



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 January 2016

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Summary

About this departmental advice

This is departmental advice from the Department for Education (DfE). This advice is non-statutory and has been produced to help recipients understand their obligations and duties in relation to the provision of 16 to 19 study programmes in their institution.

Expiry or review date

This advice applies to the 2015 to 2016 and 2016 to 2017 academic years. It updates a similar document published in March 2015.

Who is this advice for?

This advice is for everyone involved in the planning or delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes, 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.

Key points

- All 16 to 19 students, whether studying academic, applied or technical qualifications, should be given the opportunity to take a study programme which reflects their prior attainment, education and career goals.
- Study programmes should normally include substantial academic or applied and technical qualifications; non-qualification activity including work experience; and the study of English and maths where students do not hold a GCSE graded A*-C in these subjects.
- Study programmes should be focused on progression to the next level of education, a traineeship or apprenticeship, or other employment.
- Funding is on a per student, not per qualification basis.
- New accountability measures will be introduced from 2016.

Study programmes

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

The department consulted on proposals for study programmes and in July 2012 published its response and plans for implementation. Study programmes were introduced from September 2013.

Study programme principles

16 to 19 study programmes are designed to provide students with a structured and challenging individualised learning programme that supports their development and progression in line with their future career plans. All study programmes should:

- include one or more academic, applied or vocational qualifications that stretch the student and link clearly to training, employment or higher education, or work preparation and an extended work placement for those students who are not ready for study at level 2, or who are on a traineeship
- require students who do not have GCSE A*-C in maths or English to work towards the achievement of these qualifications
- allow for meaningful work experience (related to the vocational area) and/or other non-qualification activity to develop students' personal skills and/or prepare them for employment, training or higher/further education.

All study programmes should focus on maximising progression to the next stage of education, employment or an apprenticeship. Broad programme characteristics for students taking different qualification routes are set out below.

Broad programme characteristics

Students taking A Levels

Students of all abilities are expected to follow study programmes including those studying A level courses. A levels count as substantial qualifications. A level students' study programmes should include non-qualification activity such as tutorials, work experience, personal or study skills, and support in choosing options to ensure progression into employment and higher education (HE) preferences.

Students taking applied and technical qualifications

Those students for whom an applied or technical qualification is the most appropriate route to their career goal will be expected to study at least one substantial qualification. These should be of sufficient size and relevance to provide a route into a trade, profession or other form of employment, or access to HE, and should make up the majority of the study programme time. In most cases these qualifications will be at a level above each student's prior achievement. However some larger qualifications offered at level 2 also provide a route into a trade and can provide progression for students holding other level 2 qualifications.

The government has published three lists of approved applied and technical qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds, to be reported in performance tables alongside academic qualifications, as part of decisive action to raise standards and make the vocational education system more closely linked to the world of work. These lists are reviewed and updated annually and are available on gov.uk. They include for 16 to 19 students:

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

The Technical Baccalaureate is a performance table measure which recognises the achievement of 16 to 19 students that includes a tech level qualification, a level 3 maths qualification and an extended project qualification (designed to extend students' writing, communication, research and self-motivation skills). This will first be reported in 2016.

ii) Applied general qualifications are 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 provide students aged 16 to 19 with a route into a skilled trade or occupation where employers recognise entry at this level (for example, most construction trades, care work and hairdressing). They will also provide access to tech levels or an apprenticeship.

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.

Students who are not yet ready for level 2 qualifications

Progression from level 1 qualifications has historically been poor. Too many young people ‘drop out’ of education on completion, then struggle to make the transition to employment.

Providers are therefore encouraged to make use of the flexibility to focus study programmes on work preparation, an extended work placement and other non qualification activity in lieu of a substantial qualification for those who are not yet ready to study at level 2 and who are focussed on the labour market. This will enable students to gain confidence and competence, learn skills off and on the job, and be better placed to get a job when they leave education.

Traineeships

Traineeships are a type of study programme for young people without level 3 qualifications to help prepare them for an apprenticeship or other sustainable employment. They last a maximum of six months though may be shorter.

The core content of a traineeship is a high quality work placement, 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, technical qualifications and job search support.

The Traineeships framework for delivery sets out how traineeships should be delivered for academic year 2015 to 2016.

Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities

The needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) can vary widely, but the study programme principles still apply. Students should follow a programme that stretches them, prepares them for adulthood, and supports their progression into work or further study. For students with SEND who have a learning difficulty assessment (LDA) or an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, a study programme can apply up to the age of 25. Institutions, in discussion with the student, need to assess what type of programme is most suitable given their career aspirations.

While some students with SEND should be on study programmes which help them achieve stretching qualifications, others will benefit from a study programme which concentrates on high quality work experience and other non-qualification activities to help them prepare for employment and adult life more generally, rather than on qualifications. As part of their study programme, students should be supported to find routes through to employment, building on work experience, and independent living. Young people with a special educational needs (SEN) statement, LDA or EHC plan, can undertake supported

internships which aim to prepare them for employment through extended work placements with employers.

An Access to Work (AtW) grant can cover the additional support a young person may need for the in-work element of a supported internship or traineeship. Providers are advised to 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.

Study programmes for students with less complex needs can also focus on substantive work placements and support to make them work-ready.

Study programmes should always include English and maths, but at an appropriate level. Some students with SEND will be able to work towards achieving GCSE grade C or above, whereas others may qualify for exemption from the condition of funding. More information about this exemption can be found in the EFA condition of funding guidance.

Delivering study programmes

GCSE 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 a GCSE at A*-C or equivalent qualification in maths and/or in English, 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 grade D in maths or English must enrol on GCSE courses. This requirement does not apply to students on traineeships. Students with prior attainment of grade E or below can study other maths and English qualifications such as Functional Skills, ESOL and Free Standing Maths qualifications recognised by the funding condition as ‘stepping stone’ qualifications on the journey towards achievement of a GCSE.

The condition of funding is focused on the study of GCSE maths and English, due to the progression opportunities that these qualifications afford. GCSEs 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 also required by many colleges and universities to progress to Level 3 and beyond. This is demonstrated by the findings of an Ofqual survey in 2013 which found that 93% of employers said that GCSEs in maths and English are important to obtain, but only just over half thought that other qualifications are of equal value.

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.

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. 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; and
- when to enter a student for exams.

Core maths

In most other advanced economies, the study of maths is the norm for students within their 16 to 19 education. Students who have already achieved GCSE A*-C should be encouraged to study maths at level 3 in the light of the value placed on this by employers and HE institutions.

Awarding organisations have introduced new ‘core maths’ qualifications at level 3 which will build on GCSE study. The focus of these is on problem solving, reasoning and the practical application of mathematics and statistics. These new qualifications have been designed with the support and help of employers and universities and suit students with a range of pass grades at GCSE maths.

Work experience

Most students benefit from work experience to inform career choices, develop the relevant occupational skills and help instil the attitudes and behaviours expected at work. Work experience can take many forms including work tasters, participation in social action projects, or a work placement.

Work experience should be an integral part of most students’ study programme and in particular for students choosing to enter a particular occupation or profession or those taking a technical route to achieve their career aims. An extended work placement within a traineeship or supported internship can provide more general preparation for entry into employment or an Apprenticeship. Students who are not taking substantial technical, applied or academic qualifications should also be spending the majority of their time on work experience and English and maths. The funding arrangements mean that work experience is now funded at the same level as qualifications.

