

Criteria for Accreditation of Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diploma Qualifications

Version 3



Date: March 2010
Product code: Ofqual/10/4733

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Foreword

The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) is the regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England, and of vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland. Ofqual has been set up to ensure that children, young people and adult learners get the results their work deserves, that standards are maintained and that qualifications count now and in the future. Ofqual also makes sure that the qualifications available meet the needs of learners and employers.

Ofqual is part of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) until April 2010, when Ofqual becomes an independent non-ministerial government department accountable to Parliament. With the passing of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 Ofqual will become the regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England.

These criteria are for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications in England. They include the relevant common criteria for the accreditation of all qualifications from *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004* (QCA/04/1293) and are designed to be complied with in conjunction with the regulatory criteria for lines of learning, *Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies, version 2* (Ofqual/08/3761), and the *GCSE, GCE, principal learning and project code of practice 2010* (Ofqual/10/4718). These criteria have been reviewed against the requirements of the Race Relations Act 1976, Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and Equality Act 2006.

These criteria do not apply to existing accredited qualifications that may contribute to the Diploma, which are subject to the regulatory criteria published in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004* (QCA/04/1293) or the *Regulatory arrangements for the Qualifications and Credit Framework* (Ofqual/08/3726).

Diplomas will be awarded by a Diploma awarding body recognised by the qualifications regulators. Any awarding organisation wishing to award Diplomas will need to be recognised by Ofqual as a Diploma awarding body in England.

Constituent qualifications of the Diploma will be awarded by component awarding bodies. Component awarding bodies must be recognised awarding organisations. Any awarding organisation wishing to award constituent qualifications of the Diploma will also need to obtain supplementary recognition by Ofqual to be a component awarding body in England.

Qualifications are regulated by the qualifications regulators. Ofqual regulates Diplomas for offer in England. The Joint Advisory Committee for Qualifications Approval (JACQA) will submit a recommendation to the Secretary of State that the

Criteria for Accreditation of Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diploma Qualifications

Diploma qualifications should be approved for funding eligibility under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, to be taught in state-maintained schools and/or funded in colleges.

Introduction

The criteria for the accreditation of the Diploma as a qualification, alongside the criteria for each line of learning, set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all Diplomas at all levels. These criteria provide the framework within which the awarding organisation creates the detail of the constituent qualifications and sets out its requirements for how these operate.

Qualification criteria aim to:

- help ensure a coherent learning experience through consistent and comparable standards at the same level of the qualification, across a sector/subject and/or related sectors/subjects (referred to as a line of learning) and across the awarding organisations
- ensure that the rigour of the qualification is maintained
- define the relationship between the constituent qualifications that make up the components and the Diploma
- define the relationship at level 3 between the Advanced Diploma and the Progression Diploma
- provide a basis for the development of criteria for each line of learning
- help further and higher education institutions, employers and other stakeholders know what has been studied and assessed.

Diplomas will promote diversity, opportunity and inclusion by offering high quality, credible applied and general learning and real opportunities to practise skills.

1. Proposals and rationales

Proposals and rationales

Submissions for constituent qualifications may only be made by component awarding bodies that meet the requirements for supplementary recognition.

Requirements for component awarding bodies are set out in the *Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies* (Ofqual/10/4722).

Submissions for the award of the Diploma qualification will be made by recognised Diploma awarding bodies and accredited by Ofqual.

Requirements for Diploma awarding bodies are set out in the *Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies*. (Ofqual/10/4722)

- 1.1 A component awarding body submission to Ofqual for accreditation of constituent qualifications that contribute to the Diploma must relate to one or more of the following components of the Diploma:
- a. a set of units covering the full requirements for principal learning as defined for the line of learning
 - b. qualifications that meet the additional and specialist learning requirements for the line of learning (see Section 10, 'Additional and specialist learning component')
 - c. functional skills
 - d. the project.

The qualifications regulators have a statutory responsibility for ensuring that a sufficient range of qualifications are available to meet the needs of learners, without including an unnecessarily large number of qualifications.

To achieve this, the qualifications regulators require awarding organisations to provide detailed rationales for the qualifications they submit for accreditation, including information about structure, content and assessment. These rationales must also explain how accreditation of the qualification would not lead to excessive provision within the relevant sector/subject area.

- 1.2 Submissions to Ofqual for constituent qualifications that contribute to the Diploma must build on the previous information supplied in the component awarding body's updated plans of provision by setting out the basis on which it considers that each qualification must:
- a. bring additional benefits to users compared to other related qualifications, either by adopting innovative approaches to delivery and/or assessment, or by addressing the needs of an identifiable population not currently catered for by existing accredited qualifications; submissions must be supported by research and indicate the anticipated numbers of centres and learners
 - b. provide opportunities for progression to further learning and/or further qualifications and/or work or employment
 - c. have the support of interested parties concerned with:
 - education and training in relation to progression in educational courses and/or further qualifications
 - work and employment in relation to employment opportunities
 - d. be marketed and implemented in ways that will support its sustainability
 - e. not lead to excessive provision of qualifications in a particular sector/subject
 - f. take account of all current regulations and legislation in relation to diversity and inclusion.

Where, on the basis of the information provided, the qualifications regulators consider that accreditation of the qualification would lead to an excessive number of accredited qualifications within the sector/subject area, or an excessive number of qualifications serving the same or similar functions, accreditation may be refused.

When considering proposals for the withdrawal of existing qualifications, the qualifications regulators need to consider whether the withdrawals and proposed timescales would disadvantage learners and/or employers.

- 1.3 If a constituent qualification that contributes to the Diploma is to be withdrawn, the component awarding body must negotiate a timescale with the qualifications regulators for withdrawal that will allow, where appropriate, for alternative arrangements to be made for centres and learners. The component awarding body must ensure that adequate notice is given to protect the interests of learners.

2. Aims of the Diploma

- 2.1 The Diploma must encourage learners to develop and apply:
- a. knowledge, skills and understanding needed to progress into employment, training or further and/or higher education
 - b. broad understanding and knowledge about a sector/subject and/or related sectors/subjects (referred to as a line of learning)
 - c. skills, knowledge and understanding, and attributes related to the chosen sector(s)/subject(s)
 - d. additional and specialist knowledge and skills to complement and broaden, deepen and/or extend relevant learning
 - e. functional skills in mathematics, English and information and communication technology (ICT) at the appropriate level: level 1 or above in Foundation Diplomas, level 2 in Higher Diplomas and prior achievement of level 2 in Advanced and Progression Diplomas
 - f. transferable personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) (in independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, team working, self-managing and effective participation)
 - g. investigative and project management skills through the project qualification
 - h. skills gained through work experience.

- 2.2 The general and applied nature of the Diploma qualification requires constituent qualifications that promote and recognise experiential learning. They must encourage learners to:
- a. learn through experience by applying knowledge and skills to tasks or contexts including those that have many of the characteristics of real work. This will be supported by work experience
 - b. plan and reflect on their experience
 - c. draw out and articulate lessons learnt (both generalised and specific)
 - d. apply their learning to new activities or situations.
- 2.3 The Diploma qualification must also provide opportunities for planning and reviewing processes that are critical to experiential learning, coherent progression and successful attainment.
- 2.4 The Diploma qualification must include the identification of opportunities, if appropriate to the sector/subject, for developing understanding of:
- a. spiritual, moral, ethical, social, legislative, economic and cultural issues
 - b. sustainable development, health and safety considerations, and European developments, consistent with international agreements.

For further information and guidance on designing qualifications that support equality and diversity, refer to *Guidance for awarding bodies: Fair access by design – inclusive vocational qualifications* (RTF/06/2656) and *Guidance for awarding bodies: Fair access by design – inclusive GCSE and GCE qualifications* (PDF/05/1941) on Ofqual's website.

- 2.5 The Diploma qualification must aim to support equality and diversity by considering the needs of all potential learners to minimise any later need to make reasonable adjustments for learners who have particular requirements. Both in setting the structure and content of constituent qualifications, and in its processes and arrangements for assessment and awarding, the component awarding body must:
- a. ensure access and equality of opportunity while safeguarding the integrity of the qualifications
 - b. not create unnecessary barriers to achievement
 - c. guarantee fair assessment for all learners, including those with particular assessment requirements
 - d. take account of all current legislation in relation to equality of opportunity.
 - e. aim to promote equality and eliminate discrimination in respect of all of the six strands of diversity in England; namely, disability, gender, race, age, sexual orientation and religion/belief.

3. Qualification titles

Qualification titles

To ensure clarity for all users, there must be consistency in respect of qualification titles.

Diploma development partnerships will agree on the title for each line of learning with QCDA and, at level 3, whether any specialised progression pathways are recognised.

- 3.1 The title of a Diploma qualification must:
 - a. correspond with the title(s) required in the relevant line of learning criteria
 - b. be sufficiently broad to cover the breadth of the different sectors/subjects within the line of learning, where relevant
 - c. for Advanced Diplomas, follow the requirements for titles to indicate specialisms set out in the criteria for that line of learning.

- 3.2 The title of a Diploma qualification must be set out in the following order: the awarding organisation, the level (as indicated below) and title of the qualification, and the title of the line of learning:
 - a. at level 1, 'Foundation Diploma in', followed by the title of the line of learning
 - b. at level 2, 'Higher Diploma in' followed by the title of the line of learning
 - c. at level 3, 'Advanced Diploma in' followed by the title of the line of learning, and to include (in parentheses) any title indicating a specialist focus.

- 3.3 Constituent qualification titles must be set out in the following order: the awarding organisation, the level of the qualification, the type of the qualification (where relevant), an indication of the content of the qualification and (in parentheses) any indication of a specialist focus.
- 3.4 The titles of existing accredited qualifications must remain unchanged.
- 3.5 The title of principal learning qualifications must be set out in the following order: the awarding organisation, level of the qualification (Foundation, Higher or Advanced), 'principal learning in', followed by the name of the relevant line of learning.

4. Qualification structure

Components

The three components are designed to ensure a balance of practical and theoretical understanding, underpinned by essential skills.

4.1 The Diploma qualifications must include constituent qualifications that contribute to the three components of the Diploma. These components are:

- a. principal learning
- b. generic learning
- c. additional and specialist learning.

Volume

The volume of the Diploma is broadly comparable in terms of average length of study to:

- five GCSEs for the Foundation Diploma
- seven GCSEs for the Higher Diploma
- three and one half GCE A levels for the Advanced Diploma
- two and one half GCE A levels for the Progression Diploma.

4.2 The Diploma qualification must be structured from qualifications that comprise a minimum of:

- a. 600 guided learning hours (GLH) for the Foundation Diploma
- b. 800 GLH for the Higher Diploma
- c. 1,080 GLH for the Advanced Diploma
- d. 720 GLH for the Progression Diploma.

**Progression
Diploma**

At level 3 the Progression Diploma qualification is available, which comprises the principal learning and generic learning components of the Advanced Diploma.

- 4.3 Within principal learning assessment units must:
- a. have a title that reflects the content of the qualification and makes clear whether it is a unit or a whole qualification
 - b. be worth 30 and/or 60 GLH at levels 1 and 2 and 30 and/or 60 and/or 90 GLH at level 3
 - c. have identical learning outcomes and related assessment criteria when the unit shares its title with other unit(s) in different lines of learning offered by the same awarding organisation.

5. Component size

Component size

The size of each of the components is expressed in GLH, which vary according to the level. The GLH referred to in the criteria relate to teacher-supervised or directed study time, and do not include any self-directed study time that may be needed by the learner.

5.1 The size of the Foundation Diploma components must be as follows:

- a. principal learning is set at 240 GLH, of which 120 GLH as a minimum must be applied learning
- b. generic learning is set at 240 GLH, of which:
 - 60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS
 - 60 GLH must form the foundation project
- c. additional and specialist learning is set at a minimum of 120 GLH.

Generic learning

The GLH for PLTS are not contextualised and will be used to enable learners to be taught, understand, self-assess and plan the development of PLTS.

Functional skills may be taught across the Diploma qualification. They will be developed and practised within principal learning.

To achieve an appropriate level of learning for functional skills, the integrated coverage is likely to be 120 GLH. This may vary according to the ability of the learners.

Additional and specialist learning

At each level, the GLH for additional and specialist learning is set as a minimum.

Applied learning

Applied learning involves acquiring and applying knowledge, skills and understanding through tasks set in sector/subject contexts that have many of the characteristics of real work or are set within the workplace. Most importantly, the purpose of the task in which learners apply their knowledge, skills and understanding must be relevant to the workplace.

5.2 The size of the Higher Diploma components must be as follows:

- a. principal learning is set at 420 GLH, of which 210 GLH as a minimum must be applied learning
- b. generic learning is set at 200 GLH, of which:
 - 60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS
 - 60 GLH must form the higher project
- c. additional and specialist learning is set at a minimum of 180 GLH.

5.3 The size of the Advanced Diploma components must be as follows:

- a. principal learning is set at 540 GLH, of which 270 GLH as a minimum must be applied learning
- b. generic learning is set at 180 GLH, of which:
 - 60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS
 - 120 GLH must form the extended project
- c. additional and specialist learning is set at a minimum of 360 GLH.

5.4 The size of the Progression Diploma components must be as follows:

- a. principal learning is set at 540 GLH, of which 270 GLH as a minimum must be applied learning
- b. generic learning is set at 180 GLH, of which:
 - 60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS
 - 120 GLH must form the extended project.

6. Assessment

Assessment requirements

The assessment requirements are designed to ensure that assessment arrangements support progression to employment, training and further and/or higher education, while being suitable for the general and applied character of the Diploma.

In practice this means that assessment arrangements should be:

- reliable – produce judgements of a similar standard from occasion to occasion and between different assessors
- valid – assess what they are intended to assess in terms of the learning outcomes

- 6.1 Assessment arrangements must be appropriate to the general and applied character of the Diploma and meet the following requirements:
- a. take account of the demands for rigour, fairness, reliability, authenticity, validity and fitness for purpose
 - b. be transparent and manageable
 - c. within principal learning and generic learning, be comparable in demand for all learners at each level across all lines of learning
 - d. provide opportunities for learning and be designed to inform and support the different needs of individual learners, including those requiring reasonable adjustments and special consideration, in line with relevant legislation on equality of access
 - e. be differential in approach and balance according to the level of the Diploma
 - f. allow for flexibility of assessment styles and, when appropriate, facilitate e-learning and e-assessment
 - g. offer a mixture of assessment types that reflect the purpose, sector/subject context and level
 - h. offer equality of access and take account of all current regulations and legislation in relation to diversity and inclusion.

- transparent – be expressed in ways that can be readily understood by learners, teachers and assessors
- manageable – not impose undue burdens on learners, teachers, assessors or centres in terms of time, cost, personnel and resources
- balanced – fairly reflect the content and associated learning outcomes, avoid confusing learning with assessment and not adversely affect teaching and learning.

Awarding organisations should be aware of current legislation on discrimination in making adjustments and special considerations to take account of the differing needs of learners.

For further information and guidance on designing assessments that support equality and diversity, refer to *Guidance for awarding bodies: - inclusive vocational qualifications and Guidance for awarding bodies: Fair access by Design - inclusive GCSE and GCE qualifications* (PDF/05/1941) on Ofqual's website.

Internal assessment

Internal assessment methods should typically be used when they facilitate the assessment of:

- process skills
- generic skills
- practical skills
- the use of applied assessment opportunities.

Internal assessment should be quality assured through internal and external moderation or verification.

External assessment

External assessment is defined as assessment in which assessment tasks are set, and learners' work is assessed, by the awarding organisation.

6.2 Assessment arrangements must ensure that the most valid, secure and reliable form of assessment that is fit for the purpose of the Diploma is used and must:

- a. enable learners to be assessed by means of internal assessment and external assessment
- b. for principal learning, ensure internal assessment is conducted under controlled conditions
- c. continue to apply the assessment arrangements for functional skills and existing qualifications that contribute to additional and specialist learning
- d. include processes for the quality assurance of internal assessment and standardisation of external assessment across centres and assessors and over time
- e. enable assessment units to be combined for assessment purposes when appropriate to the level and learning to be assessed
- f. be appropriate for the level of the qualification
- g. be within the competence of the awarding organisation and/or its centres to implement successfully
- h. be manageable and cost-effective for centres to operate
- i. be free from any covert or overt discrimination, either in wording or in content.

