

Frequently Asked Questions

Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education

Wave 4 T Level Procurement

The Procurement Process

1. What procurement process are you considering for Wave 4 procurement?

We are considering a two-stage procurement process, which will help enable the Institute to eliminate unqualified bidders at stage 1, who do not have the required ability and capability to deliver the T Level programme. The successful Awarding Organisations will proceed to stage 2, to submit their responses to the pricing and technical (quality) questionnaire, before the contract is awarded.

2. How long is the 2-stage procurement process and how much time will there be between each stage?

The complete Invitation to Tender (ITT) documents and the contract documentation will be issued at the start of the procurement. Potential suppliers will need to complete the Selection Questionnaire (as part of stage 1) this includes:

- Administrative Compliance (Gate A)
- Economic and Financial Standing (Gate B)
- Capability Assessment (Gate C)

All suppliers will be notified of the outcome of their bids at the end of stage 1. Bids that pass Gates A, B and C evaluation will immediately progress on to stage 2 Technical and Price Evaluation (Gate D) and be evaluated on their technical (quality) responses.

We envisage the 2-stage process to be no less than 8 weeks.

3. Is the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education (“the Institute”) identifying learnings from Wave 3?

Developments on the process are ongoing, further changes may come through for Wave 4. The focus is likely to be on ensuring robust bids, good levels of competition and a successful contract.

4. Are there plans to publish lessons learned from Wave 3?

The procurement from Wave 3 has recently been completed. Lessons are being considered. There will not be any wide publication of any lessons learned but these will be reflected in any changes to Wave 4 and beyond, and any communication to the market.

5. In Wave 3 there was an initial cap on the maximum number of lots an Awarding Organisation could win. Are there any plans to have a cap in Wave 4?

There are no plans in Wave 4 to include a cap on the number of Lots an Awarding Organisation can win.

6. Which Routes and Pathways will be form part of the Wave 4 T Level procurement?

The rollout of the Wave 4 T Levels from September 2023 are:

- **Hair and Beauty**
 - Hair, Beauty and Aesthetics T Level

- **Creative and Design**
 - Craft and Design T Level
 - Media, Broadcast and Production T Level

- **Catering and Hospitality**
 - Catering T Level

- **Agriculture, Environmental and Animal Care**
 - Animal Care and Management T Level
 - Agriculture, Land Management and Production T Level

- **Legal, Finance and Accounting**
 - Legal Services T Level

- **Business and Administration**
 - Human Resources T Level

7. What is the broad timetable for the Wave 4 ITT?

The timetable for wave 4 is as follow:

- Late Autumn 2020 - Wave 4 ITT published
- Winter 2020/Spring 2021 – Evaluation of bids
- Summer 2021 - Contracts Awarded
- Summer 2021 – Summer 2022 - Content development period
- Summer 2022 - September 2023 - Provider readiness
- September 2023 – First teaching cohort

8. In terms of onward progression for the student, is having a good footprint with universities and other higher education institutes a useful 'value add' for the tender?

In terms of evaluating a bid, this would not be something we consider. Although it is helpful, it is not scored. The focus is around developing a quality qualification demonstrating the AO can put together a qualification consistent with the outline content.

9. What is meant by a concessions contract?

Under the Concessions Contract Regulations 2016 (Regulations), a contract between a contracting authority and a supplier is a services concession contract where payment is either:

- simply that the contractor has the right to exploit (that is, to profit from) the services that are the subject of the contract, or
- where the contractor has that right together with some payment from the contracting authority.

A services concession contract must also feature a transfer of the demand or supply risk (or both) to the supplier with the effect that the supplier is subject to the risks of the relevant market.

The T Level contracts for the development and delivery of Wave 4 Technical Qualifications are regarded as service concession contracts, as they grant successful suppliers an exclusive right to provide these services in circumstances where the demand risk (around the number of students taking up the T Level) is transferred to the successful supplier. This was also the case for the previous waves; and the intention is that Wave 4 will follow a similar open style supplier selection process under the Regulations.

Potential suppliers should note that the development fee element is not reliant on demand (although is reliant on a quality TQ and paid over the 3 milestones).

