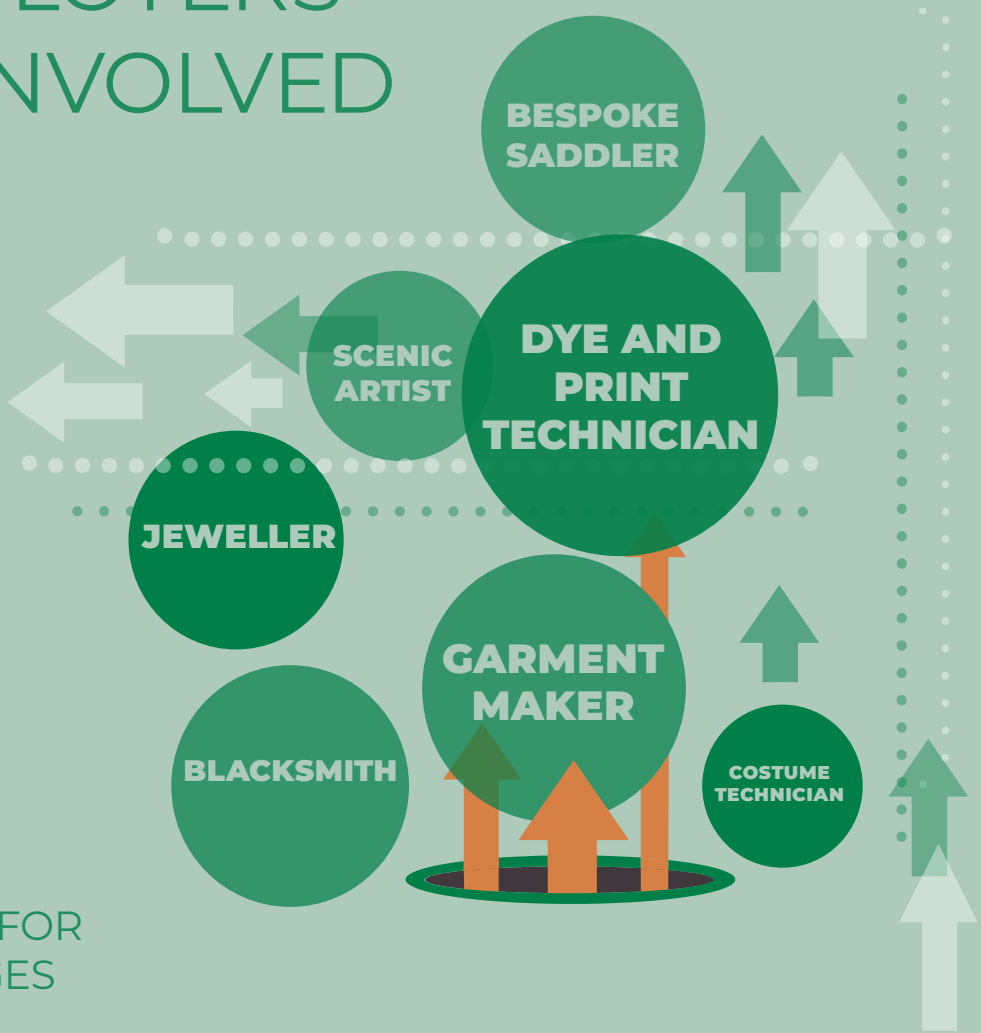
T-LEVELS
THE NEXT LEVEL QUALIFICATION

CREATIVE AND DESIGN INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS

WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN GET INVOLVED



A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR EMPLOYERS, COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS

THIS RESOURCE IS DESIGNED TO SUPPORT EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT AND PLACEMENT PLANNING ACROSS TWO T LEVELS WITHIN THE CREATIVE AND DESIGN SKILL AREA

It does not assume that every employer can offer a full placement immediately. Instead, it shows a range of ways employers can begin to engage, build confidence and move towards meaningful placement activity.

