CBEE Position Statement on T Levels

Revised and updated

24th March 2026

Construction & the Built Environment Education [CBEE]

CBEE aims to provide a single voice for Construction and the Built Environment (CBE) in relation to learning and education. It is not funded by government and operates entirely on voluntary efforts and employers who have chosen to invest their time in it.

CBEE includes representation from a wide range of stakeholders who are committed to supporting CBE education. The committee includes employers, professional bodies, awarding organisations, providers and other partners.

We aim to:

- **Provide a single voice** for CBE in relation to learning and education.
- **Promote a vibrant community** to share good practice, discuss issues, offer opportunities for networking and help to create a connected and resilient partnership.
- **Address skills gaps and help to inspire young people** to train and progress to further, higher and professional education and employment.

Introduction

The construction and built environment sector is a vital component of the economy, contributing significantly to employment through housing and infrastructure design, development and maintenance. As the industry evolves, there is also a growing need for a skilled and competent workforce equipped with the latest knowledge and techniques, prepared to adapt and take on new ways of working and face the technological challenges ahead. In response to this need, the UK government introduced T Levels, a new qualification designed to provide full time 16 to 19 year old students with a blend of classroom learning and on-the-job experience. We have welcomed the government's introduction of T Levels. We support the promotion of T Levels across our sector. We recognise many strengths to build on including the potential to transform the talent pipeline of the future. T-Level programmes also have the potential to offer an invaluable opportunity to provide more appropriately skilled, better informed, and work ready candidates to address skills shortages across the construction and built environment sector.

This document aims to review our position statement on T Levels in Construction and the Built Environment. Our original position statement on T levels was published in 2021. To ensure that our statement continues to reflect recent developments in the technical and vocational qualifications landscape it was decided that the position statement required updating and review. By analysing the key points of our current position statement, this updated statement seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness of T Levels in addressing the skills gap in this sector and their role in shaping the future workforce.

The following represents a significant degree of discussion and debate and is offered to help guide our future work and our future discussions with key partners.

Overarching CBEE statement

CBEE supports the development and implementation of T Levels and have welcomed the successful outcomes for the first cohorts of learners in recent years. However, we do have a number of general and detailed comments and recommendations to offer that we believe would greatly assist the uptake and achievement of T Levels across the construction and the built environment sector, especially as we move forward with the second generation of these qualifications.

The purpose and intent of T levels, as the qualifications of choice for full time vocational learners aged between 16 and 19, has not changed. It is important that consistency of approach is preserved as we move between generation one and two qualifications for the Design, Surveying and Planning (DSP)

pathway, and during the change of awarding organisation for the Building Services Engineering (BSE) pathway.

The DSP pathway is now well established, having been delivered in the first pilot wave of T-Levels. It is well supported by a range of construction and built environment employers as a pathway into a variety of technical and professional occupations, and by the 2022/23 academic year delivered 444 successful completions by 57 providers. The BSE pathway is less mature with typically less than half the annual overall recruitment volumes of the DSP pathway but has been delivered for more than 2 intake cohorts by at least 24 Colleges. The onsite construction pathway was delivered by 15 Colleges in its second year of delivery in September 2022, but notably only 7 of these completed more than 10 learners, and the pathway ceased recruitment in September 2024 after peak completions of 139 students in the 2023/24 academic year declined to just 125 students in 2024/25. By comparison the DSP and BSE pathways respectively saw 1,022 and 539 students completing in the 2024/25 academic year, Data on starts, completions and grades is available via the explore statistics service[1].

A successive Government administration has continued to support the T level qualification as the prime large level 3 qualification for the construction and built environment sector, and alternate large diplomas in the CBE sector have now been defunded.

However, in the Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper, reference to the design and development of a new generation of Vocational Levels (V levels) has now been proposed, returning to the notion that smaller more occupationally specific qualifications are also needed[2]:

> *'We will make 'V levels' the only pathway of vocational qualifications at level 3 for young people. These will sit alongside A levels and T Levels, providing simplicity and clarity as well as quality.'*

This approach will support providers of these qualifications with a consistent approach and the confidence to recommend the right choice of qualifications to new learners (and often their parents), in the knowledge that the T level qualifications are robust, and that initial teething problems have been addressed to some extent. This approach also provides some security, despite spanning Government and political changes, as to the future direction of post 16 vocational education for those in full time learning, as well as the reassurance that the recognition of T levels by employers will have sufficient longevity.

