

Qualifications

Specialised Diploma

Version 1 2007

The specialised Diploma



Qualifications and
Curriculum Authority

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This document replaces *The Specialised Diploma: Qualification structure, assessment and grading* (QCA/06/2707).

Introducing the Diploma

As part of the 14–19 reform programme, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), the Skills for Business Network (SfBN) and awarding bodies are developing a new qualification – the Diploma.

The Diploma is about learning a range of widely applicable skills and knowledge, set within a ‘specialised’ context – a specified group of employment sectors. The Diploma offers a unique blend of general and applied learning. Applied learning – acquiring knowledge and skills through tasks or contexts that have many of the characteristics of real work – is at the heart of the Diploma. The Diploma will promote diversity, opportunity and inclusion by offering high-quality, credible, industry-relevant learning opportunities.

The Diploma, designed principally for 14- to 19-year-olds and agreed by the Secretary of State, recognises achievement at levels 1, 2 and 3 and will be available for each of the 14 employment sectors (called ‘lines of learning’ – see Glossary).

This document describes the structure and the framework of standards, requirements, assessment and grading that will underpin all Diplomas. The appendix includes scenarios illustrating how the Diploma meets the needs of different learners.

What are its aims?

Diplomas are qualifications that will provide an exciting, stretching and relevant programme of learning for all young people. Each Diploma will have pathways to accommodate a wide range of aspirations. They are being designed to appeal to:

- the most capable students preparing for the most demanding university courses
- students who would engage better with the innovative Diploma approach than with existing provision
- students preparing for employment or work-based learning.

Diplomas will take a young person wherever they want to go, whether that is to further and higher education or to the world of work. Above all, Diplomas will help young people of all abilities realise their potential. Learners need the education to thrive in a constantly changing global economy; the Diploma brings together employers and educators to help prepare learners for life and work.

The Diploma aims to:

- support equality and diversity by considering the needs of all potential learners

- encourage learners to develop a broad understanding and knowledge about a sector and/or related sectors (called lines of learning)
- encourage learners to develop skills and attributes related to the chosen sector(s)
- encourage learners to develop additional knowledge and skills to complement and broaden sector-relevant learning
- encourage learners to develop specialist knowledge and skills to deepen or extend sector-relevant learning
- develop and apply generic learning skills.

Who awards Diplomas?

The Diploma will be offered by awarding bodies that have met supplementary criteria for recognition as Diploma and/or Component awarding bodies.

Component awarding bodies (CABs) are recognised by QCA to offer and award units and qualifications that contribute to the Diploma.

Diploma awarding bodies (DABs):

- are recognised by QCA to award the full Diploma
- must offer and award one or more units and/or qualifications that contribute to the Diploma they are recognised to award
- will offer all levels within each line of learning they award
- award the grade for the Diploma.

The shape of the Diploma

The Diploma has a common structure across all 14 lines of learning to give learners similar experiences and opportunities whatever and wherever they are studying.

Components of the Diploma

The Diploma balances practical and theoretical understanding and has three components:

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

Experiential learning, planning and reviewing are central to all three of the Diploma components.

Principal learning

Principal learning is:

- sector-related learning
- mandatory.

Principal learning focuses in particular on developing and applying the knowledge and skills that are relevant to the line of learning. At each level a minimum of 50 per cent must be concerned with the application of knowledge and skills through tasks, problems and situations that are related to work in that sector (see 'Applied learning' in the Glossary).

Principal learning will be made up of units of assessment that have been newly developed and accredited for each Diploma. The size of units will vary according to the level of the Diploma. At level 1 and 2 units may be of 30 and 60 guided learning hours (GLH) (see 'Guided learning hours' in the Glossary), and at level 3 units may be 30, 60 or 90 GLH.

Awarding bodies will provide guidance on appropriate teaching and learning methods and resources for the Diploma. Principal learning may include:

- visits to and learning in the workplace
- school- or college-based activities led by employers
- realistic environments such as workshops
- mobile learning such as e-learning.

Principal learning will ensure that:

- skills development is related to purpose and context
- generic skills are developed and applied

- teaching and learning draw on up-to-date developments from the relevant sector
- there is an emphasis on learning by doing
- rich and varied learning environments are used.

Generic learning

In this component, students develop and apply the broad skills and knowledge necessary for learning, employment and personal development. Generic learning includes:

- functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT)
- personal, learning and thinking skills
- work experience
- a project offering the chance to show potential, and breadth and independence of learning.

Generic skills have a wide application and can be developed in a variety of contexts, including through and across principal learning. Although the size of generic learning includes functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills, in practice these skills will also be integrated into principal learning. This may include:

- opportunities for learners to carry out an independent enquiry and reflect on their learning, or to make creative suggestions for solving problems when working as part of a team
- a chance for learners to develop functional skills in ICT when keeping track of spending or preparing a presentation.

The different parts of generic learning are described in further detail in the next sections.

Functional skills

Diplomas require learners to gain functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT:

- at level 1 for the level 1 Diploma
- at level 2 for Diplomas at levels 2 and 3.

Learners will have opportunities to develop and apply functional skills as part of the work they do in principal learning. Awarding bodies will provide guidance on the full range of opportunities for developing and applying functional skills. This will help centres to integrate functional skills and learners to plan and review their achievements.

