Department for Education

Technical education learner survey

Research report

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Government Social Research

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Background

New technical education programmes were introduced in 2020 to improve and simplify the existing vocational education system in England and address a skills gap identified in the 2016 Sainsbury Review. T Levels are level 3 qualifications that are equivalent to three A Levels. Learners who require additional support before taking a T Level can take the T Level Transition Programme (TLTP) – a one-year, full time course which equips learners with the skills and knowledge they need to progress on to a T Level. In their first year (2020-2021) these programmes were delivered by 43 providers across England in three technical routes: Education and Childcare, Construction and Digital.

The Technical Education Learner Survey (Tech Ed Study) aims to understand which young people are choosing these new technical routes and why, as well as their experiences and outcomes on these new technical education programmes, and how they progress into future study and work. The 2021 survey is the first wave in a wider longitudinal study of these technical learners.

Survey methodology

Learners were identified using information from administrative data (the National Pupil Database and Individual Learner Record). The 2021 survey used a census approach to sampling, given that the population of interest (all learners enrolled in the first year of the TLTP or T Level in the academic year 2020-2021) was relatively small. Learners were initially encouraged to complete an online survey. If this was not completed following a number of reminders, a telephone interview was attempted, or a paper survey posted where no telephone numbers were available. All learners were offered an incentive to take part in the form of a shopping voucher.

A total of 2,207 cases were issued for fieldwork, and the survey achieved an overall response rate of 56% (49% among Transition Programme and 61% among T Level learners).

Transition Programme

- Almost half of learners were '**advised to apply'** for the TLTP and schools/colleges offering the programme were the main source of information.
- Just over **two-fifths of learners reported that they wished to progress onto a T Level** when they started the programme. This had reduced to just over a third at the end of the Transition Programme, and just under a third were not sure.

- Learners' understanding of whether their course **led to a qualification** in their chosen occupation area often did not reflect whether the course actually included such a qualification or not.
- Most learners found the amount of teaching and the workload outside of lessons **manageable**. However, learners with SEN and with lower prior academic attainment found the workload (in and outside of lessons) less manageable than their peers.
- There was a **high level of satisfaction with the TLTP** among learners, both overall and with the different elements of the programme.
- Only around **a third of learners had the opportunity to gain work experience**, with Education and Childcare learners being most likely to gain this experience across the Transition Programme sectors. Overall, most students who completed work experience were satisfied with the experience.
- Most learners felt that the TLTP had **helped them 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' to develop** the relevant knowledge, practical skills and understanding of their sector.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a large proportion of learners received a mix of online and in-person teaching over the year, with learners reporting that **a lack of in-person teaching was the greatest barrier to learning**.

T Level

- Learners' most common **reason for choosing their course** was because it fitted with the occupational area in which they wanted to work.
- Most had heard about their programme from a school or college providing T Levels (e.g. website, prospectus, open day).
- **Satisfaction was high** with the course overall and with most components of the course. The main drivers of satisfaction were the amount of course content related to the chosen subject area, course organisation and management, the standard of classroom teaching, and skills covered for learners' chosen occupational area.
- **Most found the workload to be manageable**, including the amount of teaching on the course and work done outside taught lessons. It was less manageable for learners who had been taught mainly online, had lower academic prior attainment, were eligible for FSM and had SEN.
- Where students struggled to manage workload outside classes, the main reasons were the amount of work, the clarity of work being set and insufficient support from teachers and tutors.
- **Lack of in-person teaching was the main barrier to learning**. This was reported more by Education and Childcare and Construction than Digital learners. Around a quarter said that they had experienced no barriers to learning.

- Most learners were satisfied with their **industry placement** and felt it met their expectations in terms of content and skills development. Feeling supported by the employer during placement was the main driver of satisfaction.
- T Levels had been **challenging** for most learners. Those taught mainly online were more likely to find it 'very challenging'.
- T Levels **helped most learners to develop** relevant knowledge of their occupational area, practical skills, workplace understanding, communication skills, IT skills and their confidence.
- The three main **destinations** learners were planning to take after completing their course were a university degree (31%), a paid job (27%) and an apprenticeship (21%). The majority were planning to study or work in the same field as their T Level course.
- Most learners said they felt **supported** by their school/college in deciding the next steps after completing their T Level.

Conclusions

The findings from the first cohort of learners on the TLTP and T Levels suggest that learners have had a largely positive experience. Learners generally reported high levels of satisfaction overall and with different course elements, including the industry placements where they were undertaken. They felt that their course had helped them to develop knowledge, practical skills and understanding in their sector. Most learners found the workload to be manageable, and felt that their course was suitably challenging. Additionally, learners reported feeling supported by their school or college in deciding their next step, with nearly three-quarters of TLTP learners intending to go on to further study (including a third intending to go onto a T Level) and nearly two-fifths of T Level students intending further study (most commonly university).

However, the pandemic undoubtedly created challenges for the way that courses were delivered, limiting the amount of in-person teaching. This lack of in-person teaching was identified as the main barrier to learning, and was associated with lower satisfaction. Covid restrictions were likely to have impacted on learners' access to industry placements – a crucial element of the technical programmes – and may partly explain some differences between subjects in perceived outcomes from courses. As Covid restrictions ease and more T Level and TLTP courses are rolled out, it will be interesting to see in future waves of the study how this creates more opportunities for technical learners and the effect this has on learners' satisfaction with their experience.

Introduction

Policy Background

The government's policy for technical education reform has been informed and guided by recommendations made in the 2016 Sainsbury Review by the Independent Panel on Technical Education. The Review identified several shortcomings in the existing vocational education system in England, including:

- too many overlapping and low-value qualifications at levels 2 and 3 and a lack of technical provision at level 4 and above;
- a complex market of qualifications which young people struggled to navigate;
- a lack of high-quality alternatives to the academic (A level) route at level 3;
- too many young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) while employers faced growing skills gaps;
- and lack of employer voice in shaping the content of vocational qualifications.

The Review highlighted that the skills gap contributed to low productivity in the UK economy and that, without reform, the UK risked falling behind other large economies in providing the technical skills needed in current and future labour markets.

The Panel made several recommendations considering the needs of both employers and young people. These were accepted by government and formalised into policy in the Post-16 Skills Plan (2016). Further updates to the policy (the most recent being the T Level Action Plan 2021) provided a timetable for a series of reforms in technical education to take place between 2020 and 2024. The government recently announced a one-year extension to this timetable to give providers, awarding organisations, employers and young people more time to manage the upcoming changes.

At the heart of the technical education reforms are **T Levels**, new level 3 qualifications that are equivalent to three A levels. These two-year technical programmes were designed to offer a prestigious, high-quality alternative to academic study. They are available for young people aged 16-19 and like apprenticeships, the content is developed by employer panels. The first T Levels (in Construction, Digital and Education & Childcare) have been provided by 43 providers since September 2020. When T Levels are rolled out, young people will have a choice between 23 T Levels that will cover most occupational areas, from catering to engineering and health. The full-time, two-year study programme includes classroom learning, practical elements and an industry placement: a placement of at least 45 days in industry aimed at teaching young people workplace-relevant technical skills. (T Levels were originally designed to have an English and maths exit requirement, but this was recently removed.)

The roll-out of T Levels offers young people a simplified choice between technical (T Level) and academic (A level) routes. The Sainsbury Review recognised that not all young people will be ready to make this choice at age 16 and recommended additional support for these learners.

The **T Level Transition Programme** (TLTP) is for learners who want to progress to a T Level but need additional support and preparation before they are ready to do so. The TLTP is available to young people aged 16-19 and those with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) up to the age of 24. Thirty-two providers (schools, sixth form colleges and FE colleges) offered the Transition Programme in the 2020 to 2021 academic year. For most students, it is expected to be a full-time, one-year study programme. It comprises work experience, introductory technical content and English and maths lessons for those who have not yet achieved their level 2 grades, as well as pastoral support and initial and ongoing diagnostics of learners' progress and development needs.

A framework for delivery was published in October 2019 for the academic year 2020 to 2021 (and updated in December 2021 for the academic year 2022 to 2023 onwards) setting out the delivery expectations for providers, which gave providers the flexibility to develop tailored programmes that support the specific needs of their learners. The greatest difference between the Transition Programme and traditional level 2 programmes is that providers have the option to either embed a technical qualification into their programmes or opt to deliver the technical component through non-qualification based delivery.

In future, young people will also have access to more qualifications at levels 4 and 5. The government held a consultation on higher technical education (2019 and 2020) and introduced plans to accredit **Higher Technical Qualifications or HTQs** from 2022. The policy is based on recommendations made in the 2019 Augar Review on post-18 education. The Review highlighted that provision and uptake of level 4 and 5 qualifications in the UK is low compared to other major economies and that employers lack skills at the 'technician' level. The new level 4 and 5 qualifications will help plug these skills gaps and solidify the technical route as an alternative to university study.

The Tech Ed Study

Study aims

Once fully rolled out, these reforms will represent a substantial shift in the technical education landscape for young people. The government needs evidence regarding whether they deliver high-quality learning experiences that support young people's progression into high-quality employment. The **Tech Ed Study** will do so by collecting longitudinal data from the early cohorts of young people enrolled in the new courses.

The study will deliver a series of surveys between 2020 and 2024 to capture learners' experiences and outcomes during the course as well as their progression into future study and work.

Survey approach

This report is based on a survey of the first cohort of T Level Transition Programme and T Level learners who started courses in September 2020. Learners were identified using information from administrative data (the National Pupil Database and Individual Learner Record). Given the relatively small number of learners in 2020, a census approach was taken where all who were recorded by December 2020 as having started a T Level or Transition Programme were invited to participate in the survey.

Data collection for the survey was primarily via web self-completion, with follow-up telephone interviewing and paper questionnaires where there was no response after a series of reminders. Interviews were conducted towards the end of learners' courses in May to July 2021. For the T Level learners this was therefore towards the end of the first year of their two-year course (a second wave of data collection is planned for their second year). A total of 2,207 cases were issued for fieldwork, and the survey achieved an overall response rate of 56% (49% among Transition Programme and 61% among T Level learners). See Appendix A – technical note for more details.

Questionnaire and data

The survey questionnaire was designed with the policy team at the department and will change cohort-to-cohort. In general, the study aims to collect detailed information on:

- **Learner characteristics**, including their aspirations at the outset of their technical learning phase, as well as more detailed socio-demographic characteristics not included in administrative data (e.g. household structure, tenure and health).
- **Experiences of the programmes,** including their satisfaction with courses, the level of challenge and indications of the success of their implementation in institutions and in industry placements.
- **Short-term outcomes,** including more detailed and earlier data on progression into skilled employment and other destinations for T Level and Transition Programme learners than will be available from matched administrative data. The survey will also collect learner perceptions of factors that have contributed to that progression.

The surveys will supplement an already sophisticated administrative data system that can track individuals throughout their education and beyond. By focusing on learner experience, satisfaction and outcomes, the Tech Ed Study will enable a considerably

richer understanding and explanation of outcomes after the completion of technical education courses than would be possible with administrative data alone.

This report

Data in this report covers both the first cohort of Transition Programme learners and that of T Levels. The first substantive chapter provides the characteristics of the two cohorts for comparison, given the interest in understanding how the intake of the two courses differ. The detailed findings from the Transition Programme and T Level learners are then provided in separate chapters given the main aim is to provide comparisons *within* each course, to help understand how each has been implemented, rather than providing a direct comparison of the courses.

A separate set of Appendix Tables has been published alongside this report and is referenced in the report throughout.

Unless otherwise specified, comparisons shown in the report are statistically significant at the 95% level[1]. Where the p value is greater than 0.05 the p value is provided in the accompanying text.

Percentages are rounded to zero decimal points. As a result, figures may not sum to 100%.

All reported base sizes are unweighted and exclude those who refused to answer or selected the option ‘don’t know’ (unless these options were presented up-front). Figures based on a sample size of less than 30 are not presented.

[1] In principle, this means that, if new samples were drawn from our population of interest, 19 out of 20 times the results of the analysis would be consistent with the results presented in this report and that our findings are unlikely to be caused by random variations in the sample. In practice we have a limited population in this first year of operation, so these significance tests relate to a hypothetical wider population.

Learner characteristics

This chapter compares the socio-economic characteristics of students enrolled on the Transition Programme and T Level courses.

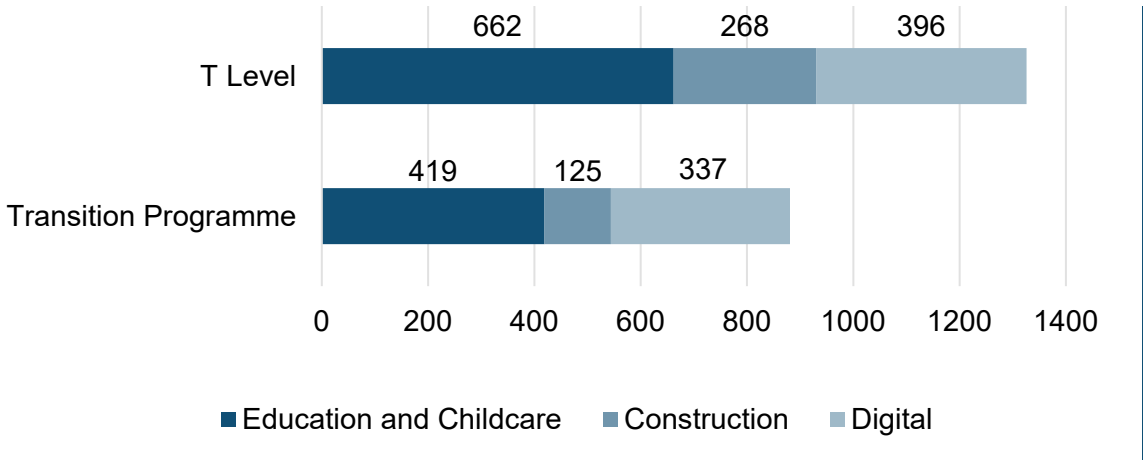
For learner characteristics held in DfE administrative data, findings are shown for all learners enrolled on the courses (and the charts state the source to be administrative data). Otherwise, findings below only relate to those learners who completed the survey.

Two sources of administrative data were provided by DfE: the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) and the National Pupil Database (NPD). The ILR data available at the time of the survey (from R04 and R06[2]) was provisional, so population figures presented below may vary slightly from official statistic releases based on final end-of-year data. Analysis of administrative data below is intended to give context to survey responses.

Course of study

Of the 2,207 learners in the available administrative data at the time of the survey, 1,326 (60%) were enrolled on T Level courses, and 881 (40%) were enrolled on the Transition Programme. Learners most commonly were studying Education and Childcare (50% of T Level and 48% of Transition Programme learners) with Construction least common (20% of T Level and 14% of Transition Programme learners).

Figure 1: Number of technical learners by course and subject



Source: NPD and ILR administrative data (full population)
Base: All technical learners (excl. cases missing data). Transition Programme: 881; T Level: 1,326

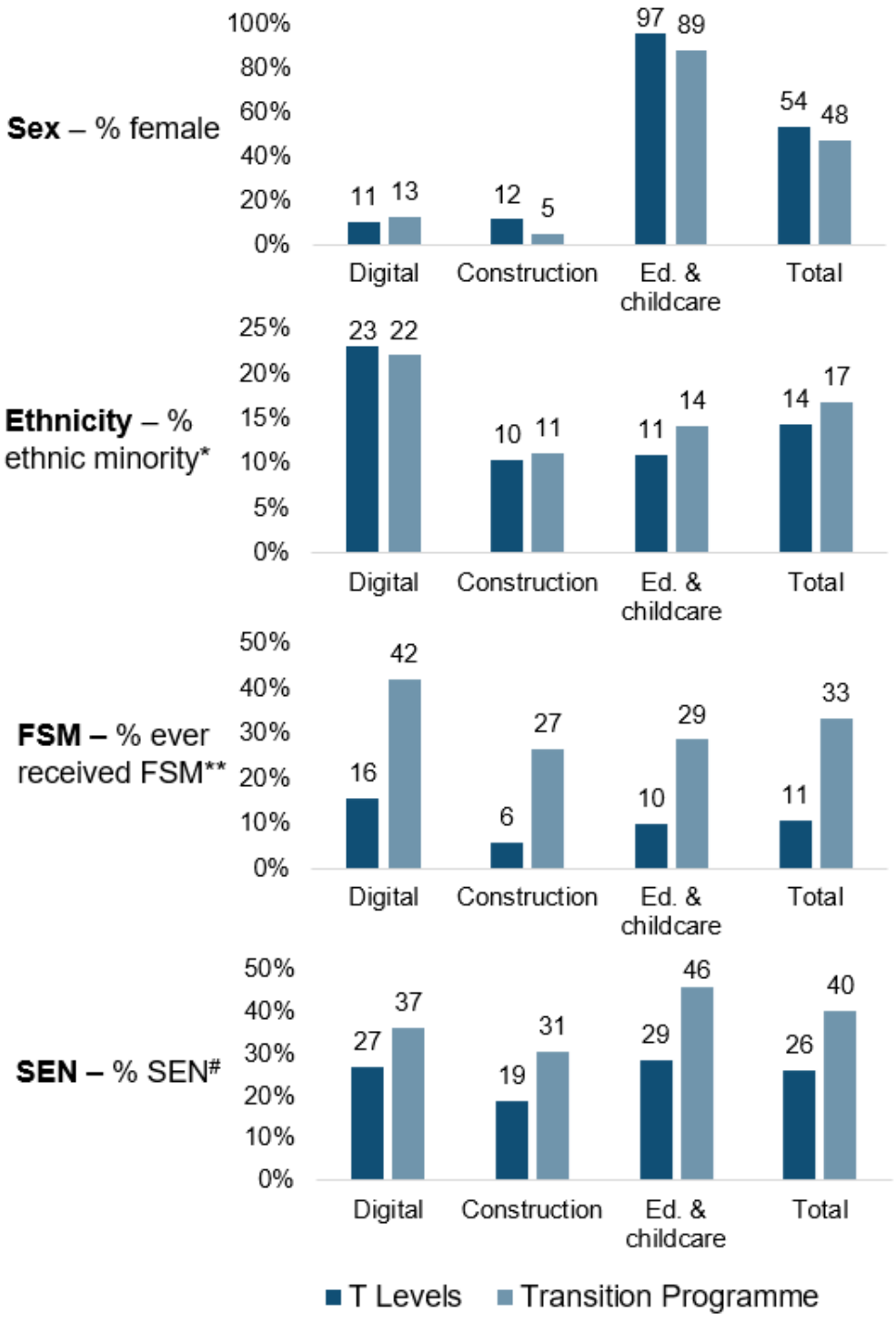
[2] R04 refers to data that FE providers submitted on 4th December 2020 (capturing provision delivered up to and including 1st November 2020). R06 refers to data that FE providers submitted on 4th February 2021 (capturing provision delivered up to and including 1st January 2021).

When asked in the survey questions to confirm their course of study, some uncertainty was revealed among Transition Programme learners. This reflected findings from NatCen's cognitive testing and piloting of the survey questionnaire that the term 'Transition Programme' was often not used by providers, with the course being referred to in several different ways. This is likely to explain the finding that 6% of Transition Programme learners said they were not on a Transition Programme (following a short description of it) and a further 13% saying they were not sure whether they were on this course.

For both the Transition Programme and T Levels there was an amount of movement off the courses during the year, with 10% and 8% of learners respectively saying they had left the course early.

Personal characteristics

Figure 2: Personal characteristics and prior attainment



Sources: NPD and ILR administrative data (full population available at time of survey).
Minimum base sizes: TLTP total: 843; TLTP Education: 408; TLTP Construction: 120; TLTP Digital: 315; TL total: 1,280; TL Education: 648; TL Construction: 258; TL Digital: 374. Excludes missing data. * 'Ethnic minority' in this analysis refers to those in all ethnic groups not classified as 'White' based on administrative data. ** Whether ever eligible for Free School Meals in past 6 years # In receipt of SEN support or an Education Health and Care Plan at any point since 2018.

Sex

On the T Level course, a slightly larger proportion (54%) of learners were female. Conversely, a slightly larger proportion of learners on the Transition Programme were male (52%). Whilst the overall picture was balanced there were marked differences in sex by subject. On both the Transition Programme and T Level, Education and Childcare learners were more likely to be female, and Construction learners were more likely to be male.

These patterns mirror those found for other vocational courses. For instance, among 16- to 18-year-old entries to 'Child development and well being' technical certificates, tech levels or applied general qualifications in academic year 2020 to 2021, 98% were female. This contrasts with the same qualifications in 'building and construction' where 90% were male.[3]

Ethnic group

Ethnicity was broadly similar across the Transition Programme and T Level courses. Both courses were majority White (85% of the learners overall). The proportion of learners that were White was higher than in the wider population of a similar age, but is more similar to the proportion found among other vocational learners in similar subject areas[4].

There was some variation by subject; for example, learners on Digital courses were more diverse, with a larger proportion of Asian learners (13% for both the Transition Programme and the T Level).

Special Educational Needs (SEN)

The proportion of learners who were recorded in administrative data as having Special Educational Needs provision[5] at any time since 2018 was noticeably higher for Transition Programme (33%), than T Level learners (11%). The highest proportion of SEN learners by subject was the Transition Programme Digital course, where 42% of learners had SEN. This compares to 6% for those studying a T Level in Construction.

[3] Data available in this Explore Education Statistics table, from the A level and other 16 to 18 results statistical release.
[4] The Annual Population Survey estimated that 79% of 16- to 19-year-olds were 'white'. (Data taken from June 2020 to June 2021 estimates via NOMIS – accessed 14/01/2022). Data on 16-18 vocational exam entries available at this Explore Education Statistics table. Of students whose ethnicity was recorded and who were doing applied general, tech level or technical certificates, 85% in the subject area of 'child development and wellbeing' were white, as were 85% of 'building and construction' students, compared with 66% of those in the 'ICT practitioner' subject area.
[5] Administrative data supplied by schools to DfE identifies students in receipt of SEN support or an Education Health Care Plan. As the ILR does not contain SEN data in a comparable format to the school census, SEN status for college learners was taken from when they were in school. Learners were included as SEN in this analysis if they had been flagged in either category since 2018.

