each student's progress from managers overseeing individual students (debriefing).

How have you assessed the success or otherwise of placements?	• Student reflections on WCG (Walsall college graduate) • Employer feedback, also logged on Work placement area in WCG. • Discussions with students and coordinators. • Debriefing meeting from employer about each student. • Students complete Impact surveys after every work experience/work placement activity taken place to gain relevant feedback to feed into success and development of placements.
Marketing & Outreach	
How are you intending to market T-Levels to students, parents and employers?	• Overviews have been created for Employers. • Careers within the organisation have received overviews to be able to give information to Parents and students enquiring about T-levels. • Local employer events to educate about T-levels. • Leaflets being created to outline T-level programme and answer any common questions that get raised. • Newsletter of success stories of current employers and students. • Use of organisation website. • T-level events for parents and students. • Look at Kick start programmes that local employers are running, to be able to link into after the programme has completed for the correct candidates to feed through onto the T-level.
What barriers, if any, have you experienced in marketing or raising awareness of T-Levels?	• Lack of awareness about the T-levels for parents, students and Employers. • Lack of marketing on T-levels. • Barriers from schools to invite the organisation to promote on careers day events. • Competition from other local providers and how they are running T-level programmes.
Lessons Learned	
What do you think will need to be in place for the successful roll-out of T-Level work placements from 2022-23?	• Need more promotion and education to communities. • More robust system from IPO (F2F sessions).

What are your positives and negatives about T-Levels in general?	- Not designed for lower level achieving students to progress onto. - Geared at more academic level of student. - Current level 2 students within engineering machinist wouldn't be able to continue onto T-level. - Lack of work placement availabilities within companies for 135 days, due to other providers all needing same thing. - More specialised staff needed for growth of T-level. - More marketing is needed and education of T-levels for parents, students and employers. - Gives learners a high standard to work towards and valued industry experience. - Learners who complete placements could have an opportunity to feed through to higher app programme with employers.
What recommendations would you make to government / IfATE etc. for T-Levels to be successful, and the work placement element in particular?	See above.

Case Study Two: South Devon College

EMPLOYER DETAILS			
College / Training Provider Name:	<mark>South Devon College</mark>		
Are you planning on offering the Engineering & Manufacturing T-Level for 2022-23 or are you delaying until later?	The college is investigating into the option in relation to delivery of Engineering T-Level, due to local industry the two options would be production and/or Manufacturing.		
What are your approximate target numbers for each route and pathway you are offering?	**Manufacturing, Processing and Control**	Production	8
		Manufacturing	8
		Processing	
		Materials	
	Maintenance, Installation & Repair	Mechanical	
		Mechatronic	
		Electrical & Electronics	
		Control & Instrumentation	
		Vehicles	
		Energy & Utilities	
	Design & Development	Mechanical	
		Electrical & Electronic	
		Control & Instrumentation	
		Structural	

What is the nature of your employer & student base relevant to the TLevels you are offering? **(eg Levy / SME, proportion of apprentices from larger employers, reliant on a few larger employers or range of SMEs?)**	• Local industry is SME sized, majority are assembling products within a production facility or are classed as a manufacturing outlet. • FT students currently are split between a more theoretical BTEC expended diploma in Engineering or a more Practical EAL Engineering Technologies qualification, these routes output into Higher level study or preparation for a Level three apprenticeship. • We do not have the capacity of staff or space to offer more than one pathway • Majority of students within Engineering are enrolled on an apprenticeship programme. • Being a coastal town, half the catchment area is underwater, competitors are based around in the major cities of South Devon. • No larger employer based within catchment area, work experience will be a challenge to facilitate, already in discussions with local business, however a common question is how are employers being supported to enable the work experience and who is going to pay for the support hours.

How have you used your CDF funding to generate and evidence T-Level size work placements?	

What, if any, additional resource have you deployed?	• Industry placement officers are in place across the college to engage employers with T-level placements, however more IPC's are needed as they are under extreme pressure due to the role also deals with across college Work placements not just T-levels • Employing a Senior IPCo and further IPCo's to manage placements will place a higher onus on health and safety requirements and quality assurance to ensure the highest level of safety for placement students and their employers. • Regular training, seminars and CPD events are planned for all relevant staff through the Education and Training Foundation for adaptations and updates which may impact delivery. • A 'learner readiness' programme is being developed in line with other departments across college. It will be closely aligned with the newly developed Personal Development programme, which runs alongside tutorials and help to build confidence and develop strong career based skills.
What has been the delivery model for work placements (days, blocks etc.)	• Delivery model will need to be flexible to suit needs of employers where possible, due to the struggles with securing placements. • We are looking at a variety of models depending on the pathway and employer requirements. The plan is to introduce the placement in the second year of study using a combination of block weeks and 1-2 days per week. • The placements may be broken down into chunks: 35 days of employer related activities, taster days, virtual workshops, job-shadowing, visits to different employers etc, Also, a combination of community schemes and employer lead projects, virtual or on-site will be explored again this year. • Industry placements will be spread across 1-2 employers offering flexibility to fit with the curriculum.

