



Department  
for Education

# **16 to 19 study programmes**

**Departmental advice for education  
providers on the planning and delivery of  
16 to 19 study programmes**

**Updated March 2018**

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## Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education. It has been produced to help recipients to understand their obligations and duties in relation to the provision of 16 to 19 study programmes in their institution. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) publishes separate regulations relating to the funding of study programmes, which should be read alongside this guidance.

## Expiry or review date

This advice updates the guidance published in July 2017 and will be reviewed before April 2019.

## Who is this advice for?

This guidance is for everyone involved in the planning or delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes<sup>1</sup>, including senior leadership teams, curriculum planners and coordinators, teachers and trainers. It is also relevant to organisations delivering traineeships for those aged 16 to 19 and supported internships.

## Key points

- All ESFA funded education for 16 to 19 year olds must be delivered as a study programme which combines qualifications and other activities, and which is tailored to each student's prior attainment and career goals
- Every study programme must have a core aim. For the majority of students, this will be either the study of substantial technical, applied or academic qualification(s) or preparation for employment
- Young people who do not hold a GCSE grade 4 (reformed grading) or grade C (legacy grading) in maths and/or English are required to continue these subjects as part of their study programme
- All study programmes should include work experience and non-qualification activities, which complement the other elements of the programme and support the student to progress to further or higher education or to employment.

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<sup>1</sup> 16 to 19 study programmes are also relevant to 20 to 24 year olds with an education, health and care plan.

## Section 1: Study programmes

Professor Alison Wolf, in her review of vocational education (2011), recommended that the Department introduce study programmes to offer students breadth and depth, without limiting their options for future study or work. Professor Wolf also recommended that all young people should be able to gain real experience and knowledge of the workplace in order to enhance their employability skills. Study programmes were introduced in September 2013.

The post-16 Skills Plan<sup>2</sup>, published in July 2016, set out further reforms to technical education, and the Government's consultation on the Implementation of T level Programmes in November 2017. Whilst these reforms will have a significant impact on the qualifications available to 16 to 19 year olds, these qualifications will continue to be delivered as part of a broader study programme. An [introduction to T levels](#) for education providers is available on gov.uk.

### Study programme principles

All 16 to 19 study programmes should be designed to provide students with a structured and challenging learning programme that supports their development and progression in line with their career plans. Study programmes should be individually tailored but will typically combine the elements below:

- i) substantial academic, applied or vocational **qualifications** that stretch students and prepare them for education at the next level or to employment
- ii) **English and maths** where students have not yet achieved a GCSE grade 4 (reformed grading) or grade C (legacy grading)
- iii) **work experience** to give young people the opportunity to develop their career choices and to apply their skills in real working conditions
- iv) other **non-qualification activity** to develop students' character, skills, attitudes and confidence, and to support progression

Broad programme characteristics for students taking different qualification pathways are set out in section 2, whilst section 3 offers further guidance on the principles above. The 'further information' section offers hyperlinks to research, case studies and other information that providers can draw on. All links were correct at the time of publication.

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<sup>2</sup> [Post-16 skills plan and independent report on technical education](#)

## Core aim of a study programme

Every study programme must have a core aim. This is the principal activity or core purpose of a student's programme, and it will usually be the component that has the largest number of planned hours. The core aim for the majority of students will be either:

- i) one or more substantial academic, applied or technical qualifications which prepare the student for further education or employment, or
- ii) a substantial work placement to prepare the student for an apprenticeship or other employment

The core aim must be agreed between the student and the education provider. It will generally remain unchanged during the year, although exceptions may be made where, for example, a student:

- finds they have made the wrong course choice and transfers to an alternative programme, or
- transfers to a traineeship after an initial period of vocational training or employability support

The remainder of the study programme should complement the core aim.

## Planned hours

Each study programme will consist of a number of planned hours; ie hours that have been timetabled and are supervised by the provider. Providers must ensure that the number of hours are realistic and deliverable.

Study programmes are designed to be full-time (600 planned hours) to allow sufficient time to deliver the principles above. Part-time study programmes may be agreed where, for example, a student:

- combines part-time education with full-time employment
- has a health issue which prevents them from being in education for more than a few hours a week, or
- needs a specific small qualification or period of work experience to progress to further education or employment

Any study programme of 150 hours or more must include English and maths where appropriate, work experience and other non-qualification activity. It is expected that programmes of fewer than 150 hours will also include these elements although providers may make exceptions. Work experience, for example, may not be relevant to a student who is combining education with full-time employment.

