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Department
for Education



Education & Skills
Funding Agency

Guidance

16 to 19 study programmes: guidance (2019 to 2020 academic year)

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Advice for education providers on the planning and delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes.

Summary

This publication provides non-statutory guidance from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). It was produced to help recipients understand their obligations and duties in relation to the provision of 16 to 19 study programmes in their institution.

Further information on [funding is available on GOV.UK](#).

Expiry or review date

This advice has been reviewed annually, and this version updates the guidance published in March 2018. It reflects the update to the [condition of funding for English and maths provision within study programmes from the 2019 to 2020 academic year](#).

Who is this advice for?

This guidance is for everyone involved in the planning or delivery of 16 to 19 study programmes – including traineeships and supported internships – such as senior leadership teams, curriculum planners and coordinators, teachers and trainers.

16 to 19 study programmes are also relevant to 19 to 24 year olds with an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Key points

- All students funded through the 16 to 19 funding methodology must be enrolled on a study programme, which typically combines qualifications and other activities, and which is tailored to each student's prior attainment and career goals.
- All study programmes must have a core aim¹. This will be tailored to the needs of the individual and typically include a substantial qualification (academic or technical) or preparation for employment.
- All study programmes should include work experience and non-qualification activities, which complement the other elements of the programme and support the student to progress to further or higher education (HE) or to employment.
- We have made a change to our [16 to 19 English and maths condition of funding guidance](#). In academic year 2018 to 2019, if a student enrolled on a study programme without prior attainment of GCSE grade 4 in English and/or maths, but had prior attainment of a grade 3, they had to study GCSE only. For those with a grade 2 or below, students who passed functional skills level 2 would still need to study towards a GCSE grade 9 to 4. From academic year 2019 to 2020 the change means that students with a GCSE grade 2 or below can study towards level 2 Functional Skills or they can still study towards a GCSE grade 9 to 4. Once they have achieved this, there is no requirement to undertake extra English or maths qualifications to meet the condition of funding. Those with a grade 3 must still study GCSE only. This adjustment allows providers to support students with prior attainment of GCSE grade 2 and below to make an informed choice of which level 2 qualification is most appropriate for them. This change was announced through the [ESFA update bulletin on Wednesday 13 February 2019](#), with full details of the changes on the [condition of funding GOV.UK page](#).

Section 1: study programmes

Professor Alison Wolf, in her [review of vocational education \(2011\)](#) recommended that the department introduce study programmes to offer students breadth and depth, without limiting their options for future study or work. Professor Wolf also recommended that all young people should be able to gain real

experience and knowledge of the workplace, in order to enhance their employability skills. Study programmes were introduced in September 2013.

The [post-16 skills plan](#), published in July 2016, and the government's consultation on the [implementation of T Level programmes](#) in November 2017, set out further reforms to technical education. T Levels will be introduced from September 2020 onwards, along with the phased implementation of the T Level transition framework. Alongside this, the government is carrying out a [review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below](#).

We will continue to update the study programme guidance in line with these reforms. We also welcome your feedback on how to make this guidance more useful – please email us with your comments and suggestions at Post16.Level3AndBelowReview@education.gov.uk.

Study programme principles

All 16 to 19 study programmes should be designed to provide students with a structured and challenging learning programme that supports their development and progression in line with their career plans. Study programmes should be individually tailored but will typically combine the elements below:

1. substantial qualifications that stretch students and prepare them for education at the next level or for employment
2. English and mathematics where students have not yet achieved a GCSE grade 4
3. work experience to give students the opportunity to develop their career choices and to apply their skills in real working conditions
4. other non-qualification activity to develop students' character, broader skills, attitudes and confidence, and to support progression

[Section 2](#) sets out broad programme characteristics for students taking different qualification pathways. [Section 3](#) offers further guidance on the principles above. The '[further information](#)' section offers hyperlinks to research, case studies and other information that providers can draw on. All links were correct at the time of publication.

Core aim of a study programme

Every study programme must have a core aim. This is the principal activity or core purpose of a student's programme and it will usually be the component that has the largest number of planned hours. The core aim for most students will be either:

- one or more substantial academic, applied or technical qualification which prepare the student for further education or employment, or
- a substantial work placement to prepare the student for an apprenticeship or other employment

The core aim must be agreed between the student and the education provider. It will generally remain unchanged during the year, although exceptions may be made where, for example, a student:

- finds they have made the wrong programme choice and transfers to an alternative programme, or
- transfers to a traineeship after an initial period of vocational training or employability support

The remainder of the study programme should complement the core aim.

Planned hours

Each study programme will consist of a number of planned hours (meaning hours that have been timetabled and are supervised by the provider). Providers must ensure that the number of hours are realistic and deliverable.

Study programmes are designed to be full-time with a minimum of 540 planned hours per academic year (as per our funding guidance, we expect full-time study programmes for 16 and 17 year olds to be on average 600 hours). This allows sufficient time to deliver the principles above. Part-time study programmes may be agreed where, for example, a student:

- combines part-time education with full-time employment
- has a health issue that prevents them from being in education for more than a few hours a week, or
- needs a specific small qualification or period of work experience to progress to further education or employment

Any study programme of 150 hours or more must include English and mathematics where appropriate, work experience and other non-qualification activity. It is expected that programmes of less than 150 hours will also include these elements, although providers may make exceptions. Work experience, for example, may not be relevant to a student who is combining education with full-time employment.

[Annex A](#) sets out examples of study programmes.

Students with special educational needs and/or

disabilities

The overwhelming majority of young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are capable of sustained employment with the right preparation and support. All professionals working with them should share that presumption. As such, the study programme principles apply equally to students with SEND. The [SEND Code of Practice](#) sets out the general responsibilities of post-16 providers for young people with SEND, both with and without an education, health and care (EHC) plan.

Providers should take particular care to tailor study programmes to the individual aspirations and needs of students with SEND, in discussion with the student. Where students have an EHC plan, providers should also involve the local authority SEN co-ordinator (SENCO) where appropriate. While some students with SEND should be on study programmes focused on helping them achieve stretching qualifications, others will gain more benefit from a traineeship, supported internship or other study programme that helps them prepare for employment and adult life.

Students with SEND may face more barriers to gaining employment than their peers. Work experience may therefore be a particularly important element of their study programme to build their skills and confidence. Providers should consider carefully how the work experience element of their study programme could enable them both to develop and demonstrate the skills that will help them gain employment. They should also consider what additional support a student with SEND may need before, during and after the work experience, to fully benefit from it. Providers may find it helpful to see the short guide on [work experience on the Preparing for Adulthood website](#).

An Access to Work (AtW) grant can cover additional support such as the job coach element of a supported internship or traineeship, where needed. An application for funding goes through the education provider (or supported employment provider working with the education provider). Providers should communicate the existence of AtW to employers when they are setting up a supported internship or traineeship, or where they are helping a student with SEND, to progress to employment when they complete their course to reassure them that personalised support can be provided to the young person at no additional cost to the employer. The [Preparing for Adulthood](#) website offers further guidance on AtW.

When finding work placements for students with SEND, providers may find it helpful to refer to Disability Confident accreditation. Disability Confident encourages employers to think differently and to take action to improve how they recruit, retain and develop disabled employees. A Disability Confident business will often display a badge on their website and company literature. Further information is available on the [Disability Confident](#) website.

Exceptionally, for students with severe and/or complex needs, a study programme to develop independent living skills may be appropriate. This would only apply to

students for whom either substantial qualifications or preparation for employment are not, at this stage in their lives, a suitable option. The student's EHC plan should confirm that independent living is their primary aim.

It is important that students with SEND are given the support they need to access their study programme. The [SEND Code of Practice](#) sets out the general responsibilities of post-16 providers for young people with SEND, both with and without an EHC plan.

Section 2: broad programme characteristics

Students for whom a technical or applied qualification is the most appropriate route to their career goal are expected to study at least one substantial qualification. This should be of sufficient size and relevance to provide a route into a trade, profession or other form of employment, or access to education at the next level.

