

The Diploma

2007

# Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies

Version 1



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# Introduction

## The Diploma qualification

The Diploma is a new composite 14–19 qualification that will bring an innovative approach to learning. It will enable students to gain knowledge, understanding and hands-on experience of sectors that they are interested in, while putting new skills into practice. Employers and awarding bodies have teamed up with schools, colleges and universities to form Diploma development partnerships (DDPs) and are working together with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) to take forward Diploma qualifications. Diplomas will be available at levels 1, 2 and 3 in 14 sector areas as a national entitlement from 2013.

The Diploma provides learners with real opportunities to practise their skills. It includes principal learning qualifications that provide opportunities for applied learning, which cover newly defined sector-related material and provide opportunities to develop and apply generic skills. In addition, learners take the project<sup>1</sup> qualification, which offers the chance to personalise and show breadth and independence of learning.

Functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are also an integral part of the Diploma, with learners required to attain a specified level to be awarded a Diploma. Learners will have opportunities to develop and apply functional skills across the Diploma curriculum. Functional skills are also available as stand-alone qualifications.

Learners must also take qualifications to meet specified guided learning hour (GLH) requirements for additional and specialist learning for the Diploma, which provide the opportunity for learners to personalise their learning. Many qualifications that are already being offered can contribute to additional and specialist learning.

Diploma qualifications will be awarded by Diploma awarding bodies. The constituent qualifications, which contribute to the Diploma, such as principal learning qualifications, and qualifications for additional and specialist learning, will be awarded by Component awarding bodies. Diploma awarding bodies and Component awarding bodies are recognised by QCA through a supplementary recognition process.

Centres and centre consortia for the Diploma, will manage records of individuals' results at centre level. The Diploma aggregation service (previously called Minerva) will enable the gathering and storing of the results data that contribute to a learner's Diploma, and will provide an aggregation function to enable the awarding of a Diploma by a Diploma awarding body.

<sup>1</sup> The project qualification is offered at levels 1 and 2. The extended project is offered at level 3. All references to the project encompass the extended project as well as the project.

## Scope and purpose of the operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies

The purpose of the operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies is to set out principles and information on the operation of the Diploma qualification, principal learning, the project, and the contribution of other constituent qualifications to the Diploma. The operating rules will be applied by Component and Diploma awarding bodies, and include information on what awarding bodies must require of centres, to ensure the Diploma can operate effectively.

The operating rules cover specific requirements for the Diploma, for principal learning and for the project. They do not include specific codes of practice for other constituent qualifications in the Diploma, but do refer to requirements in relation to constituent qualifications for the Diploma so that those results can be recorded and aggregated for the award of the Diploma qualification. Existing requirements that apply to qualifications that can contribute to additional and specialist learning remain unchanged.

Functional skills are covered under separate regulatory arrangements. The operating rules only apply to functional skills in terms of the requirement that results are included in the constituent qualification results that must be supplied to the Diploma aggregation service, for those learners with a Diploma learner account.

These operating rules establish the principles and describe the required regulatory outcomes for the Diploma. They do not set out the processes by which those aims are achieved, as do specific codes of practice, such as those for GCSEs, A levels and AS qualifications, and for NVQs.

This approach provides awarding bodies with the flexibility to work to the principles and meet the required outcomes, without the majority of processes being prescribed. This enables awarding bodies to determine the process that is most suitable for their own contexts.

Information over and above the principles and outcomes level of detail is only added where it is helpful in securing comparability between awarding bodies' qualifications or in minimising the bureaucratic burden on centres.

## Regulatory framework for the Diploma

A regulatory framework for the Diploma has been established which covers the regulation of overarching arrangements for the Diploma, and how the different constituent qualifications combine for the award of the Diploma, together with the regulation of principal learning and project qualifications.

The regulatory framework for the Diploma consists of the following elements:

- regulatory aims for the Diploma
- criteria for the supplementary recognition of Component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies – supplementary to the ‘Criteria for awarding bodies’ procedures’ in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004), which also apply to all Component and Diploma awarding bodies
- criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3 – covers the relevant aspects of the ‘Common criteria for all qualifications’ in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2004)
- criteria for the accreditation of lines of learning qualifications
- operating rules for Component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies
- arrangements for accrediting the Diploma qualifications.

## Structure of the operating rules

The operating rules are set out in the following parts. Common requirements are repeated in each of these parts as appropriate.

- Operating rules for additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies
- Operating rules for principal learning and project component awarding bodies
- Operating rules for Diploma awarding bodies

There is also a glossary at the end of this document.

This is the first version of the operating rules. They will be kept under review and a second version will be published in 2008, taking into account the developing programmes of work, including work on grading and on the Diploma aggregation service.

## Links to other regulatory publications

This diagram shows the relationship between the operating rules and other regulatory publications. The regulatory aims for the Diploma set out the overall purpose of regulating the Diploma and are provided on page 7.

### Recognition of awarding bodies

Component and Diploma awarding bodies

Criteria for awarding body procedures published in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2004*

Criteria for the supplementary recognition of Component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies

### Criteria for the accreditation of the Diploma and constituent qualifications

Additional and specialist learning qualifications

Common criteria for all qualifications published in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2004*

Criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3

Principal learning and project

Criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3

Criteria for the accreditation of lines of learning qualifications

Diploma qualification

Criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3

### The operation of the Diploma

Additional and specialist learning qualifications

Operating rules for additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies published in *Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies*

Relevant Codes of Practice as applicable  
*NVQ Code of Practice, 2007*  
*GCSE, GCE, GNVQ, AEA Code of practice, 2007*

Principal learning and project

Operating rules for principal learning and project component awarding bodies published in *Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies*

Diploma qualification

Operating rules for Diploma awarding bodies published in *Operating rules for Component and Diploma awarding bodies*

# Regulatory aims for the Diploma

The overall purpose for regulating the Diploma is to develop, secure and maintain public confidence in the new qualification. It is only through public confidence that learners and their sponsors can be confident that the qualification will be accepted and of real use in learner progression. This means that the regulation of the Diploma must be designed to meet the following aims.

