

T-LEVELS

THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

RESOLVING CHALLENGING SCENARIOS

***GUIDANCE FOR EDUCATION
PROVIDERS ON COMMON ISSUES
ARISING WITH INDUSTRY
PLACEMENTS***



HM Government

T-LEVELS

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Pre-placement top tips | 4 |
| Disciplinary action | 10 |
| Example policy on terminating industry placements early | 10 |
| After a non-start or non-completion | 11 |

T-LEVELS

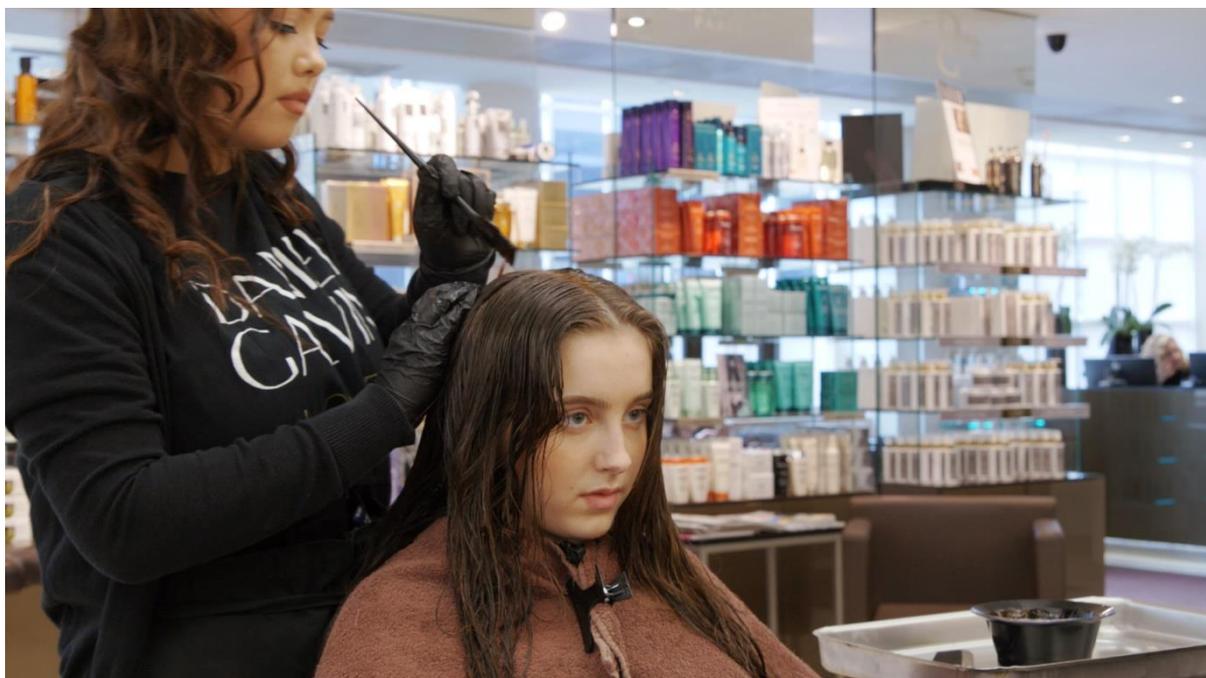
INTRODUCTION

This section brings together lessons learned from education providers who have delivered industry placements in 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019 on handling common issues arising during industry placements, including:

- objections and disengagement from students;
- logistical and financial barriers;
- issues with substance of work on placement;
- employer dissatisfaction or withdrawal; and
- unsupportive parents/guardians.

Education providers found that if a placement did not start (“non-start”) or was not completed (“non-completion”) as planned, this could damage the student’s confidence and make it difficult to find a suitable new placement within the time available.

It is preferable therefore to have the right policies and programme design in place in advance to pre-empt and prevent issues at placements. Education providers should regularly communicate with both students and employers to resolve issues before they escalate and enable the placement to continue.



T-LEVELS

PRE-PLACEMENT TOP TIPS

Here are six key pre-placement tips which have been shared by education providers to help you set up successful placements:

1. Make it clear to students and their parents/guardians at interview and enrolment that it is essential that students complete their placement. This is a vital part of their learning programme and will prepare them for their next step/the workplace. Provide information upfront about the reasons, benefits, requirements and timescales of placements and include this in an Industry Placements Policy.
2. Hold information events to launch the scheme to students and parents/guardians with named staff contact(s) to address ongoing queries. Encourage enthusiasm among students by sharing success stories and inviting past students and employers to the information events to describe their placement experience and how it has benefitted them.
3. Prepare students thoroughly in the technical and employability skills they need as well as in workplace expectations, attitudes and behaviours so they can feel confident at the start.
4. Ensure that the expectations of employers and students are aligned in terms of the type of work that the student will be doing on the placement, whilst noting that business needs may change and flexibility is important.
5. As far as possible, take account of any logistical barriers by matching students to placements that: correspond to their career aspirations; are reasonably convenient to get to; cover lunch if the student has free school meals; allow for earning from their existing part-time work or determine if their part-time work can qualify as their industry placement; and fit with any childcare commitments.
6. Encourage students to source their own placements where they are willing/this is possible. Providers found that when students secure their own placement, they feel more confident, engaged and are more motivated to see it through successfully.