10. For T Levels Wave 4 is there any dialogue with Bidders during the Procurement?

There will be no face to face meetings or Competitive Dialogue, all communication with the Institute will be via Proactis Pro Contract (The Institute's Procurement Portal) you will also find a Virtual Data Room here with key information for Bidders.

11. Are there any changes to the Assessment Questions from Wave 3?

The Wave 4 questions will be like Wave 3's but with some minor refinements.

12. When will the Technical Qualification outline content for Wave 4 Pathways be published?

The draft outline content for T Levels is published as part of a public consultation and available on the Institute's website: <https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/t-levels/final-outline-content/>

The Final outline content for Wave 4 pathways will be published on the Institute's website in due course and will be included as part of the Invitation to Tender (ITT) documents.

13. What will happen if contracts are not awarded in Wave 4, will there be a Wave 5?

The Institute has no plans to deliver a Wave 5 procurement.

The Institute recognises the potential of receiving a "no tender" or "no suitable tender" outcome during Wave 4 procurement. Should this occur, the Institute is permitted to award the contract without further advertising, under the negotiated procedure aligned to the Concession Contracts Regulations (CCR) 2016.

14. What is classified as a "no suitable tender" response?

A tender response is termed unsuitable when the tender submitted does not provide sufficient evidence that the potential supplier will be able to meet the service requirement, as specified in the Invitation to Tender (ITT) document.

Contracting Parties

15. What are the pros and cons of bidding as a consortium?

From the Institute's point of view, while we would welcome Consortia bids, we cannot say whether it's beneficial or not to form a consortia - this would be up to the prospective Awarding Organisation(s). There may be certain specialisms that certain Awarding Organisations can better deliver. The Institute will assess all bids equally. The Cabinet Office has published a document on Working in a Consortium. You can access it from the link below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-in-a-consortium>

16. Would the Institute prefer to contract with a few larger providers?

There is no presumption or direction that this is the case. We have certain obligations under the Concession Contract Regulations to run an open and fair competition. The Contract award decisions would not be depicted by the size of the organisation, but on who submits the Most Economically Advantageous Tender. We are aware that there is a balance between managing a smaller number of suppliers, against encouraging competition and having a strong market. However, we are not precluding organisations from winning across multiple lots. The Institute are open to the fact that we may end up with many different contracts. We are keen to ensure there is competition further down the line. Essentially, we want good organisations delivering good qualifications regardless of how this manifests itself. The focus is on quality, sustainability and value, and a demonstration that Awarding Organisations can provide a consistent product with the capacity to deliver it.

Pricing Approach

17. What is the pricing approach to the development fee for Wave 4?

The percentage breakdown of payment of the development fee to 30%, 40%, and 30% at three interim milestones will be our approach as with Waves 2 and 3. This is to support suppliers with more funding during the middle stage of the qualification development process. The spread of the payments also represents the increasing maturity of the deliverables required for successive milestones.

18. Does the development fee cover all assessments across the whole contract?

The development fee should include everything that is expected to be costed into the development of the qualification. The Wave 4 ITT will be clear where we expect any other costs to be included (which may include any changes to requirements through the life of the contract).

19. Are you considering open book accounting for Wave 4?

Open book accounting is not going to be utilised for Wave 4. Any changes to open book would be tested with the market.

20. Will the Institute apply a 15% discount to the Student Entry Fee where the supplier is successful in winning two or more Lots?

In Waves 2 and 3 suppliers were required to deliver efficiencies in the event that they are successful in multiple Lots within this wave of T Levels. In the event that a Supplier wins two or more Lots, the Student Entry Fee shall be reduced in the Contract in respect of each Lot in which that Supplier has been successful by a total of 15%. This is still under consideration for Wave 4.

Intellectual Property & Branding

21. With A Levels, Awarding Organisations can put their brand on exam papers. Why is this not the case for T Levels?

T Levels are a new course, and therefore brand, with suppliers having an exclusive licence to provide them for the duration of the contract. Ministers concluded that the A Level brand is broader and wider than the T Level brand with many concurrent suppliers. Single branding with the single licence approach gives the Institute and the Department for Education a degree of continuity to ensure that the T Level brand endures beyond the approved contracts. Guidance for suppliers on the use of branding was published with the ITT documentation for previous waves. This version of the guidance is in the process of being updated and will be published onto the ProContract portal with the ITT documents for Wave 4 in due course.

