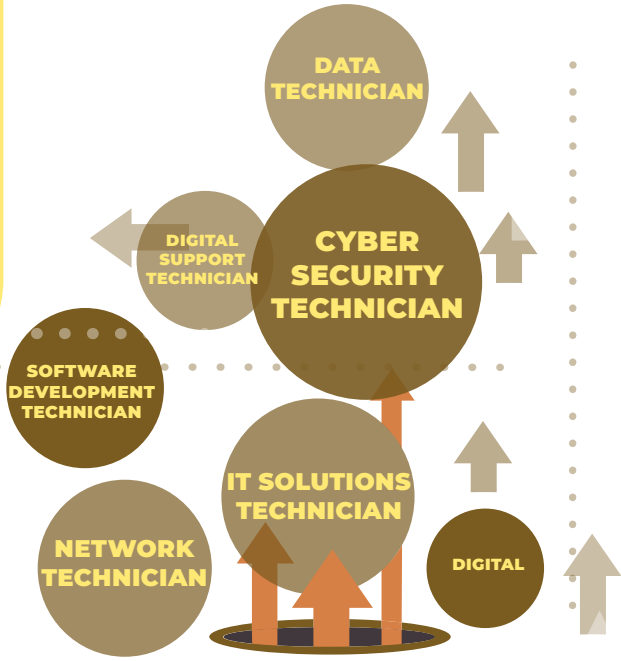
T-LEVELS
THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

EMPLOYERS' GUIDE

HOSTING A **DIGITAL** INDUSTRY PLACEMENT

Developed in partnership with employers, colleges and schools and aligned to a shared understanding of what works well in practice for digital industry placements.



Hosting a digital industry placement is a practical way to support your future workforce, while benefiting from an extra pair of hands in your team.

It doesn't need to be complex or time-consuming. Many employers start small and build from there.

WHY EMPLOYERS CHOOSE TO HOST

Employers choose to host digital industry placements for a range of practical and strategic reasons and report the following benefits:

- Identify potential future apprentices or junior recruits earlier
- Strengthen internal mentoring and supervision capability
- Bring additional capacity to defined tasks
- Increase team awareness of early talent pathways
- Contribute visibly to local skills development
- Build longer-term recruitment relationships with providers

Most importantly, they find that a well-planned placement is both achievable and worthwhile.

STAFFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Nick Tucker

"T Levels provide fantastic real-life work experience for students, helping them develop the knowledge, confidence and skills that support their first steps into employment or higher-level study. At Staffordshire County Council, we've found students bring enthusiasm, fresh perspectives and new ideas to the way we work, while also helping us engage with future digital talent."

THINKING ABOUT HOSTING?

Many organisations with digital functions are interested in supporting early talent but want to understand what it would involve in practice.

For many organisations, hosting also provides a structured way to engage with emerging digital talent and strengthen future recruitment pipelines. Students are not employees, and they are not expected to operate at that level. They are there to observe, contribute appropriately, build confidence and experience and develop a better understanding of the digital sector.

When expectations are clear from the outset, most employers find that hosting is straightforward, manageable and worthwhile for the teams involved.

Discover how Infinity 27 has successfully strengthened its workforce through T Levels and apprenticeships. In this employer story, learn how structured industry placements and early talent engagement can help businesses develop skilled, job-ready employees while supporting long-term growth.

https://youtu.be/5Pv5m4QoSSY

WHAT MIGHT A STUDENT ACTUALLY DO?

Students are not expected to be fully trained employees, but they can contribute to real work in useful ways.

Students can support day-to-day activity while gaining exposure to how work actually happens.

Through this experience, students begin to develop:

- confidence working in a professional environment
- communication skills with colleagues and stakeholders
- understanding of how teams collaborate and deliver work
- awareness of expectations around time, behaviour and responsibility
- insight into different roles and career pathways within digital

Many employers begin with a small number of clearly defined tasks and build from there as confidence grows.

For many students, this is their first experience of the workplace. The value is not just in the tasks they complete, but in the exposure to real working practice and professional expectations. This is often what enables students to move more quickly into apprenticeships or entry-level roles.

When placements are clearly scoped, students can support defined areas of live digital work while developing their capability. The most effective placements reflect genuine workflow rather than artificial projects.

Depending on your organisation and the student's pathway, this may include:

- Supporting testing and quality assurance
- Assisting with website or content updates
- Carrying out structured research or data validation
- Preparing digital assets or documentation
- Observing and contributing to project meetings
- Supporting routine tasks within agile or delivery workflows
- Shadowing different roles across the team

Clearly defined tasks often allow students to add genuine value while learning how digital work is delivered in practice.