## Standards

The standard of the Diploma must be clearly and transparently established, and the standard of contributing qualifications must be maintained.

## Comparability

There must be comparability between the qualifications offered by the different Component awarding bodies, at each level and line of learning.

## Choice

There must be flexibility and choice for centres/consortia to meet learner needs.

## Meeting the needs of learners

Diploma awarding bodies and Component awarding bodies must be able to meet market needs and to enter and leave the market without disrupting provision for learners.

## Diversity and equality

There must be fair and equal access to the Diploma and constituent qualifications for a diverse range of learners.

## Value for money

The investment in the Diploma should provide value for money for government, awarding bodies, centres/consortia and learners.



# Summary of roles and responsibilities

This section summarises the key roles and responsibilities of Component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies, reflecting the requirements of the regulatory criteria for the supplementary recognition of Component and Diploma awarding bodies. There is also a summary of the roles of the Diploma aggregation service and centres. However, these operating rules do not apply directly to the Diploma aggregation service or to centres.

## Component awarding bodies

- Component awarding bodies are recognised to offer and award constituent qualifications that contribute to Diploma qualifications. The constituent qualifications will be shown in QCA's Diploma catalogue.
- Component awarding bodies must propose which of their qualifications they want to be included in the Diploma catalogue.
- Component awarding bodies must supply Diploma learners' results to the Diploma aggregation service referenced by the Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP)<sup>2</sup> Unique Learner Number (ULN).

## Diploma awarding bodies

- Diploma awarding bodies award and certificate whole Diploma qualifications for the lines of learning for which they are recognised.
- Diploma awarding bodies must interface with and use the Diploma aggregation service to meet QCA requirements for awarding Diploma qualifications.
- Diploma awarding bodies will produce the Diploma transcript for award of the Diploma according to information and design requirements provided separately by QCA. The data for the transcript will be supplied by the Diploma aggregation service.
- All Diploma awarding bodies must offer and award one or more constituent qualifications that can contribute to the lines of learning for which they are recognised. Therefore, all Diploma awarding bodies must also be recognised as Component awarding bodies.

<sup>2</sup> MIAP is a programme supported by the Learning and Skills Council to improve the sharing of learner and learning information between organisations.

- To be recognised for a line of learning, Diploma awarding bodies must operate at all levels of that line of learning.
- Diploma awarding bodies must provide information to help centres advise learners on Diploma qualifications.
- Diploma awarding bodies must deal with queries and complaints, and operate enquiries, appeals and malpractice procedures for all the Diploma qualifications that they are recognised to award.

## Diploma aggregation service

The Diploma aggregation service is designed to enable the data sharing, results aggregation, grading and supporting functions required for the operation of the Diploma as a composite qualification.

The Diploma aggregation service:

- provides for a learner account to be opened for all Diploma learners, and accessed by the centre on their behalf
- uses the ULN created by the MIAP Learner Registration Service (LRS) as the identifier for recording and aggregating learners' achievements
- supplies the results data for the Diploma certificate and for the Diploma transcript to the Diploma awarding body for the award.

## Centres

- Centres need to open a learner account with the Diploma aggregation service for their associated Diploma learners as early as possible in the learner's programme of study. Centres can open the account directly with the Diploma aggregation service or via a Diploma awarding body, where they offer this service.
- Centres are responsible for notifying the Diploma aggregation service of a learner's demonstration of personal learning and thinking skills (PLTS).
- Centres are responsible for notifying the Diploma aggregation service of a learner's completion of work experience.
- Centres must agree a project title for each learner and submit that title to the relevant Component awarding body.<sup>3</sup>
- Centres must ensure the standardisation of internal assessment across different assessors and assessment sites.

<sup>3</sup> QCA will undertake further work to explore the feasibility of including a specific project title (verified by the centre) for each learner on the Diploma transcript.

# Part 1: Operating rules for additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies

## Section 1: Information and guidance

Additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies

1. When providing information and guidance on the Diploma, Component awarding bodies must ensure that centres:
  - a. are provided with clear information on how the Component awarding bodies' qualifications can contribute to the Diploma
  - b. are advised that QCA's Diploma catalogue provides information on all of the qualifications that can contribute to the Diploma.

*All of the qualifications that can contribute to the Diploma are referred to as constituent qualifications, and are contained in QCA's Diploma catalogue.*

*Centres should ensure that their Diploma learners have an open learner account. The ULN is a mandatory part of the learner account. The centre may open the account directly with the Diploma aggregation service or via a Diploma awarding body where they offer this service.*

*Centres will be encouraged to open the learner account at an early stage. Only one centre within a Diploma centre consortium will communicate with the Diploma aggregation service on behalf of each learner.*

## Section 2: Management of constituent qualification results

### Submission of all constituent qualification results

#### Additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies must use the ULN to identify each learner and record their results for constituent qualifications of the Diploma, to send to the Diploma aggregation service.
2. Component awarding bodies must submit to the Diploma aggregation service the constituent qualification results for each learner, identified as having a learner account and a ULN in the Diploma aggregation service.<sup>4</sup>
3. Component awarding bodies are responsible for the accuracy and validity of the results data they submit to the Diploma aggregation service referenced by each ULN. The data must be supplied to the Diploma aggregation service within a specified period of constituent qualifications being awarded, and in accordance with agreed service level agreements and commercial terms.
4. Component awarding bodies must verify that the learner details referenced by the ULN are correct before sending the results to the Diploma aggregation service.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> There will be flexibility on how the results can be sent to the Diploma aggregation service by Component awarding bodies. The process will be determined with Component awarding bodies through further work on the functionality of the Diploma aggregation service, to be completed by January 2008.