22. What is the position on branding of student/ stakeholder facing materials?

Following feedback from potential suppliers during Wave 1, the position on branding changed. This allows for co-branding, but maintains the position that certain student-facing documents should remain solely branded by the Institute. There are some opportunities for co-branding (e.g. course documents), but there are limitations in order to protect the longevity of the qualification. Guidance for suppliers on the use of branding was published with the Wave 1 ITT documentation. This version of the guidance is in the process of being updated and will be published onto the ProContract portal in due course.

T Level Design

23. Do the Institute have any preference on whether external assessments are paper-based or computer-based?

There is no particular view on the nature of external assessments as long as it has appropriate controls, can generate evidence that covers the assessment objectives and is capable of leading to valid and reliable outcomes. Bidders should refer to Ofqual's TQ Conditions and to the Service Requirements.

24. Is there a confirmed grading approach i.e. Pass/Merit/Distinction, Pass/Fail?

Students who meet the required elements of their T Level will be awarded an overall grade, and the Department for Education confirmed last year that this would be Pass, Merit or Distinction. They have also announced the intention to award a Distinction* for the highest levels of achievement.

To be awarded an overall T Level grade, a student must pass both components of their Technical Qualification, successfully, complete an industry placement, achieve level 2 English and maths if they have not already achieved this prior to starting a T Level, and meet any other requirements set by the T Level panel within the Institute.

25. Who is responsible for the delivery of the English and Maths skills within the T Level?

The Department for Education is working with English and maths experts to ensure that this content is embedded in subject content for T Levels, where it is needed. The minimum T Level exit requirement will be GCSE grade 9-4 or a Functional Skills level 2 pass, to align with the existing policy on maths and English requirements for level 3 apprenticeships.

26. Who has decided what skills, behaviours and understanding are appropriate for each T Level?

The outline content for each T Level sets out the knowledge and skills a student needs to have acquired upon completion of the T Level and will form the basis of the technical qualification. The outline content was produced by [T Level panels](#) of employers, professional bodies and providers and is based on the same standards as those used for apprenticeships. The outline content is then developed further by the approved awarding organisation to produce the full technical qualification specification for approval by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

27. What will the technical qualification aspect of T Levels contain?

Each T Level will include a new technical qualification (TQ). The content for each TQ will be assessed through two separate components:

- a core component that assesses underpinning knowledge, understanding and core skills relevant to all the occupations covered by the T Level;
- one or more occupational specialist components focussed on assessing occupationally specific knowledge, skills and behaviours relevant to an occupation within the relevant T Level pathway.

28. What will students receive at the end of their T Level course?

Students who pass their T Level will receive a nationally recognised T Level certificate. The certificate will specify the title of the T Level and the overall grade that has been achieved, as well as the individual T Level components attained. Taking this approach will mean that a student's full set of achievements and experience are reflected and that employers have a greater range of information available about prospective employees.

If a student leaves the course early or does not pass all elements of their T Level, we want to make sure that they are recognised for the elements of a T Level they have achieved. Therefore, we will issue a Statement of Achievement that officially confirms which of the requirements have been met, and this will have value for students looking to enter employment or continue their studies.

29. Does the OFQUAL minimum threshold still apply to T Levels and the qualifications needed to achieve them?

There is no requirement in Ofqual's regulations that sets a minimum expectation in terms of number of certifications per year, whereby qualifications that do not meet this would be cancelled/stopped. The approach allows for small volumes of certifications because we recognise the very important role played by some niche qualifications. We do, however, encourage awarding organisations to ensure their qualifications listed on the Register of Regulated Qualifications include only those in active use (i.e. with learners or the reasonable expectation of learners).

The Approval of T Levels

30. What is the process for approval of the qualification during the bidding process?

Once the bid has been approved, and the Awarding Organisation has been recognised for that Technical Qualification ('TQ'), the Awarding Organisation will develop the TQ. Once developed, the TQ will be accredited by Ofqual. Overall approval of the TQ is by the Institute.

