



WINNER

Digital T Level Student of the Year 2022

Keiran Hall



A bit about Keiran...

Keiran Hall has recently completed his Digital T Level at Thorpe St Andrew School and Sixth Form in Norwich, and is about to embark on an Apprenticeship as an IT Support Technician.

Congratulations on winning the Digital T Level Student of the Year 2022 Award! How did you feel when you heard your name called out?

As the awards were being presented and the winners' names were getting called, I could feel myself getting quite excited about my category.

Then the presenters got to the T Level award and started to read out a citation from the judges about the winner and I realised they were talking about me! It felt fantastic for all my hard work to be recognised.

My girlfriend was with me, and she's a T Level student too in childcare, so she knows just how much work goes into these qualifications and was so happy for me.

Tell us why you chose to do a T Level

After my GCSEs I was trying to decide which A-Levels to do and knew I wanted to do computer science and probably maths but wasn't really sure what else to pick. Then one of my teachers told me about T Levels, so I went to a talk about them to find out more as my school was one of the first providers in the area.

I learnt that they were equivalent to 3 A-Levels but also involved some work experience too, which I thought would be really useful. The Digital T Level is quite broad in that it covers 8 different technical areas so I knew I'd get a good insight into the industry.

What's been your biggest challenge to get where you are today?

The pandemic! The work experience placements are supposed to be spread throughout the T Level course, but I started in 2020 so it was really difficult to get a placement as everyone was working from home during the pandemic.

That first year was all theory rather than gaining any practical experience and I do feel that we missed out.

Also, in year 13 we had to work on an occupational specialism which involved learning a new coding framework.



In the beginning you feel it's not working and it must be broken so you have to restart but by the end I'd developed the skills to identify what the problems were and how to fix them. That was really challenging and took a lot of hard work and perseverance.

Ok, talk to us about your placement...

During my second year, my tutor helped me to secure a placement with a local education trust who are responsible for 10 different schools locally.

For 2 days a week, I've been visiting the different locations as an IT Technician solving issues, handing out equipment, installing hardware. That practical experience, being able to apply what I've learnt and gain extra skills has been really enjoyable.

What did you enjoy most about the placement?

I really like that every day is different. A different location, different people, different issues. It makes it really interesting and makes you look forward to the day because you don't know what to expect. When you've solved a technical issue for someone or resolved any difficulties they're having, it's really rewarding too.

Did you use the BCS T Level student hub? If yes, what did you find most useful about it

At the start of my course, we were encouraged to sign up and get access to the student hub. Because during that first year, there were no work placements I had a day a week free.

There is a lot of useful information on there and they host regular competitions so I used the time to enter various ones to test my skills.

The first one I entered was to create a video aimed at IT Technicians. I listed all the various jobs that were available, what skills are needed for each and how to work out which job would be right for you. I was a runner up in that one and it got posted on social media.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given during your T Level, and what would yours be to someone else considering their next steps

Right at the start of my T Level when we were learning the coding framework which was really hard, I was told not to give up, to persevere and I'd get there in the end. It was so true and it's a great feeling when you finally figure out how to do something and apply it.

I'd tell anyone, even slightly interested in doing a Digital T Level to definitely do it! The mixture of theory and practical experience is really useful and gives you a springboard to the next step – whether that's going to university, getting a job or doing an apprenticeship. It gives you so many options. I really feel like I'm definitely on the right path within IT having started with a Digital T Level and I'm even an ambassador for them.

When I started my T Level it was a new course and my school wanted to promote it, so one of the tutors made a short video which I featured in and sent it in.

I then was nominated from my class to become one of twenty T Level Ambassadors in the UK and was invited to an event in London to meet the Secretary of State for Education. As a group we share our experiences, make suggestions and I am now part of the Alumni group who meet every 3 months.

What are your plans for the future? More education, a job or something else?

I'm waiting for my results at the moment from my T Level and have been targeted with a distinction, but I'd be happy to get a merit.

Then I'm starting my Apprenticeship as a Support Technician, actually at the place where I did my work placement. So I'll be continuing to build my practical skills solving issues and fixing problems, with 1 day a week focused on theory.

I really enjoy the practical side, but during my T Level course I also got involved in some teaching. As a group we were asked by the computer science tutor to teach coding to Year 7 students. We had to put a plan together of how we were going to deliver that and it really opened my eyes on how to share my skills and inspire others. That may be a route I go down in the future.