

Diploma aggregation service Release 4

Guidance for centres and awarding bodies

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Diploma aggregation service Release 4

Release 4 of the *Diploma aggregation service* (DAS) was introduced in May 2010. This guidance explains what these changes are, and how they affect you. The changes are:

- a new planned programme of study (PPoS) feature
- two new user roles to support the PPoS feature
- a new requirement for an anticipated award date
- an improved intention to claim setting
- a new version of the batch files.

The guidance also covers minor changes introduced in Release 4.1. They are:

- a change to the way an 'Unclassified' (U) grade is treated for a project taken at a level higher than the Diploma a student is studying for, and
- the ability to amend the additional and specialist learning (ASL) qualifications that will appear on a transcript after a Diploma has already been awarded.

These modifications are additions to Release 4 of DAS.

How the DAS Release 4 changes will affect you

Planned programme of study (PPoS)

DAS now has a feature called 'planned programme of study' (PPoS). This feature will enable centres to create and validate a programme of study for one or more students within DAS, without having to use the Diploma validator tool.

A centre's DAS local administrator will need to set up two new user roles: planned programme of study (PPoS) maintainer and approver. There will be guidance and support materials available to help DAS administrators guide new and existing users on how to get the most out of this feature.

Planned programme of study maintainer

The planned programme of study (PPoS) maintainer creates a planned programme of study and enters lines of learning at the appropriate levels. Once this has been done the PPoS maintainer will submit the planned programme of study for approval.

Planned programme of study approver

The planned programme of study (PPoS) approver will be responsible for checking the planned programme of study for a student and either approving or rejecting it. Once the planned programme of study has been approved the learner data maintainer in DAS will assign it to a learner's account.

The home centre is responsible for deciding on the process and who will administer the Diploma and PPoS. Curriculum planners will probably be assigned the responsibility of the PPoS maintainer and PPoS approver role in DAS. If a centre already uses the Diploma validator tool they could allocate the role of creating a PPoS to the same person. The PPoS maintainer and approver could be the same person or your centre could allocate these roles to different users.

In order to support best practice from September 2010, centres should confirm in DAS that a learner has a valid PPoS before the exams officer opens a learner account; this means that curriculum planners and the exam office team will have to work closely together. Statistical reports are available in DAS so centres and consortia can keep track of their Diploma learners' progress with all the different components.

Anticipated award date

When registering a number of students it will be mandatory for centres to set an anticipated award date. This will help Diploma administrators keep track of achievement progress and take action if required, making the claiming of Diplomas run smoothly and efficiently.

Intention to Claim

We have also improved the Intention to Claim (ITC) setting. When setting up a learner account it will be mandatory to register with a diploma awarding body and the ITC will be automatically set as part of this task. However, an ITC can still be changed manually, if required.

Batch files

Centres are currently using batch file versions 2 and 3 to create learner accounts and carry out other tasks in DAS. These batch file versions are not supported by Release 4 and centres will need to use the new versions to ensure that learner accounts are updated with PPOS.

If centres continue to use batch file versions 2 and 3, DAS will generate an error message and will not allow your centre to assign planned programmes of study to students' Diplomas. This could mean students are not in the best position to complete or be awarded their Diplomas. Batch file templates can be found on the QCDA website www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/3561.aspx.

Release 4.1 changes

Unclassified project grades

If a learner studies for a project at a higher level than their Diploma and they achieve an Unclassified (U) grade, points will be awarded for the project in line with recent Ofqual guidance. This enables DAS to calculate the appropriate grade for the overall Diploma award ensuring that Diploma administration is smooth and efficient.

Amending an awarded Diploma to include additional specialist learning

Centres will be able to change the additional specialist learning (ASL) qualifications that appear on a learner's Diploma transcript even after the Diploma has been awarded. However, the ASL qualifications must have been awarded on a date that is the same or before the date that the Diploma was awarded. DAS will validate this and notify the diploma awarding body so it can include the amended ASL on the transcript. Centres will need to make sure their students complete their ASL on time, so that students can make the right choice of ASL qualifications for their Diploma.

Awarding bodies

DAS now has additional alerts and notifications that will inform awarding bodies of changes the centres are making to learners' PPOS.

We have also introduced a time stamp which will provide accurate auditing of information as the system will log the date and time of a transaction. This time stamp, along with the

ability to post an actual award date, will give awarding bodies an audit trail for successful Diplomas.

Diploma awarding bodies

The PPoS function in DAS ensures that a programme of study is valid and meets the Diploma awarding body's requirements, and that the learners will be eligible to claim their Diplomas. Diploma awarding bodies (DABs) will be able to confirm U grades and add the award date to the Diploma claim response, improving communication with the centre and the process of claiming a Diploma.

In addition, registering with a DAB will be mandatory and the Intention to Claim will be automatically set when this task is performed.

Component awarding bodies

The introduction of the PPoS in DAS means a centre will know that a student's programme of study is valid before or at the time they set up a learner account. Once the process is completed in DAS, component awarding bodies (CABs) will be able to search for learners that have assigned a CAB for their programme of study.

The PPoS function provides early access to learner information including unique learner number (ULN) and qualification accreditation number (QAN) details, allowing CABs more time to update their systems. If a learner withdraws a CAB's qualifications from their programme of study, the CAB will receive a notification in DAS.

Support from QCDA

A range of training and guidance materials will be available for centres and awarding bodies, including updated tools covering the new DAS Release 4 features.

For centres

- Updated e-learning tool containing exercises and demonstrations of how to carry out various tasks – available now
www.qcda.gov.uk/resources/DAS%5Fe%2Dlearning/.
- Updated guides for centres with comprehensive information about all aspects of the service – available now
www.orderline.qcda.gov.uk/GEMPDF/1849625158/QCDA104975_DAS_UserGuide_forCentres_R4v1.0.pdf.

- Updated frequently asked questions to help answer your questions about the changes to DAS – now on QCDA website at www.qcda.gov.uk/qualifications/4454.aspx.
- a DAS *Quick Guide*, including step-by-step instructions on how to use the new functionality – available from the end of August.
- *Administering the Diploma* regional training, including training in how to use DAS, will be held in September and October 2010 for exams office staff working with the Diploma from September 2010. Look out for more details on the Diploma website.

QCDA Diploma helpdesk

Our helpdesk can offer your centre guidance and support. You can phone them on 0300 100 0100 or email them at diploma@qcda.gov.uk.

Centre support officer

Your centre support officer can also guide and support you. Find out who your local centre support officer is at www.qcda.gov.uk/cso.

For awarding bodies

- Updated e-learning tool and presentation for DABs and CABs – available on the QCDA website www.qcda.gov.uk/qualifications/4516.aspx
- Updated user guide for DABs and CABs – available on the QCDA website www.qcda.gov.uk/qualifications/4516.aspx
- Guidance and support from the DAS technical support help desk – you can phone them on 0845 6050293 or by email at dastechnicalsupport@steria.co.uk.

Further information

For user support and further information on the *Diploma aggregation service*, please visit www.qcda.gov.uk/das or visit www.qcda.gov.uk/diploma for more information on Diplomas.