<sup>5</sup> The Diploma aggregation service and MIAP will work with Component awarding bodies to determine a verification process through the LRS by the end of March 2008.

*Prior achievement of constituent qualifications for the Diploma is defined as results for constituent qualifications obtained before the learner account is opened, and/or from 1 January 2005.*

*If a qualification was achieved without a ULN, centres will need to obtain a ULN and open a learner account before contacting the relevant Component awarding body to verify the prior achievement.*

*There will be no proxies for principal learning, the project and functional skills in the Diploma.*

*The Diploma aggregation service will hold all results data for principal learning and project qualifications once a learner account has been opened, including the results of those qualifications where they have not been achieved. Results of other qualifications that have been attempted, but not passed, are not required by the Diploma aggregation service and are not recorded on the Diploma transcript.*

## Prior achievement claims

### Additional and specialist learning component awarding bodies

5. On request from a centre, Component awarding bodies must verify a learner's prior achievement for the qualifications they offer, which can contribute to the Diploma, if obtained before a learner account has been opened, and/or from 1 January 2005, subject to one of the following requirements:
  - a. the qualification is in the Diploma catalogue or in a previous version of the Diploma catalogue
  - b. the Component awarding body can verify, on request, that it should be recognised against a current qualification in the Diploma catalogue.<sup>6</sup>
6. If a qualification was achieved before a learner account was opened, the Diploma aggregation service will notify all Component awarding bodies of the learner's ULN, once a learner account has been opened.

<sup>6</sup> Once a qualification has been recognised against a current qualification in the Diploma catalogue, it will be added to the expired qualifications in the catalogue. A supporting process for adding these qualifications to the Diploma catalogue will be determined by QCA and linked to the Diploma aggregation service.



# Part 2: Operating rules for principal learning and project component awarding bodies

## Section 1: Information and guidance

Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. When providing information and guidance on the Diploma, Component awarding bodies must ensure that centres:
  - a. are provided with clear information on how the Component awarding bodies' qualifications can contribute to the Diploma
  - b. are advised that QCA's Diploma catalogue provides information on all of the qualifications that can contribute to the Diploma.

*The centre and qualification approval process is an essential part of ensuring secure standards.*

*Where centre and qualification approval procedures already exist for qualifications, which can contribute to additional and specialist learning, those procedures should remain unchanged.*

*An individual centre's choice of the constituent qualifications that contribute to a Diploma may be subject to the procedures of their Gateway consortium.*

## Section 2: Centre and qualification approval

### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies must ensure that centres meet the necessary requirements for centre and qualification approval for their principal learning and/or project qualifications. The approval should:<sup>7</sup>
  - a. apply only to centres that are part of a recognised Gateway centre consortium
  - b. be consistent across a Component awarding body's lines of learning
  - c. be based on centre declarations, underpinned by component awarding bodies' monitoring
  - d. not add unnecessarily to the Gateway process, or to existing centre and qualification approval procedures.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> A programme of work to determine the required standards of internal assessment practice, and how the standards should be implemented, will be taken forward for September 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Work is planned to identify a common format for information to be provided by centres for centre and qualification approval.

*The operating rules outline assessment requirements for principal learning and the project in conjunction with the Criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3.*

*Assessment arrangements for qualifications, which can contribute to additional and specialist learning, are not specific to the Diploma.*

## Section 3: Assessment of principal learning and the project

### Principles of assessment

#### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies must ensure that the assessment of principal learning and the project (at levels 1, 2 and 3) supports the following principles:
  - a. the assessment enables results to be generated that provide a valid measure of the required knowledge, skills and understanding defined by the qualification specification
  - b. results are generated that provide a reliable measure of a learner's performance
  - c. the assessment generates results that meet the appropriate standards, and that provide comparability of standards between centres, awarding bodies and over time
  - d. the assessment minimises bias and must:
    - i. provide opportunities for a diverse range of learners to demonstrate their abilities to meet the full range of requirements
    - ii. be free from covert or overt discrimination
    - iii. ensure that content uses appropriate subject matter and language for the target group
  - e. to ensure manageability, the assessment system for principal learning and the project must:
    - i. use a level of resources within a centre/consortium, which is consistent with the required quality of assessment
    - ii. use the appropriate number of examiners/assessors and moderators/verifiers, to support reliable marking and reduce the scope for inconsistency.

### Roles, responsibilities and resources

#### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

2. Component awarding bodies must have defined roles and responsibilities for staff and define the separation of functions and points of accountability, to ensure that assessment tasks, questions and mark schemes are produced, tested and scrutinised effectively.

3. Component awarding bodies must ensure that they have the necessary systems, procedures and resources in place to ensure that:
  - a. assessment tasks, questions and mark schemes can be produced to the required level of quality
  - b. learner results can be generated and reported to the required level of accuracy
  - c. the necessary numbers of assessors/examiners and moderators/verifiers are available to ensure consistent standards
  - d. learner results can be managed effectively
  - e. contingency plans can be operated in the event of systems failures, including any breach of security of assessment tasks, questions and mark schemes
  - f. where applicable to the language in which the assessment is provided, consistency is guaranteed across the languages of English, Welsh and Irish (Gaeilge).
4. If providing e-assessment, Component awarding bodies must make the necessary adjustments to systems, resources, training and guidance, to accommodate that provision.
5. Component awarding bodies must ensure that they use assessors, examiners, moderators and verifiers with suitable training and expertise.
6. Component awarding bodies must have performance management systems in place to monitor and evaluate assessors, examiners, moderators and verifiers.

*Component awarding bodies should also refer to the Regulatory principles for e-assessment, published by QCA, DELLS, CCEA and SQA.<sup>9</sup>*

## Design and application of assessments

### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

7. Component awarding bodies must ensure that assessment tasks, questions and mark schemes meet the learning outcomes and associated assessment criteria in the specification.
8. Component awarding bodies must require centres to have procedures to ensure that evidence provided by learners is relevant, can be authenticated and is sufficient to determine whether the learners meet the required standards.

