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General Diploma Information

What is a diploma?

The Diploma is a new qualification designed to recognise achievement of the 14 - 19 learner group. It combines practical skill development with theoretical and technical understanding and knowledge.

Diplomas:

- Provide credible, industry-verified applied learning, linked to interdependent general learning, with real opportunities to practise skills.
- Open up choices for young people.
- Offer routes into further or higher education, apprenticeships or employment.

Why have Diplomas been introduced?

Diplomas have been introduced as part of a range of changes to 14-19 education that aim to widen the choice of courses available to young people, motivate them and encourage them to continue learning for longer. The Diploma blends theoretical and applied learning with key Functional Skills (English, Mathematics and ICT) in a work-related context to allow learners to develop a broad skills base to move into further education or employment.

Are Diplomas replacing A Levels and GCSEs?

No. Diplomas will sit alongside GCSEs and A Levels and can be studied as either an alternative or in combination with them.

What is a Sector Skills Council?

Sector Skills Councils are employer-led organisations covering all sectors of the economy which are responsible for tackling the skills, productivity needs and training in the UK.

What are Diploma Lines of Learning?

Lines of learning are the 14 qualifications that are being developed over the next three years across a sector. [View our lines of learning \[http://diplomainfo.org.uk/AQA-City-and-guilds-diploma-lines-of-learning.asp\]](http://diplomainfo.org.uk/AQA-City-and-guilds-diploma-lines-of-learning.asp).

What does a Diploma involve?

The Diploma is comprised of compulsory and optional elements. Compulsory elements include Principal Learning (a qualification based on your chosen subject eg. engineering), Functional Skills (English, Mathematics and ICT), a Project and 10 days work experience (at each level). Optional elements include Additional and Specialist Learning, which are programs selected by the learner in consultation with the teacher, that allow the student to explore a specialist area or broader area such as a language. This balanced learning approach will allow learners to develop Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills and knowledge to prepare for further education or work.

How does the diploma relate to the national curriculum?

Key stages 3 and 4 have been altered, which will be phased in from September 2008, with the introduction of the Diplomas. Functional Skills (English, mathematics and ICT) have been built into the new curriculum. They have been written in the same format as the subject programmes of study, increasing coherence of learning at key stage 4.

What is the difference between each diploma level?
Each level of the diploma is structured as follows:

| | Principal Learning | Generic Learning | | | Additional and Specialist Learning |
|---------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|--|
| | Main Subject eg. Creative and Media | Project | Functional Skills | Work Experience | Optional courses agreed with course coordinator |
| Foundation Diploma | Practical assessments + 1 exam | Foundation Project | ICT / Maths / English Level 1 | Minimum 10 days | Choose from a range of qualifications including: City & Guilds vocational qualifications GCSEs A levels |
| Higher Diploma | Practical assessments + 1 exam | Higher Project | ICT / Maths / English Level 2 | Minimum 10 days | |
| Advanced Diploma | Practical assessments + 2 or 3 exams | Extended Project | ICT / Maths / English Level 2 | Minimum 10 days | |
| Progression Diploma | Practical assessments + 2 or 3 exams | Extended Project | ICT / Maths / English Level 2 | Minimum 10 days | |

How does the Diploma compare to A Levels and GCSEs?

In terms of challenge and length of study each level of the diploma is broadly comparable as follows:

| Study Level | Equivalent to | Guided Learning Hours |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Foundation Diploma (Level 1) | 5 GCSEs (D-G grade) | 600 |
| Higher Diploma (Level 2) | 7 GCSEs (A*-C grade) | 800 |
| Advanced Diploma (Level 3) | 3.5 A levels (A*-E grade) | 1080 |
| Progression Diploma (Level 3) | 2.5 A Levels (A*-E grade) | 720 |

Are UCAS points awarded for Diplomas?

UCAS Points are awarded for the Level 3 Diploma and Extended Project by grade as follows:

| Component | Grade | UCAS Points |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Level 3 Diploma | A* | Not yet awarded |
| | A | 300 |
| | B | 250 |
| | C | 200 |
| | D | 150 |
| | E | 100 |
| Extended Project | A* | Not yet awarded |
| | A | 60 |
| | B | 50 |
| | C | 40 |
| | D | 30 |
| | E | 20 |

Can students move from Diplomas to other qualifications?

Yes. Students have great flexibility in the qualifications they can choose – perhaps by taking a Higher Diploma (at level 2) followed by A-levels, or GCSEs following an Advanced Diploma. Diplomas can include a GCSE or A level within the program.

Will the Diploma certificates be a joint certificate from both AQA and City & Guilds?

Yes, Diploma certificates will be awarded as AQA-City & Guilds.

Are Diplomas only available in England?

Yes, although Wales is reviewing how Diplomas might fit into their quality framework.

What is the Diploma catalogue?

[The Diploma catalogue \[http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/DiplomaCatalogueSelection.aspx\]](http://www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/DiplomaCatalogueSelection.aspx) [allows users to view the Principal learning and Project qualifications available, as well as a full listing of the Functional Skills or Additional and Specialist Learning options relevant to the specific line of learning and level.

The Diploma catalogue enables centres to put together their Diploma offers, and learners are able to view combinations of qualifications that may be available as part of a Diploma package in their area. Please visit www.ndaq.org.uk for further details.

Who are Diplomas for?

Diplomas are suitable for all 14-19 learners as they provide a balanced learning approach with excellent progression routes to Higher or Further education or employment. Diplomas provide learners with opportunities to stretch and demonstrate their abilities no matter what their future goals or learning preferences are:

- for those with academic goals, diplomas provide the stretch to demonstrate that they not only have the theoretical understanding but know how to apply knowledge in a relevant way
- for those who prefer practical work to theory, Diplomas provide the opportunity to demonstrate their skills through practical problems and situations
- for those who prefer a variety of learning styles, Diplomas give the flexibility to learn and achieve in new and innovative learning environments.

Will Diplomas prepare learners for specific jobs?

No. While Diplomas focus on equipping learners with essential transferable skills in a work-relevant context, they are designed to provide an awareness of a broad employment sector without narrowing options. Diplomas develop self-motivated, creative and forward thinking individuals valued by employers. The Diploma includes a minimum of 10 days work experience which may or may not be related to the primary study area of the Diploma.

Will Diplomas prepare learners for higher education?

Yes. Diplomas were developed in consultation with Higher Education to ensure that learners are well prepared for progression into University or College. There is also flexibility within the Diploma to allow students to undertake relevant A Level courses to satisfy specific entry requirements. Some universities and colleges have provided a statement regarding their view of the Advanced Diploma on the [UCAS website \[http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/beforeyouapply/diplomas/14-19diplomas/statements\]](http://www.ucas.ac.uk/students/beforeyouapply/diplomas/14-19diplomas/statements).

Who can I contact for more information?

Our dedicated diploma team is here to help with all aspects of preparation for delivering diplomas from the gateway process, teacher training and curriculum development through to assessment and moderation. To arrange a visit please complete our [online form \[http://www.diplomainfo.org.uk/book-diploma-advisor.asp\]](http://www.diplomainfo.org.uk/book-diploma-advisor.asp).

Principal Learning

How do I register for the Principal Learning component of the AQA-City & Guilds Diploma?

To register fill in the [Consortium Diploma Expression of Interest form \[https://secure.aqa.org.uk/consortium/index.php\]](https://secure.aqa.org.uk/consortium/index.php).

These formalise your interest in our Diploma qualification(s), as well as ensure that we send you all the relevant information on our procedures. Alternatively, [register your interest with our Diploma Advisors \[http://www.diplomainfo.org.uk/book-diploma-advisor.asp\]](http://www.diplomainfo.org.uk/book-diploma-advisor.asp) and someone will contact you to guide you through the application process.

Can a learner take a level 3 Diploma with no prior knowledge of the subject?

Yes. Students do not need any previous knowledge of a subject to do a Diploma at any level.

Is it possible to co-teach any components of the diplomas?

Yes. Most Level 1 and 2 Diploma specifications provide opportunities to co-teach, allowing for improved progression pathways and increased stretch for learners. QCA has developed some [guidance on opportunities for co-learning \[http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_18240.aspx\]](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_18240.aspx)

Can learners transfer between levels or lines of learning?

It is possible for students to transfer between levels, however it is more difficult as the Diploma progresses as results achieved in one level may need to be re-assessed to meet the criteria of the new level. To support learner progression it is recommended they are entered at the highest level they can attain, rather than taking the lower level as a safe option. Learners can revisit missing components later to achieve the full diploma.

It is more difficult to change between lines of learning, as there are no common elements between Principal Learning for each line. However there are some bridging opportunities with Functional Skills, project, work experience and potentially ASL.

Is there any provision for alternative units within Principal Learning?

Generally Principal Learning units are compulsory as set out within the Principal Learning specification, however the Creative and Media specification allows some scope for alternative units.

Can learners use their project work for the project component of Principal Learning?

