

T-LEVELS

THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

PLACEMENT MATCHING

***A GUIDE FOR EDUCATION
PROVIDERS ON HOW TO BEST MATCH
STUDENTS WITH INDUSTRY
PLACEMENTS***



HM Government

T-LEVELS

CONTENTS

Context	3
Elements of a high-quality industry placement	4
Setting clear expectations with employers	4
Setting clear expectations with students	5
Placement Matching	5
Cohort sponsorship	5
Direct matching vs interview process	5
Placement self-sourcing	6
Top tips and considerations for a successful matching process	7
Student Profile Information	8
Data Collection from Students	9
Database Format Suggestions	9
Student profile: general information	10
Curriculum-specific additional information	10
Special Needs	11
Interview Techniques and Approaches	11
CV-Based Interview	12
Competency-Based Interview	12
Competency-Based Interview Workshop	13
Contacting employers - who should do it, how, when	14
Organisation - The Task, Targets and KPIs	14
Annex 1. industry placements core principles	16
Influencing the quality of industry placements	16
industry placement core principles	17
Annex 2. Top Tips for Interviews	19
Top tips for employers	20
Annex 3. Mock Interview Template	21
COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	21

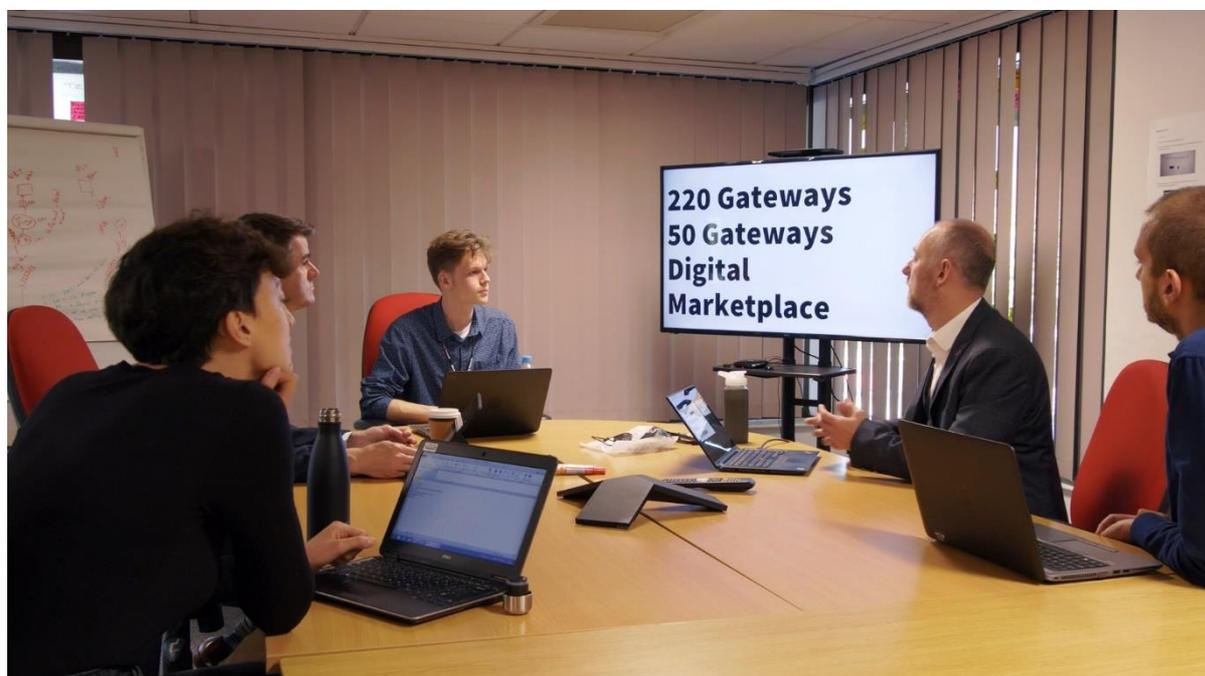
T-LEVELS

CONTEXT

This resource has been designed to support education providers throughout the matching process of students to industry placements. After a brief overview on the benefit of industry placements we will deep-dive into the different approaches and models to support you during the matching and interview process. Particular attention will be paid to how to collect information from your students to create their profile to best match them with industry placements. Finally, in the Annex section, we share a few tools and templates to better prepare your students and employers for the interview process.