<sup>9</sup> DELLS (Department for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, now DCELLS, Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills), CCEA (Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment) and SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) are the regulators for Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

9. Component awarding bodies must ensure that assessors' or examiners' marking does not enable the direct allocation of grades. Therefore, the marking criteria must not have a direct relationship with grading bands.

## External assessment of principal learning

### Principal learning component awarding bodies

10. Component awarding bodies must ensure that their assessors and examiners for external assessment do not assess work from a centre in which they have a personal interest.
11. Component awarding bodies must ensure standardisation of external assessment, followed by sampling to enable a full review of the range of performances and responses.
12. Component awarding bodies must ensure that learners' work and the associated marks are kept securely, to allow for enquiries and appeals.

## Internal assessment of principal learning and the project<sup>10</sup>

### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

13. Component awarding bodies must ensure that centres have effective and manageable administrative procedures and systems for internal assessment.<sup>11</sup>
14. Component awarding bodies must ensure centres have clear information on the parameters, and the guidance necessary, for the effective setting of assessment tasks, questions and mark schemes.
15. Component awarding bodies must ensure there are the controls in place for internal assessment to be under controlled conditions (including when the internal assessment takes place at a venue other than the centre) to:
  - a. enable the authentication of learners' work
  - b. ensure reliable internal assessment.
16. Component awarding bodies must require centres to standardise internal assessment across different assessors and assessment sites.

<sup>10</sup> A programme of work to determine the required standards of internal assessment practice, and how the standards should be implemented, will be taken forward for September 2008.

<sup>11</sup> 'Section 2: Centre and qualification approval' should also be referred to.

17. Component awarding bodies must require the use of moderation or verification to ensure that internal assessment meets defined standards.
18. Component awarding bodies must communicate clearly on the procedures for the moderation/verification of internal assessment.
19. Component awarding bodies must require sampling of internally assessed work that enables moderation/verification of a centre's internal assessment.
20. Component awarding bodies must ensure that the work of their moderators/verifiers is standardised.
21. Component awarding bodies must ensure there are a sufficient number of moderators/verifiers, according to the number and distribution of centres and learners, and the nature of assessment requirements.
22. Component awarding bodies must require that moderators/verifiers do not deal with work from a centre in which they have a personal interest.
23. Component awarding bodies must require centres to support learner choice in selecting topics for the project.

*All levels of the Diploma are graded. The grade for the whole Diploma is calculated by the Diploma aggregation service through aggregation of the unit scores for principal learning and for the project.*

*The relevant sections of the Criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3, should also be referred to.*

*The marks for principal learning units and for the project will be converted into points, and reported as grades. The aggregation of these points will produce a score for principal learning and for the project. These scores will be combined and converted into an overall Diploma grade*

## Section 4: Awarding of principal learning and the project

### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. For an initial period, as each line of learning is introduced, Component awarding bodies must award principal learning qualifications once a year only (in July), to enable awarding and grading standards to be secured.<sup>12</sup> This initial period for awarding will be determined by QCA.
2. During the initial period of awarding, Component awarding bodies must support the process for ensuring awarding and grading standards are set appropriately.
3. For an initial period, Component awarding bodies must award principal learning units and project qualifications up to twice a year (in February and July), to enable awarding and grading standards to be secured. This initial period for awarding will be determined by QCA.
4. After initial periods of awarding as each line of learning is introduced, it may be possible for principal learning and the project to be awarded more frequently.
5. Component awarding bodies must assess the performance in each unit of principal learning and in the project, against marking criteria in terms of marks.
6. Component awarding bodies must not pre-publish grade boundaries for principal learning units, principal learning qualifications or project qualifications.
7. Component awarding bodies must use a common, QCA-agreed scheme for awarding and grading principal learning and the project. This scheme will be discrete from marking and will include:
  - a. professional judgement, using evidence of performance, and informed by technical and statistical data
  - b. production of unit grade boundaries and unit grades that will be reported by Component awarding bodies

<sup>12</sup> QCA is taking forward a programme of work with principal learning and project component awarding bodies, from June 2007 until August 2008, to determine how grading standards will be secured.

*The same grading scales apply to the grading of principal learning, the project and the overall Diploma.*

8. Component awarding bodies must provide guidance to enable centres to understand the grading scales used for the award of principal learning and the project.
9. Component awarding bodies must have a process in place to consider aegrotat awards for principal learning, on the basis of partial achievement<sup>13</sup>.
10. Component awarding bodies must award and report on principal learning and the project, according to the following grading scales:
  - a. A\*, A and B for graded results and U for ungraded results at level 1
  - b. A\*, A, B and C for graded results and U for ungraded results at level 2
  - c. A\*, A, B, C, D and E for graded results and U for ungraded results at level 3.

<sup>13</sup> The minimum requirements and arrangements for principal learning aegrotat awards need to be determined.

*All of the qualifications that can contribute to the Diploma are referred to as constituent qualifications and are contained in QCA's Diploma catalogue.*

*Centres should ensure that their Diploma learners have an open learner account. The ULN is a mandatory part of the learner account. The centre may open the account directly with the Diploma aggregation service, or via a Diploma awarding body where they offer this service.*

*Centres will be encouraged to open the learner account at an early stage. Only one centre within a Diploma centre consortium will communicate with the Diploma aggregation service on behalf of the learner.*

*Prior achievement of constituent qualifications for the Diploma is defined as results for constituent qualifications obtained before the learner account is opened, and/or from 1 January 2005.*

