



The information below was submitted into the Government's online consultation form.

## **Implementation of T Level Programmes: UK Theatre and Society of London Theatre's response**

### **3 What is your organisation?**

UK Theatre and Society of London Theatre

### **4 Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?**

No

### **Principles of the T level programme**

**Do you agree that the principles outlined above are the right ones on which to base a review of level 3 qualifications we should continue to fund in the new system, alongside T levels and A levels?**

Not Answered

### **If no, what other principles do you think we should consider?**

We welcome the Government's focus on exploring and committing to making technical qualifications fit for producing the workers of the future and we welcome the opportunity to comment on how T Levels should be implemented.

Society of London Theatre and UK Theatre welcome the opportunity to comment on the Implementation of T Level Programmes because:

- We are particularly interested in the Creative & Design Route as (as set out in the Occupational Maps jobs list) these cover many of the jobs within our sector.
- One of the priorities of UK Theatre's business plan is 'protecting, promoting and diversifying the future of the theatre and performing arts workforce'.
- Our sector has a need for people with technical qualifications and or with technical skills.
- Our members will work in partnership with education and training providers to provide placements and for pupils.
- One of our members is currently involved in the T Levels Work Placement Pilot through The Challenge.
- Our members will be those employers recruiting pupils who have gone through the Creative and Design route by 2022.
- Panel members – if our members are not represented on the panel we would welcome a discussion.
- We also welcome any moves that simplify the system for pupils – giving better guidance and quality information, making clear the range of jobs available to them across the creative industries, as well as clear pathways of career progression.

We know that our industry is dynamic and changing, and that we need to invest in our workforce now if we are to have the right skills and expertise in place for our industry to thrive ten or twenty years from now. The Creative Industries are worth £92bn and is a sector growing at twice the rate of the economy\*. The Creative Industries were named as one of the five early sector deals in the Industrial Strategy Green Paper.

### **Our sector's contribution**

Arts and culture, including theatre and the performing arts contribute much to Britain's future prosperity, national identity and to both national growth and also local growth, directly

through employment, and through attracting visitors to areas which develop satellite businesses and infrastructure around theatres – including restaurants and transport.

Theatre is central to the UK's international image and soft power, and brings benefits to the wider creative economy and we are rightly proud in the UK of our dynamic and world leading theatre industry. However, for the sector to continue to make a strong contribution to the creative industries, we need to make sure that our sector's needs and those that work within them now and in the future are catered for and that the pipeline of home grown talent is secured.

\*<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/creative-industries-record-contribution-to-uk-economy>

**6 Do you agree that we should review qualifications at level 2 and below based on the principles that these qualifications should support progression into employment or higher level study and have a value in their own right alongside T levels?**

Not Answered

**If no, what other principles do you think we should consider?**

### **UK Theatre and SOLT's Workforce Review**

In 2017 UK Theatre and Society of London Theatre (SOLT) published a major research report into the current and future training needs of the UK's world leading theatre and performing arts sector. It identified gaps in training and development for off-stage roles, including theatre management and technical skills, and the need for skills in new technologies.

It covered the range of career progression, from entry level, apprenticeships, mid-career development, to the needs of the sector's future leaders. It also looked at how entry and development routes for people from black and minority ethnic groups, for disabled people and for those from low socio-economic backgrounds can be improved, with a view to increasing diversity across the workforce.

The research is helping UK Theatre and SOLT work with government (local and national) and employers, and on behalf of the industry, to keep the sector resilient and relevant into the future.

We have included a number of points from this research in response to the consultation that impact on pupils, educators, employers and parents alike.

### **Systems Approach**

This consultation does not stand alone; it should be considered in light of other government policies on education, specifically Ebacc. It's important that there are pupils there to be able to take T Levels. By this we mean that we are concerned about the squeeze of pipeline (pre T Levels) of talent to our sector caused by a decline in percentage of pupils taking at least one arts subject (DfE's own figures – published in DfE/NSN report), 8% decline in uptake of creative subjects (arts +D&T) the largest year on year decline in a decade (Cultural Learning Alliance).

We know government has stated they will tackle some of the following issues in their Careers Strategy, but we want to emphasise how the strategy needs to work for our sector in order to compliment / aid the introduction of T Levels.

Creative subjects are vital – to introduce young people to the wide range of careers available in the creative industries. Subjects like IT and engineering are also needed. Areas such as

automation are increasingly important on-stage, expertise in data management and tech systems becoming vital for ticket sales, fundraising and audience development.

### **Careers guidance**

We support the move within the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 which requires schools to give providers the opportunity to talk to pupils about alternative routes – but we would recommend that this cover all routes – as mentioned before, our industry will employ from both Academic and Technical qualifications.

