T Levels: Make or Break for Manufacturers?

This summary of our report sets out what T Levels are, what manufacturers think of them, what the challenges are and our recommendations to Government on how to make T Levels a success.

MAKE uk
The Manufacturers' Organisation

What are T Levels?

T-Levels are a new technical qualification that will sit alongside A-Levels and apprenticeships at aged 16.

One T-Level will be the equivalent to three A Levels.

There are fifteen different T Level routes that a young person can take, one of which is manufacturing and engineering.

T-Levels will be a two year course combining classroom based learning with a three month placement during which students will demonstrate the skills and practical learning that has been undertaken in the classroom in the workplace.

Currently, there are tens of thousands of vocational and technical qualifications and the introduction of T-Levels should not add to this but potentially replace the majority of level 3 vocational qualifications, simplifying the system.

T-Levels are made up of five different elements that result in a Level 3 technical qualification and a demonstration that that young person is "threshold" competent in the specialism they then pursue.

What are the 5 elements of T Levels?

1. A technical qualification.
2. English, Maths and Digital requirement.
3. A mandatory industry placement.
4. Occupational-specific requirement.
5. Further employability, enrichment and pastoral provision.

How does the Manufacturing and Engineering Route work?

Here's an example of the pathway for the Manufacturing and Engineering Route:

ROUTE
Engineering and Manufacturing

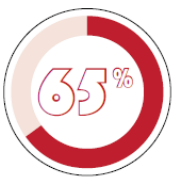
PATHWAY (3 options)
1. Engineering Design, Development and Control
2. Engineering, Manufacturing and Process
3. Maintenance Installation and Repair

OCCUPATIONS
1. A technical occupation (level 2/3)
2. Higher technical occupation (level 4/5)
3. Professional occupation (level 6)

ARE MANUFACTURERS AWARE OF T LEVELS?

Many manufacturers are unaware of T levels and those that have heard of them have limited knowledge.

CURRENTLY



OF MANUFACTURERS SAID THEY HAD NOT HEARD OF T LEVELS

ONLY

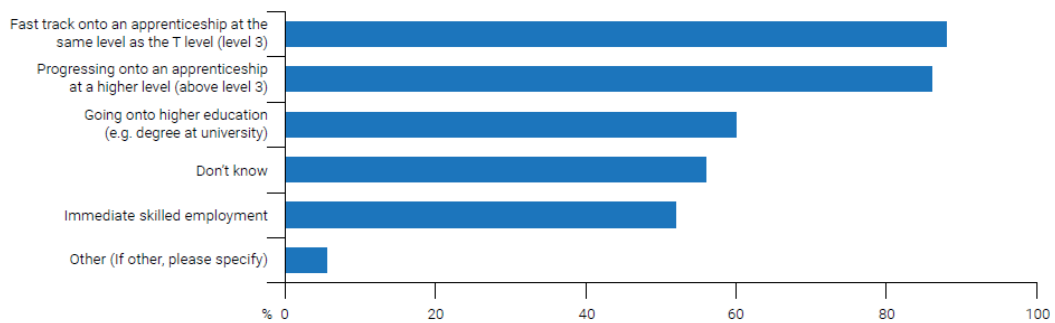
HAD HEARD OF THEM - BUT HAD LIMITED KNOWLEDGE OF THEM

Where do manufacturers think T Level learners should progress onto after completing?

Most say onto an Apprenticeship!

Chart 4: Manufacturers see T Level students progressing onto apprenticeships as well as higher education

% manufacturers citing what the progression routes for T levels should be

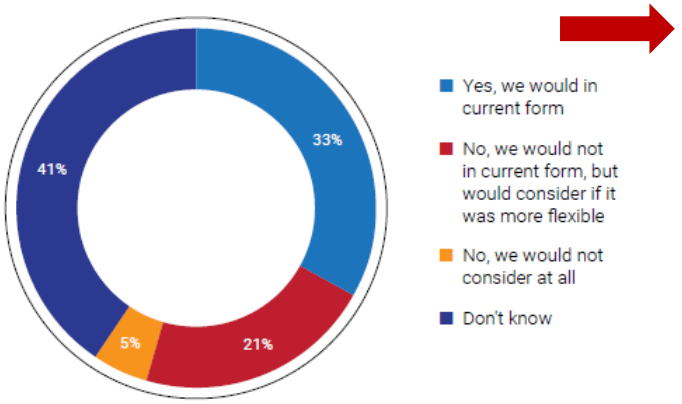


Source: Make UK, Education and Skills Survey (2019)

WILL MANUFACTURERS OFFER PLACEMENTS?

