



Cirencester
College



T-LEVELS

EMPLOYER GUIDE TO T-LEVEL WORK PLACEMENTS

What are T levels?

T-levels are a 2-year programme of study, equivalent to 3 A levels. They were designed in partnership with employers and aim to provide young people with a mixture of technical knowledge and practical skills specific to their chosen industry and occupation. A key feature of the programme is an industry placement equivalent to 45 days or 315 hours which will provide young people with an opportunity to develop employability skills and address any skills shortages which could affect the future success of your company.

Cirencester College is a pioneer of T-levels and our staff have developed the expertise for exciting, ground-breaking qualifications in:

Accounting

Agriculture, Land Management and Production

- Horticulture and Garden Design
- Floristry

Business Management and Administration

Childcare and Education

Construction

- Building Services and Engineering
- Design, Surveying and Planning
- (Civil Engineering Option included)

Creative and Design

- Art: Craft and Design
- Fashion and Textiles

Digital

- Production, Design and Development (Software Development, Coding and Game Development)
- Business Services (Data Analysis for Business)
- Support Services (IT Support)

Engineering

- Manufacture and Processing Control
- Design and Development
- Maintenance, Installation and Repair

Finance

Health and Science:

- Health
- Healthcare Science
- Science

Legal Services

Media, Broadcast and Production

- Creative Media Technician
- Events and Venues Technician
- Content Creation and Production

What are the benefits of T levels for employers?

The qualifications are intended to be a new gold standard for vocational education, preparing students for skilled employment, an apprenticeship or higher education. They have been developed to ensure a balance of technical learning, work experience and employability skills through classroom-based sessions and a high-quality placement in industry.

Potential benefits for employers include:

- Establishing a pipeline of new talent for entry level jobs.
- Securing a flexible temporary workforce to improve productivity or to work on specific projects.
- Connecting the company with young people with up to date skills, who are looking for a career in your industry.
- Addressing skills gaps and shortages by ensuring young people leave College with not only technical skills equivalent to 3 A levels but also experience of the workplace.
- Reducing recruitment costs by working with Cirencester College to identify and prepare students for a placement, and potential employment with you.
- Attracting diverse applicants to the company with fresh and innovative ideas.
- Giving existing staff the opportunity to develop their mentoring and supervisory skills as they supervise work placements.
- Motivating staff by giving additional responsibility and an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience.
- Enhancing the reputation and brand image of the company as an innovative, forward thinking, employer of choice.
- Raising the profile of the company with the local population by creating opportunities for local young people.

Overview of the process

A meaningful and high-quality work placement is key to success on the programme and it is the aim of Cirencester College to ensure that delivering industry placements is as easy as possible for employers. The College has a team of staff to help with preparation and planning for the placement but values your input to plan the main objectives and key activities students will undertake during their placement. Our team can provide advice at each stage of the process to maximise the opportunity for both you and our students:

The process:

Interested in a T-Level placement?

Visit Cirencester College website: www.cirencester.ac.uk or contact the team on employer.hub@cirencester.ac.uk or telephone the T Level Placement Team on 01285 626143



Consider the types of activities or job roles a student could undertake

Put together a placement description and consider how you would like students to apply



Select a student

College staff can offer support to help you select an appropriate candidate or arrange interviews



Prepare for a placement

You will be provided with information on how to prepare and be supported by the College to complete any paperwork.



Manage the placement

This will involve supervising our student in the workplace and feeding back to them and College staff on their achievements or areas for development



Finish the placement

Sign off the objectives and hours agreed in the preparation phase and feedback to the College.

Once they have completed their course, consider hiring the student as an employee or apprentice or decide to work with another Cirencester College student.

Cirencester College support for employers with students on work placement

Cirencester College will:

1	Ensure that students have undertaken appropriate work-preparation and training and are ready to start their placement.
2	Offer support to employers to select an appropriate candidate
3	Work collaboratively with employers to complete a placement plan by providing information about the sector specific technical qualification and providing examples of the skills, knowledge and activities which could be undertaken and developed on placement.
4	Ensure that employers have adequate insurance to cover students and any potential loss or liability caused by or to the student in relation to the placement.
5	Check that there is a safe environment for students on placement including due diligence and health and safety arrangements.
6	Ensure that relevant information about special needs and disabilities are shared with employers, with student consent, so any reasonable adjustments can be made.
7	Manage a series of reviews to assess student progress against agreed aims.
8	Manage completion of required paperwork.
9	Provide ongoing teaching and pastoral support for students on placement.

