

Specialised Diplomas - your questions answered

July 2006

Specialised Diplomas – your questions answered

What are Specialised Diplomas?

Specialised Diplomas are exciting and innovative new qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds. They have been created to provide a real alternative to more traditional education and qualifications, and are the most important change to the country's education system since the introduction of GCSEs.

All Diplomas have been developed by employers, schools, colleges and universities to help young people realise their potential and gain knowledge and skills in a 'real world' environment.

A Diploma is an all-round package which gives students the right knowledge, experience, insight and attitude to prepare them for the next stage in life – whether that's university, college or work.

When will they be introduced?

Some schools and colleges will begin teaching some Diplomas in 2008, with more being phased in during 2009 and 2010.

By 2013, the Diploma programme will be fully implemented and every 14 to 19 year old in the country will be entitled to take a Specialised Diploma if they wish.

Who are they for?

Because of their unique design, Diplomas are equally suitable for the most able pupils preparing for demanding university courses; for young people who find the existing education system doesn't suit them and for those who want to go straight into work after leaving school.

Students will be able to select which level Diploma suits them best:

Level 1: equivalent in size to 4-5 GCSEs at grades D to G
Level 2: equivalent in size to 5-6 GCSEs at grades A* to C
Level 3: equivalent in size to three A levels.

A level 3 'progression' Diploma, equivalent in size to two A levels, will also be available.

What subjects are taught in a Diploma?

From September 2008, Diplomas will begin to be available in:

[Construction and the Built Environment](#)

[Creative and Media](#)

[Engineering](#)

[Health and Social Care](#)

[IT](#)

From September 2009, another five will begin to be taught:
Land-based and environmental studies
Manufacturing
Hair and Beauty
Business Administration and Finance
Hospitality and Catering

From September 2010, the final four Diplomas will begin in:
Public Services
Sport and Leisure
Retail
Travel and Tourism

All Diplomas will ensure students get an excellent grounding in English, maths, IT user skills and personal learning and thinking skills. A project will help develop students' ability for independent work, and every student will have at least 10 days' work experience.

Can students move from Diplomas to other qualifications?

Yes. Students have great flexibility in the qualifications they can choose – perhaps by taking a level 2 Diploma followed by A-levels, or GCSEs followed by a level 3 Diploma. Some Diplomas may also contain GCSEs and A-levels. Level 3 Diplomas will be accepted by colleges and universities, and level 2 Diplomas will be accepted for students wishing to take an Advanced Apprenticeship.

Will all Diplomas be available at all schools and colleges?

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

Not all schools and colleges will be able to begin offering the Diplomas from 2008, and it is unlikely that any one school or college will be able to offer all 14 subject areas. Schools and colleges are therefore being asked to form consortia in their local area, and to submit expressions of interest in offering Diplomas. A 'gateway' process will then assess the capacity of the consortia to deliver high-quality Diplomas and will ensure schools and colleges get the support they need.

This means that if a young person wants to take a Diploma which is not offered at his or her school, there will be arrangements in place to ensure that a nearby school will be able to help.

Are the Diplomas being piloted?

Yes. Each Diploma has part of a pilot programme so that it is subject to three years of evaluation from the point at which it is introduced. In addition, schools and colleges in a number of areas (including Cumbria, Derbyshire, Gateshead, Islington, South Gloucestershire, Southwark, Wolverhampton and York) are testing elements of the Diplomas as they are developed.

Where can I find out more information?

A summary of the content of the first five Diplomas is set out below. This does not describe what the qualifications themselves will look like, but it does set out the main areas of study for young people.

More information is available at www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19. If you have a specific question, you can email diploma@qca.org.uk or ring the enquiry line on 0870 000 2288.

Construction and the Built Environment

The Construction and the Built Environment Diplomas are designed to introduce young people to the fabric of the world in which we live and its impact on individuals and communities. They progressively build up an understanding of the physical extent and significance of the built environment and of the activities which shape, develop and influence it.

Young people taking a Construction and the Built Environment Diploma course will study how things get built and the factors that affect this, such as the planning process and social and environmental factors. They will also start to develop skills which are widely used across the built environment industries; the practical techniques used in the design, construction, maintenance and management of the built environment.

The industries covered by the Construction and the Built Environment Diplomas range from construction craft areas, such as carpentry, brick laying and decorating, through building services, such as electrical installation and plumbing, to management of the built environment, such as facilities management and estate agency. The Diplomas will enable young people to go on to degree courses such as Construction Management and Apprenticeships across the industry areas. They will prepare young people for a range of occupations and professions within construction, specialist building, building maintenance services, utilities services, facilities management, property and asset management and housing.

This is a summary of the content of the Construction and the Built Environment Diplomas. It gives a flavour of the kind of areas that would be studied by young people but by no means describes the full content at each Diploma level. For more information please visit; www.cbediploma.co.uk

Mandatory Learning

Functional skills in maths, English and IT user skills.