Young people could be made more aware of the broad range of non-performance roles in the theatre industry. More informed career advice in schools would be valuable. We would like to know how Government plans to give better careers advice to pupils, parents and teachers for our sector during before, during and after T Levels. Currently, there is a real lack of knowledge by each of these stakeholders into professions in our industry.

We are working on developing careers strategy for our sector and would be happy to share our progress with you.

### **Limiting choice for pupils**

We are concerned that splitting pupils into wither ‘Technical’ or ‘Academic’ is loaded with potential problems around immediate and later in life career choices. T Levels will need to be a route that does not limit a pupils choice if they wish to switch careers into another profession or indeed develop into managerial roles or people management roles, were their technical skills alone may not be enough.

### **Credibility**

‘Just as A Levels are demanded by universities, in time we want T Levels to be demanded by employers for entry into skilled employment.’ (Post 16 Plan)

Our Workforce research showed that our industry is notoriously difficult to enter. Therefore, T Levels must be seen as credible and high quality and not a reason for employers to discount students with this qualification. Employers will need to understand how they differ from qualifications that have come before, and not see them as an option for those who are not academic or skilled, but as a qualification for those who have chosen the pathway.

### **The technical qualification**

#### **7 Do you agree with the proposed approach to assessing technical qualifications?**

No

#### **Please give reasons for your response.**

We are concerned at the appropriateness of assessment choice for T Levels, both in terms of for the whole T Level and the individual parts of the Core, the Specialism, and the Placement elements. Is a formal exam the best way to be assessing T Levels?

#### **8 Do you agree with the approach to grading technical qualification components?**

No

#### **Please give reasons for your response.**

Awarding letters and numbers may confuse potential employees (it must be acknowledged that T Levels will not always lead straight to employment). There is however, an argument to support the separate grading of each part. In theatre, you may want someone fulfilling a set designer role who is high in design skills and creativity, and maths and engineering, but may not need to be as high in English.

**9 Do you agree with the approach to maintaining comparable standards of performance for technical qualifications?**

Not Answered

**Please give reasons for your response.**

N/A

**10 Do you agree that prior attainment of the core could count if students switch to another T level within the same route?**

Yes

**Please give reasons for your response.**

**Work placements**

**11 Do you agree with the proposed approach integrating the work placement within the T level programme?**

No

**If no, what would be a preferable approach?**

**Diversity**

The consultation states that government is 'committed to making Britain a country that gives our young people a level playing field, with every opportunity to succeed.' If this is to become a reality, equality of access to placements should be addressed:

We believe the case for improving the diversity of our sector is clear. For theatre and the performing arts continue to contribute to the UK's world-leading creative industries they must draw on the talent base, and build audiences, from all areas of society. We believe that diversity is key to ensuring resilience in the sector.

If the sector is to continue to thrive it is vital that its workforce becomes more representative of our society and includes more people from BAME backgrounds, who are disabled, and from low socio economic backgrounds.

Pay for the placement is currently at the discretion of employers – however it should be standardised. This will avoid bringing inequality into the system, and may help overcome the impression that there is no money to be made by working in our sector. Work experience and placements cannot only be available to those who can afford to pay for themselves.

**12 Do you agree with the proposed method of appraising the student's performance on their work placement, including the Employer Reference?**

No

**If no, what would be a preferable approach?**

See above

**13 Do you agree with the proposed approach to quality assurance set out above?**

Yes

**If no, please explain how we can ensure work placements are quality assured?**

N/A

**14 What additional support or further modifications should be available to those with greater needs or special circumstances (such as caring responsibilities) during a work placement? Please provide your answer below:**

We urge government to continue to think about those pupils who have caring responsibilities or access needs to ensure no one is disadvantaged on completing this core part of the T Level.

**15 How can we support students to access work placements relevant to their course in areas where there are no employers to offer work placements nearby? Please provide your answer below**

Theatres and theatre companies are based across the UK (with many in London and the SE). However, if a pupil is in a location where they cannot easily access a theatre, for instance, a rural area, they either need to be able to find a decent alternative meaningful placement, or appropriate travel arrangement should be considered. Pupils should not be disadvantaged by their location. If accommodation near an available placement is considered appropriate arrangements for safeguarding should be made.

**16 Do you agree with our suggested approach to providing students with financial support whilst on a work placement?**

No

**17 What are the common barriers/challenges for employers to host work placements and how can we support employers to offer work placements? Please provide your answer below**

**Hours of work**

Our industry is largely a night-time economy. Some off stage roles work throughout the day, and some evenings, and some roles involve a significant amount of night-time work. Some roles will have core hours over the weekend. It is crucial that for a pupil to experience a genuine, high quality experience, work placements for T Levels within our industry cater for these hours and find mechanisms to make them work.