T Level	Occupation-specific areas covered	Examples of relevant settings
Media, Broadcast and Production	Creative media technician; events and venues technician; content creation and production.	Production companies, content agencies, broadcasters, audio and podcast teams, venues, theatres, festivals, event organisations, marketing and digital content teams, cultural organisations and creative media departments.
Craft and Design	Jewellery maker; ceramics maker; furniture maker; upholsterer; textiles and fashion maker.	Studios, workshops, maker businesses, designer-maker practices, textiles and fashion businesses, furniture and upholstery workshops, ceramics studios, jewellery businesses, galleries, exhibitions, retail and craft market settings.

WHY THIS MATTERS IN CREATIVE AND DESIGN

Creative and design work does not always fit neatly into fixed placement patterns. Work may be shaped around client briefs, commissions, exhibitions, product development, making processes, events, performances, campaigns, production schedules, seasonal demand or short periods of intense activity. Many employers are small teams, freelancers, studios, workshops or project-based organisations. They may want to support young people, but may be unsure what a placement could look like or how much time it would take.

This resource shows a range of manageable ways to get started. The aim is to help employers move from interest to action, while helping students experience meaningful creative work that reflects the realities of their chosen T Level pathway.

WAYS EMPLOYERS CAN GET INVOLVED

Type of engagement	What it could involve	How it can help build towards placement	How it benefits an employer
Short talk or Q&A	An employer introduces their work, career journey, current projects and the realities of working in a creative, production, studio, workshop, venue or maker environment.	Helps students understand roles, routes into work and professional expectations.	Short talk or Q&A = “CPD for staff”
Workplace, studio, workshop or venue visit	Students visit a studio, workshop, venue, gallery, agency, production space, theatre, event setting, maker business or creative workplace.	Helps students see working environments and understand pace, equipment, materials, tools, roles, behaviours and safety expectations.	Workplace, studio, workshop or venue visit = “Business exposure”
Portfolio, showreel or idea feedback	The employer reviews student work, sketches, samples, concepts, digital assets, showreels, portfolios, prototypes or project ideas.	Builds confidence, improves work-readiness and helps students respond to professional feedback.	Portfolio, showreel or idea feedback = “Talent spotting”

Type of engagement	What it could involve	How it can help build towards placement	How it benefits an employer
Live brief or short project	The employer sets a realistic challenge for students to respond to individually or in a small team. This might be a content brief, event support task, design response, product idea, sample development or audience engagement project.	Gives the employer a low-risk way to test engagement before offering placement hours.	
Showcase, critique panel or exhibition feedback	Employers attend a student showcase, critique session, screening, exhibition, performance, fashion show, product display or portfolio event and give structured feedback.	Creates employer relationships and may lead to placements, commissions, future project briefs or recruitment conversations.	
Full industry placement	A student or small group undertakes planned activity with employer oversight, linked to relevant learning goals and the employer's real work.	Provides sustained exposure to real creative practice and helps employers develop future talent.	

PLACEMENT MODEL EXAMPLES

The following models can be used separately or combined. The right model will depend on the employer's capacity, the student's readiness, the curriculum plan and the nature of the work available.

MODEL 1: ONE EMPLOYER, ONE STUDENT

A student works with a single employer over an agreed period. This may suit a studio, workshop, venue, agency, gallery, production company, maker business or creative organisation with enough supervision and suitable activity.

Aspect	Detail
When this works best	Best where the employer has clear tasks, a named supervisor and enough continuity for the student to build confidence over time.
Media, broadcast and production examples	Researching references, preparing call sheets or production notes, supporting content planning, organising digital assets, assisting with filming, recording or editing preparation, helping with venue or event setup, documenting activity or observing production workflows.
Craft and design examples	Preparing materials, organising tools or workspaces, observing making processes, practising techniques, supporting product preparation, assisting with display or retail presentation, documenting work, testing ideas or contributing to a defined stage of production.
Planning consideration	Be clear about the student's role, working pattern, supervision arrangements and what they can and cannot do. Start with smaller tasks and build responsibility gradually.

MODEL 2: PROJECT-BASED PLACEMENT AROUND A LIVE BRIEF

A placement is structured around a defined creative challenge. This could be a campaign, content piece, exhibition, product idea, design response, event support task, sample development project, digital content brief or audience engagement activity.

