

## 14-19 and the new diplomas

### What are diplomas?

Diplomas are the new courses designed to run alongside GCSEs and A Levels. They will include generic learning including English, maths and IT as well as learning more specific to the type of diploma chosen. They are intended to open up career paths and choices rather than narrow them; they are employment-related learning, not job-related training.

### What areas are the diplomas in?

Seventeen diplomas are under development, with the first due to begin in September 2008. They will be available in areas such as IT, engineering, manufacturing and public services, with three more 'academic' courses planned in languages, science and humanities. For a full list and roll-out schedule please view the 14-19 factsheet on the Education and Childcare page of this website. The government wants all diploma courses to be accessible to all young people by 2013.

### When can students take them?

Pupils can begin diploma courses in Y10 and Y12. Starting in Y10 or Y12 they can work towards a Foundation diploma (takes the same amount of time as 4-5 GCSEs) or a Higher diploma (takes the same amount of time as 5-6 GCSEs). Starting in Y12 or above, they can study for an Advanced diploma (takes the same amount of time as 3 A levels); or Progression diploma (takes the same amount of time as 2 A Levels).

### Who is providing the diplomas?

Diplomas are based on partnerships between schools, employers and other education providers. Schools and colleges are likely to form 'clusters' to deliver the courses, meaning that students may study at places outside their own school.

### What about GCSEs and A Levels?

GCSE and A Level courses will continue to run alongside the diplomas. The range of GCSEs in vocational subjects is being expanded, with changes in the assessment system also proposed. A new A\* grade is being introduced at A Level from September 2008. The first review of the 14-19 curriculum will take place in 2013.

### Will the diplomas be accepted by universities?

There has been much debate over whether universities will view diplomas in the same light as A Levels. In December 2007 the Universities and College Admission Service (UCAS) confirmed that the Advanced-level diploma would be worth a maximum of 420 UCAS points, compared with the 360 available for scoring top marks in three A levels.

### What are the implications for Service families?

Families will face the same sorts of decisions for diplomas as they currently do for GCSEs and A Levels, with all the implications of moving schools once a course has been started. It remains to be seen how feasible it will be for students to move between diploma courses in different areas, and how well SCE will rise to the challenge of providing courses in its overseas secondary schools.