

For:

- All those involved in Diploma planning



**Qualifications
and Curriculum
Development
Agency**

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Diploma
curriculum

Planning the Diploma curriculum

The Foundation Diploma

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Introduction

This guidance provides information about the Foundation Diploma and considers some of the key issues in planning for successful outcomes. It draws on features of successful delivery by phase 1 providers in 2008/9 and it builds on guidance produced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) during 2009. It includes guidance on:

- the intended client groups for Foundation Learning and the Foundation Diploma
- opportunities for co-learning with the Higher Diploma
- teaching functional skills for successful outcomes
- providing additional and specialist learning (ASL) to meet students' needs.

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The Foundation Diploma

Foundation Diploma learning gives students working at level 1 significant opportunities for increased personalisation and motivation. The structure and content of the Foundation Diploma is designed to support students who want to explore what it is like to work within a specific sector. The organisation of learning should support students in achieving their objectives and goals by providing a rich and varied learning experience.

What makes the Foundation Diploma different to other level 1 qualifications?

- It is a composite qualification with opportunities for integrated delivery of all the components and for students to make choices and personalise their experience.
- It has a focus on applied and experiential learning, and blends theoretical and practical learning in a way that motivates students.
- Students can develop a range of practical and transferable skills.
- It is delivered by a partnership of providers and in a range of places.
- Students explore what work might entail within a sector through their involvement with businesses and employers.
- Students have contact with a range of professionals including teachers and lecturers, support staff, employers and employees.

Key facts about the Foundation Diploma

Structure

The Foundation Diploma is a composite qualification at level 1 totalling 600 guided learning hours (GLH). It has three components: principal learning, generic learning and ASL.

The **principal learning** component requires 240 GLH, at least half of which should be applied learning. Applied learning will include one or more of the following:

- linking understanding and learning activities to the workplace
- interaction with professionals
- real-life investigation and active enquiry
- learning through doing
- interaction with other students through group work
- learning in different environments.

Generic learning is made up of:

- functional skills of English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) at level 1, totalling 120 GLH
- a level 1 project of 60 GLH
- personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS), totalling 60 GLH
- work experience of at least 10 days.

The **additional and specialist learning** component is made up of qualifications at level 1 (or above) totalling at least 120 GLH but not more than 180 GLH.

To be awarded a Foundation Diploma, students need to complete each component and to achieve the required level in the qualifications involved.

Assessment and award

Students' achievements are reported in two ways:

- for the Diploma as a whole
- for each of the constituent qualifications.

The Foundation Diploma is graded A*, A, B or U. The grade is calculated from the grades achieved in principal learning and the project.

Achievement in each qualification within the Diploma must be at level 1 or above. Functional skills are pass/fail. ASL awards vary depending on the type of qualification taken.

Principal learning is assessed in units. Assessment is mainly internal, in the form of controlled assessment. Controlled assessment defines the level of support and supervision that centres provide before and during the assessment, and specifies a timeframe for students' completion of the work. In the Foundation Diploma, 30 GLH (usually one unit) are externally assessed by the awarding body.

Functional skills assessment may vary across awarding bodies, and centres should choose the awarding body that best suits their students in terms of frequency of assessment opportunities, style of assessment and support provided.

Principal learning requires the student to have a strong grasp of personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS).

The components of the Diploma do not have to be completed all at the same time. For example, some achievement in key stage 4 could count toward ASL or functional skills requirements post-16, and components can be added or retaken during the lifetime of an awarding body specification to build towards the award of a full Diploma.

The Foundation Diploma within the key stage 4 curriculum

At key stage 4, the Foundation Diploma will be taught alongside the national curriculum and other subjects. It can be integrated with other learning for example English, mathematics and science GCSEs, citizenship, personal, social and health education (PSHE).

Principal learning and the project normally occupy approximately 20 per cent of curriculum time at this stage. ASL is often allocated a further 10 per cent of curriculum time.

Progression into and from the Foundation Diploma

An important aspect of successful progression into or from a Diploma programme is independent and impartial information, advice and guidance (IAG) for individual students.