Annex A sets out examples of study programmes.

## Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities

The overwhelming majority of young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are capable of sustained employment with the right preparation and support. All professionals working with them should share that presumption. As such, the study programme principles apply equally to learners with SEND.

Providers should tailor study programmes to the individual aspirations and needs of learners with SEND, in discussion with the student. Where students have an education health and care (EHC) plan, providers should also involve the local authority SEN co-ordinator where appropriate. While some students with SEND should be on study programmes, which help them achieve stretching qualifications, others will gain more benefit from a traineeship, supported internship or other study programme, which helps them prepare for employment and adult life more generally. Young people with SEND may face more barriers to gaining employment than their peers. Providers should consider carefully how the work experience element of their study programme can enable them both to develop and demonstrate the skills that will help them gain employment.

An Access to Work (AtW) grant can cover the job coach element of a supported internship or traineeship, where needed, and application for funding goes through the education provider (or supported employment provider working with the education provider). Providers should communicate the existence of AtW to employers when they are setting up a supported internship or traineeship, or where they are helping a student with SEND to progress to employment when they complete their course, to reassure them that personalised support can be provided to the young person at no additional cost to the employer.

The [Preparing for Adulthood](#) website offers further guidance on AtW.

Exceptionally, students with severe and/or complex needs, a study programme to develop independent living skills may be appropriate. This would only be apply to students for whom either substantial qualifications or preparation for employment are not – at this stage in their lives – an appropriate option. The student's EHC plan should confirm that independent living is their primary aim.

The [SEND Code of Practice](#) sets out the responsibilities of post-16 providers for young people with SEND, both with and without an EHC plan.

## Section 2: Broad programme characteristics

### A level courses

Students of all abilities are expected to follow study programmes, including those studying A level courses. A level students are expected to follow a minimum of 3 A levels, or equivalent, which count as substantial qualifications. A level study programmes should also include non-qualification activity such as tutorials, work experience, personal or study skills, and support to progress to employment or higher education (HE).

### Applied and technical qualifications

Students for whom an applied or technical qualification is the most appropriate route to their career goal are expected to study at least one substantial qualification. This should be of sufficient size and relevance to provide a route into a trade, profession or other form of employment, or access to education at the next level.

The government publishes lists of [technical and vocational qualifications](#) which meet the criteria above and which have been approved for reporting in performance tables alongside academic qualifications. They include for 16 to 19 students:

**i) Tech level qualifications** – rigorous advanced (level 3) technical qualifications, on a par with A levels, and recognised by employers. They equip young people with the specialist knowledge and skills they need for a job in occupations ranging from engineering to computing, hospitality to agriculture.

The Technical Baccalaureate is a performance table measure that includes a tech level, a level 3 maths qualification and an extended project qualification (designed to extend students' writing, communication, research and self-motivation skills).

**ii) Applied general qualifications** – rigorous advanced (level 3) qualifications that equip students with transferable knowledge and skills. They are for post-16 students wanting to continue their education through applied learning and fulfil entry requirements for a range of HE courses – either by meeting entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside and adding value to other qualifications at the same level.

**iii) Technical certificates** – level 2 qualifications that provide students with a route into a skilled trade or occupation where employers recognise entry at this level (for example, construction trades, social care and hairdressing). Technical certificates also provide access to tech levels or an apprenticeship.

The approvals process requires these qualifications to meet rigorous requirements in terms of their content, assessment and (for technical qualifications) employer involvement, so that students can be confident that they are being offered a high quality

qualification which is recognised by employers and/or higher education providers. The department expects to build on this approvals process as the technical education reforms are rolled out. Delivering these qualifications will therefore help providers to prepare for the next stage of the reforms.

Other qualifications may be taught, providing they have section 96 approval for teaching to 16 to 19 year olds, but may not be reported in the performance tables.

Substantive qualifications should generally be offered at a level above the student's prior achievement. There may be exceptions; for example where a student who has already achieved level 2:

- needs to complete a technical certificate before progressing to a tech level
- applies to study a larger qualification at level 2 to provide a route into their chosen occupation or trade

## **Students who are not yet ready for level 2 qualifications**

Students who are not yet ready to begin a qualification at level 2 should be offered a tailored study programme that supports them to progress either to education at a higher level, employment, or prepare for adult life.

