

i For information



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Level 2 Entitlement

Guide for Providers, Stakeholders and Intermediaries

This document is of interest to LSC-funded FE providers



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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 *The Guide*

This guide is for learning providers offering the Level 2 Entitlement (L2E) in 2005/06. It will also be of interest to intermediaries and other stakeholders involved in supporting eligible learners to take advantage of L2E.

The purpose of the guide is to give general information on how L2E works. More specific details can be obtained from your local LSCs in each region (Section 6).

1.2 *The Individual Offer*

The Skills Strategy White Paper (*21st Century Skills: Realising our Potential* 2003) reaffirms the commitment to help unskilled or low skilled adults to gain a platform of employability skills on which they can build for the future.

To achieve this, a package of support focused on providing learning for adults who do not already have a first full Level 2 qualification has been developed (that is, do not have 5 GCSEs at grades A* - C, an NVQ at Level 2 or an equivalent qualification). The elements of this package of support make up the **Individual Offer** set out below:

- **Level 2 Entitlement (L2E)**
An entitlement to fee remission for tuition to study for a **first full** Level 2 qualification, or in some cases a Level 3 qualification for eligible adults of 19 years and over (no upper age limit).
- **Information and Advice (IA)**
A free one-to-one session focussing on the needs of low skilled adults
- **Learner Support Funds**
Flexible use of these funds to help with the additional costs of learning, for example, registration and exam fees.
- **Adult Learning Grant (ALG)**
A means tested weekly grant for those studying full time for a first full Level 2 qualification for adults of any age (from 19 years), and for a first Level 3 for those aged 19 to 30. **ALG is offered in pilot areas only and will not be extended further in 2005/06.**

- **Employer Training Pilots (ETP)**
An entitlement for employed adults to free tuition leading to a **first full** Level 2 or Skills for Life qualification accessed through their employer, plus associated support for employers. **ETP is offered in pilot areas only.**

NB: In 2005/06 L2E and IA provision are available in **all** LSC areas.

This guidance relates specifically to the implementation of L2E. Information about the other elements of the Individual Offer – IA provision, the Adult Learning Grant and Employer Training Pilots can be obtained from your local LSC.

1.3 The routes to taking up L2E

Adults can find out more about the entitlement and if they are eligible through

- local information and advice providers
- **learnirect**
- applying directly to the learning provider (for example, a local FE college) of their choice
- their employer, if the employer is participating in the ETP initiative.

Whichever route is taken, information and advice are key to ensuring that the person makes the right decision. While IA is not mandatory it is actively encouraged.

2 SECTION 2 – INFORMATION AND ADVICE TO ACCESS L2E

2.1 The Information and Advice service on offer

Adults without a full Level 2 qualification are entitled to a free one-to-one advice session with a qualified member of staff from an LSC approved IA provider. The purpose of the session is to help them make an informed choice about their options, taking into account their current level of qualification, personal circumstances and regional and local skill priorities.

Some adults may already be clear about the qualification they wish to study and with which learning provider, so an IA session is not mandatory in order to access the L2E. However, it is highly recommended, in order to provide confirmation of this decision.



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Adults also need to be advised by an IA provider, learning provider or **learndirect** about their eligibility and have their commitment to completing their learning and achievement explained to them as part of this process.

In certain circumstances adults without a first full Level 2 qualification may study immediately at Level 3. In such cases, whether through the individual or employer route, an enhanced information and advice session from an accredited provider is highly recommended.

It is a requirement that all IA providers track learner progress by ensuring that referral destinations are recorded and followed up.

2.2 The role of learndirect and L2E

A caller to the **learndirect** information advice line who is interested in L2E and who has a clear idea of their course and learning provider is given details of the provider of their choice.

A caller who requires further support to choose their course and/or advice on Level 3 is transferred to the local IA service as per the protocol agreed between **learndirect** and IA providers. The local IA provider then arranges an appointment for the individual to discuss their options.

3 SECTION 3 - LEVEL 2 ENTITLEMENT (L2E)

3.1 Eligibility

Any adult of 19 years and over (no upper age limit) wishing to study for their **first full** Level 2 qualification is entitled to have their tuition fees remitted.

