Criteria for Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diploma Qualifications

Contents

The criteria

Introduction

1.	The following criteria will be used as the basis for the development and accreditation of Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diploma qualifications.

Proposals and rationales

2.	A component awarding organisation submission to Ofqual for accreditation of constituent qualifications that contribute to the Diploma must relate to one or more of the following components of the Diploma:

	2.1	a set of units covering the full requirements for principal learning as defined for the line of learning

	2.2	qualifications that meet the additional and specialist learning requirements for the line of learning

	2.3	functional skills

	2.4	the project.

3.	Such submissions must build on the previous information supplied in the component awarding organisation's updated plans of provision, that is to say:

	3.1	bring additional benefits to users compared to other related qualifications, either by adopting innovative approaches to delivery and/or assessment, or by addressing the needs of an identifiable population not currently catered for by existing accredited qualifications; submissions must be supported by research and indicate the anticipated number of centres and learners

	3.2	provide opportunities for progression to further learning and/or further qualifications, and/or work or employment

	3.3	have the support of interested parties concerned with:

		□	education and training in relation to progression in educational courses and/or further qualifications

		□	work and employment in relation to employment opportunities

	3.4	be marketed and implemented in ways that will support their sustainability

3.5   not lead to excessive provision of qualifications in a particular sector/subject

3.6   take account of all current regulations and legislation in relation to diversity and inclusion.

4.   If a constituent qualification that contributes to the Diploma is to be withdrawn, the component awarding organisation must negotiate a timescale with the regulators for withdrawal that will allow, where appropriate, for alternative arrangements to be made for centres and learners. The component awarding organisation must ensure that adequate notice is given to protect the interests of learners.

Aims of the Diploma

5.   The Diploma must encourage learners to develop and apply:

5.1   the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to progress into employment, training or further and/or higher education

5.2   a broad understanding and knowledge about a sector/subject and/or related sectors/subjects (referred to as a line of learning)

5.3   knowledge, skills and understanding, and attributes related to the chosen sector(s)/subject(s)

5.4   additional and specialist knowledge and skills to complement and broaden, deepen and/or extend relevant learning

5.5   functional skills in mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT) at the appropriate level: level 1 or above in Foundation Diplomas, level 2 in Higher Diplomas and prior achievement of level 2 in Advanced and Progression Diplomas

5.6   transferable personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) (in independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, team working, self-managing and effective participation)

5.7   investigative and project management skills through the project qualification

5.8   skills gained through work experience.

6. The general and applied nature of the Diploma qualification requires constituent qualifications that promote and recognise experiential learning. They must encourage learners to:

    6.1 learn through experience by applying knowledge and skills to tasks or contexts, including those that have many of the characteristics of real work. This learning will be supported by work experience

    6.2 plan and reflect on their experience

    6.3 draw out and articulate lessons learned (both generalised and specific)

    6.4 apply their learning to new activities or situations.

7. The Diploma qualification must also provide opportunities to plan and review the processes that are critical to experiential learning, coherent progression and attainment.

Qualification titles

8. The title of a Diploma qualification must:

    8.1 correspond with the title(s) required in the relevant line-of-learning criteria

    8.2 be sufficiently broad to cover the breadth of the different sectors/subjects within the line of learning, where relevant

    8.3 for Advanced Diplomas, follow the requirements for titles to indicate specialisms set out in the criteria for that line of learning.

9. The title of a Diploma qualification must be set out in the following order: the awarding organisation, the level (as indicated below) and title of the qualification, and the title of the line of learning:

    9.1 at level 1, 'Foundation Diploma in', followed by the title of the line of learning

    9.2 at level 2, 'Higher Diploma in' followed by the title of the line of learning

    9.3 at level 3, 'Advanced Diploma in' followed by the title of the line of learning, and include (in parentheses) any title indicating a specialist focus.

Qualification structure

10.   The Diploma qualifications must include constituent qualifications that contribute to the three components of the Diploma. These components are:

  10.1   principal learning

  10.2   generic learning

  10.3   additional and specialist learning.

11.   The Diploma qualification must be structured from qualifications that comprise a minimum of:

  11.1   600 guided learning hours (GLH) for the Foundation Diploma

  11.2   800 GLH for the Higher Diploma

  11.3   1,080 GLH for the Advanced Diploma

  11.4   720 GLH for the Progression Diploma.

