

Curriculum planning

Diploma

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# Generic skills in Diploma learning



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Qualifications and Curriculum Authority  
83 Piccadilly  
London  
W1J 8QA

Enquiries line: 020 7509 5556

Minicom: 020 7509 6546

Fax: 020 7509 6666

info@qca.org.uk

www.qca.org.uk

# Contents

Introduction	4
The skills infrastructure	5
A unified skills approach to the Diploma curriculum	8
Ways in which generic skills are built into Diploma principal learning units	9
Managing the Diploma skills curriculum	13
Projects and skills development	18
Work experience and skills development	20
Generic skills and the wider secondary curriculum	21
Continuing professional development and developing capacity in consortia	24
Further information	26

# Introduction

The Diploma offers a high-quality learning experience, one that brings learning to life in new and exciting ways. The Diploma curriculum helps all young people develop a range of generic transferable skills.

Employers and those working in higher education say they need young people with generic transferable skills, for example:

- skills in project-based research and communication
- the ability to work in teams and solve problems
- mastery of the basics of working with numbers and technology.

These transferable skills infuse all aspects of Diploma learning. They contribute to the unique combination of skills, knowledge and application that make a personalised curriculum designed to meet each learner's needs.

This guidance will help practitioners planning generic skills across the Diploma to maximise learner motivation, development and achievement. It is for all providers of Diploma learning, including consortia leads and coordinators, curriculum planners and practitioners.

The main focus is on the generic skills – functional skills; personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS); and project skills – that are integrated within the Diploma. These generic skills are developed and, where appropriate, assessed in context, along with sector-specific skills.

The guidance provides examples of emerging practice from Diploma consortia, drawing on the first five Diploma lines of learning.

# The skills infrastructure

Skills are important to the Diploma because of its applied nature. Learners have to show that they can bring together and apply different skills to complete tasks that have an authentic purpose in contexts that have many of the characteristics of real work or are set within the workplace.

## Applied learning

At least 50 per cent of Diploma principal learning has to be applied. This helps to ensure that skills developed are applied in the context of the line of learning. As well as PLTS, functional skills development can be integrated into principal learning to encourage a multi-skill approach.

Additional and specialist learning (ASL) provides further opportunities for individuals to develop or learn new skills, such as modern languages and scientific and citizenship skills.

Functional skills qualifications and the PLTS framework have been developed to support a curriculum that brings together skills, knowledge and understanding in a meaningful way.

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## Functional skills

To achieve the Diploma, learners are required to gain functional skills qualifications in English, mathematics and ICT – at level 1 for the Foundation Diploma and at level 2 for the Higher and Advanced Diplomas. They will be expected to develop and apply their functional skills as part of their principal learning and will be given opportunities to apply them across all Diploma learning.

- Functional English requires demonstration of speaking and listening, reading and writing skills in a range of contexts and for various purposes.
- Functional mathematics involves learners in identifying opportunities to use mathematics, selecting the mathematics to use and interpreting the outcomes of mathematical work.
- Functional ICT requires learners to use ICT systems, find and select information and develop, present and communicate information.

## Personal, learning and thinking skills

Personal, learning and thinking skills are integrated within the curriculum for the Diploma and will be assessed as part of principal learning. Sixty guided learning hours (GLH) have been allocated for their teaching and learning, including planning and reviewing activities. This reflects the importance of PLTS to Diploma achievement. No separate qualification for PLTS has to be achieved for the completion of a Diploma. However,

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their achievement is recorded on the Diploma transcript. It is the responsibility of centres to ensure that each learner achieves all six PLTS. A specific set of guidelines on recording PLTS is available on the QCA website at [www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_15597.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_15597.aspx).

The PLTS framework is made up of six distinct and interconnected areas that include skills for learning and social skills that enable individuals to become:

- independent enquirers
- creative thinkers
- reflective learners
- team workers
- self-managers
- effective participators.

Each area has a focus statement that sums up the range of skills and outcome statements that are indicative of the associated skills, behaviours and personal qualities.