## Section 5: Management of constituent qualification results

### Submission of all constituent qualification results

#### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies must use the ULN to identify each learner and record their results for constituent qualifications of the Diploma, including unit results for principal learning, to send to the Diploma aggregation service.
2. Component awarding bodies must submit to the Diploma aggregation service the constituent unit and qualification results for each learner, identified as having a learner account and a ULN in the Diploma aggregation service.<sup>14</sup>
3. Component awarding bodies are responsible for the accuracy and validity of the results data they submit to the Diploma aggregation service referenced by each ULN. The data must be supplied to the Diploma aggregation service within a specified period of constituent qualifications being awarded, and in accordance with service level agreements and agreed commercial terms.
4. Component awarding bodies must verify that the learner details referenced by the ULN are correct before sending the results to the Diploma aggregation service.<sup>15</sup>

### Prior achievement claims

#### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

5. On request from a centre, Component awarding bodies must verify a learner's prior achievement for the qualifications they offer, which can contribute to the Diploma, if obtained before a learner account has been opened, and/or from 1 January 2005, subject to one of the following requirements:
  - a. the qualification is in the Diploma catalogue or in a previous version of the Diploma catalogue

<sup>14</sup> There will be flexibility on how the results can be sent to the Diploma aggregation service by Component awarding bodies. The process will be determined with Component awarding bodies through further work on the functionality of the Diploma aggregation service to be completed by January 2008.

<sup>15</sup> The Diploma aggregation service and MIAP will work with Component awarding bodies to determine a verification process through the LRS by the end of March 2008.

*If a qualification was achieved without a ULN, centres will need to obtain a ULN and open a learner account before contacting the relevant Component awarding body to verify the prior achievement.*

*There will be no proxies for principal learning, the project and functional skills in the Diploma.*

*The Diploma aggregation service will hold all results data for principal learning and project qualifications once a learner account has been opened, including the results for those qualifications where they have not been achieved. Results of other qualifications that have been attempted, but not passed, are not required by the Diploma aggregation service and are not recorded on the Diploma transcript.*

*There will be awarding of principal learning units up to twice a year, and of principal learning qualifications once a year, for an initial period as each line of learning is introduced to enable awarding and grading standards to be secured. (See section 4, paragraphs 1–4, page 21)*

- b. the Component awarding body can verify, on request, that it should be recognised against a current qualification in the Diploma catalogue.<sup>16</sup>
6. If a qualification was achieved before a learner account was opened, the Diploma aggregation service will notify all Component awarding bodies of the learner's ULN, once a learner account has been opened.

## Resits

### Principal learning component awarding bodies

7. Component awarding bodies must permit resits of principal learning units to enable learners to improve their grades for principal learning and the overall Diploma.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Once a qualification has been recognised against a current qualification in the Diploma catalogue, it will be added to the expired qualifications in the catalogue. A supporting process for adding these qualifications to the Diploma catalogue will be determined by QCA and linked to the Diploma aggregation service.

<sup>17</sup> Arrangements need to be determined to cover resits of principal learning units before and after the principal learning qualification has been awarded. Principal learning and/or Diploma certificates and transcripts must be re-issued to reflect improvements in grades.

## Enquiries and appeals

### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

8. Component awarding bodies must have procedures for enquiries and appeals by centres in relation to principal learning and the project. Component awarding bodies may charge for enquiries and appeals but must refund the charge if the enquiry or appeal results in a change of grade for principal learning or the project.
9. Component awarding bodies must notify the Diploma aggregation service of any changes to results following an enquiry or appeal.

## Malpractice

### Principal learning and project awarding bodies

10. Component awarding bodies must have procedures for reporting on, and dealing with, instances of malpractice in principal learning and the project.

*Awarding bodies should refer to Dealing with significant cases of suspected malpractice by those involved in the delivery of qualifications: Guidance for awarding bodies (QCA, DELLS, CCEA, SQA, 2006)*

## Section 6: Certification of principal learning and the project

### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies must meet the requirements for certification of principal learning and the project, to be published separately by QCA.

### Principal learning component awarding bodies

2. Component awarding bodies must re-issue the principal learning qualification certificate if a unit resit improves the grade awarded for the principal learning qualification.

*Principal learning qualifications will be awarded once a year for an initial period as each line of learning is introduced, to enable awarding and grading standards to be secured (see paragraph 1–4 page 21).*

*The six areas of diversity and equality to be considered, which are defined in equality law are disability, gender, race/ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation and religion/belief.*

*QCA's regulation also promotes equality in terms of disability, gender and ethnic origin, in accordance with public sector equality duties, to ensure that discrimination on these grounds is addressed.*

*For further information, Component awarding bodies should also refer to Fair access by design: Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive vocational qualifications (2006), and Fair access by design: Guidance for awarding bodies and regulatory authorities on designing inclusive GCSE and GCE qualifications (2005), published by QCA, DELLS and CCEA.*

## Section 7: Diversity and equality principles for principal learning and the project

### Principal learning and project component awarding bodies

1. Component awarding bodies must design principal learning and the project, and their assessment requirements, for a diverse range of learners so that there are no barriers to achievement (unless the Component awarding body considers a barrier to disabled learners is essential to the qualification because it is part of the competence standard).
2. Component awarding bodies' design of assessment for principal learning and the project should minimise any subsequent need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled learners.
3. Component awarding bodies must allow reasonable adjustments to the assessment of principal learning and the project for disabled people, to overcome any barriers that have been identified.



*All Diploma awarding bodies are also recognised as Component awarding bodies, as they must offer and award a constituent qualification in the line or lines of learning for which they are recognised.*

## Part 3: Operating rules for Diploma awarding bodies

### Section 1: Information and guidance

#### Diploma awarding bodies

1. When providing information and guidance for centres on their services to award the Diploma qualification, Diploma awarding bodies must ensure that centres:
  - a. are advised that information on the full range of units and qualifications for the Diploma is available in QCA's Diploma catalogue
  - b. are advised that the Diploma can be awarded against any of the permitted combinations of qualifications offered by different Component awarding bodies, as shown in QCA's Diploma catalogue.