12.   Within principal learning, assessment units must:

  12.1   be worth 30 and/or 60 GLH at levels 1 and 2, and 30 and/or 60 and/or 90 GLH at level 3

  12.2   have identical learning outcomes and related assessment criteria when the unit shares its title with other unit(s) in different lines of learning offered by the same awarding organisation.

Component size

13.   The size of the Foundation Diploma components must be as follows:

  13.1   principal learning is set at 240 GLH, of which a minimum of 120 GLH must be applied learning

  13.2   generic learning is set at 240 GLH, of which:

    □   60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS

    □   60 GLH must form the foundation project

  13.3   additional and specialist learning is set at a minimum of 120 GLH.

14. The size of the Higher Diploma components must be as follows:

   14.1   principal learning is set at 420 GLH, of which a minimum of 210 GLH must be applied learning

   14.2   generic learning is set at 200 GLH, of which:

   □   60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS

   □   60 GLH must form the higher project

   14.3   additional and specialist learning is set at a minimum of 180 GLH.

15. The size of the Advanced Diploma components must be as follows:

   15.1   principal learning is set at 540 GLH, of which a minimum of 270 GLH must be applied learning

   15.2   generic learning is set at 180 GLH, of which:

   □   60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS

   □   120 GLH must form the extended project

   15.3   additional and specialist learning is set at a minimum of 360 GLH.

16. The size of the Progression Diploma components must be as follows:

   16.1   principal learning is set at 540 GLH, of which a minimum of 270 GLH must be applied learning

   16.2   generic learning is set at 180 GLH, of which:

   □   60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS

   □   120 GLH must form the extended project.

Assessment

17. Assessment arrangements must be appropriate to the general and applied character of the Diploma and meet the following requirements:

   17.1   within principal and generic learning, be comparable in demand for all learners at each level across all lines of learning

    17.2   be differential in approach and balance according to the level of the Diploma

    17.3   allow for flexibility of assessment styles and, as appropriate, facilitate e-learning and e-assessment

    17.4   offer a mixture of assessment types which reflect the purpose, sector/subject context and level.

18.   The assessment methods for principal learning, the project – and, qualifications specifically developed to support specialist pathways within additional and specialist learning for a line of learning – must include assessment tasks concerned with applied learning. This learning should be evidenced through real work or work-related purposes, problems or contexts.

19.   The chosen method or methods of assessment must be appropriate to the Diploma and must comply with any requirements in relevant criteria published by the regulators. This is so unless otherwise agreed in advance with the regulators. The methods of assessment must meet the assessment principles in paragraphs 17 to 18 above.

Grading, determination and reporting of results

20.   Diploma awarding organisations must have in place arrangements for grading and reporting of the Diploma, according to the following grading scales:

    20.1   Foundation Diploma attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A and B

    20.2   Higher Diploma attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B and C

    20.3   Advanced and Progression Diploma attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B, C, D and E

    20.4   attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a Diploma qualification is reported as Unclassified (U).

21.   The Foundation and Higher Diploma grades must be derived from the aggregate of principal learning unit scores and the foundation and higher project score for the appropriate level. Detailed information is also available in the *Arrangements for Awarding and Setting Standards in the Diploma: Principal Learning, Project and Diploma* (Ofqual/08/3865).

22. The Advanced and Progression Diploma grades must be derived from the aggregate of principal learning unit scores and the extended project score.

23. Principal learning, foundation and higher projects, and the extended project, must be graded separately and use the same grading system as the Diploma.

24. The grading models for existing qualifications that contribute to additional and specialist learning must continue to apply.

Principal learning component

25. The principal learning component is a constituent qualification of the Diploma and must:

    25.1   focus on developing and applying knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to the sector/subject

    25.2   place an emphasis on learning by doing and include a defined proportion of the programme that is concerned with the application of knowledge, skills and understanding through relevant work and work-related tasks, problems and contexts

    25.3   include levels 1 and 2, assessment units that identify learning outcomes and assessment criteria which are based on 30 and/or 60 GLH

    25.4   include at level 3, assessment units that identify learning outcomes and assessment criteria which are based on 30 and/or 60 and/or 90 GLH

    25.5   comprise units of assessment with titles that reflect the content and the sector/subject

    25.6   comply with the relevant line-of-learning criteria for each level.

