

THE EDUCATION LANDSCAPE

A Guide for Essex Employers



Developed in partnership with:



Local Support, International Reach

Introduction

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

That's why we've created this resource for Essex - the Education Landscape - A Guide for Essex Employers. It describes options for working with schools, colleges and universities, young people¹ and older learners, and the benefits of doing so for your business. You can also find out how technical education is changing to better meet your skills needs - including apprenticeships, T Levels, Supported Internships and Higher Technical Qualifications.

¹The term young person is used to include students at schools, colleges and universities up to age 24.

In the accompanying Index you can find out more about the business benefits of different opportunities – from providing workplace experiences for students, using your industry expertise to help design courses, to getting training for your new employees and existing staff.





EDUCATION AND SKILLS

The benefits for business

Discover new talent

Being involved with schools, colleges and universities is an opportunity to identify potential employees who are a good fit with your organisation. In the medium-term this can reduce expensive and time-consuming recruitment activity and support your planning for the future.

Fresh perspectives

Students on an industry placement (work Experience) will quickly acquire new knowledge and skills that they can put into practice immediately and make a real contribution to your team as they do so. They can also bring awareness of emerging trends and technologies along with new ideas to your business.

Develop your current team

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

Build new partnerships

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

Connect locally

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

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Ways to get involved



Supporting students

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

Providing workplace experiences

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

Supporting high-quality teaching

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

Work-based learning

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

Providing expert guidance

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

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

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Technical Education

In England at age 16, young people have a range of options for the next step towards their career. The academic path, with GCSEs, A Levels and undergraduate courses, is well-understood. But not everyone is familiar with our technical education system, and this has not always met the needs of employers. Government has been working with employers to change technical education – to benefit industry, and help individuals gain good jobs.



This information is correct for Winter 2024 and will be updated further to new Government policy being confirmed such as the new body Skills England, which will eventually replace the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

What is key?

- **Employers are at the heart of our new system for technical education.** Groups of employers are setting the standards for different occupations. Each occupational standard describes what a person needs to know and be able to do for a particular role. These standards are grouped into fifteen technical education routes –from agriculture, to catering, to health & science. The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (the Institute) works with panels of employer experts to make sure that the standards stay up to date.
- **Supported Internships** are a structured study programme based primarily at an employer. They enable young people aged 16 - 24 with a statement of special educational need, or an Education, Health and Care plan, to achieve sustainable employment by equipping them with the skills they need for work, through learning in the workplace. Supported internships are unpaid and last for a minimum of six months. Wherever possible, they support the young person to move into paid employment at the end of the programme. Alongside their time at the employer, young people complete a personalised study programme which includes the chance to study for relevant substantial qualifications if appropriate.
- **Apprentices** are employed and learn through on and off-the-job training. An apprentice develops the knowledge, skills and behaviours set out in the employer designed standard for their occupation. They are assessed against this standard so you can be sure an apprentice can really do the job. Most of the apprentice's training is on-the-job working with a mentor.
- **Apprentices cont.** Additional off-the-job training is provided by a training organisation for at least 20 percent of the apprentice's time. Depending on the occupation an apprenticeship can take between one and five years to complete.
- **T Levels** are two-year courses that launched in September 2020. They are the main college-based technical option for students at age 16, sitting alongside apprenticeships and A Levels. T Levels offer students a mixture of classroom learning and 'on-the-job' experience during an industry placement of around 45 days. The content of T Levels has been developed with employers, using the occupational standards as their reference. Alongside their technical knowledge, T Level students also build maths, English and digital skills. So you can be sure that these new qualifications meet the needs of industry and prepare students for work, further training or study. T Levels in 23 different subject areas were introduced between September 2020 and September 2023.
- **Higher technical qualifications** are specialised training for adults, at higher levels 4 and 5 (A Levels and T Levels are at level 3). Employer expert panels will decide which qualifications meet the employer designed occupational standards. Only level 4 and 5 qualifications that do this will be approved by the Institute as a Higher Technical Qualification. These qualifications will be awarded a quality mark so you can be sure they will develop the knowledge and skills needed by employers.

