

The UK Technical and Vocational Education and Training Systems

An Introduction



The UK TVET Systems An Introduction

This document provides a summary of the UK's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems for international partners. It is intended as a high-level summary of the sector's key features and to act as a starting point for a more detailed discussion.

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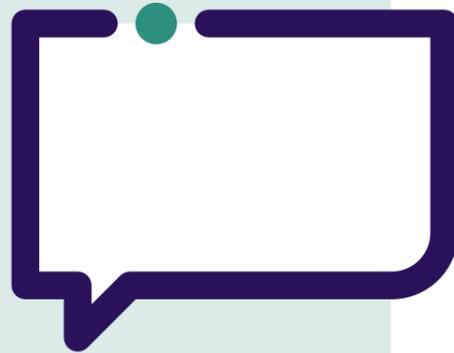
1 Introduction

Economic and political context



For the UK to seize new opportunities and grow, we need a trained and diverse workforce, supported by good business practice and the right policy environment

Confederation of British Industry (CBI)



Improving economic and individual prosperity, equality of opportunity and building communities are key ambitions for the UK. TVET has assumed increased importance as a catalyst to meet these agendas, and has been at the forefront of policy making in the nations and regions.

TVET in the UK forges the knowledge, skills and behaviors that enable employment and social mobility. TVET is also vital in supporting businesses to innovate and grow and plays an integral role in sustainable economic development. This happens at national, regional and local level and is hardwired into many other ambitions such as [Global Britain](#) and the [Industrial Strategy](#).

UK TVET is also a central part of [Building Back Better](#) from Covid-19, responding to industrial and social change and tackling climate change. It is a priority in every corner of all four UK nations.

A summary of key objectives for the sector include:

- High quality training that meets current and emerging industry skills needs
- Designing new and better ways for employers and educators to collaborate
- Ensuring flexible routes into training and employment so that all groups of learners, including those otherwise marginalised, can access training that enhances their prospects
- Promoting higher level technical qualifications and training
- Supporting lifelong training and retraining opportunities to meet the needs of employees and employers for years to come
- Investing in professional development initiatives and recruitment campaigns to build the sector's training capacity



In the years ahead, the reforms we have announced today will deliver high quality technical education across the country – and help people retrain and secure better paid jobs.

That way when we have beaten Covid-19 we can put rocket boosters under our recovery and Build Back Better.

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, announcing the Skills for Jobs White Paper

Further education is central to transforming regions and transforming lives. It's fundamental to social mobility. Fundamental to businesses and it's fundamental to the economy.

Rt Hon Gavin Williamson MP, Secretary of State for Education in a speech to the Social Market Foundation

Fundamentally, this is about ensuring a work relevant educational experience for our young people. It is about all of us valuing and understanding what a rich blend of learning, including vocational education, can offer. It is about employers playing an active role, both shaping and benefiting from Scotland's education system by helping to create the talent pool they need and recruiting young employees.

From [Developing Scotland's Young Workforce](#)

A coherent and comprehensive skills strategy can help Northern Ireland to recover and build resilience in a post-pandemic world. Based on the commitment and motivation shown by government and stakeholders the OECD is confident that Northern Ireland can position itself to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Andrew Bell, Head of the OECD Centre for Skills, Skills Strategy NI

It is important that we invest now to support a workforce with the skills to drive forward our economic response to the coronavirus.

Education Minister for Wales, Kirsty Williams AM

TVET in the UK

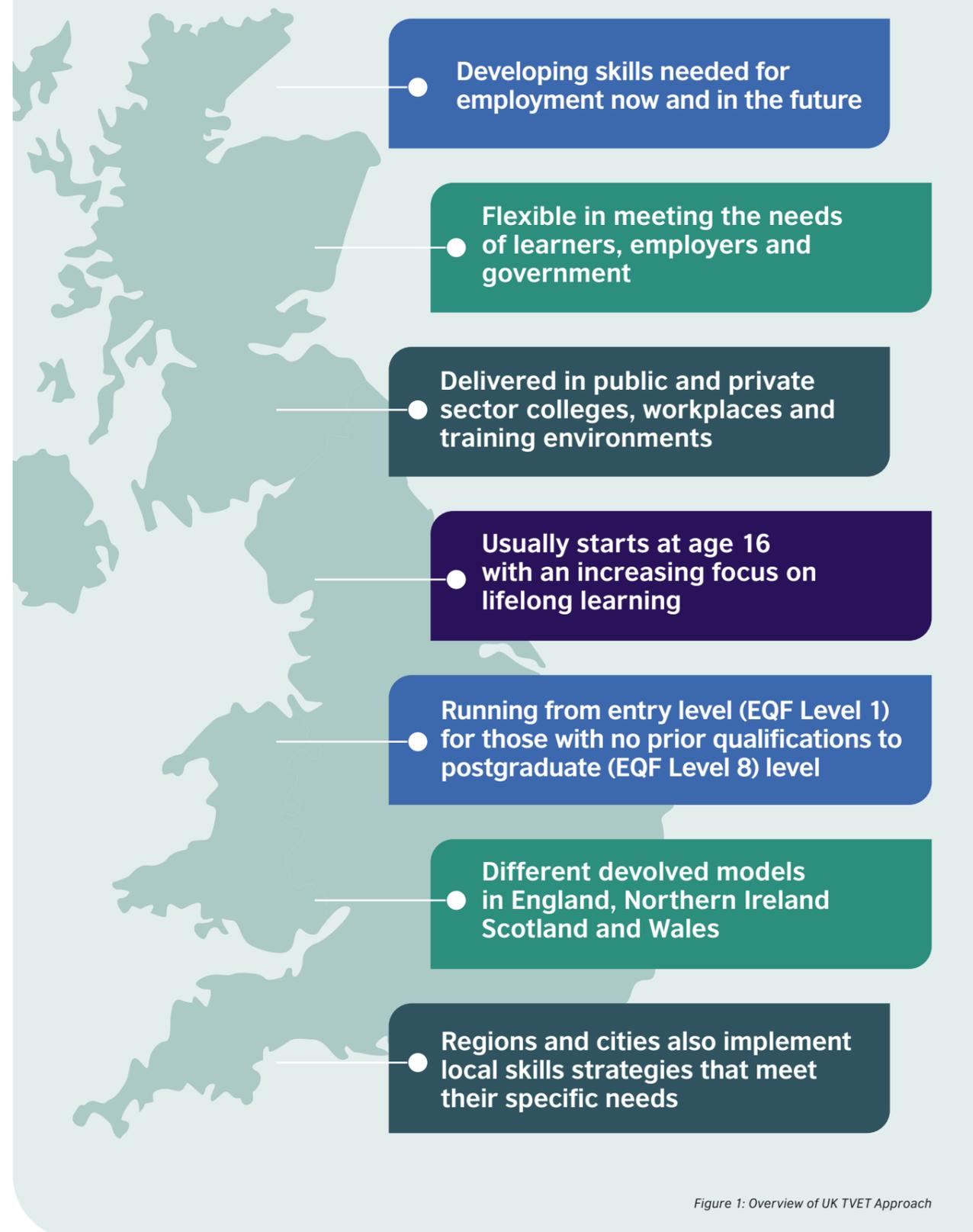


Figure 1: Overview of UK TVET Approach

Six key features that define the UK system:

Employer centred

- Employers play a key role in the design, delivery and assessment of TVET
- Employers contribute equipment, expertise, training venues and through the [apprenticeship levy](#)
- Training outcomes are measured against employment-based outcomes and not just the passing of exams

Global

- International services include; delivering training and qualifications, joint certification, international student recruitment and technical assistance
 - Supporting a wide range of international development projects and initiatives
- [The UK Skills Partnership](#) represents the domestic sector globally.

Flexible

- Training providers have relative autonomy in the delivery of training, within a regulated framework
- An innovative and multi-faceted sector, responsive to change and meeting varied stakeholders' needs
- Rigorous approach to safeguarding the interests of learners and employers
- Marketised system that allows sector stakeholders a degree of choice and utilises competition to improve learner outcomes

Access and Inclusion

- Providing access to tailored training for all learners at all ages and skills
- Comprehensive student support, community engagement, staff development and utilisation of digital technology
- Specific targets and requirements for equal access to programmes and marketing campaigns aimed at different groups

Quality

- Commitment to the delivery of high-quality programmes underpinned by robust quality assurance systems and the sharing of effective practice
- Providers have strong internal quality assurance processes
- National quality assurance agencies who have the legal power to remove low quality training providers.
- Quality inspection reports are [publicly available](#) incentivising and rewarding high performance

Economic Development

- Contributing to business growth and innovation
- Working with local development agencies to enhance approaches to business growth and competitiveness
- Delivering upskilling and reskilling programmes for SMEs to enhance their productivity
- Addressing the challenges of actual and potential unemployment through skills interventions
- Contributing to place based regional and local economic development and the development of new industries

Devolved approaches to TVET

The UK Government retains jurisdiction of English Education. Since 1999, education has been devolved to national administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- [The Scottish Parliament](#)
- [The Welsh Parliament](#)
- [The Northern Ireland Assembly](#)

These countries are sometimes to as the ‘devolved nations’ or ‘devolved administrations’.