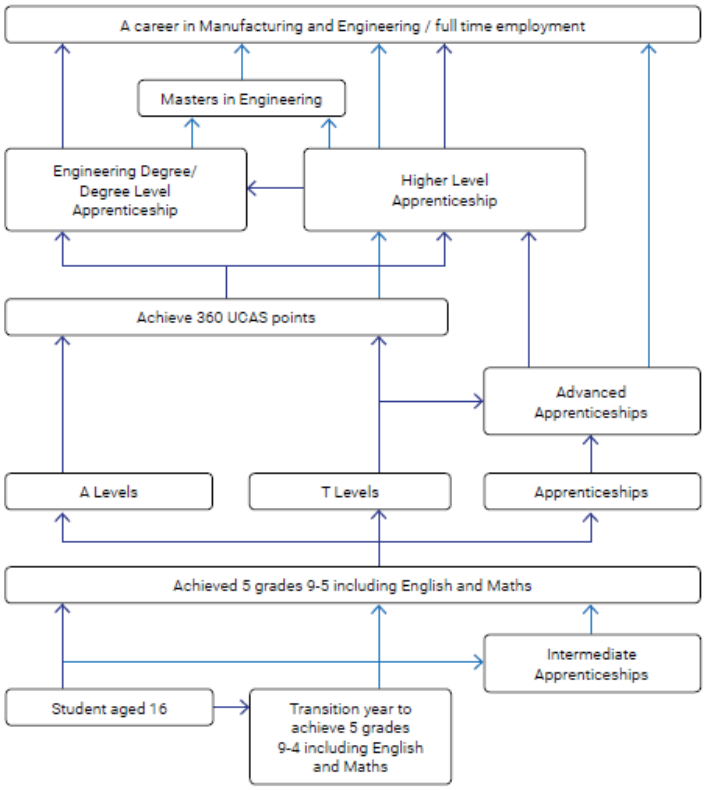
Chart 1: Manufacturers see the value of offering placements

% companies stating whether they would offer a T level student a placement



Source: Make UK, Education and Skills Survey (2019)

HOW SHOULD T LEVELS FIT INTO THE WIDER LANDSCAPE? Here's what we think....



WHAT IS MAKE UK RECOMMENDING TO MAKE T LEVELS WORK BETTER?

Here's a few of the ideas we have come up with....

Make placements work by:

1) Using training academies for delivery.
2) Allow T level learners to spend time with more than one employer .
3) Give employers direct financial support.
4) Include a work readiness module before the placement.

But there are barriers to doing so:

1. **Not enough people capacity within the business.** 60% of manufacturers said their business lacked enough people to set up, support and deliver high-quality placements.
2. **Time constraints in managing cohorts of young people**. 55% of manufacturers said juggling young students with business needs would be a barrier with many offering various initiatives throughout the year.
3. **Don't understand what is expected of the business**. 44% of firms said a lack of information on what a T level placement would entail for them is a barrier.
4. **The legal ins and outs**: 44% of manufacturers said legal constraints, such as having someone under 18 working in certain areas in certain manufacturing sub-sectors, would make it harder to offer placements.
5. **Financial costs of set up:** 17% of manufacturers said there are too many financial barriers particularly in set up costs such as equipment and PPE.

How are T Levels graded? Do manufacturers like the grading system?

– Grade A*-E for the core component of the TQ
– Pass, merit or distinction for the occupational specialism of the TQ
– Pass or fail for the 3-month placement
– Grade 9-1 for their English and maths skills
– Any other occupation-specific requirements

These grades would be outlined in a transcript, but students would also receive an overall grade into either a pass, fail, merit or distinction. It is clear that by grading individual components differently, it will leave manufacturers very confused as to what the student has actually achieved

Create genuine parity of esteem:

a) Ensure all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) accept T Level students.
b) Map out the options available to T Level learners (you can take ours!)
c) Support the Careers and Enterprise Company to better bridge the gap between industry and schools.

...you can read more in our report here.