31. Will Ofqual take a view and advise in the bidding process?

Where a bidder is an Ofqual-recognised Awarding Organisation, Ofqual will treat the bid materials as an application for an expansion of scope of recognition to include the route for which the Awarding Organisation has been awarded a contract. Where the Awarding Organisation is not currently recognised by Ofqual, it must submit a full application for Ofqual recognition.

Ofqual's recognition decision is separate from the bidding process.

32. Once a contract has been awarded, what is the process for new providers/centres? What role does the Awarding Organisation's own provider/centre approval process take in this?

Awarding Organisations offering Technical Qualifications must meet all relevant Ofqual Conditions and have regard to the associated guidance. This includes the General Conditions and guidance covering arrangements with third parties and arrangements with centres. To meet these requirements, the Awarding Organisation must have in place, with any centre delivering part of the TQ on its behalf, a written enforceable agreement which requires the centre to take all reasonable steps to

ensure the Awarding Organisation, through the centre, can meet the requirements of the Conditions. An Awarding Organisation should use a centre approval process which ensures it only enters into agreements with centres that enable it to do this

33. Is it possible for awarding bodies to receive a blanket recognition to offer TQs?

Awarding organisations offering TQs must be recognised on a pathway-specific basis. This is because, as part of its recognition process, Ofqual must ensure that an Awarding Organisation has the capacity and capability to deliver that TQ for which it has been awarded a contract.

34. What is the thinking behind allowing non-regulated Awarding Organisations to become regulated?

The tender process is not restricted to currently regulated Awarding Organisations, therefore any Awarding Organisation that is awarded a contract to deliver a TQ must be recognised, with the TQ in its scope of recognition. They must be recognised at the time the contract is awarded.

35. Ofqual's technical consultation on the proposed conditions for TQs noted risks in relation to centre marking and indicated further guidance on this was being considered. What is the timing in respect of alignment for the bidding process?

Respondents to Ofqual's technical consultation asked for guidance on the factors for an Awarding Organisation to consider when determining whether centre-marking for assessments within a TQ is necessary. This "Guidance on use of Centre marking" was published in December 2018 as part of Ofqual's Qualification Level Conditions, Requirements and Guidance for TQs. Ofqual are not currently proposing any further Conditions or Guidance in this regard in relation to TQs.

Student numbers and Providers

36. If there are updates to the student numbers, how will Awarding Organisations be informed?

The Department for Education and the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education are working closely with the awarding organisations and any updates, including student numbers, will be communicated directly to those awarding organisations.

37. Were the estimated numbers calculated by only looking at qualifications of a comparable size, e.g. over guided learning hours?

The Department for Education looked at students who were taking, as their core aim, a qualification relating to similar occupational areas as a T Level. These included qualifications of varying sizes, including those smaller than 900 guided learning hours. It is difficult to predict how providers and students will respond, so the indicative numbers should be taken as an approximate estimation.

38. Are the estimated learner numbers likely to change ahead of launching the Wave 4 procurement?

The estimated volumes of T Level entrants are based on assumptions around several factors that are currently uncertain. For example, the number of providers delivering T Levels beyond 2022 and student take-up in the context of the wider technical education landscape. The estimated learner numbers are therefore subject to change as we make revisions to the assumptions going forward. It is unlikely that the estimated numbers for wave 4 T Levels will change ahead of the ITT launch but that cannot be guaranteed.

39. How did you choose the providers to deliver the first T Levels in 2020 and 2021?

Providers who submitted an expression of interest to deliver T Levels in 2020 and 2021 were required to meet all of the requirements of an objective set of criteria. The Department for Education ran an impartial process and selected the providers who met all of the criteria requirements. 44 providers will deliver the first three T Levels in 2020 and 64 will deliver a further 7 courses in 2021. 6 of the 2020 providers deferred delivery until 2021 due to the impact of COVID-19.