26. The subject matter of the assessment units within principal learning must:

    26.1   comply with the line-of-learning criteria for each level

    26.2   give a clear indication of coverage and depth

    26.3   be expressed in terms of learning outcomes and assessment criteria

    26.4   be aligned with any relevant level descriptors specified by the regulators for accredited qualifications.

27. Principal learning must enable generic skills to be developed and applied, including:

27.1   functional skills (see paragraph 31)

27.2   PLTS (see paragraphs 32 to 34).

28.   Principal learning must be assessed by means of a combination of internal and external assessment. Thirty GLH at level 1 and 60 GLH at level 2 must be externally assessed. At level 3,120 GLH or 180 GLH must be externally assessed as specified in the criteria for each line of learning.

29.   Principal learning must be graded according to the following, separate grading scales:

29.1   level 1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A and B

29.2   level 2 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B and C

29.3   level 3 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B, C, D and E

29.4   Attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as Unclassified (U).

30.   Each principal learning unit must be graded separately.

Generic learning component

Functional skills

31.   Functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT at level 1 or above must be required for the Foundation Diploma and at level 2 for the Higher Diploma (the achievement of the Advanced and Progression Diplomas requires prior achievement of level 2 functional skills).

Personal, learning and thinking skills

32.   The Diploma qualification must require opportunities to develop and apply all six PLTS within principal learning:

32.1   independent enquiry

32.2   creative thinking

32.3   reflective learning

32.4 team working

32.5 self-management

32.6 effective participation.

33. Principal learning at each level must:

33.1 be accompanied by copies of the PLTS framework

33.2 summarise the full range of opportunities for developing and applying PLTS so that learners can plan and review their achievement

33.3 support the achievement of PLTS as appropriate to the level of the Diploma; differentiation between the levels must be determined by:

□ the amount of support a learner is given

□ the degree of sophistication of the skills used

□ the level of demand of the task, problem or context in which these skills are applied.

34. At all levels of the Diploma, principal learning must include all six PLTS. These skills must be integrated as a minimum within the assessment criteria for principal learning to recognise explicitly the application of these skills in sector- and/or subject-related contexts. The coverage of PLTS must be reported in the Diploma transcript.

Work experience

35. At each level of the Diploma qualification a learner must complete at least 10 days of work experience.

Foundation, higher and extended projects

36. The foundation, higher and extended projects are free-standing, single-unit qualifications and are constituent qualifications of the Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diplomas, which can be taken at the level of the Diploma or the level above.

37. The project at all levels can have a number of different outcomes, including:

37.1 a report with findings from an investigation or study

37.2   a dissertation

37.3   an artefact

37.4   a performance.

Foundation project

Aims and learning outcomes

38.   The foundation project must enable learners to:

38.1   develop and apply skills

38.2   develop as inquisitive and independent learners

38.3   be inspired by new areas and/or methods of study

38.4   plan and review their learning

38.5   use their learning experiences to support their personal aspirations for further study and/or career development

38.6   develop, where appropriate, as electronically confident learners and apply appropriate technologies in their studies

38.7   transfer skills developed as part of their foundation project to other areas of study.

Scope

39.   The foundation project must:

39.1   form part of a planned programme of study

39.2   be of sufficient breadth and depth to allow learners to meet the aims and learning outcomes listed above

39.3   be based on an agreed set of standards and assessment

39.4   have the potential to be researched and completed within one academic year

39.5   require 60 GLH.

Topic

40.   Learners are required to select a suitable topic for their foundation project. This means that:

40.1   the topic must be chosen by learners through negotiation with their teacher, mentor or tutor and, if appropriate, an employer

40.2   the component awarding organisation must ensure that centres confirm that learners' project topics are relevant in one or both of the following ways:

□   how the project topic complements and develops the themes and topics for learners' principal learning as set out in the relevant line-of-learning criteria

□   how it supports learner progression

40.3   learners may choose one of many, different types of project, but the topic selected must have the potential to provide the learner with opportunities to meet all the foundation project assessment objectives.