This in return should create improved opportunity for T level learners, with numbers of providers set to further increase, good practice shared to improve outcomes for these learner cohorts, and a greater return on investment for providers as learner numbers set to grow.

However, we must ensure that the expansion of the T level programmes, and the significant additional requirements they place on providers, are truly supported, if they are to expand and remain a high-quality experience for learners, and that potential issues and barriers to growth are addressed through lessons learned.

We recognise that the Government is set to invest additional funds into training for 16 to 19 year olds in the construction and built environment sector[3], but our concern is that this additional funding will only keep pace with the rate of population growth expected and as such, we believe that these T levels will need further support to be scalable and truly deliver for this sector.

The content and delivery mechanisms for these T level pathways does require a broader range of teaching and learning resources and improvements in specialist facilities, as well as investment in the development of the teaching community to truly deliver on the expected outcomes. Whilst there has been the welcomed recent appointment of 10 construction technical excellence colleges (CTECs)[4], these will tend to focus resources in regional hubs, and where travel to and from these college sites may be limited for some, the benefits will not be felt by all learners. For providers to have a fighting chance

[1] Explore Statistics Service (accessed 18/02/26)
[2] Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper
[3] Chancellor to pour £600m into construction training
[4] Construction technical excellence colleges: selection criteria and application form - GOV.UK

of meeting the demand for these courses, revenue funding must keep pace with the significantly increasing challenge of delivering to larger cohorts and the widening group of employers required to arrange sufficient industry placements.

The availability and flexibility of T level industry placements have proven difficult for providers to navigate and manage, with employers either limited in opportunity in specific regions, or slow to take on learners in this sector to date. Whilst some employers are now championing the T level route as an opportunity to identify talent, for many others, the T level model remains difficult to manage on top of an apprentice intake – with availability and/or experienced mentors limited or appropriate availability of work experience. However, where employers do take on T level learners, evidence from large construction and built environment employers and providers suggests an improvement in apprenticeship uptake, and T level learners taking up the option to start work while they study, and particularly pleasing progression from DSP completers into Higher and Degree apprenticeships post-programme[5]. However, migration from full-time study into Level 3 apprenticeships or full-time employment has also meant that the 'non-completion rate' amongst those studying T levels, particularly in the BSE pathway, is high compared to previous Level 3 qualifications. This double-edged sword needs consideration as positive progression to employment with or without study is clearly a success in one respect, attracting and enabling recruitment of talent into a sector that does need and demands new starts. However, the financial penalty for the provider in terms of retention factor and viability of class sizes, and the implications for declining achievement rate metrics must be carefully considered when reporting and evaluating provision.

The range, breadth and depth of each of the T level subject pathways in the construction and built environment sector has also varied, with the design, surveying and planning pathway remaining a relatively broad technically focused offer (to replace the BTEC where funding for full time learners in this age group has been removed), whilst the onsite and building services engineering pathways remaining focused on routes to specific trades.

This has led to variances in acceptability for progression pathways, and at worse, removed more flexible modular pathways that were previously open to 16 to 19 year old learners. For example, we now see some universities unable to assess the mathematical capability of DSP learners (as formerly, mathematical modules and grades where specifically stated for entry) and as a result, do not consider T level learners for entry to undergraduate programmes or apprenticeships at higher levels, despite these being taught level 3 programmes. For others, there is simply insufficient advanced mathematical and technical content needed to enter some apprenticeships and higher-level programmes (be that for site supervision or building services engineering), where former level 3 programmes would have been a precursor entry pathway. Although this has been addressed to some extent with the introduction of a new Occupational Specialism of Project Delivery within the DSP pathway, some employers and professional bodies remain concerned that a formerly productive progression route from BTEC in CBE to site supervisory roles remains unsupported. For Building Services Engineering, offers of progression into specialist trade apprenticeships are often not sufficiently accelerated, and students may leave the programme before completion, while progression opportunities to higher apprenticeships remain scarce.