Aspect	Detail
When this works best	Best where the employer has a real challenge but limited capacity to host a student every week in the same way.
Media, broadcast and production examples	Researching audiences, generating content ideas, creating mood boards, drafting scripts or storyboards, producing sample assets, planning a social media sequence, developing promotional material, presenting concepts and refining work after feedback.
Craft and design examples	Researching materials, markets or trends, developing sketches or sample ideas, exploring colour, texture or finish, producing mock-ups, testing product or display ideas, presenting concepts and refining work after feedback.
Planning consideration	Agree the brief, success criteria, check-in points, feedback points and final output before the project starts. Make sure students understand that creative and design work often changes during the process.

MODEL 3: SMALL TEAM PROJECT

A small group of students works on a structured project for an employer, usually with the college or school supporting day-to-day activity and the employer overseeing the project and acting as client.

Aspect	Detail
When this works best	Best for freelancers, micro-businesses, small organisations and busy teams that can provide a brief and feedback but cannot host several students on site for long periods.
Media, broadcast and production examples	Developing a content plan, social media campaign, short video concept, podcast idea, event visuals, audience research outputs, production support pack, venue information resource or behind-the-scenes content proposal.
Craft and design examples	Developing product mock-ups, packaging concepts, exhibition or retail display ideas, textile or surface design concepts, audience or customer research outputs, material exploration boards or simple recommendations for presentation and promotion.
Planning consideration	The employer must still provide meaningful input and oversight. This should feel like real employer-led work, not a classroom task with an employer name attached.

MODEL 4: MULTI-EMPLOYER PLACEMENT

Two or more employers contribute to a student's placement. This may work where no single employer can provide the full placement, but several can offer meaningful activity.

Aspect	Detail
When this works best	Best in local creative clusters, cultural districts, festivals, supply chains, venue networks, maker communities or partnerships between freelancers and small businesses.
Media, broadcast and production examples	Rotating between a venue, event team, content creator and production partner; comparing roles; supporting connected project stages; attending briefings; observing planning, production, delivery and debrief activity.
Craft and design examples	Rotating between a designer, maker, gallery, supplier, workshop or retail setting; comparing how ideas move from design to making, finishing, display, sale or customer use.
Planning consideration	Plan the sequence carefully. Students need to understand how the activities connect, who they report to at each stage and how their learning goals will be reviewed.

MODEL 5: EVENT, PRODUCTION, EXHIBITION OR SHOWCASE-LED BLOCK

Placement activity is timed around a production, event, exhibition, festival, launch, installation, fashion showcase, craft market or product display period. Activity may be more intensive during set-up, delivery and debrief.

Aspect	Detail
When this works best	Best where work happens in bursts and there is a clear project timeline.
Media, broadcast and production examples	Preparing resources, supporting set-up, organising content, assisting front-of-house or production tasks, documenting activity, gathering audience feedback, supporting debrief and reviewing what worked.
Craft and design examples	Preparing work for display, supporting installation, organising stock or samples, helping with display presentation, documenting products, gathering customer or audience feedback, supporting debrief and reviewing presentation or sales activity.
Planning consideration	Consider travel, timings, safeguarding, wellbeing, rest breaks, equipment, tools, manual handling and supervision. Late-night, public-facing or higher-risk activity will need careful planning and may not be suitable for all students.

MODEL 6: PROVIDER-LED CREATIVE PROJECT AGENCY OR STUDIO MODEL

The college or school runs a structured creative agency, production office or studio model where students respond to employer briefs, supported by tutors and employer input at key points.

Aspect	Detail
When this works best	Best where several employers can offer briefs, but cannot all host students in the workplace at the same time.
Media, broadcast and production examples	Taking a content, campaign, event or production brief; researching the employer and audience; developing concepts; producing draft outputs; responding to feedback; presenting final work to the client.
Craft and design examples	Taking a design, product, display, materials or customer brief; researching the employer and audience; developing concepts, samples or mock-ups; responding to feedback; presenting final work to the client.
Planning consideration	Employer input must be built in at the start, during development and at the end. The model should be clearly separated from ordinary classroom learning and linked to real employer needs.