To establish their eligibility for the entitlement, adults must sign a declaration to say that they do not already have a first full Level 2 qualification, or qualifications deemed by QCA to be equivalent to a full Level 2 qualification (for example, BTEC First Diploma, NVQ Level 2, Intermediate GNVQ and including older qualifications such as 5 CSEs at grade 1), or any qualification at Level 3 or above (for example, a GCE A level or a BTEC National or a degree). This declaration will be made during the enrolment process with the learning provider and endorsed by them with a signature and official stamp. Confirmation of eligibility is based on a question taken from the national Labour Force Survey about the level of qualifications already achieved. The wording to be used for the Declaration of Eligibility can be found in Section 7.



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Normal LSC residency rules apply to adults wishing to access any parts of the Individual Offer, with the exception of information and advice services. The rules can be obtained from local LSCs.

3.2 Qualifications approved for L2E fee remission

The first Level 2 qualifications approved for fee remission under L2E have been agreed by DfES, LSC and QCA and can be found on the Learning Aims Database (LAD). A new search facility making it easier to identify L2E approved qualifications on the LAD will be available for the beginning of 2005/06 contract year.

Not all qualifications on the list are always available in every area, so study is subject to availability.

There is no restriction on the mode of study and the length of programme of eligible Level 2 qualifications (unless the individual is also applying for ALG in which case ALG rules apply). Mode and length of study will be agreed as part of the adult's Learning Agreement with the learning provider and are likely to vary depending on the subject offered. It is also likely that the majority of eligible adults will study their first Level 2 qualification on a part time basis.

Under exceptional circumstances adults with part achievement towards a full Level 2 (for example, 4 GCSEs or nearly all the units of an NVQ at Level 2) may be allowed to complete their achievement (that is, study less than a full Level 2) and benefit from fee remission. However, this will not be usual and is possible only where this option is agreed by the learning provider as being the most appropriate route for the adult to take (for example, where an adult does not hold all 5 GCSEs but needs them in order to move into a career in nursing).

Also, in certain circumstances an eligible adult may go directly to study at Level 3 – see Section 3.5 for more information

3.3 Learning Providers offering fee remission

Only Learning Providers funded by the LSC through the further education (FE) funding stream may offer fee remission for tuition for full Level 2 qualifications in 2005/06. This includes all FE colleges, 6th form colleges and external institutions, that is, local education authorities (LEAs) and some other community providers in receipt of FE funding and designated external institutions (EIs). A list of these providers in each area can be obtained from local LSCs.



3.4 *What is free?*

Eligible adults are entitled to free tuition to study for a first full Level 2 qualification regardless of their employment status (eligible adults on means tested benefit will already be entitled to free tuition). However, tuition fees for any linked qualifications such as first aid, food hygiene and health and safety are not included in the Entitlement.

The entitlement is to tuition fees only. Where appropriate, learning providers have the flexibility to use their Learner Support Funds to cover other costs of learning such as exam and registration fees.

3.5 *Level 3 qualifications*

There is no automatic entitlement to study for a Level 3 qualification, but in certain circumstances, a person without a first full Level 2 may be allowed to do so. An IA session to confirm the decision is expected to take place and the qualification must be in the same subject area or occupation as the chosen Level 2 qualification or where the Level 3 falls within a regional priority area. For example, an eligible adult with significant experience of working with horses may be an appropriate candidate to move directly to the Level 3 in Equine Studies instead of studying the NVQ at Level 2.

In all regions, the Regional Skills Partnerships (RSPs) are in the process of identifying regional skills priorities.

3.6 *Funding the Level 2 Entitlement*

FE funded providers are expected to use their 2005/06 funding allocations to cover the fee remission for tuition for L2E and to use their Learner Support Funds flexibly to support eligible learners.

Fee remission for eligible learners should be recorded by the learning provider on the ILR (Individual Learning Record) together with completion of the prior qualifications field.

European Social Fund (ESF) money and the Level 2 Entitlement

Providers involved in offering the Level 2 Entitlement must not use ESF money to fund fee remission, but ESF money may be used to provide additional learner support and services. Please seek further advice from your local LSCs.



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4 SECTION 4 – THE EMPLOYER ROUTE TO LEVEL 2 – ETP

4.1 *The Employer Training Pilot Route*

Employer Training Pilots (ETPs) are operating in 20 local LSC areas. This route to learning enables eligible employed people access to Skills for Life and Level 2 qualifications and information and advice through their employer. The ETP provides flexible fully funded training that leads to a recognised qualification at a time and location to meet the needs of the employer.