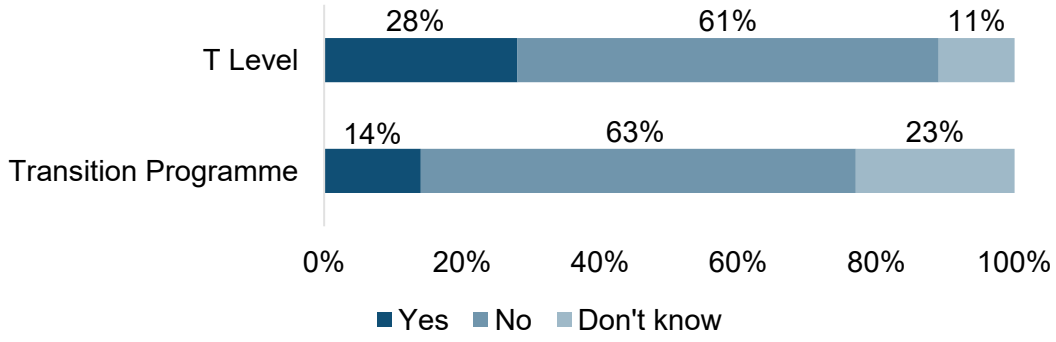
In comparison, 11% of all year 11 pupils in academic year 2019 to 2020 were recorded as having SEN support, with an additional 4% recorded as having a SEN statement or Education and Healthcare Plan.[6]

Family circumstances

Parents with a degree

To provide an indicator of the wider household educational context, learners were asked whether their parent or parents attended university. T Level learners were more likely to have a parent who had been to university (28%) than Transition Programme learners (14%) (Figure). A notable proportion of learners across both T Levels and the Transition Programme said that they didn't know their parents' HE degree status. This was higher for learners enrolled on the Transition Programme (23%), than T Level students (11%).

Figure 3: Whether a parent had a degree qualification, by course



Source: Tech Ed survey data
Base: Students enrolled in technical education courses living with a parent. Unweighted: T Level: 773; Transition Programme: 401

Economic activity of parents

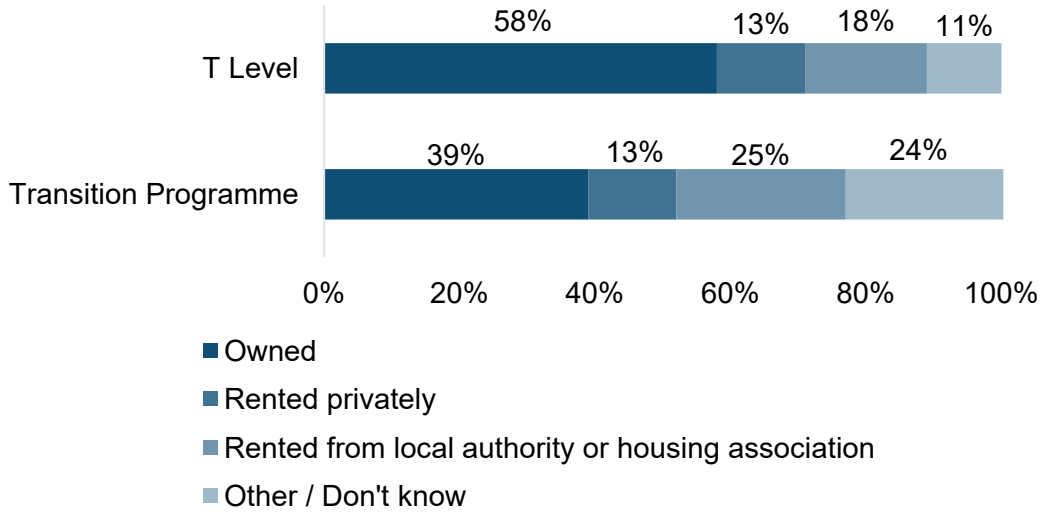
Most learners (81%) reported having a parent in work. This was more common among those studying for T Levels (84%) than those on the Transition Programme (75%). Transition Programme Construction learners were the least likely to report having a parent who was in work (65%). By contrast, learners on the T Level Construction course were the most likely to have a parent in work (86%).

[6] Data available from the 'special education needs in England' statistical release.

Housing tenure

A further indication of socioeconomic context is provided by housing tenure. Half (50%) of learners reported living in homes that are 'owned'. However, there was some variation by course, with T Level learners more likely to live in homes that were owned (58%) than Transition Programme learners (39%) and more likely to be in social rented homes (25% compared to 18%). However, there was a notably high proportion of learners who gave a 'don't know' response among Transition Programme learners (24% compared to 11% for T Level learners).

Figure 4: Learners' housing tenure, by course



Source: Tech Ed survey data
Base: All students enrolled in technical education courses. Unweighted: T Level: 796; Transition Programme: 422

Free school meals (FSM) in recent years

A significantly larger proportion of Transition Programme students (40%) had received received free school meals (FSM) in recent years[7], compared with T Level learners (26%). Proportions were highest among those completing a Transition Programme course in Education and Childcare (46%) and lowest among T Level Construction learners (19%).

[7] An indicator of free school meal status (EverFSM) was obtained for learners for the two years prior to their start on the course. The measure included instances of free school meals eligibility in any of the previous six years.

Learners' geography

Reflecting the geographic distribution of providers who were eligible and chosen to deliver these new programmes, the largest proportion of learners lived in the South East of the UK (25%), followed by the South West (21%). A large majority lived in urban areas (78% overall). This was slightly more pronounced for Transition Programme learners (81%) than for the T Level learners (76%).

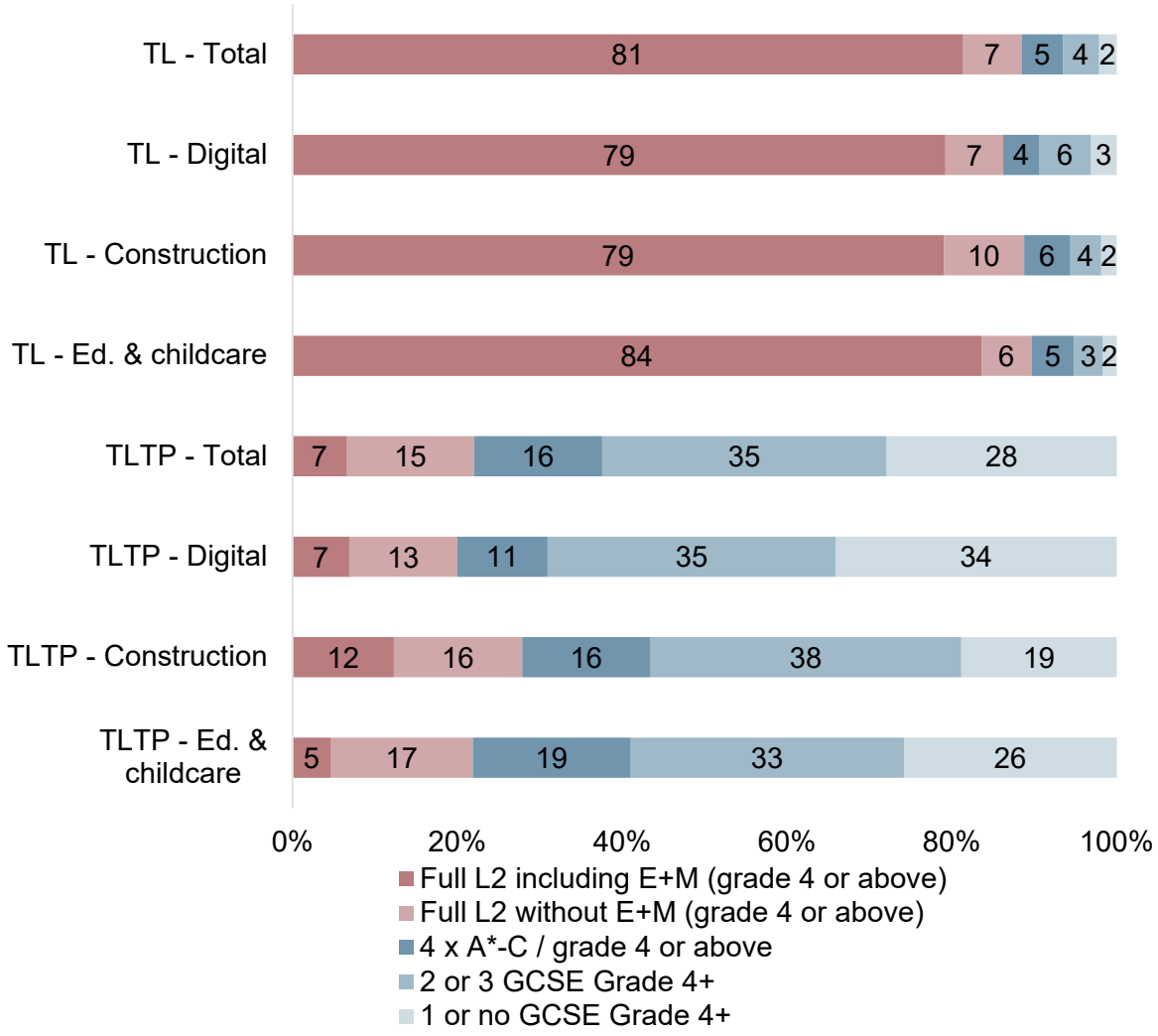
There was some variation in area deprivation by course. The distribution of T Level learners reflected the national picture, whilst Transition Programme learners tended to live in more deprived neighbourhoods (measured using the IDACI[8]). For example, 60% of T Level learners fell into the least deprived 62.5% of LSOAs category, whereas 55% of Transition Programme learners were in this category.

Previous educational attainment

Learners' prior attainment varied considerably, as might be expected, according to whether they were studying on the Transition Programme or completing a T Level (Figure 5). While 81% of T Level learners had five or more GCSEs at grades 4-9 including English and maths, just 7% of Transition Programme learners met the same level of prior attainment. This difference is unsurprising given that they are aimed at different student cohorts and therefore providers will have set different entry requirements for the two types of courses.

[8] The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) measures the proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families, see https://opendatacommunities.org/def/concept/general-concepts/imd/idaci

Figure 5: Learners' previous educational attainment, percentages



Base: Administrative data for the full population
Unweighted base: TL total:1310; TL Digital: 385; TL Construction: 267; TL Ed. & Childcare: 658; TLTP Total:849; TLTP Digital: 320; TLTP Construction:122; TLTP Ed. & Childcare: 407

Differences were also pronounced when looking at GCSE English specifically, where 89% of T Level learners had passed with a grade 4 or higher, compared to 38% of Transition Programme learners. Looking just at GCSE maths, 92% of T Level learners had passed with grade 4 or above, compared to 32% of Transition Programme learners. There were also differences by subject of study with higher prior attainment rates in GCSE maths for Construction learners and in English for Education and Childcare learners.

While it is useful to compare the two cohorts with a common measure of prior attainment, to enable better differentiation between groups for T Levels in the main chapter below we use quintiles based on the 'Attainment 8' score, a score calculated across 8 qualifications including maths and English (which are double weighted).

The T Level Transition Programme

Key Transition Programme findings

- Almost half of learners were '**advised to apply'** for the TLTP and schools/colleges offering the programme were the main source of information.
- Just over **two-fifths of learners reported that they wished to progress onto a T Level** when they started the programme. This had reduced to just over a third at the end of the Transition Programme, and just under a third were not sure.
- Learners' understanding of whether their course **led to a qualification** in their chosen occupation area often did not reflect whether the course actually included a qualification or not.
- Most learners found the amount of teaching and the workload outside of lessons **manageable**. However, learners with SEN and with lower prior academic attainment found the workload (in and outside of lessons) less manageable than their peers.
- There was a **high level of satisfaction with the TLTP** among learners, both overall and with the different elements of the programme.
- Only around **a third of learners had the opportunity to gain work experience**, with Education and Childcare learners being most likely to gain this experience across the Transition Programme sectors. Overall, most students who completed work experience were satisfied with the experience.
- Most learners felt that the TLTP had **helped them 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' to develop** the relevant knowledge, practical skills and understanding of their sector.
- Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a large proportion of learners received a mix of online and in-person teaching over the year, with learners reporting that **a lack of in-person teaching was the greatest barrier to learning**.

This chapter focuses on the T Level Transition Programme (TLTP). The focus is on reasons for choosing the course, aspirations, delivery of the course and its components, students' satisfaction and future plans. This section includes all learners who were recorded in admin data as having enrolled on a TLTP. However, questions added to the survey specifically for TLTP learners were only asked of those who confirmed they had enrolled on a TLTP (333 out of 420 learners).

Choosing the course

TLTP learners were asked if they had been advised to apply for the course, where they had heard about the course and their aspirations upon completing the TLTP.

Awareness of the course

Around two-fifths (43%) of TLTP learners reported that they were 'advised to apply' for the course, for example by a teacher or careers adviser. Similar proportions of learners reported that they were not advised to apply but the course was 'discussed as an option' (29%) or 'chose it without advice' (28%). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 17.

Most TLTP learners (65%) indicated that they had heard about their course 'from a college or school providing the course'. The other main sources of information were: 'teachers' (34%); 'careers advisers' (18%); 'course websites' (15%); and 'friends' (14%). Smaller proportions of TLTP learners gained awareness of the course through: 'social media'; 'local advertising'; and from 'an employer'. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 18.

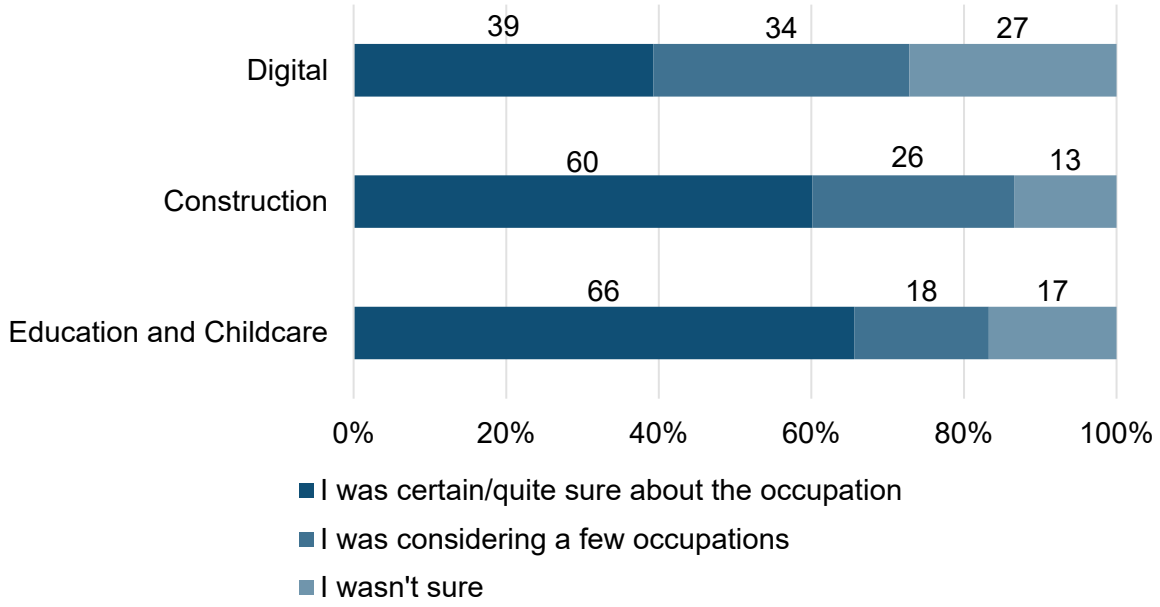
Aspirations

TLTP learners' aspirations at the start of the course varied. The largest proportion (32%) had wished to go onto 'another type of study'.

The main reason learners gave for choosing to study the TLTP was because it 'fitted with the occupational area I wanted to work in'. Around two-thirds (62%) of learners gave this reason, while smaller proportions of learners said they chose the course because it 'provided the qualification(s) and skills for further study', 'for an apprenticeship' and 'for employment'. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 20.

Before starting the TLTP, only a small proportion of learners (24%) were 'certain about the occupation' they wanted to work in eventually (Figure 6**).** Education and Childcare TLTP learners were more likely to be sure about the sector they wanted to work in, while Digital learners were more likely to be 'considering a few occupations'. Equal proportions of Construction students were 'certain about the occupation' and 'considering a few occupations'. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 21.

Figure 6: Transition Programme learners' certainty about the occupation they wanted to work in, by subject (percentages)



Base: All Transition Programme learners. Unweighted: Education and Childcare: 213; Construction: 45 Digital: 171

Just over two-fifths (43%) of learners reported that, before starting the TLTP, they hoped to go onto a T Level afterwards. By attainment, learners with higher prior academic attainment (4 or more GCSEs at grade 4+) were more likely to think this at the start of the Transition Programme (50%) compared to learners with one or no GCSEs (34%). Learners who wished to study at university were also more likely to report hoping to progress onto a T Level after the TLTP (60%) compared to those wanting to move to a paid job (35%). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 22.

Delivery of the course

Schools and colleges were given the option either to embed a qualification into their TLTPs (to deliver the technical component) or to take a non-qualification approach. For this research, we defined qualification-based Transition Programmes as those that included a *technical qualification* (such as a level 2 qualification in IT or childcare). Most TLTPs fell into this category and included 76% of learners who responded to the survey were studying TLTPs that included a technical qualification. The remaining 24% of learners who responded studied non-qualification TLTPs. For this research, non-qualification TLTPs were defined as those that did not include a technical qualification. They might, though, have included other types of qualifications, such as project qualifications or qualifications in things like, food hygiene or paediatric first aid.

We include these categorisations of TLTPs below, when looking at students' views about their TLTP.

Teaching characteristics

Learners on both qualification and non-qualification based courses lacked clarity around whether or not the TLTP they were studying led to a technical qualification in their chosen occupation area. This discrepancy is likely to relate to the point made above that non-qualification courses may still have included qualifications of some type.

Among those who were actually on qualification-based TLTPs, 66% indicated that they thought they would gain a qualification in their chosen occupation area for successfully completing the course. Six per cent thought it would not lead to a qualification and 28% were 'not sure', suggesting a lack of clarity in this group.

Among those on non-qualification-based TLTPs, three-fifths of learners (60%) thought that they would gain a qualification in their chosen occupation area for successfully completing the course. Again, there was a high level of uncertainty amongst learners (32% were 'not sure'). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 25.

Nearly all learners (96%) starting TLTPs in 2020 experienced a mix of online and in-person teaching. Around half (48%) reported that they had been taught 'roughly the same amount online and in-person'. Smaller proportions of learners had been taught mostly online (26%) and mostly in person (22%). Digital (32%) and Construction learners (28%) were more likely to be taught 'entirely' or 'mostly' in-person than Education and Childcare learners (19%) and were less likely to be taught 'entirely' or 'mostly' online (23% of Digital learners and 18% of Construction learners compared to 33% of Education and Childcare learners), but a mix of delivery was common across the subjects. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 23.

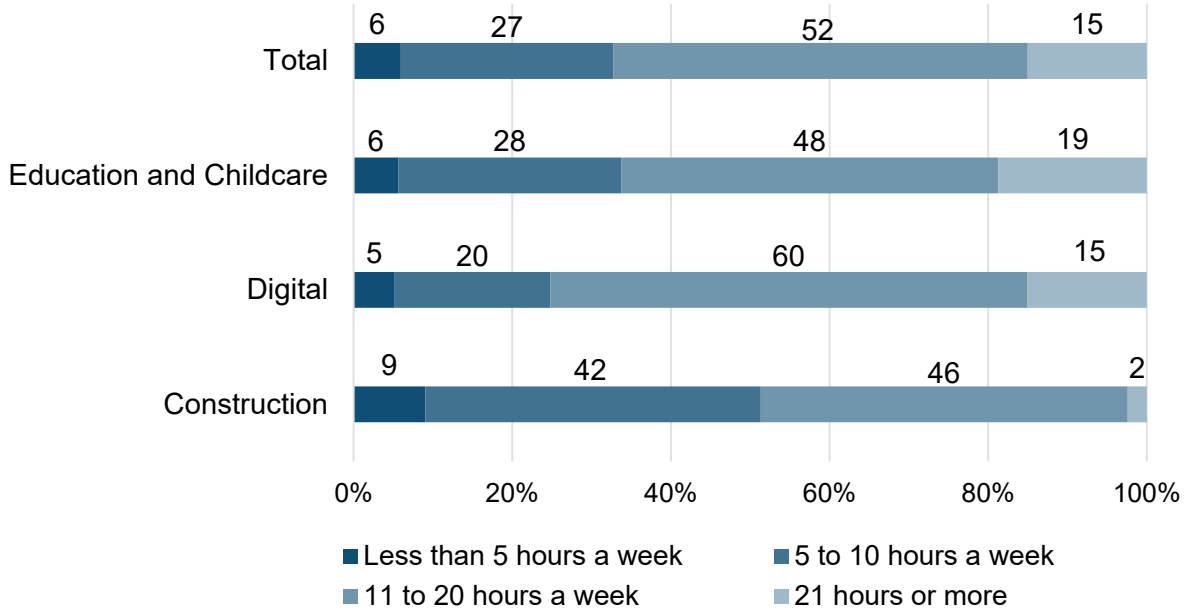
The survey included a question to gauge the approximate amount of teaching the learners received, with the aim of analysing the relationship to other survey responses, such as course satisfaction. It is not possible to know exactly which course activities respondents will have included under the term 'teaching', although respondents were asked to exclude time spent on work experience. It may be that time spent doing supervised employability, enrichment and pastoral activities was not classed as 'teaching'.

Half (52%) of TLTP learners reported receiving 11 to 20 hours a week of teaching, either online or in-person (Figure 7). Across all subjects, this was the most common number of teaching hours, although it was more common for Digital learners (60% compared to 48% for Education and Childcare and 46% for Construction learners). A sizeable minority (15%) reported receiving 21 hours or more, mainly in Education and Childcare and

Digital. Perhaps surprisingly, a third (33%) of TLTP learners reported receiving ten hours teaching or fewer per week. Construction learners were more likely to report receiving a lower number of hours (42% reported five to ten hours per week compared to 28% of Education and Childcare learners and 20% of Digital learners). Across all subjects, small proportions of TLTP learners reported that they had less than five hours a week (6% overall).

