

For:

- Project tutors and coordinators
- Senior leadership teams
- Teachers and lecturers



**Qualifications
and Curriculum
Development
Agency**

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**2010
Foundation,
higher and
extended
projects**

**Delivering foundation,
higher and extended projects
Principles and case studies**

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Introduction

Projects bring together different elements of the 14–19 curriculum in a purposeful activity. They can be taken by students in any of the four main qualification suites for 14- to 19 year olds: GCSE and A levels; the Diploma; apprenticeships and Foundation Learning. Projects lead to qualifications that attract school and college attainment and achievement table points and, for the extended project, UCAS points. They are a constituent part of the Diploma and must be completed by students to achieve a Diploma.

This publication is for teachers and managers delivering foundation, higher or extended projects. It offers practical guidance on delivering projects, including principles of effective practice and case studies from schools and colleges that already have experience of delivering projects. The case studies show how different centres have introduced and supported projects and worked in partnership with other organisations.

In addition to this guidance, QCDA has produced a short film showing how some schools and colleges are delivering foundation, higher and extended projects.

The film is available on the QCDA website, www.qcda.gov.uk.

Principles of effective practice

Foundation and higher projects develop inquisitive and independent learners who are inspired by new areas or methods of study and are able to plan and review their own learning, develop and apply skills, and use their learning experiences to support their personal aspirations.

Extended projects develop critical, reflective and independent learners. For extended projects, learners largely choose and design their own project, improve their learning and performance and develop skills in decision making, planning, research, critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and presentation.

The following principles are based on the experience of schools and colleges that are already delivering projects.

- is co-constructed with learners and partners to provide opportunities to extend learning
 - ensures learners are enthused and clear about what the project entails
 - includes a taught component to ensure learners have the knowledge and skills to choose and manage their project
 - provides guidance to ensure projects are realistic and well focused
 - promotes independent learning and the application of skills
 - provides opportunities for review and constructive feedback so that targets for improvement are clear
 - supports high-quality outcomes and is sufficiently flexible to allow scope for different types of outcome.
-

Principles of effective practice

A well-designed project curriculum and assessment process:

- is well resourced in terms of staffing, teaching time, learner support and access to information and materials
- is planned to ensure appropriate project timing and fit with the main curriculum and/or wider activities
- provides for the full range of capabilities and establishes high aspirations for all

For each of these principles, there are a number of indicators of effective practice. These are outlined below.

Indicators of effective practice

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process is *well resourced in terms of staffing, teaching time, learner support and access to information and materials.*

- Provision is coordinated across the centre.
- Staff are skilled in facilitating project work.
- Staff have sufficient time for teaching, ongoing supervision and assessing projects.
- The staff:learner ratio is realistic.
- Resources are adequate for learners' needs.

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process is *planned to ensure appropriate project timing and fit with the main curriculum and/or wider activities.*

- Projects are timed so that learners are mature enough and can use the experience gained from the project to support their progression plans.
- There is scope to draw on other learning areas.
- Pressure points for other work are avoided.
- Learners have time to complete their project and review their learning, and assemble evidence.

Please refer to JCQ rules for coursework for further guidance www.jcq.org.uk.

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process *provides for the full range of capabilities and establishes high aspirations for all.*

- Learners are encouraged to identify the relevance of projects to their personal experiences, interests and aspirations.
- Learners' needs are assessed against project requirements and equality, diversity and inclusion issues are addressed.
- Choice of project level takes account of prior knowledge and skills and enables learners to achieve at the highest standard.
- Teaching and learning strategies build learners' confidence in responding to project challenges.

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process is *co-constructed with learners and partners to provide opportunities to extend learning.*

- Different ways of enriching the project experience are identified through collaboration with partners.
- Learners explore ideas with tutors and partners, including new areas of learning and methods.
- Partners and learners are briefed and supported in planning and preparing for project activities.

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process *ensures learners are enthused and clear about what the project entails.*

- Projects are introduced in active and innovative ways that motivate learners and provide an insight into project styles of working.
- Learners understand:
 - project aims and benefits, including relevance to their progression plans
 - project processes, including the need to evaluate their own learning
 - the importance of planning, reviewing and recording project activities
 - the different types of project outcome, evidence and project assessments.

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process *includes a taught component to ensure learners have the knowledge and skills to choose and manage their project.*

- Teaching time is organised in ways that suit learners' needs and are practicable for the centre.
- Learners are taught methods and skills for research, project management and presentations, building on prior learning.

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process *provides guidance to ensure projects are realistic and well focused.*

- Advice is given on how to scope a project topic to ensure it is not too broad or narrow.
- Learners are advised on how to phrase their project title as a question, hypothesis or brief that can be followed through to conclusion.
- Learners are helped to consider what they propose to do in terms of time and resources, and ability to sustain interest and motivation.
- Information, advice and guidance is available to make clear the implications of project choice and timing for progression purposes.

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process *promotes independent learning and the application of skills.*

- Opportunities are provided for learners to:
 - talk explicitly about independent learning skills
 - learn, develop and practise skills, supported by interventions to encourage skills development
 - consolidate and apply skills to suit different tasks, problems or situations
 - assess their skills to identify what they can do well and what they need to improve.

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process *provides opportunities for review and constructive feedback so that targets for improvement are clear.*

- At each stage of the project process, learners are supported in reviewing, target setting and planning.
- Supervisors question learners about their project to prompt reflection, act as a sounding board for ideas, help them to think through ways of solving any problems and encourage commitment to action that will keep projects on track.
- Formative assessment is integral to project teaching and learning.

A well designed project curriculum and assessment process *supports high-quality outcomes, and is sufficiently flexible to allow scope for different types of outcome.*

- The type(s) of project outcome best suit learners' interests, capabilities and project topic.
- The form and quality of evidence is logically ordered, relevant and appropriate to the project type; it shows clearly that all the assessment criteria have been met by each candidate.
- There is quality assurance, including assessor training and internal standardisation, to make sure that:
 - once work is submitted for final assessment it is not revised
 - there is consistency in assessments across assessors, programmes and project types
 - plagiarism is detected and addressed
 - the same piece of work is not submitted for the extended project and another qualification
 - project provision is monitored and evaluated, with outcomes shared to improve practice.

Planning and reviewing

There are two dimensions to the planning and reviewing process.

- **Schools and colleges** need to carry out whole-curriculum planning to coordinate, timetable and monitor project provision across the school, college and/or consortium.
- **Learners** should understand the importance of planning and reviewing and should have opportunities at each stage of the project process to review their work, as a minimum at halfway through the process and again towards the end.

Schools and colleges need to give careful consideration to the timing and location of projects, and the teaching inputs and support required at different stages. Projects need to be well resourced, with good quality assurance in place. Internal moderation will ensure high-quality outcomes and consistency in assessment across assessors, programmes and project types.

The pilot showed that centres missed opportunities to engage partners, both internal and external, to enrich project experiences and to support learners. The variety of project formats was often limited: outcomes were mainly written, even though other formats such as an artefact, a live performance or an investigation might better have demonstrated appropriate evidence of the strengths of some learners.

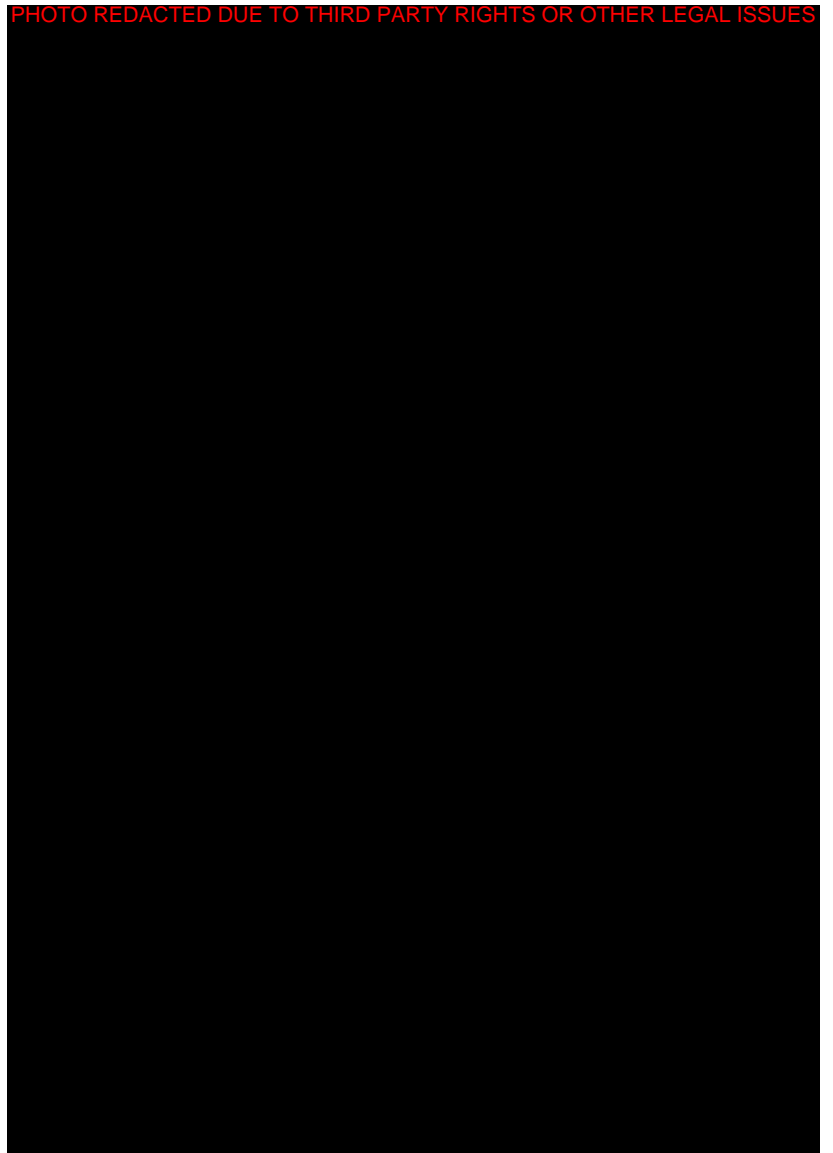
This document includes more detailed guidance on curriculum and timetabling, teaching and learning and partnership working.