Functional skills will form part of GCSEs in English, mathematics and ICT, Diplomas and apprenticeships. They will also be available as stand-alone qualifications. The assessment criteria and requirements for functional skills are currently undergoing a trial process.

Personal, learning and thinking skills

Personal, learning and thinking skills are necessary for work and for general learning. A framework for personal, learning and thinking skills sets out the requirements for the following six skills:

- independent enquiry
- creative thinking
- reflective learning
- team working
- self-management
- effective participation.

Learners will have opportunities to develop, apply and assess all six skills within principal learning. Learners may also develop and apply personal, learning and thinking skills within work experience and their project.

The qualification will be designed in such a way that it is assumed around 60 GLH will be allowed by centres to enable learners to develop, plan and review the application of their personal, learning and thinking skills across their learning programme.

Personal, learning and thinking skills will not be separately assessed as part of the Diploma. Instead all six personal, learning and thinking skills will be integrated into the assessment criteria for principal learning. Each learner's achievement of personal, learning and thinking skills will be recorded in the Diploma transcript.

Projects

The Diploma project will be available at levels 1, 2 and 3 and will:

- encourage independent learning
- be sector-relevant
- provide the opportunity to draw on and integrate learning from all components.

Through the project, learners can:

- demonstrate their full potential, interests and creativity within set parameters
- focus in more depth on specific aspects of their specialist area

- broaden their sector-related learning by engaging in an investigative piece of work on, for example, environmental, social, economic, political and/or other issues related to their principal learning
- develop their ability to learn independently and carry out an enquiry
- apply functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills
- adapt their applied and generic skills and learning to other contexts such as business, social or community enterprise or democratic participation
- at level 3, demonstrate higher-level skills and cognitive abilities.

Projects will be internally assessed – using a combination of methods – and externally moderated. There will be clear rules to follow to make sure that learners' work is their own.

At level 3, there is a common structure and common standards, including assessment criteria for learners who take the project, whether as an extended project as part of a general programme or within a Diploma.

Work experience

All learners will be expected to undertake work experience to support their programme of study. Work experience will:

- support the development and recognition of work-related learning
- build on the near-universal provision of pre-16 work experience
- develop sector skills when set in relevant settings
- develop general employability skills in other settings
- enhance the overall learning experience
- allow flexibility around how evidence of attainment is achieved.

Each learner at each level of the Diploma must do at least 10 days of work experience; for older learners, in some cases, part-time work could provide some, or all, of the required experience, with appropriate structured recording of skills development. Work experience will not be assessed.

Additional and specialist learning

Additional and specialist learning:

- supports choice and progression within a coherent whole programme
- enables the learner to specialise and/or take up relevant complementary learning
- consists of units or qualifications chosen by the learner from the Diploma catalogue
- provides opportunities to meet particular needs

- may include some national curriculum key stage 4 entitlement areas at levels 1 and 2
- may include units from a higher level or modules from higher education.

For specialist learning, each sector will identify units and qualifications that can be combined to allow learners to explore the sector in ways relevant to them. Where possible, options will be grouped together to create pathways.

Experiential learning, planning and reviewing

Experiential learning, or learning by experience, is central to developing work-related skills. Knowledge, skills and abilities that are attained through observation, simulation and participation provide depth and meaning to learning by engaging mind and body in a process of activity, review and application.

Experiential learning in the Diploma:

- actively involves learners in planning and reviewing their Diploma programme and in recording their progress and achievements
- explores different experiences and environments
- supports the development of functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills
- encourages learners to recognise, apply and extend their learning (which can include achievement of units at a higher level as well as experience gained outside the Diploma such as part-time work or volunteering)
- supports a coherent learning experience that is more than a piecemeal collection of units/qualifications.

With guidance, learners will be able to review, plan and set targets for their programme.

It is critical that young people are helped through a process of planning and reviewing their learning – it is an essential element of experiential learning. This responsibility lies with teachers and other advisers of learners. Planning and reviewing includes:

- the processes of learners selecting an individualised programme of units and qualifications within additional and specialist learning
- identifying when and how to develop and apply functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills
- the arrangements for regular reviews of progress
- planning for progression.

Planning and reviewing will not be discretely assessed as part of the Diploma programme, but will be critical to successful attainment.

Levels of Diplomas

The Diploma will be available at levels 1, 2 and 3. In each level, there is:

- a volume, given as the number of guided learning hours (GLH)
- a size for the three components (principal learning, additional and specialist learning, generic learning), also given as GLH.

Diploma level 1

Volume

The Diploma level 1 requires 600 guided learning hours (GLH), broadly comparable, in terms of average length of study, to four to five GCSEs.

The Diploma level 1 can be completed:

- in one year if taken on its own
- in two years if taken at the same time as the key stage 4 national curriculum programme of study.