There are three groups of technical and applied qualifications for 16 to 19 year olds that are approved by the Department for Education (DfE) for inclusion in performance tables². The criteria for inclusion in performance tables require these qualifications to meet particular requirements in terms of their content, assessment and (for technical qualifications) employer involvement. The qualifications are:

- Applied General qualifications: these are level 3 qualifications that equip students with transferable knowledge and skills. They are for post-16 students wanting to continue their education through applied learning and fulfil entry requirements for a range of HE courses – either by meeting entry requirements in their own right or being accepted alongside other qualifications at the same level.
- Tech Level qualifications: these are level 3 technical qualifications that are recognised by employers. They equip young people with the specialist knowledge and skills they need for a job in occupations ranging from engineering to computing, hospitality to agriculture. The Technical Baccalaureate (TechBacc) is a performance table measure that includes a Tech Level, a level 3 mathematics qualification and an extended project qualification (designed to extend students' writing, communication, research and self-motivation skills).
- Technical Certificates: these are level 2 qualifications that provide students with a route into a skilled trade or occupation where employers recognise entry at this level (for example, construction trades, social care or hairdressing). Technical Certificates also provide access to Tech Levels or an apprenticeship.

Other qualifications may be taught, providing they are on [ESFA's list of approved](#)

[qualifications for 14 to 19 year olds](#) but may not be reported in the performance tables.

A level courses

A level students are expected to follow a minimum of three A levels, or equivalent, which count as substantial qualifications. A level study programmes should also include non-qualification activity such as tutorials, work experience, personal or study skills, and support students to progress to employment or HE.

Students who are not yet ready for level 2 qualifications

Students who are not yet ready to begin a qualification at level 2 should be offered a tailored study programme that supports them to progress to education at a higher level, employment, or prepare for adult life.

Young people whose aim is an apprenticeship or other employment, and who are capable of achieving this within six months, may be offered a traineeship. Those likely to need longer may be offered a study programme with a core aim of a work placement rather than a substantial qualification.

Qualifications at level 1 and below

Progression rates from programmes below level 2 vary widely, depending on what and where young people study. Research into effective practice identified a number of factors that combine to make an effective programme. These were used to develop a number of 'principles' set out in [annex B](#). Providers delivering qualifications at entry and level 1 are encouraged to follow these principles, and to make use of the [effective practice and cases studies](#) available on GOV.UK.

Most young people who study at entry and level 1 attract additional funding through the disadvantage element of the 16 to 19 national funding formula. Providers are expected to use this funding to provide additional teaching and support for these students, including SEND support for those who need it.

Research has also shown the importance of taking account of local and demographic factors when choosing what programmes to offer at entry and level 1. Many providers review their provision each year to check that students are completing their qualifications and progressing to further education or employment. All providers are encouraged to do this, working with local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), local authorities and employer organisations where appropriate.

Links to the research above are listed in the '[further information](#)' section of this guidance.

Traineeships

Traineeships are study programmes for young people without level 3 qualifications to help prepare them for an apprenticeship or other sustainable employment where training is 'on the job'. Traineeships should last for a minimum of six weeks and a maximum of six months.

The core aim of a traineeship is a high-quality work placement with an employer of between 100 and 240 hours, which is offered alongside work preparation training, and English and maths if required. Providers and employers can bring these elements together in the best way to engage and support individual trainees and to integrate other support and training, such as mentoring, careers guidance, vocational qualifications and job search support.

We want traineeships to support as many young people as possible into apprenticeships and sustainable employment. Funding has been made available for providers to start or expand traineeship programmes. Providers are encouraged to make more opportunities available in occupations where workplace learning is available and specific qualifications are not required.

Further information can be found in [traineeships: framework for delivery](#).

Supported internships

Supported internships offer young people with an EHC plan an opportunity to develop the skills, experience and confidence they need for employment. The core aim of a supported internship is a substantial work placement with the support of an expert job coach.

Alongside their time with the employer, supported interns complete a personalised study programme that includes English and maths, and the chance to study for relevant qualifications, where appropriate. Internships normally last for a year and include unpaid work placements of at least six months. The aim is to support the young person to paid employment at the end of the programme.

DfE has published guidance on [providing supported internships for young people with an EHC plan](#).

Section 3: delivering study programmes

English and maths

All students aged 16 to 19 studying 150 hours or more, who do not hold at least a GCSE grade 4, are required to study English and maths as part of their study programme in each academic year. This requirement is a [condition of funding](#).

The condition of funding is focused on the continuing study of English and maths as securing these basic skills will support a student to secure a job, an apprenticeship or go on to further education.

All full-time 16 to 19 year old students starting a new study programme, with a GCSE grade 3 in English and/or maths, must continue to study towards a GCSE. This element of the requirement does not apply to students on traineeships.

From academic year 2019 to 2020, students with prior attainment of GCSE grade 2 or below will now be able to study towards level 2 Functional Skills or GCSE grade 9 to 4. Once students have achieved this, there is no requirement to undertake further English and maths qualifications to meet the condition of funding. This adjustment allows providers to support students with prior attainment of GCSE grade 2 and below to make an informed choice of which level 2 qualification is most appropriate for them.

Most young people starting a new study programme will be capable of studying English and maths qualifications such as Functional Skills or GCSEs. However, there are a small number of students who are not able to do so, for example those with multiple and complex needs. These students can be exempt from studying standalone English and maths qualifications, but appropriate literacy and numeracy should still be included within their study programme. Students with overseas qualifications that are established as equivalent to GCSE grade 4 or higher, are also exempt from the condition of funding.

The condition of funding is designed to give 16 to 19 providers flexibility to tailor a study programme, so that each student is enabled to improve in English and maths to the best of their ability and study an appropriate qualification. For example, providers are free to determine:

- how best to teach English and maths, and the extent to which teaching and learning are embedded and/or reinforced through technical tuition
- the appropriate course duration
- when to enter students for exams (for example, in the case of GCSEs, a student could take an intensive course ahead of a November retake or a longer, one or two year course)

Level 3 mathematics qualifications

[Sir Adrian Smith's review of post-16 mathematics](#) confirmed the strong case for raising participation in post-16 mathematics qualifications. Mathematical and quantitative skills are important for students' future study and career prospects. Higher levels of achievement in mathematics are associated with higher earnings

for individuals, and many employers are looking for applicants with advanced mathematical and quantitative skills.

To improve the life chances of students, we would like to see providers offering a range of level 3 mathematics qualifications, and more students participating post-16. The [advanced mathematics premium](#) will help education providers to increase the number of students studying level 3 mathematics qualifications. As well as newly reformed AS and A Levels in mathematics, statistics and further mathematics, we have introduced 'core mathematics' qualifications at level 3. The focus of core mathematics qualifications is on problem solving, reasoning and the practical application of mathematics and statistics. These qualifications have been designed with the help of employers and universities to suit students at a grade 4 or above in GCSE mathematics, and to provide them with the quantitative skills now needed in a wide range of jobs.

Work experience

Work experience is a key component of 16 to 19 study programmes. The term work experience refers to all forms of work-related activity including work tasters, running a student enterprise, participation in social action, volunteering or a work placement taken with an external employer. It aims to give young people the opportunity to develop their career choices, get a first taste of work, and develop those critical employability skills needed for real working conditions. All students are expected to undertake work experience or work-related training as part of their study programme, and for some students it can be the core aim of the study programme.

Activities must be planned to take account of the student's needs and future plans. As such, the purpose and nature of work experience is likely to be different for a student who plans to apply for HE when compared with a student who is preparing for employment. This approach is consistent with the Gatsby Benchmarks for good careers guidance, which are set out in [careers guidance: guidance for further education colleges and sixth form colleges](#). Gatsby has also published an 'at a glance' [guide for colleges](#).

The time spent by students on work experience is funded at the same level as qualifications taught in the classroom. This offers schools and providers the flexibility to assign staff to engage employers and secure high-quality work experience opportunities for their students.

Planned hours should normally be delivered within the providers' normal working pattern. Work placements may include evening, weekend and college holiday hours where that would give students a more realistic experience. The provider must have scheduled and agreed the hours in advance of the activity and the hours must be reasonable for a student of that age. Issues such as late-night transport should also be addressed and the student should know who to contact if a problem emerges while the college is closed.

More detailed information on the [funding requirements of work experience](#), as part of a study programme, is available on GOV.UK.

Work placements

While work experience, which may include training in a simulated work environment or social action, can help students develop ‘softer’ skills, providers are expected to offer, wherever possible, a work placement with an external employer.

Work placements are often an integral part of students’ qualification hours and will be undertaken in a workplace that is relevant to their course, to build on their employability skills in a practical setting. Work placements can also form a part of the students’ non-qualification hours and can be related to the course they are studying towards and/or help them gain experience to progress onto their chosen career path.

The requirement for providers to arrange work placements with an external employer enables students to experience the real demands of the working environment, independent from their peers and their tutors, and put into practice the transferable and sector-specific skills they have learned. Students can often obtain employer references for their performance that provides evidence for their CV, or the offer of a job on completion of their course.

Common principles of a high-quality work placement are that it:

- is purposeful, offers challenge and is relevant to the young person’s study programme and career aspirations
- allows the student to apply the technical and practical skills learned in the classroom/workshop
- is managed under the direction of a supervisor to ensure the young person obtains a genuine learning experience suited to their needs
- has a structured plan for the duration of the placement which provides tangible outcomes for the student and employer
- has clear roles, responsibilities and expectations for the student and employer
- is followed by some form of reference or feedback from the employer based on the young person’s performance

Integrating work placements into study programmes

There is no single ‘correct’ way of planning work experience and work placements – this will depend on the employers’ capacity and could vary considerably by sector. Employers are more likely to respond favourably to providers that are willing to be flexible and work with them to organise work placements to suit their requirements.

For example, work placements could follow a pattern of once a week for the duration of the term, longer block placements, or a rotation of shorter placements at different employers, so that students can experience different aspects of a

sector.

Work placements within a traineeship should be substantial, whilst the placement for a student on a supported internship should be at least six months. Students who have a work placement as the core aim of their study programme must spend a large proportion of their time with an external employer to ensure they develop the employability skills, attitudes and behaviours that are expected in the workplace, so they can progress successfully into paid employment.

The length of work placements for other study programmes will vary according to course type and employer preferences. Providers' assessment of students' abilities, prior attainment, career goals and work readiness should also determine the level and nature of work experience needed to prepare for progression to employment.

In all instances, education providers should agree with both the student and employer:

- the education and training goals of the placement
- reasonable expectations on student conduct, and
- the role of the employer in providing supervision and training.

This agreement can take the form of a short note or email from the education institution to the student and the employer. This is in line with good practice in the provision of work experience as part of a 16 to 19 study programme and to meet ESFA audit requirements for the provision of work experience.

In setting up work placements, providers must consider, in discussion with the student and the employer, whether a young person with SEND needs more support in the workplace than their peers if they are to benefit from the experience.

DfE have published research into [work experience and related activities in schools and colleges](#), which includes good practice in providing effective work placements.

Youth social action

Providers are encouraged to incorporate youth social action into study programmes alongside other work experience. Youth social action involves young people taking practical action in the service of others to create positive change.

In a work experience context, social action can take the form of young people improving their work-related skills and behaviours to have a positive community impact. Evidence shows³ that young people who participate in social action show robust improvements in the skills and behaviours that employers are calling for, including resilience, problem solving and sense of community. Young people

participating in social action have stronger personal networks, higher life-satisfaction and reduced anxiety.

Common principles of a high-quality youth social action are that it is:

- Youth-led – led, owned and shaped by young people’s needs, ideas and decision making
- Socially impactful – have clear and intended benefits to a community, cause or social problem
- Challenging – stretching and ambitious as well as enjoyable and enabling
- Embedded – accessible to all, and well-integrated to existing pathways to become a habit for life
- Progressive – sustained and providing links to other activities and opportunities
- Reflective – recognising contributions as well as valuing critical reflection and learning

Activities can include volunteering, campaigning, fundraising, mentoring – in which the activity has a ‘double benefit’, to both the young people participating and the community they are serving.

National Minimum Wage

Young people undertaking work experience or a work placement are not in employment and are therefore not entitled to the National Minimum Wage. We encourage, but do not require, employers to meet students’ expenses such as travel or meal costs.

Providers may also make financial support from the 16 to 19 bursary fund available to students if the cost of attending work experience would be a barrier to their participation.

Health and safety

The employer has the primary responsibility for the health and safety of students whilst on work experience or a placement. While education or training providers must satisfy themselves that an employer has assessed the associated risks to workers under 18 on their premises and has suitable and sufficient risk management arrangements in place, checks must be kept in proportion with the risk environment. For low risk environments, assurance can be gained through a conversation with the employer. A physical inspection by education providers, or requiring the employer to complete lengthy forms, is not necessary.

The Health and Safety Executive has published [guidance for work experience placements](#) and providers should refer to this when making arrangements.

Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance

The insurance industry has agreed that students on work experience placements should be treated as employees for the purposes of insurance.

The insurance industry has committed to treat students on work placements as employees so that they will be covered by existing Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance policies. An employer, or voluntary sector organisation, that has Employers' Liability Compulsory Insurance cover already, does not need to buy additional cover.

If the voluntary organisation only has Public Liability Insurance, they will need to obtain temporary Employer Liability Compulsory Insurance for the duration of the placement.

The Association of British Insurers has published [guidance for employers](#) planning to take on work experience students.

Disclosure and Barring Service

Providers are no longer required to carry out enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on employers/staff supervising young people aged 16 to 17 on work experience.

Young people intending to undertake work experience in the healthcare and education sectors will need to have an enhanced DBS check before starting on their placement. Providers will need to factor in these costs to the total programme cost and also plan for the time it takes to complete an application (which could be up to 4 weeks).

Other non-qualification activity

All students are expected to take part in other meaningful non-qualification activity alongside work experience. This should take account of their needs and career plans, as well as preparation for adult life more generally. For example:

- activities to develop confidence, character and resilience
- group work to develop team working, communications skills, leadership and problem solving – skills that employers often say are lacking in school and college leavers
- tutorials and seminars (including careers education)
- life skills, such as: the ability to travel independently, how to cook and eat healthily, stay safe, personal finance, or preparation for adult or university life

Such activities should also help students to build experience for their CV and/or personal statement. External programmes, such as the National Citizen Service, can be delivered alongside study programmes to offer students additional opportunities to develop their character, skills, attitudes and confidence, and to support progression.

‘September Guarantee’

The ‘September Guarantee’ aims to ensure that all young people, regardless of what they achieved in school, understand the opportunities that will help them progress, and ensure they receive the advice and support they need to find a suitable place. This can include a traineeship, an apprenticeship, full-time employment or volunteering combined with part-time study.

The ‘September Guarantee’ entitles all 15 and 16 year olds (those in the last year of compulsory education, and the first year of post-compulsory education on a one-year course), to an offer of a place in education or training for the next academic year. While local authorities are responsible for delivering the guarantee, they rely on support from providers to identify which students are expected to continue with a two-year programme, and which are likely to leave or complete their current programme and need to find an alternative place for the following year.

[Statutory guidance on young people’s participation in education and training](#) gives further information about the duties above, including the role of education providers.

Diploma in Sporting Excellence

The Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DISE) is for young people (aged 16 to 18) who are on the talent pathway for their chosen sport and want to combine their sport with study towards academic or technical qualifications. This programme replaces the non-employed pathway of the Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) and the Sporting Excellence Award.

Students participating in DISE must be nominated by their sport’s national governing body (NGB) and be in 16 to 19 education. DfE funds DISE separately, so the hours spent working towards the Diploma must not be included in the study programme’s planned hours. DISE is usually delivered at weekends or in holidays, although participants are required to commit to regular training.

Some NGBs deliver the award themselves, while others use providers to deliver it on their behalf. The provider delivering DISE is required to:

- inform the student’s study programme provider when a student enrolls on DISE

- share information about the programme the student is following; including how, where and when the diploma is to be delivered
- share information well in advance, about key dates such as competitions that might have an impact on the student's attendance at school/college
- avoid delivery of DISE overlapping with education wherever possible, including key education dates, such as the completion of assignments or educational trips, when the student should give priority to their education
- provide the athlete with a named contact whom they, or their education provider, can turn to if any issues arise

National Citizen Service (NCS)

NCS is a government-backed, part-residential youth programme which develops the skills and confidence of young people. Young people work in diverse teams of 12 to 15, building skills for work and life, taking on exciting challenges, meeting people from different backgrounds and contributing to their local area. [National independent evaluations](#) have consistently shown the positive impact the programme has on young people, particularly on team working, leadership, resilience, wellbeing and anxiety reduction.

NCS offers an autumn programme aimed at 16 and 17 year old students. Most providers deliver this during term time and agree a programme which complements the non-qualification element of the study programme by offering students further opportunities to develop character, skills, attitudes and confidence. Participants will also develop a social action project which they will put into action in their community.

NCS is managed locally and providers can tailor activities and materials to suit the student cohort and deliver the programme at a time that best meets their needs.

There is no cost to a school or college to get involved and a young person will pay no more than £50 to take part, with bursaries also available. However, as NCS is government funded, the hours the student spends on the programme must not be recorded as planned hours.

DfE has published [guidance for schools and colleges on delivering NCS](#).

Section 4: funding and accountability

Funding of study programmes

Changes to the funding of 16 to 19 education were introduced to support the introduction of study programmes in August 2013. Funding is allocated on a per student, not a per qualification, basis so that providers are funded for all planned hours, including non-qualification activity such as work experience.

For more information on 16 to 19 funding, visit the [funding rates and formula](#) and [funding regulations pages](#) on GOV.UK.

16 to 18 performance tables

Providers are accountable for the quality of the study programmes that they offer their students through reformed 16 to 18 performance tables. From 2016 onwards, school and college performance tables have provided clear and easily understood measures of student achievement.

Further guidance on accountability and performance measures can be found at [16 to 18 accountability headline measures](#).

Further information

Useful resources and external organisations

- The Education & Training Foundation (ETF) launched its [Traineeships Staff Support Programme \(TSSP\)](#) in 2014 that supports both the development and dissemination of good practice
- Health and Safety Executive guidance: [Work experience](#)
- National Citizen Service: [About NCS](#) and information for providers about the [benefits for students](#). [Guidance for schools and colleges](#) on how best to engage with NCS and case studies specifically for colleges wanting to deliver NCS in term time are also available
- Ofsted: See Ofsted's [Common inspection framework](#) and [Further education and skills inspection handbook](#). The consultation on Ofsted's [proposed new Education Inspection Framework](#) closed on 5 April 2019⁴. Proposed drafts of the framework and the remit-specific handbooks were published as part of this consultation. Ofsted will publish its response to the consultation, alongside final versions of the framework and handbooks, in the summer term, ahead of implementation from September 2019
- Preparing for Adulthood: [Access to Work fund for supported internships and traineeships](#)

Research and practice

- [Effective practice in supporting Entry/Level 1 students in post-16 institutions](#)
- [Effective curriculum practice at below Level 2 for 16/17 year olds – report and case studies](#)
- [Work experience and related activities in schools and colleges includes good practice in providing effective placements](#)
- [Young people in low-level vocational education: characteristics, trajectories and labour market outcomes](#)
- [Ofsted Level 2 Study Programmes Report](#)
- [Rapid evidence assessment on SEN and post-16 work experience](#)
- [Guide for employers and providers on work experience and SEND](#)

Other relevant departmental advice and statutory guidance

- [16 to 18 accountability headline measures: technical guide](#) – guide for schools, colleges and local authorities on measures in 2018 performance tables
- [16 to 19 education: funding guidance](#) - rules and guidance for using post-16 funding allocated by ESFA
- [16 to 19 funding: English and maths condition of funding](#) - information on English and maths condition of funding
- [Careers guidance for colleges](#) - guide for further education colleges and sixth-form colleges on how to provide independent careers guidance
- [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#) - statutory guidance for schools on providing careers guidance
- [ESFA post 16: intervention and accountability](#) – information about the intervention framework for post-16 education and skills providers
- Post-16 technical education reforms:
 - [Post-16 skills plan and independent report on technical education](#)
 - [Introduction of T Levels: information for education providers](#)
- [ESFA list of qualifications approved for funding 14 to 19](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice](#) - chapter 7 provides guidance relating to post-16 education and SEN support and chapter 8 provides guidance relating to preparing for adulthood
- [Supported internships for young people with an EHC plan](#) - departmental advice on study programmes for supported internship providers
- [Technical and applied qualifications approved for reporting in 16 to 18 performance tables](#)
- [Traineeships: information for employers and education providers](#) - documents about traineeships, who they are for, what they provide, and their funding
- Traineeships: [Delivering 16 to 18 traineeships through ESFA funding](#)

Annex A: examples of study programmes

Academic study programme

	Planned hours: qualification hours	Planned hours: non-qualification hours	Core aim?
A level 1	160		Core aim
A level 2	160		
A level 3	160		
Tutorials		40	
Preparation for higher education (HE)		10	
Work experience		40	
Social action project		30	
Total	480	120	

Technical study programme

	Planned hours: qualification hours	Planned hours: non-qualification hours	Core aim?
Tech level	280		Core aim
English GCSE	120		
Tutorials		40	
Employability skills		40	
Work placement		120	
Total	400	200	

Study programme to prepare for employment

	Planned hours: qualification hours	Planned hours: non-qualification hours	Core aim?
Work placement		240	Core aim
English	80		
Maths	80		
Employability skills		80	
Group activities		80	
Tutorials		40	
Total	160	440	

Annex B: study programmes below level 2 - principles

- Assessment – to identify the student’s needs; plan their provision; and ensure that appropriate support is in place to meet these needs. Whilst most students are currently assessed on entry, evidence shows that too many providers fail to make effective use of the assessment to plan the student’s learning programme.
- Support to make informed choices – lower-achieving students typically arrive at college with unrealistic career plans and/or limited understanding of the opportunities available to them. If programmes are to be designed to maximise progression, then students need realistic education and career plans. This in turn should reduce the number who ‘drop out’ because they find they have an inappropriate choice.
- Practical, hands-on teaching in a workshop environment can enthuse a student who struggled in school. Basic skills can be embedded into vocational programmes, making them more appealing than separate classes. An introduction to their chosen occupational area will also help students progress to further learning, an apprenticeship, or employment at an elementary level.
- English and maths in line with DfE policy, and which supports (where appropriate) the level which the student needs to have achieved to progress to their chosen level 2 programme, apprenticeship or occupation.
- Engagement with employers and work-related activity to introduce students to the opportunities available and the behaviours that employers expect. A structured work placement may be right for some, but others working at entry/level 1 may benefit more from experiencing a variety of different

employment related activities.

- The programme must be flexible if it is to meet the needs of this diverse group, and to respond to some inevitable changes in the student's longer-term plans. As such, the balance between the elements above must be individually tailored to student needs.
- Pastoral and specialist support to help students to remain engaged and progress. A high proportion of students will have special educational needs or personal and social issues and will have received additional support when they were in school. Failure to provide sufficient support post-16 risks students 'dropping out' of education, so it is important that providers address any special education or other needs so these students can benefit fully from the study programme.
- All programmes must focus on progression to the next stage of education or employment. Students should be encouraged to move on in less than one year if they are ready, and they have been offered other training or employment.

-
1. The core aim is the principal or 'core' activity in a student's programme. It must be a learning aim so that it can be recorded in the ILR or school census. Institutions returning the ILR identify the core aim for each programme. For the school census, institutions must only return the core aim for students studying technical programmes, or mixed programmes with a technical core. ↵
 2. The process for approving technical qualifications for inclusion in performance tables has been suspended. No new qualifications will be accepted for consideration on performance tables for at least two years following the publication of the 2020 performance tables list (September 2018). Qualifications included in performance tables are still subject to the post-16 level 3 and below review of qualifications in England. DfE (2019). ['Review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England'](#). ↵
 3. DfE (2016) ['Evaluating youth social action'](#) ↵
 4. Ofsted (2019) ['Education inspection framework: draft for consultation'](#). ↵

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