Subject content

41.   The foundation project must require learners to:

41.1   select, either individually or as part of a group, an appropriate topic

41.2   identify a question, task or brief which specifies an intended project outcome

41.3   produce a plan for how they will deliver their intended project outcome

41.4   conduct research into the project brief, using appropriate techniques

41.5   develop the intended project outcome, using selected tools and techniques safely

41.6   demonstrate the capacity to see a project through to completion

41.7   share the outcome of the project, including a review of their own learning and performance, with others, using appropriate communication methods.

42. During the course of their foundation project, learners must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of their studies or areas of interest.

43. During the course of their foundation project, learners must be provided with opportunities to apply and develop:

    43.1   PLTS

    43.2   the functional skills of mathematics, English and ICT

    43.3   any further specialist technical skills, where relevant to the chosen topic.

Assessment

44. The foundation project must be a single-unit, internally assessed qualification.

45. The assessment system must include:

    45.1   centre approval of the appropriateness of the project proposal

    45.2   agreement on the range of acceptable evidence

    45.3   evidence of monitoring by teachers

    45.4   clear protocols for provision of advice, guidance, interim reviews and redrafting opportunities

    45.5   arrangements for quality assurance of the assessment

    45.6   authentication of learners' work by teachers

    45.7   verification or moderation of centres and centre staff

    45.8   mark schemes which reflect the detail and demand of the assessment objectives and grade descriptions.

Scheme of assessment

46. The scheme of assessment must:

    46.1   include a specified written element

46.2   reflect the aims and content of the specification

46.3   address the assessment objectives for the foundation project

46.4   specify the type and format of evidence that is permissible

46.5   stipulate a maximum mark of at least 30

46.6   be through internal assessment.

Assessment objectives

47.   All learners are required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives must be weighted as indicated below.

Foundation project assessment objectives		Per cent weighting
A01	Manage Select, plan and carry out a project, applying skills and methods to achieve objectives.	15–25
A02	Use resources Obtain, select and use information, and select and use resources.	15–25
A03	Develop and realise Use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies, to achieve planned outcomes.	35–45
A04	Review Identify and consider project outcomes, and own learning and performance. Use communication skills to present project outcomes in an appropriate format.	15–25

Assessment evidence

48.   Assessment must include evidence of:

48.1   the planning and process of the foundation project

48.2   the sources and range of information and other resources accessed

48.3   the range of skills used, including, where appropriate, the use of new technologies

48.4   the knowledge, skills and understanding used to complete the tasks/activities of the project

48.5   an outcome demonstrating the individual's knowledge, skills and understanding

48.6   a review of the outcomes of the project, and an evaluation of own performance and learning.

Grading and reporting

49.   Awarding organisations must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of the foundation project so that:

49.1   attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported on a three-grade scale from A* to B, where A* is the highest grade

49.2   attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as Unclassified (U).

Foundation project grade descriptors

Grade A*	Candidates select their project and show good organisational skills in planning the project. There is clear evidence that they have responded effectively to guidance given. They obtain and select relevant information and use a range of resources to good effect. Problems and issues are identified and conclusions drawn. Candidates use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies, to achieve good-quality outcomes which realise the intentions of the project. They use communication skills to present their project outcomes clearly and in an appropriate format. In their summary, candidates reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their project and on their own learning. They demonstrate, through their responses to questions, good knowledge of the topic studied at this level.

Grade B	Candidates select their project and produce plans which enable them to achieve some of their overall objectives. There is some evidence that they have responded to guidance given. Candidates obtain and use some information and make use of some resources. Some problems and issues are identified, some conclusions drawn, and intended outcomes are partially realised. Elements of the project are generally well presented using ommunication skills. In their summary, candidates comment on their strengths and weaknesses in carrying out their project. They demonstrate, through their responses to questions, basic knowledge of the topic studied at this level.

Higher project

Aims and learning outcomes

50.   The higher project must enable learners to:

50.1   develop and apply skills

50.2   develop as inquisitive and independent learners

50.3   be inspired by new areas and/or methods of study

50.4   plan and review their learning

50.5   use their learning experiences to support their personal aspirations for further study and/or career development

50.6   develop, where appropriate, as electronically confident learners and apply appropriate technologies in their studies

50.7   transfer skills developed as part of their higher project to other areas of study.

