



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

Criteria for accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3

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Foreword

These criteria are for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications in England. They include the relevant common criteria for the accreditation of all qualifications from *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004* and are designed to be read in conjunction with the regulatory criteria for lines of learning and for supplementary recognition of Diploma awarding bodies and Component awarding bodies. These criteria have been reviewed against the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

These criteria do not apply to existing accredited qualifications, which may contribute to the Diploma, which are subject to the regulatory criteria published in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland 2004*.

Diplomas will be awarded by Diploma awarding body. Awarding bodies are recognised by the regulators. Any awarding body wishing to be a Diploma awarding body will need to be a recognised awarding body, and also to obtain supplementary recognition by the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to be a Diploma awarding body in England.

Constituent units and qualifications of the Diploma will be awarded by Component awarding bodies. Component awarding bodies must be recognised awarding bodies. Any awarding body wishing to be a Component awarding body will also need to obtain supplementary recognition by QCA to be a Component awarding body in England.

Qualifications are accredited by the regulators. QCA will accredit Diplomas for offer in England. QCA will subsequently recommend the accredited Diploma qualifications to the Secretary of State for approval under Sections 96 and 97 of the Learning and Skills Act, to be taught in state-maintained schools and/or funded in colleges.

Component awarding bodies wishing to offer constituent units and qualifications should submit them to the QCA as part of the relevant Diploma in England. QCA will maintain a catalogue of constituent units and qualifications for the Diploma.

Introduction

The overarching criteria for the accreditation of the Diploma as a qualification, alongside the criteria for each line of learning, set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all Diplomas at levels 1, 2 and 3. These criteria provide the framework within which the awarding body creates the detail of the components or constituent units and qualifications and sets out its requirements for how these operate.

Qualification criteria aim to:

- help ensure a coherent learning experience through consistent and comparable standards at the same level of the qualification, across a sector and/or related sectors (referred to as a line of learning) and across the awarding bodies
- define the relationship between the constituent parts of components, the components and the Diploma
- define the relationship at level 3 between the Diploma and the progression qualification
- provide a basis for the development of criteria for each line of learning
- help further and higher education institutions and employers know what has been studied and assessed.

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

1. Proposals and rationales

Proposals and rationales

Submissions for constituent units and qualifications or components may only be made by Component awarding bodies that meet the criteria for supplementary recognition.

Requirements for Component awarding bodies are set out in the regulatory criteria for the supplementary recognition of Component awarding bodies.

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

Requirements for Diploma awarding bodies are set out in the regulatory criteria for the supplementary recognition of Diploma awarding bodies.

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

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

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

- 1.1 A Component awarding body submission to QCA for constituent units and qualifications which contribute to the Diploma must relate to one or more of the following components of the Diploma:
 - a. a set of units covering the full requirements for principal learning as defined for the line of learning
 - b. constituent qualifications and units that meet the requirements for progression pathways for specialist learning as defined for the line of learning
 - c. constituent qualifications and units that offer opportunities for additional learning
 - d. the project.

- 1.2 Submissions to QCA for constituent units and qualifications which contribute to the Diploma must build on the previous information supplied in the Component awarding body's updated plans of provision by setting out the basis on which it considers that each unit or qualification must:
 - a. bring additional benefits to users compared to other related units or qualifications, either by adopting innovative approaches to delivery and/or assessment, or by addressing the needs of an identifiable population not currently catered for by existing accredited qualifications; submissions must be supported by research and indicate the anticipated numbers of centres and of candidates
 - b. provide opportunities for progression to further learning and/or further qualifications and/or work or employment
 - c. have the support of interested parties concerned with:
 - education and training in relation to progression in educational courses and/or further qualifications
 - work and employment in relation to employment opportunities

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- d. be marketed and implemented in ways that will support its sustainability
- e. not lead to excessive provision of units or qualifications in a particular sector
- f. take account of all current regulations and legislation in relation to diversity and inclusion, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

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

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

2. Aims of the Diploma

Aims

The Diploma aims to:

* develop the knowledge and skills needed to progress into employment, training or further or higher education

* meet the skills needs of employers

* contribute to the target set in the White Paper on 14–19 education of 90 percent of 17-year-olds in full-time education or training

* increase the percentage of young people who achieve level 2 and 3 qualifications

* improve the quality and recognition of qualifications in applied subjects.

- 2.1 The Diploma must aim to support equality and diversity by considering the needs of all potential learners to minimise any later need to make reasonable adjustments for learners who have particular requirements.
- 2.2 The Diploma must be aligned with the relevant level descriptors specified by the regulators for accredited qualifications and demonstrate clear progression routes. They must encourage learners to develop:
- a. broad understanding and knowledge about a sector and/or related sectors (referred to as a line of learning)
 - b. skills and attributes related to the chosen sector/s
 - c. additional and specialist knowledge and skills to complement and broaden, deepen or extend sector-relevant learning
 - d. apply the following:
 - functional skills in mathematics, English and ICT at the appropriate level, level 1 in level 1 Diplomas, level 2 in level 2 Diplomas and level 2 in level 3 Diplomas (the achievement of the Diploma at level 3 requires prior achievement of level 2 functional skills)
 - transferable personal, learning and thinking skills or PLTS (in independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, team working, self-managing and effective participation)
 - investigative and project management skills through a Diploma project
 - skills gained through work experience.
- 2.3 The general and applied nature of the Diploma qualification requires constituent units and qualifications that promote and recognise experiential learning. They must encourage learners to:

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- a. learn through experience of applying knowledge and skills to tasks or contexts including those that have many of the characteristics of real work, including a minimum of 10 days' work experience
 - b. plan and reflect on their experience
 - c. draw out and articulate lessons learnt (both generalised and specific)
 - d. apply their learning to new activities or situations.
- 2.4 The Diploma qualification must also provide opportunities for planning and reviewing, processes that are critical to experiential learning, coherent progression and successful attainment.
- 2.5 The Diploma qualification must include the identification of opportunities, if appropriate to the subject or sector, for developing understanding of:
- a. spiritual, moral, ethical, social, legislative, economic and cultural issues
 - b. sustainable development, health and safety considerations and European developments, consistent with international agreements

3. Qualification titles

Qualification titles

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

Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs) will agree the title for each line of learning with QCA and, at level 3, whether any specialised progression pathways are recognised.