Aims and features of the level 1 Diploma

Diploma level 1:

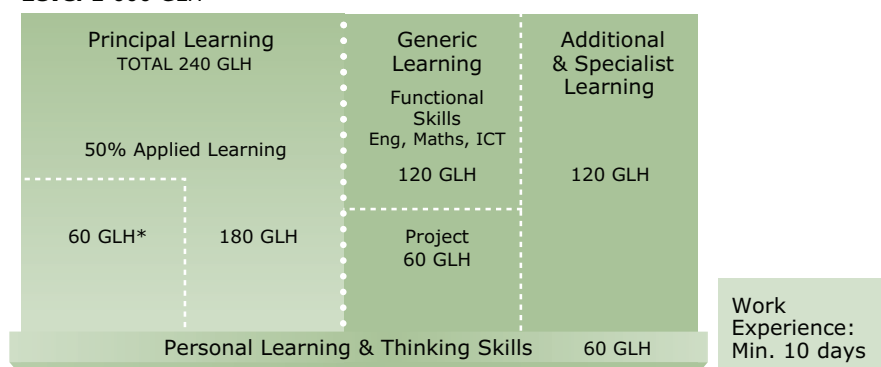
- provides a milestone for achievement at level 1 and an incentive to move on to level 2, particularly within key stage 4
- provides the foundation to progress to level 2
- helps keep learners in 14–19 education
- includes learning related to a specific sector or several sectors
- includes a project to allow individuals to plan and organise their own learning
- includes functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT at level 1
- provides the essential personal, learning and thinking skills to progress in education and training
- provides the opportunity to take up some national curriculum entitlement within additional and specialist learning
- coexists with and, where appropriate, supports pre-16 national curriculum study
- encourages progress by allowing the possible co-teaching of aspects of level 1 and level 2.

Size of components

The Diploma level 1 components are weighted, for each line of learning, as follows:

- principal learning is set at 240 GLH, of which a minimum of 120 GLH must be applied (application in work contexts – see Glossary under ‘Applied learning’)
- generic learning is set at 240 GLH
- additional and specialist learning is set at 120 GLH.

Level 1 600 GLH



*Learners can choose to specialise further within a sector or broaden their studies by selecting Principal Learning in another line of learning

Principal learning (240 GLH)

At level 1 principal learning is sector-related learning. Units may be 30 or 60 GLH and a total of 30 hours of learning will be externally assessed.

The Diploma at level 1 responds flexibly to the needs of learners in offering greater specificity or breadth, depending on their progression plans.

In the level 1 Diploma, 180 GLH of principal learning (together with the project) needs to be achieved within a specific line of learning (this determines the title of the Diploma).

The remaining 60 GLH of principal learning can be either:

- selected by the learner from the same line of learning, allowing further specialisation
- or
- selected by the learner from another line or lines of learning, enabling learners to broaden their study.

Generic learning (240 GLH)

Level 1 generic learning includes:

- personal, learning and thinking skills

- functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT at level 1
- a project offering the opportunity to achieve agreed objectives through particular topics relevant to principal learning
- at least 10 days' work experience.

Within generic learning experiential learning involves an individual planning and review process. Generic learning forms a significant proportion of learning at this level because it is critical to successful progression to higher levels of learning.

Additional and specialist learning (120 GLH)

Additional learning at level 1 offers learners the chance to take up relevant complementary learning by taking a range of units or qualifications. Specialist learning offers the chance to specialise in one sector, or across a range of sectors. It may be possible to meet some of the requirements of the national curriculum entitlements if this is appropriate. Units at a higher level may be offered within this component.

Diploma level 2

Volume

The Diploma level 2 requires 800 guided learning hours (GLH), broadly comparable, in terms of average length of study, to five to six GCSEs. The Diploma level 2 can be completed:

- in one or two years if taken on its own
- in two years if taken at the same time as the key stage 4 national curriculum programme of study.

Aims and features of the level 2 Diploma

Diploma level 2:

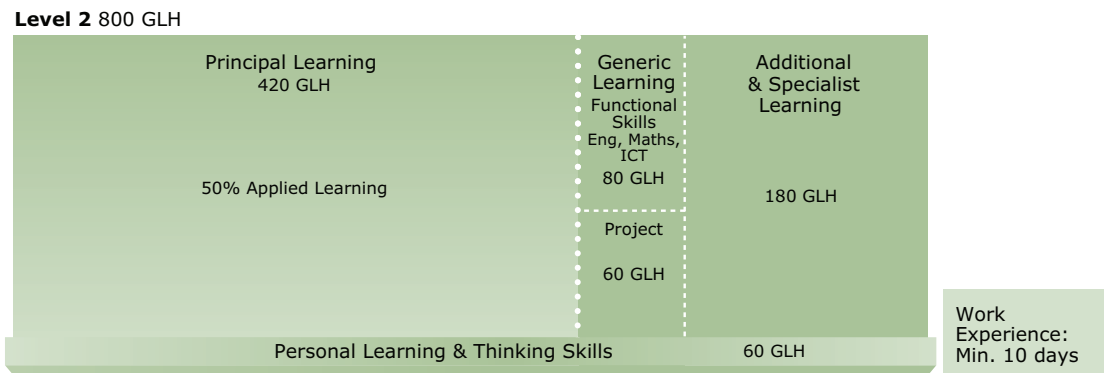
- provides an opportunity to prepare for employment or progress into work-based learning
- provides the foundation to progress to level 3
- includes principal learning related to a specific sector and may include units relevant to other sectors
- includes a project to allow individuals to plan and organise their own learning
- includes functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT at level 2
- provides the essential personal, learning and thinking skills to progress in education, training and employment

- provides the opportunity to explore the sector further and/or take up complementary learning as a part of additional and specialist learning
- coexists with and, where appropriate, supports pre-16 national curriculum study.