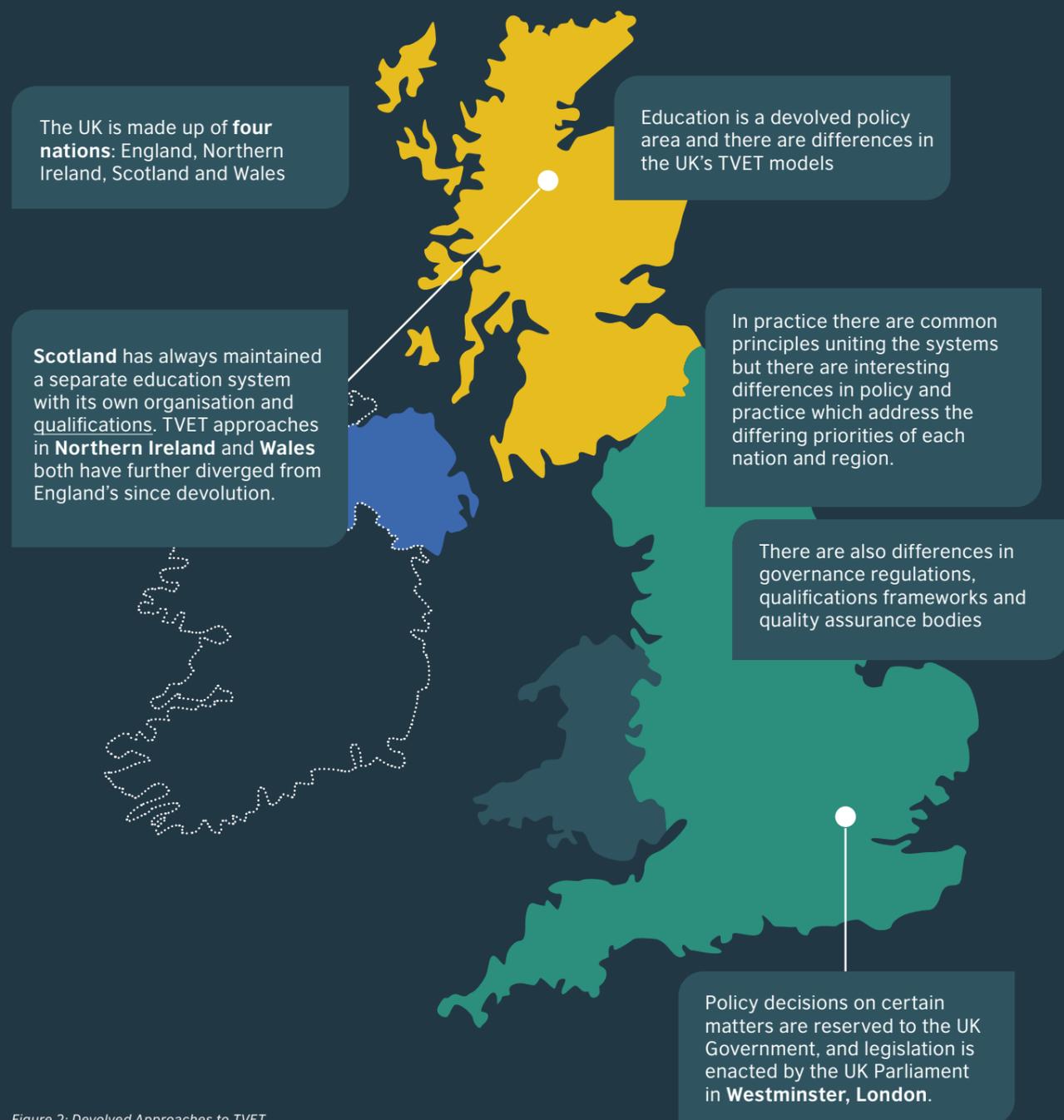


Figure 2: Devolved Approaches to TVET

Qualification Frameworks

- The Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) is used in England and Northern Ireland. The RQF is regulated by [Ofqual](#) in England and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) in Northern Ireland.
- The [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework](#) (SCQF) has a credit and unit-based structure.
- The [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales \(CQFW\)](#) is used for all qualifications in Wales. Qualifications Wales was established in 2015 as an independent agency tasked with the effective management of the CQFW.

Inspection and Regulatory Bodies

England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also have different inspection and regulatory bodies for the regulation of qualifications and provision in their TVET sectors:

Country	Training Providers	Qualifications
England	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)	Office for Qualifications and Examinations (Ofqual)
Northern Ireland	Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI)	Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA)
Scotland	Education Scotland	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
Wales	Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales (Estyn)	Qualifications Wales

Table 1. Inspection and Regulatory Bodies

Policy, administrative and funding bodies

Country	Accountable Government Department	Additional agencies	Funding Agency
England	Department for Education	Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education	The Education and Skills Funding Agency
Northern Ireland	Department for the Economy		
Scotland	Department of Learning and Department of Lifelong Learning	Skills Development Scotland	Scottish Funding Council
Wales	Department for Education and Skills		Higher Education Funding Council for Wales

Table 2: Policy, administrative and funding bodies

UK approaches to Skills planning

Each system has key independent or partially independent government agencies that provide oversight and governance of the TVET System. These agencies are apolitical but work to enact the vision of the government of the day. They are ultimately accountable to ministers but have a degree of autonomy in how they administer their systems and in how any reforms are implemented. These agencies work closely with delivery partners in the private and public sector to ensure that the TVET system works effectively for learners, education institutions and employers.

For example in Scotland, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) facilitates a demand led approach to skills planning, through deep engagement with industry and regional stakeholders to develop Sectoral and Regional Skills Investment Plans. These evidence-based plans are used to inform investment and to enhance the response of education, training and careers information advice and guidance services to the needs of industry. Skills Development Scotland also oversees the Scottish Apprenticeship Advisory Board' (SAAB) which manages the development of apprenticeship frameworks in key sectors. SAAB's membership includes representatives from employers, government and unions.



Figure 3: SDS Skills Planning Approach (summary)

In Northern Ireland a Skills Council has been established to support the roll out of the SkillsNI Strategy. This Skills Council works closely with Sectoral Employer Partnerships and Local Authority Intermediary Labour Market Partnerships to better align the skills and employability programmes across the regions. Northern Ireland has developed a skills barometer which helps to track and forecast future skills requirements across all the key sectors. A Strategic Advisory Forum also exists to help shape reforms in youth training, apprenticeships and higher-level apprenticeships.

Navigating the UK TVET Systems

The systems are made up of a range of different organisations each fulfilling different roles. For this multi-stakeholder model to operate effectively it is important that roles and remits are clearly defined including through the allocation of funding and responsibility.

The following is a simplified model combining the four countries approaches and differs slightly in reality for each nation



*Employers commission and fund training through different mechanism including the apprenticeship levy

**Employer Representatives include Sector Skills organisations, National Skills Academies, Trailblazer Groups and other employer organisations such as chambers of commerce.

Note: both the qualification regulator and the inspection agency report directly to Parliament, not the Department for Education. This ensures their independence

Figure 4: Navigating the UK TVET Systems

2 Who delivers TVET?

In the UK TVET is delivered by:



Training Providers - Introduction

The sector is made up of many different types of providers but all share the following key characteristics and objectives



Further Education (FE) Colleges

- At the heart of the UK's TVET system providing training across different sectors
- Deliver training programmes from foundation level to higher education (including degree apprenticeships)
- Historically not for profit although many now have commercial operations and reinvest profits back into publicly funded provision
- Have an important community role as a major local employer and centre of learning
- Identify opportunities to deliver non-funded training on a commercial basis
- Provide high-quality TVET for young people, adults and employers
- Deliver programmes for learners with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)
- Have a key role in strengthening local, regional and national economies
- Support transition to work or further study
- Have expert teaching staff with up-to-date industry knowledge
- Industry standard facilities

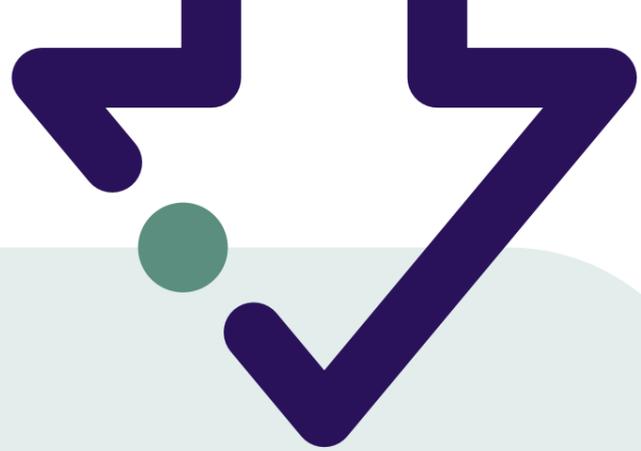
Strong Governance and the Student Voice

FE colleges are afforded a degree of autonomy in their strategic and operational direction, which requires strong leadership and governance.

England and Scotland have developed codes for good governance for public sector further education colleges. The Private ITP sector has also developed a code of good governance for independent training providers. built on seven themes of effective governance.

As part of their commitment to effective learner engagement, colleges use the 'student voice' to inform institutional policies and strategies. This can be through colleges proactively engaging with student union representatives to understand and enhance the learner experience, seeking student feedback to inform internal quality assessment or including student representatives on college governing boards.





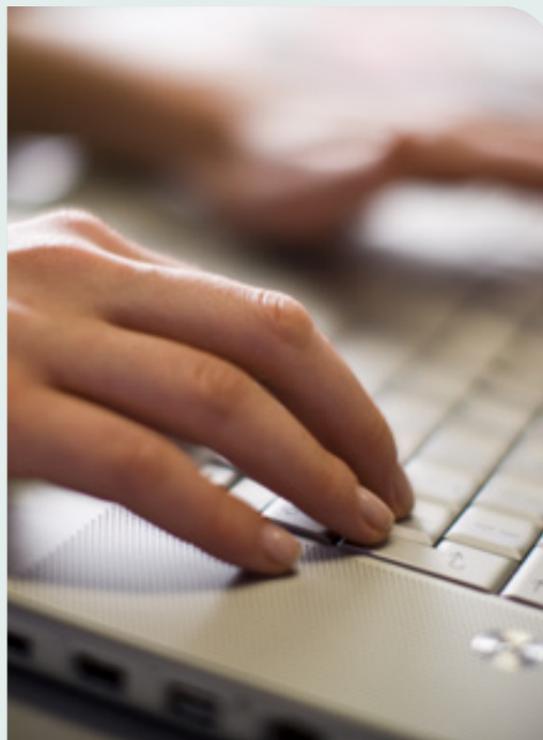
Case study: Innovative use of blended learning

Heart of Worcestershire College (HoW) started the Covid enforced lockdown with an established commitment to blended learning, having already developed its own blended learning model, SOLA, and built a library of blended learning resources through the Blended Learning Consortium.

HoW also has a robust digital induction that supports learners of all abilities with the right tools for them to engage, progress and thrive. Additional integrated tools for accessibility, such as Immersive Reader and Read Aloud, are introduced at induction to encourage learners to explore the technologies and build up a unique toolkit for their everyday academic life.

Behind all this lies the commitment of the leadership team to driving forward a digital culture, backed by significant investment in the HoW's digital estate, strategically focused on core requirements such as an "anytime, anywhere, any place" approach to accessing learning material and to provide tools to enable learners to participate regardless of level or ability.

(Example taken from JISC's '[Shaping the Digital Future of FE and Skills](#)' (2020))



Other College providers

- Sixth form colleges cater primarily for the 16-19 age group and offer a diverse range of mainly classroom based courses in academic and TVET programmes. Around two-thirds of sixth form college learners progress to higher education.
- Land-based colleges provide education and training in areas relating to animals, plants, farming, and the environment.
- Art, design and performing arts colleges offer specialist courses for the creative sectors.
- Independent Specialist Colleges (ISCs) offer specialist support to young people with learning difficulties, and/or disabilities.

Independent Training Providers (ITPs)

- Can be both for profit or not for profit, including working in the voluntary sector.
- Deliver government funded training especially to provide 'off-the-job' training; including for apprentices.
- Also deliver non-government funded training, including non-accredited bespoke training.
- Tend to be smaller than FE colleges so may deliver more niche or technically specialist provision. FE colleges will often sub-contract ITP's and work in partnership with them.
- Larger ITPs will provide training opportunities across the country in a range of vocational training areas.
- Partner with employers who want to access external expertise to help them manage their training. This includes organising 'on the job' training provided by the employer in the workplace.

Schools

Deliver some vocational courses, particularly for learners aged 14 to 18.

Universities

Offer programmes at higher level technical skills; this includes through the delivery of Degree apprenticeships (also delivered through FE Colleges)

Degree Apprenticeships

Degree Apprenticeships are developed in partnership by employers, universities, colleges and professional bodies. They combine working with studying part-time at a university. Apprentices are employed throughout the programme, and spend part of their time at university or college and the rest with their employer. Degree apprenticeship programmes can take between three to six years to complete, depending on the course level. Currently, the scheme is only available in England and Wales, although applications may be made from all parts of the UK. Scotland has its own scheme known as Graduate Apprenticeships.

Institutes of Technology

- Institutes of technology (IoTs) are collaborations between further education colleges, universities and employers.
- They specialise in delivering higher technical education (EQF L5) with a focus on STEM subjects in sectors such as:
 - engineering
 - digital
 - construction
- focus on technical skills and seek to provide their learners with clear progression routes to employment.

National Colleges

Between 2016 – 18 the UK Government opened employer-led 'National Colleges' in selected growth sectors; Creative and Cultural, Digital Skills, Nuclear and High-Speed Rail, with an objective to provide higher level skills in key growth sectors and by doing so, support the delivery of critical infrastructure projects.

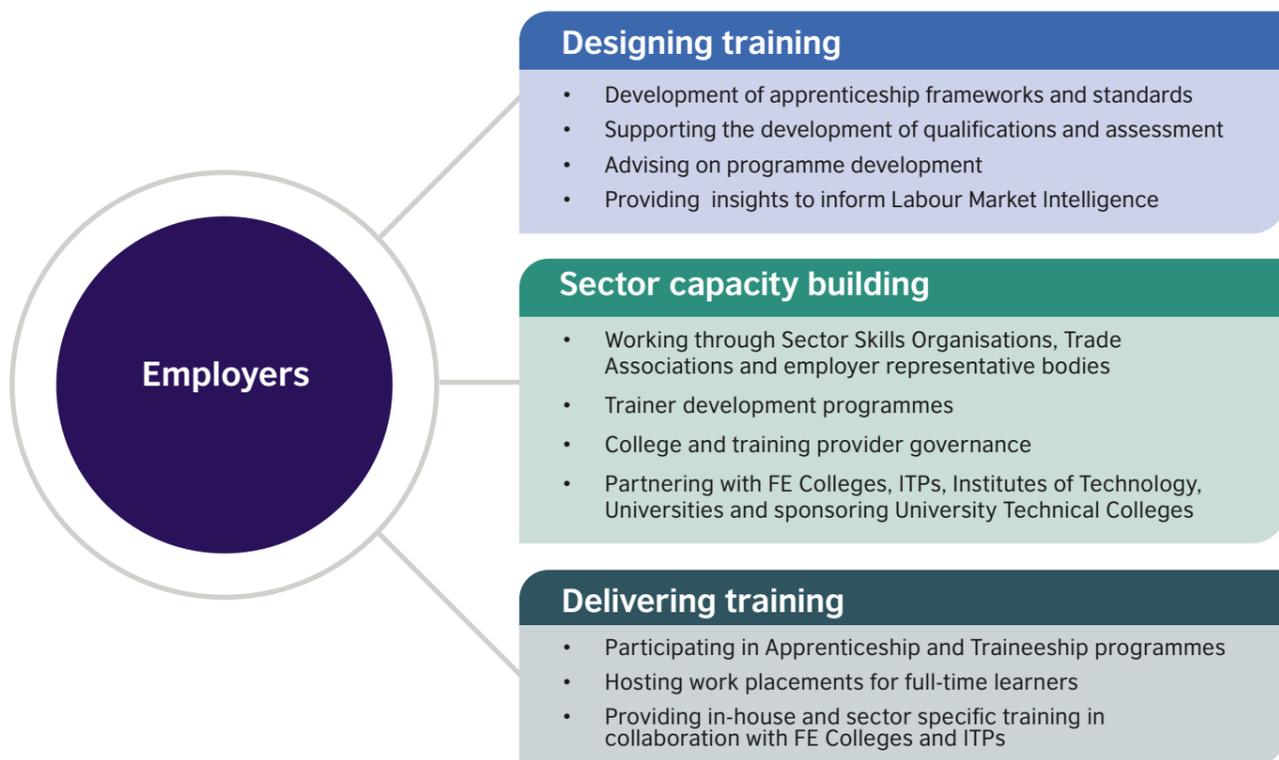
3 What is the role of employers?

Employers play a key role in the design, delivery and management of training: they are not just customers of the UK TVET Systems but active participants in all aspects of it

- Nearly all employers will provide training to their employees in areas such as; company processes, machine usage and health and safety.
- Some employers, especially larger ones, directly deliver TVET to their own employees or those of connected companies.
- Employers may also supplement their inhouse training with input from FE Colleges or ITPs.
- Employer training providers who receive government funding for their training will be subject to the same quality assurance inspections as other training providers.

‘Sector Skills Councils and National Skills Academies’

Sector Skills Councils and National Skills Academies are employer-led organisations that work across their industries and sectors to gather labour market intelligence, facilitate workforce planning, develop national occupational standards, and build demand-led solutions. They galvanise employer ambition and investment in skills, supporting increased productivity and job creation. They also work with partners across the skills landscape to support the development of sector-specific curriculum, qualifications, training and accreditation



Employer led approach to developing Apprenticeship Standards

In England, apprenticeship standards are developed by trailblazer groups, groups of employers, recognised by the [Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education](#).

Trailblazer employers are expected to employ apprentices in the occupation once the standard has been developed. They are also expected to actively promote the developed apprenticeship standard to other key stakeholders such as training providers, end-point assessment organisations, other employers and potential apprentices.

Applications for developed apprenticeship standards need to go through a proposal and approval process managed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

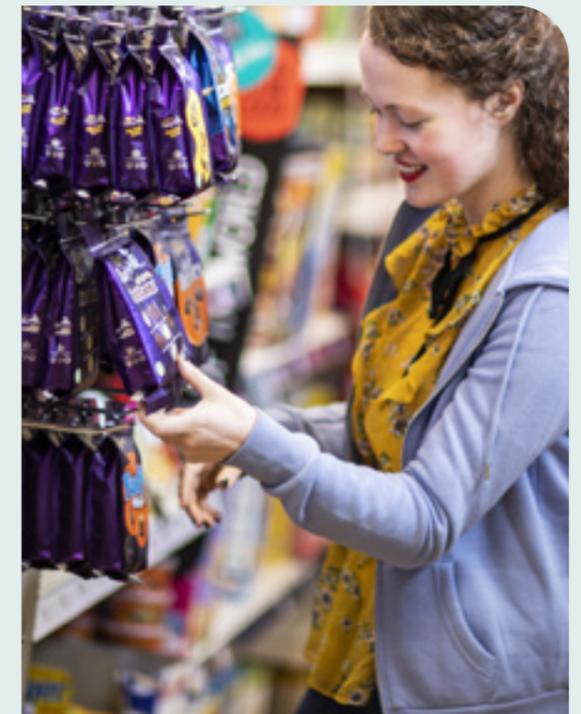
Standards should be short and concise documents that describe the ‘knowledge, skills and behaviours’ (KSBs) needed for someone to be competent in the occupation’s duties. They also detail any qualifications that must be passed and alignment with professional recognition if applicable. Standards also need to include an End Point Assessment (EPA) plan, detailing the independent assessment that apprentices must take after their training. This final assessment proves that the apprentice can successfully carry out all aspects of their jobs.

To reflect current practice, changes may need to be made to update apprenticeship standards

Case study: Employer engagement in the visitor economy sector

Employers in the visitor economy sector (including British Airways, Compass, Tesco and TUI) have worked with People 1st International (the Sector Skills Council for hospitality, retail, travel and aviation) to develop very clear and user-friendly ‘professional’ apprenticeship standards for key roles in the sector, such as chefs and retailers and airport staff. These include the key functions of the job and the behaviours required to succeed in the role.

This focus on behaviours is crucial given the importance of customer service to the industry. They have also created a ‘Career Map’ for industry, showcasing the career pathways to enter and progress through the sector



Apprenticeships

An apprenticeship is a job with training in which apprentices learn, gain experience and are paid. Apprentices are employees with an employment contract.

An apprenticeship involves working whilst receiving a formal programme of training. Apprenticeships can take two to four years to complete and provide an opportunity for apprentices to learn new skills whilst earning money and gaining hands-on experience.

Apprentices 'off-the-job' training is usually provided by an external training organisation (college, ITP), although some employers deliver their own training. Depending on the apprenticeship, off-the-job training could be delivered via a weekly study day (day release) or through training blocks. Training is delivered in workshops, classrooms, online or a via a combination of mediums. Training providers work closely with employers to develop a detailed and targeted training plan. Apprentices work towards a range of vocational

qualifications such as awards, certificates, diplomas or NVQs. Apprenticeships span Levels 2 – 7 (European Qualification Framework):

Young people (16-24) who require additional experience and skills before starting an apprenticeship can undertake traineeships or foundation apprenticeships, which are made up of work placements, work preparation training and English and Maths.

The devolved nations have taken slightly different approaches to apprenticeships. In England apprenticeships are developed based on standards (as described in the 'Apprenticeship Standards' case study) defined by groups of employers. Apprentices progress towards these standards is then checked through an end point assessment. Apprenticeships in Scotland and Wales are delivered through frameworks which include qualifications which apprentices have to pass as they progress through their apprenticeships.

Level	Educational level (European Qualifications Framework (EQF))/Age
Intermediate	EQF L3 / (approximate age 16 - 18)
Advanced	EQF L4 / (approximate age 16 – 18)
Higher	EQF Ls 5, 6, 7/ (approximate age for levels 4,5,6 is 18-22, approximate age for level 7 (22+))
Degree	EQF Ls 6, 7

UK apprenticeships

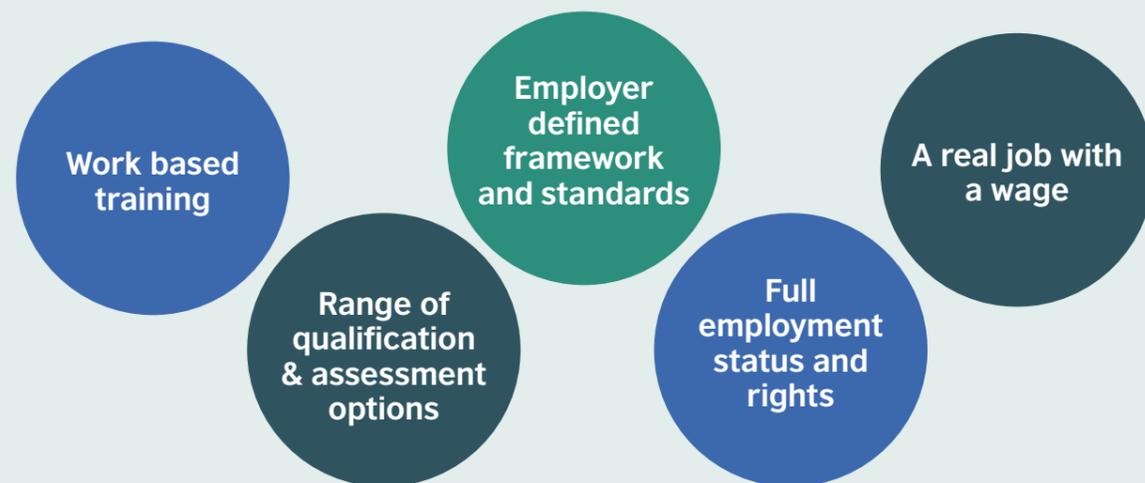


Figure 6: UK Apprenticeships

4 Who teaches TVET?

- Those who deliver TVET training are described as 'dual professionals' with both up to date technical knowledge and the ability to apply effective pedagogical theory.
- TVET sector trainers are expected to hold substantial qualifications and/or experience in their particular area and have or be willing to gain a teaching qualification.
- TVET providers look to recruit industry experts, whilst keeping their current trainers' skills up to date, this means that the continuous professional development (CPD) of instructors is extremely important.
- There are schemes to support TVET CPD, including the Society for Education and Training (SET) which provides a professional network for trainers and enhances professional development through access to teaching tools, research and training opportunities
- SET also administers the Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and Advanced Teacher Status (ATS) schemes

Teach Too

Teach Too is an important TVET sector initiative aimed at promoting excellence in training through collaborative arrangements between colleges and employers. The scheme looks to develop 'a two-way street' that encourages industry experts to spend time teaching in their work. This allows employers an opportunity to have a direct involvement in designing, planning and delivering TVET and for learners to access industry level facilities and expertise. The scheme also looks to promote 'dual professional' trainers who combine occupational and pedagogic expertise.



