

THE EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

A Guide for Employers



Developed in partnership with:





Introduction

A skilled workforce is at the heart of every business. As a business leader you get enquiries to work with local schools, colleges and universities – and you'll probably have some questions given the education and skills landscape can be complex to understand. There are many different ways to get involved – but which are the best fit for your business, and how will they help connect you to your future workforce, or boost productivity by upskilling your current team?

That's why we've created this resource – the Education Landscape: A Guide for Employers. It describes options for working with schools, colleges and universities, young people* and older learners, and the benefits of doing so for your business. You can also find out how technical education, including apprenticeships, T Levels and Higher Technical Qualifications, can meet your skills needs.

In the accompanying Index you can find out more about the business benefits of different opportunities – from providing workplace experiences for students, using your industry expertise to help design courses, to getting training for your new employees and existing staff. You can find the Index, along with a range of supporting resources, at www.educationlandscape.org.uk

*The term young person is used to include students up to age 24. This includes those at schools, colleges, specialist schools or colleges, alternative providers, independent training providers, universities and more.



EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The benefits for business

New talent

Being involved with schools, colleges and universities is an opportunity to identify potential employees who are a good fit with your organisation. In the medium- to longer-term this can reduce expensive and time-consuming recruitment activity, develop a talent pipeline for hard-to-fill vacancies and support succession, growth and workforce development planning for the future.

Fresh perspectives

Working with education connects you to a diverse range of young people and professionals. These fresh perspectives can drive innovation, support social mobility and create a more vibrant and inclusive workplace. They can bring awareness of emerging trends and new ideas to your business, and help you reach new audiences. Placement students and apprentices also quickly acquire new skills and make a real contribution to your team as they do so.

Support your local community

Working with your local education institutions can contribute to your organisation's social responsibility and reputation. Your real-world input brings the curriculum to life and gives learning a concrete focus. It's also a great opportunity to inspire, inform and help young people – which is good for them, for the community, and you.

Staff development

Getting your employees involved in education engagement activities can be rewarding and inspiring. It contributes to your current team's professional development, helping to build communication, leadership and management skills, and can support employee well-being and strengthen their loyalty to your company. Linking up with your local college or university can also open the door for technical training to upskill your existing staff.

Build partnerships

Connecting with schools, colleges and universities offers a strong value exchange. The institutions gain broader insight into your industry needs, and you can get involved in shaping the skills being taught in your local area, whilst benefitting from building your existing knowledge and expertise, for example, in developments in technology. This collaboration also demonstrates the wider contribution your business makes to the community.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Ways to get involved



Supporting students

Much of your future workforce is currently in education. Sharing your knowledge, experience and advice will inspire and inform their career choices – helping them to develop the confidence to move into a role that is right for them – and to be the right employee for you. Opportunities include giving a class careers talk or providing one-to-one mentoring for a student on a longer-term basis.

Providing expert guidance

Nobody knows your business like you do. Sharing your knowledge and expertise with government, and with the education institutions around you, will help to influence what is taught so that it is relevant to your business. You could work with a school or college as a governor, or you might contribute to the expert employer panels that shape technical education nationally or locally.

Supporting high-quality teaching

Your input into classes will ensure that teachers can share up to date knowledge, and gives you the opportunity to shape the skills being taught around your business needs. You could help design a course or support a student project, give teachers the opportunity to find out about current industry practice by hosting a site visit, teach a masterclass yourself, or even donate some equipment or workshop time for students.

Work-based learning

Helping an individual learn whilst they work in your business is a great way to develop a motivated, skilled, and qualified employee. For example, apprenticeships offer real job experience whilst a person studies for a formal qualification. You can adapt these training programmes to meet the needs of your organisation and fill gaps within your workforce skillset. Managing students also offers professional development for existing employees.

Providing experiences of the workplace

Nothing beats hands-on experience for gaining an insight into working life, and your business can also benefit in a number of ways. Opening your doors to young people is an opportunity to raise awareness and understanding of your organisation and industry, and to help students transition into the workplace. In the longer-term, you could even gain a future employee. Activities include hosting short workplace visits or longer industry placement opportunities.