Yes, however the assessment work completed must be submitted separately and independently marked according to the assessment criteria for each qualification. There is likely to be additional work required to satisfy the criteria of each qualification.

Will there be sample material available to assist in standardisation?

Yes. [Sample Assessment Material \[http://www.diplomainfo.org.uk/315.asp\]](http://www.diplomainfo.org.uk/315.asp) is already available for most lines of learning, and more is being added as we progress development in the new lines.

Does a learner need to achieve a pass in ALL units of Principal Learning to gain the Diploma?

No. Due to the compensatory model of assessment within Principal Learning a learner may fail a unit and still pass the overall qualification provided their achievement in other units is satisfactory.

Functional Skills

What does Functional Skills involve?

Functional skills are new competence-based qualifications covering the practical English, mathematics and ICT skills that everyone needs to get the most out of life, learning and work.

The assessment style AQA and City & Guilds are piloting both involve task-based scenarios using a realistic problem, in a controlled environment. Candidates select and apply the English, maths or ICT skills needed to get the job done. Additional questioning is sometimes to cover all of the functional skills standards.

What level of Functional Skills is required for each diploma level?

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

- at level 1 for the Foundation Diploma
- at level 2 for the Higher and Advanced Diploma.

Are Functional Skills integrated with GCSEs?

No. Functional Skills are stand-alone qualifications.

Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS)

What are Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS)?

Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) are essential skills for work and general learning. The PLTS framework comprises six groups of skills that, together with the functional skills of English, mathematics and ICT will prepare learners to confidently enter work and adult life as confident and capable individuals. The six groups of skills are as follows:

- Independent enquirers
- Creative thinkers
- Reflective learners
- Team workers
- Self-managers
- Effective participators

How will PLTS be assessed?

PLTS are embedded into the Principal Learning units of all AQA-City & Guilds Diplomas, and opportunities to develop these skills are clearly signposted. As such they are not assessed, but it is the responsibility of the centre to ensure that the learner has sufficiently covered requirements for developing PLTS.

Additional and Specialist Learning (ASL)

Is there a list of approved Additional and Specialist Learning (ASL) available?

AQA-City & Guilds has put together sample ASL pathways to demonstrate some of the options available to learners, and the full list of approved qualifications can be found on the NDAQ website.

Will there be duplication between ASL and Principal Learning?

Each consortium is responsible for selecting the ASL offered to learners, from the NDAQ catalogue of approved qualifications. This list of approved qualifications is intended to provide learners with wide choice of ASL that doesn't duplicate Principal Learning, however it is at the discretion of the consortium to provide learners with a broad choice of opportunities to specialise or broaden their program without duplication.

Can NVQs be used as Additional or Specialist Learning?

At this stage only language NVQs are approved for ASL.

If a student has achieved qualifications in year 11 which are approved as Additional or Specialist Learning, can they carry these forward to a Diploma in year 12?

Yes. They can carry forward Additional and Specialist Learning qualifications as long as they were taken within the allowed timeframe and the qualifications are currently in the [Diploma catalogue \[http://www accreditedqualifications.org.uk/DiplomaCatalogueSelection.aspx\]](http://www accreditedqualifications.org.uk/DiplomaCatalogueSelection.aspx).

What is the Diploma catalogue?

The Diploma catalogue allows users to view the Principal learning and Project qualifications available, as well as a full listing of the Functional Skills or Additional and Specialist Learning options relevant to the specific line of learning and level.

The Diploma catalogue enables centres to put together their Diploma offers, and learners are able to view combinations of qualifications that may be available as part of a Diploma package in their area. Please visit www.ndaq.org.uk for further details.

Work Experience

What is the requirement for work experience as part of the diploma?

For all levels of the diploma learners are required to undertake 10 days of work experience.

Does work experience have to be directly linked with the subject of the diploma?

Work experience linked to the subject of the diploma is preferable, but not required.

How is work experience tracked/assessed?

Work experience is not assessed, however centres are responsible for tracking work experience and reporting to the Diploma Aggregation Service (DAS) for each learner.

Do I need to arrange CRB checks?

CRB checks will not be required for the majority of work experience placements, however in special circumstances the centre will be responsible for ensuring relevant checks are undertaken before the commencement of the placement.

Projects

Does the project need to be related to the subject of the Diploma?

The project must be either related to the line of learning or allow for progression. This gives learners the flexibility to select a relevant and engaging project subject, to maximise their achievement and development. However, a sector/subject-relevant project can enhance and complement the Principal Learning content.

What kinds of projects can students undertake?

The project qualification assesses the process of planning, executing and evaluating a project brief. Learners need to show they can plan, deliver and present a piece of work. The outcome of the project can be a written report, a photographic journal, a piece of art, a DVD or even computer software.

How does a learner select their project?

The project allows learners to explore an area they are already studying, or extending their learning to include a broader subject area. Learners should be encouraged to select a topic that particularly interests them to enhance their engagement and learning outcome. The topic is to be selected in consultation with the tutor. Centres may choose to offer a list of project titles related to their specialist expertise or project briefs set by employers.

Can a learner start a project at Level 1 and change to a higher level?

It is possible for a learner to transfer into a higher level, however it becomes more difficult as the learner progresses through the project brief. The extended project (level 3) has a significantly higher guided learning hours requirement and each level of the project has different criteria for assessment.

Do the projects have to be approved by a moderator?

Project titles/subjects do not need to be approved by a moderator or Awarding Body.

How do tutors guide students where the subject of the project is outside their expertise?

The assessment criteria for the project focuses on the successful response to a project brief, in terms of managing the project, effective planning, selection and use of relevant resources, executing the planned outcomes and reviewing these outcomes. Tutors may call on other members of the consortium for advice and guidance, however level 1 and 2 projects can be delivered by any tutor experienced in research-based assessment. The extended project requires that learners have access to specialist subject support during the project which is likely to require a coordinated approach from the consortia.

Delivery and Assessment

What approval does my centre need to deliver diplomas?

Centres are required to submit an application to the DCSF as part of a consortia to pass through the gateway process. Following this approval centres should complete our expression of interest form to formalise your interest in our Diploma qualification(s), as well as ensure that we send you all relevant information and provide you with the support you need to succeed in your delivery.

Will I have to get centre approval to offer the diploma even though I am already an AQA or a City & Guilds centre?

Yes. All centres will have submitted an application form to the DCSF and passed through the Gateway process for consortia. Successful consortia will need to apply to individual Awarding Bodies for approval.

Can I get help making a Gateway application to offer Diplomas?

Yes. Our Diploma Support Team are available to help. Email diplomamarketing@aqg.org.uk if you would like to receive a visit from a Diploma Advisor and one will be in contact with you.

Is there training available to prepare for delivery and assessment?

Yes. We offer free teacher support events for Principal Learning, Functional Skills and Projects. Visit our events page to see when the next events are in your area.

How do I register candidates for an AQA-City & Guilds diploma?

All Diploma candidates need to have a Unique Learner Number (ULN) available at from the [Learner Registration Service \(LRS\)](http://www.miap.gov.uk/lrs/) [http://www.miap.gov.uk/lrs/] which is then entered into the Diploma Aggregation Service (DAS) to create a learner account. Once this is complete you can select AQA-City & Guilds as the learner's Diploma Awarding Body, to register the learner for an AQA-City & Guilds Diploma.

How do I claim a Diploma?

Using the Diploma Aggregation Service (DAS) you can either make an Intention to Claim (ITC) before the results are available or manually claim once all the component results have been issued.

How will Diplomas be assessed?

Diplomas will be assessed using a combination of internal and external assessment. Internally assessed units will be moderated, then converted to a standard points scale and combined with the externally assessed scores to calculate the overall grade. The overall Diploma grade is calculated from the combined score of Principal Learning and the Project, however a student must achieve a pass in all relevant Functional Skills levels and have successfully completed the work experience and ASL components.

How does moderation take place?

All AQA-City & Guilds Diplomas include a minimum of two visiting moderation sessions. The first of these sessions will occur early in the delivery of Principal Learning to cover information and guidance from the NAA. The second will take place in April or May to check that student work is being marked to the correct national standard. For more information please refer to [Internal Assessment and Moderation Guidance for Centres](http://www.diplomainfo.org.uk/documents/PL_Int_Assess_Moderation_CentreGuide_V1_1_2.pdf) [http://www.diplomainfo.org.uk/documents/PL_Int_Assess_Moderation_CentreGuide_V1_1_2.pdf].

Does the moderator visit each school in the consortium on every visit or just sample from the consortium as a whole?

The moderator will visit each school within the consortium to ensure maximum consistency.

Will there be a different moderator for each level within each Line of Learning?

In most cases the same moderator will cover each level within the line of learning, however on some occasions it may be necessary for an additional moderator to be involved.

What are the re-sit rules for Principal Learning/Projects?

Students can re-sit a unit as many times as necessary, with their best result counted towards the overall Diploma grade.