At level 3, the Progression Diploma qualification will be available, which comprises the principal learning and generic learning components of the full level 3 Diploma

- 3.1 The title of a Diploma qualification must:
- a. correspond with the title(s) required in the relevant line of learning
 - b. be sufficiently broad to cover the breadth of the different sectors within the line of learning, where relevant
 - c. at level 3 follow the requirements for titles to indicate specialisms, set out in the criteria for that line of learning.
- 3.2 The title of a Diploma qualification must be set out in the following order: the awarding body, the level and title of the qualification, and the title of the line of learning:
- a. at level 1, to be specified as 'Foundation Diploma in', followed by the title of the line of learning
 - b. at level 2, to be specified as 'Higher Diploma in' followed by the title of the line of learning
 - c. at level 3, to be specified as 'Advanced Diploma in' or 'Progression Diploma in' followed by the title of the line of learning, and to include any title indicating a specialist focus (in brackets).
- 3.3 Constituent qualification titles must be set out in the following order: the awarding body, the level of the qualification, the type of the qualification (where relevant), an indication of the content of the qualification, and (in brackets) any indication of a specialist focus.
- 3.4 The titles of existing accredited qualifications must remain unchanged.
- 3.5 The title of principal learning qualifications must be set out in the following order: the awarding body, level of the qualification (level 1, 2 or 3), 'principal learning in', the name of the relevant line of learning, and (where relevant and in brackets) any indication of specialist focus as specified in the line of learning criteria.

4. Qualification structure

Components

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

4.1 The Diploma qualification must include components comprising qualifications that can be described as:

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

Volume

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

* at level 1 to four to five GCSEs

* at level 2 to five to six GCSEs

* at level 3 to three GCE A levels for the full Diploma and two GCE A levels for the progression qualification.

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

- a. 600 guided learning hours (GLH) at level 1
- b. 800 GLH at level 2
- c. 1,080 GLH at level 3
- d. 720 GLH for the level 3 progression qualification.

4.3 Within principal and generic learning, assessment units must:

- a. have a title that makes clear whether it is a unit or a whole qualification
- b. be assigned a credit value and level according to any guidelines issued by QCA for the Diploma
- c. be 30 and/or 60 GLH at levels 1 and 2 and 30 and/or 60 and/or 90 GLH at level 3
- d. have identical learning outcomes and related assessment criteria where the unit shares its title with other unit(s) in different lines of learning offered by the same awarding body.

5. Component size

Component size

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

Generic learning

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

Additional and specialist learning

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

Applied learning

Within principal learning, there must be opportunities for applied learning. This involves acquiring and applying, knowledge, skills and understanding through tasks, with a work-related purpose. These must be set in sector contexts that have many of the characteristics of real work, or are set within the work place.

Level 3 progression qualification

The progression qualification has only two components – principal learning and generic learning. There is no additional or specialist learning in the progression qualification.

- 5.1 The size of Diploma Level 1 components must be as follows:
- a. principal learning is set at 240 GLH, of which 120 GLH as a minimum must be applied learning
 - b. generic learning is set at 240 GLH, of which:
 - 60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS
 - 60 GLH must form the project
 - c. additional and specialist learning is set at 120 GLH.
- 5.2 The size of Diploma level 2 components must be as follows:
- a. principal learning is set at 420 GLH, of which 210 GLH as a minimum must be applied learning
 - b. generic learning is set at 200 GLH, of which
 - 60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS
 - 60 GLH must form the project
 - c. additional and specialist learning is set at 180 GLH.
- 5.3 The size of Diploma level 3 components must be as follows:
- a. principal learning is set at 540 GLH, of which 270 GLH as a minimum must be applied learning
 - b. generic learning is set at 180 GLH, of which:
 - 60 GLH must support the learning and development of PLTS
 - 120 GLH must form the project
 - c. additional and specialist learning is set at 360 GLH.

6. Assessment

Assessment principles

The primary purpose of the Diploma is to qualify learners for progression. The assessment principles are designed to ensure that assessment arrangements support this purpose while being suitable for the general and applied character of the Diploma.

In practice this means that assessment arrangements should be:

- * reliable – produce judgements of a similar standard from occasion to occasion and between different assessors
- * valid – assess what it is intended to assess in terms of the learning outcomes
- * transparent – be expressed in ways that can be readily understood by learners, teachers and assessors
- * manageable – not impose undue burdens on learners, teachers, assessors or centres, in terms of time, cost, personnel and resources
- * balanced – fairly reflect the content and associated learning outcomes, avoid confusing learning with assessment and not adversely affect teaching and learning and flexible – provide opportunities for learners to produce a variety of different forms of evidence.

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

Assessment arrangements must take account of the structure of the Diploma, giving due consideration to each of its components and to the aims of the qualification as a whole and the importance of applied learning.

Internal assessment

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

Assessment principles

6.1 Assessment arrangements must be appropriate to the general and applied character of the Diploma and meet the following principles:

- a. take account of the demands for rigour, fairness, reliability, authenticity, validity and fitness for purpose
- b. be transparent, manageable and straightforward
- c. within principal learning and generic learning, be comparable in demand for all learners at each level across all lines of learning
- d. provide opportunities for learning and be designed to inform and support the different needs of individual learners, including those requiring reasonable adjustments and special consideration, in line with relevant legislation on equality of access
- e. be differential in approach and balance according to the level of the Diploma
- f. allow for flexibility of assessment styles, and where appropriate facilitate e-learning and e-assessment
- g. offer a mixture of assessment types, which reflect the purpose, sector context and level
- h. offer equality of access and take account of all current regulations and legislation in relation to diversity and inclusion, including the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

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

- a. enable learners to be assessed by means of internal assessment and external assessment
- b. internal assessment must normally be supervised and conducted under controlled conditions

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

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

External assessment

External assessment is defined as assessment where assessment tasks are set, and learners' work is assessed, by the awarding body.