### Project skills

The extended project (level 3), the higher project (level 2) and the foundation project (level 1) have been developed as part of the Diploma qualification and as free-standing qualifications that will help young people develop the skills of project-based research. The GLH attributed to the project are equivalent to approximately half the size of an A level for the extended project and half the size of a GCSE for the foundation and higher projects. Projects provide an opportunity for learners to apply a range of skills through a topic of their choice.

The project also offers a significant opportunity to explore aspects of PLTS.

# A unified skills approach to the Diploma curriculum

A unified approach to skills is about systematically planning learning experiences for the whole curriculum. It makes clear to learners and those who facilitate their learning:

- the different skills to be developed
- why they are important
- the many opportunities for their development, application and recognition.

This unified skills approach to the Diploma curriculum offers:

- opportunities for practitioners to discuss skills with learners, producing a more holistic picture of skills development
- a basis for interpreting and building generic skills into the Diploma curriculum in ways that suit the particular line of learning
- a pragmatic way forward for curriculum planners – a way of working that values diverse initiatives and activities that may be part of curricular innovations at a local level.

The Diploma offers opportunities for learners to gain skills ranging from generic skills to those that are very specific to the sector.

Sector-specific skills are crucial to understanding and meeting the requirements of the line of learning. The direct relevance to work of practical and technical skills is readily apparent to learners and can motivate them to learn. Examples of such skills include those in:

- using digital technologies and producing a creative outcome (creative and media)
- assembling a networked PC system or developing and testing a multimedia product (IT)
- identifying and responding to signs that an individual is at risk of harm or abuse (society, health and development)
- producing specifications and testing construction materials (construction and the built environment)
- dismantling and reassembling, or producing, an engineered product (engineering).

The Diploma also develops sector-related skills, such as those involved in customer care and health and safety, that can help learners to see the relevance of skills to several lines of learning.



In addition to functional skills, other opportunities for mathematical, English and/or ICT skills are present in principal learning. QCA has produced specific guidance on English, mathematics and science content and delivery in the principal learning component of the Diploma. This is available at [www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_17923.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_17923.aspx).

## Ways in which generic skills are built into Diploma principal learning units

Awarding bodies have used the PLTS framework to identify specific opportunities for demonstrating PLTS in principal learning. Where relevant, these skills have been integrated into the assessment criteria for the units. They can contribute directly to the marks achieved.

Learners with proficiency in generic skills, as well as sector-specific skills, have the potential to gain higher marks for the Diploma overall. Individuals with such skills are more effective in organising themselves, using resources, and working and communicating with others.

The **Plymouth Consortium** puts PLTS at the heart of the learning programme.

‘PLTS are the tools we are giving learners so that they can better achieve the principal learning.’

This core philosophy is reflected in the consortium’s belief that PLTS are a unique selling point. PLTS help to give the Diploma extra value in the eyes of the professionals delivering it and, based on the enthusiastic response local employers have given, PLTS are part of the intrinsic value employers see in the Diploma.

In the examples illustrating the use of skills in the Diploma, references to the individual skills appear in bold.

### Society, health and development: Higher Diploma unit on patient-centred health (OCR)

Learning outcome: be able to use measures to assess health

Assessment criteria:

- describe the normal baseline measures for health and their measurement
- assess their own health baseline
- evaluate the information obtained, judging its relevance and value.

In addition to demonstrating practical skills in taking measurements, such as height, weight, pulse, peak flow, temperature, blood pressure and waist-to-hip ratio, learners require skills of **independent enquiry** to evaluate the information obtained. Top marks are available if learners show they are able to 'carry out a critical assessment of their own health (**reflective learner**) with minimal guidance' and 'make a critical evaluation of information obtained from the measurements', with 'evidence of their clear understanding of the information obtained when judging its relevance and value'. The unit also provides opportunities to use functional skills.

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### Information technology: Advanced Diploma unit on understanding organisations (AQA)

The unit gives learners the opportunity to develop a range of functional skills and PLTS, and to demonstrate these on more than one occasion. It requires learners to take part in setting up and running a simulated mini-enterprise as part of a team, which will provide the opportunity for practical experience of making decisions about roles, processes and functions to be performed, and for reflection and evaluation of how effective these proved (requiring, for example, **skills as a team worker, reflective learner**). Here is an example of an assessment criterion:

- develop creative ideas for how digital technology solutions could be used to improve the performance and competitiveness of an organisation in a specific situation, such as during their mini-enterprise

(This criterion requires **creative thinking** and **effective participator** skills.)