A strong placement typically includes a balance of observation, guided tasks and gradually increasing responsibility.

These tasks are often where students can contribute most effectively.

DESIGNING A PLACEMENT THAT WORKS FOR YOUR TEAM

Placements should reflect how your organisation actually works.

In digital roles, this may mean flexible approaches rather than a single fixed weekly pattern. For example:

- Hybrid models combining remote and on-site working
- Structured blocks aligned to project phases
- Regular attendance across a longer period
- A mix of shadowing, supported contribution and independent activity

Colleges and schools will work with you to shape a structure that fits your capacity while ensuring the student gains meaningful experience.

The aim is not to replicate a full-time role, but to provide structured exposure to real digital teams, jobs, and working practices. Many employers start by identifying a small area of work where a student could provide support.

Flexible models often allow placements to align more naturally with digital delivery cycles and team capacity.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS DURING THE PLACEMENT

Students benefit from clarity and feedback.

Employers typically:

- Provide a short induction
- Agree expectations around communication and professionalism
- Offer brief, regular check-ins
- Highlight strengths and areas for development
- Provide short end-of-placement feedback or a reference-style summary

Some students may be under 18 during their placement. Employers have a responsibility to provide a safe and appropriate working environment for all students, including those who are under 18. This includes making sure supervision, communication, working arrangements and any remote or hybrid activity are suitable for the student's age, experience and level of confidence.

Feedback does not need to be formal or time-consuming. Short, honest conversations help students develop quickly and understand professional standards.

Most employers find supervision is light-touch once expectations are established and becomes lighter as the student gains confidence

HOW COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS SUPPORT YOU

Colleges and schools play an active role in making placements straightforward and manageable for employers.

This usually includes:

- Matching students and/or supporting interviews
- Preparing students before they arrive
- Agreeing clear plans and points of contact
- Acting as the main coordination contact, keeping the process straightforward for employers
- Maintaining communication throughout
- Addressing issues proportionately if they arise
- Gathering feedback to refine future placements
- Supporting safeguarding expectations

Helping you understand what students are learning

Colleges and schools can also share clear, accessible summaries of what students are learning in the classroom and how this develops over time.

Offering the college or school short industry conversations, guest speaker input or feedback on student readiness can all help ensure that learning remains relevant to current industry practice.

Employers are not expected to manage placements alone. Strong placements are built through partnership.

Many employers find it useful to:

- **Hear a short overview of the T Level and pathway content**
- **Understand what students are likely to have covered before placement**
- **Share feedback on emerging industry skills or tools**
- **Suggest real-world examples that can be reflected in teaching**

SUPPORTING FUTURE TALENT AND PROGRESSION

For many employers, hosting a digital industry placement provides early insight into emerging talent and future skills needs.

While there is no expectation that employers offer jobs or apprenticeships at the end of a placement, some choose to remain in contact with students or schools and colleges where there is a strong match.

This can include:

- Offering advice on next steps or career pathways
- Providing a reference or informal feedback
- Highlighting apprenticeship or trainee opportunities
- Recommending the student to partner organisations
- Hosting the student again in a future capacity

Placements often form part of a longer-term talent pipeline, helping employers build relationships with potential future recruits while supporting the development of local digital skills.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND LONG-TERM ENGAGEMENT

Placements tend to improve over time. Many employers find that a second placement requires significantly less planning than the first.

Midpoint and end-of-placement feedback allows both employer and provider to refine expectations, preparation and matching. Small adjustments year on year often lead to smoother, more confident experiences.

Many employers who host successfully go on to:

- Host additional students
- Support different T Level pathways
- Develop early talent pipelines
- Recommend placements to peers
- Contribute to curriculum development and delivery
- Act as advocates for industry placements

A manageable first experience is often the foundation for sustained engagement.

Hosting a digital industry placement does not require perfection or additional infrastructure. It starts with a clear, manageable approach and develops over time.

When placements reflect genuine digital working practice and expectations are shared from the outset, they become easier to sustain and increasingly valuable for both employers and students.

Many employers who start with one student go on to build placements into their regular way of working.

AJAR Technology

Tara McLaughlin

"As an SME, we believe T Levels are an excellent way to develop home-grown talent in an ever-growing sector. We've seen students build confidence and practical skills through placements, with some progressing into holiday work, apprenticeships and longer-term opportunities within the business."

Explore how employers like Version 1 are partnering with education providers to support the next generation of talent. This short video offers insight into how structured training programmes and industry placements contribute to workforce development and business growth.

https://youtu.be/pL_X977Ebr8

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