Learners on qualification-based TLTPs were more likely to report receiving a higher number of teaching hours, with 18% receiving 21 or more hours compared to 5% of learners on non-qualification-based TLTPs. They were less likely to report receiving a lower numbers of teaching hours, with 28% reporting receiving ten hours or fewer compared to 47% for non-qualification learners. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 24.

Figure 7: Hours of teaching Transition Programme learners usually had each week, by subject (percentages)



Base: All Transition Programme learners. Unweighted: Education and Childcare: 202; Digital: 165; Construction: 43

Almost half (47%) of TLTP learners reported that they were studying GCSE English and a further 8% reported studying Functional Skills. Learners on Digital and Construction TLTPs were more likely to report studying GCSE English than Education and Childcare learners (50% and 56% compared to 41%) (not statistically significant at the 5% level, p=0.104).

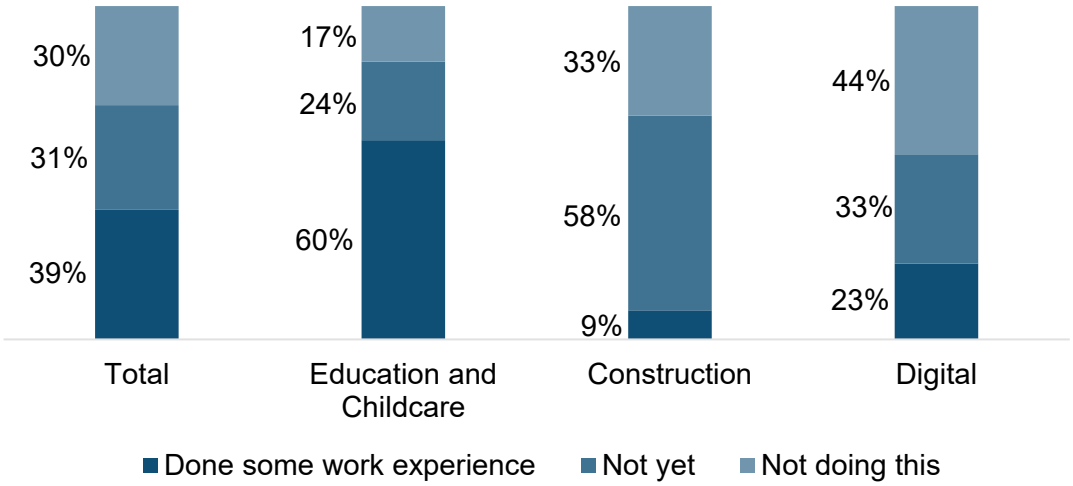
Almost half (46%) of TLTP learners reported that they were studying GCSE maths. A further 12% reported studying maths 'functional skills'. Further details can be found in Appendix Tables 26 and 27.

Work experience

Nearly two-fifths (39%) of TLTP learners who were continuing with the course at the time of the survey reported doing work experience as part of the programme. At the time of the survey, a third (34%) had completed work experience and 4% were doing work experience. This is a relatively low level given the intended content of the course and may reflect the pandemic and associated restrictions.

Education and Childcare TLTP learners were much more likely to gain work experience compared to other subjects (60% had completed or started work experience compared to 9% among Construction and 23% among Digital learners) (Figure 8). Previous research[9] has shown that Education and Childcare learners were more likely to complete work experience due to the existing strong links providers had with childcare settings. In comparison, securing work experience for Digital and Construction learners was more challenging due to a move to home working and social distancing restrictions. Some Education and Childcare qualifications also included a license to practice which required learners to complete a set number of work experience hours to gain the qualification. Learners were more likely to have done work experience where theirs was a qualification-based TLTP (46% compared to 20%). Further details can be found in Table 28.

Figure 8: Whether learner did any work experience on the Transition Programme, by subject



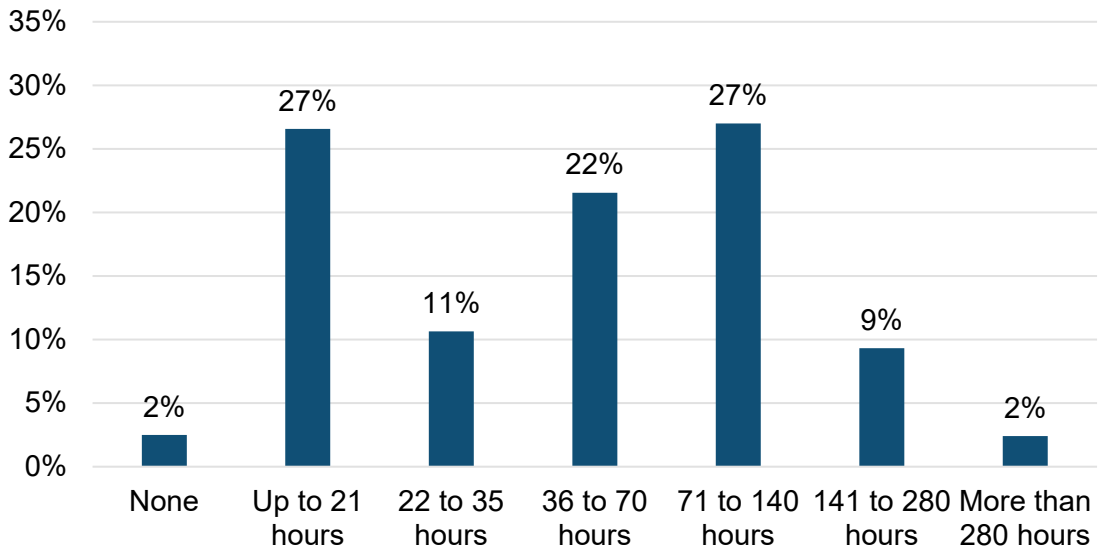
[9] DfE report on research into early delivery of the T Level Transition Programme

Base: Transition Programme learners who were still on the course by the time of the survey. Unweighted: Education: 212; Construction: 44; Digital: 170

The number of work experience hours TLTP learners estimated they had completed varied widely, with **Education and Childcare learners generally gaining more hours of work experience than Digital learners.**

Among TLTP learners who had done some work experience, two-fifths (40%) had done up to 35 hours (the equivalent of a working week) with a further 22% doing up to 70 hours. Over a quarter (27%) had done 71 to 140 hours and 11% had done more than this (Figure 9). Nearly half (46%) of Education and Childcare learners did more than 70 hours compared with a fifth (18%) of Digital learners. Fewer than 30 Construction learners had done work experience, so figures are not reported here. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 29.

Figure 9: Hours of work experience completed by Transition Programme learners



Base: Transition Programme students doing / completed work experience. Unweighted: 158

In addition to work experience, just over two-fifths of learners (43%) reported their course had included contact with employers, such as visits, talks or employer-set projects. There was a suggestion that Digital (49%) and Education and Childcare (42%) learners were more likely than Construction learners (30%) to report this, although this was not significant at the 5% level (p=0.070). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 30.

Workload and challenge

Workload and clarity

The amount of teaching was manageable for most TLTP learners, with 93% describing it as 'very', 'mostly' or 'quite' manageable. There was little variation by prior educational attainment or SEN. However, a minority did struggle with this element, particularly learners taught 'entirely' or 'mostly' online (13% found teaching 'not very' or 'not at all manageable' compared to 5% of those taught 'mostly' or 'entirely in-person'). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 31.

More TLTP learners struggled with the work they had to do *outside* of taught lessons than the work *in* lessons, although the majority (85%) still reported that they found it manageable. Learners with SEN were more likely to find the workload outside of lessons to be 'not very' or 'not at all manageable' (22% compared to 12% of learners without SEN). Similarly, learners who had lower prior academic attainment also found it less manageable (20% of those with one or no GCSEs at grade 4+ and 18% of those with two or three GCSEs, compared to 10% of those with four or more GCSEs), although this was not statistically significant at the 5% level (p=0.080). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 32.

Among the small group who found the work outside taught lessons 'not at all manageable', the main reason given was that 'the work set was unclear' (44%). Other reasons given included that there was 'not enough support from teacher/tutor' (39%), there was 'too much work given' (37%), because of 'other commitments outside the course' (25%) and because 'the work was too hard' (18%). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 33.

The majority of TLTP learners (74%) were clear from the start what they needed to do to successfully complete the course. A slightly larger proportion of learners who were certain about their future occupation reported that they were clear of what they needed to achieve to complete the course (84% of those who were certain about their occupation compared to 62% of those who were not sure). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 34.

Most TLTP learners (87%) felt that the length of the course was 'about right'. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 35.

Barriers to learning

Most TLTP learners (75%) reported that their school or college had adapted the course to meet their personal needs. Adaptations were slightly more likely for Education and Childcare learners (80% reporting the course was adapted 'a great deal'

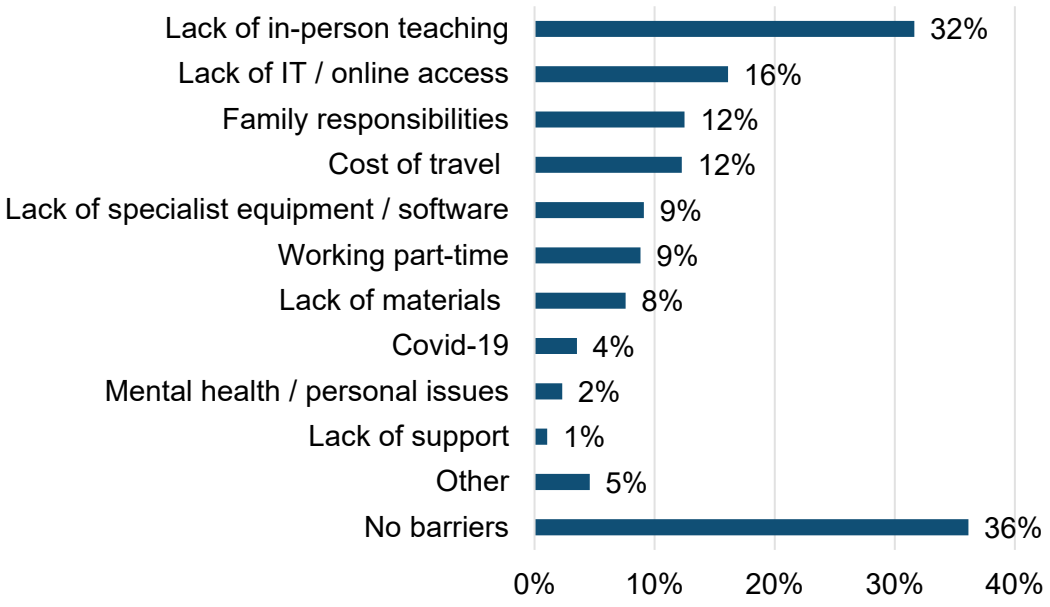
or ‘to some extent’ compared to 73% of Digital and 62% of Construction learners). Differences between those with and without SEN were not statistically significant. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 36.

Although around one-third (36%) of learners reported experiencing ‘no barriers’ to learning**,** almost a further third (32%) of learners reported ‘a lack of in-person teaching’ as a barrier to learning**.** Potentially relatedly, a ‘lack of reliable IT or online access’ was the next most common barrier (16%) for TLTP learners overall.

Some barriers were more likely to apply to particular subjects. A ‘lack of specialist equipment or software for course’ was more commonly mentioned for Digital learners (15% compared to 7% of Education and Childcare and 2% of Construction learners).

Other barriers related to things outside the delivery of courses themselves. It was noticeable that female learners were more likely to mention ‘family responsibilities’ as a barrier to learning than male learners (18% compared to 8%). Those learners who had received free school meals at some point in recent years were more likely to mention the ‘cost of travel to my course’ (17% compared to 9%). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 37.

Figure 10: Barriers to learning during the course



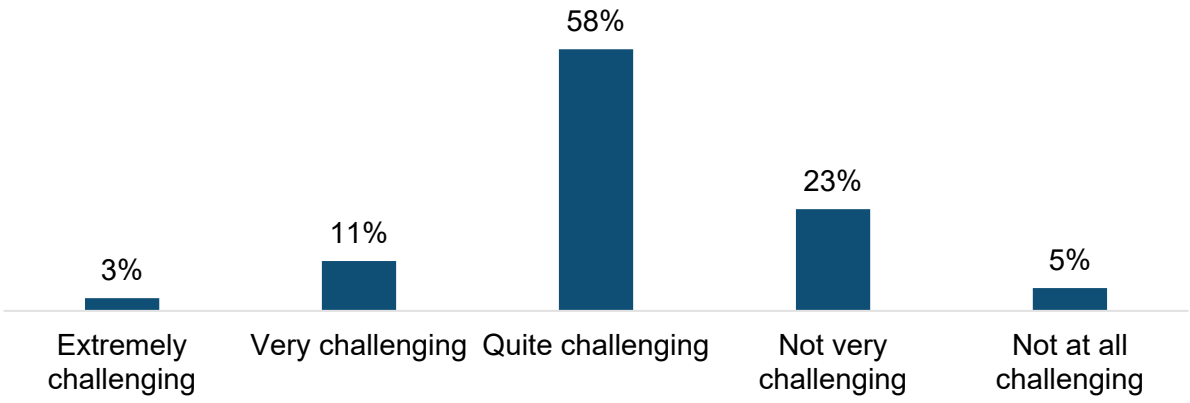
Base: All Transition Programme learners. Unweighted: 427

How challenging learners found Transition Programmes

The majority (58%) of TLTP learners reported that their course had been 'quite challenging'. A further 14% described it as being 'very' or 'extremely' challenging. Conversely, over a quarter (28%) described their course as 'not very' or 'not at all challenging' (Figure 11).

Those who had been taught entirely/mainly online were more likely to have found the course 'very' or 'extremely challenging' (22%) compared to learners who had been taught roughly the same online and in-person and mostly/entirely in-person (11%). There was also some suggestion that those with lower attainment were more likely to have found it challenging, but differences here and in relation to SEN, subject or whether the course led to a qualification were not statistically significant.

Figure 11: How challenging Transition Programme learners found their course



Base: All Transition Programme learners. Unweighted: 412

Further details can be found in Appendix Table 38.

Satisfaction with the course

Overall satisfaction

Three-quarters (77%) of TLTP learners were either 'very' or 'quite satisfied' with the course overall. A small proportion (7%) were dissatisfied.

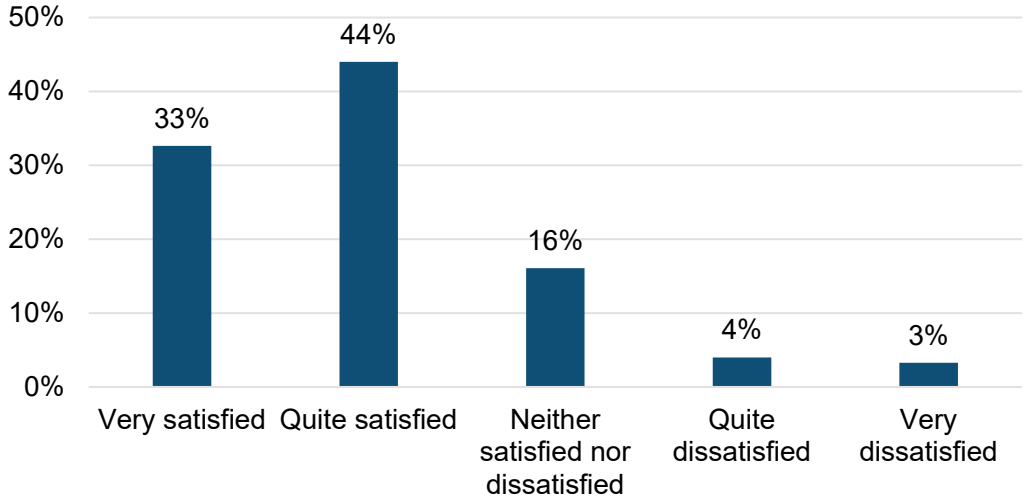
Dissatisfaction was more likely amongst learners who found the course 'extremely'/'very challenging' (17%) and 'not very'/'not at all challenging' (13%), compared to learners who found the course 'quite challenging' (3%). It was also noticeable that those who were

clear at the start of the course about the occupation they wanted to enter were more likely to be ‘very’ satisfied (49% compared to 23% of those who were not sure).

Levels of satisfaction were similar across the subjects of study and whether or not the course included a qualification. There was also little variation by level of attainment or whether learners had SEN.

Those who stated they left the course early, who accounted for 9% of TLTP starters, were considerably less likely to be satisfied than those who had carried on (37% compared to 81%).

Figure 12: Overall satisfaction with the Transition Programme



Base: All Transition Programme learners. Unweighted: 429

Drivers of overall satisfaction

Participants were asked about their satisfaction with a range of factors relating to the delivery of their course (Table 1). There were relatively high levels of satisfaction with each of these elements, and TLTP learners expressed particularly high satisfaction (‘very’ or ‘quite satisfied’) with ‘teachers’ knowledge and expertise’ (89%) and with the ‘standard of classroom teaching’ (84%).

Overall, learners were less satisfied with ‘the careers advice provided’ (67%) and the ‘level of employer contact on the course’ (54%). This was associated with whether or not a work experience placement had been part of the course (see page 27).

Also in Table 1 is a measure of each elements’ ‘importance’ in relation to overall satisfaction, provided by a correlation (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient). This shows that the elements of course delivery most strongly associated with overall

satisfaction were ‘the skills it covered’ and ‘the standard of classroom teaching’, both areas of relatively high satisfaction. The lowest area of satisfaction was with the ‘level of employer contact’, but this was found to be more weakly associated with overall satisfaction, at least in the context of the restrictions during the pandemic.

Table 1: Satisfaction with aspects of the course and their correlation with overall satisfaction

Drivers of overall satisfaction	% Very or quite satisfied	Correlation with overall satisfaction
Teachers knowledge and expertise	89%	0.46
The standard of classroom teaching	84%	0.61
The teaching of maths	80%	0.25
Equipment, software and resources available	80%	0.47
The support you received from tutors	79%	0.52
The teaching of English	78%	0.43
The skills it covered for your chosen occupation / subject area	77%	0.63
Amount of course content related to your chosen subject area	76%	0.58
The way students are assessed on the course	76%	0.55
Course organisation and management	71%	0.56
The standard of the practical hands-on work	70%	0.47
The careers advice provided	67%	0.51
The level of employer contact in the course	54%	0.40

Base: All Transition Programme learners (except K and M – those studying English/maths). Unweighted: 412 minimum (except K (170) and M 182))
Note: analysis uses Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

Satisfaction with work experience

Satisfaction levels

The majority (82%) of the TLTP learners who did work experience expressed satisfaction with this element and reported that their work experience had 'met expectations in terms of the content and skills development' (92%) (Appendix Table 53 and 54).

A high proportion of learners agreed that the work experience was 'a good challenge' for them (86%) and that they 'felt supported by the employer during the placement' (84%) (Table 2). Smaller proportions of learners agreed that 'the placement came at the right point in the course' (60%). This finding may be related to Covid-19 which meant some schools/colleges had to make adaptations to the timing of work experience. In some cases, this meant that, rather than learners completing their work experience earlier in the year or one day a week, it was delayed and delivered as a block placement at the end of the course.[10]

Drivers of satisfaction with work experience

As with overall satisfaction above, correlation analysis was also conducted to explore the strength of association of each work placement satisfaction measure with overall satisfaction with the work placement. Table 2 shows the strongest correlation between satisfaction with 'the placement directly related to my course of study' and 'I felt supported by the employer during the placement' with overall satisfaction with the placement. The lowest correlations with overall satisfaction with the placement was 'the placement came at the right time in my course', which, as highlighted above, was often related to Covid-19. Right point in course' had the lowest satisfaction, but also the lowest correlation of the items measured.

Table 2: Agreement levels with statements about work experience and correlation with satisfaction with the placement

Drivers of satisfaction with placement	% Strongly agree or Agree	Correlation with placement satisfaction
The placement was a good challenge for me	86%	0.51
I felt supported by the employer during the placement	84%	0.53

[10] DfE report on research into early delivery of the T Level Transition Programme

Drivers of satisfaction with placement	% Strongly agree or Agree	Correlation with placement satisfaction
The placement directly related to my course of study	82%	0.54
I felt supported by the college / school during the placement	80%	0.50
I was fully prepared for my placement	74%	0.49
The placement came at the right point in the course	60%	0.43

Base: Transition Programme learners who did a placement. Unweighted: 164

Course outcomes

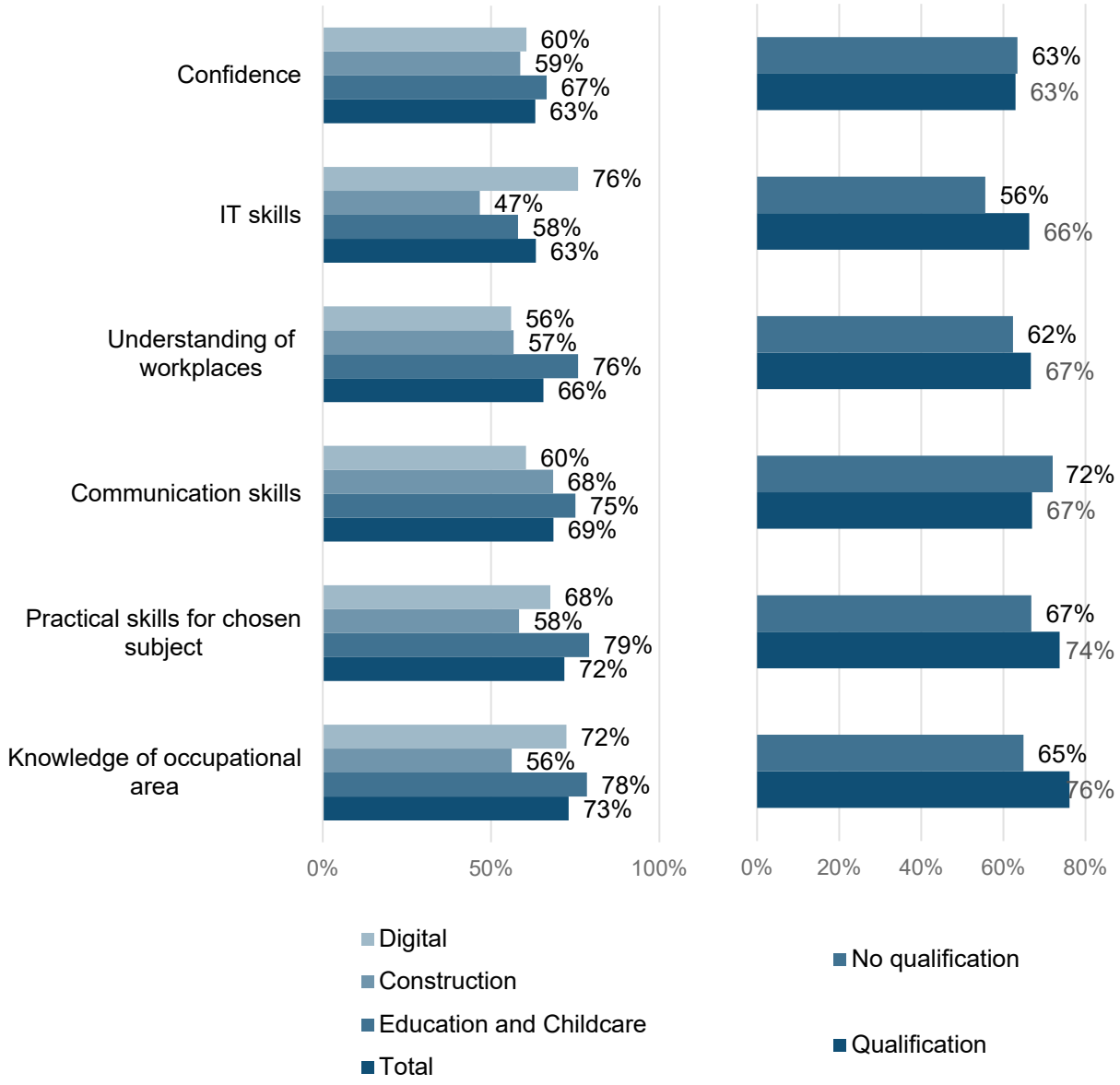
TLTP learners reported that taking the course had helped them to develop the relevant knowledge, practical skills and understanding for their chosen sector.