QUESTIONS TO SHAPE THE RIGHT MODEL

- What type of work does the employer already do that students could see, support or contribute to?
- Which T Level and occupation-specific area is the student studying, and how should this shape the activity?
- Is the employer able to host one student, a small team, or contribute to a wider multi-employer model?
- What is the best timing for the placement activity, considering briefs, commissions, making processes, exhibitions, productions, campaigns, events, client work or seasonal demand?
- What level of employer oversight is realistic, and who will provide it?
- What should the student be able to do safely and meaningfully at this stage of their course?
- What equipment, tools, materials, digital systems, locations or workspaces are involved?
- What information must be kept confidential, and how will this be explained to students?
- What will the student produce, present, reflect on or contribute by the end?
- How will the college or school check progress with the student and employer during the placement?

COMMON EMPLOYER CONCERNS AND POSSIBLE RESPONSES

Employer concern	Helpful response
"We are too small to host a full placement."	You may not need to start with a full placement. A talk, portfolio review, visit, live brief or small team project can be a first step. The college or school can help shape this into something manageable.
"We do not have time to supervise a student every day."	The placement can be planned around specific tasks, check-in points and named supervision. For some models, the college or school can support the day-to-day structure while the employer provides the brief and feedback.
"Our work is confidential or client-sensitive."	Students can work with anonymised, historic, internal or lower-risk briefs. Expectations about confidentiality, images, client work and online sharing should be explained clearly before any activity starts.
"Our work is too unpredictable."	Creative and design work often changes quickly. The placement can be designed around live project stages, events, campaigns, making processes or short blocks, as long as the student's activity remains planned, meaningful and supported.
"Students will not be ready."	Students do not arrive as finished professionals. The aim is to help them build confidence and capability through real experience, starting with appropriate tasks and building responsibility over time.
"We are not sure what students could do."	Start with work you already need to explore, test, organise, document, promote, make, display or improve. The college or school can help translate that into a suitable brief or placement activity.
"Our environment involves tools, equipment, public-facing work or time-sensitive activity."	This can still be possible with careful planning. The college or school and employer should agree suitable tasks, supervision, risk assessment, safety expectations, clothing or PPE, and clear boundaries before activity begins.
"What insurance would we need?"	In most cases, employers' existing Employers' Liability Insurance and Public Liability Insurance will already provide appropriate cover for T Level industry placement students. The college or school will discuss this with you before the placement begins and can help answer any questions about insurance, health and safety, and your responsibilities.

WHAT THE EMPLOYER GETS FROM INVOLVEMENT

- The opportunity to help shape the next generation of creative professionals, many of whom could become your future apprentices, freelancers, technicians, makers or employees.
- Fresh ideas and perspectives on real briefs, making challenges, audience needs or project opportunities.
- Additional support with structured tasks, research, content, preparation, documentation, display, sample development or audience insight.
- A stronger relationship with local colleges and schools.
- Early insight into potential future apprentices, freelancers, assistants, technicians, makers or employees.
- A manageable way to contribute to the sector without designing a placement from scratch.
- Professional development opportunities for existing staff through coaching, mentoring and supervising students, helping to strengthen leadership, communication and people management skills.

QUALITY MATTERS

Different placement models can be used, but the activity must be meaningful, planned and supported and employer-led. Students must have clear learning objectives, appropriate supervision, regular review points and opportunities to reflect on what they are learning. Where activity takes place away from the employer's usual workplace, it must still involve meaningful employer oversight and be clearly separated from normal classroom learning.

The placement activity should be appropriate for the student's T Level pathway and stage of readiness. It should stretch students beyond observation alone, while remaining realistic for their level of experience and the employer's capacity. Students should understand the brief, their role, the expected standard of work, confidentiality requirements, safety expectations and how feedback will be given.

A SIMPLE PLANNING TEMPLATE

Question	Notes
Employer / organisation	
Type of creative work or setting	
Relevant T Level and occupation-specific area	
Proposed model	
Student activity	
Employer role and named contact	
College or school role	
Timing and location	
Tools, equipment, materials, digital systems or workspace requirements	
Supervision, safeguarding, safety and wellbeing considerations	
Review points	
Expected output or contribution	
Next step agreed	

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