Employer responsibilities

1	Work collaboratively with Cirencester College to develop the student's industry placement agreement ensuring it includes a set of stretching learning goals, an agreed working pattern and key activities relevant to their occupational specialism.
2	Comply with health and safety legislation.
3	Sign the Industry Placement Agreement and commit to adhering to the guidelines set out to provide a meaningful and high-quality experience for the student.
4	Ensure appropriate safeguards are in place to ensure a safe environment for students.
5	Consider reasonable adjustments required for students with special educational needs or disabilities.
6	Identify an appropriately skilled and experienced member of staff to supervise students while on placement.
7	Maintain up to date Employer's Liability Insurance and inform insurers of the placement.

FAQs

Is this going to take up lots of time and money?

With any new starter there will be some planning and paperwork however we will support with practical and administrative tasks to help streamline the process. This will include support with the selection process, arranging review meetings, guiding you through the relevant paperwork and preparing students for the work placement.

There may be costs associated with any new starter in your organisation. These should be considered against the potential benefits of taking on a student and may include investment in time to plan and mentor the placement; space and equipment to accommodate the student; measures to ensure legal compliance e.g. insurance or in some cases DBS checks for staff, if needed; and optional payments if you choose to support the student with a wage, allowance or travel and subsistence payments whilst on placement.

Will students be ready to work from day one?

Some students will already have some limited experience of the world of work however for others, the opportunity that you are providing will be their first taste of employment. Students will have undertaken a programme of occupationally focused learning and some employability training so should have a good understanding of the professional behaviours that employers expect in the workplace. A well-structured and full workplace induction is recommended to re-enforce the messages that they have received from tutors. It may be valuable to extend the induction and revisit the key messages over the duration of the placement since there will undoubtedly be a lot of information to absorb in their new and unfamiliar environment.

What activities and tasks can a student do as part of their placement?

The aim of T Levels is to provide students with vocational learning relevant to their chosen career pathway and to develop that learning through high-quality work experience. College staff will aim to develop all students so that they are motivated, engaged and committed to their placement. Once a student is ready to undertake a placement it is important for the employer, College staff and the student to collaborate to agree objectives for the work placement including working patterns and a set of activities and learning goals which are achievable but will stretch and develop the student. These can include life-skills but should also be relevant to the student's occupational specialism. Tutors can provide you with information about the technical qualification students are participating in and can offer suggestions as to the type of activities which students could work on during their placement. We are also keen to hear from you, so let us know if students need to meet minimum entry requirements to start on placement, or what type of skills development and training you can offer, so that we can find the right person for you.

When will the work placement take place?

Work placements can be arranged quite flexibly around the business needs of the organisation. In some cases, the student can undertake a placement 1-2 days per week, allowing them to attend College, to learn and apply their knowledge of the workplace in the classroom and vice versa. This is particularly effective for Year 1 students who are just starting to focus on a more specialised career path. Students are able to undertake placements in blocks too, which can suit more experienced students who can work with employers on a specific project and experience the demands of a regular working routine. Time is set aside for placements within the College timetable and holidays provide additional opportunities to undertake block placements. For many students a combination of day-release and block placements provides a good balance of work and time to study. Students will have to sit exams and are unable to undertake work experience during the exams period.

Where can work placements take place?

Students must attend a work placement at a location which is away from their normal learning environment, so they experience what it is like to be in a real-life job, including travelling to work, independence from their peers and working with new people. This means that students cannot take on placements working from home.

Further information and useful links:

General Information on T levels can be found at: www.tlevels.gov.uk/employers

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-industry-placements-employer-guide>

PLANNING AND MANAGING WORK PLACEMENTS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE ON T LEVELS

Relevant experience is frequently cited by employers as a crucial factor when taking on recruits of any age (Employer Perspectives Survey 2016). At the heart of the new T-Level qualification is the entitlement to a quality industry placement for students, to arm them with the skills they need to give them the best possible chance for entering skilled employment.