Supporting learners

One of the main issues from the pilot was student support, especially the quality of the planning and review process. Finding an appropriate balance between offering enough guidance and offering too much can be challenging. Although students need help to make their projects realistic and well focused, too much help limits independent learning and achievement. Project teachers need training so that they are confident and skilled in project supervision.

Project tutors and supervisors must be skilled in providing constructive feedback as part of assessment for learning. Questions are helpful when they are open, probing and opinion-seeking; approaches that establish facts and supportive statements or interjections, for example offering alternative options, are also useful.

Such feedback should be offered on a regular basis, as close as possible to the relevant activity. The information should help learners build on what is good, inspire them to maintain a positive attitude towards themselves and their work, and encourage action for moving forward and meeting the required standard. Learners may need help to receive, challenge (where appropriate) and act on feedback. Feedback can be provided online as well as face to face.



Effective assessment for learning involves:

- sharing learning goals with learners
 - helping learners know and recognise the standards to aim for
 - providing feedback that helps learners identify how to improve their project work
 - believing that every learner can improve in comparison with previous achievements
 - both the teacher and learners reviewing and reflecting on learners' performance and progress
 - helping learners develop self-assessment techniques to discover areas they need to improve
 - recognising that both motivation and self-esteem, crucial for effective learning and progress, can be increased by effective assessment techniques.
-

An example of learner support as part of the plan, do and review process

To produce projects that are well planned and well focused, students need:

- guidance (tutor acting as a 'sounding board') on ideas for project topic and advice on suitability, with alternative options given if initial ideas are inappropriate
- advice about identifying research questions, hypotheses or objectives
- questions to prompt thinking about project rationale
- suggestions for possible starting points for the initial research
- information and advice about the appropriate level/ type of project, and progression opportunities
- guidance to support realistic target setting and project planning (steps, resources, support)
- advice on the feasibility of the plan and scope for meeting the assessment objectives.

Plan



Review

To support reviewing and evaluation, students need:

- supportive statements and questions to prompt evaluation of own learning and performance
- questions to elicit opinion on how far the project focus is being sustained
- accurate feedback on their performance and standard of work
- alternative options to be offered if the project is losing focus or has other problems
- encouragement to consider and record any changes to plan, and advice on next steps.

Do

To encourage reflection on performance and commitment to action, students need:

- questions to prompt thinking about what is going well and less well, and about any changes needed
- advice on skill development
- questions to elicit opinion about how to solve any problems
- alternative options to be offered to encourage them to make their own decisions, with further sources of support given if needed
- encouragement to decide on next steps, and advice on their appropriateness.



Curriculum and timetabling

Projects can make a major contribution to the aims of the curriculum by:

- developing successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens who understand quality and how to improve
- providing a focus for learning in terms of developing attitudes, skills, knowledge and understanding
- encouraging learners to explore in depth, and make connections between different subjects, curriculum dimensions and contexts.

However, to begin to realise this potential, project timing, timetabling and course structure need to be planned in relation to learners' entire learning experience and co-constructed with learners and partners.

Fit with the curriculum

Centres have found that curriculum planning needs to consider the project's fit with the curriculum, wider activities and relevant deadlines, for example for applications to higher education.

Links with core subjects

With careful planning of teaching and learning objectives, projects offer opportunities to apply, extend and consolidate learning relating to the core subject areas of English, mathematics and ICT at key stage 4. Post-16 learners can continue to build on and apply core subject concepts, processes and content gained in key stage 4.

Projects can be used to deliver elements of the national curriculum at key stage 4, for example:

Subject	Example
English	The range of non-fiction and non-literary texts studied should include forms such as journalism, travel writing, essays, reportage, literary non-fiction, print media and multimodal texts
Mathematics	The study of mathematics should enable students to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding to relevant, real-world situations
Information and communications technology (ICT)	The study of ICT should include use of increasingly demanding problems and more complex information from a wide range of sources in a variety of contexts

The following tables show how some elements of the programmes of study for English, mathematics and ICT relate to key project tasks:

- select a project topic and title
- plan
- conduct research
- develop intended outcome
- share project outcome
- evaluate project outcome and own learning and performance.

English

Key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creativity</i>: make fresh connections between ideas, experiences, texts and words; use creative approaches to answer questions, solve problems/develop ideas. • <i>Competence</i>: read and understand detail and gain overview of texts from a wide range of sources; make independent judgements about how to communicate effectively. • <i>Critical understanding</i>: form independent views, challenging what is heard or read on the grounds of logic, evidence or argument.
Key processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reading</i>: analyse and evaluate information, events and ideas; analyse and evaluate how form, layout and presentation contribute to effect; reflect on origin/purpose of texts and assess their usefulness. • <i>Writing</i>: 'composition' and 'technical accuracy' elements. • <i>Speaking and listening</i>: present information clearly/ persuasively, selecting the most appropriate way to structure and organise speech for clarity and effect.
Range and content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Writing</i>: develop and sustain ideas/views cogently and persuasively; use formal, impersonal and concise expression to explain or describe information/ideas relevantly and clearly; analyse/evaluate subject matter, supporting views/opinions with a range of evidence. • <i>Reading</i>: texts chosen to allow depth / breadth, enabling connections to be made. • <i>Speaking and listening</i>: prepare formal presentation/debates.
Curriculum opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Speaking and listening</i>: develop speaking and listening skills through work that makes cross-curricular links; participate in debate, discussion, live talks and presentations, engaging in dialogue with experts, members of the community and unfamiliar adults; make purposeful presentations, to speak with authority on significant subjects; evaluate and respond constructively to own/others' performances. • <i>Writing</i>: develop independence in writing on paper and on screen; produce extended writing to develop ideas in depth/detail; use as a means of reflecting on and exploring a range of views/perspectives on the world.

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Mathematics

Key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Competence</i>: select appropriate mathematical tools and methods. • <i>Applications and implications of mathematics</i>: understand that mathematics is used as a tool in a wide range of contexts. • <i>Creativity</i>: combine understanding, experiences, imagination and reasoning to construct new knowledge.
Key processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Representing</i>: identify mathematical aspects of the situation or problem; select mathematical information, methods, tools and models. • <i>Use appropriate procedures</i>: make accurate mathematical diagrams, graphs and constructions on paper and on screen. • <i>Analysing</i>: identify a range of techniques to tackle a problem. • <i>Communicating and reflecting</i>: use a range of forms to communicate findings to different audiences.
Range and content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Statistics</i>: all four elements could be addressed in particular projects such as investigations.
Curriculum opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on problems arising in other subjects/contexts beyond school; • work on open and closed tasks in a variety of real/abstract contexts that allow selection of mathematics; develop confidence in an increasing range of methods/techniques; work collaboratively as well as independently in a range of contexts.

ICT

Key concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Capability</i>: use a range of ICT tools in a purposeful way to tackle questions, solve problems and create ideas and solutions of value. • <i>Exploring ideas and manipulating information</i>: solve problems creatively by using ICT to explore ideas and try alternatives. • <i>Critical evaluation</i>: recognise that information must not be taken at face value, but must be analysed/evaluated; review and reflect critically on what is produced.
Key processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Finding information</i>: select appropriate information from a wide range of sources, show discrimination in choices and judge value, accuracy, plausibility, bias. • <i>Evaluating</i>: evaluate the effectiveness of ICT-based solutions using results to improve quality and inform future work. • <i>Communicating information</i>: use a range of ICT tools/media to share, exchange and present information effectively in a variety of contexts.
Range and content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a range of ICT tools to meet the needs of the user and solve problems; develop understanding of need to keep information secure and minimise risks, manage information; use increasingly demanding problems and more complex information from a wide range of sources/contexts.
Curriculum opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use ICT in other subjects/areas with contexts that are relevant, interesting; make choices about when/where it is appropriate to exploit technology in other areas of learning/everyday life; be independent, discriminating, reflective when choosing when to use technology; apply ICT to real-world situations when solving problems, carrying out a range of tasks and enquiries; evaluate experiences of using ICT.

Links with cross-curricular, enrichment and extracurricular activities

Cross-curricular dimensions offer a rich source of project topics and contexts, encouraging links to personal interests and connections across subject areas.

The curriculum dimensions are: identity and cultural diversity; healthy lifestyles; community participation; enterprise; global dimension and sustainable development; technology and the media; creativity; and critical thinking. One or more dimensions can be chosen as group themes from which individuals can choose their own topic.

Other opportunities for engaging learners in projects might include:

- partnership activities such as those organised with other schools, further education colleges or local universities, or community organisations such as theatres, museums and art galleries
- experiences of work such as extended work placements and part-time or voluntary work
- award schemes and competitions, such as the Dance Leadership Award, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, Young Enterprise or the British Council's International Schools Award
- voluntary activities in further education through, for example, the student union and enrichment activities such as citizenship.

Links with other taught programmes

There are many opportunities for making links with other study areas, whether learners choose a topic based on personal interest or one arising from a specific programme of study or Diploma line of learning. However, care must be taken to avoid overlap with a project component in another qualification. Projects must clearly show extension to learning and be assessed against the project assessment criteria. The same piece of work should not be submitted for more than one qualification.

Projects can link with qualifications such as A levels and GCSEs by being integrated into lessons to extend and apply learning in creative ways. They can be used as an extension qualification for AS and A2 courses, stretching the most able students by giving them additional time to work with subject specialists. Where there is no timetabled link, learners can still apply their skills and knowledge from other subjects in their research and the type of project they develop, such as an artefact, design or performance; equally, new knowledge and ways of thinking can deepen understanding across their studies.

Projects within Diplomas must be based on topics that complement and develop themes and topics of principal learning; they can also be used to support learner progression and career aims, and offer opportunities for applied learning. Topics can be used to draw connections between principal learning and other aspects of the Diploma programme, for example work experience, functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS).

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“The Project within the Diploma and the stand-alone Extended Project appear to give a lot of freedom to teachers and learners to pursue a topic of the learner’s choice and could provide excellent opportunities for curriculum development...which is shared by several partners in education – higher education and employers... [and has] assessment for learning as an integral part of curriculum planning.”

The whole curriculum 14–19, Nuffield Review of 14–19 Education and Training. Issues Paper, April 2008.

Projects can be used to enhance other qualifications and programmes, such as learning programmes to re-engage disaffected learners. Research, project management and presentation skills can be included in work-related learning or work-based programmes such as apprenticeships. Projects can encourage independent learning, creativity and expression within highly structured, skills-based courses through sector-specific assignments. In some cases they can also link to higher education modules.

Linking projects and learning programmes – an example

In one centre making projects part of a *Study Plus* programme offers a flexible approach for students of differing abilities who have language and/or behavioural difficulties, or who need additional one-to-one support in literacy and numeracy.

Foundation or higher projects are developed with a small group of learners in the summer of year 10, with the intention that most would be entered in year 11. Last year, the group chose to do individual projects on topics linked to active citizenship and personal interest. Most prepared a slide presentation with a supporting artefact or essay.

At least three hours per week are spent on projects in *Study Plus* sessions, including individual tutorials and directed study time. The taught element is provided on an as needed basis and focused on helping learners understand the assessment criteria and ways the project could benefit their careers and future study. Students look at research skills, such as how to use websites, and also project management. Outside timetabled time, learners use the centre's email system to maintain contact with staff and obtain constructive feedback.

Project evaluation was tackled through watching selected episodes of *The Apprentice*. The teacher noted that students "identified characteristics in certain candidates that would stop them from being effective project managers, for example interpersonal skills and attitudes or not being organised."

Delivery models

Centres have found more than one way of delivering projects. Different models for timing projects and timetabling project activities are shown below, including the advantages and disadvantages of each model. Some centres have found it helpful to combine models, for example starting off with separate sessions for the taught element and then providing project support in other ways.

Projects are funded as other qualifications, but to overcome potential funding cap issues some post-16 centres offer projects in students' second year. Some centres have also obtained funding for project activities from other sources such as local authority partnership funds, Aim Higher and the Widening Participation budget of higher education partners, and sponsorship from employers.

The detailed case studies in section 8 include information about timing, timetabling and course structure in a range of centres.

Project delivery models

Projects take place:	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> at the end of a course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An opportunity to consolidate and extend learning. Something different to stimulate interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students could have low energy reserves and fail to complete or present projects and/or assemble the required evidence before leaving.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the middle of a one-year course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could enable a themed approach with project topics inspired by/linked to aspects of the course. Could help to sustain interest, test out skills and knowledge already gained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be difficult to build in sufficient time for assessments and presentations. Competing pressure of other subject work and any examinations may distract learners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> towards the end of the first year of a two-year course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows time for learners to have matured and settled into their course, and know what really interests them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be too much pressure on less able learners who need to catch up in preparation for year 2.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> running over the end of the first year and start of the second year, with learners encouraged to carry out research in summer break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Intensive research opportunity Learners are not bound by other timetable restrictions. Opportunity to carry out action research in an extended work placement or summer school context. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to ICT/multimedia facilities, laboratories, workshops or studios, and technical support over holiday. Some learners may have care responsibilities that make it difficult to work at home. Learners will be at different stages of progress at the start of term, which could be hard to manage.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'roll-on/roll-off' approach in which learners start or finish at different times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beneficial for some students who want to complete as soon as possible because of other course commitments, or to meet deadlines for applications. Only way of fitting projects into some programmes, such as Entry to Employment (E2E) and other training provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Particularly difficult for group projects. Could be hard to monitor across a large cohort.

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Project activities:	Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> are integrated with timetabled sessions of other subjects/other opportunities throughout a programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Could encourage learners to make links with their other subject(s), think outside the box and investigate topics in new, creative ways. Ready access to subject experts Provides flexibility to fit with opportunities already available. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The main programme could dominate, meaning less priority is given by staff/learners to completing projects. The project experience may lose coherence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> take place during project-specific timetabled sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated time for taught element and tutorials. Can allow for regular access to ICT resources. Ready access to supervisors and constructive feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May clash with other option choices. Pressure on learners who are taking more than three other AS or A2 subjects.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> take place, either completely or in part, through extracurricular arrangements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduces pressure on the timetable. Allows access to specialist teaching areas and equipment, eg for art or science. May facilitate access to external partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be difficult to cope with if group numbers are too large for the allocated timeslot. Depends on a high level of learner and supervisor commitment and motivation.

Teaching and learning

As a significant element of 14–19 reform, projects have an important role in personalised learning and skills development. They also contribute to the achievement of the *Every Child Matters* outcomes (in particular ‘enjoy and achieve’).

Personalised learning

Projects enable learners to exercise choice, actively engage with and shape their curriculum and see the relevance of their learning. Projects should encourage learners to identify projects that are relevant to their personal experiences, interests and aspirations. They develop independent learners who are challenged to reflect on their learning and identify how they can improve.

By personalising learning, projects can offer stretch and challenge through:

- different research tasks that relate to learners’ interests (*individualisation*)
- breadth of study and wider experiences (*enrichment*)
- encouraging a deeper understanding of a subject, and/or new methods of study, as well as independent work on more challenging tasks (*extension*)
- independent progression at a level and pace best suited to learners’ needs (*acceleration*).

Approaches to teaching and learning

Projects are designed with different levels, formats and scope so that learners with diverse needs can engage in high-quality, relevant and personally meaningful learning experiences. However, project provision needs to be planned and monitored so that any potential barriers to learning can be addressed and learners can make the most of project opportunities.

Current thinking about 14–19 pedagogy, especially in relation to the Diploma, suggests that learners benefit from:

- a personalised approach that recognises the variety of ways young people mature and develop their capacity to be self-directing
- rich and varied learning environments with authentic tasks
- different ways of learning, including learning by doing and using new technologies and collaborative problem-based approaches that meet affective as well as cognitive needs
- playing a central role in planning and reviewing their own learning to meet their interests and needs
- interacting with a variety of others, particularly those with experience of working in relevant subject/sector contexts
- assessment for learning to develop meta-cognitive capabilities, such as reflection, that promote deeper learning and the making of connections between subject areas and contexts.

Projects offer developmental opportunities for learners to experience a dynamic and negotiated relationship with their teachers, as partners in the planning and learning process. Learners can capitalise on opportunities within and beyond the curriculum, and take part in innovative experiences spanning a variety of learning environments. Projects can encourage communication and activities with a range of different people, promoting partnership working by offering a purpose and focus for collaborative effort.

Projects can help students develop and apply the higher order skills that are essential for higher education. As a coherent piece of work, projects can consolidate functional skills and develop personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS). Different aspects of the project will use different skills, including creative thinking, self-managing and reflecting on learning. Some projects may also offer opportunities to develop and use skills required for working as part of a team and participating effectively.

There is scope across foundation, higher and extended projects for progressive skill improvement. To promote skills development, learners need:

- opportunities to identify and discuss the skills they possess and need to develop
- interventions that enable them to develop and practise skills, as well as constructive feedback
- a range of project activities to consolidate and apply skills to suit different tasks, problems and situations
- opportunities to review skills development, using self and peer assessment to identify what they can do well and what they need to improve.

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The extended project and higher education

The extended project aims to support students' aspirations and many higher education institutions have recognised its value in developing critical, reflective and independent learners who are capable of applying a range of higher order skills.

Supporting applications to higher education

The extended project is useful to students because it strengthens applications to higher education and attracts UCAS tariff points (equivalent to an AS qualification). It will also prepare them better to cope with studying at university.

UCAS tariff points for the free-standing extended project qualification

A* = 70 A = 60 B = 50
C = 40 D = 30 E = 20

Points cannot be additionally counted where the project is taken as part of a Progression or Advanced Diploma as the project is already included in the overall allocation of points for these qualifications.

However, students should understand that entry requirements for specific courses are at the discretion of the individual college or university. They should be advised to check these requirements and encouraged to view projects more broadly in terms of their potential to support higher education applications and preparation for higher-level study and employment.

« When I went for my interview at Cambridge, I was able to talk about my project and the interviewers were interested in hearing about how my ideas came about. »

« I wanted to do criminology at higher education and the extended project gave me an insight into a future career and a real interest. It was around work with an ex-offender group – I still do volunteering with this group. »

Extended project students

Students can highlight their project topic on the UCAS application form. The personal statement can be used to illustrate how the project has developed skills and knowledge relevant not only to higher education, but also graduate employment, which is a key concern for universities.