In the external assessment, learners will answer questions based on their analysis of pre-release case study materials, which will have involved reviewing and evaluating the structure, business processes and style of specified organisations; risks and opportunities; and how technology-enabled solutions may contribute to the achievement of their objectives (requiring, for example, **independent enquiry skills**). They will also need to draw on their mini-enterprise experience. Specific marks are given for the use of 'contextually appropriate formal written English' and 'appropriate mathematical/statistical analysis and reasoning'.

Unlike functional skills, which are qualifications, PLTS are not specified in levels. The level of demand of the PLTS is determined by the context in which the skills are demonstrated – in other words, a combination of factors relating to:

- the complexity of the situation
- the demand and familiarity of the activity
- the level of independence needed in completing tasks and tackling problems.

For example, in the extract below from the engineering Diploma, the learner works in a team to plan a straightforward task, and then goes on to complete the task individually. In the Higher Diploma the learner is expected to participate effectively in a production team and to be more reflective about their performance. In the Advanced Diploma the learner has to play a key role in a team involved in a more complex activity involving the collection and sharing of data.

### Example of skill progression: teamwork across Foundation, Higher and Advanced Diploma units in engineering (Edexcel)

TW = teamwork SM = self-manager RL = reflective learner

	Foundation Diploma <b>Electronic circuit construction and testing unit</b>	Higher Diploma <b>Application of manufacturing techniques unit</b>	Advanced Diploma <b>Investigating modern manufacturing techniques used in engineering unit</b>
Learning outcome	Be able to work in a team to plan the construction of an electronic circuit from a circuit diagram and then individually build the circuit.	Be able to work effectively in a production team and reflect on their performance.	Be able to work in a team and apply quality control and quality assurance systems.
Assessment criteria	Work in a team to plan the construction of a given electronic circuit [TW] and then individually prototype the circuit using a breadboard, build the circuit using stripboard and construct the circuit on a given printed circuit board [SM].	Participate effectively in a production team [TW] and review own role in the team [TW], including strengths and weaknesses [RL].	Work in a team [TW] and collect sufficient and appropriate data from an engineering manufacturing process, produce appropriate charts to control the output against a required standard and explain quality control and assurance systems and propose ways to ease unwanted process variations.
Marking (top mark band)	2 marks based on the contribution the learner makes to team effort and 1 mark allocated for the record of the planning outcome and up to 3 marks for the construction of the circuit prototype (accuracy, neatness, it works). No marks are given for teamwork in lower mark bands.	Learner participates effectively in a production team and analyses own contribution to team, recognising strengths and weaknesses, and suggests how it could be improved (6–7 marks).	Learner plays a key role as a member of a team to collect sufficient data from an engineering manufacturing process (6–7 marks).
Evidence	In the form of tutor observation of the planning process, plus any team minutes, as well as the final prototyped circuit or an annotated photograph.	Must differentiate between performance of each team member during production activities, eg a witness statement or tutor observation record to demonstrate that the learner did contribute to the organisation of a production team and did fulfil their own role within the team. Other supplementary evidence, such as minutes of team meetings. A written outcome analysing their own performance, also supported by other evidence.	Must differentiate between performances of each team member during collection and sharing activities, eg a witness statement or tutor observation record to demonstrate that the learner did contribute to the collection and sharing of data within the team and fulfilled their own role within the team. Other supplementary evidence such as minutes of team meetings.

Learners meeting the assessment criteria for these principal learning units will have demonstrated effective application of the referenced PLTS, for example the ability to:

- collaborate with others to work towards common goals
- reach agreements, managing discussions to achieve results
- show fairness and consideration to others
- work towards goals, showing initiative, commitment and perseverance
- assess themselves and others, identifying opportunities and achievements.