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Case studies

Case study:

Supporting students: Career Activities

“We believe in the importance of engaging with our community to support the ambitions of students, school leavers, graduates and individuals”

At Bartech, our dedication to cultivating talent and advancing professional growth within the engineering sector is at the core of our vision. Our partnership with Colchester Institute has been on-going for over 25 years, resulting in numerous engineers who started as apprentices going on to play key roles in our success for over two decades. Over this time, there have been many changes, making it key that we collaborate to align industry needs with educational training



Our commitment to nurturing future professionals extends beyond apprenticeships and we have broadened our engagement efforts through collaborations with Essex University, South Essex College, the Essex Careers Hub as well as local schools. This expanded network enables us to offer a rich array of opportunities, including work experience, internships, and educational visits for primary schools. Together with these institutions, we organise a variety of activities such as site visits, recruitment fairs, presentations, interview role-playing, and enterprise days. Our goal is to provide students with an understanding of different business functions, offering insights into potential career paths and future roles.

As a committed local employer, we believe in the importance of engaging with our community to support the ambitions of students, school leavers, graduates, and individuals transitioning from the forces. Our initiatives are designed to guide them in identifying and pursuing the right career paths. By collaborating with educational partners and through our community engagement, Bartech is dedicated to fostering a dynamic professional ecosystem and contributing to the development of the next generation.”

Paul Bleck, Managing Director
Bartech Marine Engineering

Case study:

Work based learning:
Apprenticeships

“We've grown some great engineers as a result of our partnership together”

“ We are a component maintenance in Great Dunmow Essex, specializing in both Airbus and Boeing component repair. Sky Smart has been working with Stansted Airport College for around three years. It's been a very successful partnership and we've grown some great engineers as a result of our partnership together.

The benefits of working with a further education college is a combination of the hand skills delivered in the workshop and the knowledge that is delivered in the classroom on the theory side, which results ultimately in a great engineer and a feed through into our apprenticeship system.

The learning that our apprentices get at Stansted Airport College has massively benefited our company. It has increased our apprentice's knowledge, ultimately giving them better skills and a faster training timeframe. ”



Andy Webb, Managing Director
Sky Smart MRO Ltd



“We need more apprentices to start in aviation.”

Case study:

Work based learning:
Apprenticeships

“GT Engine Services is an engine maintenance repair and storage company where we bring aircraft engines in and look after them for our customers. We decided to partner with Stansted Airport College as we saw the need for new apprentices in the system, both for our own business, nationally and internationally. We need more apprentices to start in aviation.”

“The college really helped us find the right type of candidates to join our apprenticeship scheme. We were able to identify the skills of available candidates, see how they were getting on academically and assess their hand skills. It was then very easy for us to be able to identify the right fit for our business.”

Eddie O'Dwyer, Technical Director, GT Engine Services





“David's journey with the Lower Thames Crossing has been inspirational”

Case study:

Building a diverse and inclusive workforce: Supported Internships

At the Lower Thames Crossing, we are passionate about supporting and developing a diverse and inclusive workforce. During the past year, we've been working with South Essex College to break down barriers for students with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), this includes providing supported internships with work placements on the project facilitated by a job coach.

After completing a level 3 engineering course at the college, David struggled with the interview stage of job interviews which led him joining the college's supported internship programme where he was matched with Lower Thames Crossing delivery partner, Balfour Beatty, for a 6-month work placement.

David joined the team in November 2023 as the first supported intern on the project where he was coupled up with Lauren as a mentor, alongside his job coach Lisa from the college to support his gradual transition into the workplace.



Lauren Edmunds, Social Impact Advisor for Balfour Beatty, said: “We've been really impressed with David's work ethic and how quickly he's settled in and spread his wings. We've seen his confidence grow and his passion for engineering has really shone through throughout, so I can't think of a better opportunity for him than a placement on one of the most important infrastructure projects in the UK.

When David first joined us, Lisa was here every day to support his transition, but now only visits once per week as he's become fully integrated, working independently and supporting multiple teams across the project. Testament to his growth, David recently applied for an apprenticeship on the project, registered to become a STEM Ambassador for engaging with other local young people in schools and colleges, and has volunteered for a litter pick day with his colleagues at a local nature reserve.

