

## **Diploma Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What is the Diploma?**

The Diploma is a new qualification for 14 to 19-year-olds that combines theoretical study with practical activities and develops skills that are highly valued by employers and universities. The Diploma gives students an insight into work and will help them make decisions about their future direction without closing down options. The Diploma will provide the skills and knowledge needed for progression into employment and into further and higher education.

### **Why is the Diploma being introduced?**

The Diploma is part of a bigger set of changes to education between the ages of 14 and 19 that will ensure that all young people can choose a qualification that suits their interests and learning style. GCSEs and A levels are also being updated, the number of Apprenticeships is being increased to 500,000 and the age to which young people will continue in some form of education or training will be increased to 17 in 2013 and 18 in 2015.

### **When and where will the Diploma be introduced?**

The Diploma is being phased in during 2008 to 2012. Schools and colleges are forming partnerships in their local area so that if a young person wants to take a Diploma that is not offered at his or her school, there are arrangements in place to ensure that a nearby school or college will be able to do so. In some cases, Diploma students may spend some of their time at school and some at college and in the workplace.

### **Who will do a Diploma?**

The Diploma will appeal to students of all abilities and aspirations who like to learn about subjects in practical ways that they can relate to real life. The courses will give a strong grounding in specific subject areas, but will also ensure students have wider skills and personal attributes to prepare them for work in any field and for further and higher education.

### **What skills are Diploma students going to develop?**

Diploma students will develop knowledge that relates to their chosen discipline, demonstrate competence in English, maths and ICT, and acquire analytical, research and practical skills essential to success in employment and further learning by applying their knowledge in a relevant way.

### Who has designed the Diplomas?

Employers and universities have been integral to the creation of the Diploma. They have worked with representatives from schools, colleges and awarding bodies to set out what students with a Diploma need to have learnt. The Diploma will be offered by all the main awarding bodies.

### What about other qualifications?

Other qualifications such as GCSEs, A levels and BTECs, can be taken as part of a Diploma or as separate subjects alongside it. Other established qualifications such as BTECs and NVQs will continue to be offered separately until at least the next major review in 2013 but will also be components of the Diploma. As take-up of the Diploma grows and the national entitlement is introduced in 2013, we do not expect other qualifications to be available to young people unless they feature in the four main learning pathways: the Diploma, Apprenticeships, general qualifications and the Foundation Learning Tier.

### Are schools and colleges going to be adequately funded to deliver Diplomas?

Yes. Schools and colleges will be funded through local authorities. Schools and colleges will receive around an extra £1,000 per Diploma student. This grant accounts for the different needs of areas, such as transport costs.

### Are Universities going to accept young people with Diplomas?

All UK universities have stated that an Advanced Diploma holder can access undergraduate courses at their institution. That does not mean they can access any course, just as few students with humanities A levels will be allowed on to science degrees. But overall, 80% of undergraduate courses can be accessed with the right grades in the right Diploma from the first 5 subjects. UCAS have awarded the Advanced Diploma a maximum tariff value of 490 points, equivalent to 3.5 A levels or 3 A levels and the Extended Project. The Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTs) and Extended Project will give the thinking, research and independent skills that universities look for in their students. Universities may specify particular combinations of options within a Diploma which reflect their entrance requirements for particular courses.

### What is a Diploma worth in the School and College Achievement and Attainment Tables?

The Diploma will be available at 3 different levels

- Foundation – equivalent to 5 GCSEs at grades D to G
- Higher – equivalent to 7 GCSEs at grades A\* to C
- Advanced – equivalent to 3.5 A levels

### What is the rationale behind the introduction of an Extended Diploma?

A considerable number of young people aged 16-19 (around 20,000 in total) currently undertake programmes of study that are larger than 3.5 A Levels (which is the size of an Advanced Diploma). We think it is right that such extended programmes should be available within the Diploma framework as well as alongside it. The Extended Diploma should appeal to students who want to take larger programmes of study.