Size of components

The Diploma level 2 components are weighted, for each line of learning, as follows:

- principal learning is set at 420 GLH, of which a minimum of 210 GLH must be applied (application in work contexts)
- generic learning is set at 200 GLH
- additional and specialist learning is set at 180 GLH.



Principal learning (420 GLH)

Level 2 principal learning is sector-related learning. Units may be 30 or 60 GLH and 60 GLH will be externally assessed.

Generic learning (200 GLH)

Level 2 generic learning includes:

- personal, learning and thinking skills
- functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT at level 2
- a project demonstrating independent learning and enquiry relevant to a sector
- at least 10 days' work experience.

Additional and specialist learning (180 GLH)

At level 2, additional learning offers learners the chance to take up relevant complementary learning by taking a range of units. Specialist learning offers the chance to specialise further in a sector. The range of units will include the opportunity to explore one line of learning or specialism in greater depth.

Choices will be determined by size, relevance to the sector, coherence for the learner and plans for progression. There will be opportunities to gain complementary skills and knowledge, as well as to explore related sectors. It may be possible to meet some of the requirements of the national curriculum entitlements if this is appropriate.

Units at a higher level can be offered within this component.

Diploma level 3

Volume

Diploma level 3 requires 1,080 guided learning hours (GLH), broadly comparable, in terms of average length of study, to three GCE A levels. There is also a level 3 progression qualification, a subset of the level 3 Diploma, broadly comparable, in terms of average length of study, to two GCE A levels. Its content will be drawn from the full Diploma level 3 (see below).

A Diploma level 3 can be completed as a two-year full-time programme.

Aims and features of the level 3 Diploma

The Diploma level 3:

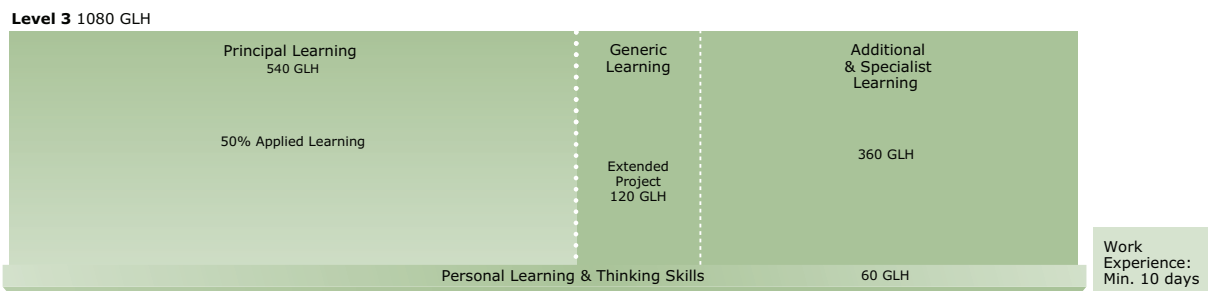
- provides the foundation to progress to higher and further education and to employment with training
- includes an extended project to allow individuals to plan and organise their own learning and to demonstrate synthesis and other higher-level skills
- provides the essential personal, learning and thinking skills to progress in education, training and employment
- allows for the highest possible level of achievement within level 3, including the scope to demonstrate higher intellectual capability
- requires level 2 functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT
- includes sector-related principal learning
- permits further specialisation through the choice of options offered by the sector in specialist learning and/or complementary learning.

Size of components

The Diploma level 3 components are, for each line of learning, as follows:

- principal learning is set at 540 GLH, of which a minimum of 270 GLH must be concerned with applied learning (application in work contexts)

- generic learning is set at 180 GLH
- additional and specialist learning is set at 360 GLH.



Principal learning (540 GLH)

Level 3 principal learning is sector-related learning. Some Diplomas may offer endorsed titles that reflect key specialist progression pathways. Units may be 30, 60 or 90 GLH and 120 or 180 hours of learning will be externally assessed (the number will be set for each line of learning).

Additional mathematics, English or ICT may be required at level 3 for some lines of learning.

Generic learning (180 GLH)

Level 3 generic learning includes:

- personal, learning and thinking skills
- a project demonstrating independent learning and enquiry relevant to a sector
- at least 10 days' work experience.

A minimum of level 2 functional skills (English, mathematics, ICT) will be required. Although many learners will already have reached this, others will need to achieve level 2 at the same time as they are studying for the Diploma.

Additional and specialist learning (360 GLH)

Additional learning at level 3 allows for relevant complementary learning such as languages, music or science. Specialist learning allows for further specialisation through the choice of options set out by the sector. Units at a higher level can be offered within this component.

The level 3 progression qualification

A level 3 progression qualification will be smaller than the full Diploma and broadly comparable, in terms of average length of study, to two GCE A levels.

- The level 3 progression qualification requires 720 GLH.
- It will comprise only the principal and the generic learning components of the full level 3 Diploma.