## Managing the Diploma skills curriculum

To achieve maximum impact, a skills curriculum will link learners' experiences across the Diploma. Learning opportunities therefore need to be managed in a coherent, meaningful and achievable way. The Diploma curriculum requires thinking about the specific learning experiences to be provided, and the teaching approaches and methods that promote and support the learning, practice and application of skills.

Successful learning is dependent upon learners having sufficient time to learn, practise, consolidate, review and apply their skills in different learning environments. It is therefore important to consider the sequencing of generic skills learning.

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Early consideration of the overlap between sector-specific and generic skills is important, as care needs to be taken that generic skills do not become too sector-specific. Learners need to feel confident in their application of skills to other contexts.

Good integration of the generic skills requires more than references to where they occur in principal learning. It involves identifying the relationship between generic skills and the Diploma components, taking this relationship into account when constructing the programme of learning and considering how this relationship is presented to teaching staff and learners.

The **Furness Consortium** sees the skills-based approach as a key incentive and a central part of its strategy to promote the importance of the Diploma. It encourages the active involvement of all partners, highlighting the presence and role of skills in presentations to students, parents and employers, to help each group realise the value of the Diploma.

The consortium realises the importance of taking a coherent approach to planning skills development at consortium, institution and learner level if they are to optimise the potential for skills development within all aspects of the Diploma.

The main focus is on how best to capitalise on opportunities to develop PLTS within assignments, the project, the Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle), work-related experience and Plan-it (provided by S-Cool Ltd) – an online system to help learners to manage their decision making and progression.

A creative and collaborative approach to the development of resources has been adopted across the consortium. This includes links with industry. Barrow Sixth Form College ensures that the leader of each line of learning and the functional skills leader receive the planning time they need for the development of the course and materials.

Macclesfield College, part of the **East Cheshire Partnership**, is offering the engineering Diploma at all three levels.

Skills for Life / key skills tutors have helped to integrate PLTS by embedding learning and skills development into the engineering learning programmes. They have worked with the specialist engineering staff to look at all aspects of skills development across the Diploma. This collaborative approach has been broadened, through the skills tutor role, to include work with the employers helping with the work-related aspects of the Diploma and work experience.

A PLTS workbook has also been developed to use with learners. The workbook helps learners see how PLTS opportunities can be found across the Diploma's different parts.

Responsibility for ensuring that the 60 GLH have been used for PLTS teaching, planning and reviewing rests with consortia management as part of delivering the Diploma as a whole qualification. It requires a system for the recording and verification of this element of the generic component. A number of different models for recording and recognising all six PLTS areas are being used by consortia.

**The Reading and Central Berkshire Consortium** is working with ASDAN to introduce new ways to develop PLTS in the society, health and development, creative and media and IT Diplomas both at key stage 4 and post-16. The partnership is introducing activity-based, work-related tasks designed to develop, reinforce and rehearse employability skills. The aim is to use this approach to support PLTS learning and skills development across the Diploma.

Learners will use a booklet that is designed to take about 50 hours to work through (about 10 hours per skills section, with the self-manager skills embedded within each of the other five areas). The activities address the skills, behaviours and personal qualities found in the PLTS framework and involve work-related tasks designed to be relevant to each of the lines of learning. Learners will demonstrate to themselves, and others, that they are developing important work-related skills that can then be applied in the Diploma itself. This approach is coordinated by the line of learning specialists or the staff responsible for the coordination of the generic learning aspects of the Diploma.

The ASDAN CoPE (Certificate of Personal Effectiveness) qualification can be linked to the PLTS embedded within principal learning. It combines recognition and auditable recording of PLTS achievement with the creation of evidence that can be used to meet requirements in the wider key skills and help track functional skills progress. The qualification is available as an ASL option for the Diploma and also includes some coverage of the skills learners will need to carry out their project as part of the Diploma.

The following approaches to generic skills development have been found to be helpful:

- modelling skills – teachers and others showing how they use skills in their work activities
- making explicit the relevance of skills to the world of work – highlighting ways in which a skill has been used in different work contexts, for example in discussions when reviewing work experience
- varying tasks and situations – so that learners can see how, and to what extent, their current skills can be used in new tasks and wider contexts
- collaborative learning – so that learners can learn skills from and with others
- problem-based learning – presenting problems that stretch, but do not undermine confidence, so that learners can try out and reflect on different skills.