Young people whose aim is an apprenticeship or other employment, and who are capable of achieving this within 6 months, may be offered a traineeship. Those likely to need longer may be offered a study programme whose core aim is a work placement rather than a substantial qualification.

## **Qualifications and entry and level 1**

Progression rates from programmes below level 2 vary widely, depending on what and where young people study. Recent research into effective practice identified a number of factors that combine to make an effective programme. These have been used to develop a number of 'principles' which are set out in annex B. Providers delivering qualifications at entry and level 1 are encouraged to follow these principles, and to make use of the effective practice and cases studies available on gov.uk.

Most young people who study at entry and level 1 attract additional funding through the disadvantage element of the 16 to 19 national funding formula. Providers are expected to use this funding to provide additional teaching and support for these students.

Research has also shown the importance of taking account of local and demographic factors when choosing what programmes to offer at entry and level 1. Many providers review their provision each year to check that students are completing their qualifications and progressing to further education or employment. All providers are encouraged to do this, working with LEPs, local authorities and employer organisations where appropriate.

Links to the research above are listed in the 'further information' section of this guidance. DfE are also looking to produce a short summary of the good practice identified in these reports, which it aims to make available by the end of May 2018.

## Traineeships

Traineeships are study programmes for young people without level 3 qualifications to help prepare them for an apprenticeship or other sustainable employment where training is 'on the job'. Traineeships should last for a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of six months.

The core aim of a traineeship is a high quality work placement with an employer of between 100 and 240 hours, which is offered alongside work preparation training, and English and maths for those who need it. Providers and employers have the freedom to bring these elements together in the best way to engage and support individual trainees and to integrate other support and training, such as mentoring, careers guidance, vocational qualifications and job search support.

Traineeships are continuing to grow and growth funding has been made available for providers to start or expand traineeship programmes. Providers are encouraged to make more opportunities available in occupations where workplace learning is available and specific qualifications are not required.

There is further information in the [Traineeships framework for delivery](#).

## Supported Internships

Supported internships offer young people with an EHC plan an opportunity to develop the skills, experience and confidence they need for employment. The core aim of a supported internship is a substantial work placement with the support of an expert job coach.

Alongside their time with the employer, supported interns complete a personalised study programme that includes English and maths and the chance to study for relevant qualifications, where appropriate. Internships normally last for a year and include unpaid work placements of at least six months. The aim is to support the young person to paid employment at the end of the programme.

DfE had published guidance on [providing supported internships for young people with an EHC plan](#).

## Section 3: Delivering study programmes

### Maths and English

Employers have expressed concerns regarding the literacy and numeracy skills of school and college leavers for many years. That is why all students aged 16 to 19 studying 150 hours or more, who do not hold at least a GCSE grade 4 (reformed grading) or grade C (legacy grading), are required to study these subjects as part of their study programme in each academic year. This requirement is a [condition of funding](#).

All full time 16 to 19 year old students starting a new study programme with a GCSE grade 3 (reformed grading) or grade D (legacy grading) in maths or English must enrol on GCSE courses. This element of the requirement does not apply to students on traineeships. Students with prior attainment of grade 2 or below (reformed grading) or grade E or below (legacy grading) can study other maths and English qualifications such as Functional Skills or ESOL qualifications recognised by the funding condition as 'stepping stone' qualifications on the journey towards achievement of a GCSE. The approved list of qualifications is maintained on the [Learning Aim Reference Service \(LARS\)](#). All qualifications on the approved list are also approved on Section 96.

The condition of funding is focused on the continuing study of maths and English due to the progression opportunities that these basic skills afford. GCSEs currently have higher labour market value with employers than other equivalent level 2 qualifications. Most employers expect job applicants to hold GCSEs in maths and English, and these qualifications are required by many colleges and universities to progress to level 3 and beyond.

The vast majority of young people starting a new study programme will be capable of studying maths and English qualifications such as Functional Skills or GCSE. However, there are a small number of students who are not able to do so, for example those with multiple and complex needs. These students can be exempt from studying standalone maths and English qualifications but appropriate literacy and numeracy should still be included in their study programme. Students with overseas qualifications that are established as equivalent to GCSE grade 4 (reformed grading) or grade C (legacy grading) are also exempt from the condition of funding.

The condition of funding is designed to give 16 to 19 providers flexibility to tailor a study programme so that each student is enabled to improve in maths and/or English to the best of their ability. For example, providers are free to determine:

- how best to teach maths and English, and the extent to which teaching and learning is embedded and/or reinforced through technical tuition
- the appropriate course duration and when to enter students for exams. For example, in the case of GCSEs, a student could take an intensive course ahead of a November retake or a longer one or two year course.

## Level 3 mathematics qualifications

The government has recently published Professor Sir Adrian Smith's review of post-16 mathematics.

Despite recent progress, participation in mathematics post-16 remains low in comparison to many other countries. There is a strong case that mathematical and quantitative skills are important for students' future study and career. Higher levels of achievement in mathematics are associated with higher earnings for individuals and many employers are looking for applicants with advanced mathematical and quantitative skills.

To improve the life chances of students we would therefore like to see providers offering a range of level 3 mathematics qualifications and more students participating post-16. The [advanced maths premium](#) will help education providers to increase the number of students studying high quality maths qualifications to level 3. As well as new reformed AS and A levels in mathematics, statistics and further mathematics; awarding organisations have introduced new 'core maths' qualifications at level 3 for students not taking A and AS levels in mathematics. The focus of core maths qualifications is on problem solving, reasoning and the practical application of mathematics and statistics. These new qualifications have been designed with the help of employers and universities to suit students with a range of pass grades at GCSE maths and provide them with the quantitative skills now needed in a wide range of jobs. We would encourage all providers to offer these new qualifications for their students.

## Work experience

Work experience is a key component of 16 to 19 study programmes. It aims to give young people the opportunity to develop their career choices, get a first taste of work, and develop those critical employability skills needed for real working conditions. All students are expected to undertake work experience / work-related training as part of their study programme. This applies to academic, technical and applied pathways.

Work experience can take many forms including work tasters, running a student enterprise, participation in social action, volunteering or a work placement. Activities must be planned to take account of the student's needs and future plans. As such, the purpose and nature of work experience is likely to be different for a student who plans to apply for HE when compared with a student who is preparing for employment. This approach is consistent with the Gatsby Benchmarks for good careers guidance, which are set out in [Careers guidance: Guidance for further education colleges and sixth form colleges](#). Gatsby have also published an 'at a glance' [Guide for Colleges](#).

The time spent by students on work experience is funded at the same level as qualifications taught in the classroom. This provides schools and colleges with the

flexibility to assign staff to engage employers and secure high quality work experience opportunities for their students.

Planned hours should normally be delivered within the providers' normal working pattern. Work placements may include evening, weekend and college holiday hours where that would give students a more realistic experience. The provider must have scheduled and agreed the hours in advance of the activity and the hours must be reasonable for a student of that age. Issues such as late night transport should also be addressed and the student should know who to contact if a problem emerges whilst the college is closed.

## Youth Social Action

Providers are encouraged to incorporate youth social action into study programmes alongside other work experience. Youth social action describes young people taking practical action in the service of others to create positive change. In a work experience context, social action can take the form of young people honing their work-related skills and behaviours to have a positive community impact. Evidence shows that young people who participate in social action show robust improvements in the skills and behaviours that employers are calling for, including resilience, problem-solving and sense of community. Young people participating in social action have stronger personal networks, higher life-satisfaction and reduced anxiety.

Common principles of a high quality youth social action is that it is:

- Youth-led – led, owned and shaped by young people's needs, ideas and decision making
- Socially impactful – have a clear and intended benefits to a community, cause or social problem
- Challenging – stretching and ambitious as well as enjoyable and enabling
- Embedded – accessible to all, and well integrated to existing pathways to become a habit for life
- Progressive – sustained and providing links to other activities and opportunities
- Reflective – recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning

Activities can include volunteering, campaigning, fundraising, mentoring – in which the activity has a 'double-benefit' to both the young people participating and the community they are serving. The Association of Colleges (AoC) has pulled together some examples of how colleges are using social action on the ['non-qualification activity'](#) page on their Study Programmes Central site.

## Work placements

Whilst work experience, training in a simulated work environment or social action can help students develop new 'softer' skills, providers are expected to offer, wherever possible, a placement with an external employer. This enables students to experience the real demands of the working environment, independent from their peers and their tutors, and put into practice the transferable and sector-specific skills they have learned. This has the greatest impact on students' employability. In addition, students can often get employer references for their performance that provides evidence for their CV, or the offer of a job on completion of their course.

Common principles of a high quality work placement are that it:

- is purposeful, offers challenge and is relevant to the young person's study programme and career aspirations
- allows the student to apply the technical and practical skills learned in the classroom/workshop
- is managed under the direction of a supervisor to ensure the young person obtains a genuine learning experience suited to their needs
- has a structured plan for the duration of the placement which provides tangible outcomes for the student and employer
- has clear roles, responsibilities and expectations for the student and employer
- is followed by some form of reference or feedback from the employer based on the young person's performance.

## Integrating work experience into study programmes

There is no single 'correct' way of planning work experience and work placements – this will depend on the employers' capacity and could vary considerably by sector. Employers are more likely to respond favourably to providers that are willing to be flexible and work with them to organise work experience and placements to suit their requirements. Work placements for example (which are longer than work experience and so require more careful organisation) could follow a pattern of once a week for the duration of the term, longer block placements, or a rotation of shorter placements at different employers, so students can experience different aspects of a sector.

Work placements within a traineeship should be substantial, whilst the placement for a student on a supported internship should be of at least 6 months. Students who have work experience as the core aim of their study programme must also spend a large proportion of their time with an external employer to ensure that they develop the employability skills, attitudes and behaviours that are expected in the workplace so that they can progress successfully into paid employment.

The length of work experience for other study programmes will vary according to course type and employer preferences. Providers' assessment of students' abilities, prior attainment, career goals and work readiness should also determine the level and nature of work experience needed to prepare for progression to employment.

In all instances, education providers should agree with both the student and employer:

- the education and training goals of the placement
- reasonable expectations on student conduct, and
- the role of the employer in providing supervision and training.

This agreement can take the form of a short note or email from the education institution to the student and the employer. This is in line with good practice in the provision of work experience as part of a 16 to 19 study programme and to meet ESFA audit requirements for the provision of work experience.

In setting up work experience, providers must consider, in discussion with the student and the employer, whether a young person with SEND needs more support in the workplace than their peers if they are to benefit from the experience.

DfE research into [work experience and related activities in schools and colleges](#), which includes good practice in providing effective work placements, is available on gov.uk.

## **Employer involvement**

As work experience and work placement provision is funded in the same way as direct teaching, we have noted a steady increase in providers assigning work placement coordinators or setting up teams dedicated to engaging local employers and securing work placements for their students. Providers who have put this resource in place are able to manage an increase in work placement opportunities, benefitting more of their students.

Other potential sources of information about employers include Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) where they exist, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Jobcentre plus (JCP). The [AoC's Study Programme Central](#) site provides examples of how other providers are successfully sourcing work experience.

## **National Minimum Wage**

Young people undertaking work experience or a work placement are not in employment and are therefore not entitled to the National Minimum Wage. We encourage, but do not require, employers to meet students' expenses such as travel or meal costs. Providers may also make financial support from the 16 to 19 bursary fund available to students if the cost of attending work experience would be a barrier to their participation.

## Health & Safety

The employer has the primary responsibility for the health and safety of students whilst on work experience or a placement. Whilst education or training providers must satisfy themselves that an employer has assessed the associated risks to workers under 18 on their premises, and has suitable and sufficient risk management arrangements in place, checks must be kept in proportion with the risk environment. For low risk environments, assurance can be gained through a conversation with the employer. A physical inspection by education providers or requiring the employer to complete lengthy forms should not take place.

The Health and Safety Executive has published [guidance for work experience placements](#), and providers should refer to this when making arrangements.

## Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance

The insurance industry has committed to treat work experience students as employees so that they will be covered by existing Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance policies. An employer, or voluntary sector organisation, that has Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance cover already, does not need to buy additional cover.

If the voluntary organisation only has Public Liability Insurance, they will need to obtain temporary Employer Liability Compulsory Insurance for the duration of the placement.

The Association of British Insurers has published [guidance for employers](#) planning to take on work experience students.

## Disclosure and Barring Service (formally CRB)

Providers are no longer required to carry out enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on employers/staff supervising young people aged 16 to 17 on work experience.

Young people intending to undertake work experience in the healthcare and early years sectors will need to have an enhanced DBS check before starting on their placement. Providers will need to factor in these costs to the total programme cost and also plan for the time it takes to complete an application (which could be up to 4 weeks).

