



14-19 Education and Skills White Paper

On 23rd February 2005 the Government published its 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper. The Paper set out clear proposals for reform which will build on the strengths of the existing system. It will:

- Secure the basics (i.e. literacy and numeracy);
- Stretch every pupil to their full potential;
- Offer a high-quality vocational route;
- Re-motivate the disengaged;
- Prepare all young people for the world of work.

“The 14-19 reforms will give all young people the opportunity to choose a mix of learning which motivates, interests and challenges them, and which gives them the knowledge, skills and attitude they need to succeed in education, work and life.”

(DCSF website)

As well as improving the current system, a key aim is to extend the range of choices and opportunities available to young people in the future. This is being addressed by the design of a new curriculum which will increase the number of learning routes through the new **diplomas** as well as strengthening the existing routes at Key Stage 3, GCSE and A Level.

The first review of the 14-19 curriculum will take place in 2013.

Diplomas

Diplomas are the new courses designed to run alongside GCSEs and A Levels. Students can embark on a diploma course in Year 10. Diplomas have been both hailed as ‘*the most important education reforms going on anywhere in the world*’ and criticised for being ‘*too easy*’ and possibly unacceptable to some universities.

Every diploma will include generic learning including English, maths and IT user skills; a project; personal learning and thinking skills, and some workplace-based learning. These will be supplemented by specific learning relevant to the course subject - e.g. in graphic design or maintenance engineering. Finally, additional and specialist learning will enable young people to tailor the course to meet their particular aspirations and interests. Students will not necessarily study in one place, as local schools and colleges may form ‘clusters’ to meet the course needs. Diplomas are intended to open

up career paths and choices rather than narrow them; they are employment-related learning, not job-related training.

Diplomas will be available at the following levels:

- **Starting in Y10 or Y12** - Foundation Diploma (takes the same amount of time as 4-5 GCSEs); or Higher Diploma (takes the same amount of time as 5-6 GCSEs)
- **Starting in Y12 or above** - 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)

Completion of Foundation or Higher Diplomas is expected to take two years, and students may progress from these to either the Advanced or Progression Diploma or to other kinds of qualifications such as A Levels, GCSEs, BTEC, NVQ or Advanced Apprenticeship. Advanced Diploma students will be able to apply to universities with their qualification. It is not necessary to have completed Foundation and Higher Diplomas in order to progress to Advanced or Progression Diplomas.

Diplomas are being developed by multi-agency Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs). The DDPs are led by the relevant Sector Skills Councils as representatives of employers. Other partners include representatives from higher education and education professionals.

Seventeen diplomas are currently under development. These are:

Diploma Area	First Teaching
IT	September 2008
Society, Health and Development	
Engineering	
Creative and Media	
Construction and the Built Environment	
Land-based and Environmental	September 2009
Manufacturing	
Hair and Beauty	
Business Administration and Finance	
Hospitality and Catering	
Public Services	September 2010
Sport and Leisure	
Retail	
Travel and Tourism	
Languages	September 2011
Science	
Humanities	

The Government's aim is for every young person in a school or college to be entitled to pursue any of the diploma courses at an appropriate level for them, wherever they are in the country. This entitlement will be put in place in 2013, once all the diplomas have been tested.

Secondary Curriculum Review

The 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper also announced a review of the secondary curriculum. The aim is that young people reach the age of 14 with a strong grounding in the basics, an enthusiasm for learning and a broad general education. The new curriculum will become statutory from September 2008.

Under the new curriculum all Key Stage 3 (11-14) pupils will continue to study all 12 subjects of the National Curriculum but with less prescribed factual content. This will free up around 25% of the school day to enable teachers to give more help to pupils struggling with English and maths and to stretch those who need it. This new approach is consistent with the incoming concept of personalised learning.

The curriculum is intended to prepare young people for the modern world with lessons in personal finance and financial capability, sustainable development and environmental change, shared British values, and an entitlement to learn cookery included in subject areas, many of which will now be allowed to overlap. There will be a continued requirement for children to study authors such as Dickens and Shakespeare, and key figures and events in history.

Changes to GCSEs

The range of GCSEs in vocational subjects is being expanded. Subjects include: Construction and the Built Environment; Hospitality and Catering; Agriculture and Applied PE. It is expected that these, and other, subjects will be available from September 2008.

Functional skills in English, maths and ICT are being incorporated into GCSEs. These are practical skills which are intended to enable individuals to operate effectively and independently. Examples include:

English Level 1 - a student moving into a new flat is able to inform his bank of his change of address in person, on the telephone, or by letter.

Maths Level 2 - a student going to university is able to research different bank accounts on offer and make educated choices as to which suits him and his needs best.

These are to be piloted from September 2007.

For the 2009 GCSEs, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has proposed controlled assessment.

A-Levels

A need has been acknowledged for more stretching questions at A Level. Students who achieve the higher level will be awarded an A* although this new grading will not affect the existing A Level standard (i.e. an A will continue to be awarded for the same level of achievement as it is today). The changes will be incorporated from September 2008.

The Foundation Learning Tier

This is a programme of learning aimed at young people who may have difficulties learning or other SEN. It will allow them to take qualifications at Level 1 (GCSE is Level 2), with a clear progression to a Level 2 programme. Three curriculum strands have been identified as central to FLT programmes: skills for life and work, vocational and subject based learning, and personal and social development. A trial began in September 2006 and a phased roll-out will begin in September 2007.