

# Getting ready for the Diploma

## Questions and answers about the Diploma

This is a collection of questions and answers about the Diploma that the National Assessment Agency (NAA) collected from exams officers during the 'Making a Big Difference' conferences about the 14–19 reforms in autumn 2007 and the 'Getting ready for the Diploma' events in 2008.

Answers are given here according to the information that is currently available. Because awarding bodies offering Diploma qualifications may operate different practices in some regards, it has not been possible to offer definitive answers to some questions about awarding body procedures. The NAA will provide further information about general awarding body practices in autumn 2008, through guidance materials and training events. However, for enquiries before autumn 2008, it is advisable to contact the awarding body concerned, directly.

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# A The Diploma and its component qualifications

## 1 Student choices in the Diploma

### ***1. Could a student do more than one Diploma?***

No. It is unlikely that a learner could study for more than one Diploma at any one time, but Diplomas could be studied in sequence.

### ***2. Can candidates progress from a level 2 GCSE course to an Advanced Diploma at 16?***

Yes, learners can interchange between the qualification 'suites' that the DCSF has outlined in its 14-19 qualifications strategy. These suites include GCSEs and A levels, Diplomas and apprenticeships. Locally available information and guidance will provide support for learners who wish to make these choices.

### ***3. How do learners choose between a Progression and Advanced Diploma?***

This will depend upon the volume of study the learner is able to follow. Both Diplomas are level 3 qualifications, however, the Progression Diploma does not include additional and specialist learning. An Advanced Diploma requires 1,080 guided learning hours (GLH) while the Progression Diploma only requires 720 GLH. The Advanced Diploma is equivalent to 3.5 A levels and the Progression Diploma is equivalent to 2.5 A levels.

### ***4. Will the Advanced and Progression Diploma restrict the choices available in higher education?***

No. A student will choose a Diploma Line of Learning according to their talents and interests in the same way as they would choose to do any other qualifications. The additional and specialist learning within the Diploma does not have to relate to the Line of Learning, and may present the learner with wider opportunities for future study in higher education if he or she does not wish to continue with study related to the Diploma Line of Learning.

### ***5. If a post-16 student opts to do the Advanced Diploma but then changes and wishes to study A levels instead, is this going to be possible?***

Yes, depending upon the centre's policy on changing courses.

**6. Will a student be able to follow a Diploma in any part of England?**

The introduction of the 17 Lines of Learning for the Diploma is taking place in phases from 2008 to 2011. Schools and colleges in 146 areas across England will offer the Diploma in up to five Lines of Learning from September 2008. More will begin teaching as the Diploma is phased in during 2009 and 2011. By 2011 there will be 17 Diploma Lines of Learning. Schools and colleges are forming partnerships in their local area so that from 2013, if a young person wants to take a Diploma that is not offered at his or her school, there are arrangements in place to ensure that a nearby school or college will be able to do so. In some cases, Diploma students may spend some of their time at school and some at college and in the workplace.

**7. If a learner has been excluded from the only centre in a consortium that offers principal learning, how can the learner access the Diploma?**

The learner will not be able to participate in principal learning within the consortium, however, the centre may be willing to provide learning in another consortium. The learner may still access the learning for other components of their Diploma offered by centres from which they are not excluded.

**8. Will a student be able to transfer to a different consortium and finish the same Diploma?**

Yes. Access to a student's unique learner number and associated learner account will be able to be transferred between centres and consortia, so any completed qualifications will be 'carried forward'. The principal learning units are not interchangeable between component awarding bodies, but a learner could complete the principal learning with the same component awarding body but in a new consortium.

Regulatory guidelines surrounding transferring principal learning units will be contained in QCA's *Operating rules for component and Diploma awarding bodies*. A second version of this document is due for publication in August 2008.

**9. Can a learner change the level of the Diploma followed once they have already started study, for example, to change from a Foundation Diploma to Higher?**

This will depend on the centre or consortium policy on changing courses. Principal learning, functional skills and the project are specific to each Diploma level, as may be some additional and specialist learning. Decisions about allowing learners to change levels will need to take into account how far a learner is into the course and how many components would need to be changed.