Undergraduates who completed an extended project before applying to higher education can explain to students how projects can be useful in higher education.

Undergraduate reflections on the extended project

Student at Durham University studying natural sciences

“My project topic on the philosophy and science of the Big Bang had always interested me. It wasn’t really linked to my career plans although it provided the research skills I need now... It gave me an opportunity to choose a topic of personal interest – more motivating. It was surprisingly fun and I learnt a lot of knowledge and skills – writing, researching, patience, commitment and organisation (meeting deadlines: an issue at times). It’s a good topic of conversation with fellow academics – good, deep knowledge on a specific area seems impressive. It was the best course I have done – really liberating and refreshing. I would absolutely recommend others to do it. I mentioned the project at interviews – skills used in writing are transferable.”

Student studying economics and law at the University of Leicester

“I achieved grade A [in my extended project qualification], which was what I expected. I was looking at climate change and how it affects everyone. I think it’s such a big issue today. I wanted to study more about it. I thought the project dissertation and presentation were demanding...

I had to think on my own and keep motivated. Doing a topic like climate change, there were so many journals, books and articles, which are processed everyday, so it was hard to keep up with it at first, but it gave me a lot of material to use. My course doesn’t have project work until the final year. But, I have been able to use the skills I developed. In particular I have been more precise in my writing and thorough in studying a topic.”

Student studying medicine at St George's, University of London

"I investigated the reasons why the UK is operating an opt-in system for organ donation and whether it would be more beneficial to change current legislation. My project topic was extremely relevant to my career plans (medicine). I will be faced with organ donation in a clinical setting and now have a much better understanding of not only the science, but the ethical issues behind it.

I was given choice and the project stretched and motivated me. It was like no other subject – all the other lessons were very syllabus-based and didn't allow much for further exploration of topics. This format of qualification allows you to investigate and research a question which actually interests you. My research skills definitely improved, as well as my evaluation of source reliability. I've also become better at meeting deadlines and knowing what, and what not, to include in the finished piece. The skills I developed through the project will be invaluable to me next year when I must research topics, write essays and produce concise bibliographies, and for considering ethical issues."

Student on a youth and community development course at De Montfort University

"I aim to have a career in mentoring students at school or college. I produced a booklet on my understanding of mentoring for my extended project. I think I gained a better understanding of the topic and certainly hope to apply my new learning to future work. The project developed my knowledge on the subject area and I've been inspired to volunteer to support extended projects in schools, although it may be hard to fit around university time."

Taken from *Evaluation of the extended project*, QCDA, March 2009.

Students can use university course details and entry profiles of disciplines that they are interested in to:

- generate ideas for project topics
- motivate them to engage seriously in skill development
- inform their choice of project format (for example investigation, performance, artefact, dissertation, combined form) so that relevant skills and knowledge can be shown in the most effective way.

The entry profiles include experiences, skills and qualities relevant to particular courses, and link to UK-wide employability profiles relating to the respective disciplines.

Examples of graduate employability skills for higher education courses

Biosciences

- Apply practical skills, including designing, planning, conducting and reporting on investigations through individual/group projects.
- Analyse critically and assess information and data, and their setting within a theoretical framework.
- Apply numeracy, communications and information technology skills efficiently.
- Use effective interpersonal and team-working skills including demonstrating an appreciation of the interdisciplinary nature of science and the validity of different points of view.
- Deploy appropriate practical and presentational techniques and methodologies, including data analysis and the use of statistics to communicate results.

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Communications, media, film and cultural studies

- Organise and manage supervised, self-directed projects.
 - Deliver work to a given brief and deadline, referencing sources and ideas and using a problem-solving approach.
 - Retrieve and generate information and evaluate sources in carrying out research.
 - Initiate, develop and realise distinctive and creative work in writing, visual, audiovisual or other electronic form.
 - Work flexibly, creatively and independently with self-discipline, self-direction and reflexivity.
 - Evaluate own work in a reflexive manner with reference to academic and professional issues and debates.
 - Use ideas and information to argue cogently in written, oral or other form.
 - Use ICT skills, including web-based technology or multimedia and develop specific proficiencies in media technologies.
-

Law

- Act independently in planning and undertaking tasks.
 - Identify accurately issues that require researching.
 - Research independently in areas of law not previously studied starting from standard legal information sources.
 - Identify and retrieve up-to-date legal information, using paper and electronic sources.
 - Judge critically the merits of particular arguments.
 - Present and make a reasoned choice between alternative solutions.
 - Apply knowledge to a situation of limited complexity so as to provide arguable conclusions for concrete, actual or hypothetical problems.
 - Present knowledge or an argument in a way that is comprehensible to others.
 - Read and discuss legal materials.
 - Use, present and evaluate information provided in numerical or statistical form.
 - Produce word-processed essays and text and present such work in an appropriate form.
 - Reflect on own learning and proactively seek and make use of feedback.
-

Working in partnership with higher education and employers

Collaboration with a range of partners can enrich the project experience and extend learning. The definition of partners includes employers and their employees, as well as self-employed people such as artists,

specialists in relevant fields, higher education staff and higher education student mentors. However, schools and colleges must make sure that any partners are suitably prepared for project activities.

Key success factors for partnership working

- Start with mutual benefit in mind – what the partner might realistically gain from participating in a project. Plan how to sustain involvement.
- An early **briefing for learners** on appropriate ways of working with partners as part of the taught element so that it becomes more of an expectation than an ad hoc activity. Students should understand:
 - why working with partners enhances the quality of the project
 - the different kinds of partners they could work with
 - who to approach and why they might be appropriate
 - how to make an initial approach, being clear about what they are asking for
 - what to expect, what might be available and what would be reasonable to ask for
 - the importance of considering the other person's point of view
 - the importance of making every effort to keep to an agreed arrangement
 - how to avoid making over-ambitious or unrealistic plans for engaging with employers.
- **A briefing for partners** on roles and responsibilities and on the project qualification itself. The briefing type should be appropriate for the potential involvement.
- **Ongoing support** for partners and learners with opportunities for reflection on progress to date or changes required.
- Where appropriate, look for ways of involving partners in *project* presentations by exploring mutually agreeable timings, structures and venues. Partners are more likely to attend and give productive feedback to learners if they feel they have a vested interest and properly understand the context.
- **Debrief partners** and take their recommendations into consideration when planning future engagement in projects. Make sure that the students and the centre thank them properly and acknowledge their contribution appropriately.
- **Find out learners' views** on how their experiences with partners have helped them. Consider their suggestions for how future project learners might work more effectively with employers and other partners.

Working in partnership with higher education

Students and staff from higher education are an additional resource for projects at all levels.

They can:

- act as mentors for project activities
- give subject input and advice on specific project topics
- provide expertise in research methods
- offer visits and access to libraries, online resources, virtual learning environments and specialist facilities
- run events or competitions that encourage project activities and recognise achievements.

Some universities have school liaison officers, and individual students, staff and departments may be willing to help. Some projects are being promoted through the *Widening Participation* agenda and there are schemes that can be used to support project work such as *researchers in residence*. However, funding can be an issue, especially for more formalised partnership arrangements. This issue needs to be resolved at the start of negotiations, with partners kept fully informed.

There are examples of partnerships with higher education and employers in the case studies in section 8 and in the accompanying film on the QCDA website.

“From my own experience of higher education, I think it’s absolutely vital for students to understand the demands of managing their own learning. The extended project seems to play a useful part in preparing students for the demands of university study. But there are also challenges...a need to understand the implications of resourcing. For the project to be successful, my advice would be: emphasise the enjoyment. It’s hard work, but students also welcome (most of the time) the change of learning style.”

Project mentor

“I work with a Diploma consortium building a network for learning... learners are given the title of associate students...A number of universities are enabling students to make use of their library – some give them library cards, access to artefacts and equipment. Bursaries have been made by research organisations to support the teaching of research skills in university laboratories. There are various resources freely available [and] centres would benefit from trusted resources, quality assured. But then there is the question of intelligent use of such resources – there’s a need for a champion on both sides.”

Higher education representative

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Working in partnership with employers

Involving representatives from business and the wider community in supporting projects can benefit all involved.

- The project gives learners skills and confidence in real work environments, meeting experts from different sectors. By equipping learners with the skills and confidence to access real work environments, authentic tasks and people with experience and expertise in different sectors, centres can add depth and relevance to the overall project experience.

- Employers and companies can see tangible benefits when they contribute to a learner's project over an extended period of time.
- Direct contact with external partners allows learners to research careers as part of their project, testing their own skills and aptitudes. At key stage 4, links with employers can be part of work-related learning and careers and enterprise education.

To secure such benefits, learners and partners must be fully briefed and supported.

Employer partners

Learners can find suitable employers by making contact with:

- people within the centre – enterprise education and work-related learning managers, careers staff, employer engagement coordinators, senior leadership team, subject staff, governors
- centre partners – parents/carers and relatives, further education colleges and local universities, community partners such as those linked to the centre’s specialist status
- external brokers – Education Business Partnerships, STEMNET Science and Engineering Ambassadors, Diploma Employer Champions Network
- organisations that have employer networks or are likely to have databases of such information, such as chambers of commerce, 14–19 partnerships, Diploma consortia, Aim Higher, the British Council.