40. What was the process for selecting providers for 2022 delivery?

The Department for Education developed the 2022 T Level provider selection criteria to expand the number of providers delivering T Levels so the momentum behind the programme continues to build and to ensure good quality providers are delivering in 2022. The list of 88 providers who were selected to deliver T Levels in 2022 was published in June 2020. A full list of providers in 2020, 2021 and 2022 can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/providers-selected-to-deliver-t-levels>

41. What is the criteria for 2023 providers to deliver T Levels?

2023 will be the fourth year of T Level roll out and the intention is to have all T Levels available by this point. To sustain momentum and reinforce T Levels as a mainstream offer for all students, the number of providers able to deliver them will increase. To take this forward all providers currently delivering 16 to 19 study programmes will be eligible to deliver some of the available T Levels from September 2023:

- T Levels that were introduced in 2020 and 2021 will be able to be delivered by any providers delivering 16 to 19 study programmes
- T Levels introduced in 2022 and 2023 will be able to be delivered by Ofsted Good and Outstanding providers only

In early 2021 the Department will announce how providers can register their intentions to deliver T Levels from 2023.

T Levels introduced in 2022 and 2023 will be able to be delivered by Ofsted Good and Outstanding providers only. Financial health will no longer be part of the criteria. This is part of our phased approach which seeks to further broaden the number of

providers delivering T Levels from 2023 as the programme becomes more embedded. Ultimately, we expect all T Levels to be available for delivery to all providers offering 16-19 study programmes but have not yet made further announcements beyond what will happen in 2023.

Industry Placements

42. What is the bar for completing the industry placement and what must they include? Is it just the number of days completed?

Industry placements must be high quality, occupationally specific, and last for a minimum of a minimum of 315 hours, with an average of 350 hours (approx 45 days). To be completed and therefore to be eligible for full funding, an Industry Placement must fulfil the following essential criteria:

- provide the student with the opportunity to develop relevant and up-to-date technical skills and specialist knowledge related to their field of study at the appropriate level (as defined by their technical qualification) in an external workplace environment, for a minimum of 45 working days (a min of 315 hours). This ensures that students are given enough time to master essentials and that the employer has the opportunity to develop and shape young people's skills. On average, the industry placement will be 50 working days within an acceptable range of 45 to 60 days.
- give the student the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge in a workplace environment
- enable the student to experience a real life job with opportunities to develop behaviours and attitudes expected in the workplace
- the employer and provider should be satisfied that the student has demonstrated commitment to the learning objectives set at the start of the placement

Delivery Guidance has now been published for providers to help them understand how to deliver high quality industry placements.

43. What is being done to support providers in the delivery of industry placements?

The Department for Education have allocated nearly £60 million to providers through the Capacity and Delivery Fund, to help them establish the infrastructure and resources needed to deliver industry placements - with another £55m in 19/20 and further funding available for 2020/21.

The National Apprenticeship Service is providing a referral and matching service to make it easier for employers to be put in touch with local providers. The Department have published Industry Placements Delivery Guidance for providers and a student guide to help them prepare.

44. Is there an expectation for awarding organisations to have their own employer panels or would they have access to the IfATE employer panel during the development phase?

T-Level Panels are dissolved once the content is approved, so as things mature awarding organisations will need to get their own employer panels involved. We wouldn't expect members of the Institute's T-Level Panels to be doing exactly the same thing on an awarding organisation's employer panel but they may be part of it in a different capacity.

45. What is being done to support providers and employers in the delivery of industry placements following COVID-19?

In June 2020, the Department for Education launched an employer support package, comprising a website, presentations, workshops and hands-on support. The Department have provided early support for industry placement delivery - £60m in capacity building funding for providers helped to create over 15,000 industry placements in 2018/19 (as part of current vocational courses). A further £55m was allocated for 2019/20.

Before the outbreak, the National Apprenticeship Service had worked with over 16,000 employers as part of their industry placement matching service. The Department will continue to monitor the regional and industry challenges caused by Covid-19 and will target support to ensure that businesses are able to offer placements where possible.

46. Will further enhanced funding be available for 2022 and 2023 providers as has been for the case for 2022 and 2021?

We would expect there to be continued support available for providers beyond the core funding to support T Level delivery - this is subject to the Spending Review.

