

# New GCSEs in Vocational Subjects

An employers' guide and overview of the new qualifications

*“The attitude and involvement of employers is critical to the success of the 14–19 reforms. We intend to engage both with employers’ organisations, and with employers themselves, especially small and medium sized enterprises.”*  
*‘14–19 extending opportunities, raising standards’ consultation document*

## **New GCSEs in Vocational Subjects**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this leaflet is to give employers an overview of the new General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in vocational subjects and to identify ways in which businesses can support the learning objectives of the qualifications which were introduced in September 2002. This is one of a series of leaflets on the new GCSEs in vocational subjects. Other leaflets address questions raised by teachers, students and parents in relation to these new qualifications.

The new qualifications will be taught in schools and colleges of further education. They provide the same standards and rigour as other GCSEs with a less theoretical and more practical approach to learning. As such they represent a positive choice for all young people. They are described as ‘Double Awards’ as they are twice the size of other GCSEs and enable learners to gain a double grade for the subject. Young people at Key Stage 4 (14 to 16 year olds) will take the new subjects at the same time as their more traditional GCSEs.

### **Purpose of the qualifications**

During Key Stage 4, or sooner, many young people form a clear interest in the world of work and in turn, gain an interest in vocational learning. The new GCSEs have been designed to develop this interest. They will provide young people with the opportunity to explore the world of work in a distinctive and innovative way.

The objectives of the new qualifications are to develop knowledge, understanding and skills relevant to a particular vocational area and sharpen general investigative, research, creative and entrepreneurial skills within a vocational context. The new qualifications aim to:

- *increase* young peoples’ understanding of the world of work;
- *enable* learners to acquire skills for working in the 21st century and for independent learning;
- *introduce* learners to a broad sector of industry and business;
- *encourage* understanding of the sector, key concepts and theories prevalent in it;
- *develop* capability in some skills used within it;

Eight new GCSE titles covering a range of subject areas, based upon the seven former Part One GNVQ subjects (plus Applied Science), are currently available. Further titles will be added in due course.

*"The new vocational GCSE's provide young people with a real opportunity to gain an insight into the world of work and the skills and capabilities required by many companies both large and small."*

ROD EDDINGTON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, BRITISH AIRWAYS.

## Applied Art and Design

Provides opportunities to understand the professional world of art, craft and design through investigating the business and commercial aspects of the industry.

## Applied Business

Enables students to acquire the knowledge, understanding and relevant business skills which will equip students with what they need to start in work or go on to further education or training.

## Engineering

Introduces the student to the process of engineering in the market place, with particular reference to design and the construction of design briefs in a range of business and industrial contexts.

## Health and Social Care

Introduces students to a wide variety of work in evaluating a range of health and social care services and organisations, increasing their knowledge and developing awareness of influences on an individual's health and well-being and examining the influences on individual development.

## Applied Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

Enables students to understand the professional world of ICT. Young people will be introduced to a wide variety of work in ICT and its applications, increasing their knowledge and developing an awareness of how ICT is used as a tool in vocational contexts in society more widely.

## Leisure and Tourism

Provides opportunities to understand the leisure and tourism industries. Students will be introduced to a variety of different branches of the industries, increasing their knowledge and developing awareness of how leisure and tourism organisations operate.

## Manufacturing

Provides insights into the process of manufacturing in a range of business operations – with particular reference to design and the construction and implementation of design briefs.

## Applied Science

Enables students to gain an understanding of the professional world of scientific activity and research. There will be ample opportunity for practical laboratory work, experimenting with a range of scientific equipment and investigating science based industries and how they work.

*“It is important that students can see the relevance of learning by providing them with an opportunity to apply their knowledge in a practical setting. The new qualifications enable teachers to work alongside business partners on the design and development of subject materials ensuring that programmes meet the needs of education and reflect the changing nature of the world of work.”*

ROD EDDINGTON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, BRITISH AIRWAYS.

## How will the new qualifications help employers?

The new GCSEs will help young people to acquire the key skills needed for when they enter the world of work. Skills such as good communication, working with numbers, information technology, problem solving and working with others are developed by each of the subjects. Studying for the new GCSEs will help prepare young people to become multi-skilled and well rounded employees and to acquire a general awareness of the world of work, including the disciplines of the work place.

Effective teaching and learning through partnerships between schools and colleges and local businesses will help to influence the quality of future employees and young peoples' career choices. Involvement of businesses with schools and colleges will help to raise the profile of a specific occupational area (such as engineering and manufacturing) and a company's profile in the community, while creating management development opportunities for young staff working with schools though widening their coaching, mentoring and evaluation skills.

Many businesses who work with schools and colleges report evidence of increased motivation of employees when they are able to help young people and make a positive contribution to the community. Having students in your company on well-structured placements and activities may also provide fresh perspectives on your industry.

## How can employers help?

You may already be involved in supporting other teaching and learning activities in schools and colleges. Depending upon the resources and

time you have available, the new GCSEs provide further opportunities for employers and schools to work together in a way which is mutually beneficial, to ensure that the courses are practical and work-related and that they reflect current and emerging practice in the workplace.

Employers can help teachers to ensure the new GCSEs encourage learning within a vocational context. That context might include:

- finding out about what people do at work, and the qualifications and training they have;
- using case studies of practice in the workplace and/or business-based materials;
- project work developed jointly by teachers and managers from local businesses;
- visits to places of employment to gain some practical experience of the skills used;
- engaging in enterprise activities with help from industry;
- undertaking a planned block or extended work experience placement or a work shadowing opportunity (to highlight the content of unit of course work).

You might also wish to explore other ways in which you can help teachers, possibly including:

- giving professional advice or mentoring students (possibly by young graduates or Modern Apprentices);
- advising/helping teachers in the planning and/or assessment of work;
- running pre-course induction programmes for students on your premises to supplement timetabled activities;

- developing a section of your corporate web site to facilitate research by teachers and students;
- arranging a seminar on your premises to brief students where staff can talk about their roles and aspects of the business relevant to courses, such as customer services, marketing, health and safety, environmental issues, career progression etc.;
- providing structured placements and work shadowing opportunities for teachers.

## Where might the new GCSEs lead?

As with all GCSEs, the new GCSEs can be used to progress to study another qualification in school or college at a higher level, such as a VCE (vocational A Level) and/or an 'AS' or 'A' level in a closely related subject. From there, students might go on to university. Some students may progress to a six unit Intermediate or Foundation GNVQ, a vocational diploma or an NVQ in the same or another vocationally specific area. Students might start work and take an Advanced Modern Apprenticeship leading to a skilled career or management training, and later to a foundation degree or other higher education course. Or they might take further training that links education to employment – such as a Foundation Modern Apprenticeship.

## Support for employers

A number of local support agencies exist who can help businesses work together to support schools and colleges, such as:

- Education Business Links Consortia ([www.dfes.gov.uk/businesslinks](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/businesslinks));

- Local Learning & Skills Councils (LLSCs) ([www.lsc.org.uk](http://www.lsc.org.uk)); and
- Connexions Partnerships ([www.dfes.gov.uk/connexions](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/connexions)).
- Local networks for schools and colleges offering the new GCSEs have been established by the DfES, supported by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) ([www.vocationallearning.org.uk](http://www.vocationallearning.org.uk)).

Other support can be found from national initiatives such as:

- Business in the Community ([www.bitc.org.uk](http://www.bitc.org.uk));
- Business Dynamics ([www.businessdynamics.org.uk](http://www.businessdynamics.org.uk));
- The Centre for Education and Industry ([www.warwick.ac.uk/cei](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/cei));
- The National Mentoring Network ([www.nmn.org.uk](http://www.nmn.org.uk));
- Trident ([www.thetridenttrust.org.uk](http://www.thetridenttrust.org.uk)); and
- Young Enterprise ([www.young-enterprise.org.uk](http://www.young-enterprise.org.uk)).

## Information for employers

Guidance for employers on providing work experience placements ([www.dfes.gov.uk/a-z/WORK\\_EXPERIENCE.html](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/a-z/WORK_EXPERIENCE.html)) and on commercial activities in schools ([www.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk)) has been produced by the DFES.

Further guidance for employers on supporting the teaching and learning for the new GCSEs and for vocational A levels, including a range of examples of successful practice, will be published by the DfES early in 2003.

## Further information

To find out more about the new GCSEs, check out the following websites.

The qualifications and subject criteria, including the common content for the new GCSEs, and signposting on how the new GCSEs relate to occupational standards in the equivalent vocational areas are on the QCA website [www.qca.org.uk](http://www.qca.org.uk).

Further information is available on the examination awarding bodies' web sites which can be found at:

AQA:	<a href="http://www.aqa.org.uk">www.aqa.org.uk</a>
Edexcel:	<a href="http://www.edexcel.org.uk">www.edexcel.org.uk</a>
OCR:	<a href="http://www.ocr.org.uk">www.ocr.org.uk</a>
WJEC:	<a href="http://www.wjec.co.uk">www.wjec.co.uk</a>
CCEA:	<a href="http://www.ccea.org.uk">www.ccea.org.uk</a>

The LSDA website can be found at [www.lsda.org.uk](http://www.lsda.org.uk). Businesses can join the LSDA database for regular up-dates on developments by phoning 0870 872 8080.

You may also wish to view the DfES website at [www.dfes.gov.uk/qualifications](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/qualifications) where we would welcome your comments on this leaflet under 'Feedback' on the 'Home page'.

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