**Demand for multiple placements**

Our sector recruits those from numerous academic and vocational qualifications and pathways, including Apprenticeships, Degrees, and Diplomas etc. Some employers in our sector currently provide placements and work experience to pupils from a variety of courses. Their needs to be taken into consideration when designing the work placements – employers cannot be expected to find placement positions for numerous pupils at once. The time needed for administration and planning for high quality placements should be considered; as should the timing of T Level placements (for example they could be at a different time of year to others).

One option to facilitate placements could be for organisations to join together to provide a range of experience within a single placement. This mirrors the experience of many self-employed practitioners in our sector.

**Supporting employers**

Some businesses in our sector might not have taken a pupil on a work placement, apprenticeship or trainee of any kind. If T Levels want to give a genuine experience of our industry, we would suggest two ideas: Government must have a strong, early and targeted marketing campaign that reaches our entire sector.

We would be happy to work with government on disseminating materials. Secondly, businesses could be offered financial incentives, and mentors or support workers for the pupils and the employer.

### **Marketing of T Levels & employer engagement**

As mentioned earlier, these changes are major. And with that, not only do employers need to understand them, but so do pupils, teachers, HE institutions and careers advisors. These stakeholders will need a clear understanding too of the differences between the current options A Levels; T Levels; Apprenticeships; Traineeships and also, an understanding of qualifications that sound similar, but are different, that have come before.

Given the expertise within our sector, we would like to know at what point employers and professional bodies will get the chance to inform the design and content of T-Levels, pathways and which subject is in which pathway. How will employers and relevant bodies know about it? Although the consultation has been out for a time now; there are still organisations that have very little knowledge, if any, about T Levels, despite government's efforts to engage.

We would also be keen to see how the Occupational Maps develop post their consultation and the development of the panels and their makeup.

### **Length of placement**

We would support a structure of work placements that allowed pupils to break their work placement up between different employees, or over the study period. As our industry is largely a night time economy and made up of lots of small companies and self-employed practitioners, this flexibility might make achieving quality placements for pupils more achievable both for pupil and employer, and be more authentic – giving them exposure to a network and a range of companies in the sector.

### **18 How do these challenges vary across industries and location types? Please provide your answer below**

#### **Theatre businesses and how they may differ**

It will be important to considering placement in different sizes of organisation. While our sector does include large national companies and large regional arts centres much of the industry is made up of smaller organisations and SMEs. These organisations will have less scope to take on work placements.

#### **• Freelancers and the self-employed**

Theatre and the performing arts has a high percentage of workers who are self-employed freelancers: Over a quarter of the respondents from our Workforce survey identified as being self-employed employed on a freelance basis, as compared to 15% of the total labour force in employment.

- This workforce makeup should therefore be taken into consideration when designing the placements. It will be important to ask whether freelancers are able to provide work placements. Moreover, when getting pupils work ready, they should be alert to the makeup of types of employment in our industry – help prepare them by thinking through what employment types, hours, contracts and work make our industry function, and whether this will be right for them.

- We would also like freelancers, self-employed and SME's to be reflected on the Panels

#### **Off stage roles**

We urge the Government to think about the range of jobs our industry needs to function. Theatre and the Performing Arts are made up of a wide selection of jobs.

We also know that stage automation, sound, lighting and production all feature heavily as skills shortages within our industry, as do senior management, HR, Finance and other administration roles.

We encourage government to think broadly about the kind of roles that those taking T Levels may be led to. Our industry needs people with STEM as much as they do STEAM qualifications and capabilities.

**19 How can the range of employers, including SMEs, be better supported to offer work placements for students with additional needs? Please provide your answer below:**

As above

**20 Would employers value a recognition in delivering work placements, for example through a form of 'kitemarking'? Please provide your answer below:**

Yes.

### **Maths, English and digital**

21 Should students be able to opt to take a higher level maths qualification e.g. core maths, A levels maths or work towards higher grades in GCSE even if T level panels do not require it? What are the issues for providers in delivering this? Please provide your answer below

**22 Which of these options for funding Maths and English within the T level programme do you think would be the most appropriate?**

Not Answered

Please explain the reasons for your answer.

### **Equalities**

**45 How could any adverse impact be reduced and are there any ways we could better advance equality of opportunity or foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not? Please provide your answer below and evidence to support your response:**

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If the sector is to continue to thrive it is vital that its workforce becomes more representative of our society and includes more people from BAME backgrounds, who are disabled, and from low socio economic backgrounds. Work experience and placements cannot only be available to those who can afford to pay for themselves.

We urge government to continue to think about those pupils who have caring responsibilities or access needs to ensure no one is disadvantaged on completing this core part of the T Level.