David said: “The supported internship allowed me to get my foot in the door and be able to apply all the skills I've been learning throughout my college years. I've recently applied for an apprenticeship as business administrator at Balfour Beatty.”

Lisa Bennet, South Essex College Job Coach, said: “David's journey with Lower Thames Crossing has been inspirational. To see him flourish within the role and gain confidence in such a short amount of time has truly made me very proud of his achievements. The support that he's had from his mentor Lauren has been second to none and I can't thank the team enough for coming on board with the programme and showing how diverse they are as a company. I'm looking forward to seeing what the future holds for David which I am sure will be a positive one.”





“Rosie finished her apprenticeship and now works at the Port of London Authority as a Marine Engineer”

Case study:

Case study: Work based learning - Apprentice perspective

Rosie joined the Maritime Defence Engineering Technician apprenticeship in September 2019. Rosie had to overcome challenges to complete her Apprenticeship not least having dyslexia and being the only employed female in her organisation as an Engineer. Rosie had struggles with bullying at times which added to her troubles. Despite all this she continued to produce work, never missed a deadline and work was always to a good standard.

Her resilience and drive enabled her to attack and overcome the challenges to achieve her apprenticeship in record time as well as receive the accolades of SEC Apprentice of the year and highly commended apprentice of the year at the Essex Countywide Business awards. In addition, Rosie was the first female to complete and achieve this Apprenticeship standard.

Rosie has now finished her apprenticeship and has been offered a job with the PLA, Port of London Authority where she works as marine engineer. She is an advocate of LGBTQ+ and regularly returns to South Essex College as a guest speaker to inspire the next generation of Marine Engineers.



Case study:

Case study: workplace experience - T level Industry Placements

Alex completed the T-Level in Digital Production, Design and Development last academic year and achieved a Distinction grade overall. Whilst at South Essex College, Alex completed at least 315 hours of industry placement with Microtill, the UK's leading Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) provider to the Leased & Tenanted Licensed industry.

Alex is very fortunate to have found himself a place on the Degree Apprenticeship with Capgemini, a company based in Sheffield that provides information technology, consulting, and outsourcing services. The company also offers digital services, technology solutions, cloud services, artificial intelligence solutions, and cybersecurity and engineering services and studying at the Sheffield Hallam University.

“Alex completed at least 315 hours of industry placement with Microtill, the UK's leading Electronic Point of Sale Provider and now has a degree apprenticeship place with Capgemini”



Case study:

Providing expert guidance: Acting as a Governor

“Being a Governor is an extension of my work. It has allowed me to make a difference for both young people and benefitted my employer.”

“I grew up in Essex, attending a local comprehensive school and Harlow college before going to university. I’ve also worked in Essex all my life, initially at Nortel Networks in Harlow and then with various Airlines based at Stansted Airport. When I returned from university, I became a Governor at Secondary then Further Education (FE) establishments and have since held various roles, most recently as Chair of the Resources Committee and Chair of the Board at Harlow College.

Being a Governor has given me a greater insight into FE and a wide understanding of the qualifications available to young people and how these provide pathways to careers or further study. As an employer it has been incredibly valuable to understand the rapidly changing qualification landscape such that I can pass on this knowledge to work colleagues. Often employers or recruiters are unaware of qualifications outside of the traditional A level. Qualifications such as T-Levels have enabled us to “try before you buy”, and we’ve employed several young people post their work placement. As a Governor we work with the Senior Leadership Team to ensure that the college focuses on the skills demand for local and regional businesses, having gained an insight into the demand through working groups and partnerships with employers, local chambers of commerce, alongside local authorities, and funding groups.

Through my role I have become extremely familiar with funding rules, budgets, forecasts as well as management accounts. My employer has benefited from the

training and exposure I have gained as a Governor as well as numerous networking opportunities. This also extends to networking, safeguarding and HR skills. Being a Governor is really an extension of my work; there are transferable skills, which work both ways. It has allowed me to make a difference for both young people and benefit my employer.”

Paul Taylor, Chair of the Corporation, Harlow College



Case study: Building a diverse and inclusive workforce: Supported Internships

“We initially saw this as a way of giving back, but we didn’t expect to gain so much ourselves. Our intern has transformed the team dynamic.”