Figure 13 and Figure 14 provide the percentage of learners who reported the course had helped them 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' in relation to a selection of outcomes for the TLTP. The majority (73%) of learners reported that the TLTP had helped 'a great deal'/'quite a bit' to develop their 'knowledge of their chosen occupational area' and to develop the 'practical skills needed for my chosen subject' (72%). Around two-thirds reported that the course helped them 'a great deal'/'quite a bit' in relation to 'communication skills', 'confidence' and 'understanding of how work places operate'.

There are areas where larger proportions of learners reported that they course had *not* been helpful. Of the learners who stated that they were on a TLTP course in the survey, 19% said the course had helped 'very little' or 'not at all' to develop 'confidence in the workplace', and 17% said the course had helped 'very little' or 'not at all' to develop 'knowledge of T Levels in my chosen area'.

Education and Childcare TLTP learners were more likely than other subjects to have been helped in relation to the knowledge, skills and understanding they had developed. Higher proportions on Education and Childcare and Digital programmes reported that the programme had helped them to develop: 'knowledge of the occupational area' and 'practical', 'IT' and 'communication' skills. Likewise, of those who who stated that they were on a TLTP course in the survey, Education and Childcare and Digital learners were more likely to report that the programme had helped them to develop 'knowledge of T Levels' and 'study skills' than those studying Construction. As might be expected, Digital learners were more likely to report being helped in relation to 'IT skills'.

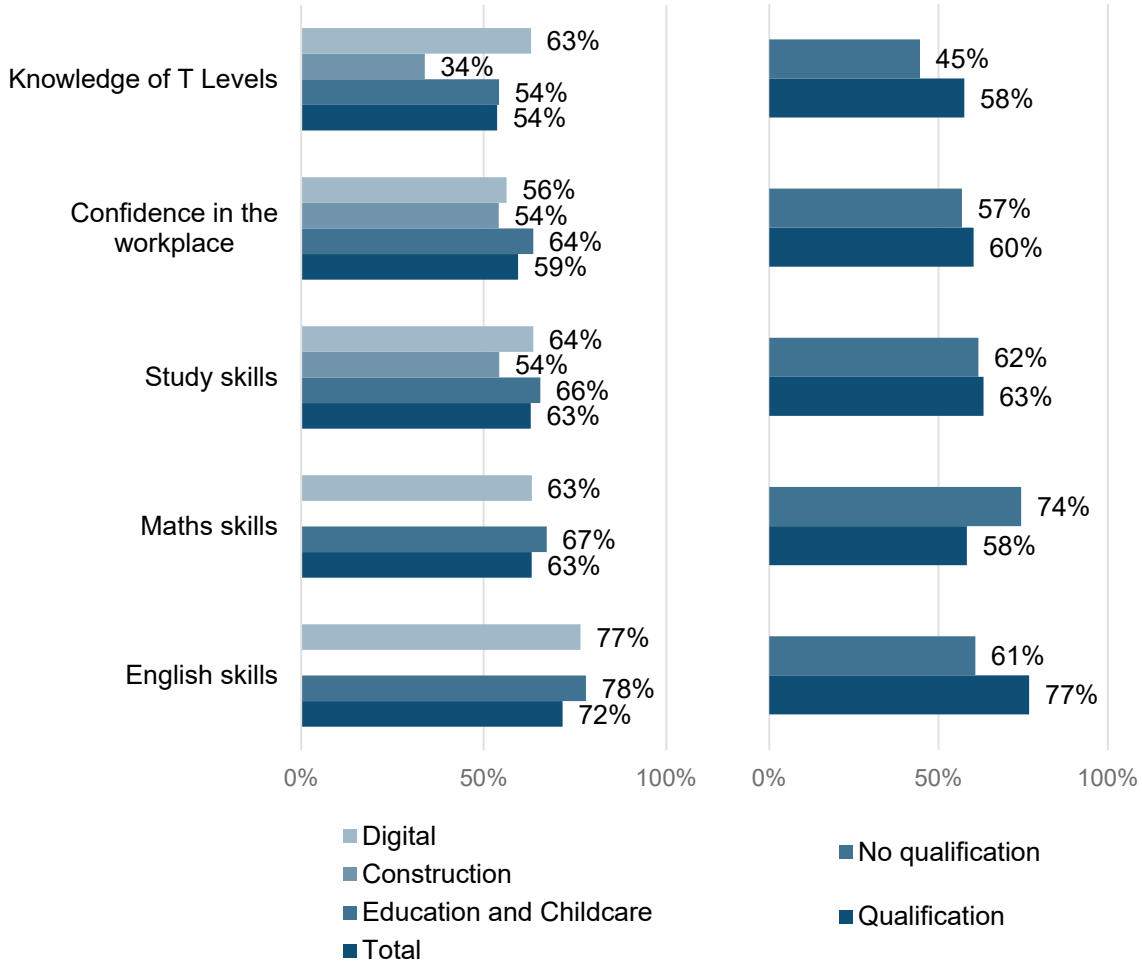
Figure 13: Percentage of learners helped 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' in TLTP outcomes, by subject and whether course led to qualification



Base: All TLTP learners. Unweighted: Total: 427; Education and Childcare: 212; Construction: 44; Digital: 171; Qualification: 321; No qualification: 100

Learners on qualification programmes tended to be a little more positive about the knowledge, skills and understanding they had developed than those on non-qualification programmes. Higher proportions of learners on qualification programmes reported that the programme had helped them to develop their 'knowledge of the occupational area'; 'knowledge of T Levels'; 'IT' and 'English skills'.

Figure 14: Percentage of learners helped 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' in Transition Programme-specific outcomes, by subject and whether course led to qualification



Base: TLTP learners identifying themselves as being on this course (except English (total=185) and maths (total=200) – those doing these elements). Unweighted: Total: 337; Education and Childcare: 171; Construction: 44; Digital: 122; Qualification: 245; No qualification: 91

*Base for English and maths skills for Construction learners too small to report (less than 30 cases).

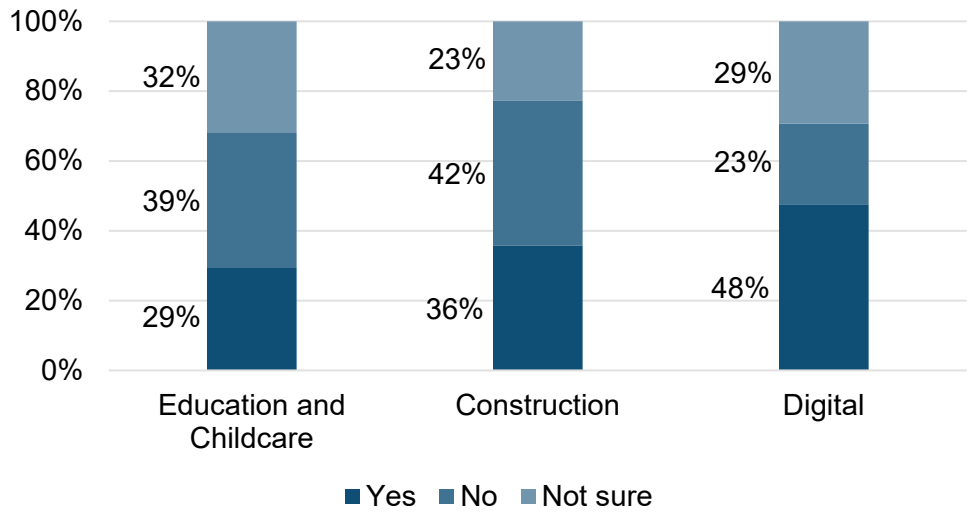
Further details can be found in Appendix Tables 61 to 71.

Next steps

Just over a third (37%) of TLTP learners who stated in the survey that they were on a TLTP course indicated that they planned to continue to a T Level at the end of the TLTP. Around a third (34%) had decided not to, leaving just under a third (29%) who were not sure whether they would or not.[11]

Digital learners were more likely to be intending to move to a T Level than other learners (48% compared to 36% of Construction and 29% of Education and Childcare learners). Learners with higher prior academic attainment (44%, p=0.061) were also more likely to report that they planned to progress onto a T Level. Larger proportions of learners who were satisfied with the course, compared to learners who were less satisfied, planned to continue onto a T Level (43% compared to 16%).

Figure 15: Whether learners intend to progress to a T Level, by subject



Base: Learners who knew they were on a Transition Programme. Unweighted: Education: 171; Construction: 44; Digital: 122

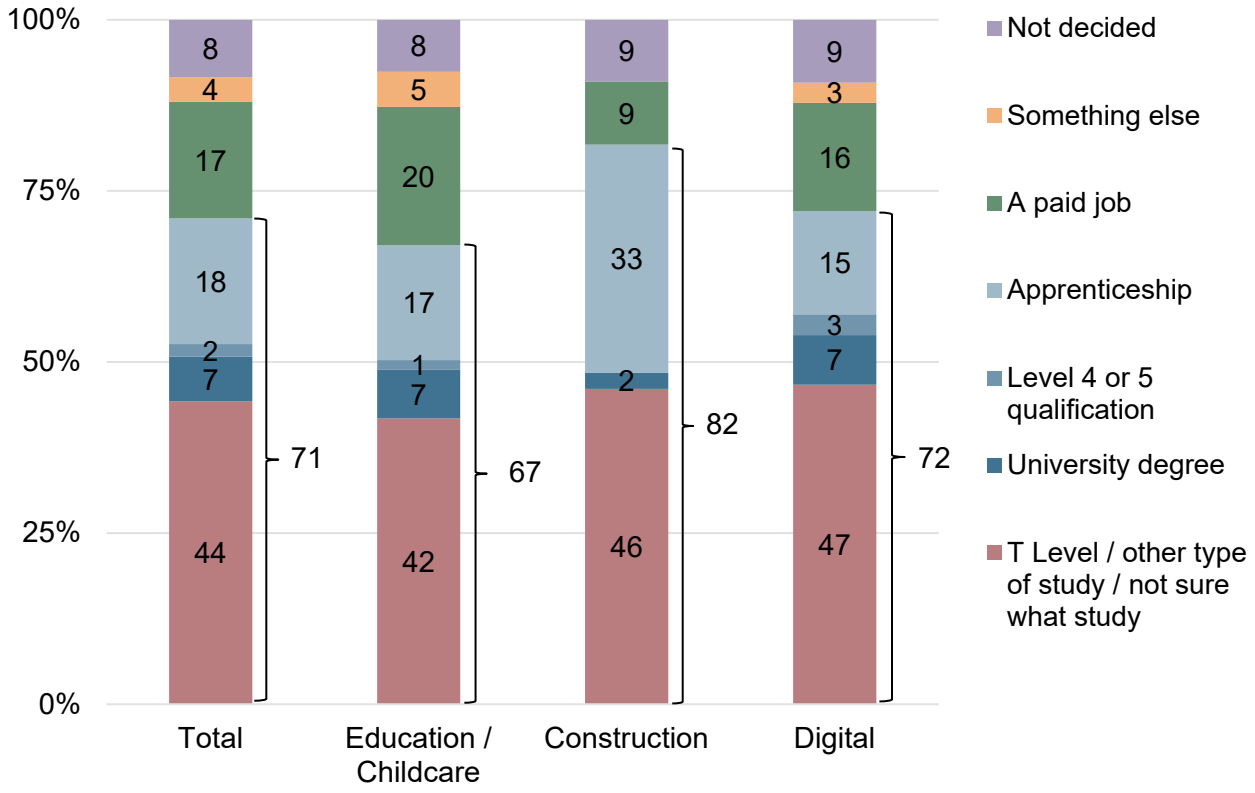
Further details can be found in Appendix Table 72.

For those who were not planning on continuing to a T Level, the survey questions first asked whether they planned to do further study of any kind and if so, the type of study (with one response selected). Those not planning to do further study were then asked for what else they planned to do (again, a single response). The chart brings responses to these questions together to provide the picture of next steps for all learners.

[11] This includes those who left the TLTP early. Excluding this group (who made up 10% of the total), 41% planned to go on to a T Level and 31% did not, the remaining 28% being unsure.

For 71% of those on the TLTP the next step in the year after the course was further study of some kind. Apart from going on to a T Level in the year after the TLTP[12], the next most common plans were taking an apprenticeship (18%). Nearly a fifth (17%) intended to get a paid job (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Next steps in year after Transition Programme, by subject (percentages)



Base: All students enrolled in a Transition Programme
Unweighted: Total: 426; Education and Childcare: 212; Construction: 43; Digital: 171

Further details can be found in Appendix Table 74.

Of those who were not intending to go on to a T Level, just over half (54%) of TLTP learners reported that they were planning to 'work or study in the same field' as their course. A higher proportion of Digital learners were 'not decided' (31%), compared to Education and Childcare learners (20%) (not significant at the 5% level, p=0.100). This finding relates to the earlier findings on learners' certainty about the occupation they wanted to work in, which showed that Digital learners were less likely to be sure,

[12] Due to routing in the questionnaire, T Levels and 'other' types of study are combined in the chart.

compared to Education and Childcare learners. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 75.

Most TLTP learners (71%) agreed that they felt supported by their school or college in deciding their next step.

Further details can be found in Appendix Table 76.

T Levels

This chapter focuses on T Levels. It looks at reasons for choosing the course, aspirations, delivery of the course and its components, students' satisfaction and future plans.

Key T Level findings

- Learners' most common **reason for choosing their course** was because it fitted with the occupational area in which they wanted to work.
- Most had heard about their programme from a school or college providing T Levels (e.g. website, prospectus, open day).
- **Satisfaction was high** with the course overall and with most components of the course. The main drivers of satisfaction were the amount of course content related to the chosen subject area, course organisation and management, the standard of classroom teaching, and skills covered for learners' chosen occupational area.
- **Most found the workload to be manageable**, including the amount of teaching on the course and work done outside taught lessons. It was less manageable for learners who had been taught mainly online, had lower academic prior attainment, were eligible for FSM and had SEND.
- Where students struggled to manage workload outside classes, the main reasons were the amount of work, the clarity of work being set and insufficient support from teachers and tutors.
- **Lack of in-person teaching was the main barrier to learning**. This was reported more by Education and Childcare and Construction than Digital learners. Around a quarter said that they had experienced no barriers to learning.
- Most learners were satisfied with their **industry placement** and felt it met their expectations in terms of content and skills development. Feeling supported by the employer during placement was the main driver of satisfaction.
- Most learners who did an **employer-set project**, were satisfied with it. Education and Childcare T Level learners had the highest level of satisfaction.
- T Levels had been **challenging** for most learners. Those taught mainly online were more likely to find it 'very challenging'.
- T Levels **helped most learners to develop** relevant knowledge of their occupational area, practical skills, workplace understanding, communication skills, IT skills and their confidence.
- The three main **destinations** learners were planning to take after completing their course were a university degree (a third), a paid job (a quarter) and an apprenticeship (a fifth). The majority were planning to study or work in the same field as their T Level course.
- Most learners said they felt **supported** by their school/college in deciding the next steps after completing their T Level.

Choosing the course

T Level learners were asked to recall the process by which they found out about the course and their reasons for choosing it against the alternatives.

Awareness of the course

The majority (70%) of T Level learners indicated that they had heard about their course 'from a college or school providing the course' (their website, prospectus, open day etc.). The other sources of information identified were: 'teachers at their school' (27%), 'careers advisers' (16%), 'social media' (14%), 'friends' (10%) and 'course websites' (9%). Smaller proportions of T Level learners gained awareness of the course through 'local advertising' and from 'an employer'. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 77.

T Level learner aspirations

Learners were asked to think back to when they were choosing the course and what they had originally wanted to do after completing the T Level, selecting one survey response option. **Around two-fifths (41%) of learners reported that they had primarily aspired to go on to 'study at university' after completing the T Level.**

Just over a quarter (27%) said that they had wanted to get 'a paid job' after the course finished. Smaller proportions reported that they had wanted to do 'another type of study' (7%) or 'something else' (2%). Nearly a quarter (23%) of learners had not been sure what they wanted to do after the end of the course.

Learners taking a Digital T Level were least likely to indicate an original aspiration to go to university (34% compared to 46% of Education and Childcare) but most likely to indicate an original aspiration to take up another type of study (12% compared to 4%). Getting 'a paid job' was more likely to be the original aspiration of those learners with lower academic prior attainment (35% of the lowest quintile compared to 19% of the highest)13 and for learners eligible for FSM (32% compared to 25%). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 78.

The main reason T Level learners gave for choosing their course was that it 'fitted with the occupational area they wanted to work in' (64%). Learners could give more than one response with over half (52%) saying that they chose the course because it 'offered the right mix of classroom learning and practical study', because it 'provided qualifications and skills for employment' (45%), and because it 'provided qualifications

[13] As noted in the first chapter, academic prior attainment quintiles are based on the T Level population's GCSE Attainment 8 score which takes account of eight qualifications including English and mathematics which are double-weighted.

and skills for further study' (40%). Learners in the three T Level subject areas gave similar responses. The exceptions were Construction T Level learners who were less likely to report 'the right mix of classroom learning and practical study' as the reason for choosing their course (40%), and Digital T Level learners who were more likely to cite 'qualifications and skills for employment' as the reason for choosing their course (51%) and less likely to cite 'fitted with the occupational area I wanted to work in' (57%). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 79.

T Level learners were reasonably assured before starting the course about the type of occupation they wanted to work in eventually. Around three-fifths (61%) were 'certain' or 'quite sure' about the occupation, while over a quarter (28%) said they were 'considering a few occupations'. A larger proportion of Education and Childcare learners (69%) compared to learners on Digital (53%) and Construction (55%) T Levels were 'certain' or 'quite sure' 'about the occupation' they wanted to work in. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 80.

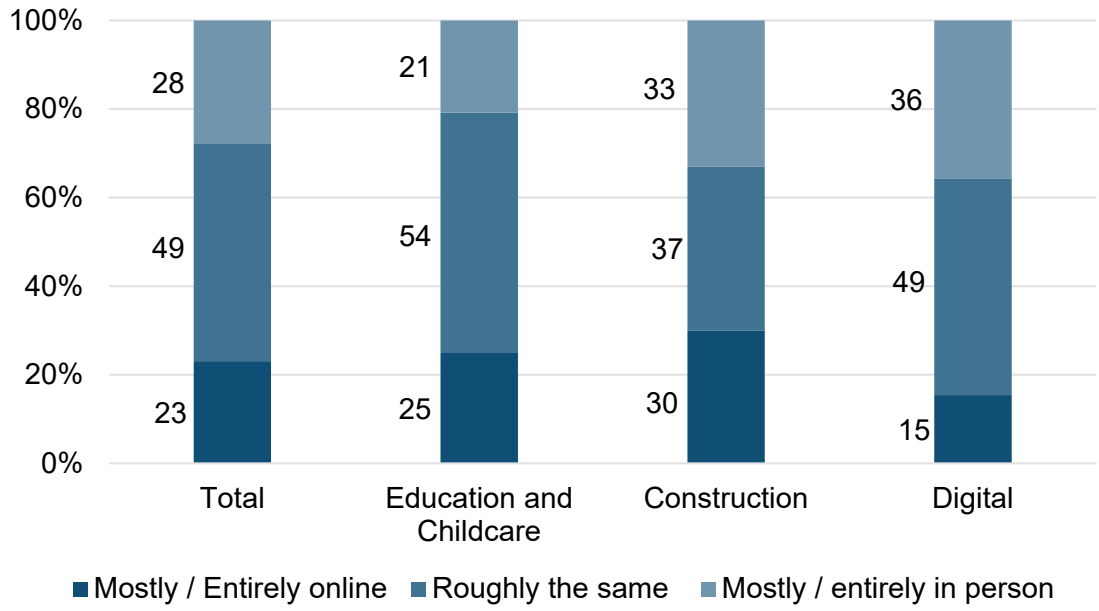
Alternatives to a T Level

Learners were asked if they had not chosen to do the course what they thought they would have most likely done instead, selecting one survey response option. Around a third (32%) of T Level learners indicated that, if they had not chosen to take a T Level, they would most likely have taken 'A levels'. A quarter said that they would have taken 'a different kind of technical or vocational qualification' and a similar proportion (22%) said they would have opted for 'an apprenticeship'. There was variation between learners by subject, with Digital T Level learners being more likely to mention A levels as the alternative (43% compared to 28% of Education and Childcare and 27% of Construction learners). The most common alternative for learners taking the Construction T Level was 'an apprenticeship' (35%). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 81.