To find out more about this wide range of opportunities take a look at **The Education Landscape: Index** by visiting www.educationlandscape.org.uk. You will find more information about these different activities, the likely commitment required from your business, and the benefits they offer to you and the students.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Technical education

In England at age 16, young people have a range of options for the next step towards their career. The academic path, with GCSEs, A Levels and undergraduate degree courses, is well-understood. But not everyone is familiar with our technical education system and the many ways that the Government has been working with businesses to ensure that technical education meets employer needs and helps individuals gain good jobs.



What's key?

- **Employers are at the heart of our system for technical education.** Groups of employers are setting the standards for different occupations. Each occupational standard describes what a person needs to know and be able to do for a particular role. These standards are grouped into fifteen technical education routes – from agriculture, to catering, to health & science. They have been designed with panels of employer experts to make sure that the standards stay up to date.
- **Apprentices** are employed and learn through on and off-the-job training. An apprentice develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the employer designed standard for their occupation. They are assessed against this standard so employers can be sure individuals can do the job. Most of the apprentice's training is on-the-job, often working with a mentor, and additional off-the-job training provided by a training organisation. Depending on the occupation an apprenticeship can take between one and six years to complete.
- **T Levels** are two-year courses that launched in September 2020. They will be the main college-based technical option for students at age 16, sitting alongside apprenticeships and A Levels. T Levels offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of around 45 days. The content of T Levels has been developed with employers, using the occupational standards as their reference. Alongside their technical knowledge, T Level students also build maths, English and digital skills. So you can be sure that these new qualifications meet the needs of industry and prepare students for work, further training or study.
- **Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs)** are specialised post-18 training at higher levels 4 and 5 (A Levels and T Levels are at level 3). Employer expert panels decide which qualifications meet the employer designed occupational standards. Only level 4 and 5 qualifications that do this are approved as a Higher Technical Qualification. These qualifications are awarded a quality mark so you can be sure they develop the knowledge and skills needed by employers.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Case studies

Case study:
Work-based learning: Apprenticeships

“There’s a clear return on investment.”

“We’ve been taking on apprentices for over 100 years, because there’s a clear return on investment. With an ageing workforce throughout the engineering sector, growing our own talent’s a great way to get the skilled staff we need. As apprentices progress through their programme, our business really starts to reap the benefits of the training we’ve invested in. The apprentice is competent in their trade, generating added value, responsive to our business needs and can move onto the next stage of their career with us.”

Keith Longman, Yard Manager,
Berthon Boat Company, Hampshire



Case study:

Support high quality teaching: Professional development for teachers



"I worked for Fujitsu for eight years before moving into education and teaching Digital subjects. However, technology moves so fast it's important that businesses give teachers like me the opportunity to visit them and see first-hand how industry is changing. This helps to inform the content I teach, but it also benefits small businesses in our area as they get to help shape the skills being taught around their business needs.

I recently spent a day with LMS Recruitment Systems, not just to learn about the software they use or the projects they are working on, but to understand what skills and behaviours businesses are looking for from their staff. I use this insight to deliver up-to-date, industry-relevant, content to the Digital T Level students at the college.

The positive impact of employer engagement on both students and employers is great to see. A local software engineer recently told us that our second year T Level students are working on similar projects to final-year Computing Degree students he's also met. He was amazed by the calibre of our students' technical ability and felt they were ready to step straight into digital jobs in businesses like his.

We're always open to hearing from small businesses to learn more about their industry requirements and to co-create great course content."

Nafisa Naheed,
Nelson & Colne College Group, Lancashire

Case study:

Supporting students: Careers talk

"I work closely with my local secondary school as a Careers and Enterprise Advisor, attending career days, open evenings and offering short periods of work experience. By working directly with students, the business gets access to new talent as we give young people a better sense of the career options in the electrical industry and how school helps them into work. Some of the students will go on to apply for our short work experience or apprenticeship positions in the future."



"The business gets to access new talent."

"Providing periods of short work experience saves our business time, energy and costs in the long-term. We get first-hand experience of who has the right work ethic and in-work communication skills to fit in with our team, and the young people get a real taste of working in an electrical role."

Scott Monk, Managing Director,
GM Monk and Enterprise Adviser,
Hailsham Community College, East Sussex

“...we have already
seen our placement
students grow in
confidence...”

Case study:

Providing experiences of the workplace:
T Level industry placements

“T Levels are great for both the student and the employer. They not only offer students the opportunity to gain on the job experience and prepare them for working life, but also benefit employers who are looking to gain new ideas, and more skilled staff.

We’ve had a very positive experience of T Level students joining our workplace for their industry placement. Their computing skills and knowledge of marketing and social media has allowed us to focus even more on the marcomms side of our business, which we haven’t been able to fully do before. Overall, we have already seen our placement students grow in confidence as a result of being within our working environment.

This is not only going to help them from a professional perspective, but on a personal level for life in general. Should any positions arise within the business, this invaluable experience of an industry placement would put them in a strong position to gain future employment.”

Aaron Clements, Football Development Officer at the Somerset Football Association, Glastonbury



Case study:

Providing expert guidance:
Acting as a governor

“I’ve become a better
leader because of my
governor role.”

“As CEO of a small business and governor within a primary academy trust, I work with schools and businesses. Working in support of the teaching team, I’m using my network and experience to help them bring to life the career options available to young people and provide a great way for teachers to stay up to date with the skills businesses need. Importantly for our business, I have become a better leader because of my governor role; learning how to manage risk, challenge with kindness and build connections with people I would never have otherwise met.

Some of our children may not have the opportunity outside of school to learn about different occupations and sectors. It’s rewarding to see their enthusiasm when they engage with small businesses. It’s never too early to light the spark of a career that they can pursue as they get older.”

Louise Doyle, CEO of Mesma and
Chair of North of Tyne Regional Board,
Wise Academies



Education system at a glance

There are plenty of reasons why businesses should get involved at all stages of the education system. The starting point is understanding the landscape:

	Age	Phase of education	Where this is provided	Description
	Age 18+	Further Education for Adults (19+) Higher Education (18+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Colleges – Universities – Institutes of Technology – Training companies – Employers 	Higher education (HE) is education and training at a standard beyond A Levels and T Levels. HE programmes are offered by universities or colleges, and vary in size and type. HE can include: Higher Technical Qualifications (including Higher Nationals and Foundation Degrees), undergraduate degrees, higher apprenticeships and postgraduate courses. Many adults also continue to improve their skills by studying Further Education (FE) courses – from basic skills to technical courses.
Key stage Five	Age 16–18	Further Education (16+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Colleges – School sixth-forms – Training companies – Employers – Charities 	At this stage young people may undertake a full-time course at college or school sixth-form, such as A Levels or a T Level, or start an apprenticeship. They can also combine work or volunteering with part-time study or training. Education or training is compulsory until the age of 18 in England.
Key stage Four	Age 14–16	Secondary Education	– Secondary schools	Secondary education starts at age 11 and continues until age 16. Students are usually studying GCSE courses, and/or other courses as appropriate (e.g. a technical qualification). Some regions also have middle schools.
Key stage Three	Age 11–14			
Key stage Two	Age 7–11	Primary Education	– Primary schools	Primary schools generally have students aged 4 to 11 years, with infant and junior classes. The Government has set out a national curriculum for all subjects across Key Stages One to Four, and there are national tests and teacher assessments for students at the end of both Key Stage One and Two. Throughout their school and college education some students attend alternative settings, which offer an adjusted curriculum to better meet their individual needs e.g. if they have Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
Key stage One	Age 5–7			
	Age 0–5	Early Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nurseries – Primary schools 	The Government sets standards for learning, development and care of young children to age 5 in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework. This can take place in state nursery schools, nursery classes and reception classes within primary schools, but also in voluntary pre-schools, privately run nurseries and with childminders.

Next steps

For further information, please see our accompanying resource **The Education Landscape: Index** by visiting www.educationlandscape.org.uk

If you have questions about anything within this guide, please contact info@educationlandscape.org.uk



This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0

This edition produced January 2025.

Developed in partnership with:

