



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority



Leading learning and skills

Foundation Learning Tier: Interim Guidance

Who is this document for?

This document will be of interest to:

- schools, colleges and other providers delivering entry level and level 1 provision to young people and adults; and
- awarding organisations, Sector Skills Councils and people and organisations involved in learning and skills at entry level and level 1.

Draft working version for 2009/10: May 2009

We welcome comments and feedback on this document, please email cvh-QFR@lsc.gov.uk.

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Purpose of document

- 1 This document is intended to update providers, and other partners and stakeholders, on the ongoing design, development and implementation of the Foundation Learning Tier, specifically with regard to the changes to the presentation of the Progression Pathways to emphasising personalised, destination-led learning programmes of flexible content and duration to support individual progression.
- 2 This document is in response to feedback from a range of partners and stakeholders, especially those providers involved in 14-16 piloting and post-16 developmental delivery activity, that there is a need for greater clarity about the range and flexibility of the Foundation Learning Tier and the progression destinations from the personalised learning programmes within the Foundation Learning Tier. The guidance outlined in this document will take effect for all providers, pre- and post-19, involved in the phased implementation of the Foundation Learning Tier from August 2009. Further, more detailed, information on these revisions will be available later in the year; in the meantime providers are encouraged to work on the basis of this guidance.
- 3 The information outlined in this document will not work against or invalidate any planning, preparation or delivery any provider might have undertaken to date. The changes are designed to enhance the flexibility of the offer whilst supporting the original focus of promoting progression.
- 4 This document is designed as policy guidance and does not contain detailed operational delivery information; the further information section later in this document signposts post-16 providers to key funding information. All personalised learning programme delivered within the Foundation Learning Tier need to be delivered within the context of the provider's current funding allocation(s).

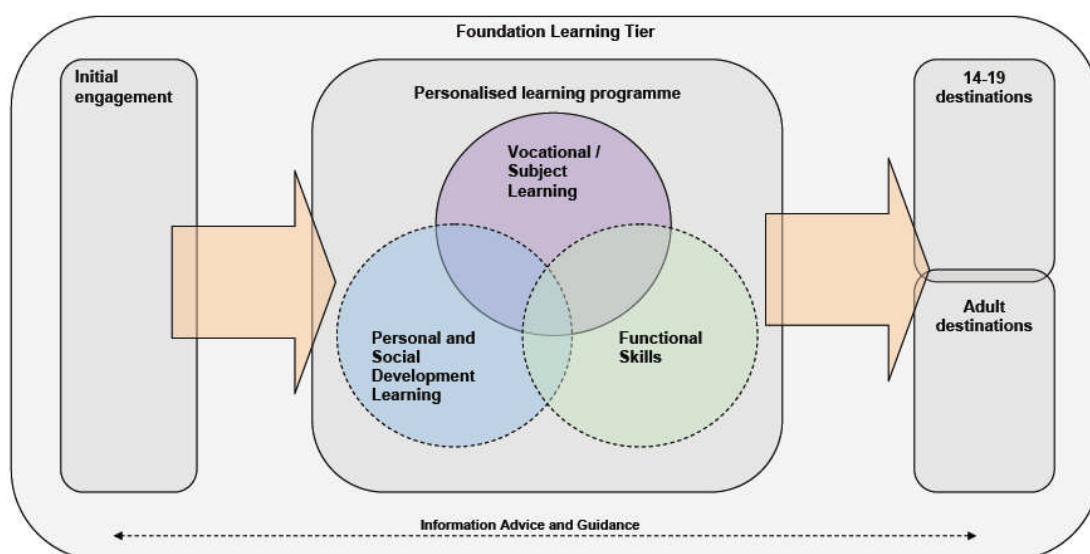
Overview of the Foundation Learning Tier

- 5 The Foundation Learning Tier is used to describe the range of provision and learning at entry level and level 1; specifically it refers to units and qualifications at entry level and level 1 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), which for a limited transitional phase will be supplemented by an agreed range of current valuable provision (some accredited and some non-accredited) which supports engagement activity for young people and adults¹. By 2010 it is intended that all vocational qualifications and other appropriate units and qualifications will be accredited in to the QCF to support the wider implementation of the Foundation Learning Tier with clear progression routes through entry level and level 1 to a range of appropriate destinations. Within the QCF, what we now know as 'pre-entry' will become part of an inclusive entry level 1, which will have no lower limit².

¹ Further research will be undertaken to explore the scope and nature of the current valuable learning and which aspects of it may be accredited into the QCF and over what timescale.

² Further research will be undertaken to determine how pre-entry literacy, numeracy and ESOL provision will fit into the QCF in future and identify any potential issues.

- 6 The overarching aims of the Foundation Learning Tier are to:
- support improved engagement, participation, achievement and progression through entry level and level 1 towards level 2 or, where relevant and appropriate, towards other destinations such as supported employment and independent living;
 - bring coherence to programmes of study at entry level and level 1 to support progression for young people and adults, including supporting the full participation of all young people in learning;
 - ensure learners gain a minimum level and range of skills providing a sound foundation for further learning and employment; and,
 - support the delivery of quality learning programmes that are personalised and appropriate to the learner's needs which help to encourage raised aspirations and a culture of lifelong learning.
- 7 Within the Foundation Learning Tier, curriculum design guidance for entry level and level 1 personalised learning programmes is provided; this is illustrated in the diagram below and described in the following paragraphs. This and subsequent diagrams seek to set out a model situation; not all learners will progress in a straightforward linear way, some learners may have breaks in their learning journeys which may continue at a later time:



- 8 The learning programme offer must encompass three distinct components:
- subject or vocational knowledge, skills and understanding;
 - Functional Skills in English, mathematics and ICT; and,
 - personal and social development learning³.

³ The Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills framework (for further information see http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_13476.aspx) covers the same area of skills as Personal and Social Development. As part of the phased implementation of Progression Pathways, we will be moving towards using one framework (PLTS), ensuring that it is appropriate for both young people and adult learners.

9 The component qualifications and level of these must be aligned to the learner's intended destination. Expectations about the minimum levels of qualification and credit achievement must also correlate with the intended destination. Originally, the minimum qualification and credit achievement levels were specified requirements for the separate Progression Pathways, as described in the Prospectus for Progression Pathways⁴; following feedback from the 14-16 pilot providers and those involved in the post-16 developmental delivery, these are now being replaced by more flexibility whereby the level of achievement is tailored for each individual depending on their specific progression requirements. To help providers and those with responsibility for planning, funding and performance monitoring, further guidance exemplifying the expected credit and qualification thresholds and combinations for different types of destinations will be produced.

10 Where learners have already achieved the necessary threshold of achievement in one of the components, it is not expected that the individual will repeat that learning; they might however seek achievement at a higher level⁵.

11 The learning programme is supported by a 'wrap-around' of support; information, advice and guidance; effective initial assessment; comprehensive ongoing review; and, provider collaboration⁶.

12 **Initial engagement** activities may combine units and/or qualifications from the QCF with other appropriate learning opportunities. The QCF provision should form the core of the engagement activity and should ideally contribute credit towards the subsequent personalised learning programme. Initial engagement will be facilitated by enhanced information advice and guidance and supplemented with support from mentors and personal tutors; this will help inform decisions about intended destinations. This should include individualised assessments of abilities and needs (initial and diagnostic assessment). The enhanced information, advice and guidance might be supported by qualifications from the QCF (especially personal and social development qualifications); again, in these circumstances these qualifications should ideally contribute credit towards the subsequent personalised learning programme.

13 **The personalised learning programme** is a destination-led programme of flexible content and duration to support individual progression through the achievement of an appropriate combination of qualifications from

⁴ The Prospectus is available from <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ft/support/>.

⁵ It is recognised that in some circumstances for some learners, especially those learners with a learning difficulty and/or disability or special educational needs, there may be a need to 'refresh' skills or return to particular components, these aspects will be researched to understand how they can best be supported within the Foundation Learning Tier.

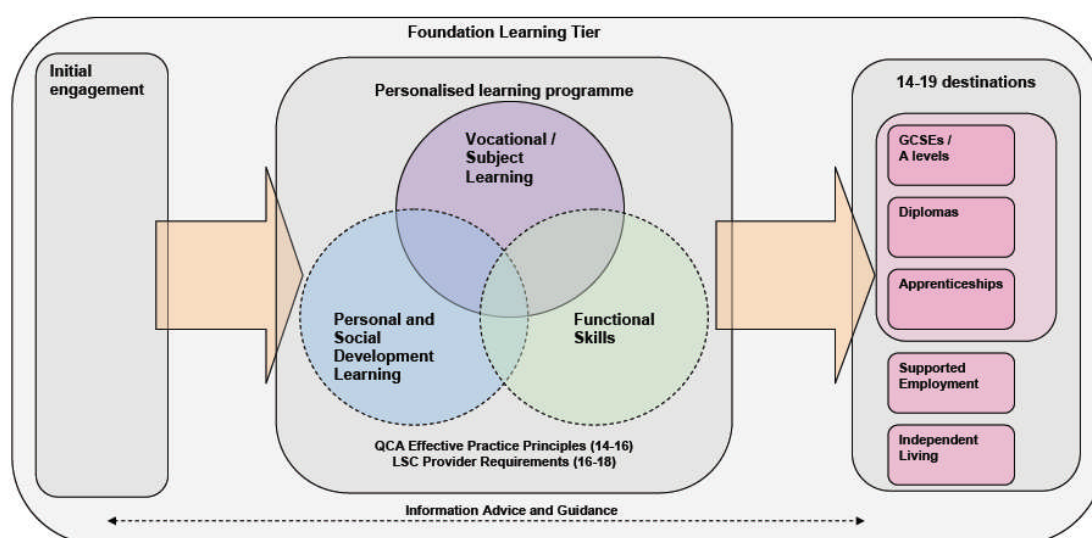
⁶ The expectations of this wrap around are detailed for schools and other providers in 14-16 settings within the QCA effective practice principles http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_20360.aspx and, for post-16 providers in the LSC Provider Requirements <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ft/support/>.

entry level and level 1 of the QCF that meets the curriculum design guidance.

- 14 **Destinations** within the Foundation Learning Tier will encompass the 14-19 national suites; full level 2 provision for adults; employment (ideally sustainable employment with training); supported employment; and, independent living. The destination, and the content and duration of the underpinning personalised learning programme; post-16 this should usually be defined within the first six weeks of the programme. Learning journeys evolve and develop and the destination may change at a later point in the programme through the process of on-going review of the programme.
- 15 Employment as a destination should be sustainable employment ideally with accredited training. For some young people and adults, it may initially be that the preferred option is progression into employment. In such cases, providers should continue to work with the individual to ensure appropriate access to on-the-job training opportunities, including possibly an Apprenticeship, and for adults, provision through Train to Gain. As a result of the Education and Skills Act 2008, all young people will need to remain in education or training (including jobs with training) to the age of 17 from 2013, and 18 from 2015. We will need to review destinations in due course as we move towards these dates.
- 16 For learners working at entry level, the achievement of entry level qualifications should generally be with an expectation that at a later point they will move on to level 1 achievement and from there to level 2. There will be a cohort of learners for whom such progression is not realistic or suitable; for these learners, an entry level or level 1 destination would be appropriate.
- 17 Programmes designed for an 'independent living' destination should seek to enable people to live their lives as independently as possible based on their own choices and aspirations. Horizontal progression and the maintenance of learning will be important for some learners for whom vertical progression may not be appropriate to support choice and empowerment. In these circumstances there would continue to be an emphasis on personal progression and each individual achieving their potential in accordance with the aims in their learning plan. This is expected to primarily benefit those learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and those with special education needs at entry levels 1 and 2.

Delivery to learners aged 14 to 19 years old

- 18 For young people, the Foundation Learning Tier will form one of the national suites of provision alongside Diplomas; GCSEs / A Levels, and apprenticeships, as described in *Promoting achievement, valuing success: a strategy for 14–19 qualifications*⁷. Current arrangements for learners at entry level and level 1, for example in terms of the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme and Entry to Employment will be assimilated within the Foundation Learning Tier.
- 19 For learners aged 14 to 19, progression is usually expected to be one of the three other national qualification suites or frameworks, in particular Diplomas or Apprenticeships. The Foundation Learning Tier offer for young people is illustrated below:

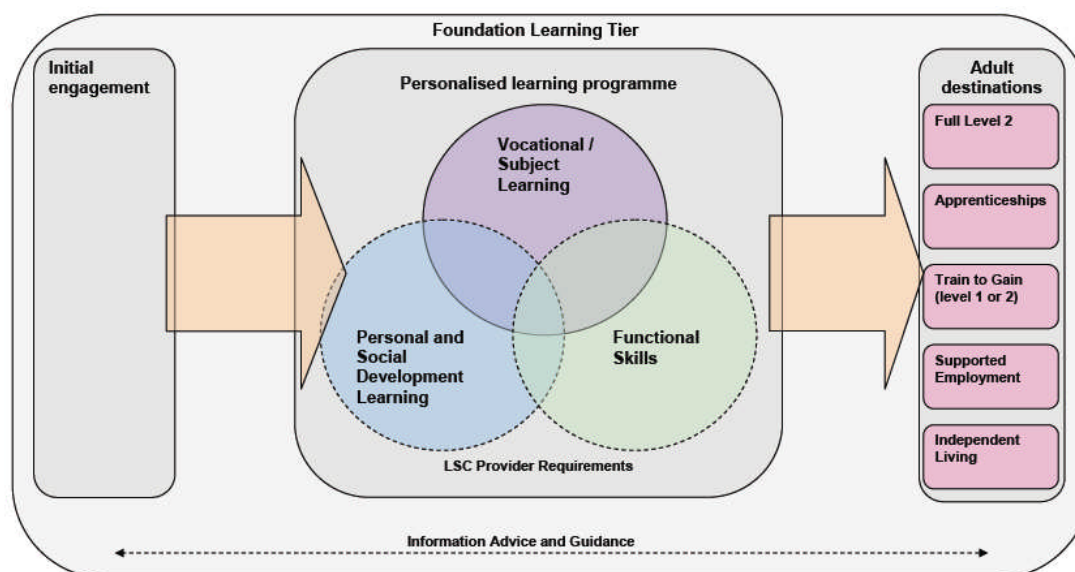


- 20 Young people will be able to study qualifications that do not fall under the Foundation Learning Tier (or the three other national suites), if learner needs cannot be met by an alternative qualification within the national suites where such qualifications have been recommended for public funding by the Joint Advisory Committee for Qualification Approval (JACQA).
- 21 The Foundation Learning Tier is designed to support young people progressing at their own pace. The Foundation Learning Tier offer will include provision and opportunities for progression, including horizontal progression, for those learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those learners with a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Further research will be undertaken to ensure that an appropriate offer can be made to all young people within the context of the available support and resources.

⁷ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/>

Delivery to adult (post-19) learners

- 22 The target group is likely to include adults with no or few low-level qualifications; those who have been out of formal learning for some years; and adults with learning difficulties and / or disabilities. For some adults who are not in employment; who have recently been made redundant; or who are in low skilled jobs, the range of recent government initiatives focussing on redundancy support and upskilling may be a more appropriate option. The Foundation Learning Tier offer for adult learners is illustrated below:



- 23 Providers of the Foundation Learning Tier offer for adult learners are encouraged to use the flexibilities of the QCF and the personalised learning programmes within the Foundation Learning Tier to help learners progress at the earliest opportunity. This focus on timely progression will require programmes of learning to be of flexible duration and content (within the parameters described in this document) to ensure learners gain only the skills they need to access the progression destination.
- 24 In view of the Adult Functional Skills timeframe and the need to increase the scale and volume of Foundation Learning Tier delivery, the LSC working with DIUS and other partners are putting in place transitional arrangements which mean accepting Skills for Life qualifications in place of Functional Skills qualifications within the Foundation Learning Tier offer for adults during 2009/10 and potentially beyond. Details are still being confirmed but the intention is to include the approved Certificates in Adult Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL Skills for Life at the entry levels and level 1. Where providers would typically deliver pre-entry literacy and numeracy qualifications, they are encouraged to explore those QCF qualifications at entry level 1 which incorporate the range of newly developed common units at this level which include Developing Communication Skills; Developing Reading Skills; Developing Writing Skills; Developing ICT Skills; and Early Mathematics.

- 25 Foundation Learning in Further Education and appropriate aspects of First Steps learning will be incorporated into the Foundation Learning Tier offer. There remains an expectation, based on the research and development undertaken to date, that the vast majority of both Foundation Learning and First Steps provision could and should be accredited into the QCF. The LSC continues to explore the implications and consequences of this position to understand the scope and nature of provision that might remain outside of the QCF. First Steps provision in 2009/10 will remain largely unchanged; providers are however encouraged to explore current and developing QCF provision with awarding organisations and other partners, with a view to introducing appropriate QCF qualifications to replace their current First Steps offer / provision during 2009/10 and 2010/11.
- 26 The Department for Innovation, University and Skills (DIUS) has agreed an interim definition for full level 2, setting a threshold of 13 credits for QCF provision. The definition will apply initially for the two-year period to 2010/11 and it defines a full level 2 as a Certificate or Diploma in the QCF. Sector Skills Councils will be responsible for determining the content and appropriate credit threshold for their sectors and will have the flexibility to set the threshold higher or lower than 13 credits as appropriate for relevant sectors.

Future Direction

- 27 As part of the ongoing design, development and implementation of the Foundation Learning Tier, a range of activity is being undertaken on developing the name, language, and identity of the Foundation Learning Tier. This work is expected to conclude in early summer with the agreement of nationally consistent language and key messages alongside a national name, brand and identity.
- 28 Further details regarding the roll out of the Foundation Learning Tier for 14-19 learners will be communicated later this year. Also later in the year the LSC will describe the nature and parameters of the Foundation Learning Tier offer for adult learners.

Further Information and support

- 29 This document should be read in conjunction with:
- the Prospectus for Progression Pathways (August 2008) <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/flt/support/>. Although the specification of Progression Pathways has changed, the Prospectus remains a useful source of information on the background; overarching delivery principles; piloting and developmental delivery activities; as well as for general guidance;
 - the LSC Provider Requirements for post-16 providers – also available from <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/flt/support/>;
 - the QCA effective practice principles for schools or other provider in a 14-16 setting http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_20360.aspx;
 - the Foundation Learning Tier Progression Pathways Qualifications Catalogue http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_20536.aspx.
- 30 Further information is available from the LSC website <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/flt/> and the QCA website www.qca.org.uk/flt.
- 31 Information on the LSC's funding approach to Foundation Learning Tier provision (Progression Pathways) can be found within the funding policy guidance available from <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/demand-led-funding/efundingpolicydocuments0809.htm>.
- 32 All providers (both 14-19 and post-19) preparing for or delivering the Foundation Learning Tier in 2009/10 will have the opportunity to benefit from a support and development programme commissioned by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS). Opportunities will also be made available through the programme to support providers preparing and planning for delivery in 2010/11. For further information on the available LSIS support please visit <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/FLT>.
- 33 For awarding organisations, QCA has produced the Foundation Learning Tier qualifications strategy to guide the development of credit-based units and qualifications by recognised awarding organisations at entry level and level 1 of the QCF; the strategy is available from http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_20352.aspx. None of the adjustments or

other features of the changes are expected to alter the current reference points for qualification development. The design of qualifications will have to support the destination(s) identified for the qualification, we would expect this to be through their rules of combination; this will be kept under review to ensure that qualification design reflects the aims and priorities of Foundation Learning Tier.

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