Delivery of the course

The Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the way T Level learners were taught in the 2020 to 2021 academic year, with around half (49%) reporting that they had been taught 'roughly the same amount online and in-person' since they started the course in September 2020. Just over a quarter (28%) said that they had been taught 'entirely' or 'mostly in-person', and a smaller proportion (23%) said that they had been taught 'entirely' or 'mostly online'. Digital learners were somewhat more likely than Education and Childcare learners to be taught 'mostly' or 'entirely in person' (36% compared to 21%) (Figure 17).

Figure 17: Classroom teaching delivery, by subject (percentages)



Base: All T Level learners. Unweighted: Education and Childcare: 401; Construction: 136 Digital: 241

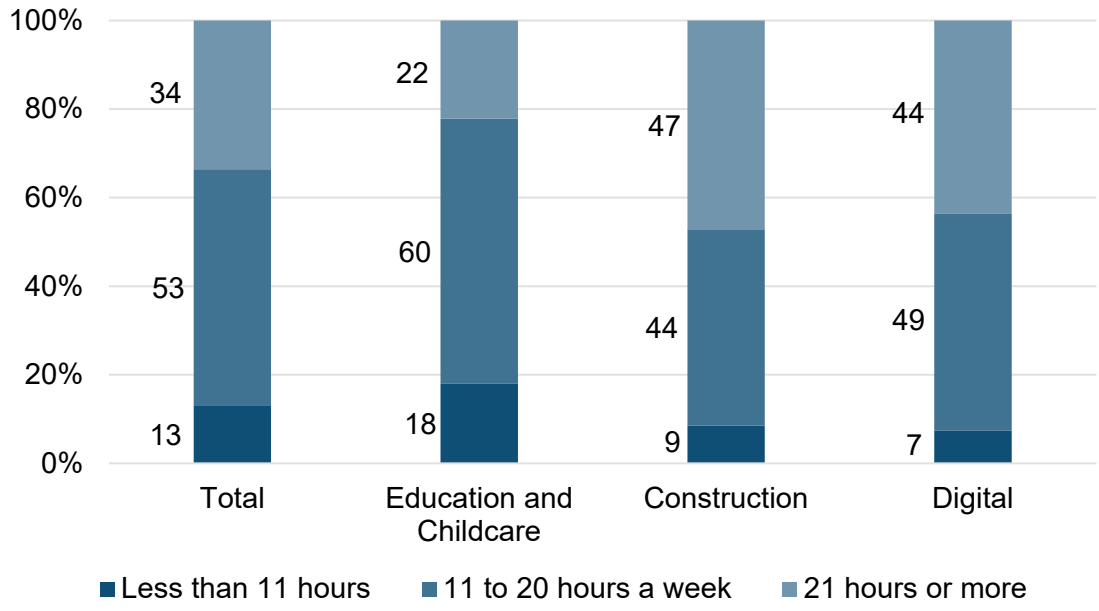
Teaching characteristics

There was a relatively wide variation in the number of hours of teaching each week reported by T Level learners. Half (53%) reported receiving 11 to 20 hours each week (either online or in-person, not including an industry placement or any other type of work experience), with a further 29% reporting receiving 21 to 30 hours. A small group (4%) reported receiving more than 30 hours, while 13% reported receiving ten hours or fewer.

There was some variation by subject, with Construction and Digital learners receiving more teaching on average compared with Education and Childcare learners. (47% and 44% respectively reported receiving 21 or more hours of teaching per week compared to 22% of Education and Childcare learners) (

Figure 18). This difference may relate to the varying levels of industry placements between the subjects (see below) and the fact that fewer guided learning hours are required in the course for Education and Childcare.

Figure 18: Hours of teaching each week, by subject



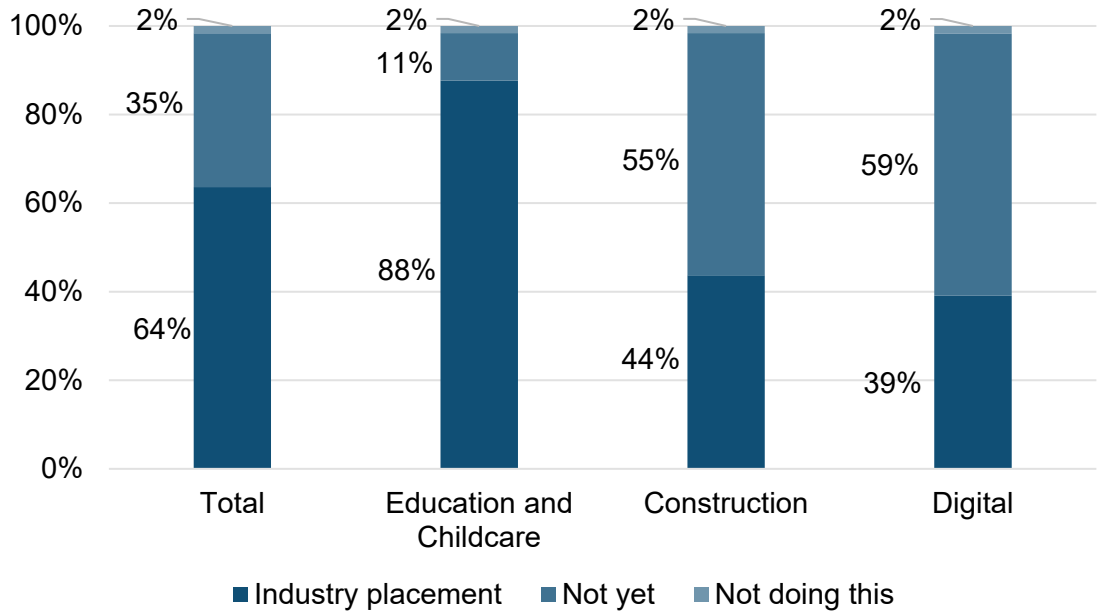
Base: All T Level learners. Unweighted: Education and Childcare: 411; Construction: 138 Digital: 244

Industry placement

Around two-thirds (64%) of T Level learners who were still on the course at the time of the survey reported that they were doing or had done an industry placement during the first year of their course. A further third (35%) indicated that they had 'not yet' started this course component, with 2% not expecting to do so. Industry placements are expected to continue into the second year of the course and for some learners may be delivered entirely in that year.

During the first year of their course, Education and Childcare T Level learners were considerably more likely to report having started an industry placement compared to other subjects (88% compared to 44% of Construction and 39% of Digital learners) (Figure 19). At least in part, this is likely to reflect the requirement for substantially longer industry placements for the Education and Childcare T Level. However, given we see a similar pattern across subject areas for the Transition Programme, it is possible that these differences also reflect the existing strong links that providers had with childcare settings and the additional difficulty for providers seeking placements among sectors affected more acutely by the pandemic.

Figure 19: Whether learner did an industry placement on the T Level, by subject



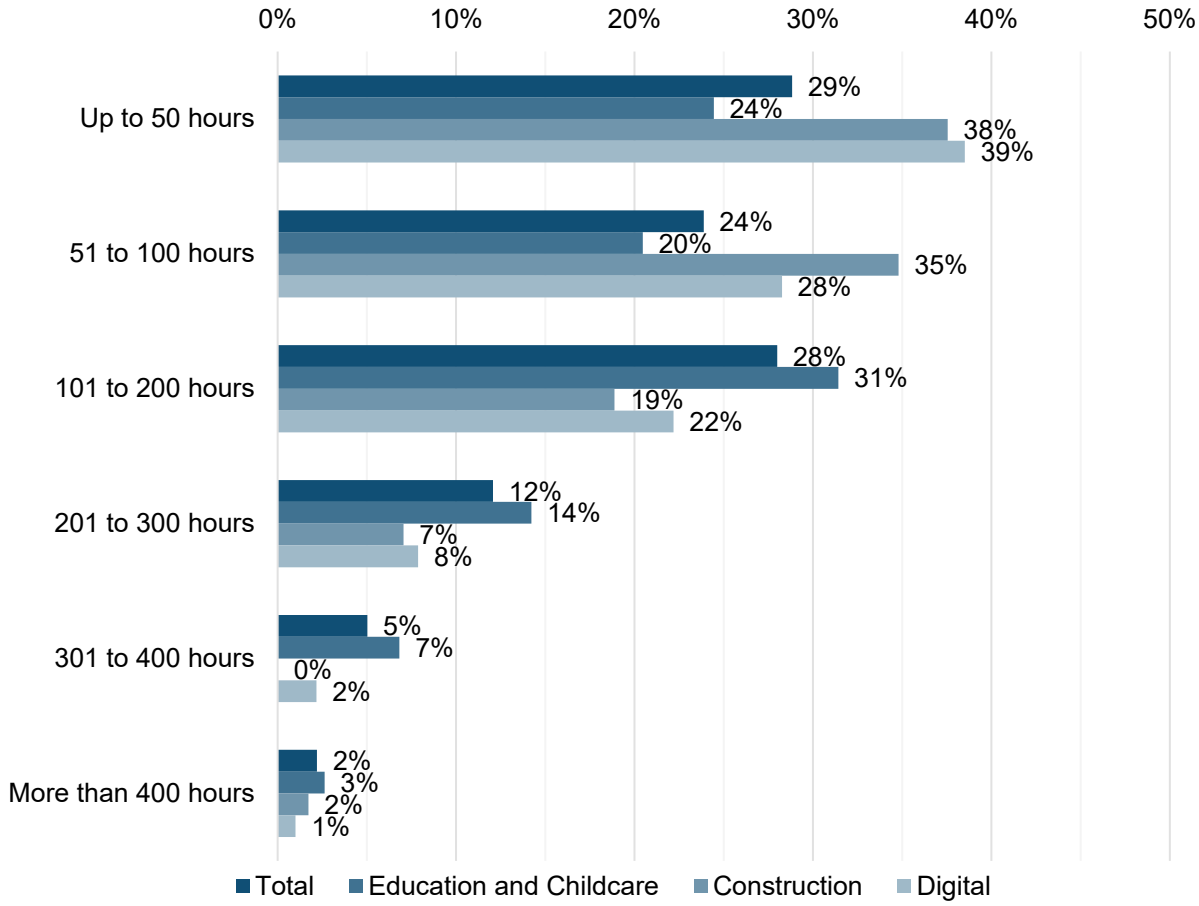
Base: T Level learners who were still on the course at the time of the survey.
Unweighted: Education and Childcare: 372; Construction: 130; Digital: 237

Further details can be found in Appendix Table 84.

The number of industry placement hours T Level learners completed varied, both overall and by subject, with Education and Childcare learners completing more hours on placements than Construction and Digital learners (Figure 20).

Of those having started an industry placement, similar proportions of learners said that they had done up to 50 hours (29%), 51 to 100 hours (24%) and 101 to 200 hours (28%). Nearly a fifth (19%) had completed over 200 hours. A larger proportion (24%) of Education and Childcare T Level learners than learners taking Construction (9%) and Digital (11%) T Level courses indicated that they had undertaken over 200 hours of their industry placement during this first year of their two-year course.

Figure 20: Industry placement hours for T Levels



Base: T Level learners who did an industry placement. Unweighted: Education & Childcare: 337; Construction: 58; Digital: 91

Employer-set project

Four-fifths (78%) of T Level learners reported that they had completed or were currently doing an employer-set project[14]. One-fifth (22%) of learners said that they had not yet started doing a project. While just over four-fifths of Education and Childcare learners (83%) and Digital learners (81%) reported doing an employer-set project, only

[14] The employer-set project (ESP) is a formally assessed component of the programme. T Level learners were asked "Have you done an employer-set project as part of the course?" It is possible that in answering this question learners referred to practice projects as opposed to the formally assessed ESP.

three-fifths of Construction learners (63%) had done so. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 110.

Workload and challenges

Workload

The amount of teaching delivered as part of T Levels was manageable for most T Level learners, with 93% indicating that they had found it to be 'very', 'mostly' or 'quite manageable'.

While only a small group found the amount of teaching to be 'not very' (6%) or 'not at all manageable' (1%), this was slightly higher among learners who had been taught 'entirely' or 'mostly online' (12%). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 86.

The majority (90%) of T Level learners also reported that they found the work undertaken outside of taught lessons to be 'very', 'mostly' or 'quite manageable'. Those with lower prior attainment were more likely to find work outside lessons to be 'not very' or 'not at all manageable' (15% among the lowest attaining quintile compared to 5% among the highest).Further details can be found in Appendix Table 87.

For the small group who did not find the work outside lessons manageable, the main reasons learners gave were 'too much work given' (50%), 'the work set was unclear' (49%) and there was 'not enough support from teachers or tutors' (42%). Further details can be found in Appendix Table 88.

Barriers to learning

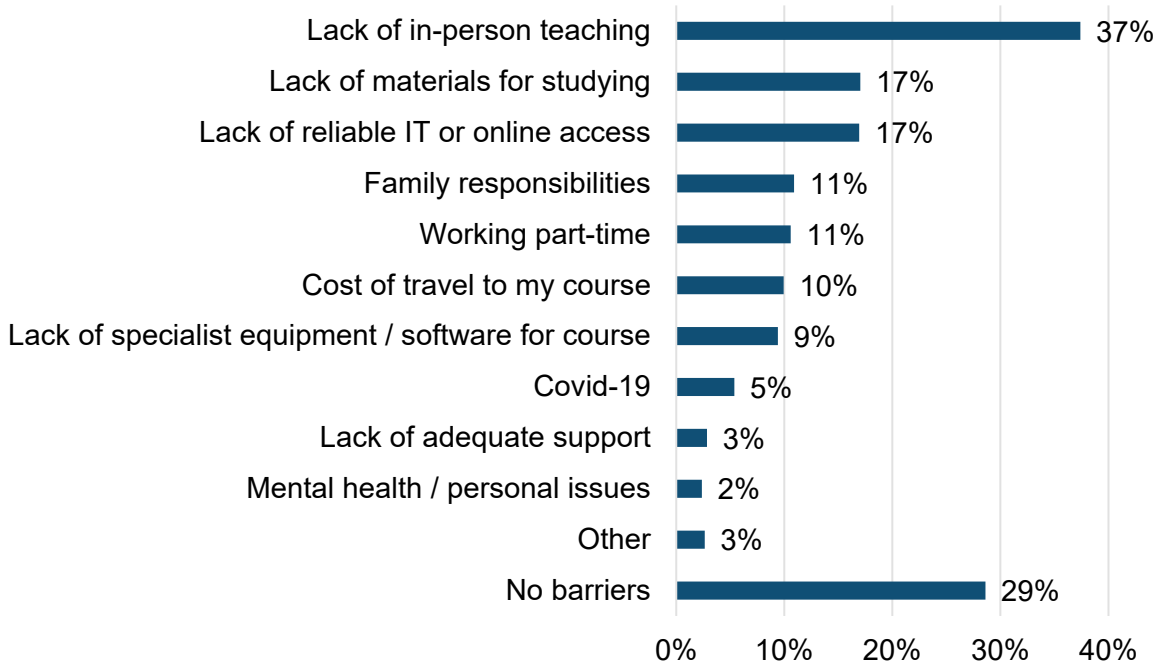
'Lack of in-person teaching' was the main barrier to learning, with nearly two-fifths (37%) of T Level learners identifying this (Figure 21). The other barriers to learning were **'**lack of reliable IT or online access' and 'lack of material for studying', each identified by 17% of T Level learners.

As with the Transition Programme, some barriers were more likely to apply to particular subjects. A larger proportion of Education and Childcare T Level learners (41%) than those taking Construction (38%) and Digital (31%) T Level courses cited 'lack of in-person teaching' as the main barrier. A 'lack of specialist equipment or software for course' was more commonly mentioned for Digital learners (14% compared to 6% of Education and Childcare learners).

Other barriers related to things outside the delivery of courses themselves. It was noticeable that female learners were more likely to mention 'family responsibilities' as a barrier to learning than male learners (15% compared to 6%).

Just over a quarter (29%) of T Level learners reported that they had experienced ‘no barriers’ to learning.

Figure 21: Barriers to learning identified by T Level learners



Base: All T Level learners. Unweighted: Education & Childcare: 415; Construction: 142; Digital: 242

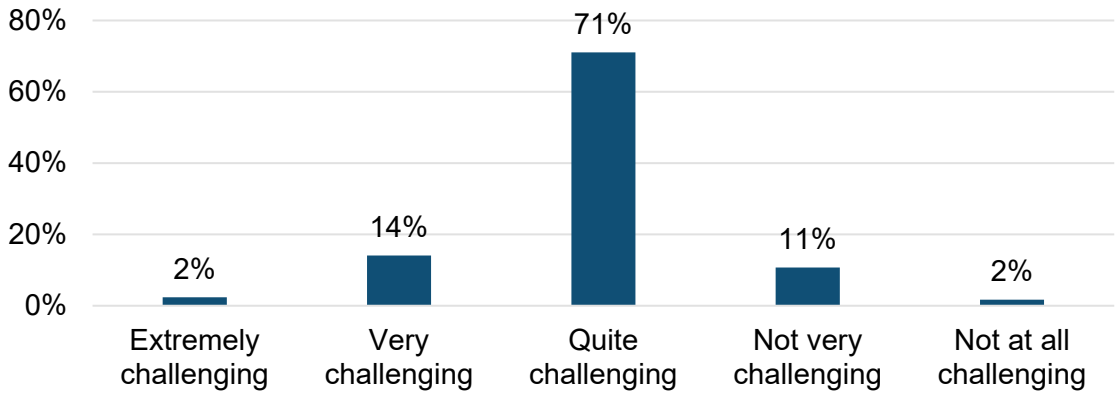
Further details can be found in Appendix Table 89.

How challenging learners found T Levels

The majority (71%) of T Level learners reported that their course had been ‘quite challenging’. A further 16% described it as being ‘very’ or ‘extremely’ challenging and a similar proportion were at the other end of the scale, with 12% describing their course as ‘not very’ or ‘not at all challenging’ (Figure 22).

Those with lower attainment were more likely to have found the course ‘extremely’ or ‘very challenging’ (20% for the lowest compared to 9% for the highest achieving quintile), and for those with SEN (24% compared to 16%, p=0.059).

Figure 22: How challenging T Level learners found their course



Base: All T Level learners. Unweighted: 779

Further details can be found in Appendix Table 90.

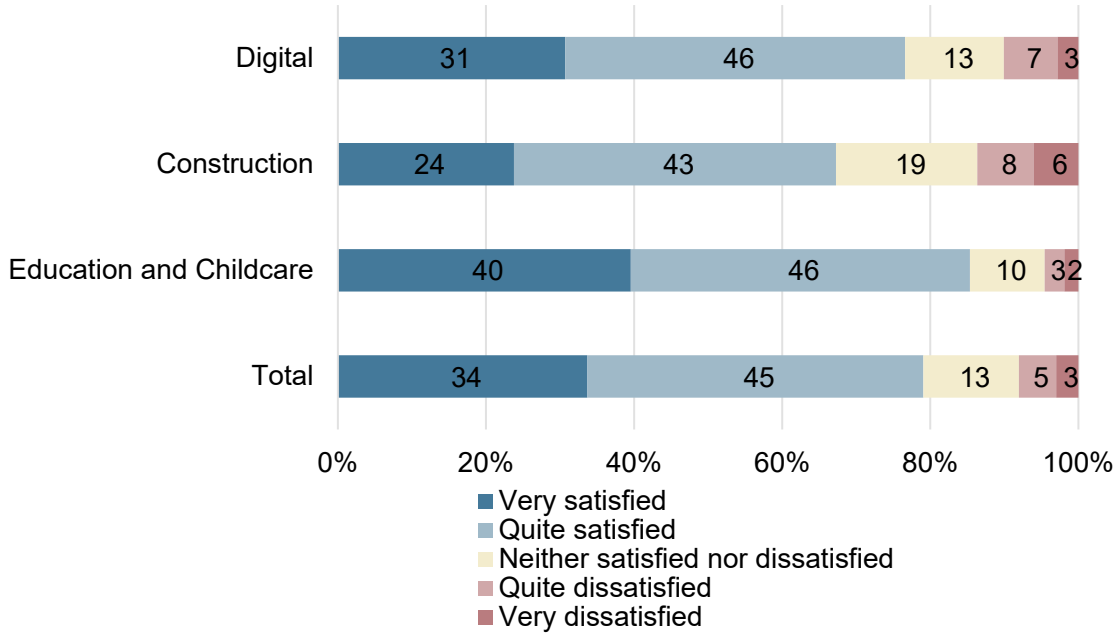
Satisfaction with the course

Satisfaction levels

Satisfaction among T Level learners was relatively high, with four-fifths (79%) indicating they were 'very' or 'quite satisfied' with their course (

Figure 23**)**. A larger proportion (85%) of Education and Childcare T Level learners compared to learners taking T Level courses in Digital (77%) and Construction (67%) expressed satisfaction with their course.

Figure 23: Overall satisfaction with T Levels by subject



Base: All T Level learners. Unweighted: Total: 805; Education: 415; Construction: 142; Digital: 248.

A larger proportion (84%) of learners who aspired to go to university expressed satisfaction with their T Level course compared with those who aspired to get a paid job (77%), do another type of study (75%) or something else/not sure (75%). Similarly, a higher proportion of learners who were 'certain' (85%) and 'quite sure' (82%) about the type of occupation they wanted to find work in eventually reported they were satisfied with their T Level course compared with those learners who were 'considering a few occupations' (78%) or 'not sure' (61%).

There were also differences by level of challenge experienced by learners in their T Level course. A higher proportion (86%) of learners who had found their T Level quite challenging were satisfied with their course compared with learners who considered their course not very/not at all challenging (66%) and extremely/very challenging (63%).

The delivery of teaching was also associated with overall satisfaction, with 86% of those who were taught entirely or mostly in-person being ‘very’ or ‘quite satisfied’ compared with 70% of those taught mostly or entirely online.

Doing an industry placement was also associated with higher levels of satisfaction, with 89% of that group being satisfied compared to 73% of those who had not yet had the opportunity to do a placement.

Those who stated they left the course early, who accounted for 8% of T Level starters, were considerably less likely to be satisfied than those who had carried on (37% compared to 83%).