T-LEVELS

EXAMPLES OF CHALLENGING SCENARIOS

The table below contains real examples and case studies of issues which arose, and suggestions for solutions. In the majority of cases, if any of these issues are communicated and dealt with early on, there are ways to mitigate, work collaboratively and resolve them without leading to a non-completion.

| Issue encountered | Possible solutions |
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| <p>General student reluctance or refusals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some students were adamant that they didn't want to undertake a placement.• There were general fears of entering the workplace, including not being up to the standards expected by employers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Making the placement an integral part of the course will enable providers to be tougher about participation.• Ensuring students are aware of the industry placement requirement before enrolment will help to set this expectation.• Emphasise to students and parents that a good way to ensure students are interested is to source their own placement.• Ensure the industry placement is closely matched to the student's interests and career goals as far as possible.• Comprehensive training and preparation and speaking to former industry placement students (where possible) should help allay student fears of not meeting employer expectations.• Additional support from relevant staff, such as arranging pre-meetings between the employer and the student or accompanying students on a practice commute |

T-LEVELS

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| | <p>before the placement begins can ease the anxiety of travelling (for both student and parent/guardian).</p> |
| <p>Student disengagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students on courses which are more likely to lead to university seemed less motivated to complete placements. This may be because they prioritise successful completion of studies, university applications, interviews and entry exams. • Business students were sometimes less engaged due to their course being very broad, so some may not know which area they want to go into. • Some students felt that related work experience had already been completed. • Some students' future career aspirations can differ from the course that they are studying or result in very specific requests for placements. • Some students found that the quality or nature of work did not meet their expectations: for example, too repetitive, menial or did not correspond with their learning objectives. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly communicate the benefits of industry placements and share success stories. • Emphasise to students and parents that a good way to ensure students are interested is to source their own placement. • Ensure the industry placement is closely matched to the student's interests, career goals and field of study as far as possible. • Encourage business students to research and narrow down the type of organisation they are interested in and recognise the value of a placement for whatever field they may choose to go into. • Make it clear that although not all students will get their first choice of placement, there are significant benefits to be derived from all relevant placements. • Maintain regular contact with the student and employer during the placement to address issues before they escalate and remind students of the need to be flexible and proactive in the world of work. |

T-LEVELS

Logistical and financial barriers

- **Existing part-time work:** students already have paid work alongside their studies as essential income. It may be difficult to change their hours to fit around a placement and studies.
 - **Extra expenses:** Students may not be able to afford extra subsistence and commuting costs to the placement.
 - **Childcare responsibilities:** Students who are parents don't have the flexibility to juggle their placement days into the weekends and evenings.
 - **Travel:** Some students are not confident to travel into the centre of a big city and use transport alone.
 - **Remote or inaccessible placements:** Some placements are not accessible by public transport.
 - **Study time:** Students already dedicate spare time to coursework/exam revision for course.
- In certain cases, the student's part-time job may qualify as an industry placement.
 - Some employers choose to pay students on their industry placement (although they have no legal obligation to do so) which may mean that students can give up their part-time work. However paid placements are less common on certain courses (e.g. creative and design).
 - Inform students of the industry placement model (in terms of days per week and duration) as early as possible to help students plan or adjust their part-time work and other commitments.
 - For education providers that are delivering industry placements in the 2019 to 2020 academic year through the Capacity and Delivery Fund (CDF), additional bursary funding is being made available to assist with student travel costs.
 - Employers may offer free lunch or reimburse travel costs.
 - Placement structure may need to be configured to fit with student's existing family/study commitments, e.g. less time per week for a longer overall duration.
 - Accompanying students to practise the commute to employers before



T-LEVELS

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| | <p>placement can ease anxiety of travelling (for student and parent/guardian).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider your policy on students driving themselves to placements. • Careful curriculum planning and timetabling to allow time for course work and revision around placements. Tutors available to help students review their study plans. |
| <p>Employer withdrawals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were a proportionately higher number of employer withdrawals in certain courses which was consistent across education providers, e.g. Engineering (Motor Vehicle) and I.T. <p>The reasons for this and withdrawals more generally seemed to relate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor student behaviour, attitude and understanding of what is expected in the workplace. • Lack of social/teamwork skills with student preferring to work alone. • Perception that students are not work-ready. • Not enough work to keep student engaged for full placement. • Non-attendance by students or actively telling employer they | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional rigour, planning and training needed in student preparation, starting from the first year of the course. • Provide extra support and preparation for students who were deemed not to be meeting the expectations needed to start an industry placement. • Comprehensive training and preparation should also help reduce student fears of not meeting employer expectations. • Provider needs to maintain quality standards and should work with employers to ensure they understand how to provide engaging and appropriate quality work for the student. • Maintain regular communication with employers on matters around attendance and behaviour. Step in and resolve issues promptly. |