Progression into a Foundation Diploma can be from key stage 3, from GCSEs or other qualifications at key stage 4, or from a Foundation Learning programme.

Achievement of a Foundation Diploma offers progression opportunities to:

- a Higher Diploma in the same or another line of learning
- other qualifications at level 2: GCSEs or vocational qualifications
- an apprenticeship in a related or unrelated framework
- employment with training.

The transferable PLTS and exposure to the workplace mean that young people with a Diploma are in a good position to progress to the next stage of their education and training. They will be work-ready, but not necessarily job-ready at that stage, so can enter the workplace and undertake further occupational training.

« An important aspect of successful progression into or from a Diploma programme is independent and impartial IAG. »

« Principal learning requires the student to have a strong grasp of PLTS. »

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The Foundation Diploma and Foundation Learning

It is important to distinguish between students whose needs are best met by the Foundation Diploma and those more suited to Foundation Learning. Foundation Learning is a new way to provide personalised learning programmes for young people and adults working mainly at Entry level and level 1. It helps these students

develop their potential and prepares them to progress towards level 2 and other routes, including Diplomas. There are some similarities between the Foundation Diploma and Foundation Learning, but there are also important differences. These are summarised in the adjacent table.

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Because Foundation Learning is a programme of study, its components can be achieved at different levels.

Foundation Diploma	Foundation Learning
<p>Is a coherent programme of study made up of three integrated components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • principal learning • generic learning (including functional skills) • additional and specialist learning. 	<p>Is made up of three integrated components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vocational or subject learning • functional skills • personal and social development.
<p>Is intended for students working at level 1 and requires achievement at that level across a range of qualifications.</p>	<p>Is intended for students working mainly at Entry level and level 1, and can accommodate achievement at different levels across the programme.</p>
<p>Is a structured programme with specified amounts of each type of learning.</p>	<p>Is a personalised programme that varies in content and size according to individual needs.</p>

Foundation Learning is suitable for a wide range of students, including those:

- in mainstream education working mainly at Entry level and level 1
- on key stage 4 engagement programmes
- on Entry to Employment programmes
- with special educational needs
- with learning difficulties or disabilities
- attending pupil referral units.

Foundation Learning is delivered in personalised programmes and the size is not prescribed. Programmes will tend to be worth between 20 and 70 credits depending on the needs and abilities of the individual student. A Foundation Learning programme must also involve diagnostic assessment, mentoring, and IAG for the student. Of course, this would be good practice in the case of Foundation Diploma students too.

For Foundation Learning, providers design programmes for their students using qualifications at Entry level and level 1 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). This provides flexibility and allows students to have achievement recognised incrementally. More information on the qualifications available for Foundation Learning programmes can be found at www.qcda.gov.uk/flqcatalogue and on the QCF at www.qcda.gov.uk/8150.aspx.

Foundation Learning components can be achieved at different levels, unlike the Foundation Diploma, where all assessed achievement must be at level 1. Foundation Learning can also be accompanied by other learning, for example English, mathematics and science GCSEs, citizenship, personal, social and health education (PHSE).

An important factor to consider when deciding on an individual's programme is whether that individual will be able to succeed at the required level in each element of the Diploma, including each functional skill.

Co-learning with the Higher Diploma

Partnerships may wish to group students taking Foundation and Higher Diplomas together for some or all of their Diploma work. There are two main reasons for this:

- because they are unsure which is the more appropriate level for specific students, particularly because this is a new type of learning that may well motivate and boost achievement
- because student numbers do not justify separate groups.

In the case of the first reason, the issue can be addressed by using co-learning in taster sessions, induction periods or a common introductory topic. This would allow students to settle into the course and find their level in the new way of learning. It would also allow teachers to assess students against Diploma standards and predict their likely success across each Diploma component, making a fully informed decision about the appropriate level for each student.

In the case of the second reason, there may be an assumption that the co-learning would continue throughout the course. This is not a recommended option as the two qualifications are different in size, content and level. Principal learning in particular is difficult to organise in this way to the benefit of all students. In the Higher Diploma principal learning needs 420 GLH, and in the Foundation Diploma it needs 240 GLH.

However, co-learning can be used effectively to bring groups together for specific activities such as visits, employer events, careers-related work or enterprise activities. In addition, the organisation of groups for GCSE subjects within the core curriculum and/or ASL options may be based on co-learning.

E-learning can be used for co-learning, where students access the same electronic material but are set different tasks with different learning outcomes.

Case study

In the Stoke-on-Trent consortium, a relatively small number of students taking an engineering Foundation Diploma join Higher Diploma students for:

- induction activities planned to develop and record skills such as a two-day 'outward bound' course
- some applied assignments
- an introduction to the project qualification, where the Foundation students are guided in their choice of topic.

As a result, the Foundation Diploma students have grown in confidence.

Electronic learning (e-learning) can be used for co-learning, where students access the same electronic material but are set different tasks with different learning outcomes. Becta provides detailed advice on the contribution that e-learning can make to Diploma delivery, together with examples of how e-learning is being used by Diploma consortia around the country.

Their examples cover learning platforms, video conferencing, video content, mobile technologies, and technologies for distance learning and personalised learning. Visit www.becta.org.uk for further information. A number of other approaches to co-learning can be found at www.qcda.gov.uk/18241.aspx.

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Successful approaches to functional skills learning

Achievement at level 1 in all three functional skills is a requirement for Foundation Diploma success. Functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT have been part of the new secondary curriculum since 2008. Students who have followed the revised curriculum will enter the 14–19 phase with a different experience, enhanced skills and greater awareness of the functional skills and their own skill levels.

Functional skills are an essential means of developing employability and a requirement for Diploma. They are the responsibility of all teachers, across the curriculum, but particularly for teachers of English, mathematics, ICT and Diploma principal learning and projects. Managers

in schools, colleges and partnerships need to ensure that these people have adequate time together to plan programmes.

In some consortia, Foundation Diploma students have been allocated additional time within their programme for functional skills work. This supplements GCSEs in English and mathematics, provides another opportunity for contextualisation of the skills, and enables an individualised approach for these students.

Further information, resources for staff training and support for planning functional skills within Diploma lines are available at www.fssupport.org.

« In some consortia, Foundation Diploma students have been allocated additional time within their programme for functional skills work. »»

Case study

Tamworth consortium used a Diploma induction period at the end of year 9 to test all the students diagnostically, in contexts linked to their chosen line of learning. They found it useful at an individual level, but also at a group level. For example, they were able to identify key areas where a group as a whole appeared to need support, such as the concept of ratio. Principal learning teachers were informed of these areas and could ensure that they were built into schemes of work in an appropriate way.

Factors promoting success in Diplomas and functional skills

Before the programme begins

- recruitment of students predicted to achieve at the appropriate level in each functional skill
- early diagnostic testing that relates to the functional skills requirements
- joint planning of teaching and assignments across the curriculum
- plotting the likely occurrence of functional skills opportunities across each line of learning, and filling any gaps.

During the programme

- a combination of discrete and embedded teaching of functional skills
- teaching of functional skills by specialist teachers
- teaching of functional skills in meaningful contexts by principal learning teachers
- practice of functional skills within Diploma tasks and assignments
- good communication between all the teachers involved
- use of formative assessment and feedback linked to individual learning plans
- regular progress checks followed by action to enhance learning and achievement
- individual support where needed
- adopting a flexible approach and adapting provision during the course if necessary, for example to focus on a specific skill or a particular group of students.

Assessment

- providing practice for the functional skills external assessment
- entering students for the external assessments as soon as each student is ready, and allowing time for any resits that may be needed
- choosing an awarding body, specification and assessment methodology that suits the line of learning and the students involved
- having a period of more intensive functional skills teaching and learning at specific points, for example before an external assessment or after completion of most of the principal learning units where individuals still need to achieve one or more functional skills qualifications
- ensuring that students continue to develop their skills in context even after they have succeeded in the qualification, consolidating functionality and moving them to the next level.

