T-Level Consultation

The Institute of Chartered Foresters (ICF) is the Royal Chartered body for foresters and arboriculturists in the UK. ICF regulates standards of entry to the profession; doing so by the provision of services and support to its members; guidance to professionals in other sectors; information to the general public; and educational advice and training to students and tree professionals seeking to develop their careers in the forestry and arboricultural industry. ICF works to foster a greater public awareness and understanding of the tree professions in order to serve a variety of commercial, recreational, environmental and scientific interests.

The Institute’s 1,850 members are required to uphold the integrity and reputation of the profession of forestry and arboriculture and to safeguard the public interest in matters of safety and health and otherwise and are bound by a code of conduct.

Forestry contributes more than £4.1bn to the UK GDP with some 39,000 people employed in the forestry and primary wood processing sectors. Only 13 per cent of Britain’s land area is wooded – well below the European average of 37 per cent but only 54 per cent of woods are properly managed meaning the UK has to rely on imports for two thirds of its timber needs (2017, Grown in Britain, [www.growninbritain.org](http://www.growninbritain.org)). Forestry, timber production and arboriculture are clearly important industries in their own right, yet are not mentioned by name within the call for input on T-levels (Agriculture, Land Management and Animal Production).

T-Levels aim to be the technical equivalent of A Levels, combining classroom theory, practical learning and an industry placement. The message that having a degree is not the only route is welcomed – however, it must be ensured that any student embarking on T-levels must not be restricted from being able to enter that pathway afterwards, not only must the requisite UCAS points be assigned to the T-levels, but Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) must be encouraged, if not required, to accept them as entry qualifications to their courses. This has not always been the case with other Level 3, A-level equivalent qualifications such as BTecs.

There is a distinct and recognised skills gap in the forestry sector. Equally, in the aligned conservation sector, where there is a large cross over in skills, it is also reported that there is a skills gap. In the NI Environmental Conservation Skills Survey: 2016 (LANTRA, 2016, <https://www.lantra.co.uk/sites/default/files/Create%20Landing%20page/NI%20Env%20Con%20Skills%20Survey%202016%20-%20FINAL.pdf>), a third of businesses (33 per cent) cited their staff were lacking technical and practical skills; this was also the case for casual staff. There are simply not enough graduates in the field; the industry as a whole is not well represented in schools, students simply do not know about the careers available within forestry and hence do not apply for the courses that are available after leaving secondary education. This would need to be addressed if uptake of a forestry T-level were to be success. This problem is not industry specific. A recent Ofsted report (Ofsted, 2016, Enterprise education: how secondary schools prepare young people for work, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/enterprise-education-how-secondary-schools-prepare-young-people-for-work>) was highly critical over careers support provision within schools and its effect on the economy as a whole. Working alongside professional bodies such as the ICF, would raise the profile of previously missed sectors and help bridge the skills gap and shortages currently suffered by the industry. In addition to this, the accreditation of forestry and arboriculture degree level courses by ICF ensures that the graduates from these providers meet the standard by the sector.

*i.      What are the key knowledge and practical skills, your organisation’s members would want an 18-19 year old to have as a result of successfully completing a level 3 T level qualification*

*Notes,*

· *Those achieving a T level  are likely to have been above average achievers at 16. Over the two years of their T level programme they will have undertaken a programme that is equivalent to 3 ‘A’ levels including science and applied technology and 600 hours supervised and assessed work experience.*

· *They will also have a good graded pass in GCSE Maths and English.*

· *A level 3 T level award can contain level 2 skills and knowledge where this is relevant to underpin the level 3 competencies.*

Business and Management Skills

Forestry and Woodland Management

Arboriculture and Urban Woodland Management

Environment, Biodiversity and Wildlife Management

Recreation Management and Planning

Public Consultation and Participation

Tree Nursery Management

Harvesting, Marketing and Utilisation

Forest Engineering

Timber Conversion

Policy Development and strategic planning

Plus practical skills such as: Tree planting; Pesticide spraying; Use of chainsaws for felling; Use of brush cutter and hooks for weeding. Experience of seasonal forest work etc.

*ii.     What are the key job titles for the roles available for such entrants at 18-19 in your sector?*

*Note some examples of job specifications and an indication of typical remuneration would be helpful but is not essential.*

Forest Worker, Forest Machine Operator, Forest craftsperson, Forest supervisor, Assistant Forester, Forest Technician.  Depending on the individual and employer salary will range from Living Wage to about £26k/annum

See also: <http://www.rfs.org.uk/forestry-careers/>

*iii.* What is the likely role of such an employee after ten years in the secto*r?*

*Note this has been included to get a feel for the likely career paths such recruits will follow in your sector in their first 10 years of employment and the degree to which your sector is prepared to support progression ‘in work’ to level 4 and above qualifications.*

An average employee will be trusted to be supervising a range of contractors on known woodlands. A high performer will have achieved chartered status as an arboriculturalist or forester fulfilling the role of a Forester or Forest manager, Tree Officer or be a self-employed consultant.

*iv.   What percentage (rough estimate acceptable) of new entrants at level 3 into your sector are aged?*

· *18-20* <5%

· *20-30* 20%

· *30 plus* 70%

We would be happy to provide further information and/or assistance, the Institute sits on forestry skills boards in both England and Scotland who deal directly with matters such as these. Please direct any comments or questions relating to the Society’s response to:

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Institute of Chartered Foresters