Drivers of overall satisfaction

T Level survey participants were asked about their satisfaction with a range of factors relating to the delivery of their course (Table 3). **The majority of T Level learners indicated that they were satisfied with ten different aspects of their course**, with between 59% and 85% of learners reporting that they were ‘very’ and ‘quite’ satisfied with these aspects. They reported they were most satisfied with:

- ‘teachers’ knowledge and expertise’ (85%)
- ‘the standard of classroom teaching’ (84%)
- ‘the skills the course covered for their chosen occupation/subject area’ (80%)
- ‘the support they received from tutors’ (80%).

The level of satisfaction expressed by learners varied according to the T Level subject they were taking. Education and Childcare T Level learners were more satisfied than learners taking Construction and Digital T Levels with seven of the course aspects. In contrast, Construction T Level learners expressed less satisfaction than learners taking the other two T Levels with five course aspects, less than half saying they were satisfied with ‘the standard of the practical ‘hands on’ work’ (49%) and ‘course organisation and management’ (46%).

Overall, T Level learners were least satisfied with ‘the level of employer contact in the course’ with 59% expressing satisfaction and only around half (51%) of Digital T Level learners indicating they were satisfied. Here it is worth noting that for level of employer contact, and other course aspects with relatively lower satisfaction scores – ‘course organisation and management’ (62%), ‘the careers advice provided’ (62%), and ‘the way learners are assessed on the course’ (68%) - a fifth or more of all learners reported that they were ‘neither satisfied nor dissatisfied’. This suggests that learners were at a stage in their course where they did not feel in a position to give a satisfaction rating for elements where they had limited experience to date.

Also in Table 3 is a measure of each elements' 'importance' in relation to overall satisfaction, provided by a correlation (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient). This shows that the elements of course delivery most strongly associated with overall satisfaction were 'course organisation and management', 'the standard of classroom teaching' and 'the skills it covered for your chosen occupation'. The latter two of these both had relatively high levels of satisfaction (84% and 80%) but there may be an opportunity to increase satisfaction for 'course organisation' from 62% and thereby increase overall satisfaction. The lowest area of satisfaction was with the 'level of employer contact', but this was found to be more weakly associated with overall satisfaction, at least in the context of the restrictions during the pandemic.

Table 3: Satisfaction with aspects of T Levels and their correlation with overall satisfaction

Drivers of overall satisfaction	% Very or quite satisfied	Correlation
Teachers' knowledge and expertise	85%	0.47
The standard of classroom teaching	84%	0.57
The skills it covered for your chosen occupation / subject area	80%	0.55
The support you received from tutors	80%	0.49
Equipment, software and resources available	75%	0.35
The standard of the practical hands-on work	69%	0.45
The way students are assessed on the course	68%	0.48
Course organisation and management	62%	0.58
The careers advice provided	62%	0.42
The level of employer contact in the course	59%	0.39

Base: All T Level learners. Unweighted: 755 minimum

Satisfaction with industry placements

Satisfaction levels

The majority (88%) of T Level learners expressed satisfaction with their industry placement. A larger proportion of Education and Childcare learners (92%) compared to learners taking courses in Digital (83%) and Construction (76%) were satisfied with their industry placement. This finding can be explained to some extent by the large proportion (24%) of Education and Childcare T Level learners undertaking 200 or more placement hours as reported earlier.

Most T Level learners (93%) reported that their industry placement had met their expectations in terms of the content and skills development. A larger proportion of learners in Education and Childcare (96%) compared to learners taking courses in Digital

(87%) and Construction (85%) considered that their placement had met their expectations in this regard. Again, this finding can be at least partly explained by Education and Childcare T Learners having completed more hours on their industry placement.

T Level learners were positive about key aspects of their industry placement. The majority (89%) of learners agreed that 'the placement directly related to their course of study' and a similar proportion (87%) of learners agreed that the placement was 'a good challenge' for them. Larger proportions of Education and Childcare T Level learners compared with learners taking the other two T Levels agreed with these statements about their industry placement on the course to date.

The majority of T Level learners agreed that they felt 'supported by the employer' (87%) and by their college/school during the placement' (75%). Comparable proportions of learners taking the three T Levels agreed they 'felt supported by the employer'.

Around three-quarters (73%) of learners 'strongly agreed/agreed' that they were 'fully prepared for their placement'. A smaller proportion (58%) of learners 'strongly agreed/agreed' that the placement 'came at the right point in the course'.

Drivers of placement satisfaction

As with overall satisfaction, driver analysis was conducted to explore the strength of association of each industry placement satisfaction measure with overall satisfaction with the industry placement. Table 4 presents the results of this analysis. It shows the strongest correlation with overall satisfaction was with the aspects 'I felt supported by the employer during the placement', 'the placement was a good challenge' and 'the placement directly related to course of study'. The lowest correlation with overall satisfaction with the industry placement was 'I felt supported by the college/school during the placement'. Right point in course' had the lowest satisfaction, but also the lowest correlation of the items measured.

Table 4: Agreement levels with statements about industry placement and correlation with overall satisfaction with the placement

Drivers of satisfaction with placement	% Strongly agree or Agree	Correlation
The placement directly related to my course of study	89%	0.44
I felt supported by the employer during the placement	87%	0.57
The placement was a good challenge for me	87%	0.45

Drivers of satisfaction with placement	% Strongly agree or Agree	Correlation
I felt supported by the college / school during the placement	75%	0.27
I was fully prepared for my placement	73%	0.31
The placement came at the right point in the course	58%	0.31

Further details can be found in Appendix Tables 102-109.

Satisfaction with employer-set project

The majority (70%) of T Level learners who had completed, or were doing, an employer-set project[15] as part of their course indicated that they were satisfied with it. A slightly larger proportion (74%) of Education and Childcare learners expressed satisfaction compared to learners taking courses in Construction (69%) and Digital (64%) T Levels, although this was not significant at the 5% level (p=0.062). Around a fifth (21%) of all learners indicated that they were 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied' which can be explained to some extent by their not having completed the project yet and therefore feeling they were not in a position to rate their satisfaction for this aspect of the course. Eight per cent of those who reported having started an employer-set project said they were 'very/quite' dissatisfied with their employer-set project, with Digital T Level learners being most dissatisfied, 14% reporting they were 'very/quite' dissatisfied. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 111.

Course outcomes

T Level learners reported that taking the course had helped them to develop the relevant knowledge, practical skills and understanding for their chosen sector.

Table 5 provides the percentage of learners who felt they were helped 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' in relation to a set of key aims and outcomes for T Levels. Nearly four-fifths (78%) of T Level learners reported that taking the course had helped them to develop their 'knowledge of the occupational area that their course covered'. Slightly lower proportions of Construction T Level learners (68% compared to 85% of Education and Childcare), learners with lower academic attainment (69% of the lowest quintile compared to 82% of the highest) and learners who found their course 'not very/not at all challenging' (68%) gave this response.

[15] As stated earlier, respondents may have been referring to practice projects rather than the formally assessed employer-set project.

Most T Level learners (74%) also considered that the course had helped them to develop '**the practical skills needed for their chosen subject**'. Construction T Level learners were less likely to have felt the course helped on this element (56% compared to 83% of Education and Childcare learners), perhaps due to being less likely to have been able to do an industry placement and potentially a greater impact from online learning.

Learners were more likely to feel the course had developed practical skills relevant to their chosen subject if they had started an industry placement (85% vs 64% of those who had not) or if they had been taught mostly in-person (76% vs 63% taught mostly online).

The views of Construction students on their practical skill development diverged substantially by how much of their tuition was online. This was much more pronounced than for other subject areas. [16] However, irrespective of the proportion of tuition online, or whether they had undertaken an industry placement, Construction learners were still less likely than Education and Childcare learners to feel the course had helped them develop 'practical skills needed for their chosen subject'.[17]

In addition, most T Level learners (73%) indicated that their course had helped them to develop their '**understanding of how workplaces operate'**. Education and Childcare learners were again more positive than those in other subjects (84% compared to 60% of Digital learners).

The survey findings also revealed that T Levels helped learners to develop generic skills. For example, 72% of T Level learners reported that their courses had help to develop their '**communication skills',** with Education and Childcare learners particularly likely to say this (83% compared to 60% of Digital).

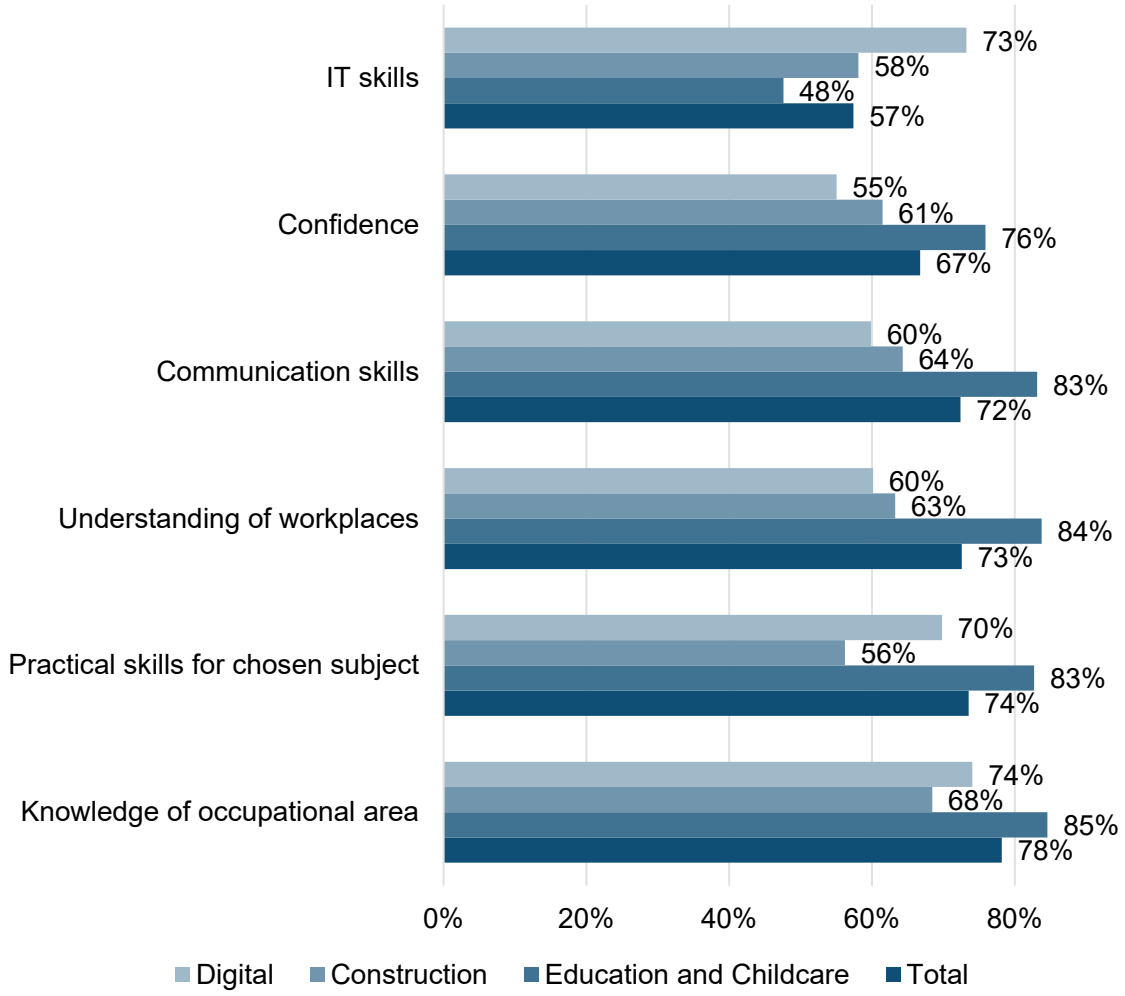
Help with the development of '**IT skills'** was mentioned by 57% overall. This was more likely to be mentioned by those on the Digital T Level (73% compared to 48% of Education and Childcare learners).

The majority of T Level learners (67%) reported that their course had helped them to develop their '**confidence'**. A lower proportion of Digital learners (55%) mentioned this, as did learners eligible for FSM (62% compared to 69% not eligible for FSM, although this was not significant at the 5% level, p=0.098).

[16] Only 39% of construction students who were taught mostly online felt the course had helped them develop their practical skills 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit', vs 76% who were taught mostly in-person. The comparable figures for Education and Childcare learners are 77% and 87% - a much smaller difference, although consistently higher than Construction.

[17] Of those who had done an industry placement, 90% of education & childcare vs 62% of construction learners felt the course had helped them develop their practical skills 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit'. Comparable figures for those who hadn't done an industry placement yet: 80% of Education & Childcare vs 57% of Construction.

Table 5: Percentage of learners helped 'a great deal' or 'quite a bit' in T Level outcomes, by subject



Base: All T Level learners. Unweighted (minimum): Total: 803; Education and Childcare: 415; Construction: 140; Digital: 247.

Further details can be found in Appendix Tables 112-117.

Next steps

Figure 24 provides T Level learners' planned next step once their T Level course was completed. The survey questions first asked whether they planned to do further study and if so, the type of study (with one response selected). Those not planning to do further study were then asked for what else they planned to do (again, a single response). The chart brings responses to these questions together to provide the picture of next steps for all learners. (This first wave of the survey was timed to be towards the end of their first year of the two-year course).

In total, 57% planned to go on to further study after completing their T Level. Nearly a third (31%) of learners indicated they planned to take 'a university degree'. Around a fifth (21%) identified taking 'an apprenticeship (including degree apprenticeship)' as their next step.

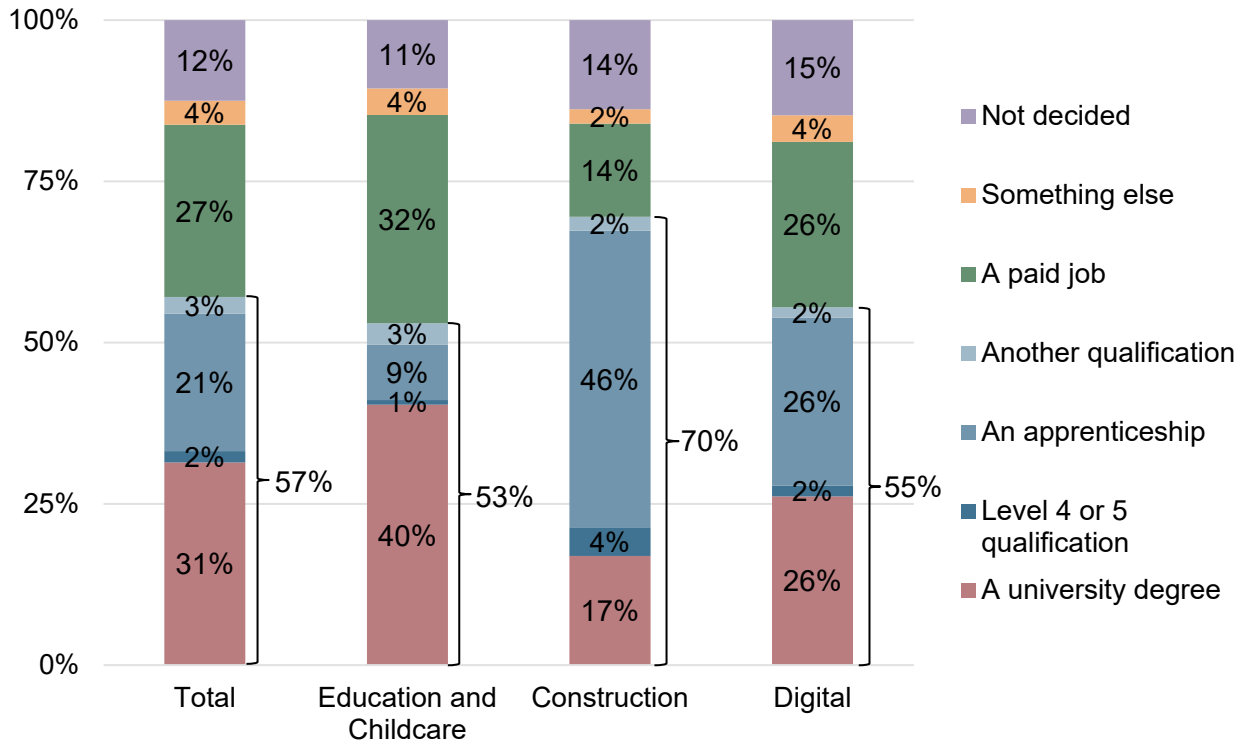
Over a quarter (27%) of learners said that their next step after the course was to get 'a paid job'. The remaining 16% intended to do something other than work or study or had not decided.

A larger proportion (40%) of learners in Education and Childcare compared to learners taking courses in Digital (26%) and Construction (17%) identified going to university as their next step. This was also the case for those who had higher academic prior attainment (39% of the highest compared to 27% of the lowest quintiles), and those who were satisfied with their course (34% compared to 22% of those not satisfied).

A larger proportion of learners in Education and Childcare (32%) compared to learners taking courses in Digital (26%) and Construction (14%) identified getting a paid job as their next step. Larger proportions of T Level learners with lower academic prior attainment and those who were eligible for FSM considered getting 'a paid job' to be their next step after completing their T Level.

A larger proportion of learners in Construction (46%) compared to learners taking courses in Digital (26%) and Education and Childcare (9%) planned to take 'an apprenticeship'. A larger proportion of T Level learners who were not satisfied with their course identified this option as their next step after completing their T Level.

Figure 24: Planned next step in year after T Level, by subject



Base: All T Level learners. Unweighted: Digital: 244; Construction: 138; Education and Childcare: 410

Further details can be found in Appendix Table 117.

More than three-quarters (78%) of T Level learners reported that they were planning to work or study in the same field as their course. A slightly larger proportion of learners taking T Levels in Education and Childcare (80%) and Construction (79%) than those taking a Digital T Level (73%) indicated that they were planning to work or study in the same field as their course, although this was not significant at the 5% level (p=0.085).Further details can be found in Appendix Table 122.

The majority (72%) of T Level learners 'strongly agreed/mostly agreed' that they felt supported by their school or college in deciding on their next step. Larger proportions of learners taking T Level courses in Education and Childcare (75%) and Digital (73%) compared with Construction T Level learners (64%) 'strongly agreed/mostly agreed' that they felt supported in deciding what to do next. Further details can be found in Appendix Table 123.

Conclusions

The Technical Education Learner Survey provides findings from the first cohort of learners experiencing the TLTP and T Levels, which are central to the technical education reform policy agenda in England. The emerging picture shows that, on the whole, TLTP and T Level learners have had a relatively positive and productive learning experience during the 2020 to 2021 academic year. However, the learning experience has not been uniform, with some variations by learner characteristics and subject, and an indication that Covid-19 pandemic-related restrictions have had an impact on delivery.

The high levels of satisfaction reported by learners, both overall, and with different elements of the courses, were strongly associated with their appreciation of teachers' knowledge and expertise and the standard of classroom teaching. This was particularly important in the challenging context of the pandemic which impacted on programme delivery, with most learners having to manage a combination of online and in-person teaching. Lower levels of in-person teaching, identified by learners as the main barrier to learning, was associated with lower satisfaction. This level of learner satisfaction, where 77% of TLTP learners and 79% of T Level learners were 'very' or 'quite' satisfied with their course overall, compares well to the National Student Survey 2021 – a survey of Higher Education students – which found that 75% of learners were satisfied with the quality of their course[18]. T Level and TLTP satisfaction with the quality of classroom teaching (84% satisfied) was similar to other 16-18 students – the 2021 FE Learner and Apprentices Experience Survey found 82% of 16 to 18 Education and Training learners were fairly or very satisfied with the teaching on their course.[19]

Planning an appropriate workload for these new courses appears to have been largely successful for TLTP and T Level courses, with most learners finding the workload on the TLTP and T Level courses to be manageable. However, learners with low prior academic attainment and SEN found it more challenging than their peers. The minority who struggled to manage the workload outside classes identified the amount and lack of clarity of work set, and insufficient support from teachers and tutors, as the main reasons.

Developing courses which provide sufficient academic and practical challenge without making them too stretching and a negative learning experience is a fine balance to achieve. The survey findings indicate that the majority of TLTP and T Level learners found their courses challenging to some extent. However, learners who had been taught mainly online were more likely to report their courses being 'extremely/very' challenging.

The impact of pandemic-related restrictions is likely to be an important factor in explaining TLTP and T Level learners' low satisfaction with the level of employer contact

[18] Office for Students, data from National Student Survey 2021
[19] DfE 2022, FE Covid-19 Learner and Apprentices Experience Survey, page 56.

they experienced. Covid-19 presented challenges to the delivery of work experience and industry placements, a core course requirement, as reflected in the relatively low level of TLTP learners reporting undertaking work experience (39%). TLTP and T Level learners taking Education and Childcare courses were much more likely than learners on Construction and Digital courses to undertake work experience and industry placements. Plausible explanations for this are the existing strong links providers have with childcare settings, the childcare sector being the first to open up after the first lockdown and remain open during later lockdowns, and larger childcare placements on T Levels needing to start in the first year of the course. Despite circumstantial limitations in provision, most learners who had undertaken work experience or an industry placement were satisfied with their experience, reporting that their expectations of content and skills development had been met and reporting higher satisfaction with the course overall.

The achieved outcomes of courses are a critical test of their effectiveness in enabling learners to gain relevant knowledge and skills. Most learners reported that the courses had helped them to develop the relevant knowledge, practical skills and understanding of their sector, with this being particularly associated with having an industry placement during the year. There were variations by subject evidenced by Education and Childcare learners being more likely to indicate that the programme had helped them to develop these outcomes than those taking other subjects, and Construction learners being least likely to report being helped by the programme to develop practical skills. The courses were also beneficial in enabling learners to develop generic skills as confirmed by a majority of learners declaring that the courses had helped them develop their communication and IT skills.

Many TLTP learners were not aware that they were on a non-qualification programme. Across most types of knowledge, skills and behaviours developed, there was no significant difference between those on qualification programmes and those who were not, but indication in some specific areas of better outcomes for those on qualification programmes. A majority of TLTP learners reported being helped to develop TP-specific outcomes (e.g. knowledge of T Levels in the subject area), English, maths and study skills, and confidence in the workplace.

Significantly, of TLTP learners who confirmed they had enrolled on the course, while just over half of TLTP learners reported having gained knowledge of T Levels, around a third planned to take a T Level as their next step, which was less than the two-fifths of learners who reported wishing to progress onto T Level when they started the course. TLTP learners' next most common plans were taking an apprenticeship or getting a paid job. Of those who were not intending to go on to do a T level, just over half reported that they were planning to work or study in the same field as their course.