## Other non-qualification activity

All students are expected to take part in other meaningful non-qualification activity alongside work experience. This should take account of their needs and career plans, as well as preparation for adult life more generally. For example:

- activities to develop confidence, character and resilience
- group work to develop team working, leadership and problem solving – skills that too often employers say are lacking in school and college leavers
- tutorials and seminars (including careers education)
- life skills, such as the ability to travel independently, how to cook and to eat healthily, stay safe, personal finance, or preparation for University life

Such activities should also help students to build experience for their CV and/or personal statement. External programmes, such as the National Citizen Service, can be delivered alongside study programmes to offer students' additional opportunities to develop their character, skills, attitudes and confidence, and to support progression (see section 4).

## Progression

All study programmes should reflect students' longer-term aims and aspirations, and support them to achieve their goals. It is expected that all students nearing their planned leaving date will be encouraged and supported to apply for and, where possible, secure an apprenticeship, further learning or employment. The progression of students will be the focus of the future accountability system.

The law requires young people to remain in education, an apprenticeship or employment combined with part time study until their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. The 'September Guarantee' entitles all 16 and 17 year olds (ie those in the last year of compulsory education, and the first year of post-compulsory education) to an offer of a place in education or training for the next academic year. Whilst local authorities are responsible for delivering the guarantee, they rely on support from providers to identify which students are expected to continue with a two-year programme, and which are likely to leave or complete their current programme and need to find an alternative place for the following year.

[Statutory guidance on young people's participation in education and training](#) gives further information about the duties above, including the role of education providers.

## Section 4: Extra-curricular activities that may be delivered alongside study programmes

### Diploma in Sporting Excellence

The Diploma in Sporting Excellence is for young people (aged 16-18) who are on the talent pathway for their chosen sport and who want to combine their sport with study towards academic or technical qualifications. This is a new programme for 2018, which replaces the non-employed pathway of the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) and the Sporting Excellence Award.

Students participating in DISE must be nominated by their sport's national governing body (NGB) and be in 16-19 education. DfE funds DISE separately, so the hours spent working towards the Diploma must not be included in the study programme's planned hours. DISE is usually delivered at weekends or in holidays although participants are required to commit to regular training.

Some NGBs deliver the award themselves, whilst others contract with colleges to deliver on their behalf. The provider delivering DISE is required to:

- inform the student's study programme provider when a student enrolls on DISE
- share information about the programme the student is following; including how, where and when the diploma is to be delivered;
- share information well in advance, about key dates such as competitions that might impact on the student's attendance at school/college;
- avoid delivery of DISE overlapping with education wherever possible, including key education dates, such as completion of assignments, educational trips etc., when the student should give priority to their education;
- provide the athlete with a named contact who they, or their education provider, can turn to if any issues arise.

### National Citizen Service (NCS)

NCS is a government-backed, part-residential youth programme which develops the skills and confidence of young people. Young people work in diverse teams of 12 to 15, building skills for work and life, taking on exciting challenges, making new friends, and contributing to their local area. [National independent evaluations](#) have consistently shown the positive impact the programme has on young people, particularly on team working, leadership, resilience, wellbeing and anxiety reduction.

NCS offer an autumn programme aimed at 16 and 17 year old students. Most providers deliver this during term time and agree a programme which complements the non-qualification element of the study programme by offering students further opportunities to:

- develop their character, skills, attitudes and confidence, and to support progression; and
- experience work experience through youth social action.

NCS is managed locally, and local providers have flexibility to tailor activities and materials to suit your cohort, and deliver the programme at a time that best meets your needs.

There is no cost to a school or college to get involved and a young person will pay no more than £50 to take part. However, as NCS is government funded, the hours the student spends on the programme must not be recorded as planned hours.

DfE has published [guidance for schools and colleges on delivering NCS](#). In addition, [case studies](#) which describe some of the different models of operating NCS that providers are using can be found on the NCS website.

## Section 5: Funding and accountability

### Funding of study programmes

Changes to the funding of 16 to 19 education were introduced to support the introduction of study programmes in August 2013. Funding is allocated on a per student, not a per qualification, basis so that providers are funded for all planned hours, including non-qualification activity such as work experience.

Funding is not linked to success rates – this means that students can be entered for more challenging qualifications without fear that failure will affect success and, in turn, funding.

Some large A level, International Baccalaureate and TechBacc programmes will be eligible for a funding uplift. Additional funding is also made available for disadvantaged students and some high-cost courses.