The size and scope of the T levels in this sector mean that co-teaching of full time, part-time and apprentice learners is not practical (since the knowledge content and assessment methodologies, of most apprenticeships and other qualifications based on occupational standards represents a small proportion of the T level learning outcomes). The benefits and cost efficiencies previously seen of co-teaching modules to these cohorts have now been entirely eroded, and those teaching the T-level now opt only to teach this route. This further removes opportunity for adults, part-time learners and apprentices (especially where another mandatory qualification is required), creating cold spots for these learners and employers.

Considering the lessons learned to date in relation to T levels and their introduction in the construction and built environment sector, there is now opportunity for policy makers, with the support of the recently established Construction Skills Mission Board[6], to reflect on our findings here and deepen the links

[5] Analysis of T level Students' Destinations: First Cohor; Report produced by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation, February 2025

[6] Government unleashes next generation of construction workers to build 1.5m homes - GOV.UK

between education and training providers, with employers, and with potential learners, to make improvements to the entry points to this sector and build the pathways that are needed to empower and complement other skills packages set for development via the new UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025[7] and the Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper[8] to address the significant skills shortages and the delivery of both the housing and infrastructure that the UK needs now and in the future.

Recommendations

Summary

T Level Construction and Built Environment pathways continue to show promising learner appeal and potential to meet long-term workforce needs. However, barriers around teaching capacity, industry placement, and progression pathways risk undermining the intent of T Levels as a high-quality technical alternative to A Levels. These recommendations support systemic improvement, provider readiness, and alignment with sector needs.

Priority Recommendations for Policy Reform

1 **Address the National Shortage of Technical Teaching Staff.** Providers are struggling to recruit and retain staff with the specialist expertise (e.g. high-level maths, engineering, surveying) required to deliver rigorous T Level content — especially DSP and BES.

- Introduce targeted recruitment incentives (e.g. golden hellos, through the Teacher Industry Exchange funding, and via teaching scholarships) to attract industry professionals into FE teaching.
- Fund cross-sector secondment programmes to allow short-term industry-to-education placement pathways.
- Establish regional Centres of Excellence for CPD, curriculum development and resource sharing in technical construction and built environment delivery (potentially through CTEC initiatives such as regional Knowledge Centres).

2 **Funding.** The transition from 16 to 19 funding to adult (19+) funding requires greater analysis in terms of its impact on those seeking to continue their studies; this particularly affects T level learners who seek to study via the T level route often following completion of level 2 programmes after resits and retakes. The options and consequences need to be carefully weighed for these 19+ T level learners, and funding could be made available for those where routes to critical skills shortages exist, and where this type of study supports the transition into the workforce.

- Extend T Level funding eligibility to 19+ learners, prioritising high-need areas (e.g. electrotechnical, site supervision, building services).

3 **Strengthen Progression Pathways into Apprenticeships and Higher Education.** Progression routes from BSE to Level 4+ are unclear or insufficient. For DSP, university recognition is inconsistent. Some learners drop out mid-T Level to take up apprenticeships.

- Work with Skills England, employers and higher education providers to ensure T Level content (especially maths) is aligned with L4+ entry and progression requirements.
- Develop bridging provision (e.g. summer schools, booster modules) for learners targeting HE or higher apprenticeships.
- Introduce formal credit recognition for partially completed T Levels when learners transfer into apprenticeships.
- Provide employers and providers with incentives to take up the accelerated pathways from BSE into Level 3 apprenticeship designed by the Gatsby Foundation[9].

[7] The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025 - GOV.UK
[8] Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper
[9] Accelerated pathways from T levels to Apprenticeships: A pilot for Electrical Careers

4 **Provide National Support for Industry Placements.** Larger employers are now taking up placement options, but the biggest growth will be from SMEs. Many of these smaller employers lack the administrative capacity or resources to plan and host placements at scale. Placement delivery models (e.g. 1 day/week) are often misaligned with employer needs.