Taking a university degree was the most frequently reported planned next step for T Level learners, followed by getting a paid job or taking an apprenticeship. More than

three-quarters reported that they were planning to work or study in the same field as their course.

Another value of taking a course is the extent to which it supports learners to make a successful transition to appropriate post-course education, training or employment opportunities. Most of the learners surveyed agreed that they felt supported by their school or college in deciding their next step after completing their course.

In the 2022/23 academic year, more providers are delivering the TLTP (68 providers) and T Levels (105 providers), with additional courses added in the Digital, Construction and Health and Science routes. The Technical Education Learner Survey will be repeated, both with the first cohort of T Level learners and new TLTP and T Level learners (and the first cohort of T Level learners will be followed up). There are several factors that may lead to differences in the results from the next survey.

As the availability of T Levels within the subject routes increases, it will be interesting to see if the number of students progressing from a TLTP onto T Levels increases in comparison to the figure of a third in the 2020 to 2021 academic year and, if not, whether there is another factor causing the relatively low progression rates, for example the uncertainty around T Levels being accepted by universities or perceptions of the level of difficulty of T Levels.

It is also important to note that the first wave of TLTP and T Level providers were approved for delivery based on their ‘Good’ and ‘Outstanding’ Ofsted ratings. Their history of high-quality programme delivery is likely to have played into the high satisfaction of learners so, as more providers with a greater range of Ofsted ratings begin to deliver the programmes, it will be interesting to see if learner satisfaction remains high.

Finally, the relaxing of Covid-19 restrictions are likely to lead to more learners having the opportunity to complete work experience and industrial placements and learners being taught more of their programme in-person. This is likely to lead firstly to higher satisfaction with the work experience and industry placement elements of the programmes compared to the 2020 to 2021 academic year and, secondly, to fewer learners reporting remote teaching being a barrier to their learning.

Appendix A – technical note

The survey was designed and delivered by NatCen with NFER providing policy expertise and questionnaire development guidance, alongside that from the research team and advisory board at DfE.

Population and sample

The population of interest for the Technical Education Learners Study in 2021 was all those enrolled in the first year of the new Transition Programme or T Level in the academic year 2020-2021, including those who left the course early.

Given the small scale of the roll out of the programmes in that first year (only three courses and 43 providers across England), and the relatively small numbers of learners, the entire population was issued to the study.

The sample frame was provided by two registers controlled by the Department for Education which together provided coverage of learners in both schools and colleges:

- **National Pupil Database (NPD)**. NPD is a database of pupils in state funded education and higher education in England.
- **Individualised Learner Record (ILR)**. ILR data is collected by providers in the further education and skills sector in England.

A total of 2,207 students were invited to take part to the first wave of the survey (1,326 T Level students and 881 Transition Programme students). These figures may vary slightly from official statistics due to their provisional natureSnapshots using R04 and R06 ILR returns were used for the survey: R04 refers to data that FE providers submitted on 4th December 2020 (capturing provision delivered up to and including 1st November 2020) and R06 refers to data that FE providers submitted on 4th February 2021 (capturing provision delivered up to and including 1st January 2021).

A further 237 cases were issued for survey fieldwork but were subsequently found to have been included in error following checks on providers. These cases were excluded from the study and the findings in this report.

Fieldwork design

This first wave of the study was operationalised with a Web-first sequential mixed-mode design. Learners were offered three possible modes of data collection:

- **Web** (or **CAWI**, Computer Assisted Web Interview) involves completing an online survey without the assistance of an interviewer.

- **CATI** (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) is an interview carried out by a trained interviewer over a phone call.
- **PAPI** (Pen-and-Paper Interview) requires the study participant to complete a paper survey sent in the mail and return it in a pre-paid envelope.

Web was the primary mode given its cost-effectiveness and familiarity with this age group (the cost per survey completed on Web is much lower than the cost per survey on any other mode).

The other two modes were implemented to ensure full population coverage and to address potential bias in the data collection process at the first stage. Neither CATI nor PAPI require access to the internet and therefore allow survey completion amongst study participants who do not have high levels of IT literacy, do not have access to a broadband, or do not own a device that would allow Web completion.

CATI was preferred as the second mode in the sequence – only enacted after learners had had sufficient time and reminders to complete the survey online but had not done so. Telephone interviewers play a crucial role in supporting study participants who are less likely to participate in self-administered surveys, those with special needs and limiting conditions, as well as those who need a more active persuasion to engage with the study.

While all cases had a postal address, a proportion did not have an available telephone number including all cases from the NPD, which covered schools. It was felt important to offer a secondary mode to this group, and a PAPI version was developed for this purpose, sent at a point after a number of reminders to complete online (only to those without telephone numbers).

Finally, the study also included a targeted design approach: telephone interview resource was prioritised for cases with socio-demographic characteristics associated with a predicted lower likelihood to take part on Web based on early stages of fieldwork. This enabled the fieldwork budget to be used on less well-represented group of learners, optimising sample representativeness. Targeting was also implemented in relation to the free school meals (FSM) group, known to be less likely to respond in other surveys: a higher incentive was offered to this group (£10 compared to £5).

Cognitive testing

A questionnaire was developed with reference to previous technical and other learner surveys and in discussion with an advisory group at DfE. A draft was tested with 12 learners from three different T Level and Transition Programme providers using cognitive interviewing techniques. An interview protocol was used to probe specific questions,

thought to be potentially less straightforward for learners to answer, using think aloud techniques.

The learners were contacted at selected providers via gatekeepers within DfE and NFER. NatCen then shared an invitation email, which was sent to students who were in scope for the testing, asking them to opt-in.

Cognitive interviews were conducted over Zoom between 24 March and 26 April 2021 and lasted approximately an hour. As part of testing participants were asked to complete survey questions on their mobile devices while sharing their screen and talking through the decision-making process.

The interviews were conducted with:

- Eight T Level learners from a school setting
- Four Transition Programme learners from two different FE colleges

The interviews included male and female learners aged between 16 and 22. One participant had SEN which affected their reading skills.

Cognitive testing findings

The cognitive testing showed that the draft survey worked well in practice. There were very few issues identified by learners and the completion time was slightly shorter than expected (at around ten minutes). Learners were able to easily navigate through the survey, and generally found the questions/terminology straightforward.

However, learners did raise a small number of issues during the testing, specifically:

- Uncertainty from Transition Programme learners about whether they were in the target group (i.e. uncertainties about the programme name).
- Difficulties understanding what was meant by the terms ‘tailored’ (**Tailored**), ‘barriers’ (**Barriers**) and ‘transferrable skills’ (at **SatTeachNum**).
- Problems identifying the average number of hours of teaching per week (**Hours**), and confusion about the timeframe. This was partly related to the nature of the question, which included a calculation of average hours, complicated by the disruption in teaching created by Covid-19 which meant that teaching hours varied significantly.
- Issues with the answer options available at **NextStep**. There was some difficulty understanding the different education options (e.g. Higher Technical qualification), and with the completeness of the answer options.

Interviews including the testing of numeric scales versus worded Likert scale for the satisfaction questions. The learners were equally divided between the two groups.

Findings from the cognitive interviews were collated and changes made in preparation for the pilot survey. These changes included:

- The addition of clearer guidance on the Transition Programme, specifically alternative names that the course might be known by at certain providers, pre-T, Progression T, T Level Foundation Year/Programme, Route to Three or Pathways to T Levels.
- Adapting the terminology at **Tailored** and **Barriers**.
- Removing 'transferable skills' from the **SatTeachNum** question.
- Adding clarification around the question and to the answer options at **Hours**.
- Reshaping **NextStep** into a core question and several follow-up questions to ensure learners are asked questions directly related to their preferred route (i.e. that tailored to their circumstances/ previous responses).

Fieldwork stages

Fieldwork had three phases:

- **Pilot** (83 learners issued). This was carried out to test the questionnaire in each mode and gain some insight into response.
- **Soft launch** (422 learners). The study had a "slow" start, so that all the fieldwork management systems and solutions, as well as the quality of the data collected, could be thoroughly tested before proceeding with the bulk of the sample.
- **Mainstage** (1,702 learners). All remaining learners were included in a final batch.

Pilot

A pilot survey was carried out with a sample of 100 students (83 after the post-fieldwork adjustment on eligible cases), divided in two groups of 50, and lasted 21 days (10th May – 30th May). The selection of the students to be included in the pilot and their allocation on the two groups were done following statistical principles of random selection based on strata (build around key characteristics), to ensure that findings from the Pilot were not biased by learners' known and unknown characteristics.

A summary of the two groups, the experiment design and findings is presented in the table below:

Group	Experiment design	Response rate (n = 83)	Mode of completion
CATI-Web	Originally assigned to telephone interviewers, who offered the choice between a Web or a CATI interview after establishing contact. Unproductive cases were given the option to complete on Web in the last week of fieldwork.	47.5% (n = 40) About half of the responses received in the last week of fieldwork (after starting Web fieldwork).	Web: 53.6% CATI: 47.4%
Web-PAPI	Offered a Web interview. Unproductive cases were sent a postal PAPI questionnaire in the last week of fieldwork.	53.5% (n = 43) Majority of interviews completed in the first 3 days of fieldwork.	Web: 95.7% PAPI: 4.3%

The pilot confirmed earlier assumptions on response rates, the prevalence of Web as preferred mode for the study and the overall accuracy of the contact details provided by the DfE for the study.

Telephone interviewers reported problems with answer phones and the role of parents in facilitating or barring cooperation in the study for their children. Interviewers' feedback was integrated for the following stages of fieldwork with the elaboration of a protocol on how to deal with answer phones and a new communication strategy targeted at parents.

The pilot also provided the opportunity to validate the questionnaire, both from a design and a cognitive perspective.

Soft launch

Soft launch fieldwork started on 26th June with 469 students (422 after post-fieldwork adjustments on new ILR/NPD data). The soft launch included 20% of the students in the sample, selected according to statistical principles of random selections within strata (the same approach used for the selection and allocation of pilot students).

The soft launch lasted for 10 days; on the 5th July, the remaining 80% of the sample was invited to take part to the study on Web. These 10 days were used by the research team to validate the correct implementation of data collection protocols, ensure that fieldwork

management processes were working as expected, and check the integrity of the data collected.

Mainstage

The Mainstage of the first wave of the TechEd Study lasted almost 7 weeks, from the 5th July 2021 until the 20th August. The sequential design meant that the Mainstage had different phases:

- 5th July. All students invited to complete a Web questionnaire by letter and email.
- 15th July. Students eligible to a telephone interview (telephone number available) were informed that they might be contacted by a telephone interviewer.
- 19th July. CATI fieldwork started for Batch 1 (Web unproductive cases considered to be the least likely to complete online).
- 26th July. Web unproductive students without a telephone number were sent a postal PAPI questionnaire.
- 2nd August. CATI fieldwork started for Batch 2 (Web unproductive cases considered to be least likely to complete online, but more likely than Batch 1 cases).
- 20th August. Mainstage fieldwork closed for all students.

Batch 3 cases (Web unproductive students considered likely to complete on Web) were supposed to be assigned to telephone interviewers on the 9th August, but the assessment of the sample composition at that point drove the decision to increase the telephone budget allocated towards Batch 1 and 2 cases and keeping Batch 3 cases on a Web-only design.

CATI prioritisation groups

All cases who were eligible for a CATI interview, and who did not take part in the study before the beginning of CATI fieldwork (19th July), were divided in three groups (Batch 1, 2, and 3). These CATI groups were modelled using data from the first 20 days of Web-only fieldwork (from the 26th June, when the soft launch fieldwork started). Earlier batches had a lower probability of web completion, while later batches a higher probability (the median probability of completing on Web was 17% for Batch 1, 30% for Batch 2 and 41% for Batch 3). The table below shows the modelled probability of individuals taking part on Web, where 0 = low and 1 = high.

CATI groups	Min	Max	Median
Batch 1	0.09	0.23	0.17
Batch 2	0.23	0.33	0.30
Batch 3	0.33	0.58	0.41

Batches with the lowest probability of Web completion were prioritised during CATI fieldwork, so that interviewers could spend more time and resources focusing on those students who were under-represented in the Web-only data.

The three batches had a different socio-demographic composition, with male, Transition Programme, Not FSM, SEN, and BAME students more common in Batch 1 (high priority), while female, T Levels, FSM, not SEN, and White students more common in Batch 3 (low priority).

Communication with participants

Any communication with participants happened across three different channels (letters, emails and texts), to maximise the probability of reaching out successfully to the sample members. This allowed to leverage all the contact details included in the DfE sample produced from ILR and NPD data (postal addresses, telephone numbers and email addresses).

The communication strategy was designed with invitation mailings and up to three reminders, landing at different times of the day and different days of the week, to maximise the possibility to be accessed by students. Postal reminders were sent both in a letter format and in a postcard format.

Following the most common best practices, each round of communication leveraged a different subjective reason to take part in the study, including social responsibility or the presence of incentives.

Incentives

Incentives were offered to students after completing the survey (£5 shopping vouchers). They were designed both as an acknowledgment for the time and effort invested by the student in completing the questionnaire, and as a way to increase response rate.

Higher incentives (£10 shopping vouchers) were offered to students who had received free school meals, who are also known to be under-represented in other survey contexts. The use of higher incentives allowed to yield a higher number of productive interviews in this group, which were needed for sub-group analysis.

Survey response

Across all the stages of fieldwork (pilot, soft launch and mainstage) the first wave of the study achieved a final response rate of 56.1% (1,238 productive interviews).

26.9% of the sample members were considered Web unproductive at the end of fieldwork; this means that they were not eligible to a CATI interview, either by design (allocated to the Web-PAPI group during the Pilot) or because they did not have a telephone number, or that they were part of Batch 3, which was not released for CATI fieldwork.

No contact from a CATI interviewer happened on 14.9% of the cases issued to CATI fieldwork. This meant that the interviewers found the phone engaged or no one answered the phone every time they called. Other outcome codes were recorded for 3.4% of the issued sample.

Survey outcome at the end of Mainstage (including Pilot and Soft launch)	**%** (n = 2,207)
Fully productive	**56.1**
CATI no contact	**41.1**
Web unproductive (no contact attempted by CATI interviewers)	26.0
No contact at numbers available	14.5
Contact made, but not with named respondent	0.3
Other unproductive (no contact)	0.2
Wrong number - new phone number could not be ascertained	0.2
Refusal/unproductive	**2.2**
Refusal before interview	0.8
Refusal by proxy	0.8
Other unproductive (contact made)	0.4
Away/in hospital throughout field period	0.0
Ineligible	**0.6**

The response rate was higher amongst T Level students compared to Transition Programme. Differences could also be seen by subject types, with students enrolled in Education and childcare or Digital more likely to take part in the study compared to those enrolled in Construction.

Course and subject	**Response Rate** (%)	**n**
T Level	**60.9**	**1326**
Education and childcare	63.1	662
Construction	53.0	268
Digital	62.6	396
Transition Programme	**48.8**	**881**
Education and childcare	51.1	419
Construction	36.0	125
Digital	50.7	337

Looking at key socio-demographic characteristics of the students, the survey data appears to be overall balanced, although the response rate varied between subgroups of the population of interest. Female students were more likely to take part in the study compared to male students. The response rate was also higher amongst students who identified as Asian, Black or White, and lower for students who did not disclose their ethnicity or identified as belonging to “Other” ethnic groups. Students with special education needs (SEN) were less likely to take part in the study compared to non-SEN students; however, the response rate was not too different between the SEN and the non-SEN groups.

The incentive strategy seemed to have played an important role in boosting the FSM group; this can also be seen in the IDACI (Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index), with high response rates achieved with students in both the most deprived category and in the lease deprived category; the incentive strategy and the target design might not have been sufficient in increasing the response rate for students in the most deprived 2.5% of LSOAs.

Socio-demographic characteristics	**Response Rate** (%)	**Issued (n)**
Sex		
Female	59.1	1133
Male	52.9	1074
Ethnic group		
Asian	62.1	169
Black	58.0	69
White	55.8	1813
Mixed	55.7	61
Other	51.6	31
Unknown	48.4	64
IDACI		
Pupils in most deprived 7.5% of LSOAs	58.9	175
Next 10% most deprived	58.6	263
Next 10% most deprived	52.0	248
Next 10% most deprived	49.4	247
Least deprived 62.5%	57.4	1270
Prior attainment 5+ GCSE 9-4 incl maths and English		
Yes	61.4	1176
No	49.5	985
Free School Meals		
Unknown	59.5	84
FSM ever	57.0	675
Not FSM ever	55.5	1448
Special Education Needs		
Unknown	60.2	83

Not SEN ever	56.8	1704
SEN	52.4	420

Interview mode

Most of the students decided to take part in the study on Web (90.7% of the completed interviews), followed by CATI (7.7%) and PAPI (1.6%). Web completion was predominant in all Soft launch and Mainstage fieldwork groups (not issued to CATI and the CATI batches), and also in the pilot.

However, CATI was particularly important in increasing response rate in Batch 1 and Batch 2, which mostly comprised students with socio-economic characteristics that seemed to be associated with Web nonresponse (Male, Transition Programme, SEN, BAME). In other terms, the targeted CATI fieldwork was instrumental in re-balancing the sample, even if in the greater picture the number of CATI interviews carried out in the study appears particularly low.

Fieldwork groups	Response rate		Interview mode			
	%	Issued (n)	Web	CATI	PAPI	Interviews (n)
Pilot	49.4	83	78.0	22.0	-	41
Not issued to CATI[20]	71.0	1,129	97.5	-	2.5	802
CATI Batch 1	41.7	290	56.2	43.8	-	121
CATI Batch 2	39.7	330	76.3	23.7	-	131
CATI Batch 3[21]	30.4	375	100.0	-	-	114

Indeed, CATI completion was higher amongst Transition Programme students and in students who were enrolled in Construction courses (either T Level or Transition Programme). Both groups were associated with an overall low response rate, which might have been worse without the role played by the telephone interviewers.

[20] This include cases that had completed on Web before CATI fieldwork started or who were not eligible for a telephone interview (no telephone number available).
[21] This last batch was not released to telephone interviewers as it was preferred to allocate most of the CATI budget on Batch 1 and Batch 2 cases.

Course and subject	Web	CATI	PAPI	Interviews (n)
T Level	**95.4**	**3.2**	**1.4**	**788**
Education and childcare	98.3	0.5	1.2	405
Construction	89.1	8.8	2.2	137
Digital	94.3	4.5	1.2	246
Transition Programme	**81.7**	**16.2**	**2.1**	**421**
Education and childcare	87.4	9.2	3.4	207
Construction	75.6	24.4	0.0	45
Digital	76.3	22.5	1.2	169

The CATI mode was also instrumental in reaching a higher response rate amongst Male students, students who identified as Black or from “Other” ethnic groups, and students with Special Education Needs. In all these groups, the share of CATI interviews on the total productive interviews is between 13% and 23%.

Socio-demographic characteristics	Web	CATI	PAPI	Interviews (n)
Sex				
Male	84.8	13.2	2.0	561
Female	95.7	2.9	1.4	648
Ethnic group				
Black	74.4	23.1	2.6	39
Other	86.7	13.3	0.0	15
Asian	92.2	7.8	0.0	102
White	91.4	7.1	1.5	990
Unknown	83.3	6.7	10.0	30
Mixed	90.9	6.1	3.0	33
IDACI				
Pupils in most deprived 2.5% of LSOAs	96.7	3.3	0.0	30
Next 5% most deprived	91.8	5.9	2.3	219
Next 10% most deprived	91.4	8.2	0.4	245
Least deprived 62.5%	89.8	8.3	2.0	714
Free School Meals				
Unknown	86.0	14.0	0.0	50
Not FSM ever	89.2	8.7	2.2	785
FSM ever	94.4	4.8	0.8	374
Special Education Needs				
SEN	84.1	14.0	1.9	214

Unknown	86.0	14.0	0.0	50
Not SEN ever	92.4	5.9	1.7	945

Data processing

As far as possible, the paper questionnaire included the same questions in the same format as the web version. However, due to the use of fed-forward data in text fills and routing to optimise the web version there were a small number of differences. In these cases, where variables could not be derived that gave equivalent measures between modes, paper questionnaire responses were not included in the analysis.

Pilot cases were included within the data for analysis. There were a small number of minor variations between the pilot and subsequent stages. Where variables could not be derived that gave equivalent measures responses were not included in the analysis.

Weighting

The census approach meant that no design weights were required for the survey data. Weighting was applied to account for those who did not take part in the study (unit nonresponse). Weights were developed using logistic regression based on the population data available in NPD and ILR. The final variables in the model included sex, age, ethnicity and subject.

Statistical testing

Unless otherwise specified, comparisons shown in the report are statistically significant at the 95% level. Where the p value is greater than 0.05 the p value is provided in the accompanying text. In principle, this means that, if new samples were drawn from our population of interest, 19 out of 20 times the results of the analysis would be consistent with the results presented in this report and that our findings are unlikely to be caused by random variations in the sample. In practice we have a limited population in this first year of operation, so these significance tests relate to a hypothetical wider population (significance tests do not apply a finite population correction).

Appendix B – survey questionnaire

Interview instruction definitions

G_Collapsible_Grid_II1 "Grid instructions 1"
_WEB: "Please select one answer on every row"
_TEL: "INTERVIEWER: READ OUT EACH STATEMENT AND THE ANSWER CODES. REPEAT ANSWER CODES AS REQUIRED."