Roll Out of T Level

47. There is intent for parity of esteem between A Levels and T Levels - will there be equivalence of UCAS points?

Yes. UCAS tariff points in line with 3 A Levels will be allocated to T Levels. The tariff is based on an alignment of the technical qualification's intended standards with other Level 3 qualifications, including A Levels. The highest T Level grade – Distinction* - will be awarded the same number of points as 3 A*s at A Level. An overall T Level Pass grade will be awarded at least the same number of points as 3 Ds at A Level. The full tariff is as follows:

UCAS tariff points	T Level overall grade	A Level
168	Distinction* (A* on the core and Distinction in the occupational specialism)	A*A*A*
144	Distinction	AAA
120	Merit	BBB
96	Pass (C or above on the core)	CCC
72	Pass (D or E on the core)	DDD

The Department is also working with UCAS and others to raise awareness of T Levels and subsequent pathways into higher education, including level 4 or 5 classroom-based technical education and degrees. This includes exploring how UCAS qualifications information services can support students to understand their options should they decide to undertake a T Level.

48. Are schools being pushed to put students on to T Levels? Is there encouragement for progression from schools to universities?

Providers can choose whether they deliver T Levels and they will work with their individual students to decide what course best suits them. T Levels provide a number of progression routes including access to skilled employment, apprenticeships and higher education. We are working with a wide range of HE providers to ensure that they are able to make a judgement about the suitability of T Levels for their institutions and courses. As more T Level materials become available, we expect them to be able to say more about this.

49. How long will it take to get from threshold competence to skilled employment?

T Levels are primarily designed to train young people to a level where they are ready to enter skilled employment. With content designed by expert panels, based on existing industry designed occupational standards, and a substantial relevant industry placement, we are confident that T Levels will be excellent preparation for entry into skilled employment in the relevant occupation.

50. How will the Technical Qualifications within T Levels be quality assured?

The Institute and Ofqual have developed a joint approach to quality assure the Technical Qualifications (TQs). This approach will ensure the TQ is subject to rigorous assurance and regulation, and that the public and employers can be confident that T Levels are a reliable indicator of technical occupational competence.

The two organisations will work together to ensure that the TQs measure what is intended, are high quality, and meet the needs of those who will use them – particularly employers and learners. The approvals process for the technical qualifications is set out in the 2019 T Level Action Plan.

51. How do you decide what is an occupational specialism within the T Level?

Occupational Specialisms are based on Level 3 Apprenticeship standards. These are reviewed to ensure their suitability to become occupational specialisms. The content of each occupational specialism directly links to the corresponding apprenticeship standard(s). Not all standards can be occupational specialisms. To ensure employers recognise which roles a learner is qualified to start work in, we propose that the title of an occupational specialism is linked to the title of the corresponding apprenticeship standard.

Communications and Information Advice & Guidance (IAG)

52. How will you communicate information on T Levels to key audiences such as parents and employers?

The Department for Education provided a communications toolkit, along with branded materials and branding guidelines, for the 2020 providers, designed for them to adapt to suit their local needs to market T Levels in their areas.

The T Level communications campaign launched in October 2019 - targeting young people, parents, teachers and employers. The aim is to establish the status of T Levels, raise awareness of the key benefits, stimulate demand and inspire people to find out more. The communications campaign will widen as the rollout of T Levels continues and with a particular focus on social media and video on demand advertising targeted at parents of 14-16s during the lead up to September 2020.

A new website has been launched – www.tlevels.gov.uk which includes a function to search for a local T Level provider. A series of industry placement case study films have been published on the DfE YouTube channel.

The National Apprenticeship Service are promoting employer engagement - and using Employer Ambassadors to promote the benefits of T Levels and industry placements.

53. What Careers Education Information Advice Guidance (CEIAG) support will be available?

Careers Advisers and Careers Leaders will be key to helping students learn about T Levels, what they are and where they could lead. We are using the established networks of the Careers and Enterprise Company, National Careers Service and careers guidance representative organisations to help reach these groups and provide the resources and information they need. Training has also been provided to

careers leaders and CPD training on T Levels for careers professionals and we have developed a T Levels explanation booklet for teachers and careers advisers.

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