Scope

51.   The higher project must:

51.1   form part of a planned programme of study

51.2   be of sufficient breadth and depth to allow learners to address the broad aims and learning outcomes listed above

51.3   be based on an agreed set of standards and assessment

51.4   have the potential to be researched and completed within one academic year

51.5   require 60 GLH.

Topic

52.   Learners are required to select a suitable topic for their higher project. This means that:

52.1   the topic must be chosen by learners through negotiation with their teacher, mentor or tutor and, if appropriate, an employer

52.2   the component awarding organisation must ensure that centres confirm that learners' project topics are relevant in one or both of the following ways:

□   how the project topic complements and develops the themes and topics for learners' principal learning as set out in the relevant line-of-learning criteria

□   how it supports learner progression

52.3   learners may choose one of many different types of project, but the topic selected must have the potential to provide the learner with opportunities to meet all the higher-project assessment objectives.

Subject content

53.   The higher project must require learners to:

53.1   select, either individually or as part of a group, an appropriate topic

53.2   identify a question, task or brief which specifies an intended project outcome

53.3   produce a plan for how they will deliver their intended project outcome

53.4.   conduct research into the project brief, using appropriate techniques

53.5.   develop the intended project outcome, using selected tools and techniques safely

53.6   demonstrate the capacity to see a project through to completion

53.7   share the outcome and an evaluation of the higher project, including a review of their own learning and performance, with others, using appropriate communication methods.

54.   During the course of completing their higher project, learners must demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the concepts and principles underlying their studies or areas of interest.

55.   During the course of completing their higher project, learners must be provided with opportunities to apply and develop:

55.1   PLTS

55.2   the functional skills of mathematics, English and ICT

55.3   any further specialist technical skills, where relevant to the chosen topic.

Assessment

56.   The higher project must be a single-unit, internally assessed qualification.

57.   The assessment system must include:

57.1   centre approval of the appropriateness of the project proposal

57.2   agreement on the range of acceptable evidence

57.3   evidence of monitoring by teachers

57.4   clear protocols for provision of advice, guidance, interim reviews and redrafting opportunities

57.5   arrangements for quality assurance of the assessment

57.6   authentication of learners' work by teachers

57.7   verification or moderation of centres and centre staff

57.8   mark schemes that reflect the detail and demand of the assessment objectives and grade descriptions.

Scheme of assessment

58.   The scheme of assessment must:

58.1   include a specified written element

58.2   reflect the aims and content of the specification

58.3   address the assessment objectives for the higher project

58.4   specify the type and format of evidence that is permissible

58.5   stipulate a maximum mark of at least 30

58.6   be through internal assessment.

Assessment objectives

59.   All learners are required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives must be weighted as indicated below.

Higher project assessment objectives		Per cent weighting
A01	Manage Identify, plan and carry out a project, applying a range of skills and methods to achieve objectives.	15–25
A02	Use resources Research, select, organise and use information, and select and use a range of resources. Interpret data and apply findings.	15–25
A03	Develop and realise Select and use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies and problem solving, to achieve planned outcomes.	35–45

A04	Review Evaluate project outcomes and own learning and performance. Use communication skills to present evidenced project outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format.	15–25

Assessment evidence

60. Assessment must include evidence of:

60.1 the planning and process of developing the higher project

60.2 the sources and range of information and other resources accessed

60.3 the range of skills used, including, where appropriate, the use of new technologies

60.4 the knowledge, skills and understanding used to complete the tasks/activities of the project

60.5 an outcome demonstrating the individual's knowledge, skills and understanding

60.6 an evaluation of the outcomes of the project and an evaluation of own performance and learning.

Grading and reporting

61. Awarding organisations must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of the higher project so that:

61.1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported on a four-grade scale from A* to C, where A* is the highest grade

61.2 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as Unclassified (U)

61.3 the grades awarded reflect the descriptions of performance at each grade published by the regulators.