Through these channels, learners can investigate opportunities to gain support for their project work from:

- existing employer links, such as those developed by centres and Diploma consortia relating to:
 - work experience, enterprise education, careers-related activities, mentoring, or subject-specific work-related links
 - the centre’s specialist status or interests such as performing arts, sports, science, business and enterprise
 - companies contracted to supply goods or services to the centre and its community
- new employer links relating to different subject areas and Diploma lines of learning
- different types of partner, including senior managers and employees in the public and private sectors, training providers, organisations offering apprenticeships, employer and trades union bodies, and staff working in voluntary and charitable organisations.

Developing project skills through an enterprise challenge

All Diploma students were encouraged to enter the *Make Your Mark Challenge* during Global Enterprise week. This competition helped students develop skills that were useful in their projects, for example researching an idea for a product or service in a strict timeframe and working as a team to develop the idea and test it through limited market research.

Students presented the idea and associated business plan to a group of ‘dragons’, including a local employer and a university representative. After the judging, students shared their experiences online through a link with a college in another country that had taken part in a similar event the same week.

Creative and media Diploma students made a video of the presentations, and also developed useful project skills in working to tight deadlines, reacting flexibly to changes in schedules and keeping calm under pressure.

How employers can support projects

The amount of employer engagement and involvement of other external partners will vary from centre to centre. It will depend upon project topics, time available, and whether projects are explicitly linked to specific work-experience placements or whether company premises, for example, are to be used as a general inspiration for projects. Enterprise education activities offer a particularly relevant context for developing project skills, as well as full-scale projects of different types, with inputs by employers who are skilled in project management.

Employers can help learners with their projects in many ways such as adding a professional dimension to topic selection, research processes and outcomes.

Type of help	Real example
Providing ideas and setting briefs for projects	One employer suggested ideas for a student's project: she went on to investigate the benefits for his company of ISO9001 compared with other accreditations, developing knowledge of products and company practices. Another set a design brief for developing a website for a local community project, acting as a mentor throughout the process. Others provided a work-related perspective on dissertation subjects.
Providing inspiration for topics, eg through access to work-based learning zones	Learners found inspiration for project topics by taking part in a series of introductory and practical workshops run on a carousel basis in a learning centre by employees and self-employed people. This also encouraged learners to consider different types of project (designs, artefacts and performances).
Offering access to authentic resources and experiences	A member of a sailing club acted as a tourist guide for the club for a work-experience placement, and then made this the topic of his foundation project. Some students contacted the local recycling manager and the head of refuse collection, obtaining information and resources relating to real practice.
Providing access to premises or staff for research purposes	A student with an interest in horses investigated how effectively different supplements help racehorses develop. A local manufacturer arranged for him to interview a company nutritionist and salesperson, and to research the views of racehorse trainers in Ireland.
Organising visits – helping students find inspiration and contacts	A group of students undertaking a level 1 qualification in British Sign Language also completed an extended project. A starting point for choosing topics was a visit to the 'Deaf World' exhibition presented by a network of local community organisations and national charities. The students made many useful contacts who continued to support them in their research.

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Type of help	Real example
Visiting a centre to give useful feedback	Two business partners skilled in project-management techniques shared their expertise and specific knowledge about their sector. They supported staff in running an enterprise activity and provided feedback to students.
Acting as a mentor	A project manager hosted a Diploma launch, inviting practitioners from the core sectors with the aim of finding mentors for individual projects.
Providing information and answering queries	Students were encouraged to make contact with external organisations and were tutored in ways to do this as part of their taught component. They obtained information from a range of different organisations such as environmental bodies, embassies and art galleries.
Providing an informed and interested audience for presentations	The college arranged for special timeslots for learners to deliver their presentations, coordinating this with external partners who were involved in supporting the projects. Partners were able to ask probing questions to help students demonstrate what they had learnt. One student involved in a competition about the Space Olympics gave a presentation about her project to international experts in Moscow, including cosmonauts and scientists.
Promoting the project qualification to others	An employer commented that he would recommend the project to other businesses: 'It's absolutely brilliant because [learners] can now come into the workplace, take on a task and just get on with it – without too many people having to tell them what to do – which is good!'

Case studies of successful project delivery

These five case studies show how projects are being delivered successfully in a range of schools, colleges and partnerships.

- 1 Barton Peveril College



- 2 Newham College of Further Education



- 3 Rugby School Partnership Programme (Rugby School, Lawrence Sheriff School, Rugby High School, Ashlawn School and Science College)



- 4 Plumstead Manor School and the University of Greenwich



- 5 Christ the King Sixth Form College and Goldsmiths

These schools and colleges all deliver the project and/or the extended project in different ways, some as part of the Diploma and others as a stand alone qualification.

Each case study includes details of all aspects of project delivery, including funding, resourcing, staffing, partners, timing, timetabling, fit with the curriculum, induction, the taught component, project supervision and assessment. Every case study also includes the key success factors identified by the schools and colleges involved.



These schools and colleges are featured in the short film that accompanies this booklet. Watch the film at www.qcda.gov.uk.

Barton Peveril College

Key success factors

- ▶ Don't jump in and try to do everything in the first year of offering the qualification – do it with a small cohort and develop a few expert staff.
 - ▶ Sell it effectively to the students, via online information or literature, because it's a really good opportunity.
 - ▶ Get some of the students who did it the year before to talk to potential recruits.
 - ▶ Do a short practice research task before starting the actual project so that students can reflect on the actual research process and then address any issues. Students like the motivation of staff setting deadlines for seeing drafts of their work, and also appreciate one-to-one support
-

Profile of the centre

Barton Peveril Sixth Form College is a coeducational sixth form college. It offers a wide range of A level courses, plus a selection of Diploma and level 2 courses, www.barton-peveril.ac.uk. The college offers the extended project as a standalone qualification to all students.

Examples of types of project and activities

Written essays and artefacts, plus some with a visual outcome, such as a website or IT software development and a small number of music projects and dance projects (these students are also doing a dance leadership award). All are individual projects. Art students tend to develop projects on topics beyond the range of study in their A level courses.

For A level, art candidates have to produce their own work for assessment. One student has focused her project ('chance and chaos') on directing artwork produced by other people. It was linked with research into communication and how people might have a shared understanding of art and communication.

Other examples include students who are looking at diet and exercise – at how the college encourages healthy eating and exercise – from four points of view: personal, medical, dietary and social.

Fit with the curriculum

Projects fit as part of the curriculum for A2. Students can do projects in generic groups or opt into subject extension groups, including ICT, mathematics and chemistry, an arts-based group, an English-based one for those hoping to study English at university, a British Sign Language group for deaf students doing projects linked to issues in this area, and one for students interested in careers in radio and press journalism.

Timing and timetabling

The project is introduced in April/May of the AS year when students are thinking about progression to A2. Those who opt for the project start in June after AS exams. Projects are timetabled throughout the A2 year (two lessons per week of 60 minutes each), but presentations can be done when ready. Supervisors negotiate with individuals when they want to complete their project. Some Oxbridge applicants, for example, want to finish by mid-November so they can talk about it at interview. All projects go for final moderation in March, with entries in May. A lot of the research is done over the summer holidays so that by mid-autumn the time is mostly used for writing up, with advice and guidance from teachers on an individual basis.

Involvement of partners

The University of Southampton and the University of Winchester have run competitions for local colleges based on categories such as 'the most innovative [project] title'.

The librarian has links with local universities and can access some of their written resources.

Lots of students have made their own links, for example following up contacts from an exhibition of local support groups for deaf people. Dance and music students have used a range of contacts developed through their courses.

Issues and ways these are/will be addressed

- Students need to understand the opportunities and benefits of doing the project, including educational value, skills development and positive feedback from universities.
 - There needs to be consistency across the whole college in terms of delivering the taught element, support and assessment (for example by setting up training sessions and staff cluster groups).
 - Getting the staff team all together in one place at the same time can be an issue – a second meeting needs to be planned for those who can't attend the main session, and additional materials/notes should be available for non-attendees. If any member of staff gets into difficulties, they know to go to their curriculum line manager.
-

Future plans for offering projects

Some staff members are thinking of developing ideas for group projects around a common theme to inspire next year's cohort. This will make the taught element more consistent, without squeezing out the opportunity the project offers for students to demonstrate independence, creativity and imagination of their own. Balancing enough support for students who need it while letting others work more independently is important. The college needs to confirm that the start time in the AS year is appropriate, and to decide whether to offer level 2, and if so to whom.

The college is considering offering higher projects as part of the level 2 courses, and to some students on advanced level courses for whom a level 2 project may be more appropriate.

Profile of project learners

The project is open to the whole cohort and this year there is a broad ability range (it was initially piloted with gifted and talented students then offered to all, but mostly taken up by the more able students). Around 550–600 students opt to do it (about half of the A2 cohort). Most are doing A levels, but some are doing a vocational National Certificate (alongside A levels and a project) rather than a Diploma. The project students are representative of the overall cohort, reflecting the local community (some rural, some central city).

How projects are funded and resourced

The projects, as an integral part of the students' programmes, attract funding in the same manner as any other qualification. Students have good access to library resources and the ICT suite is always available. Other resources are mostly up to the students – they may have to buy their own materials for an artefact, but in subjects such as art they may have access to additional equipment. The project coordinator puts guidance material together for staff to use in project sessions.

Staffing for projects

« **One-to-one is definitely a good way of learning – because the teacher really understands what your project is all about and they can give you as much help as you need without anybody else losing interest if they're talking to one class.** »

Extended project student

There is a project coordinator who supports curriculum delivery, monitors consistency and provides guidance where necessary. The coordinator is also responsible for organising the overall assessment and moderation. Around 25 to 30 staff members each supervise 16–18 students and cover the taught component, project supervision and assessment. Library staff are heavily involved and some subject specialists for projects such as those relating to British Sign Language, ICT and extended mathematics. Other subject staff may also be approached to help an individual student or project staff member. Staff recruitment has to fit with timetabling restrictions and requirements, but is basically down to volunteers from each faculty. In some cases subject-specific project teachers and students

are matched, but most are allocated to generic groups.

Before students start, there are training sessions for staff on how the project works and on the role of the supervisor; they also look at assessment criteria for completed projects. Near assessment time, further training takes place, based on the coordinator's training with the awarding organisation.

How students are recruited/introduced to projects

Personal tutors discuss with each student what they might do in their second year, explaining the options (including the project) and how they relate to progression plans. Students also have an A2 choices fair where any new qualification available has a stand and leaflets; students can discuss what it's about and whether it might suit them. The teacher introduces the project process once students are in groups.

The taught component

The taught component happens throughout the course, including lessons to get things going, and lessons on preparing presentations and reports. Library staff run lectures and sessions in the library as well as bigger presentations in the lecture theatres to help students learn how to find resources and what's available where, for example how to use university libraries, how to recognise quality in resources, how library staff can help, research skills, referencing, and acknowledgement of resources. Students propose project titles, discuss them with their supervisor, then refine and hand them in for approval by the college coordinator. The college now has a good bank of titles from previous years – these are kept on a virtual learning environment (VLE) for the students to get an idea of what they need to do. There are also some exemplar projects in the library. Students use the production log to develop the proposal during lesson times, using completed production logs as models.

Project supervision – how students are supported

Support has been provided through one-to-one discussion during the timetabled sessions and seems to have worked well.

How projects are assessed and internally moderated

Presentations can be one-to-one with the tutor, but most are to a small group from their own class, plus at least one member of staff. Art students have mounted an exhibition in the college atrium where staff could look at and discuss the artefacts with the respective students. Subject specialists are invited to some presentations to make sure that pertinent questions are asked. Assessors are grouped in clusters for initial moderation, using exemplar material from the awarding organisation. They assess their own students' work and then cross-moderate each other in their groups. The project coordinator then checks samples from each of those groups.

Newham College of Further Education

Key success factors

- A ready supply of external links, especially through the college's business unit.
 - Making full use of the college's own resources (staff, departments), including opportunities to access state-of-the-art facilities.
 - Staff members being able to develop their own areas of interest.
 - Giving students help when they need it, but also being able to keep calm when balancing competing students' demands with other teaching commitments.
-

Profile of the centre

Newham College of Further Education is located in a large, outer London borough. The college has several campuses, www.newham.ac.uk.

It offers projects at all levels as part of the Diploma:

- Foundation and Higher Diplomas in creative and media (C&M)
- Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diplomas in society, health and development (SHD)
- Foundation and Higher Diplomas in business, administration and finance (BAF)
- Foundation and Higher Diplomas in hair and beauty (H&B).

It does not offer projects as a standalone qualification.

Examples of types of project and activities

All are written projects with a final presentation. All topics are directly related to the main Diploma programme, but allow students to pursue a topic in more depth from their principal learning.

Society, Health and Development (SHD) students chose topics relevant to young people in the borough, for example smoking and teenage pregnancies. Weymouth College supported the Creative and Media (C&M) students in projects designing outdoor shelters for the 2012 Olympic sailing events. Work experience with the Press Association led to students producing a website.

Fit with the curriculum

Projects are tailored around principal learning, so selected topics relate to these interests and areas of study. This means that subject expertise can be provided by tutors, with some external help as necessary.

Timing and timetabling

On two-year courses (advanced SHD and the two pre-16 courses), projects are introduced early on in the programme, but usually completed within the second year. Most project teaching and support is done during timetabled sessions for principal learning, with students completing in their own time.

Involvement of partners

Newham College has an extensive range of partners from within the partnership and externally, including support from Newham Education Business Partnership (EBP). The college's work-based learning unit has a large employer network and a work experience team to deliver sufficient workplace learning. These links can be further used for projects.

Examples of external expertise include the local health centre, drugs awareness clinic and small employers. Students have been quite comfortable in finding out information for themselves: SHD students have listened to guest speakers from social services and higher education and have interviewed probation officers and GPs.

A local hairdressing salon is used for the H&B Diploma students, in addition to the college salon, and the Press Association has supported students through, for example, producing a video. Other partners include the local university, NHS Hospital Trust, museums, galleries and Weymouth College. There is also a link with a college in China.

Issues and ways these are/will be addressed

- The biggest problem last year was with the deadlines for the submission of projects (the deadlines were not known at the start of the programme, and turned out to be after some one-year students had left). This year delivery schedules have been revised to make sure that deadlines are met.
 - The college expected functional skills to be an issue because of students coming in with poor skills, but the college put in a lot of effort to address this.
 - There could be issues next year as the size of the cohort grows and expenses, particularly for travel, will need to be controlled.
-

Future plans for offering projects

Projects will be expanding as the numbers of Diploma learners increase.

Profile of project learners

The student profile is diverse in terms of ethnicity/cultural mix. SHD and H&B are predominately female; for C&M the proportions are roughly 50–70 per cent female. BAF and H&B are offered to 14- to 16-year-old learners from local schools. About 80 students completed projects in the most recent academic year.

How projects are funded and resourced

« We were told about secondary resources and where we could get books in our library for the project. We designed the interviews ourselves; that was all up to us. »

Project student

Projects have been funded through normal allocations, but the travel, for example to Weymouth College for the C&M project, has been expensive. Specialist resources have also been bought, for example wheelchairs for SHD, to create a realistic learning environment.

Staffing for projects

Projects are timetabled and delivered integral to the principal learning. Staff:student ratios are determined by the size of the Diploma groups.

How students are recruited and introduced to projects

There is no separate recruitment for projects because all Diploma students have to do them. Project choice is dictated by the area of principal learning: students do not choose topics outside their main subject area.

The taught component

Teaching is done as part of principal learning teaching and includes such areas as designing interview schedules and questionnaires, using the internet to find resources and arranging visits. Experts are brought in to deliver specialist sessions if necessary.

Project supervision – how students are supported

Students are supported by the principal learning teaching staff, and regular tutorials confirm progress. The students help each other, which is seen as positive for learning. The college has very good ICT facilities and classes are available to help with ICT issues, for example in designing schedules. The college has also prepared a book of guidance for projects and uses the awarding organisation guidance for students.

How projects are assessed and internally moderated

Projects are assessed by teachers and then moderated by other Diploma teachers. The consortium's expertise provides assessment advice. External partners sometimes come into the college to see presentations.

Rugby School Partnership Programme

Key success factors

- It is crucial to identify a coordinator for the partnership programme to devote time to managing resources. Coordinating a group of schools is time-consuming and requires dedication from key staff.
- It is important to have a strong link at staff level. The schools know each other reasonably well and they are geographically close, so students do not have to travel a great distance.
- The partnership has to be genuine, where partners are willing to learn from one another. At the same time they will have specific things to contribute. Managing staff relationships is absolutely crucial.
- Right from the start this project was supported by the senior managers, which was very important in establishing the links.
- Identify a key leader in each centre and ways of communicating to develop a good relationship with key staff from each school.
- Provide dedicated time to do the projects – joint sessions after school hours work very well.
- Organise what is going to be taught by which centre and when.

Overview of the partnership

This partnership comprises:

- Rugby School (the lead partner): an independent, coeducational boarding/day school (11–18) that has a long commitment to widening access, www.rugbyschool.net.
- Lawrence Sheriff School: a boys' grammar school with specialist college status for mathematics and computing, www.lawrencesheriffschool.net.
- Rugby High School: a selective girls' grammar school (11–18) with specialist status in science and languages www.rhswebsite.co.uk
- Ashlawn School and Science College: a bilateral school (comprehensive with a grammar school stream), www.ashlawn.org.uk:

The partnership focuses on supporting the extended project as a standalone qualification. It was established to share project expertise and resources, and was supported from the start by senior managers.

Rugby School and Lawrence Sheriff School were both offering a 'perspectives on science' programme. Rugby School offered particular expertise for the philosophy part of this course and Lawrence Sheriff School had extensive experience of a VLE. Rugby High School had an existing relationship with Rugby School after they participated in an annual sixth-form conference together. Ashlawn School was invited to join the partnership to offer its students additional breadth and depth to their studies and enhance their university applications.

Examples of types of project and activities

All the projects are dissertation-based. Not all are science-related. Some students choose topics they would like to pursue later, such as medicine or science, but not all choose a topic that is related to their future career. Examples of topics include scientific probability of time travel, the ethics of siblings who are created specifically for organ harvest, the big bang, and cultural differences in English and French law based on religious differences in the two countries, as well as topics related to business ethics, economics, the arts and the humanities.

Fit with the curriculum

Rugby School discusses the partnership programme with the other schools to make sure it makes sense alongside what they are doing. Ashlawn School has no timetabled project session; students follow the programme through partnership activities.

Rugby School offers projects alongside other AS/A2 subjects: year 12 students have three separate lessons per week; other students have four lessons a week for writing up their project.

Rugby High School fits in the project as an extension curriculum, offering students stretch beyond their A level subjects. It is timetabled like a fifth AS subject for two 50-minute periods a week: one period on philosophy and ethics, and one on scientific research methods.

At Lawrence Sheriff School, there are four main option blocks with slots outside these on Monday and Wednesday for the extended project, alongside other subjects.

Timing and timetabling

Partnership sessions are run at Rugby School twice a week, timed to fit with partner school travel logistics, and Rugby School also hosts an annual conference. The projects take between one and two years depending upon a partnership school's circumstances. For example, Rugby High School plans a four-term course, but tries to complete this in three terms.

Issues for the partnership schools

- The different school timetables posed a challenge. Projects are done on different timescales in the different centres. To be able to make projects sustainable, staff time has to be reflected in the teaching allocation.
- Rugby School holds the sessions after timetabled lessons end at 3:45. This can pose problems for students from all the schools, many of whom live out of the town, but they know the commitment required at the start of the project.
- Time is an issue: for one of the partner schools the project is not timetabled; students only have the 45-minute sessions together at Rugby School. The project needs recognition in terms of timetabling.
- Staff training on assessment of the project is also essential.
- Care should be taken to schedule meetings at times when all key staff can attend.

Future plans for offering projects through the partnership

Various options are being considered for widening the partnership: keeping the link with the three local schools, but using the online support (VLE) to involve schools that are not as close geographically. This is now being piloted. Some may be able to manage initial sessions and then work through the online support, or in some cases could join the partnership schools on the VLE. Rugby School also offers higher projects and is considering a pilot of foundation projects.

Profile of project learners

The project was originally offered to year 12 students from the partnership schools (about 70 in total). It is now offered to year 12, plus those in year 13 who were still to complete. There are around 120 students doing projects across the partnership. Most students are those identified as gifted and talented. Groups are culturally mixed, but not very ethnically or religiously diverse with only a small number of students from varying ethnic or religious backgrounds.

How projects are funded and resourced

The partnership programme of activities, including Rugby School staff time, is funded by Warwickshire's 14–19 partnership from the local authority budget. The VLE, which is a place to upload work, post ideas, have online discussions and access podcasts and other support material, is sponsored by RM Computers.

Staffing for projects

At Rugby School there is the project/partnership coordinator and a philosopher in residence, plus other teachers supervising between five and six students each. At Rugby High School the project involves the head of philosophy and head of chemistry, with delivery overseen by the head of sixth form. Two staff members at Ashlawn School are involved: the head of chemistry supports year 12 and a history teacher has responsibility for year 13. There is a project coordinator supported by another teacher at Lawrence Sheriff School. Most of the key staff members from the partnership schools attend the partnership sessions.

Activities for staff to prepare them for project work

Rugby School runs a two-day INSET programme for teachers who are beginning to teach the extended project. This is based on the *perspectives on science* model and covers all aspects of projects: managing discussions in the classroom, helping students shape their research proposals, supporting students through writing projects and managing the presentation. The session on managing projects is delivered by staff from Lawrence Sheriff school. Although open to schools nationally, subsidised tasters are offered to the partnership schools. Lesson models have been provided.

How students are recruited/introduced to projects

At Rugby School, projects are included in the option choices that go out in year 11, with presentations from heads of departments. All year 12 students at Rugby High School attend a presentation on the extension subjects and apply for the subject they would like to study. During the presentation they get a clear idea of what is required, the nature of the course, the commitment required, for example going to Rugby School to join the philosophy course, the online learning and so on. Students with the highest Accelerated Learning Programme for Students (ALPS) grades (all the gifted and talented students) are invited by Ashlawn School to bid to undertake projects; none of those who volunteered were rejected. Lawrence Sheriff School gives an introductory presentation on the project and why it is useful, and students then choose it as an additional option.

The partnership taught component

Seminars are offered on topics relating to philosophy, ethics and research (using the perspectives on science resources). Case studies or text extracts help students prepare for the tutor input and then discussion and debate. There are also research proposal sessions. Face-to-face, semi-structured discussion and debate are highlighted by staff and students as stimulating and enjoyable activities, particularly the opportunity to exchange ideas with students from different schools.

Project supervision/support

Ongoing support is provided by Rugby School, including email communication to check on progress and standards. Students from the different schools mentor each other. The VLE has a section where students can discuss ideas for their extended project. It offers online networking, and includes weekly podcasts from teachers on a range of issues and topic discussions, plus a resources section.

Plumstead Manor School and the University of Greenwich

Key success factors

- The extended project already fitted into what the school was trying to do with the University of Greenwich – it had identified study skills as a priority and the university could offer that.
 - It is important to build good relationships between individuals across institutions.
 - The university tutor has been flexible and has been able to adapt the university programme to the needs and capabilities of the students.
 - It is valuable to have a coordinator who promotes the extended project.
-

Profile of the centre

Plumstead Manor School is a performing arts, applied learning and humanities college for girls, www.plumsteadmanorschool.ac.uk.

The school is offering the extended project.

It has a partnership arrangement with the University of Greenwich, www.gre.ac.uk.

Examples of types of project and activities

All projects are individual. The majority are 5,000-word dissertations, mostly linked to students' progression plans. For example one student is doing a comparative study of midwifery in different cultures while another student, who aspires to be a social worker, is researching child abuse.

Fit with the curriculum

Projects can't just be what students are already doing, but they can link to students' planned careers, or something they have done in the past and given up. The health and social care students focus on health topics that link to vocational progression.

Timing and timetabling

Projects are done between September and Easter. Students have two hours per week at the start and two hours per week at the end, with tutorials (largely individual sessions of 10–15 minutes) during the middle period. Students confirm their project choices in November and presentations begin at February half-term. The first draft should be ready by the end of February.

Involvement of partners

The school had an established relationship with the University of Greenwich through *On Course* (www.gre.ac.uk/on-course): a partnership scheme between the university and a number of local schools and colleges that supports post-16 students in applying and progressing to university.

This relationship was further developed when Plumstead School's project coordinator sat on the steering group that produced the *Greenwich Passport*, a study skills resource. The passport workbook provides information, guidance and practical activities to enhance applications to higher education and develop skills such as research, critical thinking, writing and presentation skills relevant to higher education (and extended projects). Students can earn 10 passport points for each completed section of the workbook (up to a maximum of 40 points); these can be added to UCAS points to meet admission requirements for the University of Greenwich (although they don't guarantee a place).

The University of Greenwich provides staff for three extended project sessions during the year, each lasting three to four hours. Students are enrolled as associate students, which gives them access to university facilities. Some sessions take place at the university.

Some students who are taking applied A level in health and society are using work placements to support their research, for example a student with a placement in a hospital is conducting interviews in relation to her theme of diabetes in adults.

Some of the students are also taking a pilot module in research skills, which gives them the chance to gain 10 higher education credits.

Issues and ways these are/will be addressed

- Sustaining projects was an issue in the pilot year; only 11 completed, from 18 starters. It was delivered in an unstructured way, with little group teaching. The school has now developed more group teaching.
- It is difficult sometimes to take students out of subject lessons to attend sessions at the university. The school needs to communicate to subject teachers the benefits of the university sessions, which give students transferable study, research and presentation skills.
- From the teacher's point of view some topics are difficult to supervise. To address this in the future the school hopes to widen the number of staff involved with the project, from a wider range of subject specialisms and interests.
- Students did not always find it easy to go to the university library (after their initial introduction) and suggested more visits to the university as a whole class or group.

Future plans for offering projects

Student ambassadors are currently being used as mentors and project assistants for students in years 9 and 10, and as mentors for underachieving students in years 11 and 12. They also promote higher education through presentations to years 9 and 12. The school is considering using university student ambassadors and academic mentoring with sixth formers more generally. With student ambassadors to support the extended project the school might be able to extend the project offer, for example out of 177 in the sixth form there might be 100 aiming for higher education who could benefit from completing a project.

The head of sixth form is very keen to develop the relationship with other universities. Plumstead Manor School is providing support to another school entering the partnership with the University of Greenwich and is looking to gradually increase the number of subject areas for projects.

Profile of project learners

Around 30 students who are mainly on social science and humanities AS courses and health-related courses are taking the project in this academic year. Most are in year 12; others are students in year 13 who have dropped a subject. Initially, the project was pitched at higher-ability students, but the current project cohort reflects a wide range of abilities. There are a high number of students with English as an additional language (more than other subject options), including several Nepalese students who are interested in health and science.

How projects are funded and resourced

The project qualification is funded as for any other qualification, but the university provision is funded from the *Widening Participation* budget.

Staffing for projects

There are two main project staff, plus two other project supervisors. The student:staff ratio is 1:10 (maximum). A citizenship and personal development teacher became involved during the pilot stage, and initially projects were the responsibility of the personal development department. This year they are also part of the health and social care department, in preparation for the society, health and development Diplomas being introduced over the next couple of years.

How students are recruited/introduced to projects

The project is marketed at post-16 enrolment. It was suggested to more able students, and to students such as those in the specialist health group who had an idea of something they wanted to explore further. Some students take the project if a subject they wanted to do clashes with other subjects. Students have a general introduction to the extended project in September and then move on to the study-skills sessions.

The taught component

« **The best outcome is when learners think about the learning experience and their development. The important point of the extended project is that learners have autonomy and they decide how to use it.** »

Extended project teacher

The taught component facilitated by the University of Greenwich comprises three sessions: an introduction to the university library and research skills, delivered by study skills and library staff; referencing and using sources; and presentation skills. In addition, the university tutor teaches a further two hours per week as part of the research skills pilot.

Project supervision – and support

The school tutors provide weekly individualised tutorials. The university tutor provides support and supervision for some of the students, with an emphasis on the development of independence. Students have access to the university library (including electronic resources). They particularly value the study skills, which have increased their confidence with regard to both the project and higher education progression.

