



Diploma

The official student guide to the system

The Diploma

- Do you think the Diploma is the choice for you?
- Are you about to sit your exams?
- Have you received your results and don't know what to do next?
- If so, read on – this booklet is for you.

The Diploma is a new qualification for 14 to 19-year-olds. It is made up of several parts, combining subjects like English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) with practical learning, including project work and work experience.

It was introduced to provide a flexible but challenging qualification. If you learn best through applying your knowledge and skills in real world situations, then it could be for you. By 2011 the Diploma will be available across 17 broad subject areas, or lines of learning, from creative and media to manufacturing and product design, so there are plenty of options available.



Taking a Diploma can be the first step towards going to college, going to university or getting a job, so it will be useful for whatever you plan to do when you finish your course.

The Diploma decision

Did you know you can start the Diploma at age 14 (year 10) or age 16 (year 12)? Or that you can study GCSEs or A levels alongside the Diploma?

It's your choice

Choosing what you're going to study is a big decision, but don't worry – no one expects you to know exactly what you want to do in the future. Whatever happens, you will be encouraged to take a wide range of subjects in your last 2 years at school (key stage 4) so that you can keep your options open after you are 16.

Lining up the right subject for you

The Diploma will be available in 17 subject areas, or lines of learning, from 2011. From September 2009 there will be 10 subjects from which to choose:

- Business, administration and finance
- Construction and the built environment
- Creative and media
- Engineering
- Environmental and land-based studies
- Hair and beauty studies
- Hospitality
- IT
- Manufacturing and product design
- Society, health and development

Over the next few years, the following subjects will also be available:

| From September 2010 | From September 2011 |
|--------------------------|---|
| Public services | Humanities and social sciences |
| Retail business | Languages and international communication |
| Sport and active leisure | Science (levels 1 and 2 only) |
| Travel and tourism | |

When deciding which line of learning to study, think about which subjects are your best, which you enjoy and which might help you in the future. There may be some subjects, like society, health and development or manufacturing and product design, that you haven't studied before. Be sure to look at all the options so you make the decision that's right for you. Your teachers and parents or carers can also give you help and guidance. Organisations such as Connexions may also be able to offer advice. Take a look at yp.direct.gov.uk/diplomas/subjects for more details about the lines of learning.

Because the Diploma is still fairly new, not all schools and colleges are signed up to teach it. Your teachers can give you information about exactly which lines of learning are offered in your area, or you can search online at yp.direct.gov.uk/14-19prospectus

What makes a Diploma?

| | |
|--|--|
| Principal learning | This is a core component, so the content you'll study will be closely related to your Diploma subject. For example, if you choose engineering you would concentrate on engineering-related learning. |
| Additional and specialist learning (ASL) | You choose what to do for this part of the Diploma. You can choose a course closely related to your Diploma subject or pick one to do with another interest. The aim is to add breadth and depth to your studies – you may even decide to do GCSEs or an A level for your ASL. |
| Functional skills | Everyone needs good English, mathematics and ICT skills. You'll need to pass each and every one of the functional skills assessments. |
| Personal, Learning and Thinking skills | This helps you develop wider skills you'll need as you go through life – things like time management, team working and creative thinking. |
| Work experience | Spending time with an employer gives you the chance to put what you've learnt into practice. You'll spend at least 10 days on your placement, giving you useful insights into the world of work. |
| Project | Like ASL, this lets you personalise your course. You get to choose a topic for your project that relates to your chosen line of learning. It gives you a chance to demonstrate the wider skills you've learnt through studying for the Diploma. |



The Diploma is a 'composite qualification'. This means it's made up of a number of parts designed so you can develop your skills, knowledge and understanding, and then demonstrate what you've learnt.

Finding the level

Why are there different levels of Diploma? Which one should I choose?

The Diploma has been designed to be flexible and challenge all students. This is why there are three levels: Foundation Diploma, Higher Diploma and Advanced Diploma.

If you're 14 (year 10) you may choose the Foundation or Higher Diploma. At post 16 (year 12) you may go for any of the three levels.

To help you get an idea of the challenge, this table shows how each level compares to GCSEs or A levels.

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Foundation Diploma | 5 GCSEs, grades D-G |
| Higher Diploma | 7 GCSEs, grades A*-C |
| Advanced Diploma | 3.5 A Levels |

If you have any questions or worries about which level to take, speak to your teachers. They can give you help and guidance.

Grades

The Diploma normally takes two years to complete. In these two years, you'll do a mixture of coursework and controlled assessments. You'll also have to sit some exams. For help with exam preparation and more information on what will happen on the day, go to www.ofqual.gov.uk/examsdoctor

Some of the components of the Diploma are qualifications in their own right, for example the principal learning and project components. This means you'll get recognition for your achievements as you work towards your Diploma.

Your overall Diploma grade comes from putting together the scores from your core work – the principal learning units – and your project work. But remember – you must complete all aspects of the Diploma to get your full qualification.

Here are the grades you could get:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Foundation Diploma | A*, A, B or U (ungraded) |
| Higher Diploma | A*, A, B, C or U (ungraded) |
| Advanced Diploma | A*, A, B, C, D, E or U (ungraded) |



You've got your Diploma. What next?