Feedback from students who have been on industry placement suggests that students who undertook an industry placement were more confident, better prepared for future employment, and more focused and productive during their course.

This guide draws on the extensive learning from providers, students and employers during academic years 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019. We recommend using this tool as guidance and adapting information as needed, in order to fit your organisation.



T-LEVELS

ELEMENTS OF A HIGH-QUALITY INDUSTRY PLACEMENT

Industry placements can play an important role in preparing young people for employment.

Completion

For an industry placement to be 'completed' and eligible for funding, it must meet the following criteria:-

- Takes place in a working environment that is external to the students learning environment and is relevant to their occupational specialism
- Develops relevant and up-to-date technical skills and specialist knowledge related to their field of study
- Be a minimum of 315 hours (45-50 days)
- The employer and provider should be satisfied that the student has demonstrated progress towards the learning objectives set at the start of the placement

Outcomes

The expected outcome of an industry placement are:-

- Students develop the occupationally relevant technical and practical skills, needed to enter into skilled jobs or higher level apprenticeships
- Students able to demonstrate the essential employability skills to be productive in a relevant occupation
- Student gain credibility with prospective employers (because students will have met all the essential placement learning aims, set by employers)
- Provide opportunities for employers to develop their local talent pipeline
- Feed the local job market/skills gaps

SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS WITH EMPLOYERS

High-quality industry placements should come with clear role descriptions from employers, in advance of the placement start date.

A good role description should demonstrate that the employer has a clear idea of how the student will:

- Contribute to the organisation
- Develop their skills
- Access the placement
- Progress towards their personal career goals

T-LEVELS

SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS WITH STUDENTS

Students should have a clear understanding of the role they are undertaking and how it will allow them to develop their technical and transferable skills. Through conversations with relevant staff and their employer, students should set measurable SMART targets and objectives for their placement. These should be recorded in logbooks (either hard copies or electronic) to enable students to record and reflect on their development.

More information about the core principles of industry placements, which need to be considered when placement matching, can be found in Annex 1.

PLACEMENT MATCHING

Running the placement matching process effectively is crucial to a successful industry placement for both students and employers. Below are a few of the key lessons and challenges experienced by education providers.

COHORT SPONSORSHIP

Engaging employers in the matching process is always a good idea. With some employers it may be possible to get them to sponsor a student cohort. This could mean as little as an investment of time to run interviews with potential candidates and giving talks about their industry to funding branded work wear for industry placement students.

Evidence from providers suggests employers are much happier when they feel they have direct influence in selecting the right candidate for the role.

DIRECT MATCHING VS INTERVIEW PROCESS

Most education providers ranked the interview matching process as more successful and efficient than a direct matching approach (i.e. assigning students to placements).

From a student perspective, getting to know the workplace and team in advance greatly helped to reduce stress levels and gave students a better feeling of what to expect from the experience.

CASE STUDY

"Interviews helped students get an idea of the environment they'd be working in and helped establish expectations before the placement started. Students also reported that thanks to this, they were feeling less nervous on their first working day."

Education provider

Employers also much preferred using an interview process: they are familiar with such selection processes and tend to become more engaged with the overall industry placement execution when they can select their candidates themselves.

A few education providers chose to directly match students to placements because of time restraints. This approach was not as successful for them, since they experienced a much higher rate of issues and non-completion of placements compared to providers who organised interviews.

As a result, we recommend organising a full interview process to match students to placements. This might entail more initial time and resources, but will reduce the issues arising later on, and help ensure more engagement of both students and employers.

Preferred models for managing the interview process varied greatly from provider to provider. For more information on the different options, see the 'Interview Guidance' paragraph below.

PLACEMENT SELF-SOURCING

Education providers can also encourage students to find an industry placement themselves, or to ask their parents/guardians if they would be willing to host an industry placement student in their company.

A few education providers have taken this approach, as an alternative to the usual matching process. This gave students the opportunity to think about their ideal workplace, and to potentially work with the company that best fitted their needs.

Additional information, as well as a valuable tool to help students to self-source placements, can be found in the

T-LEVELS

resource: '[Empowering students to self-source industry placements](#)'. This approach might not work for all students; we recommend that providers give extra support to students for whom an industry placement may be particularly challenging to arrange, e.g. those with SEND.