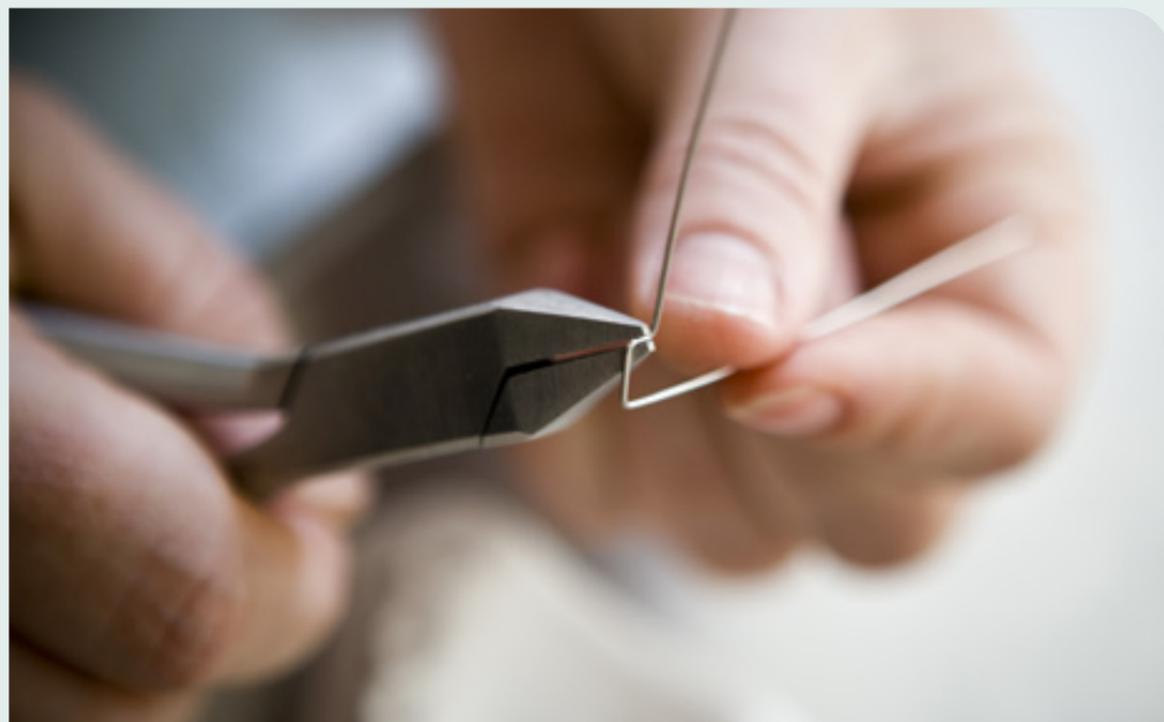
Case study: Capacity building the delivery of skills through competitions

WorldSkillsUK is a UK charity that works to raise standards in technical and vocational education. Utilising their experience of national and international competitions and as the UK's representative in the global WorldSkills International movement of over 80 member countries they work with governments, employers and education institutions to identify and embed international best practice in skills development.

Over the last year WorldSkills UK has established a Centre of Excellence in partnership with NCFE through which a team of WorldSkills UK's Skills Coaches are leading a skills and knowledge development programme for FE teachers drawing on world-leading excellence in industry and technical education. This includes peer-to-peer information exchange, technical masterclasses and supporting resources for training teachers to improve their professional practice and enable thousands of young people across the country to better fulfil their potential.

WorldSkills has also created an Innovation Network of colleges who benefit from WorldSkills UK's performance data to benchmark their performance across a wide range of skills areas and a Skills Development Hub giving educators and learners access to a wide range of online material, informed by world-class standards to support their teaching and learning. WorldSkills UK's Skills Coaches also use their international knowledge and expertise to help inform standard setting and assessment in UK TVET systems.

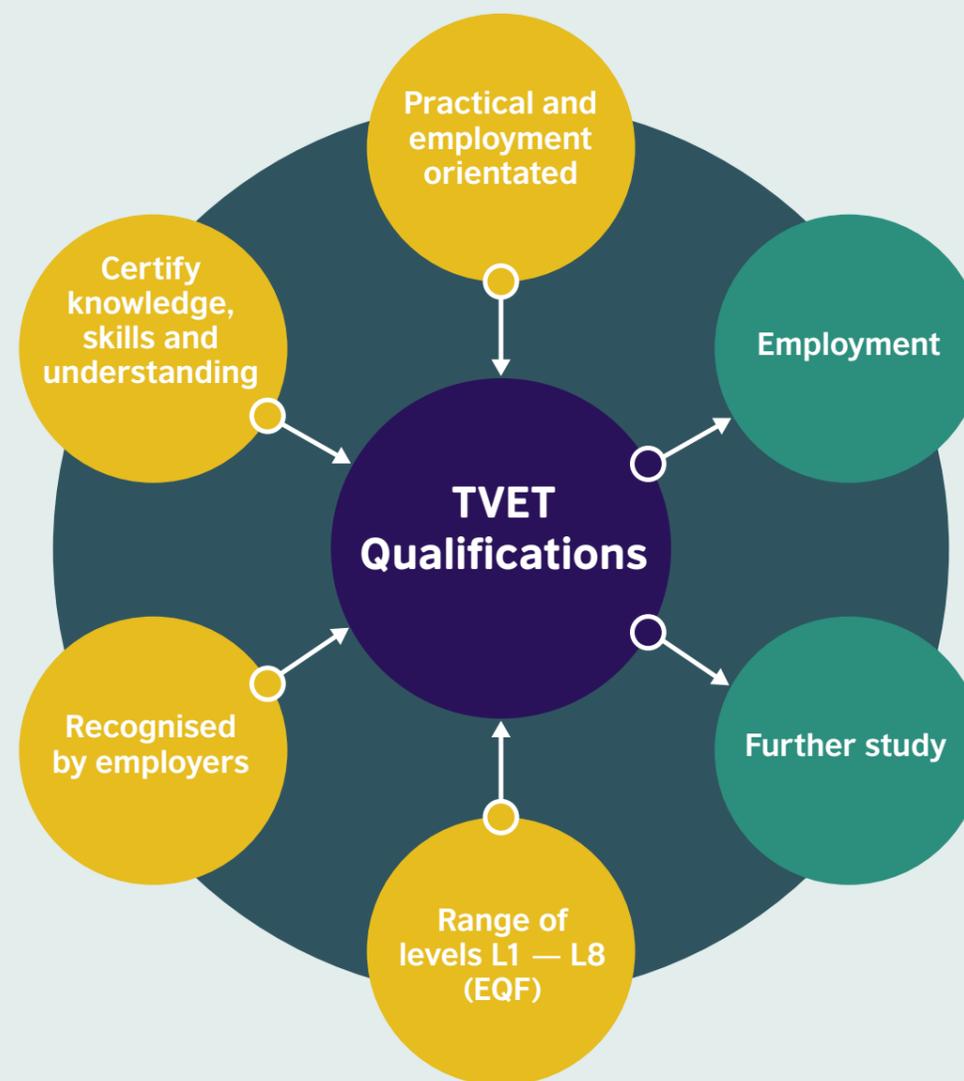
Through all these mechanisms WorldSkills UK aims to improve the standard and prestige of technical education and apprenticeships in the UK.



5 How do qualifications work?

Introduction

- TVET qualifications certify a learner's knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- Qualifications are available at all levels from basic (EQF 1) to higher degree level (EQF 8).
- Universities award foundation degrees, bachelor's and postgraduate degrees and degree apprenticeships.
- Further Education Colleges mainly focus on vocational qualifications below degree level (EQF 6), but also deliver some higher education courses, including degrees, usually in partnership with universities.
- Qualifications are regulated to ensure that they are not overly specific to one industry or company and to ensure that learners have the skills needed for life as well as work



Learning measured through technical qualifications tends to be more practical and employment related than academic qualifications. Technical qualifications are recognised by employers and enhance learners' transition from training to employment or further study.

There are many different types of qualifications, awarded by a range of awarding organisations:

Qualification	EQF Level(s)
Apprenticeship	L3 – L7
Degree Apprenticeship	L5 – L7
Certificate	L1 – L8
Higher National Certificate (HNC)	L5
National Diploma	L4 – L3
National Higher Diploma (HND)	L5
National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)	L2 – L7
Foundation Degree	L5
T Level	L4

Table 3: Qualification EQF Level comparisons



Technical Levels (T- Levels)

In England, T-Levels have been introduced to rationalise and upgrade technical qualifications. At 16, learners can initially choose between an Academic route (A-Level) or a technical one (T-Level) at RQF Level 3 (EQF Level 4). T levels are developed through employer and provider partnerships in consultation with the UK Government. This will ensure that the programmes reflect employers' skills needs. The courses last over two years with a mandatory three-month (approx. 45 days/315 hours) work placement.

There are 15 routes comprised of different sectors. Qualifications within those routes will share a 'common core' to make it easier for learners to move between jobs in the future as occupations change and evolve

Framework of 15 routes - grouping related occupations together



Figure 8: T Levels (adapted from the Department of Education)

Awarding TVET qualifications

- Awarding organisations in the UK are independent organisations that operate in a competitive market place.
- Many UK qualifications and awarding organisations also operate internationally.
- Awarding organisations are regulated by public regulatory bodies in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (Ofqual, SQA, Qualifications Wales and CCEA). This allows TVET awards to be recognised as part of national qualifications frameworks making them transferable and internationally recognised.

Awarding Organisations in the UK also:

- Provide advice on building employer responsive curricula, including best practice in pedagogy design, competency-based and assessment methodologies
- Support learner provider delivery systems, including e-portfolios and digital credentialing
- Run large-scale testing, marking and examination systems, including external quality assurance and verification



Case study: Awarding bodies

To address an emerging industry skills gap AIM Qualifications in partnership with NextGen Skills Academy developed a new Tech level qualification in Games, Animation and VFX Skills.