To ensure manageability for learners, assessment arrangements should take account of the structure of the Diploma, giving due consideration to each of its components and to the aims of the qualification as a whole, and the importance of applied learning.

- 6.3 The design of assessment methods for qualifications within the Diploma must include assessment methods that are fit for purpose in that they:
- a. provide a valid measure of the required skills, knowledge and understanding
 - b. provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate their abilities to meet the full range of requirements
 - c. differentiate only on the basis of learners' abilities to meet the requirements
 - d. will be undertaken using the equipment and material specified by the awarding organisation in advance of the assessment taking place
 - e. use assessment methods that are capable of selecting and judging evidence relevant to the learning outcomes to be assessed
 - f. have options that are comparable in terms of the nature and volume of work required and the level of intellectual demand (if the assessment includes options)
 - g. be free from any covert or overt discrimination, either in wording or in content.
- 6.4 The design of assessment methods for principal learning, the project and, when relevant, qualifications specifically developed to support specialist pathways within additional and specialist learning for a line of learning must include assessment tasks concerned with applied learning through real work or work-related purposes, problems or contexts.
- 6.5 The chosen method or methods of assessment must be appropriate to the Diploma and must comply with any requirements in relevant criteria published by the qualifications regulators, unless otherwise agreed in advance with the qualifications regulators, and they must meet the assessment principles in Section 6.1 to 6.2 above.

7. Grading, determination and reporting of results

Grading and awarding

Further information on requirements for grading and awarding the Diploma and its components can be found in the *Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies* (Ofqual /10/4722) and in the *GCE/GCSE principal learning and project code of practice* (Ofqual/10/4718), DCELLS, CCEA). Detailed information is also available in the *Arrangements for awarding and setting standards in the Diploma* (Ofqual/08/3865)

- 7.1 Diploma awarding bodies must have in place arrangements for grading and reporting of the Diploma according to the following grading scales:
- a. Foundation Diploma attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A and B
 - b. Higher Diploma attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B and C
 - c. Advanced and Progression Diploma attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B, C, D and E
 - d. attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a Diploma qualification is reported as unclassified (U).
- 7.2 The Foundation and Higher Diploma grade must be derived from the aggregate of principal learning unit scores and the foundation and higher project score for the appropriate level.
- 7.3 The Advanced and Progression Diploma grade must be derived from the aggregate of principal learning unit scores and the extended project score.

For criterion 7.4, see also Sections 8.4–8 on the criteria for principal learning and Sections 9.4.10–15, 9.4.23–28, 9.4.36–41 on foundation, higher and extended projects respectively.

7.4 Principal learning, foundation and higher projects and the extended project must be graded separately and use the same grading system as the Diploma.

7.5 The grading models for existing qualifications that contribute to additional and specialist learning must continue to apply.

8. Principal learning component

Principal learning

Principal learning submitted by awarding organisations must:

- be specifically developed for the Diploma
- demonstrate employer support, gained through working with Diploma development partnerships during the qualification development process (also refer to Section 1.2c)
- reflect the vision of the line of learning.

8.1 The principal learning component is a constituent qualification of the Diploma and must:

- a. focus on developing and applying knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to the sector/subject
- b. place an emphasis on learning by doing and include a defined proportion of the programme that is concerned with the application of knowledge, skills and understanding through relevant work and work-related tasks, problems and contexts (see also Section 5, 'Component size')
- c. include within principal learning at levels 1 and 2 assessment units that identify learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are based on 30 and/or 60 GLH
- d. include within principal learning at level 3 assessment units that identify learning outcomes and assessment criteria that are based on 30 and/or 60 and/or 90 GLH
- e. comprise units of assessment with titles that reflect the content and the sector/subject
- f. comply with the relevant line of learning criteria for each level.

Compliance with line of learning criteria

Awarding organisations may reorganise the content, providing that the submitted units of assessment meet the criteria for accreditation of Diploma qualifications and relevant line of learning criteria.

- 8.2 The subject matter of the assessment units within principal learning must:
- a. comply with the line of learning criteria for each level
 - b. give a clear indication of coverage and depth
 - c. be expressed in terms of learning outcomes and assessment criteria
 - d. be accurate and innovative
 - e. be aligned with the relevant level descriptors, specified by the qualifications regulators for accredited qualifications.

Integration of generic skills

Units of principal learning should include explicit opportunities for integrating generic skills within the learning outcomes and associated content.

The full range of opportunities for developing and applying generic skills should be summarised so that learners can plan and review their achievement.

- 8.3 Principal learning must enable generic skills to be developed and applied, including:
- a. functional skills (see Section 9.1)
 - b. PLTS (see Section 9.2).

- 8.4 Principal learning must be assessed by means of a combination of internal and external assessment. 30 GLH at level 1 and 60 GLH at level 2 must be externally assessed. At level 3, 120 GLH or 180 GLH must be externally assessed as specified in the criteria for each line of learning.

**Controlled
assessment**

Further information on controlled assessment can be found in *Diploma principal learning: component awarding body guidelines for controlled assessment* (2009; QCDA).

- 8.5 Internal assessment must be conducted under controlled conditions to ensure reliability and fairness. Requirements must be set out that ensure robustness at each stage of internal assessment, including:
- a. the setting of tasks
 - b. the conditions under which assessment takes place
 - c. supervision and feedback
 - d. resubmission
 - e. marking
 - f. standardisation
 - g. moderation.

Grading and awarding

Further information on requirements for grading and awarding the Diploma and its components can be found in the *Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies* (Ofqual/10/4722) and in the *GCE/GCSE principal learning and project code of practice* (Ofqual/09/4151), DCELLS, CCEA). Detailed information is also available in *Arrangements for awarding and setting standards in the Diploma* (Ofqual/08/3865)

Descriptions of performance at each level for a line of learning should also be referred to. Information can be obtained from QCDA.

- 8.6 Principal learning must be graded according to the following separate grading scales:
- a. level 1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A and B
 - b. level 2 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B and C
 - c. level 3 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B, C, D and E
- 8.7 Attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as unclassified (U).
- 8.8 Each principal learning unit must be graded separately.

9. Generic learning component

9.1 Functional skills

9.1.1 Functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT at level 1 or above must be required for the Foundation Diploma and at level 2 for the Higher Diploma (the achievement of the Advanced and Progression Diplomas require prior achievement of level 2 functional skills).

Assessment of functional skills

The assessment of functional skills is subject to separate development work.

The assessment principles for all three functional skills are available on the QCDA website at www.qcda.gov.uk/functionalskills.

9.1.2 Where relevant, other achievements required in English, mathematics and ICT that go beyond functional skills at the specified level must be identified.

9.2 Personal, learning and thinking skills

PLTS guidance

Refer to QCDA guidance on PLTS within the Diploma for further information.

Further opportunities to develop and apply PLTS may be offered in other aspects of the Diploma programme.

Level differentiation will occur through the process of integrating PLTS within principal learning.

9.2.1 The Diploma qualification must require opportunities to develop and apply all six PLTS within principal learning:

- a. independent enquiry
- b. creative thinking
- c. reflective learning
- d. team working
- e. self-management
- f. effective participation.

9.2.2 Principal learning at each level must:

- a. be accompanied by copies of the personal, learning and thinking skills framework
- b. summarise the full range of opportunities for developing and applying PLTS so that learners can plan and review their achievement
- c. support the achievement of PLTS as appropriate to the level of the Diploma; differentiation between the levels must be determined by:
 - the amount of support a learner is given
 - the degree of sophistication of the skills used
 - the level of demand of the task, problem or context in which these skills are applied.

- 9.2.3 At all levels of the Diploma, principal learning must include all six PLTS. These must be integrated as a minimum within the assessment criteria for principal learning to explicitly recognise the application of these skills in sector-/subject-related contexts. The coverage of PLTS must be reported in the Diploma transcript.

9.3 Work experience

Work experience may be spread over the course of the Diploma and should be in an area of work that is relevant to the principal learning. For further information on work experience refer to *Guide to work experience supporting Diploma programmes*.

- 9.3.1 At each level of the Diploma qualification a learner must complete at least ten days of work experience.

9.4 Foundation, higher and extended projects

The projects criteria are based on the stand-alone criteria for foundation, higher and extended projects, published August 2008 (QCA/08/3669).

- 9.4.1 The foundation, higher and extended project are free-standing 'single unit' qualifications and are constituent qualifications of the Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diplomas that can be taken at the level of the Diploma or the level above. The title of all project qualifications must be set out in the following order: the awarding organisation, level of the qualification ('Foundation' for level 1, 'Higher' for level 2 and 'Extended' for level 3), project.
- 9.4.2 The project at all levels can have a number of different outcomes including:
- a. a report with findings from an investigation or study
 - b. a dissertation
 - c. an artefact
 - d. a performance.

Foundation project

Aims and learning outcomes

9.4.3 The foundation project must enable learners to:

- a. develop and apply skills
- b. develop as inquisitive and independent learners
- c. be inspired by new areas and/or methods of study
- d. plan and review their learning
- e. use their learning experiences to support their personal aspirations for further study and/or career development
- f. develop, where appropriate, as electronically confident learners and apply appropriate technologies in their studies
- g. transfer skills developed as part of their foundation project to other areas of study.

Scope of project

9.4.4 The foundation project must:

- a. form part of a planned programme of study
- b. be of sufficient breadth and depth to allow learners to address the broad aims and learning outcomes listed above
- c. be based on an agreed set of standards and assessment
- d. have the potential to be researched and completed within one academic year
- e. require 60 GLH.

Topic of project

9.4.5 Learners are required to select a suitable topic for their foundation project. This means that:

- a. the topic must be chosen by learners through negotiation with their teacher, mentor or tutor and, if appropriate, an employer
- b. the component awarding body must ensure centres confirm that learners' project topics are relevant in one or both of the following ways:
 - how the project topic complements and develops the themes and topics for learners' principal learning as set out in the relevant line of learning criteria
 - how it supports learner progression
- c. learners may choose one of many different types of project, but the topic selected must have the potential to provide the learner with opportunities to meet all the foundation project assessment objectives.

Subject content

9.4.6 The foundation project must require learners to:

- a. select, either individually or as part of a group, an appropriate topic
- b. identify a question, task or brief that specifies an intended project outcome
- c. produce a plan for how they will deliver their intended project outcome
- d. conduct research into the project brief using appropriate techniques
- e. develop the intended project outcome using selected tools and techniques safely
- f. demonstrate the capacity to see a project through to completion
- g. share the outcome of the project, including a review of their own learning and performance, with others, using appropriate communication methods.

9.4.7 During the course of completing their foundation project, learners must demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of their studies or areas of interest.

9.4.8 During the course of completing their foundation project, learners must be provided with opportunities to apply and develop:

- a. PLTS
- b. the functional skills of mathematics, English and ICT
- c. any further specialist technical skills, where relevant to the chosen topic.

Assessment of the project

The scheme of assessment for the project must make clear the relationship between the project learning outcomes, assessment and grading criteria, and the project assessment objectives for the relevant level of the project.

Assessment

9.4.9 The foundation project must be a single-unit, internally assessed qualification. The awarding organisation's assessment system must be sufficiently robust to ensure comparability and consistency, as well as rigour and fairness between learners, between centres, and from year to year.

9.4.10 The assessment system must include:

- a. centre approval of the appropriateness of the project proposal
- b. agreement on the range of acceptable evidence
- c. evidence of monitoring by teachers
- d. clear protocols for provision of advice, guidance, interim reviews and redrafting opportunities
- e. arrangements for quality assurance of the assessment
- f. authentication of learner work by teachers
- g. verification or moderation of centres and centre staff
- h. mark schemes that reflect the detail and demand of the assessment objectives and grade descriptions.

Scheme of assessment

9.4.11 The scheme of assessment must:

Written element

Any reference to 'writing' or 'written communication' should be interpreted as the production of text by any means, for example via pen, word processor or other means.

- a. include a specified written element
- b. reflect the aims and content of the specification
- c. address the assessment objectives for the foundation project
- d. specify the type and format of evidence that is permissible
- e. stipulate a maximum mark of at least 30
- f. be through internal assessment.

Assessment objectives

9.4.12 All learners are required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives must be weighted as indicated below.

Foundation project assessment objectives		Per cent weighting
A01	Manage Select, plan and carry out a project, applying skills and methods to achieve objectives.	15–25
A02	Use resources Obtain, select and use information, and select and use resources.	15–25
A03	Develop and realise Use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies, to achieve planned outcomes.	35–45
A04	Review Identify and consider project outcomes, and own learning and performance. Use communication skills to present project outcomes in an appropriate format.	15–25

Evidence format

Further information on assessment evidence for the project process or the outcome can be found in QCDA curriculum planning guidance for each level of the project.

Assessment evidence

9.4.13 The assessment evidence must include evidence of:

- a. the planning and process of the foundation project
- b. sources of and range of information and other resources accessed
- c. the range of skills used, including, where appropriate, the use of new technologies
- d. the knowledge, understanding and skills used to complete the tasks/activities of the project
- e. an outcome demonstrating the individual's knowledge, understanding and skills
- f. a review of the outcomes of the project, and an evaluation of own performance and learning.

Grading and awarding

Further information on requirements for grading and awarding the Diploma and its components can be found in the *Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies* (Ofqual/10/4722) and in the *GCE, GCSE, principal learning and project code of practice* (Ofqual/09/4151), DCELLS, CCEA). Detailed information is also available in the *Arrangements*

Grading

9.4.14 Awarding organisations must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of the foundation project so that:

- a. attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported on a three-grade scale from A* to B, where A* is the highest
- b. attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as unclassified (U)
- c. the grades awarded reflect the descriptions of performance at each grade published by the qualifications regulators.

*for awarding and
setting standards in
the Diploma
(Ofqual/08/3761).*

Descriptions of
performance at
awarded grades
can be found in
*Typical
performance in
projects of
candidates at the
awarded grades
(Ofqual 2009)*

Higher project

Aims and learning outcomes

9.4.15 The higher project must enable learners to:

- a. develop and apply skills
- b. develop as inquisitive and independent learners
- c. be inspired by new areas and/or methods of study
- d. plan and review their learning
- e. use their learning experiences to support their personal aspirations for further study and/or career development
- f. develop, where appropriate, as electronically confident learners and apply appropriate technologies in their studies
- g. transfer skills developed as part of their higher project to other areas of study.

Scope of project

9.4.16 The higher project must:

- a. form part of a planned programme of study
- b. be of sufficient breadth and depth to allow learners to address the broad aims and learning outcomes listed above
- c. be based on an agreed set of standards and assessment
- d. have the potential to be researched and completed within one academic year
- e. require 60 GLH.

Topic of project

9.4.17 Learners are required to select a suitable topic for their higher project. This means that:

- a. the topic must be chosen by learners through negotiation with their teacher, mentor or tutor and, if appropriate, an employer
- b. the component awarding body must ensure that centres confirm that learners' project topics are relevant in one or both of the following ways:
 - how the project topic complements and develops the themes and topics for learners' principal learning as set out in the relevant line of learning criteria
 - how it supports learner progression
- c. learners may choose one of many different types of project, but the topic selected must have the potential to provide the learner with opportunities to meet all the higher project assessment objectives.

Subject content

9.4.18 The higher project must require learners to:

- a. select, either individually or as part of a group, an appropriate topic
- b. identify a question, task or brief that specifies an intended project outcome
- c. produce a plan for how they will deliver their intended project outcome
- d. conduct research into the project brief using appropriate techniques
- e. develop the intended project outcome using selected tools and techniques safely
- f. demonstrate the capacity to see a project through to completion
- g. share the outcome and an evaluation of the higher project, including a review of their own learning and performance, with others, using appropriate communication methods.

9.4.19 During the course of completing their higher project, learners must demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of concepts and principles underlying their studies or areas of interest.

9.4.20 During the course of completing their higher project, learners must be provided with opportunities to apply and develop:

- a. PLTS
- b. the functional skills of mathematics, English and ICT
- c. any further specialist technical skills, where relevant to the chosen topic.

Assessment of the project

The scheme of assessment for the project must make clear the relationship between the project learning outcomes, assessment and grading criteria, and the project assessment objectives for the relevant level of the project.

Assessment

9.4.21 The higher project must be a single-unit, internally assessed qualification. The awarding organisation's assessment system must be sufficiently robust to ensure comparability and consistency, as well as rigour and fairness between learners, between centres, and from year to year.

9.4.22 The assessment system must include:

- a. centre approval of the appropriateness of the project proposal
- b. agreement on the range of acceptable evidence
- c. evidence of monitoring by teachers
- d. clear protocols for provision of advice, guidance, interim reviews and redrafting opportunities
- e. arrangements for quality assurance of the assessment
- f. authentication of learner work by teachers
- g. verification or moderation of centres and centre staff
- h. mark schemes that reflect the detail and demand of the assessment objectives and grade descriptions.

Scheme of assessment

9.4.23 The scheme of assessment must:

Written element

Any reference to 'writing' or 'written communication' should be interpreted as the production of text by any means, for example pen, word processor or other means.

- a. include a specified written element
- b. reflect the aims and content of the specification
- c. address the assessment objectives for the higher project
- d. specify the type and format of evidence that is permissible
- e. stipulate a maximum mark of at least 30
- f. be through internal assessment.

Assessment objectives

9.4.24 All learners are required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives must be weighted as indicated below.

Higher project assessment objectives		Per cent weighting
A01	Manage Identify, plan and carry out a project, applying a range of skills and methods to achieve objectives.	15–25
A02	Use resources Research, select, organise and use information, and select and use a range of resources. Interpret data and apply findings.	15–25
A03	Develop and realise Select and use a range of skills, including,	35–45

	where appropriate, new technologies and problem-solving, to achieve planned outcomes.	
A04	Review Evaluate project outcomes and own learning and performance. Use communication skills to present evidenced project outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format.	15–25

Evidence format

Further information on assessment evidence for the project process or the outcome can be found in QCDA curriculum planning guidance for each level of the project.

Assessment evidence

9.4.25 The assessment evidence must include evidence of:

- a. the planning and process of the higher project
- b. sources of and range of information and other resources accessed
- c. the range of skills used, including, where appropriate, the use of new technologies
- d. the knowledge, understanding and skills used to complete the tasks/activities of the project
- e. an outcome demonstrating the individual's knowledge, understanding and skills
- f. an evaluation of the outcomes of the project, and an evaluation of own performance and learning.

Grading and awarding

Further information on requirements for grading and awarding the Diploma and its components can be found in the *Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies* (Ofqual/10/4722) and in the *GCE, GCSE, principal learning and project code of practice* (Ofqual/09/4151), DCELLS, CCEA). Detailed information is also available in the *Arrangements for awarding and setting standards in the Diploma* (Ofqual/08/3761).

Descriptions of performance at awarded grades can be found in *Typical performance in projects of candidates at the awarded grades* (Ofqual 2009)

Grading

9.4.26 Awarding organisations must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of the higher project so that:

- a. attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported on a four grade scale from A* to C, where A* is the highest
- b. attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as unclassified (U)
- c. the grades awarded reflect the descriptions of performance at each grade published by the qualifications regulators.

Extended project

Aims and learning outcomes

9.4.27 The extended project must enable learners to:

- a. make a significant contribution to the choice and design of an extended project and take responsibility either for an individual task or for a defined task within a group project
- b. develop and improve their own learning and performance as critical, reflective and independent learners
- c. develop and apply decision-making and, where appropriate, problem-solving skills
- d. extend their planning, research, critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and presentation skills
- e. where appropriate, develop confidence in applying new technologies in their studies
- f. develop and apply skills creatively, demonstrating initiative and enterprise
- g. use their learning experiences to support their aspirations for higher education and/or career development
- h. transfer skills developed as part of their extended project to other areas of study.

Scope of project

9.4.28 The extended project must:

- a. be of sufficient breadth and depth to allow learners to address the broad aims and learning outcomes listed above
- b. develop and extend from one or more of the learner's study areas and/or from an area of personal interest or activity outside their main programme of study
- c. be based on a topic chosen by the learner(s) and agreed as appropriate by the centre
- d. be based on a topic that has the potential to provide the learner(s) with opportunities to meet all the assessment objectives
- e. require 120 GLH.

Topic of project

9.4.29 The component awarding body must ensure that centres confirm that learners' extended project topics are relevant in one or both of the following ways:

- a. how the extended project topic complements and develops the themes and topics for learners' principal learning as set out in the relevant line of learning criteria
- b. how the extended project supports learner progression.

Subject content

9.4.30 The extended project must require learners to:

- a. select a topic/area of interest for an in-depth study that provides opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding, and to negotiate the scoping of that project
- b. identify and draft an objective(s) for their extended project, providing a rationale for their choice
- c. produce a plan for how they will deliver their intended outcome
- d. conduct research as required by the project brief using appropriate techniques
- e. develop the intended project outcome using selected tools and techniques safely, demonstrating the ability to pursue an extended project through to completion
- f. share the outcome of the extended project, including an evaluation of the outcome and their own learning and performance, with another or others, using appropriate communication methods.

9.4.31 During the course of completing their extended project, learners must demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of:

- a. the key concepts and principles underlying their studies or areas of interest
- b. connections, links and complexities, where appropriate, between areas of study and/or areas of interest.

9.4.32 During the course of completing their extended project, learners must be provided with opportunities to apply and develop:

- a. PLTS
- b. the functional skills of mathematics, English and ICT
- c. any further specialist technical skills, where they are relevant to the chosen topic.

Assessment of the project

The scheme of assessment for the project must make clear the relationship between the project learning outcomes, assessment and grading criteria, and the project assessment objectives for the relevant level of the project.

Assessment

9.4.33 The extended project must be a single unit, internally assessed qualification. The awarding organisation's assessment system must be sufficiently robust to ensure comparability and consistency, as well as rigour and fairness between learners, between centres, and from year to year.

9.4.34 The assessment system must include:

- a. centre approval of the appropriateness of the project proposal
- b. agreement on the range of acceptable evidence
- c. evidence of monitoring by teachers
- d. clear protocols for provision of advice, guidance, interim reviews and redrafting opportunities
- e. arrangements for quality assurance of the assessment
- f. authentication of learner work by teachers.

Scheme of assessment

9.4.35 The scheme of assessment for the extended project must:

Written element

Any reference to 'writing' or 'written communication' should be interpreted as the production of text by any means, for example pen, word processor or other means.

- a. include a specified written element
- b. reflect the aims and content of the specification
- c. address the assessment objectives for the extended project
- d. specify the type and format of evidence that is permissible
- e. stipulate a maximum mark of at least 30
- f. be through internal assessment.

Assessment objectives

9.4.36 All learners are required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives must be weighted as indicated below.

Extended project assessment objectives		Per cent weighting
A01	Manage Identify, design, plan and carry out a project, applying a range of skills, strategies and methods to achieve objectives.	15–25
A02	Use resources Research, critically select, organise and use information, and select and use a range of resources. Analyse data, apply relevantly and demonstrate understanding of any links, connections and complexities of the topic.	15–25
A03	Develop and realise Select and use a range of skills, including, where appropriate, new technologies and problem-solving, to take decisions critically and achieve planned outcomes.	35–45
A04	Review Evaluate all aspects of the extended project, including outcomes in relation to stated objectives and own learning and performance. Select and use a range of communication skills and media to present evidenced project outcomes and conclusions in an appropriate format.	15–25

Evidence format

Assessment evidence

Further information on assessment evidence for the project process or the outcome can be found in QCDA curriculum planning guidance for each level of the project.

9.4.37 The assessment evidence must include evidence of:

- a. at least one written piece
- b. the design, strategic planning and process of the project
- c. sources of and range of information and other resources accessed
- d. analysis of the data and a clear indication of how findings were used to inform the project
- e. the range of skills used, including, where appropriate, problem-solving and the use of new technologies
- f. an outcome demonstrating the individual's knowledge, understanding and skills
- g. an evaluation of own performance, learning and decision-making
- h. a presentation for a non-specialist audience, communicating outcomes, conclusions and evaluation.

In the case of group projects, this evidence must be individual to the learner. While larger group activities, for example an expedition or a performance, may be a vehicle for evidence, that evidence must demonstrate how the individual has met the assessment objectives and performance criteria.

Grading and awarding

Further information on requirements for grading and awarding the Diploma and its components can be found in the *Regulatory arrangements for component and Diploma awarding bodies* (Ofqual/10/4722) and in the *GCE, GCSE, principal learning and project code of practice* (Ofqual/10/4718), DCELLS, CCEA). Detailed information is also available in the *Arrangements for awarding and setting standards in the Diploma* (Ofqual/08/3761).

Descriptions of performance at awarded grades can be found in *Typical performance in projects of candidates at the awarded grades* (Ofqual 2009)

Grading

9.4.38 Awarding organisations must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of the extended project so that:

- a. attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported on a six-grade scale from A* to E, where A* is the highest
- b. attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a certificate is reported as unclassified (U)
- c. the grades awarded reflect the descriptions of performance at each grade published by the qualifications regulators.

10. Additional and specialist learning component

Additional and specialist learning

Additional and specialist learning qualifications are accredited qualifications approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and are published on the Diploma catalogues by line of learning.

Only fully recognised component awarding bodies that are compliant with the Diploma aggregation service can submit qualifications for additional and specialist learning.

Additional and specialist learning qualifications may be available to learners not taking the Diploma.

Awarding organisations developing qualifications that offer progression to higher education should inform UCAS of intended submissions to the tariff.

10.1 Constituent qualifications that support additional and specialist learning in Diplomas must facilitate choice and progression at the level of the Diploma, while contributing to a coherent learning experience.

10.2 Within the Diploma line of learning at the accredited level, additional and specialist learning qualifications must:

- a. provide high-quality breadth and/or depth
- b. be at
 - level 1 and/or level 2 and/or level 3 for Foundation Diploma

Criteria for Accreditation of Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diploma Qualifications

- level 2 and/or level 3 for Higher Diploma
 - level 3 and/or level 4 for Advanced Diploma
- c. avoid substantive duplication with principal learning and generic learning; a maximum content overlap of 30 per cent between additional and specialist learning and principal learning is permitted.
10. 3 Additional and specialist learning is set at a minimum of:
- Foundation – 120 GLH
 - Higher – 180 GLH
 - Advanced – 360 GLH.

11. Glossary

A

A level

See GCE AS/A level.

access arrangements

Arrangements that are approved in advance of an examination or assessment to allow attainment to be demonstrated by learners who have a permanent or a long-term disability; learning difficulty; temporary disability, illness, indisposition or medical condition; or a special educational need, including where the learner's first language is not English, Welsh or Irish (Gaeilge).

accreditation

The process through which the qualifications regulators confirm that a qualification and the associated specification conform to the relevant regulatory criteria.

additional and specialist learning (ASL)

Qualifications that learners choose to include in their Diploma that are complementary or specialised in character. Additional and specialist learning must provide high-quality breadth and/or depth of curriculum experience, without duplication of principal learning, and be based on a solid evidence-base of progression opportunities for learners who want to progress into immediate employment with training or full-time further and/or higher education.

Advanced Diploma

The Advanced Diploma, a level 3 qualification, provides the basis for progression to higher and further education, and to employment with training. It requires 1,080 guided learning hours (GLH), and is equivalent, in terms of UCAS points, to three and one half A levels. The Advanced Diploma includes principal learning that is sector- and subject-related. It requires level 2 functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), and provides the essential personal, learning and thinking skills needed to progress in education, training and employment. An Advanced Diploma can be completed as a two-year full-time programme. The Advanced Diploma components are, for each line of learning, as follows:

- principal learning (set at 540 GLH, of which a minimum of 270 GLH must be applied learning)
- generic learning (set at 180 GLH)
- additional and specialist learning (set at 360 GLH as a minimum).

Advanced subsidiary (AS) level

See GCE AS/A level.

aggregation

The adding together of attainment across the components and units of a qualification to arrive at a measure of achievement for the qualification as a whole. Aggregation may require a weighting of each element according to the intended contribution to the whole Diploma.

AO

See awarding organisation.

applied learning

Acquiring and applying knowledge, skills and understanding through tasks set in sector or subject contexts that have many of the characteristics of real work or are set within the workplace. Most importantly, the purpose of the task in which learners apply their knowledge, skills and understanding must be relevant to the workplace.

ASL

See additional and specialist learning.

assessment

The process of making judgements about the extent to which a learner's work meets the assessment criteria for a qualification, a unit or part of a unit.

assessment criteria

Assessment criteria specify what a learner is expected to meet to fulfil a set of learning outcomes. The criteria should be sufficiently detailed to support a consistent judgement that a learning outcome has been achieved. The criteria should not dictate the method of assessment to be used.

assessor

The person who makes a judgement on learners' work.

authentication

Confirmation that work has been produced by the learner putting it forward for assessment, and that it has been produced under the required conditions.

awarding

The process through which learners' results and/or grades are determined on the basis of available evidence.

Awarding body/Awarding organisation (AO)

An organisation that awards qualifications. To be eligible to award regulated qualifications, awarding bodies/awarding organisations must meet the requirements

of and be recognised by the qualifications regulators. For the Diploma, there are two types of awarding bodies/awarding organisations: component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies.

B

BAF

See business, administration and finance, lines of learning.

barring

The process of barring qualifications that may not be combined because of overlapping content.

business, administration and finance (BAF)

See lines of learning.

C

C&M

See creative and media, lines of learning.

CAB

See component awarding body

CBE

See construction and the built environment, lines of learning.

centre approval

A process through which an awarding organisation recognises or confirms that a centre can offer particular qualifications.

centre consortium

A group of centres and other organisations (including employers and training providers) working together locally to offer a Diploma line of learning. Each consortium is approved through the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Diploma Gateway process.

certificate

The final record of attainment in a unit or qualification issued by an awarding organisation.

comparability

The extent to which results obtained in different assessments, for example in different units, between awarding organisations or over time, represent equivalent attainment.

compensation

The extent to which high performance in one element of an assessment can balance lower performance in another. This idea recognises that it is the learner's overall attainment rather than individual elements that is most significant.

component awarding body(CAB)

An awarding organisation offering constituent qualifications for the Diploma, which may include principal learning, foundation, higher and extended project, functional skills and/or additional and specialist learning qualifications.

components of the Diploma

Diplomas are made up of constituent qualifications that are organised in terms of the following three components:

- principal learning
- generic learning
- additional and specialist learning.

composite qualification

A qualification consisting of a number of constituent regulated qualifications.

constituent qualifications

Regulated qualifications that make up the different components of the Diploma.

construction and the built environment (CBE)

See lines of learning.

content

The knowledge, understanding, skills or area of competence to be covered in a qualification as described in the specification.

controlled assessment

The approach to internal assessment where an awarding organisation sets requirements or 'controls' for:

- setting tasks
- taking tasks
- marking tasks.

A learner's marks for each internally assessed unit of a principal learning qualification must be drawn from an assessment that has been set, taken and marked in line with these controls. The specific requirements for each principal learning qualification and

further guidance on how to implement controls is provided by component awarding bodies.

creative and media (C&M)

See lines of learning.

D

DAB

See Diploma awarding body.

DAS

See Diploma aggregation service.

DDP

See Diploma development partnership.

determination of results

The process by which awarding organisations use the information from assessments to determine individual candidates' results.

Diploma

A composite qualification for 14- to 19-year-olds in England, the Diploma is being introduced between 2008 and 2012 and will ultimately be available in 17 lines of learning (see lines of learning) at levels 1 (Foundation), 2 (Higher) and 3 (Advanced). All Diplomas share a common structure made up of three components: principal learning, generic learning and additional and specialist learning (see individual definitions), with the exception of the Progression Diploma (see Progression Diploma).

Diploma aggregation service (DAS)

The Diploma aggregation service supports the awarding of the Diploma to the learner. It must be used by centres and component and Diploma awarding bodies involved in the delivery of the Diploma to share data and record a learner's progress towards a Diploma award. As well as recording constituent qualification results and other achievements (personal, learning and thinking skills and work experience) against each learner, the service aggregates these results and applies rules of combination to determine whether the whole Diploma can be awarded and produces a final grade.

Diploma awarding body (DAB)

An awarding organisation that awards the overall Diploma qualification, issuing a transcript and certificate.

Diploma catalogues

The catalogue of the constituent qualifications, and the valid combinations of those qualifications, which can be used for the achievement of the Diploma.

