**Sage Response to the T-Level Consultation**

**Introduction**

Sage, an employer with over 13,000 colleagues around the world, welcomes the proposed framework to support young people and adults in securing a lifetime of sustained skilled employment. We are committed to supporting the development of T-levels in the relevant capacity as this reform can make a significant difference to the state of Britain's current working environment. Sage is also committed to supporting our customers, the heroes of the economy and ensuring ambitious entrepreneurs have the right conditions to grow as research has shown a prevalence of low skills in a local authority area is correlated negatively with SME productivity growth ( Source ).  We are the market and technology leader for integrated accounting, payroll and payment systems, supporting the ambition of entrepreneurs and business builders.

Today, business builders measure success in strong relationships, partnerships, and communities. That's why Sage helps drive today's business builders with the most intelligent and flexible cloud-enabled software, support and advice to manage everything from money to people.

Our Sage qualification includes courses such as; principles of accounting, cash flow management, standard and advanced budgeting etc. They are delivered in partnership with awarding bodies such as CIMA and Skillsfirst with a total of 25,000 thousand learners across the UK ranging from level 1 to level 5. Sage qualifications are supplied in Universities, Colleges and Prisons with plans to further expand into schools, amongst ex-military and within vocational training centres.

Learning financial and business management skills are key in our view for any young person as the development of these skills provide a level of confidence in learners that enables them to support the option of self-employment as well as automatically increasing their chances for employment due to practical skills that are of immediate use to an employer.

And as an employer, we run a comprehensive training programme for graduates and apprentices, supported by a diversity and inclusion strategy. The strategy outlines our commitment to increase diversity of thought and equal opportunity in our high-performance culture to drive genuine innovation, enabling us to create amazing products and services-  Sandra Campopiano, Chief People Officer, Sage. Casting the net more broadly within the tech industry will also fill the skill gaps in the UK on a whole ( Source). Sage has already trained 240 apprentices across Europe with varied roles including in sales, marketing, customer service, technical engineering, public affairs and social media. Now the age limit has been removed we train apprentices at all ages over an average of 13 months. Most of our apprentices stay on to train at a higher level and become part of our organisation.

**Questions**

**A. What is your name?**

Oksana Peters

**B. What is your email address?**

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**C. What is your organisation?**

Sage Global PLC

**2. Do you agree that we should review qualifications at level 2 and below based on the principles that these qualifications should support progression into employment or higher-level study and have a value alongside T levels?**

Sage believes the standards of the qualifications of level 2 and below are suffice although we recommend some changes that increase a student's exposure to the different courses and educational options that they can take in their next steps as schools have a shared responsibility for helping children understand and addressing their own strength and weaknesses before entering the working environment.

There are many ways schools can approach this, for example inspirational guest speakers from different work and educational backgrounds. This will increase exposure to work and education options they themselves can take as well as being given real-time feedback about how technology is affecting the working world.

Also, providing a more rounded education in subjects that will help prepare students for involvement in running a business or embracing an increasingly digitally-led working environment. For example, training students in - money management, broader digital skills including application of AI and personal development: confidence building, learner type discovery.

Also, it would be useful for T-level students to talk about their experiences level 2 qualifications to younger students to get their insights.

**3. Do you agree with the proposed approach to assessing technical qualifications.**

Sage agrees with the approach to assessing technical qualifications however for T-levels to be effective it is key that assessment takes account of broader skills needed to succeed at work. When we screen a candidate for employment broader skills such as communications skills, linguistic skills, literacy and team building skills all enhance the employability of the candidate, in addition to the technical skills acquired through the course.

**5. Do you agree with the approach to maintaining comparable standards of performance for technical qualifications?**

Too many standards of performance are confusing for employers. For example, they are now adapting to the new standards in GCSE. Therefore, we support consistency between equivalent levels of qualifications as it will not only be easier for employers.

**13. What are the common barriers / Challenges for employers to host work placements and how can we support employers to offer work placements?**

We are concerned about the current proposals around placements for work as they would last on average 45 days with the funding amount of £250 per student.

We are uncertain to what the purpose of the work placements are within the T-level and believe this needs to be more defined as it overlaps heavily with apprenticeship.

We do not believe £250 funding will cover the costs for employers per student. And Investing in internships is a different approach as it generally applies to students who have completed their course and are looking to stay in the business long term.