Approximately how many placements per year have you managed to achieve?	• Our current cohort within Digital is 9, Health and assisting Teaching is approx 30 • Our aim for Engineering is to offer 16 - 18 placements. • There is emphasis to also drive students towards finding own placements where possible linking to Engineering Qualification.
What strategies have worked well for engaging with employers and securing work placements?	• Employer has possible opportunities available for some students after completing the two-year T-level to gain a higher apprenticeship with the company. • T-level programme could be a feeder through to company's higher apprentice programme. • We have recently merged our Apprenticeships and Employer Engagement teams, apprenticeships, business growth and T Level teams and we are aiming for a targeted approach, complimenting each strand and providing a core range of career related products. The newly centralised team will work together to maintain strong links with employers and develop engagement strategies through regular contact and support, particularly throughout the current challenges. • The Business development team and partnership co-ordinators will make the initial contacts and refer leads to relevant IPCo's. This will be carried out using our CRM system, which has been updated to ensure accuracy of contact. • IPCo's will make direct contact to SME's to generate new business through the new marketing applications and regular attendance to business forums and networks such as the BNI. We will attend sector focus groups and are currently involved with organising network group meetings to discuss updates and methods of delivery. This is an opportunity to share best practice and various tried and tested models and techniques to overcome current challenges and maintain relationships with employers. We also cross-refer where possible. • We are also in the process of compiling an infogram to provide an overview of the suite of offers including T Levels, apprenticeships, traineeships etc. This will provide a detailed visual for employers to assess and choose the best option to suit their needs.
What strategies have worked less well for securing work placements? What have been the barriers?	• Barriers for engaging employers are the education side of T-levels programmes for employers. • Employers vary • Geography of projects companies are involved in and size of companies have also been a barrier to securing placements. • Local competitors to the organisation have impacted number of placements one employer can offer as employers are working with multiple organisations.

What do you think will need to be in place for the successful roll-out of T-Level work placements from 2022-23? Lessons learned?	• More Industry Placement Co-ordinators specialised for T-level placements only. • More promotion to employers and parents, events set up for this to take place. • More promotion in schools such as attending careers events for year 10-11 students. • More marketing from organisation in local areas. • Local Employer events at the organisation to promote understanding Tlevels. • Clearer, transparent process to ensure support for learners are supported with travel costs while on placements. • IPC needs to attend sessions more with learners to ensure clear expectations of what is needed to be completed ahead of placements taking place.
Work Experience Placement Preparation	
How have you prepared students for work experience placements? Has this been effective?	• System is in place to prepare students for placements from the start of the programme, activities and tasks take place with IPC's to ensure this is understood. System in place for IPC's to communicate with employers for all required legal documentation needed prior to learners go out on placement. • Same as above smoother process is needed (back ground detail and communication with staff needs to be smoother). • Interviews F2F where possible with potential students and employers to set the standards for what is expected for placements. • We are in the process of updating a SOLAR (written last year) for the purpose of preparing learners specifically for Industry Placement. We are now incorporating the SOLAR with the Personal Development programme during tutorial for learners to develop their skills holistically and embedded within their specialist area. IPC's will lead on the workshops planned in conjunction with tutors and employers. All employability related activity will be fed through a centralised careers hub at SDC and specific training will be carried out and monitored by the IPC's. The lead IPC will ensure a quality workshop programme is delivered across the college and ensure standardisation across the departments. The Navigate system is being used for all careers related activity and thorough training, regular reviews and support will be given to students to enable them to evidence their industry placement portfolio in the most meaningful way.