We are committed to ensuring that our students gain valuable real-world experience to prepare them for adulthood. Supported internships provide an incredible opportunity for young people with special educational needs to develop essential skills, gain confidence, and explore future career pathways.

Appointing a supported intern has been a rewarding experience. Our intern brings enthusiasm, reliability, and a fresh perspective to the workplace. Many staff have commented that they feel we are a more inclusive work environment, with a strong sense of community impact. Additionally, it has helped our school develop a workforce that reflects the diversity of society. We’ve been pleasantly surprised by the level of commitment, resilience and skills development shown by our supported intern – we’ve also seen increased staff engagement and understanding around inclusion.

We appreciate that taking on a supported intern can feel like a step into the unknown for employers but there are some fantastic support mechanisms in place such as Access to Work (government funding to help with workplace adjustments) and job coaches (funding to provide trained coaches who work closely with the business and intern). As a school, we also offer ongoing support to interns and employers. Adjustments can be simple yet effective and may include aspects such as flexible working, assistive technology, a quieter workspace or additional mentoring.

To any employers we strongly encourage you to take that step – the rewards go far beyond the business benefits. You’ll be shaping the future for a young person who simply needs the opportunity to show what they’re capable of. They will grow in confidence and independence and increase their chances of future employment through real-life work experience. One of our interns shared ‘before my internship, I didn’t think I could work. Now I know I can and I love it!’

Peggy Gisby, Assistant Headteacher, Endeavour Co-operative Academy



Education system at a glance

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

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

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

Local information and contacts

If you would like to get involved in the skills system locally or need further support, there are various ways to do so:

Essex Local Skills Improvement Plan

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are in place across England to provide an employer voice and perspective on local skills needs. The Essex LSIP is led by the Chambers of Commerce and you can find out more and get involved at www.essexchambers.co.uk/lcip/

Greater Essex Careers Hub

The Careers Hub bridges the gap between education and employment by bringing together schools and colleges with local employers to support them in delivering a range of careers programmes and activities for students. There are various ways for employers to engage, including becoming an Industry Champion, Enterprise Advisor or supporting with teacher encounters. Find out more at greateressexcareershub.co.uk/employers-volunteers/



Essex Provider Network

The Essex Provider network provides a single voice for Essex based learning and training providers, including Further Education Colleges. The website also includes an overview of courses on offer. Find out more at essexprovidernetwork.com

Federation of Essex Colleges

The Federation of Essex Colleges is a forum for the colleges in Essex and promotes collaborative work of member colleges and their impact on the economy. This also enables support for the Essex LSIP and a joined-up approach to responding to employer need. Find out more at www.federationofessexcolleges.org

Essex Opportunities Employer Hub

The Essex Opportunities Employer Hub includes information to help businesses to attract early talent and promote vacancies, as well as upskill their workforce. This includes apprenticeship and T Level opportunities and support with apprenticeship levy transfer. More information is at www.essexopportunities.co.uk/employer-hub

Essex Growth Hub

The Growth Hub provides businesses with a single point of access to a range of local, regional and national support. This includes support with grants, finance, and start-up advice. Find out more at www.bestgrowthhub.org.uk

Essex Green Skills Hub

The Green Skills Hub is a one-stop-shop for residents, learners and employers with an interest in sustainability skills, carers, jobs and resources. The hub includes information on courses, green jobs and resources for employers. You can access the hub at www.essexgreenskills.co.uk/employers

Aspirational Essex Programme - employer accreditation

This is a voluntary programme for employers committed to making a difference and developing tomorrow's workforce. Aspirational Essex for Employers offers organisations the opportunity to publicly demonstrate a positive contribution to the skills and employment landscape locally. Sign up and find out more at Aspirational Essex Programme - Employer Accreditation - Backing Essex Business

University of Essex and Anglia Ruskin University (internships, mentoring, placements)

The University of Essex and Anglia Ruskin University have a range of ways for employers to work with and promote opportunities with students, including internships, degree apprenticeships mentoring, placements and projects. Find out more at employers.careerhub.essex.ac.uk/ and www.aru.ac.uk/business-employers

Developed in partnership with:

