



# Operating rules for component and Diploma awarding bodies Consultation on version 2

Archived Content



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## Introduction

### Ofqual

Ofqual, the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator, is the new regulator of qualifications, exams and tests in England. It oversees the qualifications and examinations system to make sure that it is fair, provides value for money and meets the needs of learners and employers. Ofqual has been set up to ensure that children, young people, and adult learners get the results their work deserves, that standards are maintained and that qualifications count now and in the future. Ofqual also makes sure that the qualifications available meet the needs of learners and employers.

### The Diploma qualification

The Diploma is a new composite 14–19 qualification that will bring an innovative approach to learning. It will enable students to gain knowledge, understanding and hands-on experience of sectors that they are interested in, while putting new skills into practice. Employers and awarding bodies have teamed up with schools, colleges and universities to form Diploma development partnerships (DDPs) and are working together with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and Ofqual to take forward Diploma qualifications. Diplomas are offered at the following levels: Foundation (level 1), Higher (level 2) and Progression and Advanced (level 3). They will be available in 17 subject/sector areas from 2011.

The Diploma provides learners with real opportunities to practise their skills. It includes principal learning qualifications that provide opportunities for applied learning, which cover newly defined sector-related material and allow learners to develop and apply generic skills. In addition learners take the project qualification<sup>1</sup>, which offers the chance to personalise and show breadth and independence of learning.

Functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are also an integral part of the Diploma: learners are required to attain a specified level to be awarded a Diploma. Learners will have opportunities to develop and apply functional skills across the Diploma curriculum. Functional skills are also available as stand-alone qualifications.

Learners must also take qualifications to meet specified guided learning hour (GLH) requirements for additional and specialist learning for the Diploma. This gives

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<sup>1</sup> The project qualification is offered at levels 1 and 2. The extended project is offered at level 3. All references to the project encompass the extended project as well as the project.

learners the opportunity to personalise their learning. Many qualifications that are already being offered can contribute to additional and specialist learning.

Diploma awarding bodies award Diploma qualifications. The constituent qualifications that contribute to the Diploma, such as principal learning qualifications, functional skills and qualifications for additional and specialist learning, will be awarded by component awarding bodies. Component and Diploma awarding bodies will be recognised through a supplementary process.

Centres and centre consortia for the Diploma will manage records of learners' results at centre level. The Diploma aggregation service will enable the gathering and storing of the results data that contribute to a learner's Diploma. The service will also provide an aggregation function to enable a Diploma awarding body to award a Diploma.

### **Scope and purpose of the operating rules for component and Diploma awarding bodies**

The purpose of the operating rules for component and Diploma awarding bodies is to set out the regulatory requirements for the operation of the Diploma qualification, principal learning, the project and the contribution of other constituent qualifications to the Diploma. The operating rules apply to component and Diploma awarding bodies, and include information on what awarding bodies require of centres, to ensure the Diploma can operate effectively.

The operating rules cover specific requirements for the Diploma and principal learning. The rules refer to requirements in relation to constituent qualifications for the Diploma, such as the project and qualifications that contribute to additional and specialist learning, so that the Diploma aggregation service can record and aggregate the results needed for the award of the Diploma qualification. The operating rules do not include specific codes of practice for other constituent qualifications in the Diploma, but do refer to requirements in relation to constituent qualifications for the Diploma. Existing requirements that apply to qualifications that contribute to additional and specialist learning remain unchanged.

Separate regulatory arrangements cover functional skills. The operating rules only apply to functional skills in terms of the requirement that results are included in the constituent qualification results that must be supplied to the Diploma aggregation service, for those learners with a Diploma learner account.

These operating rules establish the principles and describe the required regulatory outcomes for the Diploma. They do not set out the processes by which those aims are achieved, as do specific codes of practice such as those for NVQs, GCSEs and A levels and AS qualifications.

This approach provides awarding bodies with the flexibility to work to the principles and meet the required outcomes, without the majority of processes being prescribed. This enables awarding bodies to determine the process that is most suitable for their own contexts.

These rules only include information over and above the principles and outcomes where it is helpful in securing comparability between awarding bodies' qualifications or in minimising the bureaucratic burden on centres.

The regulatory framework for the Diploma covers the regulation of overarching arrangements, and how the different constituent qualifications combine for the award of the Diploma, together with the regulation of principal learning and project qualifications.

## **The regulatory framework for the Diploma**

The regulatory framework for the Diploma consists of the following elements:

- regulatory aims for the Diploma that set out what the regulatory framework for the Diploma is designed to achieve (see page 6)
- for awarding bodies: regulatory criteria for the supplementary recognition of component and Diploma awarding bodies – these criteria are supplementary to the criteria for recognising awarding bodies for accredited qualifications, 'Criteria for awarding bodies' procedures' published in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA, ACCAC, CEA; 2004). All component and Diploma awarding bodies must also be recognised as awarding bodies for accredited qualifications
- for awarding bodies: operating rules for component and Diploma awarding bodies that set out the regulatory requirements for the operation of the Diploma. The operating rules should be read and complied with in conjunction with the supplementary recognition criteria
- for Diploma qualifications: criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at level 1 (Foundation), level 2 (Higher) and level 3 (Advanced) – covering the relevant aspects of the 'Common criteria for all qualifications' in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA, ACCAC, CEA; 2004)
- for each subject/sector area for the Diploma: criteria for the accreditation of Lines of Learning qualifications
- arrangements for accrediting the Diploma qualifications.

Ofqual monitors the performance of awarding bodies and evaluates their qualifications to make sure the way awarding bodies operate is fair, consistent and follows Ofqual regulations. If Ofqual or the qualifications regulators for Wales and Northern Ireland (DCELLS and CCEA) identify that an awarding body is not complying with the relevant regulations, they will apply a 'condition of accreditation' to the awarding body to rectify non-compliance.

The qualifications regulators may impose sanctions where they are needed to encourage awarding bodies' compliance with the relevant regulations and protect the interests of users. The level of sanction imposed will depend on the nature of an awarding body's non-compliance, the risks posed to the quality of qualifications and the interests of users.

Further information is available in *Regulatory monitoring and reporting* published by the qualifications regulators for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland (QCA, DELLS, CCEA, SQA<sup>2</sup>: 2007).

## Structure of the operating rules

The operating rules are set out in the following parts. Common requirements are repeated in each of these parts as appropriate:

- Part 1: Operating rules for additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies
- Part 2: Operating rules for principal learning and project component awarding bodies
- Part 3: Operating rules for Diploma awarding bodies

There is also a glossary at the end of this document.

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<sup>2</sup> Ofqual (Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator), DELLS (Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, now DCELLS, Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills), CCEA (Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) and SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) are the qualifications regulators for England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

## Regulatory aims for the Diploma

The overall purpose of regulating the Diploma is to develop, secure and maintain public confidence in the new qualification. It is only through public confidence that learners and their sponsors can be confident that the qualification will be accepted and of real use in learner progression. This means that the regulation of the Diploma must be designed to meet the following aims:

### Standards

The standard of the Diploma must be clearly and transparently established, and the standard of contributing qualifications must be maintained.

### Comparability

There must be comparability between the qualifications offered by the different component awarding bodies at each level and Line of Learning.

### Meeting the needs of learners

Diploma awarding bodies and component awarding bodies must be able to meet market needs and provide flexibility and choice for learners, while entering and leaving the market without disrupting provision for learners.

### Diversity and equality

There must be fair and equal access to the Diploma and constituent qualifications for a diverse range of learners.

### Value for money

The investment in the Diploma should provide value for money for government, awarding bodies, centres/consortia and learners.

## Summary of roles and responsibilities

This section summarises the key roles and responsibilities of component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies, reflecting the requirements of the regulatory criteria for the supplementary recognition of component and Diploma awarding bodies. There is also a summary of the roles of the Diploma aggregation service and centres. However, these operating rules do not apply directly to the Diploma aggregation service or to centres.

### Component awarding bodies

- Component awarding bodies are recognised to offer and award constituent qualifications that contribute to Diploma qualifications. The Diploma catalogue shows the constituent qualifications.<sup>3</sup>
- Component awarding bodies propose which of their qualifications they want the Diploma catalogue to include.
- Component awarding bodies supply Diploma learners' results to the Diploma aggregation service, referenced by the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP)<sup>4</sup> unique learner number (ULN) and validated by the Learner Registration Service.
- Component awarding bodies either operate a system-to-system interface with the Diploma aggregation service or use its web browser interface.

### Diploma awarding bodies

- Diploma awarding bodies award and certificate whole Diploma qualifications for the Lines of Learning for which they are recognised.
- Diploma awarding bodies produce the Diploma transcript for award of the Diploma according to information and design requirements provided separately by Ofqual, as agreed with QCA. The Diploma aggregation service supplies the data for the transcript.

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<sup>3</sup> The Diploma catalogue provides information on all of the Diploma qualifications and the constituent qualifications for award of the Diplomas.

<sup>4</sup> MIAP is a programme supported by the Learning and Skills Council that aims to improve the sharing of learner and learning information between organisations.



- Diploma awarding bodies operate a system-to-system interface with the Diploma aggregation service to meet Ofqual's requirements for awarding Diploma qualifications.
- To operate as a Diploma awarding body an awarding body has to offer and award one or more constituent qualifications that can contribute to the Lines of Learning for which they are recognised. Therefore all Diploma awarding bodies must also be recognised as component awarding bodies.
- To be recognised for a Line of Learning Diploma awarding bodies have to operate at all levels of that Line of Learning.
- Diploma awarding bodies provide information to help centres advise learners on Diploma qualifications.

### **Diploma aggregation service**

- The Diploma aggregation service is designed to enable the data sharing, results aggregation, grading and supporting functions required for the operation of the Diploma as a composite qualification.
- The Diploma aggregation service:
  - enables a learner account to be opened for all Diploma learners, and accessed by the centre on their behalf
  - uses the ULN created by the MIAP Learner Registration Service as the identifier for recording and aggregating learners' achievements
  - supplies the results data for the Diploma certificate and for the Diploma transcript to the Diploma awarding body so that it can make an award.

### **Centres**

The following list of centres' roles and responsibilities is limited to the relevant roles and responsibilities of centres in relation to the requirements set out in these operating rules.

- Home centres<sup>5</sup> open a learner account with the Diploma aggregation service for each of their Diploma learners as early as possible in the learner's programme of study. Home centres can open the account directly with the Diploma aggregation service or a via a third party organisation (underpinned by the

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<sup>5</sup> The home centre is defined as the centre that undertakes transactions on the Diploma aggregation services for a particular learner. There is only one home centre for each learner. It is the centre where a learner is enrolled and which has overall responsibility for their Diploma programme. A home centre may also be operating as an assessment centre (see page 9).

centre's Diploma aggregation service user agreement), such as a Diploma awarding body, where they offer this service.

- Home centres are responsible for ensuring the use of the correct ULN and up-to-date personal details for a learner across the consortium. Home centres monitor the learner account to ensure the Diploma aggregation service holds the correct results.
- Home centres are responsible for submitting an intention to claim to the Diploma aggregation service on behalf of the learner. The home centre is also responsible for requesting the trial grade<sup>6</sup> from the Diploma aggregation service on behalf of the learner, and reviewing the trial grade with the learner.
- Home centres are responsible for notifying the Diploma aggregation service that a learner has met the requirements for personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS).
- Home centres are responsible for notifying the Diploma aggregation service of a learner's completion of work experience.
- Assessment centres<sup>7</sup> ensure the standardisation of internal assessment for principal learning and project qualifications across their different assessors and assessment sites.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> An assessment centre hosts an internal or external assessment for Diploma learners.

<sup>8</sup> The National Assessment Agency (NAA) is taking forward a programme of work to support good practice in quality assuring internal assessment on principal learning and project qualifications. First release of materials is from June 2008.

# Part 1: Operating rules for additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies

## Section 1: Management of constituent qualification results

All of the qualifications that can contribute to the Diploma are referred to as constituent qualifications, and are contained in the Diploma catalogue.

Home centres should ensure that their Diploma learners have an open learner account. The ULN is a mandatory part of the learner account. The home centre may open the account directly with the Diploma aggregation service or via a third party organisation (underpinned by the centre's Diploma aggregation service user agreement) such as a Diploma awarding body where it offers this service.

Home centres will be encouraged to open the learner account at an early stage. The home centre for each learner will communicate with the Diploma aggregation service

### Submission of all constituent qualification results

#### Additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies must use the ULN to identify each learner with a learner account in the Diploma aggregation service, and to record their results for constituent qualifications of the Diploma for submission to the Diploma aggregation service.
2. Component awarding bodies must validate the learner details referenced by the ULN with the Learner Registration Service before sending results to the Diploma aggregation service.<sup>9</sup>
3. Component awarding bodies are responsible for the accuracy and validity of the results data they submit to the Diploma aggregation service referenced by each ULN. The data must be supplied to the Diploma aggregation service within a specified period of constituent qualifications being awarded and in accordance with agreed service levels and commercial terms.
4. Component awarding bodies must submit constituent qualification results to the Diploma aggregation service within agreed timelines.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Component awarding bodies can choose to send a list of all the ULNs for which they have potential results to the Diploma aggregation service, to enable the Diploma aggregation service to advise which ULNs have active learner accounts. Component awarding bodies then only need to supply the results for active learner accounts. Alternatively component awarding bodies can send all results with a ULN to the Diploma aggregation service.

<sup>10</sup> Timelines will be set out in Ofqual's procedures supporting the awarding and grading process, agreed with awarding bodies and the Diploma aggregation service.

on their behalf.

Component awarding bodies' must supply results without unnecessary delay, including in relation to Diploma results for progression purposes such as to higher education.

Prior achievement of constituent qualifications for the Diploma is defined as results for constituent qualifications obtained before the learner account is opened, and/or from 1 January 2005.

If a qualification was achieved without a ULN centres will need to obtain a ULN and open a learner account before contacting the relevant component awarding body to verify the prior achievement.

If a qualification was achieved before a learner account was opened the Diploma aggregation service will notify all component awarding bodies of the learner's ULN, once a learner account has been opened.

There will be no proxies for principal learning, the project and functional skills in the Diploma.

Once a learner

## Prior achievement claims

### Additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies

5. Component awarding bodies must verify the relevant prior achievement of Diploma learners for the constituent qualifications they offer if this achievement was obtained before a learner account was opened in the Diploma aggregation service, and/or from 1 January 2005, subject to one of the following requirements:
  - a. the qualification is a current or expired qualification in the Diploma catalogue
  - b. the component awarding body can verify, on request, that the qualification achieved should be recognised against a qualification in the Diploma catalogue.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Once a qualification has been recognised against a current qualification in the Diploma catalogue, it will be added to the expired qualifications in the catalogue.

account has been opened the Diploma aggregation service will hold all results data for principal learning and project qualifications, and for other qualifications from the Diploma catalogue. The data will include the results of those qualifications that the learner attempted but did not achieve.

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## Part 2: Operating rules for principal learning and project component awarding bodies

### Section 1: The relationship between awarding bodies and centres

Where centre and qualification approval procedures already exist for qualifications that can contribute to additional and specialist learning, those procedures should remain unchanged.

An individual centre's choice of the constituent qualifications that contribute to a Diploma may be subject to the procedures of their Gateway centre consortium.

#### Principal learning component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies' arrangements with centres for their principal learning qualifications should:
  - a. include a declaration from each centre that they are part of a recognised Gateway centre consortium<sup>12</sup>
  - b. require a joint declaration from the centres for each line and level of principal learning to include:
    - i. the identification of named points of accountability for the quality assurance and management of each principal learning qualification
    - ii. the roles and responsibilities of each centre including key lines of communication for the quality assurance and management of each principal learning qualification
  - c. be underpinned by component awarding bodies' centre monitoring arrangements
  - d. not add unnecessarily to the Gateway process, or to existing centre and qualification approval procedures.

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<sup>12</sup> The Gateway process is operated by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and does not apply outside England.

## Section 2: Assessment of principal learning and the project

This section reflects the requirements in the regulatory criteria on assessment in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA, ACCAC, CCEA 2004).

The operating rules outline assessment requirements for principal learning and the project in conjunction with the *Criteria for accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3* (QCA; 2007). Assessment arrangements for qualifications that can contribute to additional and specialist learning are not specific to the Diploma.

### Principles of assessment

#### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies must ensure that the assessment of principal learning and the project (at levels 1, 2 and 3) supports the following principles:
  - a. the assessment enables results that provide a valid measure of the required knowledge, skills and understanding defined by the qualification specification
  - b. results generated provide a reliable measure of a learner's performance
  - c. the assessment generates results that meet the appropriate standards and that provide comparability of standards between centres, awarding bodies and over time
  - d. the assessment minimises bias and must:
    - i. provide opportunities for a diverse range of learners to demonstrate their abilities to meet the full range of requirements
    - ii. be free from covert or overt discrimination
    - iii. ensure that the content uses appropriate subject matter and language for the target group
  - e. to ensure manageability, the assessment system for principal learning and the project must:
    - i. use a level of resources within a centre/consortium that is consistent with the required quality of assessment
    - ii. use the appropriate number of examiners/assessors and moderators/verifiers to support reliable marking and reduce the scope for inconsistency.

## Roles, responsibilities and resources

### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

2. Component awarding bodies must define roles and responsibilities for staff and define the separation of functions and points of accountability to ensure that assessment tasks, question papers and mark schemes are produced, tested and scrutinised effectively.
3. Component awarding bodies must have the necessary systems, procedures and resources in place to ensure that:
  - a. assessment tasks, question papers and mark schemes can be produced to the required level of quality
  - b. learner results can be generated and reported to the required level of accuracy
  - c. the necessary numbers of assessors/examiners and moderators/verifiers are available to ensure consistent standards
  - d. learner results can be managed effectively
  - e. contingency plans can be operated in the event of systems failures, including any breach of security of assessment tasks, question papers and mark schemes
  - f. where applicable to the language in which the assessment is provided, consistency is guaranteed across the languages of English, Welsh and Irish (Gaeilge).
4. If providing e-assessment component awarding bodies

Component awarding bodies should also refer to the *Regulatory principles for e-assessment* (QCA, DELLS, CCEA, SQA; 2007).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> DELLS (Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, now DCELLS, Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills), CCEA (Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) and SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) are the regulators for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.



must make the necessary adjustments to systems, resources, training and guidance to accommodate that provision.

5. Component awarding bodies must ensure that they use assessors, examiners, moderators and verifiers who have suitable training and expertise.
6. Component awarding bodies must have performance management systems in place to monitor and evaluate assessors, examiners, moderators and verifiers.

## **Design and application of assessments**

### **Principal learning and project component awarding bodies**

7. Component awarding bodies must ensure that assessment tasks, question papers and mark schemes meet the learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria in the specification.
8. Component awarding bodies must require centres to have procedures to ensure that evidence provided by learners is relevant, can be authenticated and is sufficient to determine whether the learners meet the requirements of the qualification specifications.
9. Component awarding bodies must assess performance in each unit of principal learning and in the project against marking criteria in terms of marks<sup>14</sup>.
10. Component awarding bodies must ensure that assessors' or examiners' marking does not enable the direct allocation of grades. Therefore the marking criteria must not have a direct relationship with grading bands.

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<sup>14</sup> Further information will be set out in Ofqual's procedures supporting the awarding and grading process, agreed with awarding bodies and the Diploma aggregation service.

## **External assessment of principal learning**

### **Principal learning component awarding bodies**

11. Component awarding bodies must ensure that their assessors and examiners for external assessment do not assess work from a centre in which they have a personal interest.
12. Component awarding bodies must ensure standardisation of external assessment, followed by sampling to enable a full review of the range of performances and responses.
13. Component awarding bodies must ensure that learners' work and the associated marks are kept securely to allow for enquiries and appeals.

## **Internal assessment of principal learning and the project<sup>15</sup>**

### **Principal learning and project component awarding bodies**

14. Component awarding bodies must ensure that centres have effective and manageable administrative procedures and systems for internal assessment.<sup>16</sup>
15. Component awarding bodies must ensure centres have clear information on the parameters and the guidance necessary for the effective setting of assessment tasks, question papers and mark schemes.
16. Component awarding bodies must ensure there are controls for internal assessment to take place under controlled conditions (including when the internal assessment takes place at a venue other than the

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<sup>15</sup> The National Assessment Agency (NAA) is taking forward a programme of work to support good practice in quality assuring internal assessment on principal learning and project qualifications. First release of materials is from June 2008.

<sup>16</sup> Also refer to 'Section 1: 'The relationship between awarding bodies and centres'.

centre) to:

- a. enable the authentication of learners' work
  - b. ensure reliable internal assessment.
17. Component awarding bodies must require centres to standardise internal assessment across different assessors and assessment sites.
  18. Component awarding bodies must require centres to use moderation or verification to ensure that internal assessment meets defined standards.
  19. Component awarding bodies must communicate clearly to centres the procedures for the moderation/verification of internal assessment.
  20. Component awarding bodies must require sampling of internally assessed work that enables moderation/verification of a centre's internal assessment.
  21. Component awarding bodies must ensure that the assessment decisions of their moderators/verifiers are standardised.
  22. Component awarding bodies must ensure there is a sufficient number of moderators/verifiers according to the number and distribution of centres and learners and the nature of assessment requirements.
  23. Component awarding bodies must require that moderators/verifiers do not deal with work from a centre in which they have a personal interest.
  24. Component awarding bodies must require centres to support learner choice in selecting topics for the project.

### Section 3: Awarding of principal learning and the project

Also refer to the relevant sections of the *Criteria for accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3* (QCA; 2007).

The marks for principal learning units and for the project will be converted into points and reported as grades. The aggregation of these points will produce a score for principal learning and for the project. These scores will be combined and converted into an overall Diploma grade.

The same grading scales apply to the grading of principal learning, the project and the overall Diploma.

#### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. For an initial period as each Line of Learning is introduced component awarding bodies must award principal learning qualifications once a year only (summer), to enable awarding and grading standards to be established.<sup>17</sup> Ofqual will determine this initial period for awarding.
2. Component awarding bodies must support the procedures for ensuring awarding and grading standards are set appropriately.
3. For an initial period component awarding bodies must award principal learning units and project qualifications no more than twice a year (summer and winter), to enable awarding and grading standards to be established. Ofqual will determine this initial period for awarding.
4. After initial periods of awarding as each Line of Learning is introduced it may be possible for principal learning and the project to be awarded more frequently.
5. Component awarding bodies are responsible for providing a standardised score and grade for individuals' principal learning units and project qualification.
6. Component awarding bodies must aggregate individuals' unit results to produce an overall standardised grade for the principal learning qualification.
7. Component awarding bodies must not pre-publish grade boundaries for principal learning units or project

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<sup>17</sup> Ofqual is taking forward a programme of work with principal learning and project component awarding bodies from June 2007 until August 2008 to determine how grading standards will be established. The same grading scales apply to the grading of principal learning, the project and the overall Diploma.

qualifications.

8. Component awarding bodies must use common, Ofqual-agreed procedures for awarding and grading principal learning and the project. These procedures will be discrete from marking and will include:
  - a. professional judgement, using evidence of performance and informed by technical and statistical data
  - b. production of unit grade boundaries and unit grades that component awarding bodies will report.
9. Component awarding bodies must provide guidance to enable centres to understand the grading scales used for the award of principal learning and the project.
10. Component awarding bodies must have procedures in place to consider aegrotat awards for principal learning on the basis of partial achievement. It is the responsibility of the component awarding body to provide the Diploma aggregation service with the weighted points for the unit to which the aegrotat applies.
11. Component awarding bodies must award and report on principal learning and the project according to the following grading scales:
  - a. A\*, A and B for graded results and U for unclassified results at level 1
  - b. A\*, A, B and C for graded results and U for unclassified results at level 2
  - c. A\*, A, B, C, D and E for graded results and U for unclassified results at level 3.

## Section 4: Management of constituent qualification results

All of the qualifications that can contribute to the Diploma are referred to as constituent qualifications, and are contained in the Diploma catalogue.

Home centres should ensure that their Diploma learners have an open learner account. The ULN is a mandatory part of the learner account. The home centre may open the account directly with the Diploma aggregation service or via a third party organisation (underpinned by the centre's Diploma aggregation service user agreement) such as a Diploma awarding body where it offers this service.

Home centres will be encouraged to open the learner account at an early stage. The home centre for each learner will communicate with the Diploma aggregation service on their behalf.

### Submission of all constituent qualification results

#### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies must use the ULN to identify each learner with a learner account in the Diploma aggregation service, and to record their results for constituent qualifications of the Diploma for submission to the Diploma aggregation service.
2. Component awarding bodies must validate the learner details referenced by the ULN with the Learner Registration Service before sending results to the Diploma aggregation service.<sup>18</sup>
3. Component awarding bodies are responsible for the accuracy and validity of the results data they submit to the Diploma aggregation service referenced by each ULN. The data must be supplied to the Diploma aggregation service within a specified period of the constituent qualifications being awarded and in accordance with agreed service levels and commercial terms.
4. Component awarding bodies must submit all the constituent grades and results for the project qualifications and for principal learning units and qualifications (with their associated weighted points) to the Diploma aggregation service, including fails and absence grades.

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<sup>18</sup> Component awarding bodies can choose to send a list of all the ULNs for which they have potential results to the Diploma aggregation service, to enable the Diploma aggregation service to advise which ULNs have active learner accounts. Component awarding bodies then only need to supply the results for active learner accounts. Alternatively component awarding bodies can send all results with a ULN to the Diploma aggregation service.

Component awarding bodies' must supply results without unnecessary delay, including in relation to Diploma results for progression purposes such as to higher education.

Prior achievement of constituent qualifications for the Diploma is defined as results for constituent qualifications obtained before the learner account is opened, and/or from 1 January 2005.

If a qualification was achieved without a ULN centres will need to obtain a ULN and open a learner account before contacting the relevant component awarding body to verify the prior achievement.

If a qualification was achieved before a learner account was opened the Diploma aggregation service will notify all component awarding bodies of the learner's ULN, once a learner account has been opened.

There will be no

5. Component awarding bodies must submit constituent qualification results to the Diploma aggregation service within agreed timelines.<sup>19</sup>
6. The component awarding body must ensure that principal learning qualification results (including unit grades and weighted points) are resubmitted if a principal learning unit result is withdrawn.

## **Prior achievement claims**

### **Principal learning and project component awarding bodies**

7. Component awarding bodies must verify the relevant prior achievement of Diploma learners for the constituent qualifications they offer if this achievement was obtained before a learner account was opened in the Diploma aggregation service, and/or from 1 January 2005, subject to one of the following requirements:
  - a. the qualification is a current or expired qualification in the Diploma catalogue
  - b. the component awarding body can verify, on request, that the qualification achieved should be recognised against a current qualification in the Diploma catalogue.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Timelines will be set out in Ofqual's procedures supporting the awarding and grading process, agreed with awarding bodies and the Diploma aggregation service. Component awarding bodies also provide level 3 principal learning results for UCAS.

<sup>20</sup> Once a qualification has been recognised against a current qualification in the Diploma catalogue, will be added to the expired qualifications in the catalogue.

proxies for principal learning, the project and functional skills in the Diploma. This requirement applies to additional and specialist learning and is included here for principal learning and project awarding bodies that are also offering additional and specialist learning.

Once a learner account has been opened the Diploma aggregation service will hold all results data for principal learning and project qualifications, and for other qualifications from the Diploma catalogue. The data will include the results of those qualifications that the learner attempted but did not achieve.

## Resits

### Principal learning component awarding bodies

8. Component awarding bodies must permit resits of principal learning units to enable learners to improve their grades for principal learning and the overall Diploma.<sup>21</sup>
9. Component awarding bodies must re-issue the principal learning qualification certificate if a unit resit improves the grade awarded for the principal learning qualification.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Learners can resit principal learning units to improve their overall principal learning grade before or after the principal learning qualification has been awarded.

<sup>22</sup> Component awarding bodies must re-issue the Diploma transcript and certificate to reflect any improved grade for principal learning, the project and/or for the overall Diploma. The grade can be improved before or after the principal learning and Diploma have been awarded.



## Part 3: Operating rules for Diploma awarding bodies

### Section 1: Awarding of the Diploma

All levels of the Diploma are graded. The Diploma aggregation service calculates the grade for the whole Diploma by aggregating the unit scores for principal learning and for the project. Also refer to the relevant sections of the *Criteria for accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3* (QCA; 2007).

Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that the Diploma aggregation service is managed to safeguard the use of the service over time, and to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to awarding bodies' use of the service.