NextGen's employer steering group consists of Sony Interactive Entertainment, Ubisoft Reflections, DNEG, Framestore, Blue Zoo, Creative Assembly, Sumo Digital, Mediatonic, Playground Games and Centroid, who offer their ongoing support ensuring these qualifications reflect the nature and pace of industry growth. The qualifications were developed in response to employer identified problems with available qualifications and a recognition that graduates entering industry were not occupationally ready.

Industry concluded that in order to secure graduates with the right skills and knowledge, they must be adequately prepared with skills and knowledge specific for the job role, supported by a sound understanding of all aspects of the production pipeline. Rather than a bank of optional units, it was imperative that essential units for demonstrating competence should be mandatory with synoptic assessment.

Named as Qualification of the Year at the 2016 Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB) Awards, these Games, Animation and VFX qualifications are recognised for their innovation in meeting the STEAM

Agenda (science, technology, engineering, art and maths). The flexibility in the qualification design has allowed centres to respond to the challenge of COVID-19 by delivering online,



AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group were selected by the NextGen employer steering group as the awarding organisation to work with industry and develop the new extended diploma. AIM's reputation for producing exceptional qualifications and their understanding of the creative industry, meant that they totally understood what was needed. The result was, an Ofqual approved vocational qualification designed to give students two years of study in a combination of art, maths, coding and vocational skills (crucially with mentorship, teaching and support from industry) that they previously weren't able to access in any existing qualification

Amy Smith, Head of Talent at Framestore

6 How is TVET funded?

- Government funding is chiefly aimed at supporting the full or part time learning of young people under 25 years old and some targeted adult learners
- Training providers generate extra income through commercial activities, such as tailor-made training for employers and consultancy.
- Funding mechanisms vary in each UK nation
- Funding 'follows the learner' and reflects enrolment, retention, achievement and progression. If learners are not successful on their course then funding will be withheld or may have to be repaid.
- Funding is used as a policy lever in the delivery of educational strategy, for example, through offering financial incentives to employers to hire apprentices with additional needs or by making funding conditional on meeting certain objectives such as meeting minimum attainment standards in core subjects like English and Maths.

There is considerable pressure to get value for money from government funding. Training providers are increasingly expected to look for innovative and enterprising ways of generating income and reducing costs, while maintaining quality

Apprenticeship Levy

The UK Government has prioritised the number and quality of apprenticeships. Funding for this expansion is being supported through an apprenticeship levy which is paid as a direct tax by employers. This ensures that businesses pay a fair share of training costs and promotes a 'demand led' approach to TVET.

In 2017, The UK Government introduced an apprenticeship levy of 0.5% of wages, that applies to all large UK companies with a pay bill over £3M. Currently, only 2% of employers pay the apprenticeship levy. Levy paying businesses can access their funds through an online apprenticeship service (account) which can be spent on apprenticeship training in England. The UK Government estimates and shares the annual levy pot to support training in the devolved administrations.

The levy includes funding of apprenticeship training for all employers. Smaller employers, with a total annual pay bill of less than £3million, pay 5% of the cost of their apprenticeship training and the Government pays the rest. Smaller companies contract directly with colleges and training providers, which allows employers a greater choice and voice in TVET. Levy paying employers can also transfer up to 25% of their levy funds to other employers. This aims to make sure the system is flexible, meets the needs of employers and will also help smaller businesses to invest in more training opportunities. Levy paying employers have up to 24 months to spend their levy funds. Any unspent levy funds within each financial year are redistributed to support existing apprentices, pay for apprenticeship training for smaller employers and additional payments required to support apprentices.

7 How is TVET quality assured?

Quality assuring

- TVET provision is quality assured through robust external and internal processes.
- All providers who receive government funding have to meet the same quality requirements regardless if they are public sector FE Colleges, Employers or ITPs

Each nation has similar but different grading systems. For example, these are the grades awarded by inspectors in Northern Ireland. Providers who require improvement at any level will be supported to make these improvements and inspected regularly until they have achieved a higher standard.



National Quality Assurance Bodies

External quality assurance is conducted by Ofsted in England, Education Scotland in Scotland, the Education and Training Inspectorate in Northern Ireland, and Estyn in Wales.

Ofsted also quality assure the quality of degree apprenticeships. Other higher technical education is quality assured by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

Safeguarding and Prevent

Inspections also assure the safeguarding of learners, even beyond the physical college environment, including all students aged 14-18 and vulnerable adults. This requires providers to have written safeguarding policies and associated training for learners and staff. Where safeguarding concerns over the welfare of learners are identified these will trigger immediate measures even if the provider is generally assessed as high quality

Safeguarding also includes the area of 'Prevent' which requires colleges to play a role in preventing people being drawn into terrorism. This includes colleges developing approaches and materials to informing staff, governors and learners of their 'prevent' obligations.

Quality assuring qualifications

Awarding organisations set requirements for training providers for effective systems that ensure fairness, accuracy and consistency when delivering, assessing and quality assuring regulated qualifications.

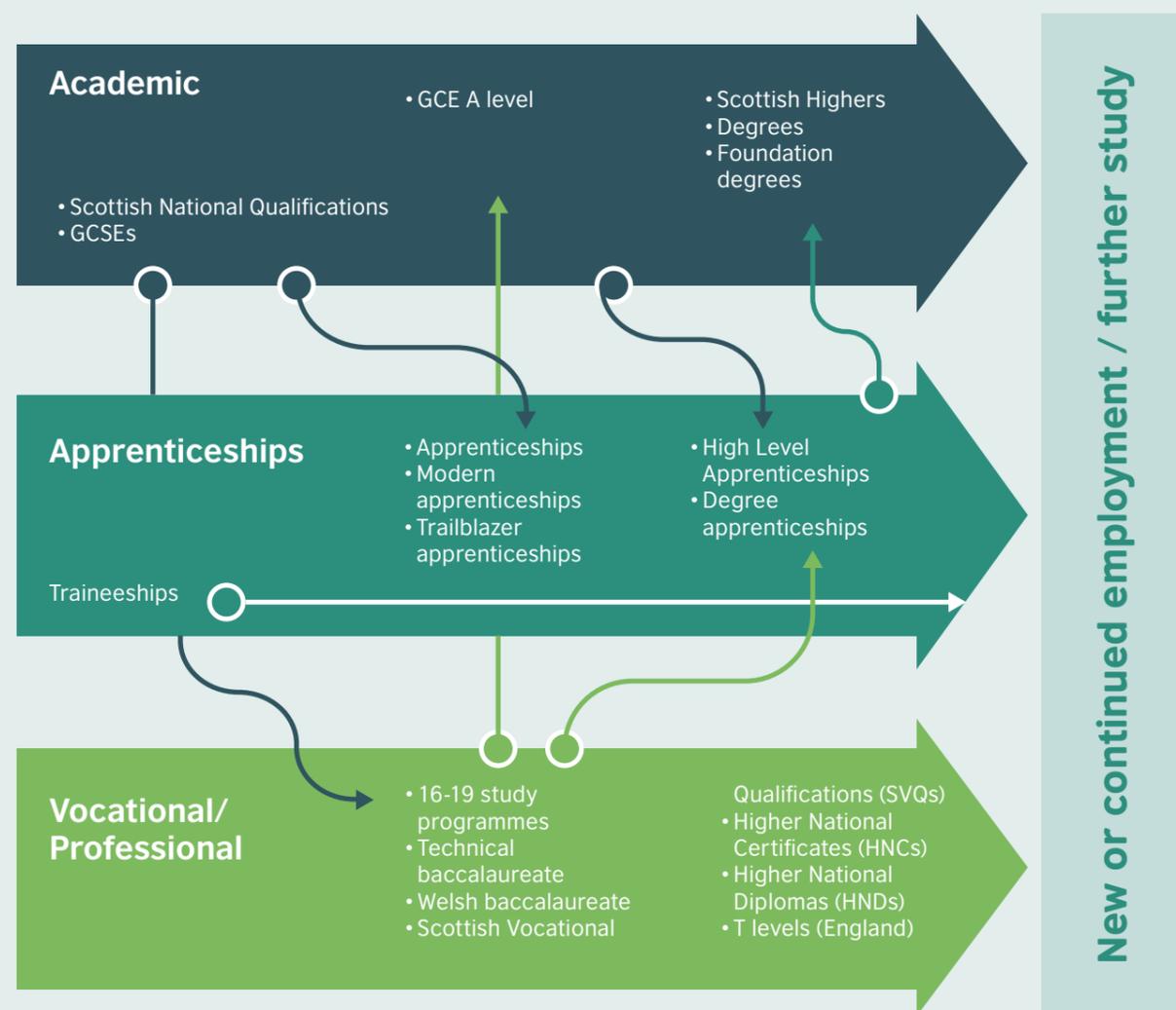
Awarding organisations are, in turn, accountable to qualification regulators - Ofqual (England), Qualifications Wales (Wales), CCEA (Northern Ireland) and SQA (Scotland), to ensure that the different quality assurance requirements of each qualification meet national standards.

Staff involved in qualification delivery, assessment and verification are required to undertake professional development and meet minimum national standards for their roles.

8 How do learners access and progress through the system?

There is increasing emphasis on equalising academic and vocational routes. The cost of university study, the opportunity to earn and learn through high-quality apprenticeships and increasingly flexible progression routes are helping to improve perceptions of vocational learning and qualifications.

Flexible pathways are available so that young people can move from, for instance, a full-time vocational programme at college to an apprenticeship with an employer and then later take a higher-level apprenticeship before going to university.



The relationship between academic, apprenticeship and vocational routes in the UK

UK approaches to Careers Information Advice and Guidance

The Careers and Enterprise Company

In England, the Careers and Enterprise Company works in partnership with schools, colleges, employers and youth organisations to create career opportunities for young people. They have an Enterprise Advisor Network which pairs senior businesses volunteers with schools to build employer engagement plans and create powerful, lasting connections between local businesses and the schools and colleges in local areas.

Organisations that provide careers advice in England are encouraged to meet minimum standards designed by independent charity, Gatsby. They identified 8 criteria for effective careers provision known as the [Gatsby Benchmarks](#). These are:

1. A stable careers programme
2. Learning from career and labour market information
3. Addressing the needs of each pupil
4. Linking curriculum learning to careers
5. Encounters with employers and employees
6. Experiences of workplaces
7. Encounters with further and higher education
8. Personal guidance

Skills Development Scotland

Skills Development Scotland (SDS) is the national skills body and delivers Scotland's free, confidential and impartial all age careers service in schools, in centres and online.

SDS careers advisers work in partnership with every state secondary school in Scotland, delivering career guidance to enable young people from aged 11-18 to develop their Career Management Skills. Beyond school, SDS advisers operate from a network of high street SDS centres and community locations nationwide, offering expert career information, advice and guidance to customers of all ages. There is also a dedicated national helpline as an access point to individuals including those affected by redundancy. SDS offers an integrated career service that blends face to face, telephone, video and virtual engagement in career information, advice and guidance. At the heart of SDS careers service is the identification and development of career management skills and thus the career guidance engagement is also a learning and skills engagement, delivered through the coaching approach to career guidance that SDS has embedded in its practice. This is also enabled through a needs led targeted and universal service offer.

Northern Ireland – A Strategy for Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG)

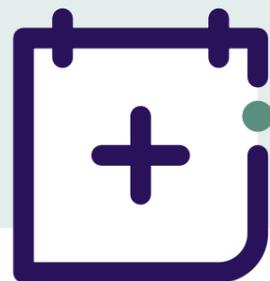
Northern Ireland has introduced an integrated careers service which is guided through a Careers Advisory Forum which includes representation from industry, government, education, youth services and TVET. The TVET sector is working to introduce new approaches to enhance the development of soft skills in the region based on OECD recommendations on the implementation of a comprehensive approach to Transversal Skills

Careers Wales

[Careers Wales](#) has been established to support career planning and successful progression to employment. This includes providing access to CIAG on employment, apprenticeship and training outcomes. It also provides a portal to wider national training and employment initiatives.

Supported Internships

Learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can train on '[supported internships](#)' or [internships for disabled people in Scotland](#). Supported internships are unpaid and last for at least six months, with most learning taking place in the workplace. Trainees are provided with more intensive support than would be available under a traineeship or apprenticeship.



Case study 'My World of Work'

'[My World of Work](#)' is SDS' award-winning online career information and advice service. This interactive service is evolving to continually meet the changing needs of SDS customers. [Take control of your career](#) is an extension that is full of advice and tools to support adults in their career.

Further digital sites provided through SDS include:

- The [Apprenticeships | Apprenticeships.scot: Work, Learn & Earn](#) site provides further information on apprenticeships and vacancies.
- [Learning with The Big Plus | My World of Work](#) – for anyone who requires additional support with literacy and numeracy
- [Homepage | Digital World](#) – all the information you need about digital career in Scotland
- [Our Skillsforce: Skills support for employers in Scotland](#) – business support and workforce development information and support
- [My Kids Career](#) is our web service for parents and carers to help parents and carers support their children to make career decisions, guided by information on the future world of work.



Adult Education and Training

The sector plays an important role in educating adult learners (over the age of 19), studying outside Higher Education (EQF L5 and above). Adult Education is primarily delivered through FE colleges, Independent Training Providers, voluntary providers and community learning centres, through a range of programmes:

- Basic skills needed for life and work in English, Maths and ICT
- Recognised vocational or academic qualification (including English and Maths up to EQF L3 (school leaver))
- Access to Higher Education programmes that support adult learners, returning to education, gain a place at University.
- Employment programmes delivered to unemployment benefit claimants
- Retraining programmes designed to support workers in at risk, or declining industries.
- Self-funded adult education courses, often delivered on a part-time basis

Case Study: ReAct

The Welsh Government, through Careers Wales has introduced the [ReAct Scheme](#) which is targeted support for those who have been made redundant or unemployed. The scheme provides funding for retraining and the upgrading of skills. It also provides financial incentives for employers to recruit staff. This includes through; recruitment and training support, vocational training grants and extra support grants (which are awarded on a discretionary basis).

The scheme works by supporting workers and those who are unemployed to upgrade their skills to improve the ability to access new or improved employment. Beneficiaries of ReAct can also apply to Careers Wales for financial support to cover training, travel, childcare or accommodation costs that might otherwise prevent their re-entry into the labour force.



9

How are we ensuring TVET is fit for the future?

Digital adaptation

- A focus on using technology to promote effective digital and blended learning that enhances teaching, learning and assessment,
- The sector has been introducing innovative approaches to the use of digital technology in the management of institutions and engaging with partners, staff and learners.
- The sector is also embedding new technology such as augmented and virtual reality that supports engaging and impactful online learning that isn't simply a case of transferring traditional courses on line.

Digital Wales 2030

The Welsh Government has introduced 'Digital 2030'. Digital 2030 establishes a strategic framework of Wales' shared vision, aims and objectives for post-16 digital

learning during the next decade.

The strategy has been designed to meet national and industrial priorities in this crucial sector.

Digital Skills Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has developed a holistic approach to the development of Digital Skills through a Digital ICT Curriculum Hub which leads on employer engagement to inform digital skills pathways and curriculum. The TVET sector approach to digital skills development is award winning and aligns with an international recognition as a centre of excellence in digital, cyber and creative industries. The Department for Economy has included digital investment and innovation as a key priority in the SkillsNI strategy and this approach has helped Northern Ireland secure significant success in attracting mobile FDI projects in areas related to cloud computing, financial services, cyber, data analytics, health informatics and digital building

Case Study: Utilising AI in the delivery of digital pedagogy

Bolton College, in its experiments with AI, wants to move beyond closed questions to explore whether students can provide answers and receive automated feedback based on model answers provided by teaching staff. Staff have been exploring the potential offered by natural language processing and natural language classifications platforms from the leading vendors in the field such as IBM, Amazon, Google and Microsoft. Initial results are promising, with positive feedback received from students and teachers. Students liked receiving real-time feedback, as they responded to open questions, and teachers stated that these services could lead to a reduction in marking workloads.

"The emergence of this new assessment tool enables teachers to make use of a richer medium for assessing their students. Our solution enables teachers to pose open-ended questions which can be automatically analysed and assessed by a computer. The ability to offer real-time feedback means that students can qualify and clarify their responses," says Aftab Hussain, ILT manager at the college.

Example taken from JISC's ['Shaping the Digital Future of FE and Skills'](#) (2020)



Using Labour Market Information

The UK system heavily relies on high quality LMI to make planning and funding decisions and use a range of quantitative and qualitative sources.

LMI is aggregated from a range of institutional, regional, sectoral and national sources. These range from large scale quantitative data sets to specialised qualitative surveys that map future trends. As important as collecting and processing the LMI is how it is shared with policy makers, educators, learners and parents to inform choices. Each nation and many regions and sectors have online resources where all participants in the skills sector can access key data and ensure that they are making informed decisions.

In Scotland, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) as the national skills body, produces detailed Regional and Sectoral Skills Assessments. This includes a combination of published data, real time vacancy data, forecast data and qualitative insight from stakeholders to provide a coherent narrative on each region and sector. This robust evidence base is used internally in SDS to influence investment in apprenticeships and to support Careers Information, Advice and Guidance (CIAG), so that individuals are supported to make informed choices, and externally with other partners in the development of Regional and Sectoral Skills Investment Plans

SDS Collaborative PhD Programme

The Skills Development Scotland collaborative PhD Programme produces new research aligned to the evolving skills agenda in Scotland. It links the academic community to policy relevant skills research. The Programme is a partnership between SDS, the Scottish Graduate School of Social Science (SGSSS) and the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). Current topics on WBL include:

- Work based learning for the fourth industrial revolution.
- Strategic actors and the apprenticeship system of skill formation.
- The potential impact of graduate apprenticeships on intergenerational social mobility in Scotland.
- How employers engage with apprenticeships in Scotland.
- Work based learning environments for industry relevant skills.
- Key influences for young people in Scotland choosing apprenticeship pathways into the world of work.