Design of assessment

It is important that the assessment method(s) chosen for a qualification are fit for purpose. They need to:

- * be appropriate for the level of the qualification, so that learners' assessments will be wholly relevant
- * be within the competence of the awarding body and/or its centres to implement successfully
- * meet the assessment principles in Section 6.1 to 6.2 above.

- c. include within principal learning at levels 1 and 2 assessment units that identify learning objectives and assessment criteria that are based on 30 and/or 60 GLH
- d. include within principal learning at level 3 assessment units that identify learning objectives and assessment criteria that are based on 30 and/or 60 and/or 90 GLH
- e. enable assessment units to be combined for assessment purposes where appropriate to the level and learning to be assessed
- f. use assessment methods that are capable of selecting and judging evidence that are relevant to the learning outcomes to be assessed
- g. provide for assessment concerned with applied learning through real work or work-related tasks, problems or contexts.

Design of assessment for principal learning, the project and specialist learning

6.3 The design of assessment for principal learning, the project and specialist qualifications, that are developed specifically to support specialist learning within the Diploma, must include assessment methods that are fit for purpose in that they:

- a. provide a valid measure of the required skills, knowledge and understanding
- b. provide opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their abilities to meet the full range of requirements
- c. differentiate only on the basis of candidates' abilities to meet the requirements
- d. are free from any covert or overt discrimination, either in wording or in content
- e. are manageable and cost-effective for centres to operate
- f. will be undertaken using the equipment and material, as specified by the awarding body in advance of the assessment taking place
- g. have options that are comparable in terms of the nature and volume of work required and the level of intellectual

demand (if the assessment includes options).

- h. include processes for the quality assurance of internal assessment and standardisation of external assessment across centres and assessors and over time.

- 6.4 The chosen method or methods of assessment must be appropriate to the Diploma and must comply with any requirements in relevant criteria published by the regulators, unless otherwise agreed in advance with the regulators.

Archived Content

7. Grading, determination and reporting of results

Grading

Further information on awarding of the Diploma can be found in the Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

Diploma grades

- 7.1 Diploma awarding bodies must have in place arrangements for grading and reporting of the Diploma according to the following grading scales:
- level 1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A and B
 - level 2 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B and C
 - level 3 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B, C, D and E
 - attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as unclassified (U).
- 7.2 The Diploma grade for levels 1 and 2 will be derived from the aggregate of principal learning unit scores and project score for the appropriate level.
- 7.3 The Diploma grade for level 3 will be derived from the aggregate of principal learning unit scores and extended project score.
- 7.4 The Diploma awarding body must provide information to centres on how the overall award will be derived from candidate performance.

Further information on awarding of principal learning and the project can be found in the Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

Grading of constituent qualifications

- 7.5 Principal learning, level 1 and 2 projects and the extended project must be graded separately and use the same grading system as the Diploma. (See also Sections 8.6–12 on the criteria for principal learning, Sections 9.3.8–13 on level 1 and 2 projects, and Sections 9.4.9–15 on extended projects.)
- 7.6 The grading models for existing qualifications and units that contribute to additional and specialist learning must continue to apply.

Reporting

Further information on awarding the Diploma can be found in the Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

Reporting of results for the Diploma

- 7.7 Diploma awarding bodies must report learners' results in the Diploma transcript. This will include:

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- a. the grade for the Diploma
- b. the grade for the principal learning and each separate principal learning unit achieved
- c. the grade for the project
- d. the grade for each functional skills qualification (English, mathematics and ICT)
- e. grades for additional and specialist learning qualifications and/or units achieved
- f. confirmation that learners have undertaken at least 10 days' work experience
- g. confirmation that learners have covered all of the six personal, learning and thinking skills.

8. Principal learning component

Principal learning

Principal learning submitted by awarding bodies must:

* be specifically developed for the Diploma

* demonstrate employer support, gained through working with Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs) during the qualification development process

* reflect the philosophy of the line of learning

* meet the criteria for the line of learning and content requirements.

Compliance with line of learning criteria

With the agreement of the DDP and QCA, awarding bodies may reorganise the content, providing that the submitted units of assessment meet the criteria for accreditation of Diploma qualifications and relevant line of learning criteria.

Integration of generic skills

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

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

- 8.1 The principal learning component is a constituent qualification of the Diploma and must:
- be sector-related and mandatory, focusing on developing and applying knowledge and skills relevant to the sector
 - place an emphasis on learning by doing and include a defined proportion of the programme (see Section 5 Component size) that is concerned with the application of knowledge and skills through relevant work and work-related tasks, problems and contexts.

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

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

Assessment of principal learning

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

- 8.5 Internal assessment must normally be supervised and conducted under controlled conditions to ensure reliability and fairness. Requirements must be set out that ensure robustness at each stage of internal assessment, including:
- the setting of tasks
 - the extent of supervision in carrying out tasks
 - the conditions under which assessment takes place
 - marking and standardising procedures
 - moderation and verification processes.

Grading

Further information on the awarding of principal learning can be found in the Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

Grading of principal learning

- 8.6 Component awarding bodies must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of the principal learning qualification according to the following grading scales:
- level 1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A and B
 - level 2 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B and C
 - level 3 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A, B, C, D and E
 - attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as unclassified (U).
- 8.7 Each principal learning unit must be graded separately.
- 8.8 Each principal learning unit must be marked separately, the maximum mark for a unit must be significantly higher than 20.
- 8.8 Each unit must specify attainment for unit grades using the same grade scales and notation for the principal learning qualification as a whole at the relevant level.
- 8.9 The Component awarding body must derive the grade for principal learning from the aggregate of principal learning unit scores.

- 8.10 The Component awarding body must provide information to centres on how the overall award will be derived from candidate performance.