Higher project grade descriptors

Grade A*	Candidates identify their project and produce well-structured and well-organised plans. There is clear evidence that they have responded effectively to guidance given. Candidates research, select, organise and use relevant information and use a range of suitable resources to good effect. Problems and issues are identified and conclusions drawn. Candidates select and use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies, to achieve good-quality outcomes which realise the intentions of the project. They use communication skills to present clearly the project outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format with supporting evidence. In their analyses, candidates evaluate the project outcomes and their strengths and weaknesses in carrying out their project. They demonstrate, through their responses to questions, good knowledge of the topic studied at this level.
Grade C	Candidates identify their project and produce plans which enable them to achieve most of their overall objectives. There is some evidence that candidates have responded to guidance given. Candidates research, select, organise and use information, and partially exploit a range of resources. Some problems and issues are identified, some conclusions drawn, and the intended outcomes are partially realised. Elements of the project are generally well presented using communication skills. In their analyses, candidates reflect on their project and on their strengths and weaknesses in carrying out the project. They demonstrate, through their responses to questions, basic knowledge of the topic studied at this level.

Extended project

Aims and learning outcomes

62.   The extended project must enable learners to:

62.1   make a significant contribution to the choice and design of an extended project and take responsibility either for an individual task or for a defined task within a group project

62.2   develop and improve their own learning and performance as critical, reflective and independent learners

62.3   develop and apply decision-making and, where appropriate, problem-solving skills

62.4   extend their planning, research, critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and presentation skills

62.5   where appropriate, develop confidence in applying new technologies in their studies

62.6   develop and apply skills creatively, demonstrating initiative and enterprise

62.7   use their learning experiences to support their aspirations for higher education and/or career development

62.8   transfer skills developed as part of their extended project to other areas of study.

Scope

63.   The extended project must:

63.1   be of sufficient breadth and depth to allow learners to address the broad aims and learning outcomes listed above

63.2   develop and extend from one or more of the learner's study areas and/or from an area of personal interest or activity outside their main programme of study

63.3   be based on a topic chosen by the learner(s) and agreed as appropriate by the centre

63.4   be based on a topic that has the potential to provide the learner(s) with opportunities to meet all the assessment objectives

63.5   require 120 GLH.

Topic

64. The component awarding organisation must ensure that centres confirm that learners' extended project topics are relevant in one or both of the following ways:

64.1 how the extended project topic complements and develops the themes and topics for learners' principal learning as set out in the relevant line-of-learning criteria

64.2 how the extended project supports learners' progression.

Subject content

65. The extended project must require learners to:

65.1 select a topic/area of interest for an in-depth study which provides opportunities to develop knowledge, skills and understanding, and to negotiate the scoping of that project

65.2 identify and draft an objective(s) for their extended project, providing a rationale for their choice

65.3 produce a plan for how they will deliver their intended outcome

65.4 conduct research as required by the project brief, using appropriate techniques

65.5 develop the intended project outcome, using selected tools and techniques safely, to demonstrate the ability to pursue an extended project through to completion

65.6 share the outcome of the extended project, including an evaluation of the outcome and their own learning and performance, with another or others, using appropriate communication methods.

66. During the course of their extended project, learners must demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of:

66.1 the key concepts and principles underlying their studies or areas of interest

66.2 connections, links and complexities, where appropriate, between different areas of study and/or different areas of interest.

67. During the course of completing their extended project, learners must be provided with opportunities to apply and develop:

67.1   PLTS

67.2   the functional skills of mathematics, English and ICT

67.3   any further specialist technical skills, where these are relevant to the chosen topic.

Assessment

68.   The extended project must be a single-unit, internally assessed qualification.

69.   The assessment system must include:

69.1   centre approval of the appropriateness of the project proposal

69.2   agreement on the range of acceptable evidence

69.3   evidence of monitoring by teachers

69.4   clear protocols for provision of advice, guidance, interim reviews and redrafting opportunities

69.5   arrangements for quality assurance of the assessment

69.6   authentication of learners' work by teachers.

Scheme of assessment

70.   The scheme of assessment for the extended project must:

70.1   include a specified written element

70.2   reflect the aims and content of the specification

70.3   address the assessment objectives for the extended project

70.4   specify the type and format of evidence that is permissible

70.5   stipulate a maximum mark of at least 30

70.6   be internally assessed.

71. All learners are required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives must be weighted as indicated below.