Work Experience Monitoring	
How have you monitored student progress on work experience placements?	• Communication with IPO daily of student's attendance from employer, which fed back to staff who followed up and fed back to IPC and employer. • Communication weekly from the education and careers lead at BBV on all students' progress with coordinator of programme, which is shared with the team including IPO. • Targets set by employer and shared with the college as part of the work placement process for learners to log, review and reflect upon on • WCG. Initial assessments will help to align learner needs to employer support capabilities and these surveys will be repeated throughout the journey to monitor progress and distance travelled. The newly installed Navigate system will evidence, track and monitor distance travelled as learners embark on career related and Industry placement activity. • Internal quality assurance system to include observations of placement and Curriculum reviews. System checks are being put in place to standardise quality across the different routes. • A thorough matching process is being designed to ensure the employer can deliver support for SMART targets set for the learner and with regular training and relevant CPD, staff will be fully informed to monitor and track the employer and student journey. We are also currently looking at methods for meaningful online reviews/adaptations to address the issues of current challenges
How have you assessed the success or otherwise of placements?	• Employer feedback, also logged on Work placement area in WCG. • Discussions with students and coordinators. Debriefing meeting from employer about each student. Students complete Impact surveys after every work experience/work placement activity taken place to gain relevant feedback to feed into success and development of placements. • The former TRIPS projects set out to determine the skills of highest importance to employers and how competent tutors and employers were to deliver and support the core elements of the qualification. This produced data which will determine the constitution of a quality placement and link work onsite to curriculum content. Employers will also be given an outline of course content to allow for opportunities to link employer projects to course subject matter to really consolidate their learning. • IPC's will closely and regularly monitor placements, communicate with employers and liaise with tutors to ensure ongoing quality.

Marketing & Outreach	
How are you intending to market T-Levels to students, parents and employers?	• Overviews have been created for Employers. • Careers within the organisation have received overviews to be able to give information to Parents and students enquiring about T-levels. • Local employer events to educate about T-levels. • Leaflets being created to outline T-level programme and answer any common questions that get raised. • Case studies and success stories of current employers and students. • Use of organisation website. • T-level events for parents and students. • Look at Kick start programmes and Bootcamps that local employers are utilising, to be able to link into after the programme has completed for the correct candidates to feed through onto the T-level.
What barriers, if any, have you experienced in marketing or raising awareness of T-Levels?	• Lack of awareness about the T-levels for parents, students and Employers. • Lack of marketing on T-levels. Employers do not have the finance or staff to implement the work experience at this level. Barriers from schools to invite the organisation to promote on careers day events. • Competition from other local providers and how they are running Tlevel programmes.
Lessons Learned	
What do you think will need to be in place for the successful roll-out of T-Level work placements from 2022-23?	• Need more promotion and education to communities. • More robust system from IPO (F2F sessions). More employer incentive/support
What are your positives and negatives about T-Levels in general?	• Not designed for more practical based learning to support practical based learning styles. • Geared at more academic level of student. • Current level 2 students within engineering machinist wouldn't be able to continue onto T-level. • Lack of work placement availabilities within companies for 135 days, due to other providers all needing same thing. • More specialised staff needed for growth of T-level. • More marketing is needed and education of T-levels for parents, students and employers. • Gives learners a high standard to work towards and valued industry experience. • Learners who complete placements could have an opportunity to feed through to higher app programme with employers.

What recommendations would you make to government / IfATE etc. for T-Levels to be successful, and the work placement element in particular?	• See above.

Case Study Three: Herefordshire, Ludlow & North Shropshire College

EMPLOYER DETAILS			
College / Training Provider Name:	Herefordshire, Ludlow & North Shropshire College		
Are you planning on offering the Engineering & Manufacturing T-Level for 2022-23 or are you delaying until later?	Yes – 2022-23		
What are your approximate target numbers for each route and pathway you are offering?	**Manufacturing, Processing and Control**	Production	
		Manufacturing	
		Processing	
		Materials	
	Maintenance, Installation & Repair	Mechanical	
		Mechatronic	
		Electrical & Electronics	
		Control & Instrumentation	
		Vehicles	
		Energy & Utilities	
	Design & Development	Mechanical	14
		Electrical & Electronic	
		Control & Instrumentation	
		Structural	

What is the nature of your employer & student base relevant to the T-Levels you are offering? (eg Levy / SME, proportion of apprentices from larger employers, reliant on a few larger employers or range of SMEs?)	• Employer base is predominantly SME – approx. 10% of apprentices are from Levy payers. • Approx 16-20 intake of L3 Engineering apprentices each year + approx. 15-20 L2 FT and 30-40 L3 FT. Approx 20 intake at HNC. • Mainly small / specialist manufacturing firms and food processing • Due to no dominant employers we have to offer a broad generic apprenticeship offer across manufacturing/design, maintenance and electronics to achieve viable off-the-job cohorts • Rural area with poor public transport network • We are 30 miles from Welsh border but have to turn away potential employers and apprentices from Wales due to no funding available to deliver in England. • We do not have the volumes of FT students to be able to offer more than one or two pathways for T-Level

How have you used your CDF funding to generate and evidence T-Level size work placements?