Reporting

Further information on the awarding of principal learning can be found in the Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

Reporting of principal learning results

- 8.11 The grade for the principal learning qualification and each separate principal learning unit achieved must be reported on the Diploma transcript.
- 8.12 The principal learning qualification must be certificated separately and include indication of the grade achieved.

9. Generic learning component

Functional skills

- 9.1.1 Functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT at level 1 must be required for the level 1 Diploma and at level 2 for the level 2 Diploma (the achievement of the Diploma at level 3 requires prior achievement of level 2 functional skills).
- 9.1.2 The Diploma must provide opportunities for learners to develop and apply functional skills within sector-relevant contexts.
- 9.1.3 Where relevant, other achievements required in English, mathematics and ICT that go beyond functional skills at the specified level must be identified.

Assessment of functional skills

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

The regulators will confirm the assessment criteria and requirements for functional skills as a result of the trial and pilot process.

Assessment of functional skills

- 9.1.4 Functional skills must be assessed as discrete units.

Personal, learning and thinking skills

- 9.2.1 The Diploma qualification must require opportunities to develop and apply all six PLTS within principal learning. Further opportunities may be offered in work experience and the project.

Integration of PLTS

Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs) will provide guidance on the essential PLTS for working in their sector and opportunities for developing all six personal, learning and thinking skills.

Units of principal learning and the project should include clear and appropriate integrated opportunities for PLTS within:

* the learning outcomes and associated content

* the assessment criteria.

Differentiation will occur

- 9.2.2 The Diploma qualification at each level must:

- a. be accompanied by copies of the personal, learning and thinking skills framework
- b. summarise the full range of opportunities for developing and applying PLTS so that learners can plan and review their achievement
- c. support the achievement of PLTS as appropriate to the level of the Diploma. Differentiation between the levels must be determined by:

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through the process of integrating the PLTS within principal learning.

- the amount of support a learner is given
- the degree of sophistication of the skills used
- the level of demand of the task, problem or context in which these skills are applied.

Assessment of PLTS

PLTS are assessed within principal learning. Further opportunities for recognising some personal learning and thinking skills are available within the project.

Assessment of PLTS

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

Level 1 and 2 projects

9.3.1 Titling

Level 1 and 2 projects are free-standing 'single unit' qualifications and are constituent qualifications of the Diploma at levels 1 and 2. The title of level 1 and 2 project qualifications must be set out in the following order: the awarding body, level of the qualification, 'project'.

9.3.2 Aims

The project at level 1 and 2 must offer opportunities for learners to:

- a. develop as inquisitive and independent learners
- b. be inspired by new areas and/or methods of study
- c. support the experiential learning process and provide further opportunities for learners to plan and review their learning
- d. use their learning experiences to support their personal aspirations for further study and career development
- e. develop, where appropriate, as e-confident learners and apply appropriate technologies in their studies.

9.3.3 Relationship between the projects at Levels 1 and 2 and other areas of study.

The project at levels 1 and 2 must:

- a. form part of a planned programme of study
- b. be of sufficient breadth and depth to allow learners to address the broad aims listed above
- c. be based on a topic chosen by the student(s) and verified as appropriate by the centre
- d. be based on an agreed set of standards and assessment
- e. be aligned with the relevant level descriptors specified by the regulators for accredited qualifications
- f. have the potential to be researched and completed within one academic year
- g. require 60 GLH.

9.3.4 The project at levels 1 and 2 must require learners to select an appropriate topic for their project. This means that:

- a. the topic must be chosen by the learner, through negotiation with their teacher, mentor or tutor and if appropriate, an employer
- b. if taken as part of the Diploma, the Component awarding body must ensure that the chosen project topic has been verified by the centre as being relevant to principal learning in either or both of the following ways:
 - how the project topic complements and develops the themes and topics for learners' principal learning set out in the relevant line of learning criteria
 - how it supports learner progression
- c. learners may choose one of many different types of project, but the topic selected must have the potential to provide the learner with opportunities to meet all the assessment objectives (see Section 9.3.11).

Project outcome

The outcome could be, for example:

* a design

* a report with findings from

9.3.5 Specification of content

The projects at level 1 and 2 must require learners, with support, where appropriate, to:

an investigation or study

* an artefact

* a performance.

(See also guidance for Section 9.3.12)

- a. select, either individually or as part of a group, an appropriate topic
- b. identify a question, task or brief which specifies an intended outcome
- c. produce a plan for how they will deliver their intended outcome
- d. obtain information (level 1)/conduct research (level 2) and select information to support meeting the requirements of the project brief using appropriate techniques
- e. develop the intended outcome using selected tools and techniques safely
- f. demonstrate the capacity to see through a project to completion
- g. share the outcome and an evaluation of the project, including a review of their own learning and performance, with others, using appropriate communication methods.

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

- a. connections and links where appropriate, with other areas of study and/or areas of interest
- b. how to transfer skills developed as part of their project to other areas of study.

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

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

Assessment of the project

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

Assessment of projects at levels 1 and 2

9.3.8 The projects at level 1 and 2 must be discretely assessed single-unit qualifications.

9.3.9 The projects at level 1 and 2 must be internally assessed. The Component awarding body's assessment system must be

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sufficiently robust to ensure comparability and consistency, rigour and fairness between students, between centres and from year to year. The system must involve (see also Section 6 Assessment):

- a. effective centre verification of the appropriateness of the topic (see also Section 9.3.4)
- b. agreement on the range of acceptable evidence
- c. monitoring by teachers/tutors with supporting evidence
- d. clear protocols for provision of advice, guidance, interim reviews and redrafting opportunities
- e. training, and verification or moderation of centres and centre staff
- f. mark schemes that reflect the detail and demand of the assessment objectives and performance descriptors.

9.3.10 Scheme of assessment

All schemes of assessment for projects at level 1 and 2 must:

- a. include a specified written component
- b. match the aims and content of the specification
- c. address the assessment objectives for the project at the relevant level (see Section 9.3.11)
- d. allow for internal assessment of the project evidence, including the presentation
- e. specify the type and format of evidence which is permissible as a project evidence (see Section 9.3.12)
- f. ensure that the maximum mark available for projects at either level is significantly higher than 20.

9.3.11 Assessment objectives

For the projects at level 1 and 2, all candidates must be required to meet the assessment objectives at the appropriate level. The assessment objectives must be weighted as indicated below.

Project assessment objectives		Level	1 (%)
AO1	Manage With appropriate support select, plan and carry out a project or task applying organisational skills to achieve agreed objectives.		20
AO2	Use resources Obtain and select information from a range of sources and apply in a relevant manner to achieve agreed objectives.		20
AO3	Develop and realise Select and use a range of skills, including appropriate technologies and working with others to, achieve agreed objectives.		40
AO4	Review Communicate project outcomes, presenting evidence in an appropriate format.		20
Project assessment objectives		Level	2 (%)
AO1	Manage With appropriate guidance, select, plan and carry out an individual project or task (or individual project or task within a group project), applying organisational skills and using a range of methods and resources, to achieve agreed objectives.		20
AO2	Use resources Research, collate and select information from a range of sources and apply in a relevant manner to achieve agreed objectives.		20
AO3	Develop and realise Select and use a range of skills, including appropriate technologies, working with others, and problem solving to complete tasks, and achieve agreed objectives.		40
AO4	Review Analyse project outcomes and draw own conclusions. Communicate project outcomes, presenting evidence in an appropriate format.		20

Evidence format

Assessment evidence for the project process or the outcome can be presented in any appropriate format, including journals, slides, CDs, videos/DVDs of performances and activities, audio tape, photographs, artefacts.

9.3.12 Assessment evidence

The assessment evidence must include at least one written piece of evidence. Overall the evidence must comprise:

- a. evidence of the planning and of the process of the project (for example, a validated log documenting the progress of the project and the decision making process – this could be using a diary, IT logging system, staged reviews

- or interviews)
- b. sources of and range of information accessed
 - c. evidence of the range of skills used including, where appropriate, new technologies and/or access to e-learning materials
 - d. details of knowledge, understanding and skills used to complete the tasks/activities of the project, such as an experiment, a construction, a performance or research interviews
 - e. an evaluation of the outcomes of the project, an evaluation of own performance and learning
 - f. evidence individual to the candidate; while larger group activities – such as an expedition or a performance may be a vehicle for evidence – that evidence must demonstrate how the individual has met the assessment objectives and performance criteria
 - g. an outcome that demonstrates the individual's knowledge, understanding and skills.

Grading

Further information on awarding of the project can be found in the Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

9.3.13 Grading of the projects at levels 1 and 2

Component awarding bodies must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of the project qualification according to the following grading scales:

- a. for the project qualification at level 1 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of the qualification is reported as A*, A and B
- b. for the project qualification at level 2 attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as A*, A, B and C
- c. for project qualifications at both level 1 and 2 attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as unclassified (U).

Reporting

Further information on awarding of the project can be found in the Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

9.3.14 Reporting of level 1 and 2 project results

- a. If awarded as part of the Diploma, the grade for the project qualifications must be reported on the Diploma transcript.
- b. The level 1 and 2 project qualifications must be certificated separately and include indication of the grade achieved.

Extended project at level 3

9.4.1 Titling

The extended project is a free-standing 'single unit' qualification and a constituent qualification of the Diploma at level 3. The title of the extended project qualification must be set out in the following order: the awarding body, level of the qualification, 'extended project'.

9.4.2 Aims

The extended project at level 3 must offer opportunities for learners to:

- a. have a significant input to the choice and design of an extended project and take responsibility either for an individual task or for a defined task within a group project
- b. develop and improve their own learning and performance as critical, reflective and independent learners
- c. develop and apply decision making and, where appropriate, problem solving skills
- d. extend their planning, research, critical thinking, analysis, synthesis, evaluation and presentation skills
- e. where appropriate, develop as e-confident learners and apply appropriate technologies in their studies
- f. develop and apply skills creatively demonstrating initiative and enterprise

- g. use their learning experiences to support their personal aspirations for further study and/or career development.

9.4.3 Relationship between the extended project and other areas of study.

The extended project must:

- a. be of sufficient breadth and depth to allow students to address the broad aims listed above
- b. develop and extend from one or more of the student's study areas and/or from an area of personal interest or activity outside their main programme of study
- c. be based on a topic chosen by the student(s) and verified as appropriate by the centre
- d. be based on a topic which has the potential to provide the student with opportunities to meet all the assessment objectives
- e. allow students the opportunity to engage in a business, social community venture/enterprise and/or on a local, regional or international team project
- f. require 120 GLH
- g. be aligned with the relevant level descriptors, specified by the regulators for accredited qualifications.

9.4.4 If taken as part of the Diploma, the Component awarding body must ensure that centres verify that learners' project topics are appropriate in that they are relevant to principal learning in either or both of the following ways:

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

Extended project outcome

The outcome of the extended project could be, for example:

* a design

* a report with findings from an investigation or study

9.4.5 Specification of content

The extended project must require learners to complete independently, or take an identified and individual role in, a project involving:

* a dissertation presenting an argument

* an artefact

* a performance.

(See also guidance for Section 9.6.4.)

- a. selecting, either individually or as part of a group, a topic for an in-depth study which provides opportunities to develop skills, knowledge and understanding, and negotiate with their mentor (teacher/employer/HE collaborator) the scoping of that project
- b. identifying and drafting an objective for their project, for example, in the form of a question, hypothesis, problem, challenge, issue to be investigated or commission for a client, and provide a rationale for their choice
- c. producing a plan for how they will deliver their intended outcome
- d. conducting research as required by the project brief using appropriate techniques
- e. developing the intended outcome using selected tools and techniques safely
- f. demonstrate their capacity to pursue a project through to completion
- g. tasks and/or activities through which to demonstrate project skills, which leads to an intended outcome
- h. sharing the outcome of the project, including an evaluation of the outcome and their own learning and performance, with another or others using appropriate communication methods.

