

# Expression of interest

# Title: Technical Education Learner Survey

**Project reference: 2019/052**

**Deadline for expressions of interest: 23:59 on 6th November 2020**

## Summary

Expressions of interest are sought to design, deliver and analyse a set of closely related surveys from 2021 to 2024 which will inform the evaluation of Technical Education reforms:

* Three-wave longitudinal survey with the first two cohorts of T Level learners
* Two-wave longitudinal survey with one cohort of A Level and vocational Level 2 and 3 learners to provide a non-T Level comparator group;
* One-wave survey of early Transition Programme learner cohorts;
* Two-wave longitudinal survey of a cohort of pre-reform Higher Technical Education learners;
* Two-wave longitudinal survey of a cohort of Institutes of Technology learners.

## Background

Technical Education reforms are based on the work of Lord Sainsbury’s independent panel[[1]](#footnote-2) and are set out in the government’s Post-16 Skills Plan[[2]](#footnote-3). The following reforms are to be rolled out within the next 5 years, as part of the Government’s ambitious framework to support individuals to secure a lifetime of skilled employment and meet the growing and changing needs of the economy.

1. The firstthree **T Levels**[[3]](#footnote-4) (new two-year qualification-based courses for 16- to 19-year olds) will be available at selected providers in September 2020, with a further seven T Level subjects available in September 2021. The remaining T Levels will be introduced in 2023 and 2024. These are completely new courses, with a substantial industry placement. Industry placements will be external to the classroom; linked to the skills related to their course; and for a minimum duration of 315 hours.
2. Aligned to T Levels is the **T Level** **Transition Programme**[[4]](#footnote-5), a new programme expected to last up to a year to prepare post-16 students who are not ready to take a T Level. This will be rolled out in phases from September 2020.
3. Reforms to **Higher Technical Education**[[5]](#footnote-6) (HTE= Levels 4 to 5 classroom-based provision aligned to technical routes) will be introduced to learners from 2022, including accrediting qualifications through the Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education, changing the regulatory framework and student finance offer, and improving information, advice, and guidance.
4. Aligned to the HTE reforms, **Institutes of Technology[[6]](#footnote-7)** (IoTs), established by existing HE and FE institutions, will specialise in offering Level 3 to Level 6 technical education, with an emphasis on Level 4 and Level 5, led by local employers. The first wave of these are being opened between 2020 and 2021 and the second wave of these are scheduled to open from 2021.

## Research aims

The aim of this research is to design and deliver a survey and analyse findings to inform the evaluation of Technical Educations reforms. The primary focus in the first instance is the initial two waves of T Levels (and three waves of its associated Transition Programme). Evidence from this research will also be used to establish a comprehensive baseline from which to robustly evaluate future reforms to Higher Technical Education. Although existing administrative datasets will inform part of the evaluation of Technical Education reforms, we will use this Tech Ed Learner Survey to capture certain learner characteristics, course perceptions, and short-term outcomes.

In particular, we anticipate research questions to include but not be limited to:

1. **Learner characteristics** to enable us to conduct richer analysis of administrative data (e.g. socioeconomic characteristics, motivations, ambitions);
2. **Learner perceptions** of their programme of study (e.g. course experiences, satisfaction, barriers to learning, reasons for non-completion);
3. **Learner short-term outcomes** (e.g. progression into skilled employment or further study/training, specific details of current activity, post-completion course reflections);
4. **Ask respondents for consent to link the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) matched administrative dataset** (containing data from Department for Education, Her Majesty’s Revenue & Customs, and Department for Work & Pensions) to enable future exploration of outcomes (such as, progression to further learning, employment, and future income and benefits receipt). This linking and data analysis is not in the scope of this project and will be conducted separately at a later date.

## Methodology

#### Survey design

The contractor will be responsible for designing fit-for-purpose questionnaires, in partnership with the Department. We expect this to involve proportionate cognitive testing and piloting. We therefore value evidence of bidders having worked on similar learner surveys of FE learners and longitudinal surveys in general.

We also expect the contractor to design and implement robust sampling and weighting strategies. The department will provide data for sampling, which will be drawn from:

1. **School Census[[7]](#footnote-8)** run by DfE, which is an electronic collection of pupil data from primary, secondary, special schools and pupil referral units, which takes place three times a year.
2. **Individualised Learner Record[[8]](#footnote-9)** (ILR), run by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), which captures some limited sociodemographic information (gender, ethnicity, disability, Special Educational Needs) and learning variables (Level, Course, Completion Status, and maths / English qualification).
3. **Higher Education Student Data[[9]](#footnote-10)**, run by HESA, which captures whose studying in HE, their pathways into HE, where and what they study, and their progression rates and qualifications.

#### Fieldwork

We anticipate a mixed methods survey will be the most appropriate to maximise response rates and provide best value for money, although we welcome alternative views. Unless strong justification can be provided, we therefore expect bidders to have the expertise and resources to undertake surveys that could involve online, telephone and postal elements. At full tender stage bidders will be invited to submit appropriate and innovative approaches for undertaking this survey.

#### Analysis and reporting

We expect the contractor to produce a number of reports and data outputs throughout the project. Clarity, precision and succinctness of written work are important to this project, as is a thorough approach to quality assurance.

#### Data protection

As this project involves the sharing of DfE-held personal data, any potential bidder who wishes to submit a bid for this work will require extra checks. All individuals at the bidding organisation who require access to the sample data in any form will be required to have a current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate issued no more than two years ago, and to sign an individual declaration form.

#### Components of survey

Survey timings will differ according to the learner types:

**T Level Learners** - This project will contact the first two T Level learner cohorts (those starting Autumn 2020 and Autumn 2021), capturing 3 occupational areas this academic year and 10 occupational areas next academic year. This survey will comprise 3 waves with data collection at the end of learners’ first year (Summer 2021 and Summer 2022), towards the end of their course (Summer 2022 and Summer 2023), and 6-9 months post-completion (Spring 2023 and Spring 2024).

**Non-T Level Comparator Learners** - This project will also contact a cohort of A Level and vocational Level 2 and 3 learners to collect similar information on their characteristics, course perceptions, and short-term outcomes. This survey will comprise 2 waves with data collection towards the end of learners’ courses and 6-9 months post-completion. The Departnent will confirm by early 2021 whether this comparator cohort survey will begin this academic year or the following.

**Transition Programme Learners** - This project will capture early Transition Programme learner cohorts towards the end of their one-year course.

**Pre-reform HTE Learners** - This project will capture one cohort of those HTE learners not captured by existing Higher Education (HE) surveys (e.g. OfS’ National Student Survey and HESA’s Graduate Outcomes). This survey will contact learners who enrolled before the HTE reforms begin to roll out in the 2022 academic year. Data collection will comprise 2 waves: one towards the end of learners’ courses (Summer 2022) and 15 months post-completion (Autumn 2023). This follow-up time-frame has been chosen to enable comparability to HTE learners whose destination data will already be captured by HESA Graduate Outcomes.

**IoT Learners** - To ensure we have comprehensive coverage of learner satisfaction and destination data, we may need to supplement existing Higher Education and apprenticeship surveys with this Tech Ed Learner Survey. This would be a 2-wave survey of non-HE and non-apprenticeship IoT learners studying technical Level 3 to Level 5 qualifications starting in academic year 2021-2022. Data collection would happen at the end of learners’ courses and 15 months post-completion. As with the HTE supplement, this follow-up time-frame has been chosen to ensure comparability to IoT learners whose destination data will already be captured by HESA Graduate Outcomes.

## Timing

**Procurement**

* Deadline for EOIs is 23.59 on 6th November 2020;
* Invitations to Tender (ITT) will be issued to short-listed organisations W/C 16th November 2020;
* Deadline for tenders is 16th December 2020;
* Preferred bidder will be selected W/C 11th January 2020.

**Contract**

* First survey in Spring-Summer 2021;
* Last survey in Spring 2024;
* Contract end date December 2024.

The Department reserves the right to reject all or any of the bids for the competition and not to award a contract to any bidder, without any liability on its part. Nothing in this expression of interest shall generate any contractual obligations prior to the signature of a contract following a competition.

## Assessment criteria

* Evidence of suppliers' understanding of the policy area;
* Evidence of suppliers' technical/professional ability to undertake the work;
* Evidence of relevant research experience. This covers an assessment of the suppliers’ expertise and experience in surveys, especially longitudinal studies, mixed mode surveys and surveys with FE learners.

**CVs and references are not required at this stage**

**Please note there is a 1000-word limit for Expressions of Interest**

| **Closing date for EOIs: 23:59 on 6th November 2020**  **Send your EOI form to:** [**alice.bull@education.gov.uk**](mailto:alice.bull@education.gov.uk) **and sarah.mcloughlin**[**@education.gov.uk**](mailto:alice.bull@education.gov.uk) |
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## How to submit an expressions of interest

You must submit an expression of interest (EOI) in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the ‘EOI form 2018’ form which can be found under attachments in the ContractsFinder listing. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

All contracts are let on the basis of the Department’s Terms & Conditions, a copy is available attached to the ContractsFinder listing. You are encouraged to check these before submitting your expression of interest, as these form part of your contractual obligations.

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1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/post-16-skills-plan-and-independent-report-on-technical-education> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/536043/Post-16_Skills_Plan.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/introduction-of-t-levels/introduction-of-t-levels> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/t-level-transition-programme-framework-for-delivery-2020-to-2021> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-technical-education-reforms/higher-technical-education-reforms> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/institutes-of-technology--2> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/individualised-learner-record-ilr> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)