



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

The Diploma glossary

April 2008

QCA/08/3604

A

A level

See GCE/A level.

accreditation

The process through which the regulators confirm that a qualification and the associated specification conform to the relevant regulatory criteria.

additional and specialist learning

Qualifications that learners choose to include in their Diploma that are complementary or specialised in character. Additional and specialist learning must provide high-quality breadth and/or depth of curriculum experience, without duplication of principal learning, and be based on a solid evidence-base of progression opportunities for learners who want to progress into immediate employment with training, or full-time further and/or higher education.

aegrotat award

An award made on the basis of partial achievement to a learner who is unable, through temporary illness, injury or indisposition, to complete all the usual assessment requirements.

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.

appeal

A process through which an awarding body may be challenged on the outcome of an enquiry about results or, where appropriate, other procedural decisions affecting a centre or individual learners.

applied learning

Acquiring and applying knowledge, skills and understanding through tasks set in sector or subject contexts that have many of the characteristics of real work or are set within the workplace. Most importantly, the purpose of the task in which learners apply their knowledge, skills and understanding must be relevant to the workplace.

assessment

The process of making judgements about the extent to which a learner's work meets the assessment criteria for a qualification or unit or part of a unit.

assessment centre

Any centre in a consortium hosting an internal or external assessment for Diploma learners.

assessment plan

A collection of information on Diploma assessments to aid the planning and management of assessment activity. The plan indicates the constituent qualification specifications used by the consortium for each level Diploma and for each Line of Learning, the assessment methods involved for these qualifications and where and when the assessments will take place.

assessor

The person who makes a judgement on learner's work.

authentication

Confirmation that work has been produced by the learner who is putting it forward for assessment, and that it has been produced under the required conditions.

awarding

The process through which learners' 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 bodies: component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies.

B

barring

Qualifications that may not be combined because of overlapping content.

C

CAB

See component awarding body.

centre approval

A process through which a centre wishing to offer particular qualifications is confirmed as being able to maintain the required quality and consistency of assessment and comply with other expectations of the awarding body.

centre identifiers

The Diploma aggregation service operates its own internal centre identifiers. It is invisible to users as no one existing system can cater for both administrative and commercial levels of detail.

centre support officers (CSO)

A regional team of National Assessment Agency (NAA) staff who provide in-centre support for exams officers. The role of the CSO is to promote good practice in assessment administration, provide communication between centres and the NAA, and help exams officers introduce change to assessment administration according to qualification developments.

certificate

The record of attainment in a unit or qualification issued by the awarding body.

comparability

The extent to which results obtained in different assessments, for example in different units, between awarding bodies or over time, represent equivalent attainment.

compensation

The extent to which high performance in one element of an assessment can balance lower performance in another. This idea recognises that it is the student's overall attainment rather than individual elements that is most significant.

component awarding body (CAB)

A component awarding body meets the requirements for, and is recognised by, the regulators to award constituent units and qualifications of Diplomas.

components of the Diploma

Diplomas are made up of constituent qualifications that are organised in terms of the following three components:

- principal learning
- generic learning
- additional and specialist learning.

composite qualification

A qualification consisting of a number of constituent accredited qualifications.

consortium

A group of centres and other organisations (including employers and training providers) working together locally to offer a Diploma Line of Learning. Each consortium is approved through the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Gateway process.

consortia delivery plan

A collection of information made available by consortium leadership showing how a consortium is organised to deliver the Diploma. It will identify the Lines of Learning delivered and which centres (and other institutions) are involved in teaching or accessing the Diploma. This is information that consortium leadership will have provided when applying for the Diploma Gateway. The plan may be known by a different name in a consortium and may take the form of a written document, diagram, spreadsheet or web pages, and may be extended to also show responsibilities and contact details, for example for Line of Learning leaders.

constituent qualifications

Accredited qualifications that make up the different components of the Diploma.

content

The knowledge, understanding, skills or area of competence to be covered in a qualification as described in the specification.

controlled assessments

Controlled assessments are internal assessment activities undertaken by learners under conditions set by an awarding body. The conditions relate to the three elements of assessment: setting of tasks, conduct of tasks and marking of learners' assessment evidence. Component awarding bodies will provide guidance on what controlled assessment means in relation to the specifications for components in Diplomas.

D

DAB

See Diploma awarding body.

DDP

See Diploma development partnership.

Diploma

A defined set of qualifications combined according to a set of rules. Diplomas are a combination of existing qualifications and purpose-designed qualifications. The Diploma is designed to support progression to further study, training and employment in a particular Line of Learning.

Diploma aggregation service

Previously called Minerva, the Diploma aggregation service will support the awarding of Diplomas to learners. It will be used by exam centres and awarding bodies engaged in the delivery of Diplomas to share data and record learners' progress towards a Diploma award. Typically, users at exam centres will access the service through a web browser, although they may also access it via an existing management information system (where a link has been established to the service). Larger awarding bodies will link their own systems directly to the service. As well as recording Diploma constituent qualification results against each learner, the service will aggregate these results and apply rules of combination to determine whether sufficient units and results have been gained for a Diploma to be claimed through the service.

Diploma awarding body

A Diploma awarding body meets the requirements for, and is recognised by, the regulators to award the full Diploma qualification.

Diploma catalogues

The catalogues of the constituent qualifications, and the valid combinations of those qualifications, which can be used for the achievement of the Diploma.

Diploma development partnership (DDP)

This is a partnership between employers, higher education and other subject experts (with an interest/stake in the sector or subject) and education representatives (with professional, educational or qualification-design expertise). DDPs are brought together through sector skills councils (SSCs) and are led by the most appropriate SSC. DDPs are responsible for developing the Line of Learning statement.

Diploma transcript

A report of the qualifications that make up a learner's Diploma programme. It lists the learners' grades for each qualification in their Diploma, and records work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills.

domain assessor

A person who has responsibility within a consortium for overseeing all aspects of the quality assurance of the internal assessment carried out on the principal learning and project components for a particular Diploma Line of Learning.

E

entitlement areas

At key stage 4, schools are required to ensure that all students have access to at least one course in each of the following areas:

- the arts
- design and technology
- the humanities
- modern foreign languages.

This entitlement will remain in 2013, alongside the entitlement to Diplomas.

experiential learning

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. The learner's subjective experience is of critical importance in the learning process.

extended Diploma

Announced in early 2008, the extended Diploma will provide extra stretch and challenge for the most capable learners at all Diploma levels. Recognising a wider range of achievement – including compulsory study within key stage 4 – the extended Diplomas will each feature an extended core of English and mathematics content, as well as an further block of additional and specialist learning. Developed across all 17 Lines of Learning in time for first teaching in 2011, the precise details of the extended Diploma will emerge as development of the phase 4 Diplomas (in languages, science and humanities) progresses.

extended project

This is a level 3 qualification involving a single piece of work that requires a high degree of planning, preparation, research and independent working. Students will explore in real depth a topic based on their own interests and aspirations. The extended project may be completed alongside A levels or as part of an Advanced or Progression Diploma.

external assessment

A form of assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are set by the awarding body, taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marked by the awarding body.

F**foundation learning tier**

The foundation learning tier is made up of all units and qualifications at Entry level and level 1 of the new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) taken by learners aged 14 and over. Units and qualifications within the foundation learning tier will be packaged together into progression pathways – frameworks for learning that will ensure that all learners are helped to progress towards level 2 or other meaningful destinations.

functional skills

These are the core elements of English, mathematics and ICT, which provide the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work. Functional skills will relate to GCSEs in English, mathematics and ICT, Diplomas and apprenticeships. They will also be available as stand-alone qualifications.

G

Gateway

The quality assurance process run by the DCSF, through which a local partnership of learning providers (a consortium) applies for approval to offer Diploma qualifications in a Line of Learning.

GCE/A level

An A level is normally taken as a two-year course progressing from either GCSE or an equivalent qualification.

It comprises the advanced subsidiary (AS) and A2 qualifications. The AS is a stand-alone qualification and is valued as half a full A level qualification (assessed at the standard expected for a student halfway through an A level course). The A2 is the second half of a full A level qualification (assessed at the standard expected for a student at the end of a full A level course). Both are worth 50 per cent of the full A level qualification.

GCSE

GCSE stands for General Certificate of Secondary Education. This qualification is normally taken by 15- to 18-year-olds in schools and colleges across the country but GCSEs are available to anyone who would like to gain a qualification in a subject which they are interested in.

GCSE specifications are currently under review and revised specifications will be available for first teaching in September 2009, except for English, English literature, ICT and mathematics, which are for first teaching in September 2010.

generic learning

Generic learning enables students to develop and apply the skills and knowledge necessary for learning, employment and personal development. The generic learning component of the Diploma is made up of the following constituent parts:

- functional skills
- personal, learning and thinking skills
- a project
- work experience.

grade

A point on a scale of performance used to differentiate achievement within a qualification (for example, A*, A, B, C, D, E).

guided learning hours (GLH)

The number of hours of supervised or directed study time required to teach the qualification or a unit of a qualification.

H

higher education institutions (HEI)

An institution offering higher education courses.

home centre

The home centre is defined as the centre that undertakes transactions on the Diploma aggregation services for a particular learner, and there is only one home centre for each learner. It is the centre where a learner is enrolled and which has overall responsibility for his or her Diploma programme.

I

information, advice and guidance (IAG)

People need IAG to make informed choices about local learning and work opportunities. Information is the data about how to access learning and work opportunities. Advice is the additional support given to understand the information. Guidance offers even more in-depth help from a trained adviser.

intention to claim

A mechanism by which a learner can state his or her intention to claim a Diploma once the final constituent qualification results have been received.

internal assessment

Assessment tasks where learners' evidence is assessed in the centre against criteria provided by the awarding body and subjected to external moderation. The assessment tasks may be set internally at the centre or be provided by the awarding body.

internal standardisation

Processes carried out by centres in relation to internally assessed work to ensure consistency within each Line of Learning in relation to the setting of tasks, conduct of tasks and marking of learners' assessment evidence. Internal standardisation thereby ensures that all learners are judged against the same standards regardless of which teaching group they are in or which assessor marks their work.

K

key stage 4 curriculum

At key stage 4 all students are required to study English, mathematics, ICT, science, citizenship, physical education, religious education, sex education, careers education and work-related learning. This requirement will remain following the introduction of Diplomas.

L

lead assessor

A person who has responsibility within a consortium for overseeing all aspects of the quality assurance of the assessment carried out for the principal learning and project components for all Diploma programmes offered.

learner

An individual who is studying for or who has completed a Diploma qualification.

learner account

This will indicate participation on a Diploma programme and act as the repository for results data for an individual learner, recording Line of Learning and level. It will be managed and monitored by a centre on behalf of a learner or a DAB on behalf of a centre. Learners will not have direct access to their learner accounts.

learner administrator

This is a role specific to the aggregation service. The learner administrator is responsible for creating and maintaining learner accounts with the service to record a learner's work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills achievements, and for activating a claim for a Diploma on behalf of the learner. Typically, this role would be carried out by an exams officer for the centre where the learner is enrolled. The administrator is also responsible for the administration of changes to the Line of Learning or level, or for the relocation (transfer) of a learner to another centre.

Learner Registration Service (LRS)

The LRS is an internet-based service capable of providing a unique learner number (ULN) for every person in education and training in the UK. This will allow people to build a lifelong record of their learning participation and achievements, which they can access and share if they choose. It is part of the MIAP programme of work and further information can be found at www.miap.gov.uk/services.

learning outcomes

These indicate the knowledge, skills and understanding that learners should have developed through the teaching and learning activities. They provide opportunities for checking progress and reviewing work with learners.

level indicators:

entry

Entry level qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning in everyday situations under direct guidance or supervision.

Learning at this level involves building basic knowledge and skills and is not geared towards specific occupations.

level 1

Level 1 qualifications recognise basic knowledge and skills and the ability to apply learning with guidance or supervision. Learning at this level is about activities that mostly relate to everyday situations and may be linked to job competence. The Foundation Diploma is a level 1 qualification.

level 2

Level 2 qualifications recognise the ability to gain a good knowledge and understanding of an area of work or a subject area, and to perform varied tasks

with some guidance or supervision. Learning at this level involves building knowledge and/or skills in relation to an area of work or a subject area and is appropriate for many job roles. The Higher Diploma is a level 2 qualification.

level 3

Level 3 qualifications recognise the ability to gain, and where relevant, apply a range of knowledge, skills and understanding. Learning at this level involves obtaining detailed knowledge and skills. It is appropriate for people wishing to go to university, people working independently or, in some areas, supervising and training others in their field of work. The Advanced and Progression Diplomas are level 3 qualifications.

level 4

Level 4 qualifications recognise specialist learning and involve detailed analysis of a high level of information and knowledge in an area of work or study. Learning at this level is appropriate for people working in technical and professional jobs, and/or managing and developing others. Level 4 qualifications are at a level equivalent to Certificates of Higher Education.

Lines of Learning

The broad subject areas that each Diploma will cover are as follows:

First teaching September 2008

construction and the built environment
creative and media
engineering
information technology
society, health and development.

First teaching September 2009

business, administration and finance
environmental and land-based studies
hair and beauty studies
hospitality
manufacturing and product design.

First teaching September 2010

public services
retail

sport and leisure
travel and tourism.

First teaching September 2011

humanities
languages
science.

The Lines of Learning titles are subject to change.

Line of Learning criteria

A regulatory document developed by the QCA and approved by Ofqual that defines the knowledge, skills and understanding relevant to a Line of Learning at levels 1, 2 and 3 that must be contained as part of the principal learning component within the Diploma qualification. Awarding bodies must meet the requirements laid out in the Line of Learning criteria in addition to the *Criteria for accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3*.

Line of Learning statement

A detailed document written and owned by the relevant Diploma Development Partnership for a particular Line of Learning that outlines the rationale, vision and content at levels 1, 2 and 3 that should be contained as part of the principal learning component within the Diploma qualification. This document is intended to inform and guide the development of the Line of Learning criteria.

M

management information system (MIS)

MIS (management information system) is a general term for the computer systems in an organisation that provide information about its business operations.

Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP)

The MIAP programme will streamline the collection, handling and sharing of information on learning and achievement for education and training organisations. The Learning and Skills Council is delivering MIAP on behalf of partners across the education sector. Further information can be found at www.miap.gov.uk.

Minerva application programming interface

An application programming interface (API) defines how to access a software-based service. It is a published specification that describes how other software programs can access the functions of an automated service. In web services, WSDL is a standardised format for expressing an API. The Minerva API defines the software services available to third-party systems. The Minerva API is defined using WSDL.

moderation

The process through which internal assessment is monitored to ensure that it meets required standards, and makes adjustments to results where required to compensate for any difference in standards that are encountered.

N

national curriculum

The national curriculum is a framework used by all maintained schools to ensure that teaching and learning is balanced and consistent. It sets out:

- the subjects taught
- the knowledge, skills and understanding required in each subject
- standards or attainment targets in each subject – teachers can use these to measure a child's progress and plan the next steps in his or her learning
- how children's progress is assessed and reported.

Within the framework of the national curriculum, schools are free to plan and organise teaching and learning in the way that best meets the needs of their pupils.

National Database of Accreditation Qualifications (NDAQ)

This is a website that contains details of all qualifications that are accredited by the qualification regulators in England (Ofqual), Wales (DCELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA). More information can be found on NDAQ at www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/index.aspx.

O

operating agreement

The agreement between QCA and an awarding body governing the provision of the Diploma aggregation service by QCA for use by awarding bodies in live operation.

operating rules

A set of requirements and information for component and Diploma awarding bodies, covering the operation of the Diploma qualification, principal learning, the project and the contribution of constituent qualifications to the Diploma.

P

pathfinders

Pathfinders are local groups of schools, colleges and employers that were set up to test local collaborative delivery of 14–19 education and training in a range of settings over the three years 2002/03 to 2004/05. The practice and findings of these pathfinders helped to shape the development of the Diploma and how it will be delivered.

pathway

A route to progress through the Diploma framework.

personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)

The framework of skills that will equip all young people for successful employment and lifelong learning. PLTS require learners to be:

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

principal learning

This is the mandatory learning part of the Diploma. Principal learning is sector- and subject-related and predominantly applied in character. It includes a minimum of 50 per cent applied learning and consists of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that support progress through the Line of Learning into the sectors and subjects concerned. Opportunities to develop and apply generic skills are also integrated into principal learning.

prior achievement

The Diploma qualification allows for the inclusion of constituent qualifications that have been achieved by a learner after 1 January 2005 if they are in the Diploma catalogue or a historic version of the Diploma catalogue. Prior achievement also refers to qualifications that are relevant to the Diploma achieved prior to the opening of a learner account.

programme of study

The statutory elements of the national curriculum that all students at key stage 4 must cover while at school or college.

Q

Qualification and Credit Framework

The Qualification and Credit framework is a new way of recognising skills and qualifications. It does this by awarding credit for qualifications and units (small steps of learning). It enables people to gain qualifications at their own pace along flexible routes.

qualification criteria

The *Criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3*, alongside the criteria for each Line of Learning, sets 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 awarding bodies create the detail of the components or constituent qualifications.

qualification specification

A detailed statement that defines the purpose, content, structure and assessment arrangements for a qualification.

Quality Improvement Agency

The Quality Improvement Agency aims to raise the quality of education and training throughout the learning and skills sector by inspiring a culture of self-improvement and by supporting the move to self-regulation.

R

reasonable adjustments

Defined in the Disability Discrimination Act as reasonable steps to ensure disabled people are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled people, 'substantial' being more than minor or trivial.

regulator for qualifications

Statutory organisations that are required to establish national standards for qualifications and ensure consistent compliance with them. The regulators for England, Wales and Northern Ireland are respectively: Ofqual, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) and the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

rules of combination

Automatic rules (applied through the Diploma catalogues) that define which qualifications can make up a full Diploma qualification.

S

Section 96

Under the provisions of Section 96, 98, 100 and 101 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, schools, institutions and employers in England may offer to those under the age of 19 a course leading to an external qualification that is funded either by a local authority or a learning and skills council only if the qualification is approved.

sector

In relation to the Diploma, the term sector refers to an employer-led Line of Learning in a specific area of work, such as construction or engineering.

sector skills councils (SSCs)

There are 25 SSCs and each one is an employer-led, independent organisation that covers a specific sector across the UK. The four key goals are to:

- reduce skills gaps and shortages
- improve productivity, business and public service performance
- increase opportunities to boost the skills and productivity of everyone in the sector's workforce
- improve learning supply including apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards (NOS).

specialist learning

See additional and specialist learning.

standardisation

A process to ensure that the assessment criteria for a qualification or unit are applied consistently by assessors, moderators and verifiers.

supplementary recognition

The recognition of Diploma awarding bodies and component awarding bodies in England, in addition to their recognition as awarding bodies for accredited qualifications.

synthesis

A learner's ability to bring together facts, skills, knowledge or concepts that have been learnt separately and that may belong to different subjects or disciplines.

T

testing agreement

The agreement between QCA and an awarding body governing the testing of the Diploma aggregation service.

trial grade

Centres will be able to obtain a trial grade for each learner who has completed the necessary achievements for the Diploma, before claiming the award of the Diploma through the Diploma awarding body and the Diploma aggregation service. The trial grade is verified by the Diploma awarding body that will award the Diploma.

U

Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS)

UCAS is the UK central organisation through which applications are processed for entry to full-time first degrees. Students who wish to progress to higher education must apply through the UCAS application system.

unique learner number (ULN)

The unique number that identifies a learner, supported by MIAP and the learner registration service.

unit

The smallest part of a qualification that is capable of certification in its own right.

unit grade

The grade awarded for each unit. This applies to the principal learning qualification.

unit grade boundary

The lowest mark on the scale deserving of a particular grade.

V

verification

A process of moderation that includes local checking of assessment processes and decisions.

W

work experience

Work experience provides opportunities for learning about skills and personal qualities, careers, roles and structures that exist within a workplace or company. Learners gain insights into, and experience of, personal responsibilities, competencies, key skills and tasks within a workplace. Where well structured, work experience helps young people understand the functions of different people at work and the range of opportunities within a company. It gives insights into the relevance to working life of subjects and raises awareness of enterprise and entrepreneurial ability.