Extended project assessment objectives		Per cent weighting
A01	Manage Identify, design, plan and carry out a project, applying a range of skills, strategies and methods to achieve objectives.	15–25
A02	Use resources Research, critically select, organise and use information, and select and use a range of resources. Analyse data, apply relevantly and demonstrate understanding of any links, connections and complexities within the topic.	15–25
A03	Develop and realise Select and use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies and problem solving, to take decisions critically and achieve planned outcomes.	35–45
A04	Review Evaluate all aspects of the extended project, including outcomes in relation to stated objectives and own learning and performance. Select and use a range of communication skills and media to present evidenced project outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format.	15–25

Assessment evidence

72. Assessment must include evidence of:

   72.1   at least one written piece

   72.2   the design, strategic planning and process of the project

   72.3   the sources and range of information and other resources accessed

   72.4   analysis of the data and a clear indication of how findings were used to inform the project

> 72.5 the range of skills used, including, where appropriate, problem solving and the use of new technologies
>
> 72.6 an outcome demonstrating the individual's knowledge, skills and understanding
>
> 72.7 an evaluation of own performance, learning and decision making
>
> 72.8 a presentation for a non-specialist audience, communicating outcomes, conclusions and evaluation.

73. In the case of group projects, this evidence must be individual to the learner. While larger group activities, for example an expedition or a performance, may be a vehicle for evidence, that evidence must demonstrate how the individual has met the assessment objectives and performance criteria.

Grading and reporting

74. Awarding organisations must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of the extended project so that:

> 74.1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported on a six-grade scale from A* to E, where A* is the highest grade
>
> 74.2 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as Unclassified (U).

Extended project grade descriptors

| Grade A* | Candidates identify their project and produce an effective design and thorough plan. They carry out their project in a highly organised fashion, showing excellent independent working skills and clear evidence of responding very effectively to guidance given. They use a wide range of resources critically, analyse data effectively and apply findings to good effect. They show clear links between sources of information and the themes of their project, and fully explore the complexities of the topic. Problems and/or issues are identified, fully explored and addressed. Candidates select and use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies, to achieve high-quality outcomes which fully realise the intentions of the project and to draw conclusions. Candidates carry out full, in-depth evaluations, showing a |

	high level of insight into how they conducted their project and the limitations of the resources at their disposal. They select and use a range of communication skills to present outcomes and conclusions clearly, in an appropriate format with excellent supporting evidence. Candidates show a deep and extensive knowledge of the project area of study through their responses to questions.
Grade C	Candidates identify and design their project. They produce a plan which enables them to achieve the overall objectives and to demonstrate some higher level organisational skills. They are able to work independently in carrying out the project and respond to guidance given. Candidates use a range of resources, analyse data and apply findings. They show links between sources of information and the themes of the project and explore some complexities of the topic. Some problems and/or issues are identified and addressed. A range of skills is employed and the intended outcomes are generally achieved to a competent standard. In their evaluations, candidates reflect effectively on the final outcome and on their strengths and weaknesses in carrying out their project. They use a range of communication skills to present clearly the outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format with sound supporting evidence. Candidates show a good knowledge of the project area of study through their responses to questions.
Grade E	Candidates identify their project and produce a workable plan. They show some organisational skills in completing the project. There is some evidence that they have responded to guidance given. Candidates use a limited range of resources, analyse some of the data and apply findings. Some links are made between the sources of information and the themes of the project. Candidates use a range of skills to realise partially the intended outcomes. They give some thought to the way the final outcomes have emerged and to their own strengths and weaknesses in carrying out their project. Communication skills are used to present outcomes and conclusions with some supporting evidence. Candidates demonstrate some knowledge of the project area through their responses to questions.

Additional and specialist learning component

75.   Constituent qualifications that support additional and specialist learning in Diplomas must facilitate choice and progression at the level of the Diploma, while contributing to a coherent learning experience.

76. Within the Diploma line of learning at the accredited level, additional and specialist learning qualifications must:

   76.1   provide high-quality breadth and/or depth

   76.2   be at

      □   level 1 and/or level 2, and/or level 3 for the Foundation Diploma

      □   level 2 and/or level 3 for the Higher Diploma

      □   level 3 and/or level 4 for the Advanced Diploma

   76.3   avoid substantive duplication with principal learning and generic learning; a maximum content overlap of 30 per cent between additional and specialist learning and principal learning is permitted.

77. Additional and specialist learning is set at a minimum of:

   □   120 GLH for the Foundation Diploma

   □   180 GLH for the Higher Diploma

   □   360 GLH for the Advanced Diploma.

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