These approaches all encourage purposeful discussion about skills that will help learners to develop the language they need to identify skills across their Diploma experience and describe their skills to others.

The **Plymouth Consortium** realised that the skills necessary to succeed in the Diploma are the very skills many new learners lack or are weak in. As a result, the Plym Cluster took the decision to use the induction period to address this issue head on, making sure the unique opportunities and challenges offered in the Diploma are clearly visible. The planned induction period runs for the first five to six weeks of the Diploma course. This also addresses the requirement for 60 GLH as part of the generic skills requirement.

The belief is that if learners can be helped to embrace their skills development needs early on in the course, the functional skills and PLTS embedded in principal learning can be accessed by learners more effectively. The learners audit their skills needs at the start of the course and they use this baseline as a way of measuring their progress. The consortium recognises the central role of the learner in skills development and builds in regular self-review events.

#### **Outline of the induction programme at Hele's School (part of the Plym Cluster)**

The goal of the induction period is to introduce the learners to:

- the realities of the working world, specifically within the sectors covered by the society, health and development Diploma
- the various agencies and organisations within each sector, who their clients are and what they do in a local and national context
- the opportunities that exist for employment and careers, locally and nationally
- the importance of the skills that are used in these jobs by carers, social workers and others working in the sector.

Induction stresses the uniqueness of the Diploma, looking at what makes it significantly different from previous qualifications. The learners are also introduced to the different aspects of the Diploma and spend time understanding the different component parts and discussing their importance. Where possible, real materials for new recruits to the sector are used.

Functional skills are also embedded in the induction process. Higher Diploma learners plan a balanced diet for a family, creating a shopping list and using 'online' supermarket websites to buy the necessary groceries within a fixed budget. This provides opportunities to use functional skills in both ICT and mathematics.



**Employer engagement days**

The **Plymouth Consortium** organises employer engagement days where all the consortium learners attend line of learning specific events. The employer engagement days are focused on giving learners an opportunity to hear directly from employers about the skills that those wanting to work in Diploma sectors will need to develop if they are to succeed. This reinforces the messages about the importance of skills development embedded within the lines of learning.

**Society, health and development Advanced Diploma:  
Outline of the 'Justice Day'**

During the course of the day:

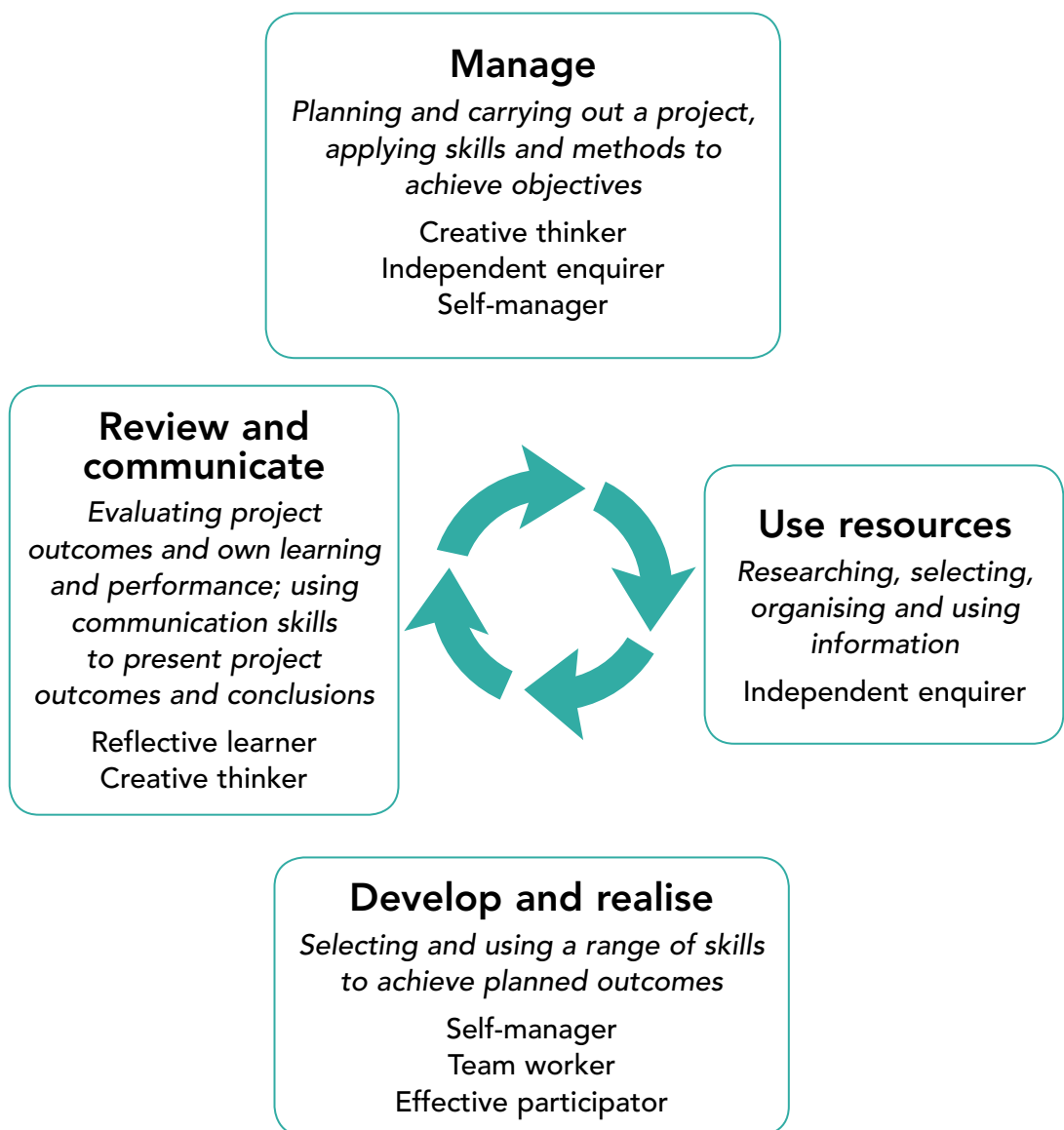
- the local Criminal Justice Board will provide an introduction to how the criminal justice system in England and Wales works, discussing crime in the local area, and looking at multi-agency work, the values of the sector and the skills and qualities required to complete a range of jobs within the sector
- local magistrates will carry out a sentencing activity and talk about their job role, the agencies that they work with and the skills and qualities required
- the Victim Support Team will examine the other side of the justice sector, discussing how victims of crime are supported locally and nationally, and looking at multi-agency work, sector values, job roles and opportunities and the skills and qualities needed to work in the sector.

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# Projects and skills development

Examples of PLTS that are integral to the project processes are given in the diagram below. Their separate assessment is not required, but they are crucial in achieving a high standard of project work.

## Project processes and examples of PLTS development opportunities



### Example of an extended project linked to the Diploma in creative and media

Stephen is interested in a career in journalism. He could complement and extend his principal learning by planning and conducting an investigation of an issue of personal and local concern, for example 'What will be the effect of closing the local youth club?' He would need to produce a detailed plan with clear and focused objectives. Stephen would need to be actively engaged with the issue, drawing on his media skills to produce a short documentary, with the intention of trying to influence others and present a persuasive case for action (**effective participator**). This might involve identifying questions and exploring the issue in more depth from different perspectives (young people, other villagers, the local council and police) to provide evidence to support his conclusions (**independent enquirer**).

Producing the documentary would involve generating and exploring ideas and trying out alternatives to find imaginative solutions (**creative thinker**) and collaborating with others on the different stages of production (**teamwork**). Stephen would have to show personal responsibility in organising his time and resources (**self-manager**). The project requires regular reviews of progress, including feedback from others, as well as an evaluation of the project outcomes against the original objectives and of his own performance (**reflective learner**).

The taught element of the project would enable Stephen to refresh and extend his research, project management and evaluation skills, to make the most of his project and media skills.

Functional skills may be taught in other areas of the curriculum, and developed through principal learning, but they can also contribute to project achievement. For example, learners with good functional skills can:

- access resources effectively, including those from electronic sources
- interpret numerical and other data from project investigations and research
- communicate project outcomes clearly and appropriately, using multimedia to enhance their presentations.