T-LEVELS

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| <p>didn't need to come any more.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of communication between employer and education provider. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a system of monitoring student attendance such as time sheets which need to be signed off by the employer and submitted back to you. • An alternative option suggested by one employer is an app or online tool to enable the student to register when they arrive at work and for the employer to use it to confirm attendance and report behaviour issues. This would also reduce provider admin time. |
| <p>Unsupportive parents/guardians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some placements are not being completed or students are withdrawing due to parents not supporting the programme. A few parents saw industry placement as free labour and are not happy with the travel arrangements (e.g. too far, unsafe or difficult to get to). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a launch event or parents' evening at the start of the programme to get parents involved, engaged and aware of the benefits. • Encourage parents to think of possible placements in their own networks. • See separate guidance on Engaging Students and Parents/Guardians. |



T-LEVELS

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Some education providers have implemented procedures and taken disciplinary action where students refuse to participate in an industry placement which is a part of their course. We suggest that education providers agree in advance with senior management whether disciplinary action can be a consequence of non-attendance by students and if so, what form that will take.

CASE STUDY

An education provider put in place a disciplinary process for any students who refused to take part in a placement. This is a 3-step process including meetings with tutors and the leadership team and would ultimately result in the student being asked to leave the course. This was used in only two courses but resulted in students working closely with staff to identify placements that matched their interests and skills or sourcing their own placements.

EXAMPLE POLICY ON TERMINATING INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS EARLY

Below is an example of a policy that one education provider implemented:

The industry placement contact should be provided with information on any difficulties experienced on an ongoing basis and at least **two attempts** should be made to address points. Where it is impractical to resolve a significant issue then the industry placements contact should follow these procedures in agreement with the industry placements manager.

Steps:

Confirm the background and gather as much information as possible from both the employer and the student:

- Why is the employer not satisfied with the student? Has sufficient feedback been given to the student and opportunities given, where appropriate, for the student to modify poor behaviour/practice?
- Why is the student not satisfied with the placement and has there been sufficient discussion to request modifications to arrangements and widen opportunities with the employer?



T-LEVELS

- Confirm that no further attempts should/can be made to resolve the industry placement difficulties. At this stage, the industry placement coordinator should discuss the case with the careers and industry placement manager to gain a second opinion and to confirm withdrawal of the student from the placement.
- If withdrawal is confirmed, record the reasons and add a short summary to the spreadsheet used to monitor all students' progress.
- Where a student is withdrawn by the employer, then the industry placement coordinator should write a follow-up letter: to "apologise" to the employer on behalf of the college; note any sanctions applied to the student, etc. A proforma for the letter is available to use from the industry placement manager.
- Where a student is withdrawn by an employer in the case of arguable grounds, or they withdraw themselves for good reason, the industry placement coordinator will support the student in finding an alternative placement.

AFTER A NON-START OR NON-COMPLETION

Mentoring

Students should be offered extra support and mentoring after a non-completion to reflect on lessons learned and minimise any loss in confidence or negative attitude towards their technical skills, employability or future job prospects.

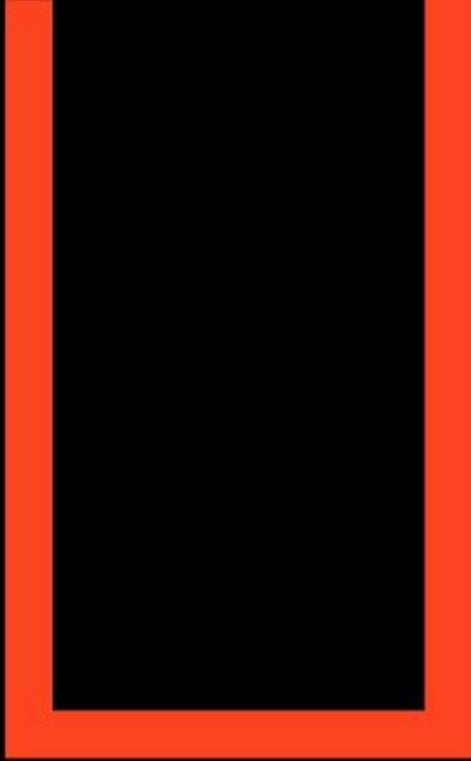
Alternative Placement

Where possible, education providers should find a new placement for the student which picks up on any reflections and lessons learned from the non-completion as well as fitting well with the student's career aspirations, logistical needs and existing personal commitments, etc.

CASE STUDY

After an initial two week-block, some employers felt that there was not enough work to keep the student engaged for 45 days. Education providers should work with employers in advance to talk through potential projects that students could work. They should also monitor placements closely in the early stages and encourage employers to feed back and check in more often to resolve issues earlier to avoid a non-completion.





T-LEVELS

THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

Industry placements are a core part of the new T Level courses. The first T Levels start September 2020. Visit www.gov.uk/dfes/t-levels.

Learning providers can make enquiries regarding industry placements by using this [online enquiry form](#) to contact the Education & Skills Funding Agency or you can speak to your local ESFA team.

