

Learners, employers, teachers, parents, school and colleges

The specialised Diploma



A new 14–19 qualification will be available from September 2008

What is the specialised Diploma?

QCA, the DfES and the Skills for Business Network are working together to develop the specialised Diploma, which is a new qualification to recognise achievement at ages 14 to 19. It will combine practical skill development with theoretical and technical understanding and knowledge.

What is it for?

The specialised Diploma will:

- open up choices for young people
- offer different ways of learning and a route into higher education or employment
- provide credible, industry-verified applied learning, linked to interdependent general learning, with real opportunities to practise skills.

How will the Diploma be structured?

The Diploma will have three components:

- principal learning – students develop knowledge, understanding, skills and

attitudes relevant to a sector (or sectors) and are given opportunities to apply these to work roles or situations and realistic contexts

- additional/specialist learning – students choose from a range of options endorsed by employers
- generic learning – students develop and apply the skills and knowledge necessary for learning, employment and personal development.

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

- level 1 Diploma will be comparable, in terms of average length of study, to a programme of four to five GCSEs
- level 2 Diploma will be comparable, in terms of average length of study, to a programme of five to six GCSEs
- level 3 Diploma will be comparable, in terms of average length of study, to a programme of three GCE A levels. A level 3 award is also being developed, broadly comparable in size to two A levels.

Specialised Diplomas may contain other qualifications or units.

The Diploma and the national curriculum

At key stage 4, learners follow the programme of study for the core and foundation subjects (English, mathematics and science, and ICT, PE and citizenship). One or more of these may fall inside a Diploma, depending on the scope and nature of the Diploma.

The Diploma and work experience

The Diploma will include a minimum of ten days' work experience at each level. A Diploma is different from an Apprenticeship. There will be clear routes between the specialised Diplomas and Apprenticeships. Specialised Diplomas may share units with an Apprenticeship.

What work has been done so far?

The structure of the Diploma has been developed by QCA and agreed by the Secretary of State. Diploma Development Partnerships (representing employers, higher education and other groups) have developed the content of Diplomas. Awarding bodies, working with the partnerships, are creating the qualifications from the agreed content.

There will be Diplomas for each of the 14 lines of learning as defined in the 14–19 White Paper. The development will be done in three stages.

By 2013 there will be a national entitlement for 14- to 19-year-olds to study towards any one of the specialised Diplomas.

Work on the specialised Diploma is part of a wider programme of 11–19 reform, taking forward proposals from the 14–19 Education and Skills White Paper.

Lines of learning	Development
Information and communication technology	First teaching: September 2008
Health and social care	
Engineering	
Creative and media	
Construction and built environment	
Land-based and environmental	First teaching: September 2009
Manufacturing	
Hair and beauty	
Business administration and finance	
Hospitality and catering	
Public services	First teaching: September 2010
Sport and leisure	
Retail	
Travel and tourism	

Contact information

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