At all levels, learners are expected to be able to adapt skills developed through the project to other contexts.

# Work experience and skills development

Diploma work experience has potential for project-based work and offers further opportunities for learners to develop sector-specific skills in relevant settings and general employability skills in other settings. Skills for employability focus on those generic skills, including functional skills and PLTS, that are necessary for preparation for work. These skills also help learners to cope with change and to manage their continuing career development, including transitions.

## Example of work experience and skills development

On work experience Louise shadowed the site foreman of a large construction company. She attended a meeting with the company managers to discuss a residential development. She asked questions and took notes to inform a site visit (**functional English; independent enquirer**).

She completed a review of 15 houses on a site visit with the foreman before carrying out the 'snagging' process on another 10 properties by herself (**self-manager**). She had to identify and describe any defects, decide what needed to be done to rectify them and record this information on the required document (**functional English**).

In a review with the site foreman, she invited feedback on her work and was given advice, acting on this when completing a further inspection of 10 houses (**reflective learner**).

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One key feature of the skills integration strategy in the **Barrow cluster of the Furness Consortium** is a work-related booklet, developed by Cumbria Business Education Consortium and the awarding body OCNW, and available to all learners going on work experience. The booklet provides information about how to prepare for work placements and looks at the kind of skills valued by employers. It is built around a series of applied challenges and directly supports the types of learning and skills development needed to encourage and facilitate PLTS achievement in each line of learning, while at the same time bringing a level of coherence and consistency to work experience and skills development that employers also welcome.

This type of approach helps build employer–learner relationships during work experience. It gives the employer a clear objective and role in working with the learner, and makes work experience more structured and meaningful for the learner.

## Generic skills and the wider secondary curriculum

The key stage 3 and 4 programmes of study provide opportunities to plan sequences of work, learning outcomes and teaching approaches that ensure that all PLTS and functional skills are integrated into subject teaching and learning.

The PLTS framework has been used to incorporate PLTS into the 11–19 curriculum, making it possible to dovetail skills required for the Diploma with skills development opportunities across the secondary curriculum.

The flexibility of the framework enables PLTS to support other programmes, awards and qualifications such as:

- the wider key skills
- preparation for employment or certificates of personal effectiveness offered by ASDAN and other awarding bodies
- Opening Minds (RSA)
- PEARL (Personal Employability, Achievement and Reflection for Learning Programme)
- SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning).

In developing as a self-manager, for example, learners have to manage their emotions, build and maintain relationships and develop organisational skills.

**Aldersley High School** is offering the IT Foundation Diploma and the engineering Foundation and Higher Diplomas. The school is engaged in new approaches to skills development at a whole-school level, changing the way the curriculum is presented to, and experienced by, the learner, taking into account the broader 11–19 skills framework and the changes to the national curriculum. The Diploma's emphasis on skills development – functional skills and PLTS – is seen to fit in completely with this approach. What is important is that learners can recognise the skills and competencies in different learning situations.

The school has taken the Opening Minds curriculum as a starting point for developing its own skills-based approach, harnessing the potential of technology to help assess competency. The system is web-based and personalised. Learners are required to support their claim of competence with evidence and a supporting statement. Tutors review and validate claims. All teaching staff, including higher-level teaching assistants, are online tutors and assessors.

Individual subjects also provide rich contexts for developing functional skills and PLTS. For example, learners studying science carry out practical and investigative activities in groups that develop teamwork and independent enquiry skills. Geography also involves learners in structured investigations that require them to devise their own questions, develop hypotheses and select and deploy evidence. In physical education, learners need to be able to identify and evaluate strengths and weaknesses in finding ways of refining the quality of a performance.

Work-related learning, enterprise, economic wellbeing and citizenship all include an element of provision for learners to recognise, develop and apply functional skills and PLTS. This includes opportunities to discuss skills, for example in a guidance interview focusing on career progression.

Activities that form part of enterprise education and citizenship can be linked into Diploma programmes, for example by developing and applying generic skills in business and social enterprise curriculum opportunities.