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 minimum required amounts of GLH for additional and specialist learning are 120 GLH at level 1 (Foundation), 180 GLH at level 2 (Higher) and 360

#### Diploma awarding bodies

1. Diploma awarding bodies must have a clear understanding of the awarding process by which the grades for principal learning units and the project are converted to points. These points are added together to derive a Diploma score, which is converted into a Diploma grade using published thresholds.
2. Diploma awarding bodies must award and report on Diploma grading according to the following grading scales:
  - a. A\*, A and B for graded results and U for unclassified results at Foundation level
  - b. A\*, A, B and C for graded results and U for unclassified results at Higher level
  - c. A\*, A, B, C, D and E for graded results and U for unclassified results at Advanced level.
3. Diploma awarding bodies must award the overall Diploma grade based on the combined scores obtained for principal learning and the project.
4. Diploma awarding bodies must ensure that the Diploma is only awarded on the basis of claims that meet the following requirements:
  - a. achievement at pass or above of the combined results of principal learning and the project
  - b. achievement of qualifications from the Diploma catalogue for additional and specialist learning that:
    - i. are at the same level or one level above the level of the Diploma
    - ii. meet the minimum required amounts of GLH

GLH at level 3 (Advanced). Awarding bodies should refer to *Dealing with significant cases of suspected malpractice by those involved in the delivery of qualifications: Guidance for awarding bodies* (QCA, DELLS, CCEA, SQA; 2006).

- c. achievement of functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) required at:
    - i. level 1 or above for the Foundation Diploma
    - ii. level 2 or above for the Higher Diploma
    - iii. level 2 or above as prior achievement for award of the Advanced Diploma
  - d. demonstration of personal, learning and thinking skills
  - e. completion of work experience.
5. Diploma awarding bodies must assist centres in understanding the grading scales and requirements for the award of the Diploma.

## Section 2: Management of Diploma results

If a claimed Diploma is reaggregated and a new trial grade calculated then a claim will be automatically issued to the Diploma awarding body that last awarded the Diploma, if an intention to claim has been set. This could be due to a resit or an enquiry or appeal.

Diploma awarding bodies will not have access to full details of learners' constituent qualifications in any circumstances prior to the point the Diploma claim is made.

### Diploma awarding bodies

1. Diploma awarding bodies must interface with and use the Diploma aggregation service to meet Ofqual requirements for awarding and certificating Diploma qualifications in accordance with agreed service levels and commercial terms, in order to support the operation of the Diploma aggregation service
2. Diploma awarding bodies must not issue constituent qualification results received for the Diploma transcript before the respective issue dates for the results of those qualifications.
3. Diploma awarding bodies must provide all Diploma results for the Diploma aggregation service according to agreed timelines.<sup>23</sup>
4. Diploma awarding bodies must re-issue a Diploma result, preceded by the trial grade if applicable, if the Diploma aggregation service has reaggregated constituent results.

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<sup>23</sup> Timelines will be set out in Ofqual's procedures supporting the awarding and grading process, agreed with awarding bodies and the Diploma aggregation service. Diploma awarding bodies also provide Advanced and Progression Diploma results for UCAS.

## Section 3: Certification of the Diploma and the Diploma transcript

When making the award the Diploma awarding body must only print the Diploma transcript on the basis of a claim by a centre on behalf of a learner.

Centres are responsible for the delivery and recording in the Diploma aggregation service of personal, learning and thinking skills. This will be quality assured by inspection regimes.

Centres are responsible for the delivery and recording in the Diploma aggregation service of work experience. This will be quality assured by inspection regimes.

### Diploma awarding bodies

1. Following an agreed period after the issue of results to allow for relevant enquiries and appeals, Diploma awarding bodies must print and issue the Diploma transcript with the Diploma certificate once a Diploma claim has been made and the Diploma aggregation service has made available the necessary results data.

### Diploma transcript

#### Diploma awarding bodies

2. As a minimum the Diploma transcript must meet the following information requirements for which the Diploma aggregation service will provide data.

The Diploma transcript must include:

- a. learner details: ULN, learner's given name and learner's surname (not date of birth)
- b. Diploma details: Diploma awarding body name (not logo), Diploma Line of Learning, level and final grade (not score)
- c. principal learning: component awarding body name (not logo), qualification name and level (not name of centre), overall principal learning grade, date of award and credit value (where available), unit name and grade (not score) for each unit
- d. personal, learning and thinking skills: demonstration of PLTS and a list of the six skills
- e. project: component awarding body name (not logo), qualification name (not name of centre), level and grade (not score), date of award and credit value (where available)
- f. functional skills: component awarding body name(s) (not logo), qualification name (not name of centre), level and type, grade (not score) for English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), date of award

and credit value (where available)

- g. additional and specialist learning: component awarding body name(s) (not logo), qualification name(s) (not name[s] of centre[s]), level(s) and type(s), grade (where applicable; not score), date of award and credit value (where available)
        - h. work experience: completion.
3. The Diploma transcript must also:
  - a. meet design requirements for the Diploma as agreed by QCA and supplied through Ofqual
  - b. clearly state that the Diploma transcript is only valid when issued with the Diploma certificate
  - c. be designed and produced as a secure document.
4. The Diploma transcript must be re-issued to reflect any improved grade for principal learning, the project and/or for the overall Diploma.