TOP TIPS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MATCHING PROCESS

Below are some key lessons learned from education providers:

Distance and geographical location matter

- The geographical location of an employer should be taken into account during the matching process.
- Distance from a student's home to the workplace, transport links, cost of transport, and ability to travel can have a big impact on the student's attendance. This is particularly true where students may face barriers to travel, such as a disability.

To manage this, request home postcodes from students when completing the student's profile. See 'Student Profile Information' paragraph for more information and tips on matching based on geographical location.

The matching process requires time

Make sure you've planned in enough time to properly execute the placement matching process, including buffer time to mitigate against delays.

Clear communication streams with both employers and students

Throughout the matching process, it's important to keep communicating with all parties involved.

With the employer:

- Reviewing work tasks ensuring that they are clearly identified and reflected in a meaningful role description, and that they don't vary too much during the industry placement.
- In addition, for employers that are not familiar with matching and interviews, keeping in regular contact to ensure they stay engaged in the process.

With the student:

- Having an open conversation to collect information about their previous experiences, their ideal workplace and

T-LEVELS

potential barriers and issues to attendance is key to ensure a successful match. Compiling a student profile is an essential step towards this.

- Regular contact with students throughout the matching and interview process can help them to manage stress and expectations on what will come next. It will also help them perform as well as possible during the interviews.

Multiple matches are advisable

Students need to be encouraged to select more than one employer option: there may be competition for placement positions, or they may not be selected by the employer after the interview.

Similarly, some employers explicitly requested to interview multiple students and to be directly involved in making matching decisions. We suggest allocating multiple students to each employer.

Multiple matching also gives the opportunity for employer and student to find their best fit. It also gives more real-world experience - when learners are out in the world applying for jobs, they will not be the only applicant

Ensure a fair matching process for all your students

- Keep in mind throughout the matching and interview process any special needs that participants might have.

CASE STUDY

"Our learning point in this period is that every single employer/student match is unique, combining several different factors. In order for the match to be successful, time must be taken to plan and support as well as to manage expectations throughout the process."

Education provider

- Honesty from the education provider with employers is key when matching students with special needs: this means they can properly prepare and put in place any support required.

STUDENT PROFILE INFORMATION

Based on what we learned from providers delivering industry placements, this section aims to support you in collecting information on students ahead of the matching process. Working closely with your students to gather all the information will

T-LEVELS

make a big difference and maximise the chances of a successful placement.

DATA COLLECTION FROM STUDENTS

Student profile databases will help you collect and organise students' information, and also help students to be clear on how they can make the most of their placement. For example, they will identify skills they are aiming to improve and barriers or commitments that might prevent them from attending work.

DATABASE FORMAT SUGGESTIONS

There are a few possible ways to collect and store students' information. A few options used by our education providers include:

- **Excel matrix database:** An excel matrix allows you to compare information easily across different candidates. Excel will also allow you to apply filters according to different criteria that might prove valuable during the matching process, for example areas of interest or home address.
- **Online database:** A few providers were using their online/cloud-based tools to create specific profiles for their students. Keeping all information digitised allows easier storage of information and would be recommended particularly for education providers with a high number of students to place.
- **Word document:** Although it might not be the most efficient tool to keep a database, Word may be a good option to collect information from students, as it allows you to easily create a questionnaire.
- **Other creative options:** Some education providers used more creative tools to collect and compare information. Some collected location information on an online map to keep track of home addresses and placement locations during the matching (an example of this tool is shown below - see 'Examples of Learner Profile'). Others incentivised students to prepare visual portfolios of their previous work (especially those following creative and design courses).

T-LEVELS

The above tools can be used individually or in combination to collect student information based on your needs. You might have data collection processes already in place for student information and may just need to incorporate additional information needed for placement matching.

STUDENT PROFILE: GENERAL INFORMATION

What kind of information should you collect from students to match them with appropriate industry placements?

The following list is not a mandatory or exhaustive checklist, so we recommend you assess internally which information is most relevant.