9.4.6 The extended project must provide opportunities for students to apply and develop knowledge and understanding of:

- a. the key concepts and principles underlying their studies or areas of interest
- b. connections, links and complexities, where appropriate, between areas of study and/or areas of interest
- c. how to transfer skills developed as part of their project to other areas of study.

Applying and developing PLTS

The extended project should provide opportunities for students to apply, develop and extend their PLTS

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

including:

* identifying, planning, carrying out and completing an in-depth piece of work on a chosen topic

* demonstrating skills of self-management through target setting, sequencing and allocation of tasks, establishing success criteria, adapting and responding to changed circumstances and meeting deadlines

* collecting and collating data, and, where appropriate, analysing and synthesising information in a variety of forms and from a range of different sources

* applying decision making skills and, where appropriate, problem solving skills to carry out tasks and activities and to draw conclusions

* adopting a flexible, creative and individual approach to addressing tasks, activities and challenges

* involving the development of the students' meta-cognitive skills to enable them to reflect on and monitor their own thinking processes

* selecting and applying technology, where appropriate, to support the development of their project

* reviewing and evaluating own learning and the quality of the outcomes of the project

* when sharing the outcome of the project, producing a presentation for a specialist and/or non-specialist audience.

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

9.4.8 Extended project specifications must, where appropriate, provide opportunities for developing and generating evidence for assessing the key skills of:

- communication
- application of number
- ICT
- improving own learning and performance
- working with others
- problem solving.

These opportunities must be directly cross-referenced, at specified level(s), to the criteria listed in key skills specifications.

Assessment of the project

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

Assessment of extended projects

9.4.9 The extended project at level 3 must be a discretely assessed single unit qualification.

9.4.10 Extended projects must be internally assessed. The Component awarding body's assessment system must be sufficiently robust to ensure comparability and consistency, rigour and fairness between students, between centres and from year to year. The system must involve (see also Section 6, Assessment):

- a. effective centre verification of the appropriateness of the topic
- b. agreement on the range of acceptable evidence (see Section 9.6.3)
- c. monitoring by teachers/tutors with supporting evidence
- d. clear protocols for provision of advice, guidance, interim reviews and redrafting opportunities
- e. training and verification or moderation of centres and centre staff
- f. mark schemes which reflect the detail and demand of the criteria.

9.4.11 Scheme of assessment

All schemes of assessment for the extended project must:

- a. include a specified written component
- b. match the aims and content of the specification
- c. address the assessment objectives for the project at the relevant level (see Section 9.3.11)
- d. allow for internal assessment of the project evidence, including the presentation
- e. specify the type and format of evidence which is permissible as a project evidence (see Section 9.3.12)

- f. ensure that the maximum mark available for the extended project is significantly higher than 20.

9.4.12 Assessment objectives

All candidates must be required to meet the following assessment objectives. The assessment objectives must be weighted in all specifications as indicated.

Extended project assessment objectives		(per cent)
AO1	Manage Identify, design, plan, and complete an individual project (or task within a group project), applying organisational skills and strategies to meet stated objectives.	15–25
AO2	Use resources Obtain and select information from a range of sources, analyse data, apply relevantly and demonstrate understanding of any appropriate linkages, connections and complexities of their topic	15–25
AO3	Develop and realise Select and use a range of skills including new technologies, where appropriate, to solve problems, to take decisions critically, creatively and flexibly, and to achieve planned outcomes	35–45
AO4	Review Evaluate outcomes including own learning and performance. Select and use a range of communication skills and media to convey and present evidenced outcomes and conclusions	15–25

Evidence format

Assessment evidence for the project process or the outcome can be presented in any appropriate format, including written text, notes, journals, slides, CDs, videos/DVDs of performances and activities, audio tape, photographs, artefacts.

Any written work for the evidence of the task/activities must be of sufficient length to explore the issues but at the same time demonstrate skills of structuring, using an appropriate style and form of writing and using appropriate terminology.

9.4.13 Assessment evidence

The evidence for assessment must comprise:

- evidence of the strategic planning and of the progress of the project, such as a validated log documenting the progress of the project and the decision making process – this could be via a diary, IT logging system, staged reviews/interviews
- sources of and range of information accessed

Criteria for accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3

For example, a practically-based project may have a relatively short documented process, while a dissertation-style project would contain much more extended writing. The length will depend on the nature of the project, and any accompanying materials.

The outcome and presentation should be supported by answers to any questions from assessors.

The outcome and the presentation should be able to demonstrate the individual's knowledge, understanding and skills.

- c. evidence of the range of skills used including, where appropriate, new technologies and/or access to e-learning materials
- d. details of the design, knowledge, understanding and skills used to complete the tasks/activities of the project, such as an experiment, a construction, a performance or research interviews
- e. a project conclusion to include:
 - an evaluation of the outcomes of the project
 - an evaluation of own performance of learning and decision-making
 - a presentation for a non-specialist audience, using media appropriate in balance to the type of project
- g. evidence individual to the candidate; while larger group activities such as an expedition or a performance may be a vehicle for evidence, that evidence must demonstrate how the individual has met the assessment objectives and performance criteria.

Grading

Further information on awarding of the project can be found in the Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

9.4.14 Grading of the extended project

Component awarding bodies must specify arrangements for grading and reporting of the project qualification according to the following grading scales:

- a. attainment that is sufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as A*, A, B, C, D and E
- b. attainment that is insufficient to lead to the award of a qualification is reported as unclassified or (U).

Reporting

Further information on awarding of the project can be found in the Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

9.4.15 Reporting of extended project results

- a. The extended project qualification must be certificated separately and include indication of the grade achieved.
- b. If awarded as part of the Diploma, the grade for the extended project qualification must be reported on the Diploma transcript.

10. Additional and specialist learning component

Additional and specialist learning

Additional and specialist learning will consist of accredited qualifications approved under Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

Additional and specialist learning can include accredited qualifications that:

* are available within the Diploma as well as to learners not taking the Diploma

* are developed specifically to support specialist learning within the Diploma.