The service is aimed primarily at small and medium sized organisations, although all organisations except Government departments are eligible, and offers them the opportunity to discuss company training needs with a Business Broker or Training Adviser, who then sources the training for the workforce. The employer agrees to allow employees to take time off for study during working hours and in most cases receives a contribution to the wage costs. For more details contact local LSC ETP project teams.

4.2 *Where ETP is not available*

In areas where ETP is not available, the entitlement to fee remission applies to all eligible adults no matter who would have paid the fees. Therefore, employers must not be charged tuition fees for eligible employees aiming to achieve their first Level 2 qualification in agreement with their employer. Non-eligible learners, of course, are not affected.

As a rule, the tuition fee remitted to the employer, where the employer would have paid the fee, should be no less than the tuition fee remitted to adults who pay their own fees.

This position is confirmed in the Fees Consultation Paper (*Investing in Skills – Taking forward the Skills Strategy*, July 2004). This document states:

‘In the case of employees seeking their first Level 2 qualification, they are within the scope of the Level 2 entitlement, on the same terms as other learners engaged in further education provision and therefore, eligible for free tuition at standard costs. Beyond that, however, colleges and providers are free to negotiate fees from employers in relation to training for other employees, other costs of training delivery, or where – for instance – training is customised to meet the employer’s needs.’



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5 SECTION 5 – MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

5.1 Marketing the Level 2 Entitlement

2005/06 is considered a transition year in preparation for the national launch of the Individual and Employer Offers from 2006/07. Therefore, learning providers should bear this in mind when considering their approach to the marketing and promotion of L2E in 2005/06, since they are not expected to make major changes to their provision in 2005/06 to accommodate L2E.

LSC Strategy

National

- Generic messages through PR, to adults with no or few qualifications, promoting the benefits of skills, with signposting to the national nextstep advice line (handled by **learndirect**)

Regional and local

- Ensuring messages get to the right target audiences through key intermediaries (IAG partnerships, Jobcentre Plus, voluntary and community groups, Union Learning Representatives)
- Joined up marketing activity to give clear and coherent messages to target audiences: Level 2 entitlement, IAG (nextstep service) and Adult Learning Grant (in the 19 pilot LSCs)
- Communicating with FE colleges and adult education services to ensure they understand the entitlement; provide information and marketing materials for them to give to learners
- Specific targeted marketing through local channels (press, radio, ambient)

Any local marketing should be agreed with your local LSC.

6 SECTION 6 – SELF-DECLARATION OF ELIGIBILITY

6.1 Self-Declaration Form

The learner is eligible for fee remission of tuition fees under L2E if they do not already have a first full Level 2 qualification or equivalent, which equates to a qualification equivalent in standard and breadth to 5 GCSEs at Level A* - C.



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All learners eligible for fee remission under L2E must complete and sign a declaration of eligibility – see Annex 1. This declaration must be counter signed and stamped by the learning provider.

The declaration should be attached to the student's record and retained by the learning provider as a record of eligibility.

The question on which the declaration of eligibility is based is taken from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) about prior qualifications. The information given on prior qualifications should also be entered on the ILR

Below is the list of qualifications at Level 2 and above which would render the adult ineligible for fee remission under L2E and the form of words that should be used by the learning provider for the declaration of eligibility.

Qualification

5 GCSEs grade A* - C
5 'O' Level passes
5 CSE GRADE1
2 AS levels or more
1 A LEVEL or more
NVQ 2
NVQ 3
NVQ 4
INTERMEDIATE GNVQ or higher
EdExcel/BTEC 1ST Diploma or higher
City & Guilds Craft part 2
Access Course
HND/HNC
First degree/Higher degree

Advice should be sought from your local LSC office about other qualifications.



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Annex 1

The form of words to be used by learning providers for the self-declaration is as follows:

'I confirm that all the information on this form is correct and I declare that I do not already have a full Level 2 qualification or above. I understand that if I have declared false information the provider may take action against me to reclaim the tuition fees and any support costs provided.'

Signed
(Learner)

Signed
(Learning Provider)

Date

Official Stamp of the Learning Provider

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