### How many points will the Extended Diploma attract on the UCAS tariff?

This will be confirmed as the qualification is developed; it is for UCAS to determine the number of points assigned to any qualification.

### If I'm doing GCSE English and Maths, do I still need to take a functional skills qualification for these?

Yes, you do. Functional Skills in Maths, English and ICT form an integral part of the Diploma and must all be achieved at Level 1 for a Foundation Diploma or Level 2 for a Higher Diploma. GCSE is a different qualification and cannot be used to replace functional skills.

### Does a Diploma mean choosing a career too early?

Students will learn about a broad range of careers in their chosen subject, but many of the skills and qualities they will develop by doing the Diploma are general and valued by all employers and universities, so they are not restricting their options. Also students will be able to switch between the different types of qualification: some may choose to take a Higher Diploma from 14 to 16, then do A levels or an Apprenticeship; or they might do GCSEs, then start an Advanced Diploma at 16.

### What are Functional skills, how do they fit with Diplomas?

Functional skills are the practical English, maths and IT skills that everybody needs to deal with everyday life, for example, writing a letter of application, or working out the value of a car.

The Diploma will contain all three functional skills qualifications. This will ensure that young people secure the right foundation of English, maths and ICT skills needed for progression into employment, college and university.

Passes in functional skills will be required at level 1 for a Level 1 Diploma and at level 2 for a Level 2 or a Level 3 Diploma.

### Do secondary curriculum changes align with the approach and content of the Diploma?

Yes. The secondary curriculum and the Diploma share the same aims and the approaches are aligned. In both cases, there is an emphasis on learner choice and the development of practical skills for life and work. Both emphasise the importance of developing cross-curricular links and both emphasise mastery of the basics so that every young person has a secure grounding in functional English, mathematics and ICT. An outward-looking approach is common to the secondary curriculum and the Diploma, with teaching and learning being grounded in a real-world context and engaging with the big issues of the day.

# Diploma in Public Services

## When will the Diploma in Public Services first be taught?

The Diploma in Public Services will be taught in a limited number of schools and colleges in England from September 2010, and will be available to all students from September 2012.

## How will teachers who haven't worked in Public Services teach the subject?

Teachers will be given further training to help them provide the highest level of education, and they will be supported in teaching the work by colleges and people who are currently working in public services. We think that students will find that teachers will be able to draw from their own careers and experiences of working within a large organisation with many similar key skills that young people will be learning.

## When will it be available to everyone?

The Public Services Diploma will be available to all in 2012. Local authorities will work with schools and colleges to make sure that young people can study the subject that they're interested in so all students should find the Diploma in Public Services being taught in their area.

## Why will only limited schools get this in 2010?

It is important to make sure that the Diploma works well so to begin with it will be taught in 'pilot' areas. The schools that are involved in the pilot will receive extra support to help them overcome any initial problems and will have the opportunity to feedback to us any suggestions they have for making it work better.

## What should I tell my parents about the Diploma in Public Services?

Parents like to be involved in your school decisions and will appreciate you approaching them with some ideas of what you might be interested in.

They will have their own opinions and thoughts and might be unsure whether Diplomas are the best option for you because, let's face it, they're going to be worried about what is the best for you. Mention the Diploma in Public Services to them and give a few examples of why you're interested then tell them to check out this site where there's a page of information just for them, this page of frequently asked questions and much more information to help them get a better understanding of the Diploma in Public Services.

## What if I decide at the end of the Diploma that I don't want to go into Public Services, will I have to start all over again in a new subject?

Public Services is such a wide subject, you might be surprised how many options would be available to you. If your plan is to go on to university then by taking the full Diploma you will have built up the points that you need to get onto various related university courses such as Politics, Social Policy, Sociology, Public Services and Criminology. One of the great things about the Diploma in Public Services is that you will learn so many skills that can be used in other areas of work and learning so you should find that you haven't wasted your time or have to start again because you will have learnt things that can open many doors for you. When you're making your options you'll get advice about the best subjects to study alongside the Diploma to help you move on to the job or course that interests you.