Information worth collecting might include:

- Student ID number
- Home address and postcode
- Ability to drive/ownership of a car
- Upcoming GCSE results and dates
- Part-time jobs and daily availability
- Specific timing restrictions
- Other restrictions, e.g. caring responsibilities, practical restraints, etc.
- CV or previous work experience
- Interests and skills
- Contact person details (parents or guardians)
- Curriculum-specific information

CURRICULUM-SPECIFIC ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Curriculum teams might want to add some route-specific questions on things needed or desired by the employer. Below are a few examples reported from education providers:

- **Business administration:** IT expertise, in particular level of confidence in Microsoft Office
- **Catering and hospitality:** Any previous hygiene training completed
- **Childcare and education:** DBS and/or other checks and certifications
- **Construction:** Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS)
- **Creative and design:** Depending on the particular sector, questions might include whether a student plays an



T-LEVELS

instrument; link to a previous portfolio of work; any relevant technical skills

- **Digital:** Relevant programming, coding or IT skills; portfolio of previous work
- **Hair and beauty:** Previous work experience or training completed; specific skills e.g. type of hair the student can work on. Professional appearance may also be requested by employers, so general questions on e.g. highly visible tattoos might be helpful
- **Legal, finance and accounting:** Experience of relevant tools/programmes; level of proficiency with basic IT, Microsoft Office

SPECIAL NEEDS

Additional information should be included in the student profile document to enable you to approach employers and set up appropriate, feasible and supported placements with the student's needs and aspirations in mind.

It might be a good idea to ask the student's parents/guardians (and carers where relevant) to input into this profile too. Providers found that it was important to have parents/guardians of students with SEND/LLDD on board at this stage, as they may be anxious about the risks, safety and impact of industry placements.

The following information could be included as a minimum:

- Medical conditions
- Additional learning needs
- Whether a job coach will be required, or any other support required by the student (e.g. additional mentoring support and/or work-buddy)
- Any learning aids used by the student in their studies (e.g. coloured paper, larger fonts) which should also be provided at the placement
- Any working environment preferences or adjustments (e.g. quieter spaces, later start time)
- Ability to travel independently

INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES

In this section we describe some of the most commonly used approaches for interviewing students.

To prepare your students, it may be helpful to **organise interview training** with a general overview on what to expect

T-LEVELS

in an interview and tips on how to best prepare for them. You may also want to give a short workshop on **how to write a CV**.

CV-BASED INTERVIEW

This is probably the most common way to conduct an interview. The candidate is usually asked to talk about him/herself and to describe any previous work experience. The interviewer will then usually ask follow-up questions based on the student's CV and ask them to expand on past work experiences and/or interests.

If the majority of your participating employers use this approach, we suggest giving a workshop for students on how to write a CV. Education providers reported that a few students didn't have a CV before starting their industry placement and were struggling to compile one without any guidance.

Typical CV-based questions in an interview could be:

- I see from your CV that you previously had an internship at XXX. What were you responsible for and what were your daily tasks?
- Tell me more about your hobby. I see you're into tennis - do you play regularly?
- Talk me through your CV.
- I see you were recently working at X; tell me more about this.

COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW

Competency-based interviews (also referred to as situational, behavioural or competency questions) use a style of interviewing that is increasingly used to assess early-stage candidates with little previous work experience. The key aim of this approach is to evaluate the candidate's key competencies, particularly when it is hard to select on the basis of technical merit. It's often used for graduate schemes or graduate jobs where relevant experience is less important or not required.

The employer will ask the student to provide situational examples from their life experiences, and to illustrate their personality, skills and competencies.

Typical competency questions could be:

T-LEVELS

- Describe a situation where you have had to work as part of a team.
- Tell me about a time you faced a conflict with one of your friends: how did you approach it and how did you solve it?
- Describe a time when you worked as part of a team to overcome a problem and tell me about the outcome.
- Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a difficult customer.

COMPETENCY-BASED INTERVIEW WORKSHOP

To prepare students for competency-based questions, we suggest an interview skills workshop to teach them how to structure their responses. Two useful frameworks they can use are STAR and CAR:

STAR stands for **Situation, Task, Action, Result**.

Here's how this framework would help a student answer the question, *"Tell me about a time you faced a conflict with one of your friends; how did you approach it and how did you solve it?"*

Situation

The student would start by describing the context. For example, perhaps they were working on a group project and had a conflict with one of their team members. The situation could be from work experience, a volunteer position, or any other experience. The idea is to be as specific as possible.

Task

Next, the student would describe their responsibility in that situation. Perhaps they had to help their group complete a project under a tight deadline or meet a specific target.

