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Implementing changes to Technical Education

In her speech to business leaders at the British Chambers of Commerce Education Summit on 6 July, the Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening, set out her mission to spark the skills revolution needed to help Britain make a success of leaving the European Union.

She explained how important it is for the Department for Education to work with the business community to ensure that the skills revolution happens and is successful. But she also explained that it is equally important that education and training providers are involved, alongside businesses, in designing these reforms and are supported to help them make the implementation a success.

The Post-16 Skills Plan, published last July, sets out our plans to reform technical education to support young people and adults to secure a lifetime of sustained skilled employment *and* meet the needs of our growing and rapidly changing economy.

I, too, share the Secretary of State's vision and am writing to you to reaffirm the Government's commitment to implementing these reforms. I also want to take this opportunity to confirm our timetable for implementation.

Technical education reforms

The Skills Plan accepted all 34 recommendations from the Independent Panel on Technical Education, chaired by Lord Sainsbury, including the introduction of a new framework of 15 technical routes to skilled employment, new provider-based training programmes (T levels) based on employer-designed standards, and high quality T level work placements.

Technical education will be delivered through both a work-based option - apprenticeships - and a provider-based option – T levels. In this context, providers include all ESFA funded providers such as school and academy sixth forms, sixth form colleges and independent training providers, as well as

general further education colleges.

The framework of the 15 routes allows us to group together occupations where there are shared training requirements. T levels will build on progress made in reforming apprenticeships, basing them on the skills, knowledge and behaviours employers want.

In addition, prestigious Institutes of Technology will be developed to deliver the higher-level technical skills that employers need. The competition to establish these Institutes will launch in the Autumn. And the foundations for strong, higher technical skills are already being laid by the new National Colleges. Two more will open later this year. These are trailblazing employer led colleges, yet another example of the deepening role businesses have in education.

Delivering the reforms together

Delivering these reforms will be transformational, and we are determined to ensure they are a success and achieve their overall aims: to systematically reform technical education, integrating apprenticeships (work-based) and technical training (provider-based) to create a high quality skills system that delivers the skills, knowledge and behaviours that employers need.

The only way to deliver this challenge successfully is through a genuine partnership between government, business experts/leaders and education professionals. We will be working closely with industry and the education sector over the coming months on the design of the new T levels to ensure we get these reforms right.

My officials have established a group to advise on T level policy development and implementation, membership of which includes employer representatives, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers and the Association of Colleges. We are also planning a public consultation on the design of T levels, to allow all interested organisations and individuals to contribute towards the development of the new programmes, as well as a series of further engagement opportunities.

The implementation timetable and funding

The Post-16 Skills Plan announced the Government's intention to launch the first of the new T level routes from September 2019, with the remainder being introduced by September 2022. Over the last few months, officials in the Department have carried out extensive testing of the current plans for delivery and, like many of our key partners including Lord Sainsbury, the Secretary of State and I are now agreed that we need to adjust our timetable and take the necessary amount of time to ensure the reforms are delivered properly.

We therefore now propose the first teaching of T levels by a number of pilot providers in September 2020, with all routes available as planned in September 2022.

Introducing the first T levels in 2020 gives us the opportunity to work with you, as well as employers, awarding organisations and other partners, to design the new system.

It also means we can support you to make any necessary changes you need to make to ensure you can deliver T levels successfully – for example, making sure your workforce has the right skills, that you have the right equipment and facilities, and that you are able to build and maintain good links with employers. In her speech the Secretary of State re-iterated the £500 million funding for T levels, announced in the Spring Budget. The first £50m will be made available from April 2018, to boost providers' in-house capacity to put in place the infrastructure and resources needed to deliver the substantial number of T level work placements needed, with funding increasing over time as the number of work placements increases. In addition to this, the Secretary of State announced further packages of support:

- We will allocate £15 million over the next two years for a Strategic College Improvement Fund, which will provide focussed support for weaker colleges.
- The FE Commissioner, Richard Atkins, will take on an expanded role to support colleges in raising standards by drawing on the talents of the sector's outstanding leaders.
- We will establish a programme for National Leaders of Further Education to enable them to spread their expert knowledge, and mentor and support weaker parts of the system.
- Finally, for the teachers who will lead the teaching of the new routes, we will introduce a package of support that will include a dedicated programme to help industry experts join the profession.

Over the summer, we will continue to refine and develop our plans and ensure that all those who have a part to play or want to be involved in the design of the reforms understand how best they can contribute, and we will provide an update on progress in the autumn.

Transforming technical education is essential if we are to make a success of Brexit as it is one of the key ways we can radically improve social mobility and productivity in the UK. This is the government's mission but government cannot do this alone. Improving social mobility must be a mission for everyone who have a stake a Britain's future. This is why we are calling for our opportunity makers – Britain's businesses, universities, colleges and schools – to join our skills revolution.

With best wishes,

Anne

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