In Wales, the Wales Advisory Apprenticeship Board was established in 2018 to advise on the contents of apprenticeship frameworks. This includes through identifying current and future skills needs based on data from regional skills partnerships and skills plans. To address regional skills needs Wales has established regional skills partnerships, comprised of government, training providers, and employers.

In England, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) influence sub-regional skills policy, funding for adult skills development and capital expenditure. LEPs are led by employers who work in partnership with local government and other economic and social partners. In parallel, local government across the sub-regions where the largest cities such as Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield are located, have come together to form wide ranging economic development strategies with national government. These include employment and skills action plans linked to local labour market information.

An example of this approach is the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's 'Skills and Work' strategy, which aims to develop an integrated employment and skills ecosystem with employers and individuals at its heart.

Skills to Succeed is the Northern Ireland Government Services initiative to Support and promote the TVET sector in Northern Ireland.

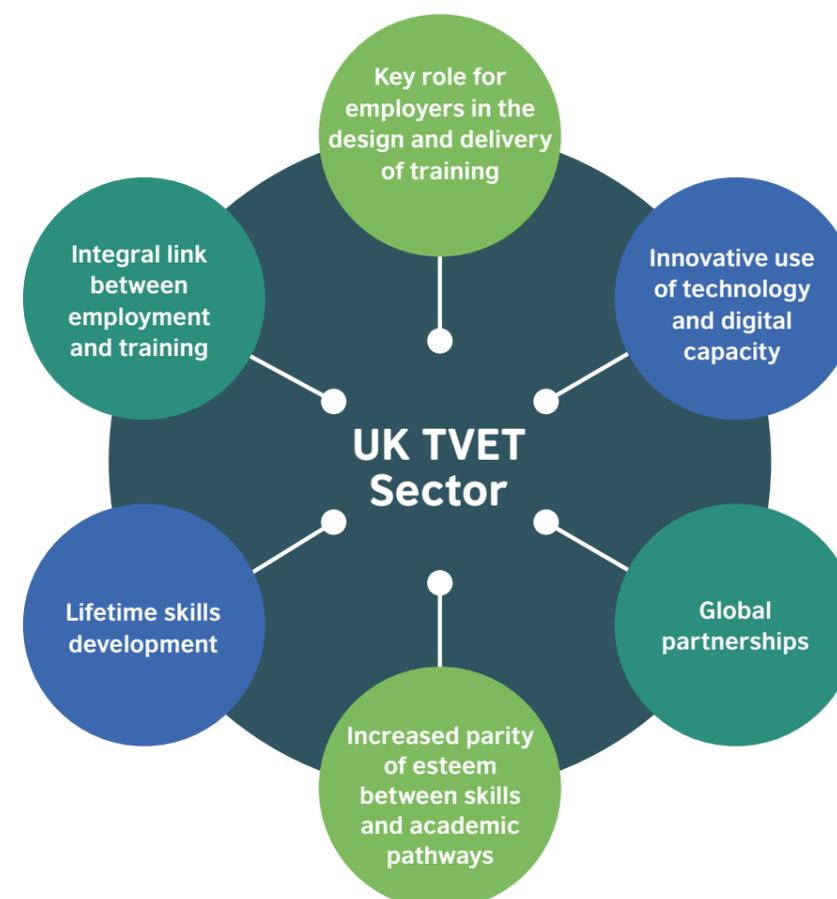
Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) data

The LEO programme led by the Department for Education in England connects individuals' education data with their employment, benefits and earnings data to create a de-identified person level administrative dataset.

The capacity to analyse these longer-term labour market outcomes together, at person level, enables a major leap forward in the assessment of education policy and provision with greater accuracy than ever before

Policy

- The delivery of TVET across the UK is defined by key principles and themes which will continue to shape the system's development.
- The impact of Covid and Brexit on the resetting of the UK's economy has resulted in a focus on promoting productivity in target sectors and roles.
- The fast-changing economic landscape will also necessitate a commitment to lifetime skills development. Initiatives such as the 'lifetime skills guarantee' will support and fund people's capacity to adapt to economic changes and meet new skills demands.



Skills for Jobs White Paper

In January 2021 the Secretary of State for Education announced a new White Paper setting out the plans for TVET in England for the foreseeable future. This White Paper is the most significant reform in a number of years and outlines some new policies as well as consolidating previous announcements.

[Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth](#) outlines the following key ambitions and measures

- Business groups, including Chambers of Commerce, working alongside colleges to develop tailored **local skills improvement plans** to meet local training needs; supported by a £65 million Strategic Development Fund to put the plans into action and establish **new College Business Centres to drive innovation and enhanced collaboration with employers**.
- Ensure government has up-to-date and expert advice on the labour market and national skills gaps from the **Skills and Productivity Board**.
- Providing a **Lifelong Loan Entitlement**, the equivalent of four years of post-18 education from 2025, and transforming the funding system so it is just as easy to get a loan for a higher technical course as it is for a full-length university degree
- **Ensuring everyone has access to education and training that will help them to get a great job**, from 12-16-week bootcamps to funding free qualifications for any adult without an existing full level 3 (A Level equivalent) qualification.
- **Funding upgrades to further education colleges across the country** and improving our already successful apprenticeships.
- **Giving employers a central role in designing almost all technical courses by 2030**, to ensure that the education and training people receive is directly linked to the skills needed for real jobs.
- **Boosting the quality and uptake of Higher Technical Qualifications** - that provide the skills that many employers say they need and that can lead to higher wages – by **introducing newly approved qualifications from September 2022 supported by a government-backed brand and quality mark**.
- **Changing the law so that from 2025 people can access flexible student finance so they can train and retrain throughout their lives**, supported by funding in 21/22 to test ways to boost access to more modular and flexible learning.
- **Base Initial Teacher Education on employer-led standards**
- **Launching a nationwide recruitment campaign to get more talented individuals to teach in further education and investing in high quality professional development including a new Workforce Industry Exchange Programme**.
- **Overhauling the funding and accountability rules**, so funding is better targeted at supporting high quality education and training that meets the needs of employers; and introducing new powers to intervene when colleges are failing to deliver good outcomes for the communities they serve.

These measures are intended to boost the profile, quality and take up of TVET in England and are seen as vital in meeting other key economic and social objectives such as; levelling up communities, dealing with the effects of Covid on UK businesses and citizens and responding to demographic, environmental and technological shifts.



10 UK Partners

How the British Council supports skills development

We build connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and other countries through arts and culture, education and the English language

Our work in TVET improves the quality, relevance and inclusivity of Skills and Employment Systems to better meet social and economic ambitions. We encourage closer links between education, employers and policy makers in the UK and the countries we work in to enhance skills systems and outcomes for learners. Our work creates opportunities for individuals to broaden their horizons and be equipped with the skills needed to thrive in today's global and multicultural world of work.

We work by sharing experience from policy and practice; encouraging mobility and exchange for young people, practitioners and policymakers; supporting innovative and sustainable partnership working; and helping to build the capacity of teachers, practitioners and policy-makers. We continually develop our work through piloting different approaches to raise the profile and quality of skills development globally to improve outcomes for learners and workers.

UK Skills Partnership

The [UK Skills Partnership](#) (UKSP) comprises of key UK skills system stakeholders who have significant capability to promote and support skills development around the world.

Members work collaboratively to build the UK sector's capacity and engagement in international activities and act as an advocate for the UK's TVET offer internationally.

The UKSP also provides a gateway for international partners to meet UK providers and experts.

Supporting the International Benchmarking of Vietnam's Vocational Education Institutions

As part of a British Council led activity, delivered through the EU-funded VET Toolbox project, UK skills providers supported four vocational colleges in Vietnam in assessing and benchmarking their provision against UK quality standards. The outcomes from the assessment assisted Vietnamese colleges in reaching international quality standards in line with Vietnam's vocational education development strategy.

The activity was conducted by two UK sector experts who undertook a light touch inspection of the colleges.

The inspection drew on UK guidelines to benchmark the quality of teaching and learning in the four selected colleges and assessed the robustness of the quality assurance mechanisms in place.

In particular, recommendations from the UK experts steered the colleges to develop strategies to overcome identified limitations and improve the quality of training, employer engagement and employability opportunities for students after graduation.

For more information or to speak to a member of our team please visit <https://www.britishcouncil.org/education/skills-employability> or write to us at skills@britishcouncil.org

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