Action

The student would then describe how they completed the task or what they did to meet the challenge. They would focus on what they personally did, rather than what their team, boss, or others did. (The response should be: "I did ABC", instead of: "We did ABC".

Result

Lastly, the student would explain the outcomes or results of their actions. They could draw attention to what they accomplished, or what they learned.



T-LEVELS

CAR stands for **Context, Action** and **Result**.

It provides a similar framework as above for structuring a response.

Both models require practice, either through mock interviews or writing a response and practising saying it out loud. These two models will enable students to manage these sometimes-difficult questions with relative ease.

Further information on how to support your students and employers in the interview process can be found in 'Annex 2. Top Tips for Interviews' and in 'Annex 3. Mock Interview Examples'

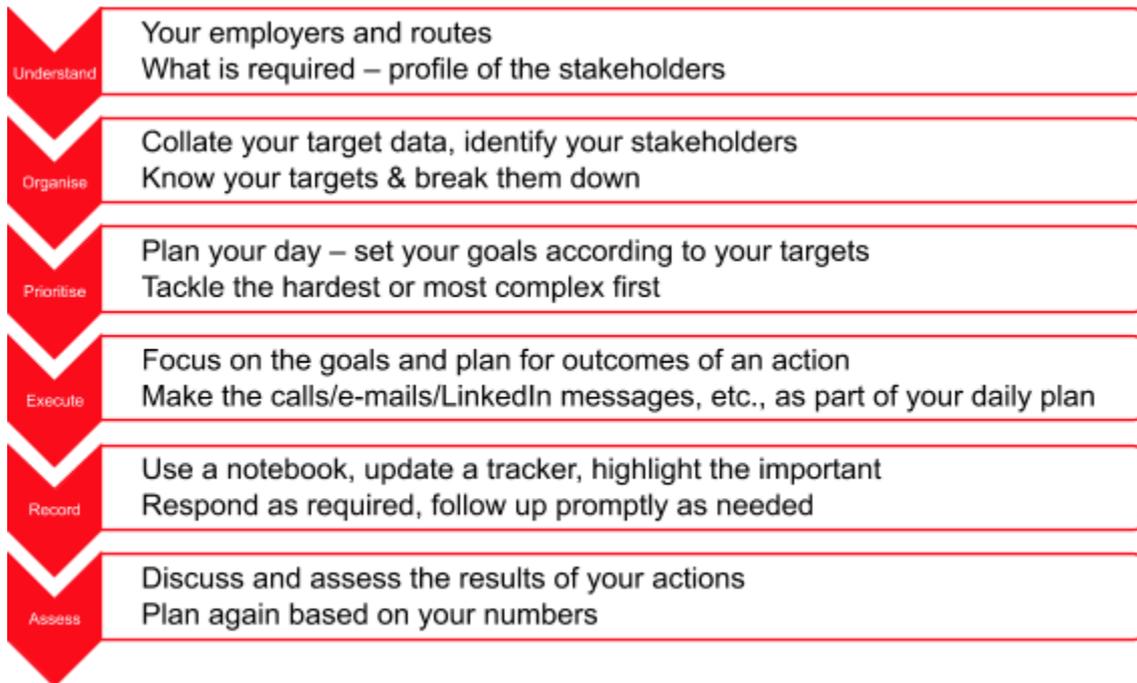
CONTACTING EMPLOYERS - WHO SHOULD DO IT, HOW, WHEN

ORGANISATION - THE TASK, TARGETS AND KPIS

The key to successfully engaging employers and managing those relationships is understanding your task and targets.

The task is simply to persuade employers to take technical education students on an industry placement which is a minimum of 315 hours and in a role relevant to their course. The only exception currently is the Early Years Educator occupational specialism, within the Education and Childcare T Level, that must be for a minimum of 750 hours. You will have a target number of industry placements to source. This goal can be broken down to help you focus and make sure you meet targets:

T-LEVELS



Further information on how to best contact and engage with employers ahead of the matching and interview processes can be found in the [How to Implement Industry Placements](#) guidance resource.