Summary of the size of the components at each level of the Diploma programme

	Level 1 Diploma	Level 2 Diploma	Level 3 Diploma
Principal learning	240 GLH	420 GLH	540 GLH
Generic learning	240 GLH	200 GLH	180 GLH
Additional and specialist learning	120 GLH	180 GLH	360 GLH

Assessment within the Diploma

The primary purpose of assessment within the Diploma is to determine whether learners are ready to progress. Assessment for the Diploma will meet the five regulatory requirements applied to all assessment in external qualifications and national curriculum tests:

- validity
- reliability
- comparability of standards (particularly across different Diplomas and their component parts within the same line of learning)
- minimal bias
- manageability of systems of assessment.

All Diplomas will have external assessment and a variety of approaches will be used. The proportion of external assessment may vary between Diploma lines of learning at level 3.

Different methods of internal assessment will also be used in the Diploma. Awarding bodies will set out requirements to support internal assessment through moderation and verification, and there will be rules and checks in place to make sure that learners' work is their own.

Individual units and their assessment

The Diploma is a unitised qualification. The following rules have been devised to govern the combination of units within a Diploma programme.

- At levels 1 and 2 units may be either 30 or 60 GLH.
- At level 3 units may be 30, 60 or 90 GLH.
- Principal learning will be a qualification in its own right, assessed both externally and internally (see Glossary under 'Internal assessment'). Thirty GLH at level 1, 60 GLH at level 2 and either 120 or 180 GLH at level 3 will be externally assessed (the size of external assessment at level 3 will be set for each line of learning).
- The project will constitute a discrete unit with its own standards and assessment.
- Following the pilot, units will have a maximum shelf life of five years to ensure they remain up to date and are accessible to a full range of learners.
- New units and qualifications developed to contribute to specialist learning within the Diploma will be assessed using systems that meet the assessment principles and design requirements for the Diploma.

- Existing units and qualifications imported into the Diploma (such as functional skills or units and qualifications offered as part of additional and specialist learning) will be assessed and verified using their existing methods.
- The assessment of existing units and qualifications may be changed, if the changes satisfy the criteria of the existing qualification. However, where such changes are agreed, that assessment change will apply to that qualification in any setting, wherever offered.

Grading

The Diploma will be graded. This will apply to all levels. Further information on grading will be available by the end of January 2007.

Passing the Diploma

The Diploma aims to highlight a broad competence or capability in the application of a range of knowledge and skills within a range of contexts.

QCA, working with awarding bodies, will carry out detailed work to address a number of technical issues of assessment, which may include the following:

- the threshold for achievement across each of the three components of the Diploma
- the rules for compensation (see Glossary under 'Compensation'), as the Diploma contains some capacity to compensate across some units
- the necessary adjustments for the achievement of units taken by learners at a higher level.

Reporting achievement

The Diploma transcript (see Glossary under 'Transcript') will record and report a learner's achievements in units and qualifications within the Diploma programme. It will contain grades at unit level and record the achievement of personal, learning and thinking skills, as well as the completion of work experience.

Centre requirements

Centres have to meet rigorous quality-assurance requirements. Approval of centres will take account of the partnership environment within which the Diplomas are to be delivered.

Awarding bodies, working with Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs), will set out for each line of learning:

- the expertise required to deliver the qualification, eg for trainers, instructors, mentors, business/industry representatives and assessors and verifiers at unit level, where appropriate
- the experience needed to support qualification delivery
- the minimum resources required for delivery of each unit, including the range and type of the tools, equipment or technology required and information and media materials
- guidance on tasks, problems and situations in applied learning contexts, which are likely to be identified and developed in partnership with the sector and their employers at local, national or regional level
- guidance on real or realistic work environments.

The Specialist Schools and Academies Trust and the Quality Improvement Agency, working closely with QCA, the Sector Skills Development Agency, sector skills councils and the Skills for Business Network, are leading on the Diploma support programme. The programme will include the publication of guidance on teaching and learning methods that support Diploma delivery.

Progression

Entering a level

Achievement at one level of the Diploma will allow students to progress to the next level of study. It is not, however, a prerequisite.

Learners on Entry level programmes will have access to units from Diplomas at level 1 and above.

Moving to a higher level

The Diplomas will support progression to a higher level through:

- the development of generic skills, including personal, learning and thinking skills
- the learning and evidence of achievement demonstrated in the project
- coherent applied learning, which combines practical and theoretical elements, enabling progression to appropriate foundation and other degree programmes
- completion of units at a higher level (such as level 4 units or higher education modules) as part of a Diploma within additional and specialist learning, where appropriate, demonstrating learners' capability for higher study
- recognition of Diploma achievement with Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) tariff points
- involvement of higher education in the design and delivery of level 3 and 4 units for use in the Diploma programme.

The national curriculum

A new entitlement to Diplomas is being created for 2013. Key stage 4 learners will still be required to take the national curriculum core and foundation subjects. However, this new entitlement will provide an alternative to the existing entitlement areas.

The national curriculum is based on the delivery of programmes of study, rather than GLH. However, OFSTED and QCA reports suggest an average of 350 GLH per year at key stage 4.