Personal, learning and thinking skills.

Work experience.

Project.

Design the built environment:

design; planning; materials; economic, social and environmental issues.

Create the built environment:

job roles; tools, materials and processes;
construction techniques; health and safety and environmental protection; project management.

Value and use the built environment:

Impact of the built environment on individuals and society; Housing and property; Maintenance and support.

Learners would have to apply principles, for example, by designing a complex structure, carrying out tasks safely using appropriate tools and safety gear and evaluating the contribution of the built environment to the community.

Optional Learning

Learners must select topics organised into three pathways (four at level 3), either concentrating on one or two pathways or selecting from across the range:

Construction; including surveying, civil engineering and craft skill options.

Building Services Engineering; including electrical or mechanical services.

Management of Built Assets; including valuation, sales and letting and housing management.

Management in the Built Environment (level 3); financial or project management, supply chain relationships

There are also a number of other topics such as CAD, science and materials, customer management, heritage and languages.

Creative and Media

The Creative and Media Diplomas will enable young people to develop their creativity and confidence and their ability to think, question, explore, create and communicate. They will learn about the creative and media industries, explore their creativity, develop skills in critical thinking, creative problem solving and communication which are common across the creative industries, and learn practical skills which enable them to apply their ideas in different ways.

There is a spectrum of industries covered by the Creative and Media Diplomas. They include visual arts and craft, a range of design occupations, publishing and advertising, the performing arts, film, television, radio and interactive media and animation and computer game development. However, many of the processes and the contexts in which creative work is developed are common across these industries. Young people will be able to choose a number of different disciplines through which to study, depending on their interests and career aspirations, but much of their focus will be on developing a core set of skills and knowledge which encompass the skills and knowledge used across the creative and media sectors.

Young people with a Creative and Media Diploma will develop a range of skills that will enable them to go onto a number of different specialist or more general higher level courses, such as degree courses in Performing Arts, Design or English Literature. They will also be able to progress to a Creative Apprenticeship or undertake training to support future employment.

This is a summary of the content of the Creative and Media Diplomas. It gives a flavour of the kind of areas that would be studied by young people but by no means describes the full content at each Diploma level. For more information please visit; www.skillset.org/qualifications/diploma.

Mandatory Learning

Functional skills in maths, English and IT user skills.
Personal, learning and thinking skills.
Work experience.
Project.

Four themes

Creativity in Context:

Awareness of the context of creative production;
Activities of the creative and media sectors; Critical analysis.

Thinking and Working Creatively:

Developing creative ideas; Research; Creative problem solving.

Principles, Processes and Practice:

Developing and using practical skills and techniques;
New technologies; The creative process;

Creative Businesses and Enterprise:

The business context; The creative and media industries;
Business skills, including marketing and management.

Delivered through a choice of disciplines – 5 at level 3, more at level 2:

2D Visual Art

Optional Learning

Additional and learning options are still to be worked up. However, it is likely that they will include topics reflecting the industry areas to allow greater specialism in particular areas of interest. They will also include options which complement the mandatory areas. For example, maths and IT will be needed to complement the computer games pathway for progression to higher levels, and English Language and Literature would be generally available but highly advised in support of the creative writing pathway.

Mandatory Learning

Optional Learning

3D Visual Art
Craft
Graphic Design
Product Design
Fashion Design
Textile Design
Printing and Publishing
Advertising
Drama
Dance
Music
Film and Television
Radio
Interactive Media
Animation
Computer Games
Photo Imaging
Creative Writing

Engineering

The Engineering Diplomas will provide young people with a foundation in engineering principles, both theoretical and practical, which will enable them to go on to higher levels of study or employment and which will provide employers with the skilled young people that they need.

As well as developing theoretical, technical and practical skills, young people will learn general and professional IT skills, team working, customer handling and multi-disciplinary working, problem solving and management and organisation skills, all of which are essential to success in the different engineering related industries. The Engineering Diplomas will enable young people to do this by providing cutting edge industry scenarios that will give young people a real understanding of the future of engineering and the demand for new technologies, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The range of industries covered by the Engineering Diplomas includes aerospace, bioengineering, robotics, vehicle engineering and maintenance for both private and public transport, chemical and process engineering, building services and utilities.

This is a summary of the content of the Engineering Diplomas. It gives a flavour of the kind of areas that would be studied by young people but by no means describes the full content at each Diploma level. For more information please visit; www.engineeringdiploma.com

Mandatory Learning

Functional skills in maths, English and IT user skills.

Personal, learning and thinking skills.

Work experience.

Project.

The Engineered World:

impact of engineering; industry and career structures.

Discovering Engineering:

principles of engineering design; computer applications; systems and products; problem solving; electrical systems; (at level 3) applying maths and science to tackle engineering problems across three topics chosen from the different engineering disciplines, eg, aeronautical, civil, electronic.

Engineering the future:

impact of engineering on society and the environment; sustainability;

Analytical Methods for Engineering (levels 2 & 3):

maths and physics and their application in engineering.

Learners would have to apply principles, for example, by preparing and consulting on design proposals.

Optional Learning

A selection of topics from a range reflecting the industry areas covered by the Diplomas.

Also, further maths and science, for those young people who wish to progress to an Engineering degree course.

Other topics which complement the programme of study such as languages.

Health and Social Care

The Diplomas in the Health and Social Care subject area place the intrinsic value of all human beings at their heart; they are fundamentally about the care and development of people. They will provide young people with an understanding of health, social care, children's services and community justice and help them develop the skills critical to working successfully in all these areas, problem solving, team working, communication and creative thinking.

These Diplomas will focus on key principles in the sectors, such as the rights and responsibilities of individuals, and the way in which health and care systems operate in this country, which a particular emphasis on partnership working and communication between agencies and individuals.

Achieving a Diploma in Health and Social Care will help a young person progress to a range of degree courses, including those leading to social work, nursing and other health professions, and teaching. It will also provide young people with the skills and knowledge to go into a large number of health and care Apprenticeships and jobs, covering both children's and adults services.

This is a summary of the content of the Health and Social Care Diplomas. It gives a flavour of the kind of areas that would be studied by young people but by no means describes the full content at each Diploma level. For more information please visit; www.skillsforhealth.org.uk.

Mandatory Learning

Functional skills in maths, English and IT user skills.

Personal, learning and thinking skills.

Work experience.

Project.

Principles and Values Partnership working
 Communications and information sharing
 Personal and professional development
 Health, safety, security and risk
 Safeguard and protect individuals
 Infection prevention and control*
 Health, wellbeing and lifestyle*
 Addressing needs*
 Human growth and development*
 Causes and impact of offending behaviour*
 Supporting children and young people's development*
 Health care services, procedures and medication*
 The social care model*

**These only mandatory at level 2*

Learners would have to apply their learning, for example, by undertaking role play to explore communications methods and devising and carrying out a personal health improvement plan

Optional Learning

A choice of options (these are primarily at level 3):

Infection prevention and control
 Health, wellbeing and lifestyle
 Addressing needs

Supporting adults through transitions

Causes and responses to offending behaviour

The impact of offending behaviour on individuals and communities

Supporting children and young people's development

Play and learning

Supporting children and young people through transitional processes

Health conditions and treatments

Nutrition and health

Promoting independence in social care

Group work in social care

Leadership and management

Ethical dilemmas, judgements and decision making in social care practice

A-level options, particularly science-based, will also be available to support progression to higher level courses where these are required.

IT

The Diplomas in the IT subject area will engage students through the real-world integration of technology in business. Students will explore the transformational potential of technology, learn how to deliver successful projects, create technology solutions to meet business requirements, and develop their ability to work effectively in a professional business environment.

Underpinned by the three integrated themes of Business, People and Technology, these Diplomas bring learning to life through student-relevant contexts such as the music industry, computer games and the internet. The subject-matter content is supported by the development of skills in English and communications, Maths, team working, critical analysis and problem solving and creative thinking.

While these Diplomas are particularly relevant to future IT professionals, entrepreneurs, and business managers and leaders, they are also highly valuable to anyone who may in future work in a technology-enabled environment. Students of these Diplomas will be able to help UK businesses succeed in highly competitive global markets in an e-enabled world.

Young people with these Diplomas will be able to progress into a wide range of degree courses, not only technology and business-related subjects, but a very wide range of other choices, depending on the options chosen within the Diploma. Students may also enter the workforce, for example into Apprenticeship or other training programmes.

This is a summary of the content of the Diplomas in the IT subject area. It gives a flavour of the kind of areas that would be studied by young people but by no means describes the full content at each Diploma level. For more information please visit: www.e-skills.com.

Mandatory Learning

Functional skills in maths, English and IT user skills.

Personal, learning and thinking skills.

Work experience.

Project.

Level 2

Technology in business:

Transformational Technology: the impact on globalisation, business success and business operations.

Technology systems:

Designing technology systems, programming and security.

Working in Enterprise:

Effectiveness in a professional work environment, including the use of language and number to communicate ideas, plans and results.

Level 3

The potential of technology:

Realising the potential of technology: business cases for technology solutions.

Understanding organisations:

Company structures and styles, and the impact of technology; levers for business performance.

Optional Learning

A number of options from a range that will include:

GCSEs or A levels (particularly those which support progression to maths or computing courses).

IT-related qualifications, including professional qualifications.

Modules from other Diplomas or qualifications

Mandatory Learning

Professional development:

Effective English and maths in the business environment; Business analysis; Problem solving and negotiation.

Making projects successful:

Project life cycles; Project planning; Managing risk

Creating technology solutions:

Design principles, Programming; Data modelling; Data management; Security.

Managing technology systems:

Technical support; Change management; Systems configuration and maintenance
Problem solving.

Optional Learning