**10. If a learner does not complete their Diploma, will any achievements be recognised?**

The learner will receive certificates for any qualifications they complete. These include principal learning, the project, the three functional skills and any additional and specialist learning. No credit will be given for any qualifications that have only been part completed.

**11. Can a student re-sit a Diploma?**

The component qualifications of the Diploma can be re-sat in line with the specific qualification guidelines.

**12. How can you check whether a combination of qualifications for additional and specialist learning is an acceptable combination for a Diploma?**

The Diploma catalogues show this information at [www.ndaq.org.uk](http://www.ndaq.org.uk). A *barring classification code* is displayed alongside each qualification title in the list of additional and specialist learning qualifications for the Line of Learning at each Diploma level. An acceptable combination of qualifications will not contain any two qualifications with the same barring classification code.

**13. Will it possible for a learner to use qualifications already gained in a Foundation or Higher Diploma as a part of an Advanced or Progression Diploma?**

Qualifications achieved at a lower level cannot be included as prior achievement for a Diploma at a higher level. Once functional skills becomes a national expectation for all learners, functional skills at level 1 will become a pre-requisite for learners starting a Higher Diploma, and level 2 functional skills will be a pre-requisite for the Advanced or Progression Diploma.

## **2 National availability of the Diploma**

**1. Does the fact that from 2013 all students will have a right to study for a Diploma mean that all schools will have to offer Diplomas?**

No – but from 2013, arrangements will be in place to ensure that young people can take any Diploma they want, even if it is not provided at their school or college.

This means that if a young person wants to take a Diploma that is not offered at his or her school, there will be arrangements in place to ensure that a nearby school or college can help. Local areas have published 14–19 online learning prospectuses to enable young people to understand what learning provision is on offer in their locality. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has published an index of these prospectuses [www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=41](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=41).

**2. Will a student be able to follow any Line of Learning in any part of England?**

The introduction of the 17 Lines of Learning for the Diploma is taking place in phases from 2008 to 2011. Schools and colleges in 146 areas across England will offer the Diploma in up to five Lines of Learning from September 2008. More will begin teaching as the Diploma is phased in

during 2009 and 2011. By 2011 there will be 17 Diploma lines. Schools and colleges are forming partnerships in their local area so that from 2013, if a young person wants to take a Diploma he or she is not offered at his or her school, there are arrangements in place to ensure that a nearby school or college will be able to do so. In some cases, Diploma students may spend some of their time at school and some at college and in the workplace.

### **3. Types of Diploma**

#### ***1. Will there be an entry level Diploma?***

No. Learners on entry level programmes will have access to units from Diplomas at level 1 and above.

#### ***2. What has happened to the development of the General Diploma level 2/3?***

The General Diploma is not being taken forward for development in 2009.

### **4 Relationship with other qualifications**

#### ***1. Is the Diploma a 'vocational' qualification and GCSEs and A levels more academic?***

Diplomas provide students with an integrated programme of study that will allow them to apply their learning in a practical and relevant way. All Diplomas require a student to achieve a minimum standard in English, mathematics and ICT, complete a project and do a minimum of 10 days' work experience.

Diploma students will also acquire the skills and knowledge which are essential for success in employment and higher education, both related to the Line of Learning and those that are common, like teamwork, self-management and critical thinking skills.

Via the additional and specialist learning component of each Diploma, learners can combine different courses (vocational qualifications, or GCSEs and A levels).

Students with a Diploma will be able to progress into employment as well as into college and university. Foundation and Higher Diploma students can go on to study for the next level of Diploma, take a different type of qualification such as GCSE, A level or apprenticeship, or go on to a job with training. An Advanced Diploma can lead on to university or into a career.

## ***2. How will GCSEs fit into the Foundation and Higher Diploma?***

The Diploma is a composite qualification, which by its nature enables the learner to select the components of his or her programme of study.

Learners can study one or more GCSEs as additional and specialist learning if the qualifications are listed in the relevant Diploma catalogue. The Diploma catalogue lists the component qualifications available for the Diploma and can be browsed at [www.ndaq.org.uk](http://www.ndaq.org.uk).

## ***3. Can Diploma units be mixed with units from A levels or components of NVQs or GNVQ?***

Individual units cannot be mixed. However, as part of the additional and specialist learning, a Diploma student may opt to study another qualification within an Advanced Diploma. The Diploma catalogue lists the qualifications available for additional and specialist learning within a Diploma, and can be browsed at [www.ndaq.org.uk](http://www.ndaq.org.uk).

## ***4. How many A levels is a Diploma equivalent to?***

The Advanced Diploma is a level 3 qualification, equivalent to 3.5 A levels. The Progression Diploma is also a level 3 qualification, and comparable to 2.5 A levels. For further details on equivalence, see [www.qca.org.uk/diploma-aat](http://www.qca.org.uk/diploma-aat).

## ***5. How do the Advanced and Progression Diplomas fit in with BTEC National Diploma and National Certificate?***

The Diploma will not replace existing qualifications. Many existing qualifications including the BTEC National Diploma and Certificate may be followed as part of additional and specialist learning to add breadth or depth to a Diploma student's learning. To view what additional and specialist learning qualifications may form part of each Diploma, see the Diploma catalogues at [www.ndaq.org.uk](http://www.ndaq.org.uk).

## ***6. Can learners progress from a level 2 GCSE course to an Advanced Diploma at 16?***

Yes, a learner can progress from a GCSE course onto an Advanced Diploma programme. Locally available information, advice and guidance will provide appropriate details for the learner.

## 5 The Diploma and functional skills

### ***1. How can the Diploma be offered from 2008 when functional skills and extended project qualifications are still being piloted?***

Students who successfully complete their course of study in the pilots will receive valid qualifications that will count towards a Diploma. For example, over 900 extended project qualifications have already been awarded.

### ***2. If a Diploma student fails his or her functional skills, will they fail the Diploma?***

All three functional skills have to be passed at the relevant level to achieve the Diploma qualification. They will be taught within the Diploma at level 1 for the Foundation Diploma and level 2 for the Higher Diploma. The Advanced and Progression Diplomas require level 2 achievement in the three functional skills. Students can re-sit functional skills qualifications if they are unsuccessful first time and can be awarded Diploma once they pass all the functional skills.

### ***3. In a Diploma, do functional skills qualifications have to be taken with the same awarding body as the principal learning or the overall Diploma?***

While a consortium or centre may decide to use a single component awarding body that offers some or all of the constituent qualifications of a learner's Diploma, the selection of qualifications is not constrained by the identity of the Diploma awarding body used, or the component awarding body selected to provide principal learning. Constituent qualifications may be selected from any component awarding body provided the qualification is included in the relevant Diploma catalogue for the Line of Learning and level selected.

### ***4. Will awarding body fees be payable for functional skills entries?***

Awarding bodies do charge fees for functional skills entries. Information about fees can be found on the website of each of the awarding bodies offering functional skills qualifications. These are listed on the NAA 'At a glance' guide to Diploma qualifications and at [www.ndaq.org.uk](http://www.ndaq.org.uk).

## 6 The Diploma and work experience

### ***1. Can work experience completed in year 10 count towards the work experience required for a Foundation or Higher Diploma?***

Work experience or even part-time work could count towards a Foundation or Higher Diploma provided it is relevant to the student's learning aims and is managed and recorded



appropriately. Learners are required to undertake a minimum of 10 days of work experience for the Diploma.

## **7 Achievement and attainment table and UCAS points**

### **1. What AAT and UCAS equivalencies will be carried by Diplomas?**

Achievement and attainment table (AAT) points and their equivalencies are set out in full on the QCA website [www.qca.org.uk/diploma-aat](http://www.qca.org.uk/diploma-aat) and the NAA *Getting ready for the Diploma* booklet. UCAS details its tariff for the Diploma on its website [www.ucas.ac.uk](http://www.ucas.ac.uk).

### **2. Are the component qualifications within a Diploma worth AAT points in their own right?**

Yes. The Diploma attracts AAT points for some completed achievements, even if the learner does not complete their overall Diploma.

For Foundation and Higher Diplomas, the principal learning, project and additional and specialist learning attract AAT points. Functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills are recognised in AAT points outside the Diploma through the key stage 4 curriculum.

For the Progression and Advanced Diplomas, all component qualifications attract AAT points. For detailed information on achievement and attainment table (AAT) points, see the QCA website at [www.qca.org.uk/diploma-aat](http://www.qca.org.uk/diploma-aat) or NAA's *Getting ready for the Diploma* guide booklet.

### **3. Why is the Foundation Diploma listed as equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A\*–G in terms of the achievement and attainment tables? Shouldn't it be listed as equivalent to five GCSEs at grades D–G?**

The Foundation Diploma is equivalent to five GCSEs at level 1 (grades D–G). The Higher Diploma is equivalent to seven GCSEs at level 2 (grades A\*–C).

Students taking the Foundation Diploma will only be able to achieve the equivalent of GCSE grades D–G for their principal learning and project. They will, though, be able to achieve level 2 in their functional skills and additional and specialist learning as they could take a GCSE as part of their additional specialist learning and could achieve grades A\*–G for that element of their Diploma. Partly for this reason, the Foundation Diploma is given in achievement and attainment tables as equivalent to five GCSEs A\*–G.

### **4. Different GCSE equivalent values have been published for the Higher Diploma. What is the definitive value?**

The Higher Diploma is equivalent to seven GCSEs at level 2 (grades A\*–C). This equivalence includes achievement and attainment table points for the principal learning and project and additional and specialist learning only. Functional skills will attract their own performance points at level 2 equivalent to 0.5 GCSE A\*–C for each functional skill. In the early years of Diploma delivery, when functional skills have to be taken as a standalone qualification, Diploma students will be awarded these points in addition to any performance points for achievement in English and mathematics GCSEs. But by 2010 we expect most students taking a Higher Diploma at key stage 4 to be achieving their functional skills through English, mathematics and ICT GCSEs. Functional skills would then be recognised in points for achievement of those GCSEs.

# **B Consortia and the DCSF Diploma Gateway process**

## **1 The DCSF Gateway process**

### ***1. What is a Diploma Gateway?***

The Gateway has been introduced to ensure that the Diploma is delivered at a high standard to all learners. It is an application process that assesses consortia and identifies those best equipped to deliver the Diplomas in 2008 and beyond. The DCSF established the process in order to help learning providers identify whether they are ready and capable of delivering the Diplomas to the standard required. The DCSF manages the Gateway application and approval process. The 2009 Gateway results have recently been published at [www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19).

## **2 Establishing consortia**

### ***1. Why must a centre be part of a consortium to offer the Diploma?***

Approval via the DCSF Gateway for institutions to offer Diploma Lines of Learning depends, among other criteria, upon their ability to provide for the full range of learning options included in a Diploma course of study. It is highly unlikely that a single centre would be able to offer such a range.

### ***2. How many centres should there be in a consortium?***

There is no prescribed minimum or maximum. There may be as few as two centres or more than 20. The only requirement is that there is sufficient resource in a consortium to teach a full Line of Learning, including options for additional and specialist learning. Consortia can consist of a number of partner organisations. Consortia delivering in 2008 typically consist of 6–12 organisations, usually including a college and several schools and often the local authority, Learning and Skills Council, Connexions and employers.

### ***3. Who decides which centres belong to a consortium? Will there be a consortium 'coordinator' to ensure everything is brought together?***

Consortium arrangements including membership are decided locally. Each consortium provides a lead contact for the Gateway process in order to ensure a single channel of communication between the DCSF and the consortium. As consortia move towards delivery, they may decide to appoint a lead exams officer to coordinate the exams office group.

#### **4. Can a centre be part of several consortia for different Lines of Learning?**

Yes, where different partnerships are formed to provide different Lines of Learning in the same area, a centre may be part of more than one consortium.

#### **5. How do non-maintained, independent and special schools join a consortium?**

Non-maintained, private and special schools join a consortium in the same way as any other institution. Although local authorities often lead their development, consortium membership is agreed locally and voluntarily.

#### **6. Who decides which Lines of Learning a centre and consortium will offer?**

Consortia members agree which Lines of Learning they will apply to deliver in their area. The Gateway process then approves the consortium to offer these specific Lines of Learning. Consortia wishing to offer additional Lines of Learning in subsequent years will need to submit Gateway applications to demonstrate that their delivery plans on these are robust.

#### **7. In a consortium, does the work experience provider count as a centre?**

No. The work experience provision will be overseen by the centre the learner comes from, with a coordinator ensuring the work experience is formally recorded.

### **3 How consortia work**

#### **1. How will consortia work in rural areas where neighbouring institutions are many miles apart?**

In rural areas, challenges to delivering the Diploma include distance between centres, transport infrastructure and cost, employer type and density. However, there is no firm evidence base to underpin this. Also classifying an area as 'rural' is not sophisticated enough to capture the different pressures and issues faced by different types of rural area. In response to this, the DCSF has undertaken a project to collect data on rural delivery, setting out where the delivery challenges are most acute and building a national picture. The initial report of this work can be found at [www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=27&pid=360&ctype=TEXT&ptype=Single](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=27&pid=360&ctype=TEXT&ptype=Single) and a full report is planned to be released at the end of 2008. QCA has also published guidance relating to rural delivery as part of its Insights from Diploma Pathfinders publication, which is available at [www.qca.org.uk/diploma](http://www.qca.org.uk/diploma).

**2. With more new qualifications becoming available in centres, is it likely there will be more timetable clashes?**

Some consortia are implementing common timetables across all centres for both teaching sessions and exams to aid the organisation of student transport between centres. QCA has produced a number of guidance documents which can be found at

[www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_13949.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_13949.aspx)

Provisional timetables for 2009 are currently available for consultation and comment. Where it is possible to resolve a clash, the common timetable will be amended. Similarly the 2010 timetable will be consulted on in spring 2009.

## **4 Student transport**

**1. For Diploma learning, will students have to physically go to other centres?**

Yes. It is unlikely that any one centre would be able to provide all the learning for a full Diploma. Arrangements for student transport between centres should feature in every consortium's planning for Diploma delivery.

**2. How will consortia arrange transport for students between different centres without high costs in money and learning time?**

Arrangements for student transport between centres should feature in every consortium's planning for Diploma delivery. This might, for example, include planning timetables so that students spend a full day at each centre they need to attend. Funding is being made available to consortia to make suitable arrangements for transport, including arrangements to take rural locations into account.

**3. Who will be responsible for a Diploma student's travel between centres?**

Each individual consortium is responsible for planning its own arrangements for the coordination of student transport from centre to centre. Arrangements will differ from consortium to consortium.

## **5 Funding**

**1. How will schools be funded to deliver the Diploma?**

The DCSF has made £40 million available in 2006/07 and a further £70 million in 2007/08 through the Dedicated Schools Grant to support practical learning opportunities for 14–16 year olds. This funding covers the additional core costs of delivering the Diploma including teaching,

curriculum planning, resource and equipment and relevant fees. The DCSF also provided £15 million per year in 2006/07 and 2007/08, and £28 million for 2008/09 to support consortia with the administrative and logistical costs of delivering 14–19 reform. For 2008/09, this is estimated to be the equivalent of around an extra £1,000 per Diploma student, although this will vary according to the Line of Learning.

***2. Will schools receive funding to enable provision for Diplomas within a consortium?***

The consortium as a whole, and not individual institutions, receives funding to support delivery of Diplomas. Decisions about how this funding will be distributed between centres will be made locally.

# C Awarding bodies

## 1 General

### ***1. Where can you find a list of all the Diploma awarding bodies and component awarding bodies and qualifications?***

Information on Diploma awarding bodies and component awarding bodies as well as information on the Diploma qualifications that they offer is available from the Diploma catalogues at [www.ndaq.org.uk](http://www.ndaq.org.uk). This is a freely searchable website giving up-to-date information on all accredited qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### ***2. Will Diploma awarding bodies and component awarding bodies be encouraged to apply uniform and simplified administration and registration processes?***

Diploma awarding bodies are working together to make as many processes and operating procedures as common as possible. QCA has issued a common set of Diploma operating rules to awarding bodies to ensure consistency. However, because awarding bodies are independent commercial organisations, some processes, for example exam entry processes, may differ.

### ***3. Is the NAA working with awarding bodies to reduce administrative burden?***

Yes. Work is currently underway to extend the use of some of the NAA's existing administrative tools: the access arrangements tool will also include awarding body-based decisions for general qualifications; and the examinations timetable and key dates calendar will start to incorporate vocational qualification types. At present, however, the tool excludes functional skills and principal learning,

### ***4. What is the centre approval process with the awarding bodies for the Diploma and when can a centre apply for approval?***

The awarding body process of centre approval for the Diploma is being reviewed. Regulatory guidelines are being developed by QCA with awarding bodies. The guidelines will be in the new version of the *Operating rules for component and Diploma awarding bodies* due for publication in August 2008.

### ***5. Do all centres in a consortium have to have the same Diploma awarding body?***

It is possible for centres within a consortium to use different Diploma awarding bodies, unless consortium-wide decisions are made regarding the use of a single Diploma awarding body for a Line of Learning.

**6. Do centres have to use the same awarding body for all qualifications within a Diploma?**

While a consortium or centre may decide to use a single component awarding body that offers some or all of the constituent qualifications of a learner's Diploma, the selection of qualifications is not constrained by the identity of the Diploma awarding body used, or the component awarding body selected to provide principal learning. Constituent qualifications may be selected from any component awarding body provided the qualification is included in the relevant Diploma catalogue for the Line of Learning and level selected.

**7. Will JCQ coordinate awarding body regulations for the Diploma?**

JCQ does not represent all Diploma awarding bodies and component awarding bodies. However, the award bodies that it does deal with will have common regulations that align with the regulator's requirements.

## **2 Fees**

**1. In a consortium where students are completing studies in different centres, who pays the awarding body fees?**

Responsibility for learners is allocated to their home centre, so the home centre will usually pay the fees for its own students.

**2. How much will course registration fees be for the different Diplomas?**

Awarding body fees are not standardised for the Diploma or its component qualifications. Individual awarding bodies will be able to advise centres on any applicable fees for the overall Diploma and component qualifications.

**3. Will centres be charged Diploma awarding body fees at the point of learner registration for a Diploma course, or at another time? Might late registration penalties apply?**

Fee structures are likely to differ between Diploma awarding bodies. Diploma awarding bodies will be able to advise centres on fee payment for Diploma courses.



**4. At what point will centres pay fees for principal learning? Will it be upon registration for the course (for principal learning) or at the point of making entries for assessments?**

This is likely to differ between component awarding bodies. Individual awarding bodies will be able to advise centres on fee payment requirements.

**5. Will late fees be applicable for students joining a Diploma course late, for example, when they transfer to a centre from another area?**

This may vary depending on the point at which the Diploma awarding body requires course registrations to be made, and upon the awarding body's policy on these situations. Diploma awarding bodies will be able to advise centres on whether late course registration fees will apply.

**6. Where can exams officers find out information about how much fees will be for the overall Diploma and its component qualifications?**

Awarding bodies will be able to advise on course fees. Many awarding bodies will make this information available through their websites.

## D Assessment processes

### 1 Unique learner number

#### ***1. Will the ULN be the same as the unique pupil number? If not, why not?***

No, the unique learner number (ULN) is not the same as the unique pupil number (UPN). The ULN is a new 10-digit, lifelong learner number allocated to a learner at the age of 14 for use across school, college and university and the entire education system. A UPN is a candidate identifier that lapses when pupils leave schooling and potentially could be reallocated. Diplomas are component-based and are awarded once the required constituent qualifications are achieved by a learner and do not have time limits for completion. Aggregation therefore requires an identification number that remains with the learner beyond school-leaving age. More information about the ULN is available at [www.miap.gov.uk](http://www.miap.gov.uk).

### 2 Registrations and entries

#### ***1. When is a Diploma awarding body selected for a learner's Diploma?***

Depending on Diploma awarding body requirements, a Diploma awarding body could be selected at any time up to the point at which all component results and achievements are complete and a claim is made for the over all Diploma award. The NAA training in autumn 2008 will cover this process.

#### ***2. When should learners be registered for constituent qualifications for their Diploma?***

This will vary depending on the constituent qualification, and the requirements of the awarding body involved. Some constituent qualifications might not need registration at the start of the course, and just require an entry close to the time of the assessment, such as GCSE.

#### ***3. Will late entry fees apply for Diploma component qualifications?***

Whether late fees apply will vary depending on the component qualification and the awarding body involved. Exams officers should follow component awarding body advice on whether late fees will apply, for each individual qualification.

#### **4. Who makes entries for candidates – the centre offering the course or the candidate's home centre?**

Consortia have flexibility to decide which centre will make entries for constituent qualifications of a Diploma. It is expected, however, that in most cases, that the entry at overall qualification level will be made by the home centre (allowing the overall result to be returned to the home centre) and that the entry for every individually assessed unit within the qualification would be made by whichever centre hosts the assessment (the assessment centre). Home centres should be responsible, however, for ensuring all their learners have been entered for the right assessments by the correct centre.

QCA will provide regulatory guidance for awarding bodies on entries, and this will be contained in the second version of QCA's *Diploma Operating rules for component and Diploma awarding bodies* (scheduled publication date August 2008). Guidance and training for opening learner accounts and making student registrations and assessment entries will be included in the NAA training in autumn 2008.

#### **5. Who in a consortium will enter Diploma students for their final exam?**

There is no single final exam for the Diploma. The Diploma aggregation service will automatically recognise when a student has achieved sufficient qualifications and other elements to be able to claim a final Diploma award.

#### **6. Who in a consortium will make the entry or indicate the intention to claim the Diploma award?**

Every Diploma centre has responsibility for maintaining an overview of the overall Diploma programme for each of its own learners. Home centre staff will create and manage learner accounts, and will also make claims for final Diploma awards, using the Diploma aggregation service.

### **3 Access arrangements**

#### **1. If a student normally has classroom support in his or her centre, who will provide this service when the student is studying at another centre in the consortium?**

The student's home centre should advise on provision of classroom support when he or she is learning at another centre. Exams officers from the centres concerned should agree which centre would most practically provide the support.

## 4 Tracking learner progress

### ***1. How will a learner's progress be tracked for the Diploma?***

Home centre staff will be able to track a student's progress towards a final Diploma by viewing the individual's learner account in the Diploma aggregation service. The NAA will provide training on using the Diploma aggregation service in autumn 2008.

### ***2. When will a centre be notified if a student has failed to achieve a pass in all units?***

The learner/centre will be notified of success or failure by the component awarding bodies concerned, in line with the guidelines provided for each of the constituent qualifications.

## 5 The Diploma aggregation service and management information systems

### ***1. What will the Diploma aggregation service do?***

The purpose of the Diploma aggregation service is to support the awarding of Diplomas. It performs three main functions. Firstly it records Diploma constituent qualifications results against each learner within individual learner accounts. Secondly, it aggregates the learner's results, applying pre-defined rules of combination to determine whether the learner has achieved sufficient results to claim a Diploma. Thirdly, the service then calculates a trial grade from the learner's results to enable a Diploma to be awarded by a Diploma awarding body. Entries for constituent qualifications with component awarding bodies will be conducted using the existing awarding body processes.

### ***2. Will the Diploma aggregation service link to my centre's management information system (MIS)?***

QCA is working with MIS suppliers to provide basic functionality allowing the Diploma aggregation service to integrate with the MIS used in most Diploma centres for September 2008. It is, however, a MIS supplier's decision as to whether they provide this functionality. The Diploma aggregation service has certainly been designed with this MIS link in mind.