G_Multi_II1 "Multicode instructions 1"
_WEB: "Please select all that apply"
_TEL: "INTERVIEWER: READ OUT EACH OPTION AND CODE ALL THAT APPLY"

G_MultiUpTo2_II1 "Multicode up to 2 instructions 1"
_WEB: "Please select up to two"
_TEL: "INTERVIEWER: 'Please select up to two'
INTERVIEWER: READ OUT ALL OPTIONS AND THEN CODE UP TO 2"

G_MultiUpTo3_II1 "Multicode up to 3 instructions"
_WEB: "Please select up to three"
_TEL: "INTERVIEWER: 'Please select up to three'
INTERVIEWER: READ OUT ALL OPTIONS AND THEN CODE UP TO 3"

G_ReadOut_II1 "Read out instructions 1"
_WEB: ""
_TEL: "INTERVIEWER: READ OUT"

G_NoReadOut_II1 "Interviewer do not read out instructions 1"
_WEB:""
_TEL:"INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ OUT"

G_NoPrompt_II1 "Interviewer no prompt instructions 1"
_WEB:""
_TEL:"INTERVIEWER: DO NOT PROMPT"

G_IfNec_II1 "Interviewer if necessary instructions 1"
_WEB:""
_TEL:"INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY"

G_NoneAns_II1 "None of these answer option 1"
_WEB: "None of these"
_TEL "INTERVIEWER: DO NOT READ OUT None of these"

Introduction

{IF MODE = WEB}
Intro1
"Welcome to the Technical Education Learner Survey! Thank you for your help with this important study on behalf of the Department for Education.

The survey should take about 15 minutes – your answers will be saved as you go along so you can stop and return at any time."

DISPLAY

Checks on identity and course

START FILTER: IF MODE = CAWI [not CATI]

{IF MailNameAdd <> "Study Participant"}
CvChk
"This is the questionnaire for {MailNameAdd}".

Please confirm this is you."

1. Yes
2. No
3. I am supporting them to complete the questionnaire

{IF CVChk=2}
NotResp
"Thank you for your time. It looks like we have the wrong information.

If you think this questionnaire is for you but your name needs updating, please go back and select 'Yes' at the previous question (there will be an opportunity to make amendments).

If you have any concerns, please contact NatCen at the details below.

Freephone: 0800 652 9294

Email: TechEd@natcen.ac.uk"

[Display]

{EXIT INTERVIEW}

{ASK ALL}
DobSv
"Just to make sure our records match, please confirm your month and year of birth."

"Month" RANGE 1 to 12

"Year" RANGE 1995 to 2005

PROGRAMMER: CHECK AGAINST SAMPLE VARIABLE

IF DobSvMonth = FF_MonthOfBirth AND DobSvYear = FF_YearOfBirth CheckDOB=1; ELSE = 0

{IF CheckDOB=0}
NotResp
“Thank you for your time. It looks like we have the wrong information.

If you think this questionnaire is for you or if you have any concerns, please contact NatCen at the details below.

Freephone: 0800 652 9294

Email: TechEd@natcen.ac.uk”

Display

{EXIT INTERVIEW}

END FILTER: IF MODE = CAWI [not CATI]

{ASK ALL}
OnCourse
“Have you been enrolled on a {FF_CourseMajor (from sample: “Transition Programme”; “T Level”)} over the past academic year since September 2020?

{CourseDescr}”

IF FF_CourseMajor_num = 1 (Transition Programme) CourseDescr = “A Transition Programme is a 1-year course that prepares people for T Levels and provides technical training and work placements in areas such as digital, construction or education and childcare. This course is also known by the names Pre-T, Progression T, T Level Foundation Year/Programme, Route to Three or Pathways to T Levels.”
IF FF_CourseMajor_num = 2 (T Level) CourseDescr = “T Levels are two-year courses that are an alternative to A Levels. They offer technical training and an industry placement in areas such as digital, construction or education and childcare.”

G_IfNec_II1

1. Yes
2. Yes – but I left the course early
3. No – a different course
4. Not sure

{IF OnCourse=3 (different course)}

WhatCourse
"What course have you been doing?"

OPEN

{COMPUTED VARIABLE}
CType
"Type of course – confirmed in interview"

1. Transition Programme {IF (sample=TP and (Oncourse=1 or 2)) }
2. "T Level" {IF (sample=TL and (Oncourse=1 or 2)) }
3. "Other" {IF Oncourse=3 }
4. "Not sure" {IF Oncourse=4 }

{COMPUTED VARIABLE}
CTypetxt
"Type of course – confirmed in interview – for textfills" {String}

1. "Transition Programme" {IF CType=1}
2. "T Level" {IF CType=2}
3. "course" {IF CType=3 or 4}

{ASK ALL}
Subject
"What subject area {IF OnCourse=2: 'was'; ELSE 'is') your {CTypetxt} in?"
G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Digital
2. Construction
3. Education and Childcare
4. Something else (specify)

{IF OnCourse=2 (left course early)}
WhyLeft
"Please tell us about why you left the course early and what you did after you left it."

OPEN

{IF OnCourse=2 (left course early)}
WhyLeftInfo
"We are still very keen to hear about your experiences of the course. You can skip any questions that you don't think are relevant to you."

DISPLAY

Reasons for choosing course

{ASK ALL}

Aspiration

“Thinking back to last year before you started this course, what did you want to do after the course finished?”

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Study at university
2. Another type of study
3. A paid job
4. Something else
5. I wasn’t sure

{ASK ALL}

Certainty

“And still thinking about that time, how sure were you about the type of occupation you wanted to find work in eventually?”

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. I was certain about the occupation
2. I was quite sure about it
3. I was considering a few occupations
4. I wasn’t sure

{ASK IF CType=1 (TP)}

TPTLevel

“Thinking back to when you started this course, did you hope to go on to do a T Level afterwards?”

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Yes
2. No
3. Wasn’t sure

{ASK IF CType=1 (TP)}

TPActive

“Were you advised to apply for this course, for instance by a teacher or careers advisor?”

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Yes – advised to apply
2. No – but discussed as an option
3. No – chose it without advice

{ASK ALL}

ReasonsCourse

“Thinking back to when you were choosing a course, why did you choose this **particular** course?”

G_Multi_II1

1. Fitted with the occupational area I wanted to work in
2. Offered the right mix of classroom learning and practical study
3. Offered an alternative to academic study (A-Levels)
4. Provided qualification(s) and skills **for further study**
5. Provided qualification(s) and skills **for employment**
6. Provided experience and skills **for an apprenticeship**
7. {IF CType=2,3,4: “The industry placement”; IF CType=1: “The work experience placement”}
8. Other (specify)
9. No specific reason (EXCLUSIVE)

{ASK ALL}

Aware

“Where did you hear about the {“CTypetxt}?”

G_Multi_II1

1. Teachers at your school
2. Careers adviser
3. {IF CType=1: “Transition Programme”}{IF CType = 2: “T Level”} website
4. From a college or school providing the {IF CType=1: “Transition Programme”}{IF CType = 2: “T Level”} (their website, prospectus, open-day, etc.)
5. Friends
6. Social media
7. Local advertising
8. An employer
9. Somewhere else (specify)

{ASK IF CType=2 (T Level)}

TLInstead

“If you had not chosen to do a T Level, what do you think you would most likely have done instead?”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. A different kind of technical or vocational qualification
2. A-Levels
3. A mixture of A-Levels and other courses
4. An apprenticeship
5. Another form of training
6. Don’t know

Course content and delivery

Format of delivery

{ASK ALL}
TeachingFormat
“How have you been taught since you started in September?”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. Entirely taught online
2. Mostly taught online
3. Roughly the same amount online and in-person
4. Mostly in person
5. Entirely in person

{ASK ALL}
Hours
“Not including the industry placement or any work experience, how many hours of **teaching**, either online or in-person, did you usually have **each week**?”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. Less than 5 hours a week
2. 5 to 10 hours a week
3. 11 to 20 hours a week
4. 21 to 30 hours a week
5. More than 30 hours a week

{ASK ALL}
HoursManage
“How manageable have you found the **amount of teaching**, whether online or in-person?”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. Very manageable
2. Mostly manageable
3. Quite manageable
4. Not very manageable
5. Not at all manageable

{ASK ALL}
Workload
“How manageable have you found the work you have to do **outside the taught lessons**?”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. Very manageable
2. Mostly manageable
3. Quite manageable
4. Not very manageable
5. Not at all manageable

{IF Workload=4 or 5 (not manageable)}
WorkloadWhy
"Why was it not manageable?"

G_Multi_ll1

1. Too much work given
2. The work was too hard
3. The work set was unclear
4. Not enough support from teacher / tutor
5. Other commitments outside course
6. Other (specify)

Course elements delivered

{IF CType=1,3,4 (TP, other, not sure}
Clarity
"Were you clear from the start what you needed to do to successfully complete the course?"

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Yes
2. No
3. Can't remember

{IF CType=1,3,4 (TP, other, not sure}
Qualification
"Does your course lead to a qualification in your chosen occupation area if it's completed successfully (for instance in digital, construction or education and childcare)?"

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

{IF CType=1,3,4 (TP, other, not sure}
Tailored

“To what extent did your school or college adapt the course to meet your personal needs?

For example, this may include additional things to help with building your confidence, study skills, communication skills or managing personal finances.”

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. A great deal
2. To some extent
3. Not at all
4. Didn’t need any adaptation

{IF CType=1,3,4 (TP, other, not sure}
CourseLen
“Would you say the overall length of the course is…?”

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Too long
2. About right
3. Too short

{IF CType=1,3,4 (TP, other, not sure} {Cog}
English
“Are you studying English for…”

G_Multi_ll1

1. GCSE
2. Functional Skills
3. Neither [EXCLUSIVE]

{IF CType=1,3,4 (TP, other, not sure} {Cog}
Maths
G_Multi_ll1

“Are you studying maths for…”

1. GCSE
2. Functional Skills
3. Neither [EXCLUSIVE]

{ASK ALL}
IndPlaceDone
“Have you done {IF CType=2 (TL): an industry placement; ELSE: some work experience} during the course?”

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Yes – currently on a placement
2. Yes – completed placement
3. Not yet
4. No – not doing this

{IF CType=2 AND IndPlaceDone=1 or 2}
IndPlaceHrs
"How many hours at your industry placement {IF IndPlaceDone=1 (currently on placement): have you done so far?; IF IndPlaceDone=2 (completed placement): did you do?}"

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. None
2. Up to 50 hours
3. 51 to 100 hours
4. 101 to 200 hours
5. 201 to 300 hours
6. 301 to 400 hours
7. More than 400 hours

{IF CType=1, 3, 4 (TP or something else/not sure) AND IndPlaceDone=1 or 2}
WorkExpHrs
"How many hours of work experience {IF IndPlaceDone=1 (currently on placement): have you done so far?; IF IndPlaceDone=2 (completed placement): did you do?}"

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. None
2. Up to 21 hours
3. 22 to 35 hours
4. 36 to 70 hours
5. 71 to 140 hours
6. 141 to 280 hours
7. More than 280 hours

{IF CType=1,3,4 (TP or something else/ not sure)}
OthEmpCont
"Apart from any work experience, has your course included other contact with employers, for instance visits, talks or employer-set projects?

Please think about both in-person and online/virtual contact"

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Yes

2. No

Level of challenge

{ASK ALL}
Challenge
“Overall, would you say the course has been…”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. Extremely challenging
2. Very challenging
3. Quite challenging
4. Not very challenging
5. Not at all challenging

Barriers

{ASK ALL}
Barriers
“Which, if any, of the following have got in the way of your learning during the course?”

G_Multi_II1

1. Lack of materials for studying
2. Lack of specialist equipment / software for course
3. Lack of reliable IT or online access
4. Lack of in-person teaching
5. Cost of travel to my course
6. Family responsibilities
7. Working part-time
8. Other (please specify)
9. No barriers {EXCLUSIVE}

Evaluation of course content

Overall satisfaction

{ASK ALL}
SatOverall
“How satisfied with your course are you overall?”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. Very satisfied
2. Quite satisfied
3. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

4. Quite dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied

Satisfaction with programme elements

{ASK ALL}
SatTeach
"How satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with each of the following on your course?"

G_Collapsible_Grid_ll1

GRID ITEMS

1. The standard of classroom teaching
2. The standard of the practical 'hands on' work
3. Teachers' knowledge and expertise
4. The support you received from tutors
5. Course organisation and management
6. The skills it covered for your chosen occupation / subject area
7. Equipment, software and resources available
8. The way students are assessed on the course
9. The careers advice provided
10. The level of employer contact in the course
11. {IF English = 1,2 AND CType = 1: "The teaching of English"}
12. {IF Maths = 1,2 AND CType = 1: "The teaching of maths"}
13. Amount of course content related to your chosen subject area (for instance digital, construction or education and childcare) {TP only – Ctype=1}

{Programmer: Max 6 items per screen}

GRID RESPONSES

1. Very satisfied
2. Quite satisfied
3. Neither satisfied not dissatisfied
4. Quite dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied
6. Not applicable

Satisfaction with Industry placement/ work experience

{IF IndPlaceDone = 1 or 2 – work experience or placement done}
SatPlacement
"The next few questions are about your {IF CType=2,3,4: "industry placement"; IF CType=1: "work experience placement"}.

How satisfied were you with your {IF CType=2,3,4: "industry placement"; IF CType=1: "work experience placement"}?"

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Very satisfied
2. Quite satisfied
3. Neither satisfied not dissatisfied
4. Quite dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied

{IF IndPlaceDone = 1 or 2 – work experience or placement done}
ExpectPlace
“Did the placement meet your expectations in terms of the content and skill development?”

1. Yes
2. No

{IF IndPlaceDone = 1 or 2 – work experience or placement done}
PlaceRate
“How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the {IF CType=2,3,4: “industry placement”; IF CType=1: “work experience placement”} on the course so far?”

G_Collapsible_Grid_ll1

GRID ITEMS

1. The placement directly related to my course of study
2. The placement came at the right point in the course
3. I was fully prepared for my placement
4. I felt supported by the employer during the placement
5. I felt supported by the college / school during the placement
6. The placement was a good challenge for me

GRID RESPONSES

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

{IF CType=2 (TL)}
EmpSet
“Have you done an employer-set project as part of the course?”

1. Yes– I have completed one
2. Yes – I am currently doing one
3. No

{IF EmpSet=1,2}
EmpSetSat
“How satisfied have you been with the employer-set project?”

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Very satisfied
2. Quite satisfied
3. Neither satisfied not dissatisfied
4. Quite dissatisfied
5. Very dissatisfied

Outcomes from course

{ASK ALL}
Outcomes
“How much has your course **helped you to develop** in the following areas?”

G_Collapsible_Grid_ll1

GRID ITEMS

1. My knowledge of the occupational area that my course covered
2. The practical skills needed for my chosen subject
3. My understanding of how workplaces operate
4. My IT skills
5. My communication skills
6. My confidence

GRID RESPONSES

1. A great deal
2. Quite a bit
3. To some extent
4. Very little
5. Not at all

{ASK IF CType=1 {TP}}
OutcomesTP
“How much has your course **helped you to develop**</b in the following areas?”

G_Collapsible_Grid_ll1

GRID ITEMS

1. Knowledge of T Levels in my chosen area
2. {IF English = 1, 2: “English skills”}

3. {IF Maths = 1, 2: “Maths skills”}
4. Study skills (for example, researching a topic or exam technique)
5. Confidence in the workplace

GRID RESPONSES

1. A great deal
2. Quite a bit
3. To some extent
4. Very little
5. Not at all

Future plans

{IF CType=1 (TP)}
TPContTL
“Are you planning to continue to a T Level at the end of the Transition Programme?”

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

{IF TPContTL = 2 or 3 No / not sure}
TPContTLWhy
“Why not?”

OPEN

{ASK IF CType=2,3,4 (TL, other, not sure) or TPContTL = 2 or 3 No/Not sure}
NextStepEd
“Are you planning to do further study or an apprenticeship of any kind in the year after your course finishes?”

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not decided

{ASK IF NextStepEd=1 (Yes)}
NextStepEdTypYes
“Which of these best describes your plans for further study?”

G_ReadOut_ll1

1. A university degree
2. {IF Digital at Subject: “Higher Technical qualification”}
3. A {IF Digital at Subject: “different kind of”} level 4 or 5 qualification (such as HND, HNC)
4. An apprenticeship (including a degree apprenticeship)

5. Another qualification / type of study

{ASK IF NextStepEd=2 (No) OR NextStepEd=3 (Not Decided)}
NextStepEdTypNo
“Which of these best describes your plans in the year after your course finishes?”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. A paid job
2. Voluntary work/unpaid internship
3. Take a break from study and work
4. Something else (please specify)
5. Not decided

{ASK IF CType=2,3,4 (TL, other, not sure) or TPContTL = 2 or 3 No/Not sure}
NextStepField
“Are you planning to work or study in the same field (e.g. childcare, digital) as your {CTypeTxt}?”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not decided

{ASK ALL}
NSSupport
“To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

I feel supported by my school/college in deciding on my next step”

G_ReadOut_II1

1. Strongly agree
2. Mostly agree
3. Neither agree nor disagree
4. Mostly disagree
5. Strongly disagree

Data linkage

{ASK ALL}
ConsentLink
“We would like your permission to link information from the records held by the following government agencies:

- Department for Education – your past and future learning
- Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs – your employment, earnings, tax and benefits
- Department for Work and Pensions – your benefits and participation in government schemes
- Higher Education Statistics Agency – your university participation

Adding information from these records makes the information you have given us even more valuable. It will build a more detailed picture of you now and in the future. This will help researchers to understand what happens to learners like you and help improve things.

Your information is confidential. You will not be identifiable in the data that researchers use. Your name, address or other contact details will never be included in the results.

You can change or withdraw your permissions at any time by contacting NatCen or the Department for Education. If you withdraw your permission data that has already been linked will be retained but no future linking will take place.

Do you give permission for a reference number to be passed to the Department for Education, so your records described above can be identified and linked to your survey responses?

TEL:"INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY":

EXPANDING HELP LINK: "Why is it helpful to add this information?"

"Adding extra details from administrative records opens up new possibilities for researchers from universities, charities and within government who all use the data to understand the experiences of learners and improve the services you use.

We learn a lot about your experiences from the questions we ask in the survey but adding extra information from administrative records helps us to build a more complete picture of how your course has helped you.

It also means we can make the data as valuable and accurate as possible, as it allows us to fill in the blanks for any details you may not know or remember and to avoid asking you for some other details during the survey."

TEL:"INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY":

EXPANDING HELP LINK: "What do these records include?"

- "Department for Education's (DfE) National Pupil Database (NPD) includes information about your participation and achievement in school and further education as well as details about the school, college or training centre you attended.
- Department for Educations' (DfE) Individual Learner Record (ILR) includes information about your participation and achievement in further education from age 16, as well as details about the college or training centre you may have attended.

- Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) records include Income Tax, Tax Credits and Child Benefit data, providing information about employment, earnings, tax, pensions and National Insurance contributions.
- Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) includes information about benefit receipt and participation in employment programs
- Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) includes information about higher education applications and offers
- Student Loans Company (SLC) records include information about applications for student finance
- Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) includes information about university participation and attainment"

TEL:"INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY":

EXPANDING HELP LINK: "How does this process work?"
"If you give your permission, NatCen Social Research will pass an anonymised reference number to the Department for Education. The Department will be able to identify you in their records and link your information to records from the other government databases listed."

1. Yes
2. No

{ASK IF ConsentLink=2,ref,DK}
ConsentLinkIndiv
"Do you give permission for an anonymised reference number to be passed to the Department for Education, so that some of your records can be identified and linked to your survey responses? If so, please can you confirm which records you consent to having your survey responses linked to?"

TEL:"INTERVIEWER, IF NECESSARY":

EXPANDING HELP LINK: "What do these records include?"
"Department for Education's (DfE) National Pupil Database (NPD) includes information about your participation and achievement in school and further education as well as details about the school, college or training centre you attended.

Department for Educations' (DfE) Individual Learner Record (ILR) includes information about your participation and achievement in further education from age 16, as well as details about the college or training centre you may have attended.

Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) records include Income Tax, Tax Credits and Child Benefit data, providing information about employment, earnings, tax, pensions and National Insurance contributions.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) includes information about benefit receipt and participation in employment programs

Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) includes information about higher education applications and offers.

Student Loans Company (SLC) records include information about applications for student finance)

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) includes information about university participation and attainment”

G_Collapsible_Grid_ll1

GRID ITEMS

1. Department for Education’s National Pupil Database
2. Department for Education’s Individual Learner Record
3. Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs
4. Department for Work and Pensions
5. Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
6. Student Loans Company records
7. Higher Education Statistics Agency

GRID RESPONSES

1. Yes
2. No

Demographics

{ASK ALL}
DemIntro
“Now some questions about your household to help us understand more about your current situation.

Your answers will help us understand how students’ personal circumstances relate to their experiences of the new technical education courses.”

DISPLAY

{ASK ALL}
CvNumP
“How many people, including you, are currently living in your household?

Please make sure you include yourself and any children when answering."

{HELPLINK: "By 'household' we mean the group of people (not necessarily related) living at your address who share cooking facilities with you and also share a living room or sitting room or dining area"

RANGE: 1...16

CHECK: IF CvNumP=1 "Just to check, are you living alone? If not, please change your answer to include yourself in the number of people in the household. If you are, please continue."

RELATIONSHIP LOOP [CvNumP-1]

{IF CvNumP > 1}
CvRelP
{IF CvNumP > 2: "Thinking about each person in your household in any order, what is the (first/second/third…)"}; {IF CvNumP = 2: "What is this"} person's relationship to you?"
G_IfNec_II1

1. Mother (natural/adoptive/foster/step/in-law)
2. Father (natural/adoptive/foster/step/in-law)
3. Sister or brother (natural/half/adopted/foster/step/in-law)
4. Grandparent
5. Husband/wife/partner
6. Son or daughter (natural/adopted/foster/step/in-law)
7. Other relative
8. Other non-relative

{IF CvRelP = 1,2 (mother/father)}
ParentEdu
"Does your {IF CvRelP = 1 "mother", IF CvRelP = 2 "father"} have a university degree?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

{IF CvRelP = 1,2 (mother/father)}
ParentEconAct
Which of these best describes what your {IF CvRelP = 1 "mother", IF CvRelP = 2 "father"} was doing last week, that is the seven days ending last Sunday?

{#G_ReadOut_II1}

1. Full-time paid work (30 or more hours a week)
2. Part-time paid work (less than 30 hours a week)
3. Unemployed and looking for work
4. Full-time education or training course
5. Permanently sick/disabled
6. Looking after home/family

7. Retired from work
8. Something else
9. Don’t know

END LOOP

{ASK ALL}
Tenure
“Thinking about the accommodation you are living in at the moment, does your household own or rent this accommodation?”
G_ReadOut_ll1

1. Owned (with a mortgage or outright)
2. Rented privately
3. Rented from a local authority or housing association.
4. Something else (specify)
5. Don’t know

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