

# Working Group on **14-19** Reform

## **Principles for Reform of 14-19 Learning Programmes and Qualifications**

July 2003

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## FOREWORD – BY MIKE TOMLINSON

My colleagues and I in the Working Group on 14-19 Reform are immensely privileged to have been given the opportunity to contribute so significantly to reform of education and training for 14-19 year olds in England.

The terms of reference for the Working Group set out by the Government in January in *14-19: opportunity and excellence* present a far-reaching agenda for change which could in time transform the experiences and achievements of all young people.

The focus of our early work has been to identify the key principles of reform and the broad design features of an approach to curriculum planning, assessment and a national framework of qualifications. Our central concern has been the learner, with three key overarching aims:

- to ensure that the needs, culture and motivation of all young people are central to the design and delivery of the reforms;
- to offer levels of demand appropriate to the abilities of all young people, whatever their background, personal circumstances and capabilities so that they are all stretched to achieve their full potential;
- to meet the needs of employers, higher education, wider society and the economy, by ensuring that more young people acquire the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for effective participation in employment, further and higher learning and adult life.

We have been particularly conscious of the challenges involved in developing a framework which is truly capable of accommodating the needs and aspirations of all young people. The most able and talented generally do well in our existing arrangements but we need to find ways of increasing the demands made of them through the range and variety of their learning. Young people's culture, ethnicity and background have a significant impact upon the way they approach learning. Those with special educational needs must be enabled to engage with learning and helped to fulfil their potential in ways which reflect their particular capacities. Whatever their capabilities, background or circumstances, all young people must have access to a curriculum which stretches them to achieve to their full potential, and qualifications which recognise achievement of all types and levels and which command widespread respect and esteem. We hope this progress report provides a starting point for meeting the challenges set out above.

The proposals are not a detailed blueprint for reform, nor could they be, given we have been working for just over three months. We hope that they will enable readers to judge whether or not the group's thinking is on broadly the right lines.

There are some very difficult issues to resolve in developing detailed proposals, some of which may well challenge long cherished positions. However this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape 14-19 provision into a system which better meets the needs of all young people, while retaining the best features of our present arrangements. There is much to be done over the next year.

To this end, we want wide involvement and input from all sections of education, employment, training, and the wider community. We have been fortunate already in having benefited from the inputs of a wide range of people and organisations. We need yet more.

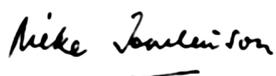
In later phases of our work we will begin to set out the detail of our proposals for 14-19 reform and what is needed to ensure effective continuity and progression within the wider education and training system. In particular, we will be looking carefully at links with key stage three and Modern Apprenticeships as well as further and higher education. There are already strong links between our early work and the Government's recently published Skills Strategy White Paper.

Whatever reforms the Working Group may propose for the longer term, the Government is committed to maintaining the stability and credibility of the existing system so that those young people who pass through it can remain confident that their work is properly recognised and valued. We fully endorse that commitment. Nothing in our current or future work should cast doubt on the value of young people's current achievements and qualifications.

In developing potentially radical reform, we are clear that change must not be rushed. Young people, parents, teachers, employers and the many other stakeholders in 14-19 learning must have the opportunity to contribute and adjust to any new system. We must ensure that what we propose is within the capacity of schools, colleges, awarding bodies and others to deliver.

We very much welcome the five to ten year implementation timetable which the Government has specified for 14-19 reform. We will be developing plans for carefully phased implementation of our proposals over that period. This plan will be set out in detail for consultation in our further reports to be published in the first half of 2004.

This progress report is an important first step to possible reform of 14-19 provision, a necessary move if we are to have a system which allows **all** young people to achieve their full potential. I look forward to having your views between now and mid-October.



**Mike Tomlinson**

Chair, Working Group on 14-19 Reform  
July 2003

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## A. INTRODUCTION

**1.** The Working Group was established in March 2003 to look at long-term development of the framework for 14-19 learning programmes<sup>1</sup> and qualifications as part of the wider 14-19 reform programme set out by the Government in *14-19: opportunity and excellence*, published in January 2003.

**2.** We have been asked to produce an interim report in January 2004 and a final report six months later.

**3.** In our early discussions, we have focused on identifying the strategic directions for our work over the next year. The purposes of this progress report are to:

- provide an early indication of our progress in establishing an analytical framework for, and conclusions about, the directions in which we are intending to take our work;
- consult and promote debate about the key design characteristics of the 14-19 framework we are expecting to develop; and
- seek views on the design and implementation issues which we will need to address in moving from high-level objectives to detailed proposals for reform.

**4.** The deadline for responses to this consultation is 16 October 2003. Details of how to respond can be found at the end of this document.

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### How important is age?

**5.** 14-19 is a familiar and commonly used label, which we have retained in describing the focus of our work. In practice, the characteristics of the 14-19 phase are only loosely age-related. Some young people may be ready to embark at 13 or earlier on '14-19' learning. It is equally likely that some may be older than 19 before they are ready to progress, or may be undertaking programmes which last beyond age 19.

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## Priorities

6. Our terms of reference identify three strands for our work:

- a. Coherent 14-19 learning programmes;
- b. 14-19 assessment arrangements; and
- c. A unified framework of qualifications.

7. We have organised much of our early work along these lines, whilst also seeking to place our emerging ideas within an overarching framework of principles and design criteria for the 14-19 phase as a whole.

8. This approach has been carried through into the structure of this report as follows:

- **Section B** - The principles and purposes of 14-19 learning.
- **Sections C to E** - Identifying the main objectives of reform within each of the three main strands of our terms of reference.
- **Section F** - Our early progress towards an overall structure for 14-19 programmes and qualifications and the key dilemmas which we face in moving towards more detailed proposals.
- **Section G** - Next steps and issues which we will tackle in later stages of our work.

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## B. THE OBJECTIVES OF REFORM

**9.** We believe that 14-19 learning should build on learning at earlier ages to:

- ensure that all young people acquire the general<sup>2</sup> learning, skills, knowledge and attributes that they will need for effective engagement in further learning and adult life;
- provide the specialist<sup>3</sup> learning, knowledge and skills which young people will need in order to progress to their chosen destinations in further and higher learning, training and employment; and
- provide young people with opportunities and motivation to pursue their own interests, ideas and vocations in a rigorous and creative manner.

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### Criteria for a reformed 14-19 framework

**10.** We believe that the framework for 14-19 learning and qualifications should:

**Recognise the varying aspirations, circumstances & motivations of learners by:**

- enabling all young people whether in school, college or work-place to follow high-quality programmes of learning which meet their needs; which they find engaging and demanding; and which lead to outcomes valued by learners themselves and by wider society;
- giving all young people access to enriched learning through a variety of learning styles and experiences within individual programmes and encouraging independent learning and self-motivation;
- ensuring that all young people can access the specialist learning and skills which they need for successful progression to their chosen destination;
- motivating young people to stay in learning until 19, whilst enabling those who leave earlier to retain credit for their achievements;
- enabling completion of programmes after age 19; and
- allowing flexible delivery methods and settings which reflect young people's personal circumstances and preferred learning styles and which engage training providers, employers and higher education institutions,

alongside schools and colleges, in the design and delivery of 14-19 learning programmes.

### **Promote participation by:**

- reinforcing the concept of 14-19 as a coherent single phase of learning, in place of the widespread perception of 14-16 and 16-19 learning as two distinct phases;
- providing clearly identified progression routes through the 14-19 phase to well-defined destinations, but with flexibility for those who change their goals; and
- integrating acquisition of general skills, knowledge and personal attributes into all learning programmes.

### **Recognise achievement by:**

- providing appropriate recognition at four levels: entry, foundation, intermediate, and advanced<sup>4</sup>;
- ensuring that any reforms maintain the levels of challenge associated with the current system;
- differentiating achievement in ways which are clear, credible and relevant to those who use qualifications for selection, such as employers and further and higher education institutions; and
- enabling those young people who leave learning before 18/19 to retain credit for their achievements.

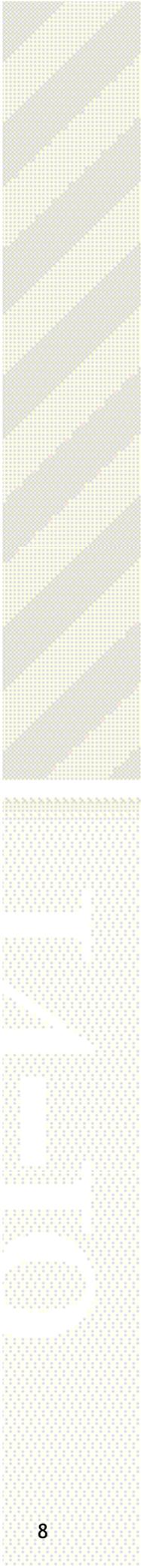
**Question 1: Do you broadly agree or disagree with the criteria in paragraph 10 for a reformed 14-19 framework?**

## **Types of 14-19 framework**

**11.** Broadly we see two approaches to developing a more coherent, unified 14-19 framework. The first is a 'climbing frame' of linked but free-standing courses and qualifications. This may be designed to offer clear and flexible progression routes, with options for specialisation and breadth but without specific rules of combination<sup>5</sup>. Students choose the volume, breadth and

<sup>4</sup>: See glossary: *levels 1,2,3 and entry level*

<sup>5</sup>: See glossary: *rules of combination*



coverage of their programme. Such a system provides flexible entry and exit points and avoids all-or-nothing choices between different programmes or different levels of study. It is similar in concept to the recent “Higher Still” reforms in Scotland.

**12.** The other model is much closer to baccalaureate-style approaches in other countries. It emphasises the nature and content of the whole programme by placing individual components of learning within a framework which prescribes the breadth and types of learning which young people should undertake. It recognises achievement through a single large qualification with rules of combination to ensure that the overall programme matches the prescribed framework.

**13.** As we make clear later in this report, our current preference is for a system of qualifications each of which recognises a whole programme and achievement across a balanced range of specialist and general learning. But we also believe that it will be necessary to give young people the stepping stones and the flexibility of progression which are characteristic of the ‘climbing frame’ approach, and which are absent from some existing baccalaureate approaches. Although there are some significant challenges in this, we are optimistic that we can develop in our later work an appropriate balance of ‘climbing frame’ and baccalaureate-type characteristics. Some of the issues and design dilemmas which this raises are discussed in more detail at the end of this report (Section F and particularly paragraphs 62 to 66).

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## C. PRIORITIES FOR 14-19 LEARNING PROGRAMMES

14. Our terms of reference ask us to consider how to make progress over time towards:

*“a strengthened structure and content of vocational programmes, and greater coherence in learning programmes for all young people throughout their 14-19 education.”*

15. They ask us to tackle, in particular, the structure and clarity of vocational programmes. Our task is also to improve the quality of learning and outcomes for all those participating in 14-19 education.

16. We have sought to strike a balance between the strengths on which we can build in developing a new framework for 14-19 learning programmes and identifying the weaknesses which need to be tackled.

17. The strengths include:

- **curriculum flexibility and choice of institutions**, particularly post 16, which allow young people to pursue their personal interests and strengths more than is possible in many other countries. Increasingly, schools, colleges and training providers are working together to strengthen the range of options they offer;
- **a tradition of depth and intellectual rigour** in subject study, especially at A level;
- **well-established and respected routes for progression and achievement** in the academic track and high esteem accorded to occupational training in some sectors, and to some of the full-time, programme-based qualifications available in FE;
- **a strong tradition of vocational education** within higher education and through professional bodies - by some definitions, half of all HE is directly vocational; and
- **the growing popularity, and recognition of the potential, of vocational learning** as a means of enriching the curriculum for all learners, as a tool for developing skills and attributes which are difficult to access through theoretical learning and in providing learning styles and settings capable of motivating a wide range of young people. Some awarding bodies also offer their own well-established and highly-regarded vocational and craft qualifications.

## The need for improvement

18. Symptoms of weakness in our arrangements include:

- **High drop-out rates**, both in terms of non-completion of courses, and in failure to progress from lower and intermediate levels during 14-19 learning.
- **Low achievement.** Too few young people - some 50% - achieve 5 A\*-C grades at GCSE by the end of compulsory schooling and too few go on to achieve levels 2 and 3<sup>6</sup> in post-16 learning.
- **Uncertain currency of some qualifications.** Use of vocational<sup>7</sup> qualifications as a recruitment tool varies widely between different sectors and different employers. There is no vocational equivalent to the near universal link between success at A level and entry to HE.
- **Lack of breadth.** In the past, the A level curriculum has often been criticised for narrowness of subject study, with most learners studying no more than three subjects, with other enrichment studies being an optional extra. The early impact of the Curriculum 2000 reforms is considered below.
- **Low personal rewards.** There is evidence that on average vocational qualifications are less effective at increasing an individual's earning power than academic qualifications at the same level. In particular, the evidence suggests that vocational level 2 may be operating as a kind of basic entry certificate for employment rather than a means of moving off the bottom rungs of the earnings ladder.
- **High levels of illiteracy and innumeracy among adults.** The 1999 Moser Report<sup>8</sup> estimated that something like one adult in five in this country is not functionally literate and that a still higher proportion has problems with numeracy.
- **Widespread perceptions among employers and HE institutions** that even well-qualified young people often lack the generic<sup>9</sup> skills and attributes needed for employment and higher level study.

19. Many of these symptoms and the problems that underpin them are most acute in vocational learning. This is widely acknowledged, for instance in the major programme of work currently under way jointly by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, the Learning and Skills Council and Sector Skills Councils to improve the vocational qualifications system.

Working Group on 14-19 Reform | 6: See glossary: *levels 1, 2, 3 and entry level*

7: See glossary: *academic and vocational/occupational learning*

8: *Improving literacy and numeracy: a fresh start*, Report of the Working Group chaired by Sir Claus Moser, 1999

9: See glossary: *key skills*

**20.** GCSE has played a major part in significant improvements in achievement and post-16 participation in the last 15 years, and we continue to see incremental improvements year-on-year. But the fifty per cent of young people who still do not achieve 5 A\*-C grades gain insufficient wider recognition for their achievements, have few clear progression routes, and hence infer that they have failed at 16. Patterns of study such as taking 10 GCSEs at 16 promote subject breadth; but those who do succeed at GCSE sometimes find they have little time or encouragement to develop the independent learning skills required for further study.

**21.** At advanced level, the Curriculum 2000 reforms have encouraged most learners to study one or two extra subjects in their first year. The introduction of the AS means that they have the option - which many have welcomed - to experiment with their choices before settling on the subjects they will pursue to the full A level. However, research<sup>10</sup> on the early experience of Curriculum 2000 also suggests that the reforms have so far been less successful in promoting other types of breadth: most learners have opted for complementary rather than contrasting learning experiences; learning in the AS has, in many instances, been perceived as rushed and superficial; and teachers feel under pressure to teach to the test and learners to focus on maximising their grade, sometimes at the expense of wider exploratory learning. Many institutions report a decline in learner engagement with extra-curricular or wider activities, but there are also some indications that this may be changing as schools, colleges and students adjust to the new system.

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## What we need to achieve and why

**22.** We have identified the following priorities for reform of 14-19 learning programmes:

### High quality, high status programmes

**23.** A levels and some vocational/occupational programmes are well-respected and valued both by the learners who follow them and others such as employers and HE institutions who use qualifications as part of their selection process. Across all levels and types of learning, young people should have access to high quality programmes which they find stretching and which offer outcomes which are valued and respected in the wider world. They should not find that their preference for a particular career path or for practical and applied learning styles can be met only by programmes which lack wider relevance, recognition and esteem.

10: For instance, OFSTED, *Curriculum 2000: the first year of implementation; 2001*; OFSTED, *Curriculum 2000: implementation, 2003*; and Hodgson A and Spours K, *Beyond A Levels - Curriculum 2000 and the reform of 14-19 qualifications*, Kogan Page, 2003.

## **Clearer structure**

**24.** There are currently over 3,700 separate specifications within the national qualifications framework. Courses<sup>11</sup> vary greatly in level, volume and delivery, ranging from short courses targeting particular knowledge and skills areas in isolation to fully-developed programme-based courses with clear entry routes and progression between levels.

**25.** This variety is a response to demands over time from employers and others for specific knowledge and skills, and to the commercial 'market' in qualifications. But the fragmented provision makes it harder for young people to plot a route through the system, even if they are quite clear about their preferred destinations. It is also very much more difficult for either learners or others - particularly employers - to understand what learning and skills are reflected in the courses they have followed or the qualifications which have been gained. The differences in volume, level, delivery and purpose also greatly complicate the tasks of providing coherent combinations of courses within programmes and establishing clear progression routes. In our further work, we aim to improve the transparency and simplicity of the structure for 14-19 courses and qualifications.

## **Clearer purposes**

**26.** The traditional academic/vocational distinction does not distinguish effectively between the distinct purposes and destinations of 14-19 learning. For instance, while nominally 'vocational', vocational A levels are increasingly used as a part of the 'academic' route. They appear to offer more practical content and assessment styles than traditional A levels, but with the same outcome - entry to HE rather than direct progression into employment. Many 'academic' 14-19 programmes give admission to employment, highly vocational HE or professional training. These distinctions of first destination, which are often not immediately apparent to young people or indeed their advisers, have important implications for course design and content. In our further work, we aim to establish clear and relevant links between young people's longer term aims and the options open to them during the 14-19 phase; and to improve recognition of the variety of progression routes available to young people, for instance by reinforcing the role of advanced vocational and occupational learning as a viable route into HE as well as employment.

## **Breadth of skills and experience**

**27.** The majority of 14-19 programmes, particularly in their post-16 and level 3 components, focus on the specialist learning needed to progress to a specific career, training or HE destination. It is important that young people should be able to pursue their particular interests in real depth. But it is important also

to highlight a broader priority for any learning programme targeted at this age-group - that of equipping them with the wider skills, knowledge and experience they need to underpin progression to higher levels of learning and employment and to adult life.

**28.** Too many young people are failing to acquire the general skills and attributes on which they depend for progress in learning and employment. For instance, nearly 60 per cent fail to acquire numeracy and communication skills at level 2 or above by the time they reach the end of compulsory schooling. Many of these are embarking on demanding post-16 options such as Advanced Modern Apprenticeships. The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) has identified low levels of key skills<sup>12</sup> as a major factor in drop-out within vocational programmes. Similarly, HE institutions are concerned about many undergraduates' lack of language, numeracy and personal skills. We are persuaded that lack of generic skills significantly inhibits the ability of many young people to succeed and progress.

**Question 2: Do you broadly agree or disagree with the priority objectives we have identified in Section C for reform of 14-19 learning programmes?**

<sup>12</sup>: See glossary: *Key skills*

## D. PRIORITIES FOR 14-19 ASSESSMENT ARRANGEMENTS

29. Our terms of reference ask us to consider how to make progress over time towards:

*“assessment arrangements for 14-19 year olds that are appropriate to different types of course and styles of teaching and learning, with the overall amount of assessment manageable for learners and teachers alike.”*

30. Assessment is distinct from, although often closely linked to, qualifications. It is also an integral element of teaching and learning. Assessment should not lead the curriculum. It should be matched to the content, style and purposes of learning so that it can reinforce and extend the learning experience. It should therefore reflect the nature and purpose of the learning programmes and qualifications with which it is associated.

### Purposes of assessment

31. Assessment during the 14-19 phase performs the following function in relation to individual learners:

- **diagnosis:** helping young people to establish a baseline and understand their progress, strengths and development needs;
- **recognition and motivation:** recording and rewarding learners’ progress and achievement;
- **standard setting:** defining levels and thresholds of achievement;
- **differentiation and selection:** enabling employers and HE to understand what young people have achieved, and how individuals compare to their peers.

32. All of these purposes are useful and necessary. But the relevance of each, and the balance between them, will vary at different points during the 14-19 phase and with different types of learning.

33. Our terms of reference focus on the purposes of assessment in relation to individual learners and others who need to know what individual young people have achieved. There is another purpose which assessment and, particularly, qualifications serve - providing a basis for judging the performance of schools and colleges and of the education system as whole. We shall need to consider the wider implications of any new assessment arrangements we propose.

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## What we want to achieve and why

### Fitness for purpose

- **Matching styles of assessment** to styles of learning. We must ensure that assessment arrangements are relevant to the type of learning which students have undertaken. Practical and skills-based learning should be assessed differently from subject knowledge and theoretical understanding. We are very aware, for instance, of concerns that the change to vocational A levels has been accompanied by more traditional, written assessment which has skewed teaching and learning away from the practical and applied styles which were characteristic of the GNVQ.
- **Variety of assessment methods.** Without moving away from assessment which is appropriate to the content and purposes of the learning, we aim to ensure that all young people experience a variety of types of assessment. These should test their acquisition of knowledge, understanding and skills in a range of settings and thus enhance the range of skills and personal attributes which they develop and demonstrate.
- **Assessment for learning.** We share the widespread concern that an increasing tendency to equate assessment with certification has devalued the role of teacher-led diagnostic and formative assessment. In developing our detailed proposals we will consider how to reinforce the role of, and capacity for, such assessment within 14-19 teaching and learning.
- **Reliability:** a technical term for the consistency with which achievement needs to be measured. This depends to some extent on the purpose of the assessment. Assessment which is used for ranking learners and competitive selection (e.g. for higher education) needs more reliability than assessment intended as a progress check or for formative feedback to the learner.
- **Validity:** also a technical term, indicating the extent to which the assessment adequately represents the content of learning. There is no theoretical problem about simultaneously achieving high validity and high reliability but there can be tensions between these two requirements in practice, for instance between ensuring that skills are assessed in the interests of validity while avoiding undue expense and burden in the search for high reliability.

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- **Credibility.** Employers, HE and others must have faith in the validity, fairness and reliability of the processes and outcomes of assessment. The precise balance between these factors will need to vary according to the purpose of the assessment. One of our concerns is the extent to which, in England, the credibility of assessment has come to be equated with written external examinations, especially for progression and selection purposes. One of our major tasks is to consider how to enhance the credibility of different types of assessment, but which may have significant advantages in terms of guaranteeing validity of appropriate outcomes.

### **Manageability**

**34.** Time spent by learners in preparing for and undertaking assessment plays an important part in learning by helping to consolidate and draw together the skills and knowledge which they have acquired. Nevertheless, the burden which external assessment currently places on learners and teachers alike is a significant issue within 14-19 programmes, highlighted for instance by:

- high volumes of external assessment at GCSE;
- the amount of external assessment associated with individual AS and A2 units under the Curriculum 2000 reforms - although anecdotal evidence suggests that many students respond positively to the modular structure of AS and A level courses; and
- external verification arrangements for NVQs.

**35.** The amount of assessment, and preparation for assessment, experienced by young people varies greatly according to the number and type of qualifications they are pursuing. For GCSE/A level students, preparation and examination time may amount to two terms or more over four years. This reduces the time available for teaching and represents a significant opportunity cost for the learner. The quantity of assessment - particularly external examinations - also strains the capacity of the qualifications system to deliver high quality marking and reliable administration.

**36.** We believe that the balance between learning time and assessment-related demands has swung too far towards the latter. In international terms, we are unusually dependent upon external assessment in accrediting achievement of young people part-way through the 14-19 phase. The current arrangements impose significant costs upon schools and colleges and the education and training system as a whole. They stretch the practical resources of learners,

schools, colleges and awarding bodies, and displace other valuable educational opportunities. In our further work we believe that it will be necessary to seek alternative arrangements, including greater use of ICT, which continue to deliver credible assessment where it is needed but in ways which divert fewer resources from teaching and learning.

**37.** We are particularly keen to reinforce the role of assessment which is based upon the professional judgement of teacher and trainers. We do not believe that, with effective training and monitoring, internal assessment is necessarily less reliable than external assessment. More effective internal assessment need not be accompanied by an increase in workload for teaching staff. For instance, we believe that better use could be made of assessment which is already undertaken by many teachers and trainers of work done by learners as a natural part of their course, rather than relying on a greater volume of externally-prescribed coursework tasks. These changes would need to be supported by measures to extend the existing capacity and expertise of schools, colleges and training providers to undertake internal assessment, and to re-establish the credibility of such assessment as a reliable tool for judging the achievement of young people.

**38.** Paragraph 60 offers our early thinking on the links between reform of the qualifications framework and potential changes to the nature and volume of assessment, but our detailed proposals for this will depend upon our more fully-developed recommendations for 14-19 learning programmes and qualifications.

**Question 3:** Do you broadly agree or disagree with the priority objectives we have identified in Section D for reform of 14-19 assessment arrangements?

## E. PRIORITIES FOR THE 14-19 QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

39. Our terms of reference ask us to consider how to make progress over time towards:

*“a unified framework of qualifications that stretches the performance of learners, motivates progression and recognises different levels of achievement.”*

40. Qualifications have a significant impact on 14-19 learning. Very often, it is qualifications, and the access they give to employment, higher education and other destinations, which shape the choices and motivation of learners. The behaviour of institutions, too, is affected by the importance of qualifications as a public measure of the achievement of their students and, thus, of their overall performance.

41. It is critical therefore that a qualifications framework promotes learning, behaviour and choices which reflect and reinforce the objectives of the 14-19 phase as a whole.

### **What we need to achieve and why**

42. In developing a unified framework of qualifications we attach particular priority to:

- **Recognising different types of learning.** Our existing qualifications system is very good at recognising some types of achievement, for instance in academic courses and some occupational areas. But it is not sufficiently responsive to other types of potential and achievement, particularly in more applied and vocational areas. Too many young people are channelled into courses and qualifications which do not either match their personal strengths or offer appropriate styles of learning. A broad consensus underpins the whole of the Government’s 14-19 agenda that the organisation and delivery of 14-19 learning should be more flexible in meeting the needs, circumstances and choices of all young people. This flexibility must be carried through into the 14-19 qualifications framework.
- **Promoting progression.** Current progression routes, for instance through the GCSE/A level route and in some vocational qualifications are clearly understood and work well for many learners. But for others the existing qualifications system presents barriers which pinpoint failure rather than motivate and encourage progress. Some young people are capable of moving more quickly, over bigger steps, to higher

levels of achievement than others. The 14-19 framework must be able to accommodate those whose starting point is lower and whose capabilities or circumstances limit them to slower progress and less advanced outcomes. It must also allow young people to make false starts and change their mind without having to start again at the very beginning of another route; and it must enable those learners who change institutions part way through their 14-19 learning to retain credit for their previous achievements.

- **Differentiating achievement:** We regard maintaining and improving the differentiation function as central to the design of any reformed qualifications framework. Qualifications open a wide variety of doors to employment and further and higher learning. The qualifications system must recognise the achievement of individuals in different ways for different purposes. Traditionally it has been strength of our academic qualifications that they offer a high degree of differentiation between levels of achievement as a basis for competitive selection for higher education. In developing our proposals, we will maintain the levels of demand and public credibility associated with these qualifications. Employers often need a different type of differentiation - to identify those who have reached the required threshold of occupational competence and those who have not. In those occupations where entry is regulated, qualifications are available which are well-suited to this task. In other occupational areas the relevance of qualifications is more varied.
- **Reinforcing breadth of knowledge and skills.** Some qualifications are effectively full-time programmes in their own right and incorporate elements of breadth of skills and knowledge alongside specialist learning. However, most individual 14-19 qualifications contain little intrinsic breadth or variety. Students acquire free-standing qualifications subject by subject and level by level. These are accumulated into programmes, often to meet perceived demands for particular combinations of specialist subjects or skills. Qualifications which are seen to have no immediate relevance to the requirements of higher education institutions or employers can become devalued, or worse contribute to demotivation and failure to progress. For instance, as OFSTED has reported, the place of key skills qualifications within the Curriculum 2000 framework has been undermined by the perception that they play little or no part in university admissions decisions. Our aim is to develop a qualifications system which delivers a wider range and variety of skills and knowledge as an integral element of the qualifications package sought by all young people.

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- **Simplifying and clarifying young people’s options.** The qualification system should provide the map which helps young people to navigate the options and progression routes open to them, and understand how these relate to specific destinations. The qualifications which young people hold should help indicate their suitability for specific learning and career paths. Both of these purposes are most clearly served within our current system by the near universal recognition of the link between A level achievement and ability to progress into higher education. Our aim is to achieve a similarly transparent qualifications framework across the full range of 14-19 learning and destinations in employment and further and higher learning.

**Question 4: Do you broadly agree or disagree with the priority objectives we have identified in Section E for reform of the 14-19 qualifications framework?**

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## F. THE OVERALL STRUCTURE OF 14-19 PROGRAMMES AND QUALIFICATIONS

**43.** This section illustrates the ways in which we think the priorities which we have identified earlier in this report can be tackled, and highlights some of the most significant design issues and dilemmas which we need to consider in developing more detailed proposals.

**44.** We believe that the first and most important objective is to establish a framework which ensures that young people acquire a range of knowledge, skills and understanding which is balanced to meet the needs of different learners and types of programme over the course of the 14-19 phase. This requires a shift away from the current emphasis on individual qualifications towards whole programmes designed to offer combinations of specialisation, breadth, depth and variety. It is equally important to establish a culture in which all young people's achievement and progress are recognised positively in their own right. They should not be judged to have 'passed' or 'failed' when they are only part way through their 14-19 learning.

### **A common template for all 14-19 programmes**

**45.** The first step is to clarify the content and balance of learning which young people should undertake over the 14-19 phase. We favour a broadly common overall structure for all programmes, which can accommodate the different subjects and types of learning and the various balances of skills and knowledge which should be available to young people during the 14-19 phase.

**46.** We are also clear that the framework must offer all young people clear progression routes to at least level 3, whatever their starting point and preferred destination in higher or further learning or employment. They must be able to embark at 14 on programmes at levels which are appropriate to their previous progress, including entry level<sup>13</sup>.

**47.** While we have yet to agree the precise form of this template, an example of the kind of structure we have in mind would ensure that all 14-19 programmes comprise:

**A general core:** the generic knowledge, skills and personal experience which all young people need to acquire as a basis for progression, further learning, employment and adult life. We will be considering in detail the content of this strand of learning, but it should certainly include maths and English - or their key skills equivalents - and ICT. We would expect most learning which is currently compulsory at key stage 4, such as science, to continue to form part of the 14-19 curriculum for all young people. The general core might also include wider generic and/or key

<sup>13</sup>: See glossary: *levels 1, 2 and 3 and entry level*.



skills such as teamwork which employers in particular believe that many young people lack at present. Delivery and assessment might vary according to the nature of the programme, and may often be integrated into wider teaching and learning. We are attracted to models of generic skills which extend beyond the existing six key skills specifications to cover a wider range of generic skills and attributes. We very much support the Government's intention, set out in the recent Skills Strategy White Paper to simplify and clarify the various classifications of generic skills.

**Specialist learning:** the specific knowledge, skills and understanding required for successful progression to the learner's preferred destination. This could for instance be the sector- or occupation-specific learning needed for a particular career; the advanced learning which provides a basis for entry to higher learning; or simply the subjects in which the young person is most interested.

**Supplementary learning:** wider elective and general learning, possibly tailored to the content and level of the specialist components. This should include complementary learning and enrichment and any generic skills at the higher levels which may be needed for success and progress in specific employment or higher learning. Depending upon the nature of the programme, supplementary learning might cover, for instance, critical thinking or research skills, and mathematics or modern foreign languages where these complement or support the specialist learning. It might also include young people's wider activities and personal interests such as sports, arts, and volunteering which contribute to their skills, experiences and personal development. As with the general core, we need to consider carefully how to deliver and assess or accredit supplementary learning, and the scope for its integration into wider teaching and learning.

**Question 5: Do you agree or disagree that the approach outlined in paragraph 47 covers the strands of learning which should be present in all 14-19 programmes?**

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## Balancing specialist and general education

**48.** In the next phase of our work we shall consider in more detail the content of, and balance between specialist, supplementary and general learning. We are interested in the experiences and strengths of systems in other countries, many of which require young people to follow a large volume of general and supplementary learning in the upper secondary

phase - often occupying 30 per cent or more of available teaching time even within highly-specialised vocational programmes.

**49.** In general terms, we are clear that all programmes should contain both specialist and general learning over the 14-19 phase. We would expect the balance between the two to change as the learner moves through the phase.

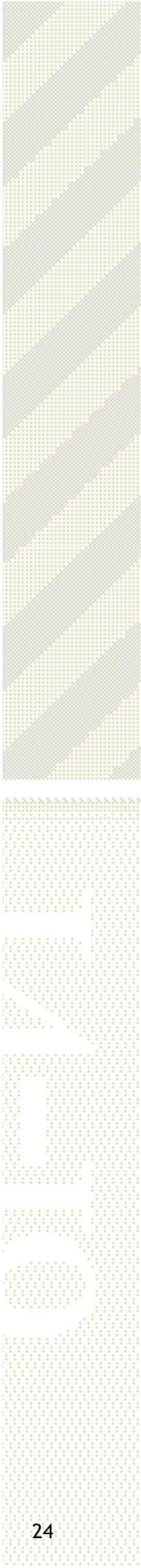
It is essential that early in their 14-19 learning young people follow programmes which are sufficiently broadly-based to keep their options open. Programmes may be tailored quite early to young people's specific strengths or preferences, as may happen now through GCSE choices at 14 and the increasing range of work-related and vocational options at key stage 4. But they should not find that this confines their later options to a narrow range of courses or types of learning. This requires a broad preparatory programme. For many young people, it would then be natural for the balance to shift later in the phase towards the specialist learning required for particular destinations. This specialisation should not be to the exclusion of general and supplementary learning.

**Question 6: Do you agree or disagree that the emphasis on specialist learning should generally increase as learners move towards the end of the 14-19 phase (paragraph 49)?**

## Early acquisition of generic skills

**50.** There is evidence that, at all levels of attainment, young people are often entering specialised learning and employment with an insufficient command of the generic skills necessary to support effective performance and progress. For instance, we have highlighted earlier in this paper the extent to which absence of key skills - particularly numeracy and communication - appears to be a major factor in non-completion and failure to progress.

**51.** For many young people, the current arrangements in which GCSE is the main basis for teaching, learning and accrediting key skills for 14-16 year-olds are not effective. So too many are subsequently channelled towards relatively specialised post-16 programmes without having gained the skills which are essential to support progression or to meet the needs of subsequent employers. This is reflected in the current emphasis on the delivery of key skills in post-16 learning. But many learners perceive post-16 key skills as remedial, and sometimes irrelevant. We therefore believe that it may be necessary to consider ways of introducing earlier emphasis on, and more effective ways of



delivering, essential generic skills before age 16; and to ensure that, where this fails for whatever reason, these skills are addressed as soon as possible after 16 by providers who are capable of delivering them effectively.

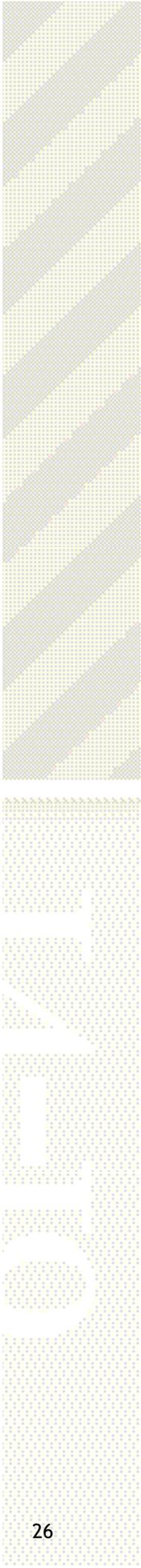
**Question 7: Do you agree or disagree that earlier, more effective delivery of generic skills should be a high priority within a reformed 14-19 framework (paragraphs 50-51)?**

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## A framework of diplomas

**52.** Our terms of reference ask us to develop proposals for a unified framework of qualifications, looking particularly carefully at the possibility of baccalaureate-style qualifications. We believe that a framework of diplomas - within which young people would receive a single qualification covering the whole of their programme - offers the best prospect of promoting balanced programmes of general and specialist learning capable of leading to a variety of destinations in further and higher learning, training and employment. There are significant issues and dilemmas which we must explore before deciding whether to make firm proposals along these lines. Some of the most important of these issues are discussed later in this section of the report.

**53.** We have taken account of the consultation on the Matriculation Diploma proposal included in the Government's Green Paper *14-19: extending opportunities, raising standards*. This model involved grouping existing qualifications, a core of key skills, and wider experience and activities under a single umbrella award. Consultation highlighted concerns that HE and employers would continue to select on the basis of the component qualifications rather than of the diploma as a whole, so that the overall award and the other elements of the diploma would be perceived by schools, colleges and learners as having little value. We have therefore rejected as a basis for our work models which nest existing qualifications inside a single larger award.



## Diplomas in action

Even in the absence of firm proposals for a national system of diplomas, the concept of recognising whole learning programmes is attracting widespread interest in England and leading to local or regional models which aim to promote balanced programmes within the existing qualifications framework.

The **Liverpool Graduation Project** aims to embed a broader curriculum experience for all post 16 students through the inclusion of personal skills, study skills and wider experiences as prerequisites for a graduation award in addition to existing qualifications.

The project originated as a pilot through QCA and is currently being extended to all Liverpool schools. 50 students from 4 schools graduated in 2002 and a larger number will graduate this summer.

The award, while initially at level 3, is intended to be extended to level 1 and 2 and to include achievements in NVQ units as part of the qualifications core. Links with higher education institutions are developed to promote progression to HE.

The project is underpinned by a light touch verification system and students are supported by tutors in planning their wider activities, and recognising and recording the progress made.

The **Surrey Sixth Form Graduation Certificate** also seeks to broaden students' post-16 learning experiences. It is currently available at 22 schools in the county. 150 students from 3 schools graduated in 2003 and a larger number will graduate this summer with a further significant increase in 2004.

Awards are available at advanced and intermediate levels. To achieve a certificate, students must complete:

- an **academic element**, comprising a specified volume of A level study (for the advanced award) or GCSEs or equivalent (for the intermediate award);
- a portfolio assessed **applied skills element** for which students have to demonstrate and show evidence of competence in 3 out of the 6 based on the nationally recognised key skills criteria;
- a **citizenship element** made up of either or both school and community based activities amounting to at least 45 hours for the advanced award, and 30 hours for the intermediate. A further element of individual achievement must also be completed, through, for instance, the Duke of Edinburgh Awards or Millennium Service Volunteer programmes.

**54.** For our current purposes we wish to offer and consult upon a model diploma framework which:

- covers whole learning programmes in single diploma qualifications rather than through the existing system of smaller free-standing qualifications. Our working assumption is that the components of learning and assessment which contribute to such diplomas should not be separate qualifications in their own right. They would nonetheless need some degree of currency - for instance to ensure that students who move between school and college at 16 carry with them a record of their achievement. Paragraphs 62 to 66 explore in more detail the issues this raises.
- offers positive recognition of all levels of achievements through diplomas at entry level and levels 1, 2 and 3 (see fig. 1, below). At entry level, this may require some flexibility to recognise the achievements of young people with special educational needs, for some of whom a broad, high-volume qualification might be beyond their reach;
- requires a balance of achievement in specialist, general and supplementary learning; and
- provides, at least at more advanced levels, differentiation between the performance of individual learners, both at the level of the overall award and in individual specialist components. Further work is needed on the best way of differentiating effectively across the range of types and levels of 14-19 learning. For some diplomas young people might receive an overall grade or be classified as pass, merit or distinction to differentiate varying breadth and depth of achievement. This would be accompanied by a detailed record of their achievement in individual components which would give further and higher education institutions and employers the level of information they need to inform their selection processes.

**55.** Some of the existing individual courses undertaken by young people could become individual components within the diploma framework. Other components would be developed specifically for the new framework. These components would be assessed and combined according to their requirements of diplomas at various levels. The level of different components within an individual award might vary. But learners would need to complete a significant volume of learning at the level of the overall diploma. At any given level, the learning and assessment should be at least as demanding in terms of volume and depth as the programmes which students currently follow. We certainly do not intend that one outcome of our proposals would be a need for longer first degree courses.

**56.** Further work would be needed to develop the necessary range and variety of components and ways of combining them into different levels and types of diploma. That will involve considering, in particular:

- the extent to which the existing qualifications such as GCSEs, A levels and NVQs are suited in volume, depth and content to conversion into components within the diploma; and
- whether newly-designed components are needed to ensure full coverage of different types and levels of learning within the diploma framework.

**Figure 1.**

<b>A new framework of diplomas</b>	<b>Existing qualifications</b>
Level 3 (advanced) Diplomas	AS and A Level, Level 3 NVQ, Advanced Extension Award and equivalent qualifications
Level 2 (intermediate) Diplomas	GCSE at grades A*-C, Intermediate GNVQ, Level 2 NVQ and equivalent qualifications
Level 1 (foundation) Diplomas	GCSE at grades D-G, foundation GNVQ, Level 1 NVQ and equivalent qualifications
Entry Level Diplomas	Entry Level Certificates

**Question 8: Do you agree or disagree with the following features of the qualifications model set out above:**

- a. A framework of diplomas, each of which recognises a whole programme with a single qualification?
- b. The framework should replace the existing qualifications taken by young people?
- c. A required balance of specialist, general and supplementary learning?
- d. Awards at all levels from entry level to level 3?
- e. Differentiation of performance in individual components of the diploma to help inform selection processes?

## Breadth in other qualifications systems

- Students following the French *Baccalauréat Général* choose subjects focusing on one of three specialist areas: literaryeconomics and social sciences; and science. Alongside their specialist subjects, all students study French, a modern foreign language, mathematics, philosophy, PE and sport. (Source: *Eurydice Database*, [www.eurydice.org](http://www.eurydice.org) )
- Apprentices in Germany attending a *Berufsschule* as part of their training study German, social studies, economics, RE and sport alongside their specialist occupational learning. Many also study maths, science and a modern foreign language as part of the requirements for off-the-job training in their chosen occupation.
- Students following the *International Baccalaureate* choose one subject from each of six subject groups:
  - the learner’s first language;
  - a second language;
  - individuals and societies;
  - experimental sciences;
  - mathematics and computer science; and
  - the arts.

All IB students also study the Theory of Knowledge; and undertake an extended essay on a topic of special interest and wider activities for instance in the arts, sports or the community.

(Source: [www.ibo.co.uk](http://www.ibo.co.uk))

- In England and Wales, trainees working towards an *Advanced Modern Apprenticeship in Engineering* must complete:
  - at least two mandatory units and six additional units of the Performing Engineering Operations NVQ Level 2
  - a relevant NVQ at level 3 or 4
  - the Key Skills of: Communication; Application of Number; IT; Improving Own Learning and Performance; and Working With Others.
  - a technical certificate, such as a BTEC National Certificate, which tests the theoretical knowledge and understanding necessary to underpin the skills acquired in the work-place and provides a foundation for subsequent progression.
- Many engineering employers also require their trainees to complete additional components, for instance covering foreign language skills, advanced team-building (developed, for instance, through an Outward Bound-type course), customer care, or business skills. (Source: *SEMTA, The Advanced Modern Apprenticeship in Engineering*, [www.semta.org.uk](http://www.semta.org.uk))

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## Adding value to the diplomas: breadth, depth and enrichment

**57.** In our further work we expect to consider requirements for breadth within different types of diploma to ensure that young people acquire a range of skills and knowledge to support progression and enable them to change track. Traditionally, the aspiration for greater breadth has been expressed in terms of additional subject study, often to promote contrasting subject study (e.g. arts subjects for science specialists or vice versa). This type of breadth is commonly found in existing baccalaureate-style qualifications. There is, no doubt, value in extending the range of subjects which young people study. The added value which students gain from additional subject breadth depends on subject choice but it can sometimes be limited by the similarity in teaching, learning and assessment styles within the range of subject study.

**58.** In addition, a framework of diplomas offers opportunities to work across the boundaries of individual subjects and disciplines to incorporate a variety of learning styles, settings and experiences and extend the portfolio of skills and attributes which young people develop as they progress through their learning.

### For instance:

- preparation of an extended research project or oral presentation drawing together material from more than one subject area could significantly enrich the learning experience for many young people and would help them develop and demonstrate attributes which would be attractive to university admissions tutors and employers alike;
- mixing vocational and academic components could extend the types of learning which young people experience;
- incorporating activities such as team-building and trans-national placements within an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship could help enhance subsequent employability and mobility;
- integrating into advanced diplomas the higher levels of intellectual demand associated with Advanced Extension Awards, which are currently a free-standing addition to the A level system; and
- personal interests and activities such as sports, arts and volunteering can enrich young people's experience and contribute to wider personal development. One of the features of the Matriculation Diploma proposal most welcomed by young people was the recognition which it gave to these wider activities

59. In the next phase of our work, we intend to explore how these various types of breadth may best be incorporated into detailed proposals.

**Question 9:** Do you agree or disagree with our view that a framework of diplomas should offer learners an extended range of styles and types of learning, settings and experiences as well as options for additional subject study (paragraphs 57-59)?

## Assessment for the diplomas

60. A framework of diplomas along these lines potentially provides a means to address concerns which we have identified about the burden and fitness for purpose of existing assessment arrangements and for creating the additional space that would be needed to enrich and extend young people's learning.

### For instance:

- **Economies of scale.** The current system of individual subject-based qualifications introduces a significant degree of repetition into assessment. A student taking eight GCSEs will generally need to complete eight separate coursework assignments, many of which test a similar range of skills albeit applied to the different subject matter of each course. Similar repetition arises in the coursework of AS and A level qualifications. Within a programme-level diploma it would be possible to reduce the frequency and total volume of these kinds of assessment whilst still ensuring that learners develop and use the skills that underpin them.
- **Distinguishing between assessment for qualifications and assessment for learning.** Assessment which contributes directly to an overall diploma must meet the standards of volume and rigour necessary to secure the credibility of high status public qualifications. Different conditions may apply to assessment of learning which is undertaken explicitly as preparation for more advanced learning within the overall 14-19 programme, rather than because it will count directly towards a diploma. If young people move through fewer qualification steps during the 14-19 phase, it will be easier to tailor some assessment to the different demands of providing feedback and reviewing progress part-way through the programme.

- **Varying the weight of assessment of diploma components.**

The diploma as a whole must meet expectations about the reliability of public qualifications. We must also ensure reliability for those individual components which are particularly important, for instance because they will be relevant to selection for a specialist HE course or because they cover essential skills areas such as numeracy, literacy or ICT. Assessment for the other components which contribute to the diploma may under some circumstances reflect the lesser extent to which they will be judged in their own right. Whether this can be achieved in practice will depend on the way in which components contribute to the overall award. If the award depends on the learner achieving a specified standard in each component individually, then assessment of the overall diploma would be only as reliable as the least reliable component. More flexibility in assessment may be possible if performance is aggregated across the diploma as a whole.

**61.** We have also highlighted, in paragraph 37, our intention to consider how the role of internal assessment can be strengthened, which could have a significant impact on the volume of written examination-type assessment which young people experience. This is not dependent upon being able to move to a new diploma framework, but it does mean tackling the widespread perception that such assessment is unreliable.

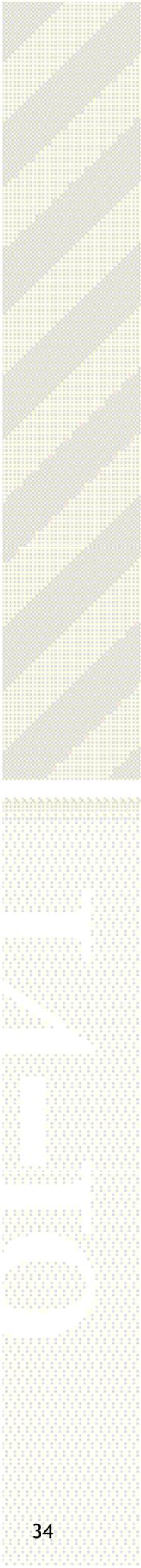
**Question 10:** Do you agree or disagree with our view of the opportunities offered by a system of programme-level diplomas for more varied styles and volumes of assessment?

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## **Design choices and dilemmas**

**62.** Earlier in this document we highlighted the ‘climbing-frame’ and baccalaureate-style approaches to the structure of learning programmes and qualifications. This distinction raises some key dilemmas, which we have not yet resolved. These relate to the balance between: on the one hand, focusing upon a balanced overall curriculum, whole diplomas and outcomes at the end of the 14-19 phase; and on the other, emphasising and giving status to, choice and achievement at intermediate points in the phase and individual components of the programme. In practice this balance will be reflected in:

- the currency which individual components within the diploma have in their own right;



## Recording achievement at 15/16

(Sources: various, public)

- In Sweden, 15/16 year olds receive a school leaving certificate. Grades are awarded by teachers, supported by a system of national tests. In order to progress to a recognised programme of upper secondary education, students must have passes in Swedish, English and mathematics.
- In Germany, schools for lower and middle academic ability students end at 15/16. Their students receive a leaving certificate, based on teacher assessment, supplemented, in some parts of the country, by examinations. The academically-oriented *Gymnasias* provide both lower and upper secondary education. Their students do not receive formal certification of achievement at 15/16, but they need to meet prescribed standards of attainment in order to proceed to the upper secondary stage.
- In the USA, Canada and Australia the great majority of young people attend comprehensive secondary or high schools catering for students up to the age of 18. No formal certificate is awarded at 15/16.
- In New Zealand, the previous system of academic and vocational qualifications at ages 16 and 18 is being replaced by a unified National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) covering different levels, which removes old distinctions between academic and vocational training. It uses a mixture of external examinations and internal assessment. In 2002 the NCEA Level 1 award replaced the GCSE-equivalent School Certificate for 15/16 year-olds.

- whether, to recognise a full 14-19 programme, diplomas should generally be awarded at different levels at the end of the 14-19 phase; or alternatively, whether learners would acquire diplomas at more than one level as they progress through the phase; and
- how much of the content of the diplomas is chosen by learners and how much is prescribed by rules of combination.

**63.** Factors which suggest giving greater weight and currency to individual components and/or to progress and achievement part way through the 14-19 phase include:

- **Motivation:** we do not believe it is realistic to expect young people at age 13 or 14 to set their sights wholly on a qualification they will gain four or five years later. They need clear milestones during the 14-19 phase to demonstrate more immediate progress and achievement and to help them make choices about their future learning.
- **Learner choice:** the 'climbing frame' approach gives learners potentially wide freedom and flexibility of progression in pursuing the courses and subjects which interest them, although choice can rarely be wholly unfettered, particularly in 14-16 learning.
- **Institutional mobility:** some 50 per cent of young people move to a different school, college or other provider at the end of compulsory schooling. They need to be able to take with them a clear and reliable record of what they have achieved up to that point.
- **Moving away from learning:** the long-term aspiration is for a system in which all young people stay in learning up to age 18 or 19. In reality, we are a long way from that goal. Significant numbers of young people will continue to leave learning at 16 or 17 - or even earlier, as OFSTED has recently highlighted - either through choice or as a response to personal circumstances. They need a credible record of what they have achieved, both to support entry to employment and to ensure that they can re-enter learning later at a level which reflects their earlier progress and achievement.

**64.** On the other hand there are factors which argue for focusing on whole programmes and/or outcomes at the end of 14-19 learning, including:

- **Reducing early drop out.** A key objective of the overall 14-19 agenda is to overcome the break point in learning at 16. The greater the extent to which assessment part way through 14-19 has currency and status in

its own right, the more likely it is to facilitate early exit.

- **Ensuring a balanced curriculum.** We have emphasised the need for balanced programmes of specialist, supplementary and general learning. Particularly within post-16 learning, this requires a curriculum and qualifications framework which removes at least some degree of choice in order to ensure that young people undertake some elements of the programme which they might otherwise choose to avoid.
- **Ensuring status and currency for the diploma.** Our intention is that learning across a balanced programme should become the principal benchmark of achievement, from the perspective both of young people themselves and of those who use qualifications as a basis for selection and recruitment. This suggests strongly the need to ensure that the assessment and certification of individual components does not detract from the value and currency of the diploma as a whole.
- **More flexible, manageable assessment:** we identify in paragraph 60 above the opportunities which a diploma framework could offer for increased variety of assessment styles, a reduced volume of assessment and greater breadth and enrichment. These depend to a significant extent on moving away from the high volumes of external assessment currently associated with the acquisition of qualifications as stepping stones during 14-19 learning.

**65.** There is a clear tension between these two sets of objectives which we have not yet resolved. In developing our detailed proposals, a key task will be to identify an appropriate balance of design features to ensure a clear emphasis on whole programmes and outcomes at 19, whilst retaining both the milestones to motivate progress and inform choice, and the recognition of smaller components of achievement to ensure that those who change institutions or leave learning before 18/19 receive credit for their progress.

**66.** Balancing these objectives will be crucial to our further work. We are optimistic about being able to develop the necessary mixture of baccalaureate-style and 'climbing frame' features within the overall diploma framework set out in this report. Nevertheless, we wish to test this possibility carefully before deciding how to proceed and before reaching firm conclusions on whether our preferred diploma model is realistic and achievable.

**Question 11: How much importance do you attach to each of the factors listed in paragraphs 63 and 64:**

- a. Providing clear milestones during the 14-19 phase?
- b. Giving young people as much choice as possible over the content and breadth of their learning?
- c. Certifying the achievement of those who move between institutions during their 14-19 learning?
- d. Certifying the achievements of those who leave learning before 18/19?
- e. Reducing the impact of the potential break-point at 16?
- f. Ensuring balanced programmes of general, specialist and supplementary learning?
- g. Ensuring status and currency for the diploma?
- h. More flexible, manageable assessment?

## SECTION G: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

### Consultation

**67.** We intend to consult widely over the summer and autumn on the basis of this document: both formally, through written responses to the questionnaire; and in meetings, seminars and informal discussion with people who have an interest in the delivery and outcomes of 14-19 learning, including young people, school and college organisations, teachers and lecturers, employer and higher and further education.

**68.** We will publish a summary of the written consultation responses alongside our interim report in January 2004.

### The next phase of our work

**69.** The consultation on this document will help us decide whether the analysis and framework for reform which we have set out are on the right lines, and will inform the next phase of our work.

**70.** Between now and January 2004 we will be developing the detailed proposals for the design of 14-19 programmes, qualifications and assessment. Our interim report to the Government in January 2004 will make as much progress as possible towards:

- A detailed framework for 14-19 programmes describing:
  - the different types of programme which should be available to meet young people's various learning, career and personal aspirations, and to reflect the needs of employers and wider society over the next few decades. In doing so, we will take account of previous work such as that published by the Skills Task Force in 1998-2001<sup>14</sup>, which looked in detail at the future needs of the labour market and the economy;
  - the content, coverage and balance of general, specialist and supplementary learning within different types and levels of programme and at various stages within the 14-19 phase.
- A fully worked-up model of the diploma framework, reflecting consultation responses, and describing:
  - the different types and levels of diploma that would be available, for instance in specific disciplines and occupational/vocational

specialisms;

- how diplomas of different types and levels relate to each other, and the progression routes that learners could follow;
  - principles governing the design of diploma components including expectations about volume and about progression between components of different levels in the same subject or area of learning; and
  - the ‘rules of combination’ needed to define the ways in which components should be combined to achieve the different levels; and, crucially, to ensure that the overall amount of learning is manageable.
- Principles of the assessment arrangements for different types of learning and for various purposes during the 14-19 phase, including the ways in which generic skills and young people’s wider activities and experiences should be integrated into the assessment framework.
  - How the reformed 14-19 framework should link with and reinforce other phases and types of learning, including:
    - ensuring effective continuity and progression between key stage 3, 14-19 and later higher and further learning; and
    - strengthening the progression routes between, and integration of, 14-19 learning and Modern Apprenticeships.
  - The ways in which our proposals reflect the needs of particular groups of young people, including ethnic minorities, those with special educational needs, and young people whose personal circumstances present significant obstacles to learning.
  - Any implications which our detailed recommendations may have for other aspects of the education system, such as: key stage 3; the organisation of schools, colleges and training providers, the ways in which their performance is measured and how collaboration is managed between institutions; the professional development of teachers and lecturers; support, advice and guidance for young people; and the administration of the qualifications system.

- The potential impact of reforms in England for, and links with, other qualifications systems in the UK - particularly in Northern Ireland and Wales which currently share the same qualifications framework as England.

**71.** We intend to consult on these detailed proposals early next year. The outcomes will be reflected in our final report in July 2004. Our final report will also set out recommendations for the timetable and way in which the proposals should be implemented, and the costs and other resource and practical implications of reform. Relevant to what progress can be made are issues of manageability. We will want to ensure that what we propose is within the capacity of institutions and examination boards to deliver.

**72.** We would welcome any comments which you would like to offer now on any of the issues set out in this section.

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## **Responding to the Consultation**

**73.** The consultation period for this document will run until 16 October 2003. Written responses should be sent to:

**14-19 Consultation Unit  
Area 1B, Castle View House  
East Lane  
Runcorn WA7 2G1**

**74.** Responses may also be made on-line at [www.14-19reform.gov.uk](http://www.14-19reform.gov.uk).



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## APPENDIX I: GLOSSARY

**In this report we have used a variety of terms in ways which may be unfamiliar or need clarification:**

**Academic and vocational/occupational learning.**

The widely-used distinction between traditional school qualifications such as GCSEs and GCE A levels and those qualifications such as NVQs which in whole or in part are designed to deliver the skills and knowledge required for employment in specific sectors or career paths. The distinction is blurred by 'general vocational' qualifications such as GNVQs and now vocational A levels, and the term 'general' has increasingly replaced 'academic' in the classification of qualifications. But we have used 'general' in a different sense - see below.

**Courses.**

The individual elements of learning - usually associated with free-standing qualifications - which form the basis of most current learning programmes. These elements can be quite large like NVQs, or smaller like individual GCSEs.

**Entry level.**

See *Levels 1, 2 and 3*, below

**Foundation, intermediate and advanced levels.**

See *Levels 1, 2 and 3*, below.

**General learning.**

See *specialist and general learning*, below.

**Generic skills.**

see *key skills*, below.

**Key skills.**

Nationally recognised specifications for a range of essential skills which underpin success in education, employment, lifelong learning and personal development and can be accredited through recognised qualifications or units. The key skills are communication, application of number, IT, working with others, managing own learning and performance, and problem solving. Other ways of identifying generic, transferable and employability skills cover the same or similar ground, but have not been embedded in the qualifications framework. We have used the term 'generic skills' to describe these looser skills classifications.

### **Levels 1, 2 and 3 and entry level.**

Specification of levels and volumes of achievement within the existing qualifications framework. Level 1 is equivalent to 5 GCSE grades G or above, or equivalent vocational qualifications; Level 2 is equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades A\*-C or equivalent vocational qualifications and Level 3 is equivalent to two A levels or the vocational equivalent. Individual entry level qualifications recognise achievement at the first three levels of the National Curriculum. The terms *foundation*, *intermediate* and *advanced* are often used to describe achievement at levels 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

### **Programmes.**

Used throughout the text to describe the overall combination of different courses and qualifications being followed by an individual or group of young people. Except where otherwise indicated in the text, the term is used in a loose sense, and carries no implication about the coherence, volume, level or length of the programme.

### **Rules of combination:**

In modular or unit-based courses and qualifications, rules of combination specify the ways in which individual units can be combined to make up a whole qualification or programme.

### **Specialist and general learning.**

An increasingly common distinction made between learning which is required for progression and entry to specific destinations such as particular occupations or higher learning, and the generic and wider 'general' learning which provides the basic knowledge, skills and attributes which all young people need, and learning which may complement, supplement or contrast with the specialist elements of the programme. (See also *supplementary learning*, below.) By this definition, A level programmes which give entry to HE and NVQs targeted at specific occupations are equally 'specialist'.

### **Supplementary learning:**

General learning and experience outside the core of essential knowledge, skills and attributes which all young people need. Supplementary learning includes for instance: the advanced critical or analytical skills that might be needed for higher learning and higher level occupations; learning which complements or contrasts with specialist elements of a programme; and wider activities and personal interests such as sports, the arts and community work.



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## APPENDIX II: SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

### **Question 1:**

Do you broadly agree or disagree with the criteria in paragraph 10 for a reformed 14-19 framework?

### **Question 2:**

Do you broadly agree or disagree with the priority objectives we have identified in Section C for reform of 14-19 learning programmes?

### **Question 3:**

Do you broadly agree or disagree with the priority objectives we have identified in Section D for reform of 14-19 assessment arrangements?

### **Question 4:**

Do you broadly agree or disagree with the priority objectives we have identified in Section E for reform of the 14-19 qualifications framework?

### **Question 5:**

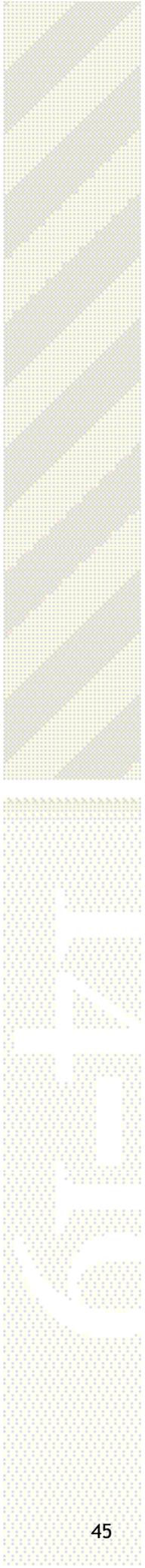
Do you agree or disagree that the approach outlined in paragraph 47 covers the strands of learning which should be present in all 14-19 programmes?

### **Question 6:**

Do you agree or disagree that the emphasis on specialist learning should generally increase as learners move towards the end of the 14-19 phase (paragraph 49)?

### **Question 7:**

Do you agree or disagree that earlier, more effective delivery of generic skills should be a high priority within a reformed 14-19 framework (paragraphs 50 and 51)?



**Question 8:**

Do you agree or disagree with the following features of the qualifications model in paragraphs 54 and 55:

- a. A framework of diplomas, each of which recognises a whole programme with a single qualification?
- b. The framework should replace the existing qualifications taken by young people?
- c. A required balance of specialist, general and supplementary learning?
- d. Awards at all levels from entry level to level 3?
- e. Differentiation of performance in individual components of the diploma to help inform selection processes?

**Question 9:**

Do you agree or disagree with our view that a framework of diplomas should offer learners an extended range of styles and types of learning, settings and experiences as well as options for additional subject study (paragraphs 57-59) ?

**Question 10:**

Do you agree or disagree with our view of the opportunities offered by a system of programme-level diplomas for more varied styles and volumes of assessment (paragraphs 60 and 61)?

**Question 11:**

How much importance do you attach to each of the factors listed in paragraphs 63 and 64:

- a. Providing clear milestones during the 14-19 phase?
- b. Giving young people as much choice as possible over the content and breadth of their learning?
- c. Certifying the achievement of those who move between institutions during their 14-19 learning?

- 
- d. Certifying the achievements of those who leave learning before 18/19?
  - e. Reducing the impact of the potential break-point at 16?
  - f. Ensuring balanced programmes of general, specialist and supplementary learning?
  - g. Ensuring status and currency for the diploma?
  - h. More flexible, manageable assessment?

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## APPENDIX III – MEMBERS OF THE WORKING GROUP ON 14-19 REFORM

### **Chair:**

**Mike Tomlinson**

### **Members:**

**John Berkeley OBE,**  
SEMTA Senior Fellow, University of Warwick Centre for Lifelong Learning

**Professor David Eastwood,**  
Vice Chancellor, University of East Anglia

**Simon Culmer,**  
Operations Director, Cisco Systems UK and Ireland

**Carmel Flatley (up to June 2003),**  
Director of HR and Training, McDonald's Restaurants Ltd

**Ian Ferguson (from July 2003),**  
Chairman, Data Connection Ltd

**Dr Helen Gilchrist CBE,**  
Principal, Bury College

**Edward Gould,**  
Master, Marlborough College

**Dr John Guy OBE,**  
Principal, Farnborough 6th Form College

**Carolyn Hayman OBE,**  
Chief Executive, the Foyer Federation

**Colin Hilton,**  
Executive Director, Liverpool City Council

**Professor David Melville CBE,**  
Vice Chancellor, University of Kent

**Professor David Raffe,**  
University of Edinburgh  
**Jennifer Slater,**



Principal, Northallerton College

**Dr Ken Spours,**  
University of London Institute of Education

**Kathleen Tattersall OBE,**  
Director General, Assessment and Qualifications Alliance

**DfES Observer:**  
**Peter Shaw,**  
Director General for Youth, DfES

**Secretary:**  
Matthew White

**Secretariat team:**  
Audrey Beckford  
Andrew Fernandes  
Nicholas Holmes  
Lucy Mackenzie  
Nancy McLean  
Rob Simpson  
Ian Tanner

In addition, the Working Group has established several sub-groups and an associate network of individuals and organisations with an interest in 14-19 learning. Further information may be found on the group's website.

**[www.14-19reform.gov.uk](http://www.14-19reform.gov.uk).**



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**Quoting reference:**

14-19 Reform <b>Progress Report</b>	DfES/0489/2003
14-19 Reform <b>Progress Report Summary</b>	DfES/0490/2003
14-19 Reform <b>Progress Report Consultation Response Form</b>	DfES/0491/2003

Copies of the Summary version and Consultation Response Form will also be available in the most commonly used minority ethnic languages and in audio (ref: DfES/0490/2003Audio), and Braille (ref: DfES/0490/2003Braille) versions.

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