Diploma development partnership (DDP)

This is a partnership between employers, higher education and other sector / line of learning experts (with an interest/stake in the sector or subject) and education representatives (with professional, educational or qualification-design expertise). DDPs are brought together through sector skills councils (SSCs) and are led by the most appropriate SSC. DDPs are responsible for developing the line of learning statement.

Diploma progress statement (DPS)

A document that records a learner's achievement and progress through a Diploma programme. The DPS provides information including the candidate's name, the centre's name and a list of the aspects of the Diploma that the learner has achieved. It also provides details of the full Diploma requirements at each level. The centre can access the DPS through the learner account in the Diploma aggregation service.

Diploma transcript

A report of the qualifications that make up a learner's Diploma programme. It lists the learner's grades for each qualification in their Diploma, and records work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills.

E

ELB

See environmental and land-based studies, lines of learning.

ENG

See engineering, lines of learning.

engineering (ENG)

See lines of learning.

enterprise education

entitlement areas

At key stage 4, schools are required to ensure that all learners have access to at least one course in each of the following areas:

- the arts
- design and technology
- the humanities

- modern foreign languages.

This entitlement will remain in 2013, alongside the entitlement to Diplomas.

environmental and land-based studies (ELB)

See lines of learning.

Entry level

Entry level qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building basic knowledge and skills and is not geared towards specific occupations.

environmental and land-based studies (ELB)

See lines of learning.

experiential learning

A process that stresses the central role of experience in learning related to the world of work. Learners reflect on their experience, draw out and articulate lessons learnt (generalise) and then apply their learning to new situations or activities. The learner's objective experience is critical to the learning process.

extended project

A level 3 qualification involving a single piece of work that requires a high degree of planning, preparation, research and independent working. Learners will explore in depth a topic based on their own interests and aspirations. The extended project may be completed alongside A levels or as part of an Advanced or Progression Diploma.

external assessment

A form of assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are set by the awarding organisation, taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marked by the awarding organisation.

F

FAB

See Federation of Awarding Bodies.

FE

See further education.

Federation of Awarding Bodies (FAB)

A membership body representing organisations that award qualifications in the UK.

Foundation Diploma

The Foundation Diploma is achieved at level 1, and supports progression to level 2,

particularly within key stage 4. It requires 600 guided learning hours (GLH) and is equivalent, in terms of average length of study, to five GCSEs. The Foundation Diploma includes learning related to a specific sector or subject, and includes a project to allow individuals to plan and organise their own learning. It includes functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT at level 1, and provides the essential personal, learning and thinking skills needed to progress in education and training. The Diploma can be taken in one year if taken on its own, or in two years if taken at the same time as the key stage 4 national curriculum programme of study. The Foundation Diploma components for each line of learning are as follows:

- principal learning (set at 240 GLH, of which a minimum of 120 GLH must be applied learning)
- generic learning (set at 240 GLH)
- additional and specialist learning (set at 120 GLH minimum).

functional skills

These are the core elements of English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) that provide the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work. Functional skills will relate to Diplomas and apprenticeships. They are also available as stand-alone qualifications.

further education (FE)

Post-compulsory education (in addition to that received at secondary school) that is distinct from the education offered in universities (higher education). It may be at any level above compulsory education, from basic training to Higher National Diploma or Foundation Degree.

G

GCE AS/A level

GCE stands for General Certificate of Education. An A level is normally taken as a two-year course progressing from either GCSE or an equivalent qualification. It comprises the advanced subsidiary (AS) and A2 components. Both AS and A level qualifications sit at level 3 in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The AS is a stand-alone qualification and is valued as half a full A level qualification (assessed at the standard expected for a learner halfway through an A level course). The A2 is the second half of a full A level qualification (assessed at the standard expected for a learner at the end of a full A level course). Both are worth 50 per cent of the full A level qualification. AS levels are graded A to E; A levels are graded A* to E.

GCSE

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. GCSE qualifications are generally taken as a two-year course by learners aged 14 to 16. GCSEs sit within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. GCSEs are graded A* to G; grades D to G are at level 1 and grades A* to C are at level 2 in the NQF.

GCSE assessment involves external assessment; including controlled assessments for most qualifications. GCSEs can be either linear or unitised. GCSEs are offered in a variety of subjects, including English, mathematics, ICT and science, which are compulsory within state schools at key stage 4 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

generic learning

Generic learning enables learners to develop and apply the skills and knowledge necessary for learning, employment and personal development. The generic learning component of the Diploma is made up of the following constituent parts:

- functional skills
- personal, learning and thinking skills
- a project
- work experience.

GLH

See guided learning hours.

grade

A point on a scale of performance used to differentiate achievement within a qualification (for example, A*, A, B, C, D, E).

grading

The process of determining the grades to be issued to learners for a unit or qualification.

guided learning hours (GLH)

Guided learning hours are a measure of the time that a typical learner will require in direct guidance – from a teacher, tutor or other identified guidance provider – to complete their programme of learning successfully. The guidance must be related to the programme that the learner is taking, and can include time in lectures, classes, tutorials, one-to-one meetings, workshops or assessment sessions. The guidance may be delivered through virtual means, such as online, or through video and teleconferencing. If the guidance is in the form of supervised study, then the

supervising person must be available to provide support for the specific subject. Guided learning does not include the marking of assessments when the learner is not present; work experience where an assessor or centre/employer learning provider is not present; or custodial supervision.

H

H&B

See hair and beauty studies, lines of learning.

hair and beauty studies (H&B)

See lines of learning.

Higher Diploma

The Higher Diploma provides the basis for progression to further education, an apprenticeship or employment. It is a level 2 qualification and supports progression to level 3. It requires 800 guided learning hours (GLH), and is equivalent, in terms of average length of study, to seven GCSEs. The Higher Diploma includes principal learning related to a specific sector or subject, and includes a project to allow individuals to plan and organise their own learning. It includes functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT at level 2, and provides the essential personal, learning and thinking skills needed to progress in education, training and employment. The Diploma can be taken in one or two years if taken on its own or in two years if taken at the same time as the key stage 4 national curriculum programme of study. The Higher Diploma components for each line of learning are as follows:

- principal learning (set at 420 GLH, of which a minimum of 210 GLH must be applied learning)
- generic learning (set at 200 GLH)
- additional and specialist learning (set at 180 GLH minimum).

HOS

See hospitality, lines of learning.

hospitality (HOS)

See lines of learning.

Humanities and social sciences

See lines of learning.

I

IAG

See information, advice and guidance.

ICT

See information and communication technology.

information, advice and guidance (IAG)

Information, advice and guidance is an umbrella term covering a range of activities and interventions that help young people to become more self-reliant and better able to manage their personal and career development, including learning.

information technology (IT)

See lines of learning.

internal assessment

Comprises assessment tasks where learners' evidence is assessed in the centre against criteria provided by the awarding organisation and subjected to external moderation. The assessment tasks may be set internally at the centre or be provided by the awarding organisation.

internal standardisation

Consists of processes carried out by centres in relation to internally assessed work. This ensures consistency within each line of learning in relation to the setting of tasks, conduct of tasks and marking of learners' assessment evidence. Internal standardisation thereby ensures that all learners are judged against the same standards regardless of which teaching group they are in or which assessor marks their work.

IT

See information technology, lines of learning.

K

key stage 4 curriculum

At key stage 4 all learners are required to study English, mathematics, ICT, science, citizenship, physical education, religious education, sex education, careers education and work-related learning. This requirement will remain following the introduction of Diplomas.