The current certification requirements for accredited qualifications are published in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (QCA, ACCAC, CEA; 2004).

## **Certification of the Diploma**

### **Diploma awarding bodies**

5. In addition to the requirements for the certification of accredited qualifications, Diploma awarding bodies must ensure that certificates for the overall Diploma follow the design requirements for the Diploma agreed by QCA and supplied through Ofqual.
6. The Diploma certificate must also include the learner's ULN, without reference to their date of birth.
7. The Diploma certificate must be re-issued if the overall grade for the Diploma is improved.

## Annex 1: Draft pricing principles for component and Diploma awarding bodies

The following pricing principles provide a framework within which awarding bodies can participate in the operation of the Diploma, while ensuring that the prices charged are reasonable.

Evidence from work on qualification pricing shows that the main factor affecting a centre's choice of awarding bodies is the suitability of the qualification rather than its price. The pricing of constituent qualifications in the Diploma catalogue will impact on the cost of the whole Diploma.

The Diploma qualification is a significant new qualification and the principal learning within it is a new industry-led programme of study. Therefore the initial pricing of both the Diploma and principal learning will have a significant impact on the take-up of these new qualifications.

### Educational benefit

1. Choice for the Diploma should continue to be based on what centres perceive to be of the best educational benefit for their learners, rather than on the basis of price.

### Transparency of pricing

2. The fees charged by Diploma awarding bodies for the award and certification of the Diploma, and by component awarding bodies for principal learning and the project, must be transparent. Centres must be able to see what they are paying for, including in terms of additional products and services, and be able to make comparisons between competing providers.

### Notice period for the implementation of fees

3. Pricing of principal learning, the award and certification of the Diploma and any relevant additional products and services that have an impact on the cost of the whole Diploma should be publicised at least one year in advance of when the fee is due to be paid, so that centres can plan their budgets.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The implementation of this requirement and when it comes into effect will need to be planned with component and Diploma awarding bodies.

### **Fair and appropriate pricing**

4. It is essential that a range of awarding bodies participate in the Diploma to keep prices competitive and provide choice for learners. The fees relating to the award of the Diploma, including for Diploma certificates and Diploma transcripts, and the pricing of principal learning, must be fair and appropriate.

Archived Content

## Annex 2: Draft diversity and equality principles for component and Diploma awarding bodies

It is intended that the qualifications regulators will consult on a draft set of diversity and equality principles that will apply to all accredited qualifications. Therefore these principles will be kept under review.

'Equally' or 'equality' as used here means, as a minimum, eliminating discrimination and ensuring equality in terms of 'race', gender and disability.

It is also recommended that other equality themes such as age, sexual orientation and religion/belief be taken into consideration.

For further information

component awarding bodies should also refer to *Fair access by design: Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive vocational*

*qualifications* (QCA, DELLS, CCEA; 2006) and *Fair access by design: Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive GCSE and GCE qualifications* (QCA, DELLS, CCEA; 2005).

1. Component awarding bodies must ensure that their processes for developing, assessing and monitoring principal learning and project qualifications operate fairly and equally at every stage and allow a diverse range of learners to achieve their full potential.
2. Component awarding bodies must design the principal learning and project qualifications so that there are no barriers for learners on the basis of disability, gender and race, unless the component awarding body can explicitly justify a barrier on the grounds it is part of the 'competence standard'.
3. Component awarding bodies must allow access arrangements and special considerations to the assessment of principal learning and project qualifications to overcome or minimise any barriers to equality that have been identified. They must also allow 'reasonable adjustments' for disabled learners as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act.
4. Component awarding bodies' design of assessment for principal learning and the project qualifications should minimise any subsequent need to make access arrangements or special considerations available, or to make reasonable adjustments for disabled learners.



## Glossary

### 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.

**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.

**assessor**

The person who makes a judgement on a 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 qualifications regulators for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (see regulator for qualifications). For the Diploma, there are two types of awarding bodies: component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies.

**barring**

Qualifications that may not be combined because of overlapping content.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 (as in Gateway 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.

### **constituent qualifications**

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

### **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.

### **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 supports the awarding of Diplomas to learners. It is 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 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 may link their own systems directly to the service. As well as recording constituent qualification results against each learner, the service aggregates these results and applies 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 catalogue**

The catalogue 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.

### **extended project**

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.

### **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.

### **Gateway** (*also see consortium*)

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 that 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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 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](http://www.miap.gov.uk/services).



## **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*.

### **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](http://www.miap.gov.uk).

### **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.

### **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](http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/index.aspx).

### **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.

### **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.

### **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, Northern Ireland and Scotland are Ofqual, the Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS), the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

### **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.

### **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.

### **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.

### **Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS)**

UCAS is the central UK 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.

### **verification**

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

### **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.

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