To create a high value industrial placement for both your company and the student, there are a number of factors to consider.

1 Finding the right student

Sometimes a student may contact you directly and let you know what they are studying and what they hope to get out of a placement. In this case you might wish to interview the student, offer a placement based on their speculative approach or decline their application. It is always helpful to feedback the reason for your decision, especially if this can help them improve their approach for subsequent applications. If you would like to talk anything through with staff at the College, please e-mail employer.hub@cirencester.ac.uk or telephone 01285 626143.

Alternatively, it might be useful to consider offering a placement as if you were recruiting for an entry level job opportunity. What tasks and activities would you expect this person to undertake and are there any preferred skills and aptitudes that the ideal candidate would possess? Cirencester College can promote your placement to students and oversee a selection process. You can select a short list of students to interview and find the person who will fit best in your company.

2 Health and Safety

Before any student goes on placement, the College needs to undertake some basic checks to ensure that the student is undertaking their placement in a safe environment. These checks are usually just to confirm that you are following normal good practise and current health and safety legislation. For example, we will ask you whether you have a Health and Safety policy, if you have Employer Liability Insurance and what kind of risks a student might be exposed to while on placement. You may wish to highlight the precautions you would take to accommodate an inexperienced young person on site and we recommend that you let your insurer know that you are taking a student.

It is a common misconception that under-18s aren't allowed in certain work settings however in most situations this remains the decision of the employer and is perfectly acceptable as long as risks are managed in the same way as you would manage risks for any member of staff. If your business is involved in agriculture, construction or manufacturing, it may be considered a 'high-risk environment'. You should consider if you need to do anything further to manage the risks for a young person, such as supervising the student when using equipment. If your business uses heavy or dangerous machinery, you need to check the student is old enough to use it before giving them training.

There is more guidance on the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk or <https://employers.tlevels.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/4403442891794-Legal-compliance-for-industry-placements>

3 Creating a plan for students on placement

Cirencester College will work collaboratively with employers to set challenging but realistic and relevant learning goals for students. At the outset of the placement students, employers and the College will sign an Industry Placement Agreement, which summarises the logistics of the placement, the learning goals and the key contacts. This agreement will be based on the list of tasks that you tell us a student will be expected to complete and linked to the curriculum by College staff. It will also form the basis for progress reviews which are arranged by College staff and should take place at least three times during a placement, or more if the student requires more support. At each of these reviews you will be asked for your feedback. Your industry expertise will provide valuable information on how well the student is progressing and allow the College to identify ways to provide support at the College.

4 Induction and supervision

By law, employers are responsible for ensuring a safe working environment for staff including placement students. A comprehensive induction covering all aspects of health and safety and the organisation's policies and procedures is essential. Sharing your expectations with the student at the start of the placement is important since most students will have limited experience of any workplace, a situation which has been exacerbated by changes in working practises during Covid.

Consider:

- Time keeping and what to do if the student is running late; breaks, lunch and home-time.
- Absence; who the student should contact if they are sick or want to book time off
- How to do an effective handover of work and put on an out-of-office response if required.

- Dress code; is there a uniform or dress code to adhere to? What Personal Protective Equipment is required and provided?
- Office etiquette; how they should address management, colleagues or customers; how to engage and interact in meetings.
- Respecting colleagues; their time, deadlines & workload.
- Taking messages for others and answering the phone.
- Organisational skills; creating a to-do list, meeting deadlines and keeping others informed if they are unable to complete tasks on time.
- Prioritisation of work and who to ask if they are not sure.
- Diary management; know how to set reminders, book meetings and check their diary. Understand the importance of giving notice if they need to reschedule.
- The importance of taking a proactive approach to communication with supervisors and reassurance that it is ok to ask for help.
- If all work is completed then encourage students to look or ask for more to do! To show initiative.

The College can provide you and students with an induction checklist if this is useful.

5 Who looks after students on placement?

It is essential to provide a named line manager or supervisor for students on placement. Ideally this should be someone who has experience in the sector and of training others. This person would be expected to offer supervision on placement on a day to day basis and to feedback at review meetings. Depending on the size of your organisation, you may also want to nominate a buddy or mentor to help the young person to settle in. A buddy/mentor might be particularly useful as a consistent source of support if a student is spending time with several different teams in your company.