For more information on 16-19 funding, visit the [funding rates and formula](#) and [funding regulations](#) pages on gov.uk.

### 16 to 19 performance tables

Schools and other providers are accountable for the quality of the study programmes that they offer their students through reformed 16 to 19 performance tables. From 2016 onwards, school and college performance tables will provide clear and easily understood measures of student achievement. All 16 to 19 providers will also be expected to meet robust minimum standards, with scrutiny from either the ESFA or the Regional Schools Co-ordinator for those failing to meet them.

Further guidance on accountability can be found at [ESFA post-16: intervention and accountability](#). Further detail on the performance measures can be found at: [16 to 18 accountability headline measures](#)

## Further information

### Useful resources and external organisations

The [AoC Study Programme Central](#) website provides education and training providers with helpful resources, good practice examples and information on staff training days

The Education & Training Foundation (ETF) launched its Traineeships Staff Support Programme (TSSP) in 2014 that supports both the development and dissemination of good practice.

Health and Safety Executive guidance: [Work experience](#)

National Citizen Service: [About NCS](#) and information for providers about the [benefits for students](#). [Guidance for schools and colleges](#) on how best to engage with NCS and case studies specifically for colleges wanting to deliver NCS in term time are also available

Ofsted: [The common inspection framework: education, skills and early years from September 2015](#)

Ofsted: [Further education and skills handbook](#)

Preparing for Adulthood: [Access to Work fund for supported internships and traineeships](#)

### Research and practice

[Effective practice in supporting Entry/Level 1 students in post-16 institutions](#)

[Effective curriculum practice at below Level 2 for 16/17 year olds](#) – report and case studies

[Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges](#) includes good practice in providing effective placements

[Young people in low level vocational education: characteristics, trajectories and labour market outcomes](#)

## Other relevant departmental advice and statutory guidance

[16 to 18 accountability headline measures: technical guide](#) – guide for schools, colleges and local authorities on new headline measures for the 2016 performance tables

[16 to 19 education: funding guidance](#) - rules and guidance for using post-16 funding allocated by ESFA

[16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding](#) - information on maths and English condition of funding

[Careers guidance for colleges](#) - guide for further education colleges and sixth-form colleges on how to provide independent careers guidance

[ESFA post 16: intervention and accountability](#) – information about the intervention framework for post-16 education and skills providers

Post-16 technical education reforms

- [Post-16 skills plan and independent report on technical education](#)
- [Introduction of T levels: information for education providers](#)

[Section 96 - qualifications](#) - overview of section 96 and facility to search for qualifications

[SEND Code of Practice](#) - chapter 7 provides guidance relating to post-16 education and SEN support and chapter 8 provides guidance relating to preparing for adulthood

[Supported internships for young people with an EHC plan](#) - departmental advice on study programmes for supported internship providers

[Technical and vocational qualifications](#) approved for reporting in performance tables

[Traineeships: information for employers and education providers](#) - documents about traineeships, who they are for, what they provide, and their funding

Traineeships: [Delivering 16 to 18 traineeships through EFA funding](#)

## Annex A: Examples of study programmes

### Academic study programme

	Planned hours		Core aim?
	Qualification hours	Non-qual hours	
A level 1	160		Core aim
A level 2	160		
A level 3	160		
Tutorials		40	
Preparation for HE		10	
Work experience		40	
Social action project		30	
<b>Total</b>	<b>480</b>	<b>120</b>	

### Vocational study programme

	Planned hours		Core aim?
	Qualification hours	Non-qual hours	
Tech level	280		Core aim
English GCSE	120		
Tutorials		40	
Employability skills		40	
Work placement		120	
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>200</b>	

### Study programme to prepare for employment

	Planned hours		Core aim?
	Qualification hours	Non-qual hours	
Work placement		240	Core aim
English	80		
Maths	80		
Employability skills		80	
Group activities		80	
Tutorials		40	
<b>Total</b>	<b>160</b>	<b>440</b>	