Work experience within a study programme should be:

- planned, taking account of the student’s prior attainment, career and learning goals and can be linked to future aspirations for students taking academic, applied or technical, programmes. In the latter case work experience may contribute to the achievement of tech level qualifications
- clearly set out in the student’s timetable or learning plan and be within the normal pattern of attendance at the institution. Providers have the responsibility to ensure that work experience offers challenge and purpose, is set on pre-determined outcomes, and the duration and level of provider/employer support is tailored to the individual needs of the student
- supervised by the provider. This is to reduce the risk that the young person is used as ‘cheap labour’ or placed in an ‘extended interview’ position without

gaining skills or behaviours that would bring them closer to the labour market (whilst being exempt from the national minimum wage)

- supported where necessary. Some students, including those with SEND, may need additional support in the workplace to enable them to learn effectively.

Whilst training in a simulated work environment can help a student develop new skills and support progression into an external working environment, it is a work placement with an employer in an external work environment that has the greatest impact on students' employability. We expect providers to ensure that wherever possible all young people spend time in an external workplace.

Departmental advice on work experience brings together advice from DfE, EFA, Ofsted and the Health and Safety Executive to help providers deliver high quality work experience.

Other activities within a study programme

Students should be encouraged to take part in other meaningful non-qualification activity alongside work experience. Such activities should again be planned and organised by the provider, and may include enrichment activity to build character (as recognised by the DfE character awards), tutorials, study skills, leadership, team-work or self-management skills and activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award or volunteering.

Progression

All study programmes should reflect the student's longer term aims and aspirations, and support them to achieve their goals. Ofsted has expressed concern about study programmes not being sufficiently focussed on progression.

It is expected that all students nearing their planned leaving date should be encouraged and supported to apply for and, where possible, secure an apprenticeship, further learning or employment. The progression of students will be the main focus of the future accountability system.

Providers are reminded that the law requires young people to remain in education, an apprenticeship or employment combined with part time study until their 18th birthday. The 'September Guarantee' entitles all 16 year olds (ie those in the first year of post-compulsory education) to an offer of a place in education or training for the next academic year and providers are expected to work with local authorities to ensure that students receive a suitable offer.

Funding

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, making it easier for providers to fund other activities such as work experience.

The funding changes also mean that funding is no longer linked to success rates. 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 in academic year 2016 to 2017 and beyond.

For more information on funding, visit the 16 to 19 funding page on [gov.uk](#).

Accountability

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. These changes will apply to courses which began in September 2014. 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 financial penalties, intervention and ultimately closure, for those failing to meet them.

Further guidance on accountability can be found on [gov.uk](#).

Further information

Useful resources and external organisations

157 group: [Communications to Promote Study Programmes](#)

The [AoC Study Programme Central](#) website has a range of useful information on study programmes for institutions

Department of Work and Pensions: [Access to Work](#) grant for work experience and employment outside study programmes

Ofsted: [Transforming 16 to 19 education and training: the early implementation of 16 to 19 study programmes](#)

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

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

Other relevant departmental advice and statutory guidance

[16 to 19 accountability: minimum standards, inspection, financial health and control](#) - Information about the intervention actions available to the EFA

[16 to 19 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 EFA

[16 to 19 study programmes: work experience](#) - departmental advice for all post-16 education and training providers on post-16 work experience

[16 to 19 funding: maths and English condition of funding](#) - information on maths and English condition of funding for academic years 2014 to 2015 and 2015 to 2016

[2015 DfE Character Awards](#) - an invitation to schools and other organisations to apply to be recognised as a leader in character education through the 2015 DfE Character Awards

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

[Further education workforce strategy](#) - the government's strategy to support workforce excellence in further education (FE) colleges and training providers

[Review of Vocational Education – the Wolf Report](#)

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

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

[Technical and vocational qualifications for 14- to 19-year-olds](#) - lists of technical and vocational qualifications approved for teaching from September 2015 and reporting in 2017 performance tables

[Technical and vocational qualifications for 14- to 19-year olds](#) - lists of technical awards and technical certificates approved for teaching from September 2016 and reporting in 2018 performance tables. Lists of tech levels and applied general qualifications will also be accessible from this page when approved

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



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