L

languages and international communication

See lines of learning.

learning outcomes

Indicate the knowledge, skills and understanding that learners should have developed through the teaching and learning activities. They provide opportunities for checking progress and reviewing work with learners.

level

The level at which a qualification or unit is positioned for accreditation. Levels are defined in terms of complexity, autonomy and range of achievement.

level 1

Recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision. Learning at this level is about activities that mostly relate to everyday situations and may be linked to job competence. The Foundation Diploma is a level 1 qualification.

level 2

Recognise the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of an area of work or a subject area, and to perform varied tasks with some guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building knowledge and/or skills in relation to an area of work or a subject area and is appropriate for many job roles. The Higher Diploma is a level 2 qualification.

level 3

Recognise the ability to gain, and where relevant, apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning at this level involves obtaining detailed knowledge and skills. It is appropriate for people wishing to go to university, people working independently or, in some areas, supervising and training others in their field of work. The Advanced and Progression Diplomas are level 3 qualifications.

level 4

Recognise specialist learning and involve detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work or study. Learning at this level is appropriate for people working in technical and professional jobs, and/or managing and developing others. Level 4 qualifications are at a level equivalent to certificates of higher education.

level indicators

See Entry level, level 1, level 2, level 3, level 4.

lines of learning

The broad subject areas that each Diploma will cover are as follows:

- First teaching September 2008

Criteria for Accreditation of Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diploma Qualifications

- construction and the built environment (CBE)
- creative and media (C&M)
- engineering (ENG)
- information technology (IT)
- society, health and development (SHD)
- First teaching September 2009
 - business, administration and finance (BAF)
 - environmental and land-based studies (ELB)
 - hair and beauty studies (H&B)
 - hospitality (HOS)
 - manufacturing and product design (MPD)
- First teaching September 2010
 - public services (PO)
 - retail business (RBT)
 - sport and active leisure (SAL)
 - travel and tourism (T&T)
- First teaching September 2011
 - Humanities and social sciences (HSS)
 - Languages and international communications (LIC)
 - Science (levels 1 and 2) (SCI)
- First teaching September 2012
 - Science (level 3) (SCI)

The line of learning titles are subject to change.

line of learning criteria

A regulatory document that defines the knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to a line of learning at levels 1, 2 and 3 that must be contained as part of the principal

learning component within the Diploma qualification. Awarding organisations must meet the requirements laid out in the line of learning criteria in addition to the *Criteria for accreditation of Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diploma qualifications - line of learning statement*

A detailed document written and owned by the relevant Diploma development partnership for a particular line of learning that outlines the rationale, vision and content at levels 1, 2 and 3 that should be contained as part of the principal learning component within the Diploma qualification. This document is intended to inform and guide the development of the line of learning criteria.

M

manufacturing and product design (MPD)

See lines of learning.

mark scheme

A mark scheme describes how marks are to be awarded in relation to a particular assessment task.

moderation

The process through which internal assessment is monitored to ensure that it meets required standards, and adjustments to results are made, where required, to compensate for any differences in standards that are encountered.

MPD

See manufacturing and product design, lines of learning.

N

national curriculum

The national curriculum is a framework used by all maintained schools to ensure that teaching and learning is balanced and consistent. It sets out:

- the subjects taught
- the knowledge, skills and understanding required in each subject
- standards or attainment targets in each subject – teachers can use these to measure a learner's progress and plan the next steps in his or her learning
- how learners' progress is assessed and reported.

Within the framework of the national curriculum, schools are free to plan and organise teaching and learning in the way that best meets the needs of their learners.

O

Ofqual

Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulation. Ofqual is the qualifications regulator for England and vocational qualifications in Northern Ireland.

operating rules

A set of requirements and information for component and Diploma awarding bodies, covering the operation of the Diploma qualification, principal learning, the project and the contribution of constituent qualifications to the Diploma.

P

pathway

A route to progress through the Diploma framework.

personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)

The framework of skills that will equip all young people for successful employment and lifelong learning. PLTS require learners to be:

- independent enquirers
- creative thinkers
- reflective learners
- team workers
- self-managers
- effective participators.

PLTS

See personal, learning and thinking skills.

principal learning

This is the mandatory learning part of the Diploma. Principal learning is sector- and subject-related and predominantly applied in character. It includes a minimum of 50 per cent applied learning and consists of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that support progress through the line of learning into the sectors and subjects concerned. Opportunities to develop and apply generic skills are also integrated into principal learning.

prior achievement

The Diploma qualification allows for the inclusion of constituent qualifications that

have been achieved by a learner after 1 January 2005 if they are in the Diploma catalogue or a previous version of the Diploma catalogue.

programme of study

The statutory elements of the national curriculum that all learners at key stage 4 must cover while at school or college.

Progression Diploma

The Progression Diploma is a subset of the Advanced Diploma and is made up of only the principal learning and generic learning components. It requires 720 GLH and is equivalent, in terms of UCAS points, to two and a half A levels.

project

A level 1 or 2 qualification involving a single piece of work that requires a high degree of planning, preparation, research and independent working. Learners explore in depth a topic based on their own interests and aspirations. The project is completed as part of a Foundation or Higher Diploma. An extended project is completed as part of the Advanced or Progression Diploma.

public services

See lines of learning.

Q

QCDA

See Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency.

qualification criteria

The document *Criteria for the accreditation of Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diploma qualifications* alongside the criteria for each line of learning, sets out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all Diplomas. These criteria provide the framework within which awarding organisations create the detail of the components or constituent qualifications.

qualification specification

A detailed document that defines the purpose, content, structure and assessment arrangements for a qualification.

Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA)

The Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA) is the government agency that develops the curriculum, improves and delivers assessments and reviews and reforms qualifications.

Qualifications regulators

Statutory organisations that are required to establish national standards for

qualifications and ensure consistent compliance with them. The qualifications regulators for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland are respectively: Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual); the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS); the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA); and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

R

reasonable adjustments

Steps taken to ensure disabled people are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled people, 'substantial' being more than minor or trivial. A reasonable adjustment will generally lead to an access arrangement being made for the learner.

recognition

The recognition of component and Diploma awarding bodies in England, in addition to their recognition as awarding organisations for regulated qualifications.

reliability of assessment

The extent to which assessment results are an accurate measure of a candidate's demonstration of the abilities specified by the assessment criteria.

rules of combination

Automatic rules (applied through the Diploma catalogues) that define which qualifications can make up a full Diploma qualification.

retail business

See lines of learning.

S

science

See lines of learning.

Section 96

Under the provisions of Sections 96, 98, 100 and 101 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, schools, institutions and employers in England may offer to those under the age of 19 a course leading to an external qualification that is funded either by a local authority or a learning and skills council only if the qualification is approved.

sector

In relation to the Diploma, the term sector refers to an employer-led line of learning in a specific area of work, such as construction or engineering.

sector body

A body (such as a sector skills council) recognised by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills as responsible for formulating and reviewing standards of occupational competence for an employment sector.

SHD

See society, health and development, lines of learning.

society, health and development (SHD)

See lines of learning

special arrangements

Special arrangements are now referred to as access arrangements. See access arrangements.

special consideration

A process that allows learners who suffer from temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of an assessment to be credited with the achievement they are capable of.

specification

A document setting out the requirements of a unit, component or qualification.

sport and active leisure

See lines of learning.

SSC

See sector skills councils.

Standardisation

A process to ensure that the assessment criteria for a qualification or unit are applied consistently by assessors, moderators and verifiers.

supplementary recognition

The recognition of component and Diploma awarding bodies in England, in addition to their recognition as awarding organisations for regulated qualifications.

synthesis

A learner's ability to bring together facts, skills, knowledge or concepts that have been learnt separately and that may belong to different subjects or disciplines.

T

testing agreement

The agreement between QCDA and an awarding organisation governing the testing of the Diploma aggregation service.

transcript

A report of the units and qualifications that make up a learner's programme and achievement. It lists the learner's units and grades for each of the components of their Diploma qualification and also records work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills. The transcript must accompany a certificate to validate the Diploma.

travel and tourism

See lines of learning.

trial grade

Centres will be able to obtain a trial grade for each learner who has completed the necessary achievements for the Diploma, before claiming the award of the Diploma through the Diploma awarding body and the Diploma aggregation service. The trial grade is verified by the Diploma awarding body that will award the Diploma.

U

UCAS

See Universities and Colleges Admission Service.

unit

The smallest part of a qualification that can be certified.

unit grade

The grade awarded for each unit. This applies to the principal learning qualification.

unit grade boundary

The lowest mark in the range deserving of a particular grade.

Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS)

UCAS is the UK central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to study for full-time first degrees. Learners who wish to progress to higher education must apply through the UCAS application system.

V

validity

The fitness for purpose of an assessment tool or scheme.

verification

A process of moderation that includes local checking of assessment processes and decisions.

W

work experience

Work experience is a placement with an employer in which a young person carries out a task – or range of tasks – and duties in much the same way as an employee, with the emphasis on learning from the experience. Work experience provides opportunities for learning about the skills and personal qualities, careers, roles and structures that exist within a workplace or organisation.

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First published by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation in 2010.

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