## Annex B: Study programmes below level 2 - principles

- i. **Assessment** to identify the student's needs; plan their provision; and ensure that appropriate support is in place to meet these needs. Whilst most students are currently assessed on entry, evidence shows that too many providers fail to make effective use of the assessment to plan the student's learning programme.
- ii. **Support to make informed choices** – lower achieving students typically arrive at college with unrealistic career plans and/or limited understanding of the opportunities available to them. If programmes are to be designed to maximise progression, then students need realistic education and career plans. This in turn should reduce the number who 'drop out' because they find they have an inappropriate choice.
- iii. All our evidence points to vocational programmes attracting students into post-16 education. **Practical, hands-on teaching** in a workshop environment can enthuse a student who struggled in school. Basic skills can be embedded into vocational programmes, making them more appealing than separate classes. An introduction to their chosen occupational area will also help students progress to further learning, an apprenticeship, or employment at an elementary level.
- iv. **English and maths in line with DfE policy**, and which supports (where appropriate) the level which the student needs to have achieved to progress to their chosen level 2 programme, apprenticeship or occupation.
- v. **Engagement with employers** and work related activity to open students' eyes to the opportunities available and the behaviours that employers expect. A structured work placement may be right for some, but others working at entry/level 1 may get more benefit from experiencing a variety of different employment related activities.
- vi. The programme must be **flexible** if it is to meet the needs of this diverse group, and to respond to some inevitable changes in the student's longer term plans. As such, the balance between the elements above must individually tailored to student needs.
- vii. **Pastoral and specialist support** to help students to remain engaged and progress. A high proportion of students will have special educational needs or personal and social issues and will have experienced additional support when they were in school. Failure to replicate this level of support post-16 risks students 'dropping out' of education.
- viii. All programmes must focus on **progression** to the next stage of education or employment. Students should be encouraged to move on in less than a year if they are ready, and they have been offered other training or employment.

## Annex C: What Ofsted inspectors look for when they inspect study programmes

Ofsted has published a handbook to support the [inspection of further education and skills providers](#). There is a summary below of the evaluation criteria which apply to study programmes.

- leaders promote high expectations and use rigorous systems to drive improvement, including through monitoring and developing the quality of 16 to 19 provision and improving the progress and achievement of learners and groups of learners
- study programmes for each learner are planned and managed so that they fully meet the principles of the DfE's 16 to 19 study programmes by providing progression, stretch, mathematics and English for all learners without GCSE grades A\* to C, as well as work experience and non-qualification activities
- teaching and assessment support and challenge learners
- study programmes build on each learner's prior attainment and enable them to make progress and move on to a higher level of qualification when they are ready to do so
- learners receive high quality impartial careers guidance to prepare them for their chosen next steps and to enable them to make well-informed decisions about their future plans
- learners develop personal, social, employability and independent learning skills, and achieve high levels of punctuality, attendance and conduct, including through the contribution of non-qualification or enrichment activities and/or work experience
- learners understand how to keep themselves safe and healthy, both physically and emotionally
- learners, and groups of learners, make progress from their different starting points, remain on their study programme, achieve their core aim and make progress towards a GCSE grade C in English and/or mathematics if they do not already have one
- learners, and groups of learners, progress to the planned next stage in their careers, such as a higher level of education or training, or to employment or an apprenticeship
- the 16 to 19 minimum standards are met where applicable.

## **Annex D: What Ofsted inspectors look for when they inspect work experience**

Work experience is inspected and reported on as an integral part of the inspection of provision for 16 to 19 year olds (and up to age 24 for traineeships) against the Common Inspection Framework for FE and Skills 2012.

To reach an overall judgement about the effectiveness of the provision of study programmes, inspectors carefully evaluate all the available evidence to determine how learners' needs are being met. Due regard will be taken of the learner's planned destination. In programmes which are preparing learners for work, inspectors will look for evidence of substantial work preparation and work experience suited to the needs of the individual.

Work experience should contribute to students' overall development. For example, when considering outcomes for students, inspectors will explore how well they can develop their employability and vocational skills and personal effectiveness (eg attendance, attitudes, punctuality and behaviour) in relation to their starting points while on work experience.

Similarly, when inspecting teaching, learning and assessment inspectors will explore how well students on work experience have been prepared beforehand, the tasks they are set and whether they receive detailed feedback on their progress.

The inspection of leadership and management will evaluate the extent to which work experience is purposeful for each student, how well it fits into the other aspects of their study programme and that appropriate steps have been taken by the employers to provide a safe environment.

Work experience in providers' realistic working environments, such as college companies; provide good opportunities for students to develop initial vocational skills, knowledge and employability skills. However, this should not be seen as an alternative to external work experience, especially if work experience is a substantial part of their programme.



Department  
for Education

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