T-LEVELS

ANNEX 1. INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS CORE PRINCIPLES

INFLUENCING THE QUALITY OF INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS

Provider and employer	Provider	Employer
Provider and employer responsibilities over safeguarding / student wellbeing and health and safety in the workplace are taken seriously (top priority)	Quality of support from provider, named contact during placement, regular review meetings and communication between provider and employer (top priority)	Employer experience and ability to deliver training for this age group, to mentor and motivate students to do their best
Stretching objectives that are relevant to the job, the student's specialism	Provider preparation of student and employability training to ensure the right calibre of students are being sent on placement, managing employer expectations (top priority)	
Relevance of workplace: the employer/student match is critical for students to apply and demonstrate relevant technical skills during the placement	Quality processes to screen employer, due diligence checks (pre-placement) and regular monitoring visits (during placement) are adhered to	
Long standing provider relationship with employer leads to more satisfactory experience for all involved	Minimising varying industry placement standards of delivery across provider provision	

T-LEVELS

INDUSTRY PLACEMENT CORE PRINCIPLES

- **Takes place in a working environment:** must be external to students' normal learning environment so they experience what it is like to be in a real-life job, including travel to work, independence from their peers and working with new people, except for students with SEND or in Young Offender Institutions where alternative approaches can be applied
- **Relevant to the occupational specialism:** must be focussed on developing up-to-date technical skills and specialist knowledge required for the students' occupational specialism, which is underpinned by the qualification content that students are studying at Level 3. However, students studying Digital and Engineering & Manufacturing T Levels can undertake a route level placement that allows them to develop the knowledge and skills studied at route level rather than those only relevant to their occupational specialism
- **Number of employers:** a placement can be split across 2 employers, where this is considered necessary for 'breadth of content' and/or beneficial for students
- **Duration:** must be for a minimum of 315 hours (there is no upper limit), which can include up to 35 hours of work taster activities, if relevant to all the occupational specialisms within the T Level. The only exception currently is the Early Years Educator occupational specialism, within the Education and Childcare T Level, that must be for a minimum of 750 hours
- **Timing:** must be organised in line with the normal requirements of the industry, which may be outside the academic timetable or normal provider working hours. Placement hours must align with the [Working Time Regulations](#)
- **Industry placement completion:** to complete their placement students must:
 - demonstrate sufficient progress towards their learning goals
 - work directly to an external employer and
 - have been on placement for the minimum number of hours

T-LEVELS

- **Industry placement completion exceptions**
 - special consideration can be applied in some exceptional circumstances where students *have* demonstrated sufficient progress towards their learning goals but have not completed the minimum number of hours within the 2-year programme
 - where students have not been able to meet the minimum number of hours and have *not* demonstrated sufficient progress towards their learning goals, providers can apply their discretion and allow the student to continue their placement following their 2-year programme to allow them to make up their hours and receive full T Level certification
- **Student readiness:** providers must ensure students are suitably prepared to enter the workplace before they go on their industry placement. This includes having the required technical and employability skills and knowledge, including a good understanding of the professional standards of behaviour and attitude they need to display on their placement and the importance of adhering to company policies and procedures
- **SEND accessibility:** providers and employers must comply with their [legal duties under the Equality Act 2010](#), including provisions for reasonable adjustments, so that students with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can benefit from high-quality external industry placements as much as their non-SEND peers

For more information about the core principles industry placements please see the Department for Education's [industry placements delivery guidance](#).

T-LEVELS

ANNEX 2. TOP TIPS FOR INTERVIEWS

Below are some top tips and advice for both students and employers to help them understand what to expect and/or how to prepare for the interview day. These tips are general best practice for interviews; your staff and curriculum leads might be able to add suggestions specific to their industry or sector.

TOP TIPS FOR STUDENTS

The text below can be adapted and shared with your students:

"Some nerves are inevitable before a job interview. Try not to let it get to you - and know at least that everyone else is in the same boat! And remember that you're guaranteed an industry placement in a challenging and interesting organisation."

Be prepared:

- Do your homework on each employer. Knowing who you are meeting for your interview and gathering as much information as possible about their business will be really helpful during the interview.
- Practise at home, out loud, giving a short description about yourself. This is generally the first question for each interview so it's worth preparing it in advance.
- Search online or ask your tutor for interview example questions or look in the student handbook for some top tips.
- Talk to students who have already been interviewed by the same employer, or who did the same industry placement in previous years, to find out more about what to expect.
- Schedule a meeting with your career advisor on further interview tips.
- [EDUCATION PROVIDERS TO ADD SECTOR-SPECIFIC TIPS]

Be positive and proactive:

- A positive attitude and willingness to learn is one of the key qualities required by employers.
- Arrive on time, or even better, arrive 5-10 minutes in advance.
- Most industry placements won't require you to wear a suit, but a smart outfit can help to give a good first impression. Check with your tutor or the employer on dress code.