Study. University. Apprenticeship. Work.
There are many routes available to you after you finish your Diploma.

Perhaps you've already decided that after completing your Foundation Diploma you want to find a job, apply for an apprenticeship or study for more qualifications, at college or university.

If you'd like to continue your studies, there's a whole range of options from which to choose. Maybe you want to take a further Diploma – at higher or advanced level. Alternatively, you may be interested in doing a BTEC, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) or other vocational course.

If you think A levels might be the thing for you, then you can find out more in A levels: The official student guide to the system, which is available on the Ofqual website at www.ofqual.gov.uk/alevelguide (Ofqual/09/4145).

If you've taken an Advanced Diploma, which is equivalent to 3.5 A levels, you could look at going to university. There's more information about this on the UCAS website at www.ucas.ac.uk

On the other hand, you may decide that the world of work is for you and are now looking for a job or to start an apprenticeship. You can find details of organisations that offer careers advice and guidance in the 'Where to go for help' section of this booklet on page 8.

Whichever route you take, your Diploma will put you on the right track for your future study, training or employment.

If you haven't done as well as you'd hoped, don't lose heart – there are lots of options open to you, including options to retake components. Check the 'Where to go for help' section of this booklet for some ideas on sources for help and advice.

Who's who in Diplomas

The Diploma is still a relatively new qualification, so don't worry if you're unfamiliar with who's involved. This brief guide tells you who's who.

Ofqual

Ofqual is the official organisation that oversees what awarding organisations do in England. As the regulator of qualifications, exams and tests, it's Ofqual's job to protect your interest. Ofqual makes sure you're treated fairly and receive appropriate grades. www.ofqual.gov.uk

Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA)

QCDA develops the curriculum, improves and delivers assessments, and reviews and reforms qualifications. www.qcda.gov.uk

Awarding Organisations

Ofqual recognises awarding organisations to deliver accredited qualifications. There are two different types of awarding organisation involved in the Diploma.

A Diploma awarding body awards the overall Diploma qualification and will issue your certificate.

A component awarding body awards the unit qualifications that build to make a complete Diploma, for example project qualifications or ASL qualifications.

Centres

The organisations that teach you. This includes your school or college, also known as your home centre, but may also include other local colleges, employers or schools. A group of centres is called a consortium.



Where to go for help

If you're worried about what to do next or want more information and support, advice is always available. There's no need to worry on your own.

Your teachers can give you advice on a whole range of issues, from syllabus information, study tips and revision techniques to subject or career choices. Lots of organisations offer help and support, and information and advice is available from numerous websites and helplines. These are some of the official ones:

www.ofqual.gov.uk

Ofqual supplies everything you need to know about qualifications and the exam system, including an online version of this guide and student guides to GCSEs and A levels, as well as animations to help you prepare for tests and exams.

www.ofqual.gov.uk/examsdoctor

The Exams Doctor is on hand to help with all your qualifications and exams questions. He has many years' experience in the examination system and can answer queries on Diplomas, GCSEs and A levels; what to do when you get your results; and how to get the best from them.

www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas

The official Diploma site offers a detailed look at the Diploma, including video case studies by current Diploma students.

www.connexions-direct.com

Local Connexions services and the Connexions Direct website offers young people aged 13-19 information on a wide range of topics as well as confidential advice and practical help. For more information on Connexions Direct and the contact details of your local Connexions provider visit www.connexions-direct.com. Connexions Direct Helpline Advisers are available to talk to from 8am to 2am, 7 days a week by telephone on 080 8001 3219 or text 07766 413219.

www.qcda.gov.uk/14-19

QCDA provides lots of information on different qualifications for 14 to 19-year-olds.

www.dcsf.gov.uk/qualifications

The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) explains the different types of qualification.

www.need2know.co.uk

This website gives information and advice on everything from qualifications to jobs and much more.

www.learndirect.co.uk

Learndirect helps you find the right courses. Call them free on 0800 100 900.

www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Apprenticeships allow you to earn while you learn. This website can answer all your questions.

www.ucas.ac.uk

Visit this site to research your choices and apply for higher education courses.

www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk/index.aspx

The National Database for Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) lists all accredited qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.



Hints and tips from the Exams Doctor

With many years' experience in the exams system, Ofqual's Exams Doctor has plenty of advice to offer to students studying for their Diploma.

In some Diploma awards, there may be an exam for which you need to prepare. Make sure you plan your time effectively to do this properly.

There are many components you need to pass to gain your Diploma. Use your time effectively to prepare for each separate part of your qualification. They're all as important as each other.

www.ofqual.gov.uk/examsdoctor

Our Exams Doctor can provide help and advice if you need it. Find out more information in the 'Where to go for help' section on page 8.



You can contact us at:

**Office of the Qualifications
and Examinations Regulator**

Spring Place
Coventry Business Park
Herald Avenue
Coventry CV5 6UB

Switchboard: 0300 303 3344

(Lines are open Monday to Friday, 8.00am to 5.30pm)

Helpline: 0300 303 3346

(Lines are open Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 5.00pm)

Textphone: 0300 303 3345

Fax: 0300 303 3348

Email: info@ofqual.gov.uk

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