The Diploma model assumes that:

- an average of 800 GLH are available for each year of key stage 4 in schools
- national curriculum English, mathematics and ICT can be partly delivered in conjunction with generic learning and, for specific Diplomas, with principal learning
- the requirement for work-related learning at key stage 4 can be met.

The existing entitlement areas of the arts, design and technology, the humanities and modern foreign languages could be accommodated where appropriate to the Diploma. Additional science could be accommodated in the additional and specialist learning for specific Diplomas. Such overlaps make it possible for a pre-16 learner to complete Diploma level 1 in one year alongside the national curriculum, provided a substantial portion of Diploma generic skills are delivered through national curriculum time and a portion of the national curriculum is delivered by the Diploma.

Many students will take longer than a year to complete Diploma level 1 – progress will depend on the learner’s pace and on the extent of national curriculum delivered through the Diploma.

At level 2, the Diploma requires 800 GLH, approximately half the learning time available during key stage 4. Diplomas are likely to occupy much of the available curriculum time beyond the statutory national curriculum requirements.

The entitlement to Diplomas also applies to post-16 learners. In addition, they will have a statutory entitlement, up to the age of 19, to continue studying English, mathematics and ICT until they have achieved level 2. Learners going on to higher education or further professional study are encouraged to take at least one of these subjects at level 3.

Apprenticeships

Diplomas and apprenticeships are distinct. However, there will be clear routes to progress from Diplomas into apprenticeships and vice versa. Units within these two routes will be designed so that, where appropriate, they meet the needs of both apprenticeship frameworks and the Diplomas.

Stretch within the Diploma

The Diploma has the following features that make it challenging for all learners.

- The project provides for autonomy, and for higher-order synoptic skills, particularly at level 3.
- Grading of the Diploma will encourage higher achievement beyond the pass threshold.
- Units at a higher level may be included as a choice within additional and specialist learning.
- The Diploma transcript will record excellence at unit level.

Glossary

Additional and specialist learning

Units or qualifications that learners choose to include in their Diploma.

Additional learning is complementary in character. It consists of further learning and can include national curriculum entitlement areas and/or learning options such as languages, music or science that relate to individual needs, interests and aspirations.

Specialist learning consists of qualifications and units within a line of learning that support progression recommended by the employers and higher education advisers in each sector.

Applied learning

Acquiring and applying knowledge, skills and understanding through tasks set in sector 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 real work in the sector.

Compensation

The idea that high achievement in one element of a qualification should offset low achievement in other elements of qualification. This approach recognises that it is the student's overall performance, rather than their performance in individual related elements, that is most significant.

Component

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

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

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.

Diploma Development Partnership (DDP)

A partnership between employers (with an interest/stake in the sector) and education representatives (with professional, educational and qualification-design expertise). DDPs are brought together through sector skills councils and are led by the most appropriate sector skills council. DDPs are responsible for developing the line of learning statement.

Diploma awarding body (DAB)

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

Diploma

A defined set of qualifications or units of qualifications combined according to a set of rules. They may be existing units or qualifications or purpose-designed. The Diploma is designed to support progression to further study, training and employment in a particular employment sector or line of learning. At this stage 'specialised Diploma' is a working title.

Entitlement areas

A guaranteed core curriculum providing all children with the opportunity to develop the skills and understanding required to continue learning regardless of sex, social background, race, religion or disability. It includes the national curriculum, religious education, collective worship, sex education and career education as well as other wider opportunities.

Experiential learning (learning by experience) cycle

A process that stresses the central role of experience in learning related to the world of work. Learners reflect on their experience, draw out and articulate lessons learnt (generalise), and then apply their learning to new situations or activities.

External assessment

Assessment tasks are set and candidates' work is assessed by the awarding body.

Functional skills

Functional skills are core elements of English, mathematics and ICT, providing the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work. Further information is available on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk.

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:

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

Generic skills

Generic skills are relevant to learning, training and working in all lines of learning and all sectors. They include functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills.

Grade

A point on a scale of performance used to differentiate achievement within a qualification (for example: A, B, C, D, E, F, G; Distinction, Merit, Pass).

Guided learning hours (GLH)

The number of hours of teacher-supervised or directed study time assigned to complete the qualification or a unit of a qualification.

Internal assessment

Tasks are set and marked against criteria provided by the awarding body and subjected to external moderation. Internal assessment is normally supervised and conducted under controlled conditions.

Lines of learning

First teaching: September 2008

Information technology
Society, health and development
Engineering
Creative and media
Construction and the built environment

First teaching: September 2009

Land-based and environmental
Manufacturing
Hair and beauty
Business, administration and finance
Hospitality and catering

First teaching: September 2010

Public services
Sport and leisure
Retail
Travel and tourism

The lines of learning titles are subject to change.

Moderation

The process of checking that assessment standards have been applied correctly and consistently between assessors, between centres and over time, and making adjustments to results where required to compensate for any differences in standard that are encountered. See also 'Verification'.

National curriculum

What pupils are taught in state-maintained schools. It provides a balanced education covering 11 subjects, divided into four key stages according to age.

Pathway

A route to progress through the Diploma framework.

Personal, learning and thinking skills

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

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

Further information is available on the QCA website at www.qca.org.uk.

Principal learning

Mandatory learning in the Diploma. Principal learning is sector-related, predominantly applied in character and consists of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that support progress through the line of learning into the sectors concerned. Opportunities to develop and apply generic skills are also integrated into principal learning.

Regulators (for qualifications)

Government-designated statutory organisations required to establish national standards for qualifications and ensure consistent compliance with the standards.

Reliability of assessment

The extent to which assessment results are an accurate measurement of the candidate's demonstration of the abilities specified by the assessment criteria.

Synthesis

A range of related intellectual skills. These include bringing together facts, skills, knowledge or concepts that have been learnt separately and that may belong to different subjects or disciplines.

Transcript

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

Unit

The smallest portion of a qualification that can be awarded credit in its own right and wholly transferred into another qualification.

Validity of assessment

The fitness of purpose of an assessment tool or scheme.

Verification

A process of moderation that includes local checking of assessment processes and decisions. See also 'Moderation'.

Appendix – Scenarios

Scenario at level 1 – Construction and the built environment

Dan achieved level 4s in his national curriculum tests at 14. Dan's dad and uncle are roofing contractors and Dan has always been enthusiastic about hands-on activities at school. During year 9 options Dan spent some time at a local construction centre, run jointly by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB-ConstructionSkills) and a local college, as well as sampling other key stage 4 options. Following discussion with his tutor, his parents and an adviser Dan decided that he wanted to take Diploma level 1 in construction and the built environment.

This contained units that introduced him to a variety of jobs and organisations in this sector and to basic construction terminology and techniques. It also gave him the opportunity to try units featuring the skills and knowledge required by the core construction occupations of bricklaying, carpentry and joinery, painting and decorating. Dan spent two days a week in a workshop at his local college where he benefited from working alongside more advanced trainees while being supervised by a specialist trainer. Dan also completed units in health and safety and enterprise. During his second term Dan worked two days a week for five weeks at a building maintenance company.

Back at school Dan followed a programme of study that included his core national curriculum and GCSE in construction and the built environment. He also researched and carried out a project that looked at how the industry affects the environment and the community. Dan achieved his Diploma level 1 in construction and the built environment at the end of year 11. He can now choose between going on to level 2, taking an apprenticeship in construction or following a general programme.

Scenario at level 2 – Society, health and development

Saideep has developed an interest in the health sector, partly through his sister who is a dental technician. However, he is also attracted to the music industry. He achieved level 5s and 6s in the key stage 3 tests.

Through careers education he researched roles in the health sector and the qualifications required. During the options process he talked to students and teachers across his local partnership about a number of key stage 4 courses before he decided that he wanted to take a Diploma level 2 in society, health and development.

As part of his principal learning programme Saideep explored a range of work roles by interviewing health and social care professionals. He experienced work-related learning in a variety of contexts including a local health centre, a residential home for the elderly, a radiography department and a dental surgery. In addition to GCSEs in mathematics, English and core science, Saideep's individual learning plan included health science and extended science specially designed for those interested in the health sector, which forms part of his additional and specialist learning.

Saideep also studied for a GCSE in music and secured a work placement in a music shop. This boosted his confidence and helped him develop employment and generic skills and consider his career plans.

Saideep also took part in a taster programme for healthcare occupations offered by a local healthcare trust in conjunction with the local Health Workforce Development Agency (HWDA). This inspired his Diploma project that explored the use of music therapy in psychiatric care.

During the second year of his Diploma studies, Saideep received careers advice that helped him explore different ways of pursuing a career in the health sector, perhaps as a nurse, either through A levels or through a Diploma at level 3. He chose the latter because, after visiting a local college, he was attracted to the opportunities for work-related learning that it, together with local employers, was able to offer.

Scenario at level 2 – Creative and media

Dene has always been interested in music and dance. Owing to family problems he left school at 16 with three GCSEs at grades A to C (English, art and music). He then spent a year out in which he tried to earn money through deejaying and promoting club nights, but realised that he needed to get more qualifications to take his music career forward. Following discussions with his local Connexions service and an interview with his local college, Dene decided to enrol on a level 2 Diploma in creative and media and was able to claim an Educational Maintenance Allowance.

During his college induction Dene worked with his tutor and other advisers to agree an individual learning programme for his course. In his principal learning Dene was able to develop skills and knowledge of the creative process through units that combined music with dance, drama and film, together with audio and creative writing. His learning programme also included additional support for his learning, as he was identified as having dyslexia, and a weekly tutorial session to help plan his time each week. Dene made good use of this time to study for the level 2 functional skills that he needed in mathematics and ICT.

During his course Dene made great progress with dance and was able to take a graded examination in jazz dance through a partnership arranged between the college and a

local dance centre. The college also arranged a two-week work placement at the dance centre, where Dene helped out with bookings and preparations for classes. For his project Dene worked with a group of students to plan, create and produce a music video, and took responsibility for choreographing the dance moves.

At the end of the course Dene was so pleased with his success on the programme that he applied to continue his studies at the college. He plans to take Diploma in creative and media at level 3 but has yet to decide whether to take A level music or A level dance as his specialist option within his level 3 Diploma.