*All levels of the Diploma are graded. The grade for the whole Diploma is calculated by the Diploma aggregation service through aggregation of the unit scores for principal learning and for the project.*

*The relevant sections of the Criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3, should also be referred to.*

*To be awarded the Diploma, learners must meet requirements for the achievement of principal learning, additional and specialist learning, and generic learning. Generic learning comprises the project, functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT, and the demonstration of PLTS and completion of work experience.*

*Arrangements will be put in place to ensure that the Diploma aggregation service is managed to safeguard the use of the service over time, and to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to awarding bodies' use of the service.*

*Centres will be able to obtain a trial grade for each learner who has completed the necessary achievements for the Diploma, before claiming the award of the Diploma through the Diploma awarding body and the Diploma aggregation service.*

## Section 2: Awarding of the Diploma

### Diploma awarding bodies

1. Diploma awarding bodies must have a clear understanding of the awarding process by which the grades for principal learning units and the project are converted to points. These points are added to derive a Diploma score, which is converted into a Diploma grade using published thresholds.
2. Diploma awarding bodies must award and report on Diploma grading according to the following grading scales:
  - a. A\*, A and B for graded results and U for ungraded results at level 1
  - b. A\*, A, B and C for graded results and U for ungraded results at level 2
  - c. A\*, A, B, C, D and E for graded results and U for ungraded results at level 3.
3. Diploma awarding bodies must award the overall Diploma grade, based on the combined scores obtained for principal learning and the project.
4. Diploma awarding bodies must ensure centres understand the grading scales for the award of the Diploma.
5. Diploma awarding bodies must interface with, and use the Diploma aggregation service to meet QCA requirements for awarding and certificating Diploma qualifications, in accordance with agreed service level agreements and commercial terms to support the operation of the Diploma aggregation service.
6. Diploma awarding bodies must have a process in place to consider the award of an aegrotat for the Diploma, on the basis of partial achievement.<sup>18</sup>
7. Diploma awarding bodies must ensure that the Diploma is only awarded on the basis of claims that meet the following requirements:
  - a. achievement at pass or above of the combined results of principal learning and the project
  - b. achievement of qualifications from the Diploma catalogue for additional and specialist learning, which:

<sup>18</sup> Minimum requirements and arrangements for aegrotat awards at Diploma level need to be determined.

*The minimum required amounts of GLH for additional and specialist learning are 120 GLH at level 1, 180 GLH at level 2 and 360 GLH at level 3.*

- i. are at the same level, or one level above the level of the Diploma
- ii. meet the minimum required amounts of GLH.
- c. achievement of functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) required at:
  - i. level 1 or above for the level 1 Diploma
  - ii. level 2 or above for the level 2 Diploma
  - iii. level 2 or above as prior achievement for award of the level 3 Diploma.
- d. demonstration of personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)
- e. completion of work experience.
- 8. Diploma awarding bodies must provide the final Diploma grade to the Diploma aggregation service.

## Enquiries and appeals

### Diploma awarding bodies

- 9. Diploma awarding bodies should be the first point of contact for an appeal on the award of the whole Diploma. Where an appeal is related to a constituent qualification, the centre should refer this to the relevant Component awarding body.<sup>19</sup>

## Malpractice

### Diploma awarding bodies

- 10. Diploma awarding bodies should have procedures in place to report on and manage instances of malpractice at Diploma level.

*Awarding bodies should refer to Dealing with significant cases of suspected malpractice by those involved in the delivery of qualifications: Guidance for awarding bodies (QCA, DELLS, CCEA, SQA, 2006).*

<sup>19</sup> Diploma awarding bodies are not involved in enquiries and appeals on other Component awarding bodies' constituent qualifications. If a result changes due to an enquiry or appeal on a constituent qualification, arrangements need to be determined for the re-issue of an overall Diploma result.

## Section 3: Certification of the Diploma and the Diploma transcript

### Diploma awarding bodies

1. Diploma awarding bodies must print and issue the Diploma transcript with the Diploma certificate within a reasonable amount of time, once a Diploma claim has been made and the necessary results data have been made available by the Diploma aggregation service.

### Diploma transcript

#### Diploma awarding bodies

2. The Diploma transcript must meet the following information requirements, for which data will be provided by the Diploma aggregation service.

The Diploma transcript will detail:

- a. overall Diploma details (this will match the certificate content): Diploma line of learning, Diploma level and overall Diploma grade (not score)
- b. principal learning: Component awarding body name(s) (not logos), qualification level and type, grade (not score) for each unit, overall principal learning grade, date of award and credit value (where available)
- c. personal, learning and thinking skills: demonstration of PLTS and a list of the six skills
- d. project: Component awarding body name (not logo), qualification level and type, grade (not score), date of award and credit value (where available)
- e. functional skills: Component awarding body name(s) (not logo), qualification level and type, grade (not score) for English, mathematics and ICT, date of award and credit value (where available)
- f. additional and specialist learning: Component awarding body name(s) (not logo), qualification level and type, grade (not score), date of award and credit value (where available)
- g. work experience: completion.

*The Diploma awarding body must only print the Diploma transcript on the basis of a claim by a centre on behalf of a learner.*

*The delivery of PLTS and its recording in the Diploma aggregation service is a centre responsibility and will be quality assured by inspection regimes.*

*The delivery of work experience and its recording in the Diploma aggregation service is a centre responsibility and will be quality assured by inspection regimes.*

3. The Diploma transcript should not include centre details for the purposes of confidentiality.
4. The Diploma transcript must be re-issued to reflect any improved grade for principal learning, the project and/or for the overall Diploma.

## Certification of the Diploma

### Diploma awarding bodies

5. Diploma awarding bodies must meet the requirements for certification of the Diploma, to be published separately by QCA.
6. The Diploma certificate must be re-issued if the overall grade for the Diploma is improved.



# Annex: Draft pricing principles for Component and Diploma awarding bodies

The following pricing principles provide a framework within which awarding bodies can participate in the operation of the Diploma, while ensuring that the prices charged are reasonable.