Qualifications that are developed specifically for specialist learning for the Diploma must have been accredited before they can be offered as part of the Diploma.

Additional and specialist learning must be at the level of the Diploma or above.

Additional and specialist learning may include qualifications that support transition to further or higher education, or employment.

The requirements for specialisation for identified progression pathways at each level are set out in the line of learning criteria, based on recommendations from DDPs.

The Diploma should make clear that the choice of what additional and specialist learning to undertake is the responsibility of the learner, with guidance from his or her teacher, mentor or tutor, and if appropriate an employer or higher education collaborator (level 3).

- 10.1 Constituent qualifications that support additional and specialist learning in Diplomas must:
- support choice and progression at the level of the Diploma, while providing a coherent learning experience
 - avoid duplication with principal learning and generic learning, within that line of learning
 - be fit for purpose in terms of size and level.
- 10.2 Additional learning qualifications must also enable the learner to take up relevant complementary learning.
- 10.3 Specialist learning qualifications must also enable the learner to specialise as identified for the line of learning.
- 10.4 Diploma qualifications must enable learners to choose from the full range of additional and specialist learning qualifications offered by recognised Component awarding bodies.

Assessment of additional and specialist learning

- 10.5 The assessment arrangements for existing qualifications which contribute to additional and specialist learning must continue to apply.
- 10.6 Assessment arrangements for specialist qualifications, which are developed specifically to support specialist learning within the Diploma, must meet the Diploma principles and design requirements (see Section 6 Assessment).

11. Glossary

Accreditation	The process through which the regulators confirm that a qualification and the associated specification conform to the regulatory criteria.
Additional learning (see also specialist learning)	Units or qualifications that learners choose to include in their Diploma. Additional learning is complementary in character. It consists of further learning and can include national curriculum entitlement areas and/or learning options such as languages, music or science that relate to individual needs, interests and aspirations, provided these do not duplicate learning in principal learning and generic learning.
Aggregation	The adding together of attainment across the components and units of a qualification to arrive at a measure of achievement for the qualification as a whole. Aggregation may require a weighting of the different elements to determine how much each element can contribute to the whole qualification.
Applied learning	Acquiring and applying, knowledge, skills and understanding through <i>tasks</i> set in sector <i>contexts</i> that have many of the characteristics of real work or are set within the work place. Most importantly, the <i>purpose</i> of the task in which learners apply their knowledge, skills and understanding must be relevant to real work in the sector.
Assessment	The process of making judgments about the extent to which a candidate's work meets the assessment criteria for a qualification or unit.
Assessment criteria	Specify the standard a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that a learning outcome, or set of learning outcomes, has been achieved. Assessment criteria should be sufficiently detailed to support a consistent judgement that a learning outcome has been achieved – there are no minimum or maximum number of assessment criteria that relate to each learning outcomes. The criteria should not dictate the method of assessment to be used.
Assessment specification	A description of the methods and processes (and tasks where appropriate) to be used to assess a qualification or unit.
Assessor	The person who assesses a candidate's work.
Authentication	Confirmation that work has been produced by the candidate who is putting it forward for assessment, and where applicable that it has been produced under the required conditions.

Awarding	The process through which candidates' results and/or grades are determined on the basis of available evidence.
Awarding body	An organisation or consortium that awards qualifications. To be eligible to award accredited qualifications, awarding bodies must meet the requirements of and be recognised by the regulators. For the Diploma there are two types of awarding body, which are defined below – Component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies.
Candidate	A person who is registered with an awarding body for a qualification or unit.
Centre (or assessment centre)	An organisation or consortium accountable to an awarding body for the assessment arrangements leading to a qualification or units.
Code of practice	Principles and practices specified by the regulators against which awarding body processes and procedures for the assessing and awarding of particular qualification types are designed and evaluated.
Comparability	The extent to which marks, grades or results are equivalent between centres, between awarding bodies and over time.
Compensation	High achievement in one element of a qualification should offset low achievement in other elements of a qualification. This approach recognises that it is the student's overall performance, rather than their performance in individual related elements, that is most significant.
Components	<p>Diplomas are made up of learning modules, units of assessment and constituent qualifications, which are organised in terms of the following three components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • principal learning • additional and specialist learning • generic learning. <p>The constituent parts of each component are defined under each of the different components or types of learning.</p>
Component awarding body	A Component awarding body must meet the requirements of the regulators to award accredited qualifications. Any awarding body wishing to be a Component awarding body will need to obtain supplementary recognition from QCA to be a Component awarding body in England.
Constituent qualifications	Accredited qualifications that make up the different components of Diploma qualifications.

Constituent units	The units of learning and assessment that make up the different components of the Diploma qualification.
Content	The coverage of a qualification, programme, module, unit or other component, expressed as the knowledge, understanding, skills or area of competence that is covered.
Credit value	Specifies the number of credits that will be awarded to a learner who has achieved the learning outcomes of a unit. One credit is awarded for those learning outcomes achievable within 10 hours of learning time. When credit value is calculated, both teacher-supervised or directed study time (guided learning hours or GLH) and learner or self-directed study time are taken into account.
Diplomas	A defined set of qualifications or units of qualifications combined according to a set of rules. The Diplomas are designed to support progression to further study, training and employment.
Diploma awarding body	A Diploma awarding body must meet the requirements of the regulators to award accredited qualifications. Any awarding body wishing to be a Diploma awarding body will need to obtain supplementary recognition from QCA to be a Component awarding body and a Diploma awarding body in England.
Diploma Development Partnership (DDP)	A partnership between employers (with an interest/stake in the area) and education representatives (with professional, educational and qualification-design expertise). DDPs are brought together through Sector Skills Councils (SSC) and are led by the most appropriate SSC. They take responsibility for researching and providing recommendations and guidance on a line of learning.
Entitlement areas	A guaranteed core curriculum providing all pupils with the opportunity to develop the skills and understanding required to continue learning regardless of sex, social background, race, religion or disability. They include the national curriculum, religious education, collective worship, sex education and career education as well as other wider opportunities.
Experiential learning (learning by experience) cycle	A process that stresses the central role of experience in learning related to the world of work. Learners reflect on their experience, draw out and articulate lessons learnt (generalise), and then apply their learning to new situations or activities.
External assessment	Assessment tasks are set and candidates' work is assessed by the awarding body.