What, if any, additional resource have you deployed?	• Senior Management reluctant to provide dedicated resource in form of work placement co-ordinators • In first year, an hourly paid member of support staff was engaged to generate and monitor work placements, with reasonable success, but this did not continue, with the expectation that curriculum staff would be doing it, which has been less successful
What has been the delivery model for work placements (days, blocks etc.)	• Strategy employed was to identify students who already had relevant part time paid employment and to then capture and evidence this via record sheets and progress reviews • Therefore no delivery model was determined upon – based around existing job-role arrangements
Approximately how many placements per year have you managed to achieve?	• Above strategy evidenced around 12 placements / year. • Around 75% of students have part time jobs but only around 10-20% could be counted as T-Level equivalent work placements due to relevancy of PT job and many not having the sufficient 315 hrs
What strategies have worked well for engaging with employers and securing work placements?	• As above – limited resource made available to properly engage with employers
What strategies have worked less well for securing work placements? What have been the barriers?	• As above. • In addition, geography and patchy and expensive public transport presented additional barriers to potential placements • Students reluctant to work for free or to give up existing part time (usually non-relevant) jobs to start an unpaid work experience placement

What do you think will need to be in place for the successful roll-out of T-Level work placements from 2022-23? Lessons learned?	• Needs to be more promotion from employer groups such as the Chambers etc. to encourage their members to offer placements for young people • Student should be paid for work placement at minimum wage + cover of travel expenses, to overcome financial barriers • For our circumstance specifically, we will need to properly resource and employ work placement co-ordinators
Work Experience Placement Preparation	
How have you prepared students for work experience placements? **Has this been effective?**	• We did not have a robust or effective system in place for this. As per above, the target cohort were those already in relevant paid part time employment • Existing careers etc. resources will need to be adapted and deployed. Time on timetable to be allowed in 1st year of T-Level delivery for work prep.
Work Experience Monitoring	
How have you monitored student progress on work experience placements?	• When we had someone specifically who was doing this, we adapted existing Apprenticeship Review paperwork to evidence T-Level work placement progress – 1 x start, 1 x mid, 1 x end. This worked well while it lasted • Same person also carried out the initial employer vetting (ie H&S etc.)
How have you assessed the success or otherwise of placements?	• Limited evaluation carried out
Marketing & Outreach	
How are you intending to market T-Levels to students, parents and employers?	• Usual means – ie website, prospectus • Some presentations to careers advisors and employer groups have taken place, but interrupted by Covid • No usual face to face open evenings or careers events for 12 months+ due to covid • An Employer's Guide to Work Experience was produced and distributed but did not generate many leads in itself • On the ground marketing / visits will be required to generate interest from employers • Parents will take a lot of convincing and careers advisors a lot of educating

What barriers, if any, have you experienced in marketing or raising awareness of T-Levels?	• General lack of awareness from general public and employers about T-Levels • T-Levels currently in competition with other more established L3 quals • Lack of clarity around progression routes to HE and / or Apprenticeships means that staff are reluctant to sell hard
Lessons Learned	
What do you think will need to be in place for the successful roll-out of T-Level work placements from 2022-23?	• Needs to be more promotion from employer groups such as the Chambers etc. to encourage their members to offer placements for young people • Student should be paid for work placement at minimum wage + cover of travel expenses, to overcome financial barriers • Parents will take a lot of convincing and careers advisors a lot of educating • Lack of clarity around progression routes to HE and / or Apprenticeships means that staff are reluctant to sell hard
What are your positives and negatives about T-Levels in general?	• If delivered well, with full buy-in from staff and employers, it should be a gold standard qualification • Concerns that it won't be suitable for all aspiring L3 Engineering students • Concerns that only those students who can afford to work for free will access T-Levels • Concerns that there won't be enough work placements available to accommodate student demand • Concerns that government may defund competitor quals and therefore 50%+ of engineering students will not be able to continue their education beyond L2, particularly in rural areas with no larger employers
What recommendations would you make to government / IfATE etc. for T-Levels to be successful, and the work placement element in particular?	• Needs to be properly funded – in terms of £/hr, funding in many cases is less generous than now • See also above comments