*Evidence from work on qualification pricing is that the main factor affecting a centre's choice of awarding bodies is the suitability of the qualification rather than its price.*

*The pricing of constituent qualifications in the Diploma catalogue will impact on the cost of the whole Diploma.*

## Educational benefit

1. Choice for the Diploma should continue to be based on what centres perceive to be of the best educational benefit for their learners, rather than on the basis of price.

## Transparency of pricing

2. The fees charged by Diploma awarding bodies for the award and certification of the Diploma, and by Component awarding bodies for principal learning and the project, must be transparent. Centres must be able to see what they are paying for, including in terms of additional products and services, and be able to make comparisons between competing providers.

## Notice period for the implementation of fees

3. Pricing of principal learning, the award and certification of the Diploma, and any relevant additional products and services that have an impact on the cost of the whole Diploma, should be publicised at least one year in advance of when the fee is due to be paid, so that centres can plan their budgets.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> The implementation of this requirement and when it comes into effect will need to be planned with Component and Diploma awarding bodies.

*The Diploma qualification is a significant new qualification and the principal learning within it is a new industry-led programme of study. Therefore, the initial pricing of both the Diploma and principal learning will have a significant impact on the take up of these new qualifications.*

### Fair and appropriate pricing

4. It is essential that a range of awarding bodies participate in the Diploma in order to keep prices competitive and provide choice for learners. The fees in relation to the award of the Diploma, including for Diploma certificates and Diploma transcripts, and the pricing of principal learning, must be fair and appropriate.

# Glossary

## Accreditation

The process through which the regulators confirm that a qualification and the associated specification conform to the relevant regulatory criteria.

## Additional learning (also see 'specialist learning')

Qualifications that learners choose to include in their Diploma. Additional learning is complementary in character. It consists of further learning and can include national curriculum entitlement areas and/or learning options such as languages, music or science that relate to individual needs, interests and aspirations, provided these do not duplicate learning in principal learning and generic learning.

## Aegrotat award

An award made on the basis of partial achievement to a learner who is unable, through temporary illness, injury or indisposition, to complete all the usual assessment requirements.

## Aggregation

The adding together of attainment across the components and units of a qualification to arrive at a measure of achievement for the qualification as a whole. Aggregation may require a weighting of the different elements to determine how much each element can contribute to the whole qualification.

## Appeal

A process through which an awarding body may be challenged on the outcome of an enquiry about results or, where appropriate, other procedural decisions affecting a centre or individual learners.

## Applied learning

The acquisition and application of, knowledge, skills, and understanding through tasks set in sector contexts that have many of the characteristics of real work or are set within the work place. Most importantly, the purpose of the task in which learners apply their knowledge, skills and understanding must be relevant to real work in the sector.

## Assessment

The process of making judgements about the extent to which a learner's work meets the assessment criteria for a qualification or unit, or a part of a unit.

### Assessment criteria

The specification of the standards a learner is expected to meet to demonstrate that a learning outcome, or set of outcomes, has been achieved. Assessment criteria should be sufficiently detailed to support a consistent judgement that a learning outcome has been achieved.

### Assessor

The person who assesses a learner's work.

### Authentication

Confirmation that work has been produced by the learner who is putting it forward for assessment, and that it has been produced under the required conditions.

### Awarding

The process through which learners' results and/or grades are determined on the basis of available evidence.

### Awarding body

An organisation or consortium that awards qualifications. To be eligible to award accredited qualifications, awarding bodies must meet the requirements of and be recognised by the regulators. For the Diploma there are two types of awarding bodies: Component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies.

### Centre (centre consortium)

An organisation (or consortium) accountable to an awarding body for the assessment arrangements leading to a qualification or part of a qualification.

### Certificate

The record of attainment in a unit or qualification issued by the awarding body.

### Comparability

The extent to which marks, grades or results are equivalent between centres, between awarding bodies and over time.

### Component awarding body (CAB)

A Component awarding body must meet the requirements of the regulators to award constituent accredited qualifications of Diplomas. Any awarding body wishing to be a Component awarding body will need to obtain supplementary recognition from QCA to be a Component awarding body in England.

### Components (of the Diploma)

Diplomas are made up of constituent units and qualifications that are organised in terms of the following three components:

- Principal learning
- Generic learning
- Additional and specialist learning

### Composite qualification

A qualification consisting of a number of constituent accredited qualifications.

### Constituent qualifications

Accredited qualifications that make up the different components of the Diploma.

### Credit value

Specification of the number of credits that will be awarded to a learner who has achieved the learning outcomes of a unit. One credit is awarded for those learning outcomes achievable within 10 hours of learning time. When credit value is calculated, both teacher-supervised or directed study time (guided learning hours or GLH), and learner or self-directed study time are taken into account.

### Diploma

A defined set of qualifications combined according to a set of rules. Diplomas are designed to support progression to further study, training and employment.

### Diploma aggregation service (previously called Minerva)

The system for the data sharing, results aggregation, grading and supporting functions required for the awarding of the Diploma as a composite qualification.

### Diploma awarding body (DAB)

A Diploma awarding body must meet the requirements of the regulators to award accredited qualifications. Any awarding body wishing to be a Diploma awarding body will need to obtain supplementary recognition from QCA to be a Component awarding body and a Diploma awarding body in England. All Diploma awarding bodies must also be recognised and operate as Component awarding bodies.

### Diploma catalogue

The catalogue of the constituent qualifications, and the permitted combinations of those qualifications, which can be used for achievement of the Diploma.

### Diploma Development Partnership (DDP)

A partnership between employers (with an interest/stake in the area) and education representatives (with professional, educational and qualification-design expertise). DDPs are brought together and led through the most appropriate Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). They take responsibility for researching and providing recommendations and guidance on a line of learning.