External verifier	An individual appointed by the awarding body to ensure accurate and consistent standards of assessment, across centres and over time.
Functional skills	Functional skills are core elements of English, mathematics and ICT, providing the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work.
Generic learning	<p>Generic learning enables students to develop and apply the skills and knowledge necessary for learning, employment and personal development.</p> <p>The generic learning component of the Diploma is made up of the following constituent parts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functional skills • personal, learning and thinking skills • a project • work experience.
Generic skills	Generic skills are relevant to learning, training and working in all lines of learning and all sectors. They include functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills.
Grade	A point on a scale of performance used to differentiate achievement within a qualification (for example: A, B, C, D, E, F, G; Distinction, Merit, Pass).
Grading	The process of determining the grade for a unit or qualification.
Guided learning hours (GLHs)	The number of hours of teacher-supervised or directed study time required to teach the qualification or a unit of a qualification.
Internal assessment	Tasks are set and marked against criteria provided by the awarding body and subjected to external moderation. Internal assessment is normally supervised and conducted under controlled conditions.
Internal verifier	An individual appointed by the centre to ensure accurate and consistent standards of assessment, both between assessors operating within a centre and between centres offering the same award.
Learning outcome	A learning outcome sets out what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do as the result of a process of learning. Learning outcomes should not assume that the learning has been undertaken in a particular manner, so learning outcomes can include statements that encompass knowledge, skills and understanding. There is no limitation on the number of learning outcomes that a unit may contain, but the learning outcomes must be coherent, explicit and assessable.

Level	The level at which a qualification or unit is positioned for accreditation. Levels are defined in terms of complexity, autonomy and range of achievement.
Level indicator	A statement describing the characteristics of qualifications at a particular level, defined by the regulators for accreditation purposes.
Mark scheme	Detail of how marks are to be awarded in relation to a particular assessment task.
Mastery	A learner or worker's demonstration of a specified range of performances or competencies to an agreed standard.
Moderation	The process of checking that assessment standards have been applied correctly and consistently between assessors, between centres and over time, and making adjustments to results where required to compensate for any differences in standard that are encountered. See also 'Verification'.
National curriculum	What pupils will be taught in state-maintained schools. It provides a balanced education covering 11 subjects, divided into four key stages according to age.
Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)	The framework of skills, which will equip all young people for successful employment and life-long learning. PLTS require learners to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • independent enquirers • creative thinkers • reflective learners • team workers • self-managers • effective participators.
Principal learning	Learning modules and units of assessment that the learner must include in their Diploma. Principal learning includes a minimum of 50 per cent of applied learning and consists of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that support progress through the line of learning into the sectors concerned. Opportunities to develop and apply generic skills are also integrated into principal learning.

Progression qualification	A subset of the Diploma qualification, which is available only at level 3. The progression qualification has only two components – principal learning and generic learning. There is no additional or specialist learning in the progression qualification.
Qualification	An award made by an awarding body for demonstration of achievement or competence.
Qualification specification (see also unit specification)	A detailed statement defining the purpose, content, structure and assessment arrangements for a qualification.
Reasonable adjustments	Arrangements which are approved in advance of an examination or assessment to allow attainment to be demonstrated by candidates with either a permanent or long-term disability or learning difficulty, or a temporary disability, illness or indisposition.
Regulators (for accredited qualifications)	Government-designated statutory organisations required to establish national standards for qualifications and secure consistent compliance with them. The regulators for England Wales and Northern Ireland are QCA, DELLS and CCEA.
Reliability of assessment	The extent to which assessment results are an accurate measurement of the candidates' demonstration of the abilities specified by the assessment criteria.
Result determination	The process by which awarding bodies use the information from assessments to determine individual candidates' results.
Sector body	A body (such as a Sector Skills Council) recognised by the regulators as responsible for formulating and reviewing standards of occupational competence for an employment sector.
Self-directed study or learning	Learning or study where the learner selects and carries out his or her own learning goals, objectives, methods and means to verifying that the goals are met. At higher levels, the learner takes increasing responsibility for initiating the learning, by making decisions about what training and development experiences will occur and how.
Special arrangements	Special arrangements are now referred to as reasonable adjustments to bring usage into line with the wording of legislation on equal opportunities.
Special consideration	Procedures implemented at the time of an examination to allow attainment to be demonstrated by candidates who have suffered temporary illness, injury or indisposition at the time of the examination.

Specialist learning (see also additional learning)	Units or qualifications that learners choose to include in their Diploma. Specialist learning allows the learner to take up further, more specialist learning, within their line of learning. It consists of qualifications and units that will support progression across the range of progression pathways within a chosen sector, as identified and recommended by the employers and higher education advisers on the Diploma Development Partnership.
Specification	A specification is a detailed document setting out the requirements for a unit, component or qualification that an awarding body submits for accreditation by the regulators.
Standardisation of assessment	A process to ensure that the assessment criteria for a qualification, unit or Component are applied consistently by assessors, moderators and verifiers.
Supplementary recognition	The recognition of Diploma awarding bodies and Component awarding bodies in England that applies in addition to their recognition as existing awarding bodies for accredited qualifications.
Title (of qualification)	A short description that states the type of qualification, the qualification level and its area of coverage.
Transcript	A report of the units and qualifications that make up a learner's programme and achievement. It lists the learner's units and grades for each of the components of their Diploma qualification and also records work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills.
Unit	The smallest portion of a qualification that can be awarded credit in its own right and wholly transferred into another qualification.
Unit specification (see also qualification specification)	A detailed statement defining the title, content, assessment arrangements, credit value and level for a unit.
Validity	The fitness for purpose of an assessment tool or scheme.
Verification	A process of moderation that includes local checking of assessment processes and decisions. See also 'Moderation'.