- Scale up employer brokerage support and local placement hubs, focusing on SMEs.
- Fund access to appropriate skills cards, such as CSCS and ECS cards, as well as PPE costs for learners where required (e.g. through the Employer Support Fund for T-level placements).
- Allow greater flexibility in delivery models (e.g. substantial block placements in holiday periods, hybrid models including a greater proportion of remote working, hosting by a greater number of employers within a consortia, and the expansion of the proportion of the placement allowed to be within skills-hubs or in employer supervised projects at providers premises).
- Improve the per learner placement funding for providers, which is currently insufficient to fund the scale of business development and employer engagement required to ramp-up volumes significantly.

In addition to encourage a more collaborative approach it is recommended that action should be taken to:

- Encourage Collaborative Placement Models Between key construction and built environment employers and their supply chain partners (sharing the responsibility for T Level placements between these organisations reduces the burden on any single employer, making participation more attractive. This approach also exposes students to a broader range of skills, working environments, and industry practices, enriching their learning experience and better preparing them for diverse roles within the sector).
- Incentivise larger employers to facilitate multi-partner placements (offering incentives such as recognition, financial support, or streamlined compliance processes, and where the coordination and collaborative placement encourages wider industry buy-in. This helps scale the initiative, ensuring more students benefit from quality placements without overloading any single company).
- Establish Clear Guidelines and Support Structures for Collaborative Placements (to ensure accountability and quality, guidelines should clarify the roles and responsibilities of key employer and supply chain partners s in delivering T Level placements. Support structures—such as placement coordinators or industry liaison officers—can facilitate communication and problem-solving, ensuring placements are well-managed and meet educational standards).
- Promote Awareness and Best Practice Sharing Within the construction and built environment industry (sharing success stories and effective models -such as those already trialled by employers helps demonstrate the benefits of collaborative placements. Industry forums, case studies, and workshops can spread awareness and encourage uptake, driving cultural change within the sector).
- Align Workplace Experience Placements with Apprenticeships and Sustainable Employment Pathways (designing placements with a clear pathway toward apprenticeships or long-term employment increases their value to both students and employers. It helps ensure that the investment in work experience contributes directly to addressing skills shortages and improving career progression within the construction and built environment industry).

5 **Ensure Pathway Design Reflects Learner Needs and Sector Gaps.** Learners want exposure to multiple occupations and to develop core knowledge and skills before specialising. Current T level design and delivery may result in learners becoming overly specialised too early. "Easier-to-deliver" options, such as electrotechnical, are prioritised by providers over those with greater skills gaps (e.g. protection systems engineering, and refrigeration & air-conditioning).

- Use funding uplifts or performance premiums to incentivise delivery of high-need specialisms (e.g. building services engineering).
- Regularly audit and report on specialism uptake versus national workforce gaps, and where necessary, introduce new specialisms (such as site management, BIM practitioner etc).
- Revise metrics to enable training providers to report the positive progression to apprenticeships from T-Levels (even during T level delivery); this will help promote the most

successful pathways, and to plan interventions for programmes where overall achievement rates on T levels remain too low.

We also recommend a number of system level improvements including the following:

Area	Challenge	Policy Solution
Teaching Workforce	Shortage of qualified staff (maths, engineering)	National incentives, secondment routes, CPD hubs
HE & Apprenticeship Progression	Poor alignment; early exit to apprenticeships	Improve content alignment, formalise partial credit
Placements	SME capacity & placement model rigidity	Placement brokerage support; funded CSCS cards; flexible models
Specialism Gaps	Provider drift to easier options	Targeted funding for key trades; specialism-level accountability

To support implementation and longer-term improvements we recommend that consideration should be given to:

- **Messaging**
  Clearer national guidance is needed to support learner and parent understanding of the distinct outcomes of each T Level.
- **Data Collection**
  Systematic tracking of learner destinations, progression, and completion will be essential in the post-2024 intake landscape.
- **Cross-Department Collaboration**
  Stronger partnerships with Skills England, DfE, MHCLG, DBT, and DWP could help align skills investment with housing, infrastructure, and employment strategy.
- **Funding**
  As previously mentioned, the transition from 16 to 19 to adult funding requires analysis with options and consequences carefully weighed.