### The Diploma transcript

A report of the units and qualifications that make up a learner's achievements for the Diploma. It lists the learner's units and grades for each of the constituent qualifications of their Diploma and also records work experience and personal, learning and thinking skills.

### e-Assessment

The use of electronic systems for the development, operation and delivery of accredited qualification assessment, or for the collection of performance evidence, which contributes to the awarding of a unit or an accredited qualification.

### External assessment

A form of assessment in which question papers, assignments and tasks are set by the awarding body, taken under specified conditions (including details of supervision and duration) and marked by the awarding body.

### Functional skills

The core elements of English, mathematics and information communication technology (ICT), providing the essential knowledge, skills and understanding needed to operate confidently, effectively and independently in life and at work.

### Gateway centre consortium

A consortium of centres that are recognised for the delivery of specified lines of learning for the Diploma, through the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Gateway process.

### Gateway process

The DCSF process for the recognition of centre consortia for the delivery of specified lines of learning for the Diploma.

### Generic learning

Generic learning enables students to develop and apply the skills and knowledge necessary for learning, employment and personal development. The generic learning component of the Diploma is made up of the following constituent parts:

- Functional skills in English, mathematics and ICT

- Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)
- A project
- Work experience.

### Grade

A point on a scale of performance used to differentiate achievement within a qualification (for example: A\*, A, B, C, D, E).

### Grading

The process of determining the grade for a unit or qualification.

### Guided learning hours (GLH)

The number of hours of teacher-supervised or directed study time required to teach the qualification or a unit of a qualification.

### Internal assessment

Assessment where assessment tasks are set, and/or learners' work assessed, wholly by the centre subject where appropriate to external moderation or verification.

### Learner

A person who is registered with an awarding body for a qualification or unit.

### Learner account

A record of the constituent qualifications and units achieved by a learner identified as being on a Diploma course of study, held by the Diploma aggregation service.

### Learning outcome

A learning outcome sets out what a learner is expected to know, understand and be able to do as the result of a process of learning. There is no limitation on the number of learning outcomes that a unit may contain, but the learning outcomes must be coherent, explicit, and assessable.

### Learner registration service

Service supported by MIAP for the registration of learners for a unique learner number (ULN).

### Level

The level at which a qualification is accredited. A qualification may be made up of units that are not all regarded as being at the same level.

### Lines of learning

The broad subject areas that each Diploma will cover.

### Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP)

MIAP is a programme supported by the Learning and Skills Council, to improve the sharing of learner and learning information between organisations.

### Mark scheme

Detail of how marks are to be awarded in relation to a particular assessment task.

### Moderation (see 'verification')

The process through which internal assessment is monitored to ensure that it meets required standards.

### Monitoring

The review of, and reporting on, an awarding body's quality assurance arrangements by the regulators.

### Operating rules

A set of requirements and information for Component and Diploma awarding bodies, covering the operation of the Diploma qualification, principal learning, the project, and the contribution of constituent qualifications to the Diploma.

### Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)

The framework of skills, that will equip all young people for successful employment and life-long learning. PLTS require learners to be:

- independent enquirers
- creative thinkers
- reflective learners
- team workers
- self-managers
- effective participators.

### Principal learning

Mandatory learning in the Diploma. Principal learning is sector related and applied in character. It includes a minimum of 50 per cent applied learning and consists of knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that support progress through the line of learning into the sectors concerned. Opportunities to develop and apply generic skills are also integrated into principal learning.

### Prior achievement

The results of constituent qualifications obtained before the creation of a learner account, and/or from 1 January 2005, which may be recognised as contributing to the Diploma.

### Project qualification (extended project qualification)

A qualification that provides the opportunity for learners to complete a project, to enable them to demonstrate breadth and independence of learning.

The project qualification is offered at levels 1 and 2. The extended project qualification is offered at level 3.

### Qualification specification

A detailed statement that defines the purpose, content, structure and assessment arrangements for a qualification.

### Reasonable adjustments

Defined in the Disability Discrimination Act as reasonable steps to ensure disabled people are not placed at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with non-disabled people, 'substantial' being more than minor or trivial.

### Regulator (for qualifications)

Government designated statutory organisations required to establish national standards for qualifications and ensure consistent compliance with them. The regulators for England, Wales and Northern Ireland are the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (DCELLS) and Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

### Specialist learning (see also 'additional learning')

Qualifications that learners choose to include in their Diploma to allow further, more specialist learning, within their line of learning. It consists of qualifications and units that will support progression across the range of progression pathways within a chosen sector, as identified and recommended by the employers and higher education advisers from the Diploma Development Partnership.

### Specification

A specification is a detailed document setting out the requirements for a qualification that an awarding body submits for accreditation by the regulators.

### Standardisation

A process to ensure that the assessment criteria for a qualification or unit are applied consistently by assessors, moderators and verifiers.

### Supplementary recognition

The recognition of Diploma awarding bodies and Component awarding bodies in England, in addition to their recognition as awarding bodies for accredited qualifications.

#### Unique learner number (ULN)

The unique number created by the MIAP Learner Registration Service that will be used to identify each learner in the Diploma aggregation service.

#### Unit

The smallest part of a qualification that is capable of certification in its own right.

#### Unit grades

The grade awarded for each unit. This applies to the principal learning qualification.

#### Unit grade boundaries

The range of marks which apply to each grade.

#### Validity of assessment

The fitness for purpose of an assessment tool or scheme.

#### Verification (see 'moderation')

A process of moderation that includes local checking of assessment processes and decisions.



## About this publication

<b>Who is it for?</b>	This publication is for Component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies.
<b>What is it about?</b>	This publication sets out operating rules for the Diploma, principal learning and the Project, and the contribution of other constituent qualifications to the Diploma.
<b>Related publications</b>	<i>Criteria for the supplementary recognition of Component awarding bodies and Diploma awarding bodies</i>  <i>Criteria for the accreditation of Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3</i>  Criteria for the accreditation of lines of learning qualifications

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