T-LEVELS

- If you're not sure how to answer a question, ask your interviewer to clarify, or to give an example of what he/she means.
- End the interview by asking one or two questions about the placement or about the company. This is a useful way to find out more and will show the employer that you are proactive and motivated to learn more about the company.

TOP TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

Most employers will have extensive experience in interviewing. However, it might be worth having a chat ahead of time to check if they have any questions about the placement selection process. Additionally, some employers might be new to working with students, and might need a few extra tips on how to best interview them for an industry placement.

Below are some basic tips you could give to your employers:

- Keep in mind that students are still young and may be quite stressed on the day. It can take some time to feel at ease and to open up, so start with some easy, open questions to get the conversation flowing and relaxed.
- At the start of interview, make the interviewee feel comfortable by just chatting. Prompt them to talk about themselves.
- Some students might not have any previous work experiences, but this doesn't mean they are less qualified for the job. In those cases, a classic CV-based interview process may not be the best method. Try to use a competency-based approach instead to make sure you capture the student's real capabilities.
- The interview is a way for you to get to know the student while they get to know you. Make sure to leave a bit of time to answer questions and (if on site) show them around the workplace.

T-LEVELS

ANNEX 3. MOCK INTERVIEW TEMPLATE

Below is an assessment table that can be used by the employer for competency-based interviews. It can also be shared in advance with students to give them an idea of potential questions.

COMPETENCY BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Team work

Question	Candidate Name	Score: 1 poor 5 excellent	Notes
Tell me about a time when you worked successfully as part of a team.			
Describe a situation where you were successful in getting people to work together effectively.			
Tell me about a situation when you needed to offer constructive criticism to a friend or team member.			

Responsibility

Question	Candidate Name	Score: 1 poor 5 excellent	Note
Tell me about a time when you were responsible for something.			
How do you address any responsibilities you may have?			
Do you enjoy having extra or additional responsibilities and why?			

T-LEVELS

Decision Making

Question	Candidate Name	Score: 1 poor 5 excellent	Note
What is the toughest decision you have ever made? Why was it so difficult?			
Tell me about a decision you have made that has affected other people.			
Give me an example of a bad decision you have made. Why was it a bad decision?			

Communication

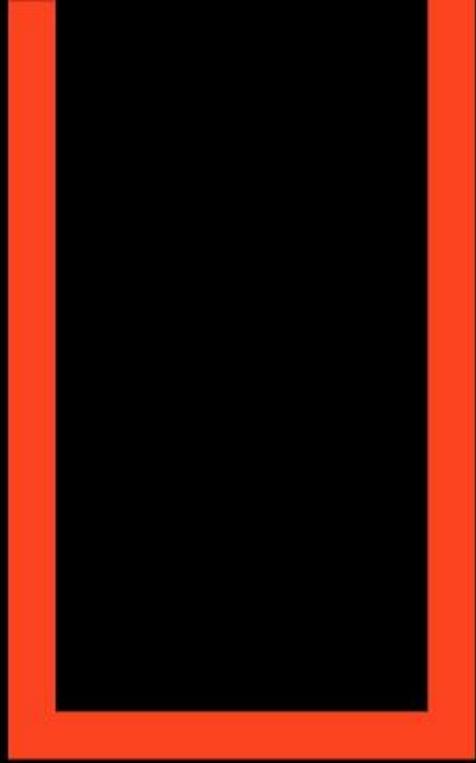
Question	Candidate Name	Score: 1 poor 5 excellent	Note
Give me an example of how you dealt with a difficult customer at work or in volunteering.			
Tell me about a time when you taught someone else something.			
How do you explain things to other people?			

Problem Solving

Question	Candidate Name	Score: 1 poor 5 excellent	Note
Give me an example of a problem you have			

T-LEVELS

faced in the past, either as part of a team or as an individual. How did you solve the problem?			
What do you do when you can't solve a problem?			
You have a huge list of things to do and not enough time for everything. What do you do?			



T-LEVELS

THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

Industry placements are a core part of the T Level courses.
Visit www.tlevels.gov.uk.