We suggest an increased placement time as a part of a formal process towards the end of the T-level. This gives students a larger scope of the role giving more benefit to the student and the organisation.

As an organisation we would prefer to partly cover the cost of hosting T-levels placement with the apprenticeship levy.

Smaller organisations on the other hand would find more difficulty in accepting work placements due to limited resources. Another factor that can be posed as challenging for small and medium business is the financial support of £250 per student not being a great enough incentive.

Alternatively, companies could take students for a couple of days dedicated deep dive into career opportunities and learn more about opportunities in the organisation midway through their course.

**14. How can these challenges vary across industries and location types?**

Different types of industries require different entry points and different placement durations
this thus incurs different cost's that an organisation needs to have covered during the placement.

At Sage we have co-launched a technical engineering degree apprenticeship in partnership with Sunderland University and what we have found at this level not only do we require a certain amount of time to equip the students with the knowledge needed to pass the exit requirements but we also require a level of maturity and higher entry points to the begin a technical engineering qualification.

We suggest to increase the possibility of successful implementation of work placements within this new qualification, T-levels should be analysed by subject and by level to best implement process and timings.

**16. Would employers value a recognition in delivering work placements, for example through a form of 'Kite Marking'?**

Sage believes that employers would certainly benefit from a form of kitemarking to signify their involvement in hosting T-Level placements. This would be an added incentive for employers as not only does it expose their companies to the future workforce but it also reinforces a standard or quality within their organisation.

**22. Which of these options for funding Maths and English within the T level programme do you think would be the most appropriate?**

Sage believes funding for raising the standards of Maths and English should be included within the T-level where it is an exit requirement.

**35. Should we seek to further influence which T levels are offered by providers, according to local and national skills needs?**

Yes, we believe the T-levels should address local and national skills needs. We suggest a national skills indicator to help identify which skills shortages there are and ensure provision matches locally.

As an employer and a provider, we have experienced first-hand the lack of distribution of tech skills not only geographically but within the cohorts of gender, age and cultural background. The lack of diversity in career paths needs to be addressed as well as the skill's shortage on a whole. It is vital that T-levels' design reflect shortages in skills at present as well as the skills required alongside the development of technology.

For example:

**Technical Engineering/ AI skills**– Should be introduced into every course to prepare for our future workforce. It does not have to be a module component but can be inserted in a fun and engaging way. For example: In the form of an online game that relates to the subject chosen.

Exposure of technical engineering at a national level of can create a surge in the tech talent pool. It also carries the opportunity to give UK the diverse tech workforce it needs to build responsible and ethical technology that is reflective of all users.

Every businesses is a digital businesses and exposure to technology is vital in this changing economy and this is why  Sage is launching their Sage-Bot-Camp ([Source](#)).

With the development of technology on the rise we predict that automation will transform accountancy. To what extent does the current pathway for accountancy take that into consideration?  The development of technology needs to be applied to all other T-level routes.

**Financial Literacy** – Each T-Level should cover a component of financial literacy. Covering topics like money management and how to read financial literature increases a student confidence and reduces one of the barriers to SMBs and Start-ups. It is said that 60% of businesses fail within 5 years ([Source](#)) However when a company adopts technology and connects with an accountant it improves the success rate to 80% vs 40% of those companies that do not. Technology paired with financial understanding positions employees to support their business with financial structure, discipline and

a management reporting framework.  Giving the opportunity to develop this skill within all T-levels routes will be one driver for improving skill's both locally and nationally.

**Wider skills** – Each T-level at each stage should include wider 'work-ready' skills. This training should include personal development, leadership, communication and confidence building. This aspect of training should be included within work readiness however it may be more beneficial to the student if this area was not an assessed grade.

**36. How do providers currently take account of local and national skills needs when planning their provision and how do they work with the existing structures that have responsibility for local skills planning?**

Sage provides standardized training on payroll and accounts with qualifications to over 28,000 people in the UK.

We invest in the areas surrounding our UKI headquarters. We do this by supporting events at UTC and other technical establishments such as Campus North in Newcastle as well as build qualifications with neighbouring universities like Sunderland, Ulster and Hertfordshire University.

In terms of national skills needs our qualification distribution is dependent on where providers and consumers are based. We provide our qualifications to skills first centres but we would welcome better data to map demand for qualification with skills shortages.

We suggest a national skills indicator to improve local provision, making it more targeted.