Scenario at level 2 – Engineering

Carly has always been interested in cars and learning to drive – her favourite TV programme is *Pimp my ride*. Following advice from her teachers and school careers adviser she decided that the GCSE route and apprenticeship were not for her. So with advice from her teachers Carly chose the level 2 Diploma in engineering.

Carly's principal learning programme introduced her to different options and skills across engineering, including engineering design, engineering applications of computers, producing engineering solutions, electronic and electrical systems, manufacturing engineering, maintenance, and innovation in engineering. Her school had good links with local businesses and was able to organise work experience for her with the local Jaguar dealership. This enabled Carly to find out about the technical side of working with cars and about vehicle sales. She was part of the school team developing an entry for the Formula One in Schools Challenge. Even though Carly was very excited about F1 she was concerned about green issues, and through her project she was able to investigate hybrid cars and developments in alternative fuels.

During her course Carly was able to find out more about career options in the motor industry. The Automotive Skills (the sector skills council for the retail motor industry) careers helpline gave her detailed information about qualifications and options. When she completed her Diploma, Carly was well placed to take up an apprenticeship in either vehicle sales or vehicle technology, or to go on to further study in engineering.

Scenario at level 3 – Information technology

Amber achieved nine GCSEs, seven at grade C or above, including A grades in mathematics and ICT. Amber researched careers in pharmacy and ICT. Following an interview with an adviser and discussions with sixth-form and college tutors, she decided to take a Diploma level 3 in IT, which she saw as an opportunity to gain the necessary university qualifications and find out more about the work done by IT professionals. Together with her tutor she developed an individual learning plan. Her principal learning included units on the potential of technology, understanding

organisations, creating technological solutions and multimedia and digital applications. Amber and her teachers/lecturers were able to access up-to-date IT projects through e-skills UK (the sector skills council), which provided a starting point for some of Amber's assignments. As part of her business technology unit, Amber carried out research into the IT system used at the local supermarket where she works on Saturdays. This part-time job also helped her develop a range of employment and generic skills, for example an understanding of how competition might change job roles.

Amber chose to study A level chemistry, a subject she had always enjoyed, as part of her additional and specialist learning. The analytical demands of chemistry provided the functional skills in mathematics to level 3 (beyond the minimum requirement for her Diploma).

Amber's cousin is diabetic and Amber had been involved in fundraising for a diabetes charity. Building on this Amber developed a proposal for her extended project – designing and implementing a web-based mutual-support network for diabetics. This enabled her to combine personal interests and applied studies. She identified the skills, knowledge and aptitudes that she hoped to develop and demonstrate, including project management, problem solving and patient empowerment. Although the website did not progress beyond a working prototype, Amber was able to record significant learning, which was documented in her assessed project evaluation. After two years Amber completed her Diploma gaining a merit overall and a distinction for her extended project. Her individual learning programme provided a detailed record of her plans and achievements and her Diploma transcript recorded achievement at unit level.

Although Amber considered a full-time job on an IT help-desk, she decided instead to apply for a degree, knowing that she could still earn money through vacation work at the supermarket, where she had been promoted to supervisor. Amber's Diploma demonstrated to the university that she had the knowledge, skills and aptitude necessary to study business communications at degree level and she was offered a place.

Scenario at level 3 – Engineering

Gael is a high flyer who achieved good grades in her GCSEs (gaining an A* in design and technology and Bs in mathematics and engineering). She has always been fascinated by gadgets and shares her father's interest in finding out how things work. Gael was keen to go to university to take a degree. The decision to take a Diploma in engineering was prompted by the chance to learn more about cutting-edge innovations and developments across the sector, while keeping her options open. The traditional A level route did not allow her to explore such up-to-date developments. Gael's partnership has good links with the local university, and the admissions tutor confirmed that the Diploma would be an acceptable entry qualification, particularly as

it includes mathematics and science at an appropriate level.

Gael worked with her teacher and learning mentor from the local university to develop an individual learning plan for her diploma that would enable her to develop understanding of engineering developments and innovation and engineering for the future through her principal learning. Because Gael was interested in a degree in electronic engineering she chose to take computer aided design and manufacture and electronics for her specialist learning. Gael was interested in working for a global company or working abroad. She had studied Spanish at GCSE so, to broaden her opportunities, she chose to study a different language, German, through her additional learning.

Gael was anxious to take work experience that would link closely with her studies. Following a suggestion from the engineering department at the local university, she did her work experience at a small multimedia company developing music technology and audio engineering solutions. As a result of her work experience projects, Gael decided to investigate recyclable materials for MP3 players for her extended project.

At the end of her two-year programme of study Gael completed her Diploma and was offered a place to study both at her local university and another university. At interview, Gael had impressed admissions tutors with her understanding of issues in engineering and her enthusiasm and commitment, shown through her project.

About this publication

Who is it for?	This document is for all those involved in 14–19 education and achievement.
What is it about?	This document replaces <i>The Specialised Diploma: Qualification structure, assessment and grading</i> (QCA/06/2707). It sets out the structure, assessment and grading of the specialised Diploma.
What is it for?	This document supports the development and delivery of the Diploma qualification.
Related publications	<i>14–19 Education and Skills: Implementation Plan</i> (DFES, 2005), <i>14–19 Education and Skills White Paper</i> (DFES, 2005)

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