### ***3. Will results aggregation be automatic when a learner has completed all of a Diploma's components or does the learner's home centre have to 'cash in'?***

Learners have a choice: they can either have their qualifications aggregated automatically or choose their constituent qualifications with a view to improving them.

Firstly, they can set an intention to claim. This ensures the Diploma aggregation service aggregates their Diploma as soon as all required components are achieved and recorded in the learner account, and it provides this information to the Diploma awarding body which generates the award. This is recommended for Advanced or Progression Diploma learners who want to use their Diploma for progression through the UCAS process, because it enables the Diploma result to be forwarded to UCAS as quickly as possible.

Alternatively, learners can wait for all their constituent qualifications and other achievements to be recorded in the learner account and then review the trial grade with their centre. If they want to claim the Diploma they can or they may choose to re-sit or take additional constituent qualifications.

#### ***4. Will component awarding bodies provide base data or results via electronic data interchange (EDI)?***

The provision of base data or results by EDI may vary according to the awarding body involved. Each awarding body will be able to advise on whether base data or results by EDI will be provided. JCQ awarding bodies expect EDI to be phased out over the next few years, to be replaced by awarding body extranets. Negotiations are taking place with value-added network (VAN) providers and MIS providers.

## **6 Grading and awarding**

### ***1. How will the Diploma be graded?***

The final grade for each learner will be calculated from the assessment of the principal learning and the project. To achieve an overall Diploma grade, however, learners will also need to successfully complete all parts of their Diploma, including the functional skills relevant requirements, personal, learning and thinking skills, 10 days of work experience and any additional and specialist learning. The Diploma aggregation service then combines all the qualifications using rules of combination to arrive at an overall grade for the Diploma. More information on marking, grading and assessment is available at [www.qca.org.uk/diploma-grading](http://www.qca.org.uk/diploma-grading).

### ***2. How will the Diploma be awarded?***

The Diploma can be automatically cashed in when the Diploma aggregation service judges enough criteria have been met for an award or a learner can choose to re-sit qualifications to improve the final grade.

Learners can set an intention to claim. The Diploma aggregation service aggregates their Diploma as soon as all required components are achieved and recorded in the learner account, and it provides this information to the Diploma awarding body which generates the award.

Alternatively, learners can wait for all their constituent qualifications and other achievements to be recorded in the learner account and then review the trial grade with their centre. If they want to claim the Diploma they can or they may choose to re-sit or take additional constituent qualifications.

The NAA will provide detailed guidance and training on the processes involved in autumn 2008.

***3. Will we be able to claim the Diploma at the same time as entering students for their final assessments as we do with modular GCSEs/GCEs or will we have to wait until results are in to then claim the Diploma?***

Yes, an Intention to Claim (ITC) can be set by the home centre, using the Diploma aggregation service, at any point during the Diploma process. The exams officer will be able to enter a learner for constituent qualifications at the same time, for which the results will be recorded by component awarding bodies within the Diploma aggregation service. When the learner has achieved all the constituent parts, the Diploma aggregation service calculates the trial grade on behalf of the learner. By setting an ITC, the Diploma aggregation service automatically calculates a trial grade. The Diploma awarding body then issues the final grade to the home centre for the learner.

## **7 Results**

***1. Which centre within a consortium will claim a learner's results (for the overall Diploma award and its constituent qualifications) for use in performance statistics?***

Achievement and attainment table (AAT) points are allocated to components of the Diploma and will be claimed by the home centre.

***2. Will Diploma results be issued on a specific date like GCSE results?***

Results for Foundation and Higher Diplomas will be published for learners at the same time as GCSE results. Results for Progression and Advanced Diplomas will be published at the same time as those for GCE (A levels).

## E Sources of further information

Useful website addresses for further Diploma information:

- QCA [www.qca.org.uk/diploma](http://www.qca.org.uk/diploma) for information about the qualification and its curriculum
- DCSF <http://yp.direct.gov.uk/Diplomas/> providing information about the Diploma for learners, parents, teachers and employers
- NAA [www.naa.org.uk/diploma](http://www.naa.org.uk/diploma) for exams office support.