Please encourage staff to identify and celebrate any successes throughout the placement to promote engagement and motivation. Keep a note of them too as we will be asking for examples at the progress reviews.

Discuss development or concerns as they happen so that any constructive feedback can be taken on-board and improvement promoted straight away, as with any employee.

In most cases students are highly motivated and excited to be able to get practical experience and apply their learning. In the unlikely event that a student behaves inappropriately or consistently fails to meet the standards you require, you should raise concerns with your contact at Cirencester College. The College has personal and pastoral tutors to help young people navigate personal challenges and will have spent time with your student preparing them for their placement. The sooner the College knows about an issue, the easier it is to resolve. If poor behaviour persists you are at liberty to withdraw the placement offer.

6 Getting to know your student

Some students may have Special Educational Needs or Disabilities and require additional support. With the student's permission we will share support needs with you and would ask you to consider making reasonable adjustments to accommodate students during placement.

During the global pandemic, many social, educational and career opportunities for young people were severely restricted. For some young people, the challenge of starting work in an unfamiliar, adult work place may create feelings of anxiety, beyond the normal butterflies we all might experience when starting a new job. If you would like to meet students, on College premises during the selection process, this may help to ease the transition from the classroom to the work place.

7 Will I need to record student hours?

The College is moving onto a digitised system of recording activities and hours for young people on placement. The onus is with the student to log their hours, the tasks they have completed and the skills they have used. A nominated person, usually the supervisor will receive an email each week with a link to allow them to verify the hours claimed. Any hours not validated will not be counted towards the student's placement. It is helpful to provide time for the student to reflect on what they have done. Many young people may be unfamiliar with reflective practises and may require a bit of encouragement at first to identify what skills they have been developing.

8 How should I deal with commercial confidentiality?

In some industries, students may be exposed to commercially sensitive or confidential information during their placement. If it is normal practice to put clauses in place to protect the business, then it is recommended that you follow the same principles for students, as you do with other employees. You can draw up a confidentiality statement for students to sign. Although not legally binding, it could give you peace of mind and confirm to students how important confidentiality is to your business.

9 What happens at the end of a placement?

There will usually be a Final Review towards the end of the placement. This is an opportunity to reflect on the student's progress through the placement. It should take into account progress towards the goals described in the Industry Placement Agreement and developed through the review process as well as achievement of appropriate behaviours such as time-keeping, courteous communication or reliable attendance.

The most crucial information that you will be asked to sign is the Completion Declaration form. This asks you to confirm that students have made adequate progress towards the learning goals whilst on placement and have completed the correct number of hours, recorded and validated on the College's system. This may be the whole 315 hours however if an employer is only able to offer a short placement, for instance on a specific project, this figure may be lower. Please bear in mind when offering a placement that students must achieve their 315 hours on placement with a maximum of two employers, except in very specific circumstances. The College will send you the form but it is key that you sign and return it.

You will also be asked to provide an appraisal for the student, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. In some cases, you may be happy to offer a student a reference.

The purpose of the T-Level qualification is to prepare students for entry into skilled employment, academic study or progression to specialised vocational opportunities such as apprenticeships. It is crucial that students complete their T-Level Placement and the academic components of the course before you offer them paid employment or an apprenticeship opportunity. Cirencester College Apprenticeships Team will be happy provide advice, guidance and recruitment options. Contact the team on apprenticeships@cirencester.ac.uk or 01285 626259.

10 Employer feedback

T Levels are new qualifications which place a strong focus on the work placement element of the programme and which are designed to provide flexibility to meet the requirements of employers. Cirencester College welcomes feedback from you about your experience to enhance the delivery of the programme and support for our students. You can provide feedback to your named College contact or at employer.hub@cirencester.ac.uk

If you are unable to help with work placements at this time, you can play an important role on sector specific Employer Boards, which help to shape the College's understanding of the challenges and opportunities for employers. Meetings take place periodically and a panel of employers are invited to contribute. If you are interested in being involved, please let us know.

You can also help by offering to speak to students, presenting at careers events or allowing visits to your site.

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The information contained in this document is believed to be correct at the time of production, September 2022.