Additional and specialist learning provision

Students have different needs in relation to ASL, and collaborative partnership delivery will be required to meet them all. Consortia should ascertain the range of student needs, plan for an enhanced ASL offer across the partnership, and use the ASL catalogues proactively to select appropriate qualifications. To meet these needs across these groups, approaches include using:

- blocks of time within the curriculum, for example during induction, when other students are on work experience or when most of the principal learning has been completed
- some smaller ASL qualifications, such as those in health and safety, which can be used alongside larger ASL qualifications in the short to medium term while numbers of Diploma students are building; success in these qualifications can also help build confidence
- an extended day for students wishing to access specific ASL provision
- qualifications that can be taken by students across different lines of learning, for example a certificate of personal effectiveness, a work skills qualification or one in preparing for employment.

At key stage 4, many consortia timetable the Foundation and Higher Diplomas for the same amount of curriculum time. This usually means that the Foundation Diploma programme includes provision for a range of ASL qualifications.

Students have the option when applying for their Diploma transcript to nominate one or more of their other qualifications as ASL, as long as the combination of qualifications make up a valid programme of study.

Providers can check Diploma development partnership websites for advice and suggestions on the most suitable ASL qualifications for particular sector progression. These websites are listed at www.qcda.gov.uk/25238.aspx.

QCDA has developed a resource called the *Diploma validator*, a web-based tool that helps providers to check that students' programmes, including ASL, meet the requirements of the Diploma. »

The Diploma validator

In planning the Diploma curriculum it is important to check that all of the components of the Diploma are met and that together they comprise a valid programme of study for each student. QCDA has developed a resource called the *Diploma validator*, a web-based tool that helps providers to check that students' programmes, including ASL, meet the requirements of the Diploma. Information on the *Diploma validator* can be found at www.qcda.gov.uk/26548.aspx.

The Diploma learner study plan

A *Diploma learner study plan* is a document used to provide an overview of all the components of a student's Diploma for easy reference by the student and his or her advisers, parents/carers, tutors and exams office staff. The consortium exam policy must identify an individual who is responsible for completing and checking *Diploma learner study plans* before returning them to the exams office by the end of October in the first year of Diploma study. This study plan will help centres ensure that practical arrangements for the assessment of the components for every student's Diploma are planned and nothing is overlooked. A programme of study that has been validated by the *Diploma validator* can be imported into the *Diploma learner study plan* template. More information on this can be found at www.qcda.gov.uk/26548.aspx.

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Where to get more information

For further information about the Diploma, go to www.qcda.gov.uk/diploma.

Further case studies can be found in QCDA's *Design for success: consortia planning* (QCA/08/3988) at www.qcda.gov.uk/25730.aspx.

Details of training and support for the introduction of Diplomas can be found at www.diplomasupport.org.

Quality, choice and aspiration – a strategy for young people's information, advice and guidance (DCSF-00977-2009) can be found at <http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk>.

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- Liverpool
- Northamptonshire
- Plymouth
- Reading
- Staffordshire (Tamworth)
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Suffolk
- Sunderland
- West Sussex
- York



About this publication

Who is it for?

This guidance is for Diploma practitioners and senior staff in centres and consortia who are teaching the Foundation Diploma or who are planning to offer it in the future.

What is it about?

This guidance summarises key information for practitioners and senior staff about the Foundation Diploma and considers some of the key issues in planning for successful student outcomes.

What is it for?

The Foundation Diploma is a high-quality coherent course that gives students working at level 1 significant opportunities for increased motivation and achievement. This publication considers the key issues in planning the Foundation Diploma and is designed to support practitioners who are teaching it or who are planning to teach it.

Related publications

For guidance on planning a Foundation Diploma, see the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency's (QCDA) *Design for success* material at www.qcda.gov.uk/25729.aspx.

Details of training and support for the introduction of Diplomas can be found at www.diplomasupport.org.

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