## Citizenship and the Diploma

QCA's Diploma curriculum guidance ([www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_13470.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_13470.aspx)) highlights links with citizenship themes, processes and content in supporting the overall curriculum aim for young people to become 'responsible citizens who make a positive contribution to society'. Some Diploma partnerships have mapped the key stage 4 programme of study for citizenship against principal learning and made specific links with the **effective participator** skill set which covers many of the same skills as citizenship. Citizenship topics of relevance to the lines of learning are also being chosen for Diploma projects.

In preparing for the introduction of the Diploma, the **Nottingham Consortium** encouraged learners to take part in enterprise activities linked to the OCR Certificate in enterprise (young enterprise). This provided a platform to develop PLTS, functional skills, project management and business skills, and is now used to enhance skills development opportunities within the IT Diploma. The Institute of Leadership & Management Certificate in preparing for business enterprise is also being delivered as part of the ASL component of the IT Diploma.

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Increasing understanding of the six areas of PLTS, and the sets of skills and qualities they encompass, can provide a common focus for learning across subjects. Many centres plan for developing young people's PLTS by explicitly mapping these skills into schemes of work, alongside subject-based objectives. The national curriculum website has guidance to assist this process (<http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/skills/plts>).

## Continuing professional development and developing capacity in consortia

Professional development that specifically focuses on contextualised teaching and learning of generic skills, with sector-specific skills, is important in helping teachers to design learning programmes. Authentic tasks that reflect the complexities and real purposes of activities within workplaces provide good opportunities for these

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skills to be developed. Teachers with responsibilities for principal learning, projects and functional skills need opportunities to work together to develop effective approaches to the integration, teaching and learning of skills.

**In the Plymouth Consortium** there is an emphasis on skills development in the Diploma and a strong skills focus in students' induction. Four half days of skills training were provided in the summer for all staff involved in the delivery of the society, health and development Diploma. During the training sessions, teachers looked at current thinking about teamwork and group interaction as well as reflective thinking, using examples drawn from recent research as a basis for their own learning and discussion.

Other teachers, employers and partners operating within and across different learning sites can also contribute to skills development. For example, it is important that mathematics teachers and specialists delivering principal learning have opportunities to plan how sessions can be sequenced to enable key stage 4 mathematics teaching to support Diploma skills development.

**The engineering department at Macclesfield College** has been working collaboratively with the skills tutors to design an embedded skills curriculum that optimises opportunities for developing skills within the line of learning. This collaboration between sector specialist staff and generic learning staff has focused on identifying the skills to be developed and then concentrated on supporting an integrated delivery model. Employers have also been involved.

In addition to staff development, effective delivery of a unified approach to skills development relies on:

- managers who have a clear vision of what they want to achieve, with positive leadership that promotes and actively supports skills development
- curriculum planners who are creative and collaborative in ensuring effective curriculum design that takes account of skills development within the Diploma
- consortia line of learning leads who are able to motivate teams, developing positive attitudes towards skills and optimising learning opportunities
- quality assurance arrangements that include opportunities to evaluate, reflect on and refine the approach to skills
- organisational systems and processes designed to support the experience of learners.

QCA has developed resources that support curriculum planning and innovation ([www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_13470.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_13470.aspx) and [www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_13909.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_13909.aspx)).

## Further information

Further information about generic skills in Diploma learning can be found at [www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_20539.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_20539.aspx).

The web page includes links to:

- resources about developing skills through the Diploma
- illustrations of how time for skills teaching and learning can be built into the curriculum
- details of complementary work on skills within the secondary curriculum
- other relevant resources and training.

General information on the Diploma can be found at [www.qca.org.uk/diploma](http://www.qca.org.uk/diploma).

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## About this publication

### Who's it for?

This guidance is for all providers of Diploma learning, including consortia leads and coordinators, curriculum planners and practitioners.

### What's it about?

This guidance is about developing generic skills across the Diploma and includes examples of emerging practice from Diploma consortia.

### What's it for?

This guidance will help practitioners planning generic skills across the Diploma.

### Related information

[www.qca.org.uk/diploma](http://www.qca.org.uk/diploma)

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