How projects are assessed/internally moderated

Presentations are mainly to an audience of other students. Last year, the audience was about 15 to 20 people, and students were questioned by several people. Supervisors assess their own students' work and then swap for moderation – then a third person looks at both moderations.

Christ the King Sixth Form College and Goldsmiths

Key success factors

- Not having preconceived ideas: we 'inched our way forward together.'
- Students' advice to other students: organise and plan or the task becomes impossible; talk through what you are doing; keep a journal; write down all the resources you use as you go along and record page numbers too.
- Teachers and university lecturers need to communicate so they all understand what can be expected of students.
- It helps to have a single, named champion at the higher education institution, and support from the library staff.

Profile of the centre

Christ the King Sixth Form College is a Catholic sixth form college located in Lewisham, south London, www.ctksfc.ac.uk.

It offers the extended project (dissertation unit) as a standalone qualification.

Examples of types of project and activities

“ I took a while to fix a topic – started with savagery, but this was too broad. It was difficult to get information so I had to narrow it down. I was helped in the skills session at Easter and by feedback after my initial presentation. I wanted to do nature and nurture: where do dictators come from? The Easter taster session pushed me to define dictatorship and I was helped by staff at Goldsmiths to get my current focus on the conceptual origin of totalitarianism. ”

Extended project student

Examples of topics include aggression, the intellectual origins of totalitarianism, interpersonal relations and sex, the end of the Roman Empire, a comparative study of the position of women now and in the sixteenth century, the psychology of belief in ghosts, and a psychological exploration of slavery. Students recognised that defining the topic was critical and were expected to refine and develop to get the right one.

Fit with the curriculum

Projects support students' aspirations for university study. Students and teachers understand projects as an opportunity to explore topics that connect to future study and to develop skills that will be used at university. Project topics are not directly related to A or AS level subjects. However, students report that the skills that they have acquired, for example in writing and reading, are very relevant to their A levels. The students have all mentioned their projects in their university applications. The contact with Goldsmiths and with higher-level ways of working has helped them to prepare for higher education and feel confident about it.

Timing and timetabling

Projects start in February and run until the autumn, with students encouraged to complete work over the summer holiday.

Involvement of partners

The partnership between the college and Goldsmiths was developed jointly. Goldsmiths provides access to its library, ICT facilities and VLE. Goldsmiths staff and undergraduate mentors run a three-day introduction to research, attend project presentations and provide support through the VLE.

Issues and ways these are/will be addressed

- Student independence is important: they need freedom and flexibility so that the project continues to have value as a maturing process. With this in mind, the college is now providing weekly workshops to reduce the drop-out rate.
 - Issues raised by students included motivation to sustain the project and workload.
 - Students needed to work on their project during the summer holidays, which is potentially difficult. There was no face-to-face support but they could use the VLE for discussion.
-

Future plans for offering projects

There are plans to offer projects to students taking English, media studies and business studies and to recognise the project as a key element of the curriculum as an additional subject, rather than an optional extra.

Profile of project learners

Currently, all year 12 students doing psychology and history are invited to take the project.

How projects are funded/resourced

The school pays its own costs and project qualification entry fees. Activities supported by Goldsmiths are paid for by Aspire (Aim Higher).

Staffing for projects

The project coordinator has one hour per week to support students. Lecturers and students at Goldsmiths also provide support.

How students are recruited/introduced to projects

Last year, all those recruited in the autumn were invited to do the three-day training and then decide whether to continue. About 50 initially expressed interest; 26 went on to attend the course, 15 started a project and 8 completed.

The taught component

« **I'm interested in political ideas and plan to do history at university; the project has given me a chance to look at ideas and topics in depth. My interpersonal project supports my plan to study psychology. I have learnt about several different approaches, so it has broadened my understanding of psychology.** »

Extended project student

The introductory unit at Goldsmiths helps students identify their research question, although this can be further refined during the five or six weeks of reading time up until the project presentation stage. The session also addressed reading and writing skills and the use of resources. The unit is followed by facilitated workshop time, timetabled for one hour per week, when students are expected to engage with their project work.

Project supervision and support

« We looked at newspapers to find questions and were challenged to come up with a question. We were also shown how to use research facilities and given guidance on how to read books quickly and select websites... the facilities were new; there were different books and journals. We had never used journals before and we learnt how to use them. There was also a session on writing: history and psychology students were split and had to read sample essays and evaluate them. It helped to be given structure for writing. »

Extended project student

A formal weekly workshop of one hour per week has been created this year to help students sustain their commitment. Mentoring by Goldsmiths undergraduates works well because the mentors are at the right level to understand, communicate with and model for learners. Some students used the Goldsmiths library on a weekly basis throughout the summer, receiving help to locate and use resources. The university lecturers also offered supervision through the VLE and through feedback to developmental presentations, for example in making suggestions for things to read. Lecturers and undergraduates helped students evaluate their presentations and ask questions. The university's VLE proved popular with the students.

How projects are assessed/internally moderated

All students do two presentations, with the first being a rehearsal, to an audience of peers, lecturers and mentors. The second presentation, after the project has been written, is formally assessed by Goldsmiths lecturers and Christ the King's teacher supervisor. The VLE has a facility for students to keep a journal, which helps with planning and can be submitted as evidence for planning and to show ongoing evaluation. The two teachers and the university lecturers have worked together to assess and moderate the projects. Over time they have all come to have a better understanding of standards.

Goldsmiths, University of London

www.gold.ac.uk

For Goldsmiths, the partnership with Christ the King College has been an extremely successful pilot. The *Widening Participation* team is particularly pleased with the performance of the student ambassadors, who support sixth formers at workshops and through the VLE. The ambassadors, who earn an hourly wage, are enthusiastic and highly committed. Their involvement deepens their own understanding of research skills, and gives them a chance to contribute to their community and add to their CV.

From September, Goldsmiths will offer a package of support for the extended project across all boroughs within the Aspire area. Schools and colleges in adjoining boroughs will be able to buy the support for around £140 per student. The package will consist of a three-day introduction, two separate presentation days, access to the university library and ongoing support through the university's VLE by lecturers and students. Goldsmiths will provide tailored packages for five subject areas: media and communications, history and literature, drama and music, psychology and social sciences. It plans to engage 40 students per subject area: a total of 200 sixth formers who will be supported in their extended projects from February through to September.

Goldsmiths is using the partnership to raise awareness of the extended project across the university, for example by inviting admissions tutors to project presentations. Other universities in the Aspire partnership – the University of Greenwich, King's College London and London South Bank University – are also offering their own support for the extended project.

On the VLE, you can send a question whenever you want, late at night for example ...I could share my work and ideas...I liked using the forum...it develops team skills. I like this way of developing and discussing work. I use it weekly; it was available whenever I needed to work – mostly at midnight. It was good to blog a lot after presentations. We were also able to feed back to others online after our presentations.))

Extended project student

Having contact with the undergraduates is good – we could ask about other things like university in general. We could relate to them because they were just a bit older than us.))

Extended project student

Further information and guidance

QCDA



The QCDA website includes links to a range of relevant guidance documents, including:

- *Guidance on managing project delivery* (QCA/08/3670)
- *An introduction to the foundation project* (QCA/08/3671)
- *An introduction to the higher project* (QCA/08/3672)
- *An introduction to the extended project* (QCA/08/3673)
- *Checklist for tutors delivering projects* (QCA/09/4139).

The website (www.qcda.gov.uk) also contains links to information on the national curriculum, personalised learning, PLTS, functional skills, curriculum planning and curriculum innovation.

National Database of Accredited Qualifications



Information on all accredited project qualifications:

www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk

Joint Council for Qualifications



Information about qualifications including coursework regulations:

www.jcq.org.uk

Awarding organisations



Information and guidance on project qualification specifications:

AQA	www.aqa.org.uk
City & Guilds	www.cityandguilds.com
Edexcel	www.edexcel.com
EDI	www.ediplc.com
OCR	www.ocr.org.uk
VTCT	www.vtct.org.uk
WJEC	www.wjec.co.uk

Ofqual



Information on project criteria:

www.ofqual.gov.uk

UCAS



Information on courses, entry profiles and employability profiles:

www.ucas.com.

Department for Children, Schools and Families



Information on 14–19 reforms:

www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19

14–19 and general qualification support programme



Information on support available on 14–19 reforms:

www.14-19support.org

General qualification support programme



Information on support available on the extended project:

<http://gqsp.excellencegateway.org.uk>

Diploma support programme



Information on support available on the Diploma, including modules on engaging employers:

www.diploma-support.org

Other links



Enterprise UK, including the *Make Your Mark* challenge:

www.enterpriseuk.org



Education and Employers Taskforce, including information and guides to working in partnership with employers:

www.educationandemployers.org



INTUTE website, including online tutorial to develop internet research skills:

www.vts.intute.ac.uk



Researchers in Residence:

www.researchersinresidence.ac.uk

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Rugby School
University of Greenwich



About this publication

Who is it for?

This guidance is for managers and teachers delivering foundation, higher or extended projects in schools and colleges.

What is it about

This guidance offers practical guidance on delivering projects, including principles of effective practice and case studies from schools and colleges, including working in partnership with other organisations.

What is it for?

This publication will help schools and colleges deliver successful projects.

Related publications

Guidance on managing project delivery QCA/08/3670

Introduction to the foundation project QCA/08/3671

Introduction to the higher project QCA/08/3672

Introduction to the extended project QCA/08/3673

Checklist for tutors delivering projects QCA/09/4139

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