



Careers Column

Weekly career planning advice for young people and their parents, from the education and career experts at Gloucestershire College.



T Levels – coming to a college near you!

Steve Weldon Advice and Guidance Manager

The government has set in motion a series of reforms that are being hailed as the biggest shake up in education in a generation.

The changes are aimed at improving both the quality and relevance of technical qualifications, as recommended by the widely praised Sainsbury Review. The reforms will be achieved by bringing greater contrast between the academic A Levels route and the more technical employer-led sector specific qualifications - studied as a full-time college course or as part of an apprenticeship.

Currently there are around 13,000 'vocational' qualifications available to students in the UK - such as BTEC, CACHE, and Cambridge Technicals. Under the reforms, these will be reviewed and streamlined to provide clear progression routes leading to 15 occupational sectors. These new qualifications will be referred to as 'T Levels'.

What's a 'T Level'?

The two-year T Levels will be advanced full-time college courses incorporating technical skills, plus English and maths at GCSE level and will include a relevant three-month work experience placement.

T Level qualifications in each of the 15 sector-based routes will be created through consultation with industry experts, to ensure that the skills taught are relevant to the needs of the labour market. The 15 sector areas are:

- Agriculture, environmental and animal care
- Business and administration
- Catering and hospitality
- Childcare and education
- Construction
- Creative and design

- Digital
- Engineering and manufacturing
- Hair and beauty
- Health and science
- Legal, finance and accounting
- Protective services
- Sales, marketing and procurement
- Social care
- Transport and logistics

How will T Levels be taught?

The number of timetabled hours that a T Level student will have in their programme will increase significantly from 540 to 900 hours per year and will incorporate a work placement taking place over a minimum of three months.

Current thinking is that a full-time student will spend four days in college and one day in the workplace each week – the opposite to many apprentices, who spend four days in work and one day in college each week.

Why do we need T Levels?

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, on average 50% of young people in developed countries follow vocational routes to work. In Germany the proportion is close to 75%. In the UK, it is just 30%.

The current range of vocational qualifications in the UK is overly complicated and undervalued – these reforms will refresh and upgrade the training options available, developing parity with established academic routes.

While the overall UK unemployment rate is currently at 4.6%, the figure for 19-24 year-olds is 12.7%, so qualifications with a clear route to the workplace will help young people progress into the world of employment.

Who will T Levels be for?

T Levels will be available to all 16 year olds following their GCSEs and entry criteria is likely to be similar to A Levels. For those who need to improve their grades before starting a qualification, there will be the option to take a 'transition year' within one of the 15 sector areas.

Those choosing T Levels will need to be able to identify their preferred broad sector of interest - so high quality careers education and guidance will be essential to support young people to make a well informed choice.

What will they lead to?

Once complete, T Level students will be able to progress to a Higher or Degree level apprenticeship or Higher Education at a university or college, as the new system builds in the opportunity to switch between the academic and technical pathways.

T Levels will provide students with a deep understanding of the work involved and opportunities available in their chosen field of work, along with the skills required by employers.

When will they be available?

Students will be able to start T Level courses in September 2019 so it's important that young people starting GCSEs next year, as well as their parents and teachers, understand their progression options.

It's never too early to start thinking about the pathways available to help you to reach your goals and the Advice Team at Gloucestershire College is here to help.

You can email us at advice@gloscol.ac.uk or call us on 01452 563210.

Technical skills helped me launch my career

At Gloucestershire College our goal is to prepare students for the world of work by equipping them with the skills, qualifications and experience needed to be successful in their chosen field. Here are some of our former students who used their technical training to launch their dream career.



Alice Baker, Spa Manager at Malmaison Cheltenham Hotel and Spa
Level 2 Diploma in Beauty Therapy, Level 3 Diploma in Nail Technologies and Level 3 Diploma in Body and Spa Therapy

"I loved the fact there was a student spa set up on campus. It enabled us to gain experience working in a real life spa. We would take clients through to have their treatments or use the spa facilities, and were responsible for our own clients throughout our time at college.

My dream was to be a spa manager, which I have achieved already. I love my job and have worked hard to get where I am today. My next goal is to run my own spa. Without the courses at GC, I would not be where I am today."



Ryan Ambridge, Cabin Crew for British Airways
Level 3 Travel and Tourism

"During the Travel and Tourism course we covered all aspects of the tourism industry, as well as presentation skills, interview tips and CV writing – no stone was left unturned! After leaving college I worked as an apprentice with STA Travel, then as a Holiday Adviser for Thomson Holidays in Mallorca, Fuerteventura, Menorca and Morocco.

I have recently started a cabin crew role with British Airways and I'm extremely excited for the next chapter in my career."



Joshua Murphy, Commis Chef at Lucknam Park Hotel
Level 3 Catering

"I did work experience at the 2 Michelin Star restaurant, Le Champignon Sauvage while I was studying at GC, which showed me the fine dining side of catering and completely changed the path I wanted to go down. After college, the skills and experience I gained on my course earned me a full-time position as Chef de Partie at Le Champignon, where I worked for a year. I'm now Commis Chef at Lucknam Park, learning under celebrity chef Hywel Jones and have even been back to GC several times as a guest chef."

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