

## **DfE brief update: key information relating to Diplomas and other qualifications for 14-19 year olds**

This brief update provides several key pieces of information in relation to the above areas and is intended to ensure local authorities and providers are aware of recent announcements and essential operational information. We do not intend to produce further updates specifically covering this area - in future information will be provided on our website or through the local authority bulletin.

This update covers:

Funding  
Reform of the Diploma  
Raising the Participation Age  
Interim criteria for Section 96 approvals  
Foundation Learning  
Diploma awarding support from QCDA

### **Funding**

**2010-11:** The Local Delivery Support Grant and Diploma Formula Grant for 2010-11 will be paid to local authorities on the basis agreed earlier this year. No changes will be made to the agreed formulae for this financial year. Local authorities will receive their second LDSG payment in January 2011 and their second DFG payment in March 2011.

Notification of the in-year reconciliation of the Diploma Formula Grant (to take into account the actual student numbers collected in November 2010) will follow in January.

**2011-12:** During 2011-12 the DFG will be paid through the Dedicated Schools Grant only for Diploma students continuing in to the second year of their courses.

Ministers have indicated that they will simplify the Diploma in order to ensure that it can be offered alongside other qualifications, without the need for additional support. See below for further details.

### **Diploma reform and next steps**

In a speech to the Sixth Form Colleges Forum Conference on 25 November, Lord Hill announced the Government's intention to reform the Diploma to make it simpler to teach and award. This is part of the Government's commitment to freeing schools and colleges from centralised control and reducing bureaucratic burdens so that they can respond to the needs of pupils, students, employers and communities in the way they feel most appropriate.

This is also part of the Government's commitment to improve vocational education – and any decisions will be in line with Professor Wolf's review of vocational education, due to report in the spring. You can read Lord Hill's speech [here](#).

## **Raising the Participation Age**

In the Spending Review announcement and the White Paper *The Importance of Teaching*, the Government made clear its continued commitment to raising the participation age to 17 by 2013 and to 18 from 2015, though reductions in the provision cost per learner will need to be secured. The White Paper also announced that we will legislate to allow the enforcement process to be introduced progressively over a longer period. The rationale behind this is to ensure that enforcement powers cannot be used inappropriately, particularly in the set up phase and that local authorities develop ways of implementing RPA with minimal need for enforcement. We will be legislating for this in the forthcoming Bill and will commit to reviewing whether an enforcement process is required on an annual basis from 2014.

The first young people affected are currently in Year 9 (academic year 2010/2011). They will be the first to be required to stay in education or training until they are 17. Young people currently in Year 8 will be the first to be required to continue until 18 in 2015.

## **Interim Criteria for Section 96 approvals**

As set out in Section 96 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, only qualifications that have been approved under Section 96 of the Act should be used in maintained schools and colleges for students up to 19.

Ministers announced at the beginning of November their decision to remove the former Section 96 criteria, as they were out of date and did not support the Coalition Government's priorities for vocational education. Ministers do not wish to pre-empt Professor Wolf's review of vocational education and her recommendations which are due early in the New Year. Therefore, in place of the previous arrangements, a set of interim arrangements has been introduced, to run until March 2011. These interim arrangements will be kept under regular review, and we anticipate they will be replaced by new arrangements, in light of Professor Wolf's review. The interim criteria can be viewed [here](#).

The backlog of qualifications submitted for approval via the QCDA Web Based Application (WBA) has now been cleared for post 16 qualifications. Pre 16 qualifications have also been approved where they meet the criteria, but a number of pre 16 qualifications are still being examined and we hope to have dealt with the majority of these qualifications within the next few weeks. An update on progress that was issued on 7<sup>th</sup> December can be viewed at [here](#).

Qualifications approved under Section 96 for use in England and available to eligible students above compulsory school age and under 19, are normally eligible for YPLA funding; these are recorded by YPLA on their Learning Aims Database (LAD). A few approved qualifications are ineligible for funding and these are also identified in the LAD.

Regarding pupils aged 14 to 16, only qualifications that appear on Section 96 should be used. Searches can be carried out on the Section 96 website [here](#) and Awarding Bodies should be contacted in the first instance for any enquiries about qualifications.

## Foundation Learning

All local authorities (LAs) should receive their second instalment of the Standards Fund grant for Key Stage 4 provision in 2010/11 in December. The remainder of the grant will be paid in March 2011. Following the Spending Review, Ministers have now agreed that there will be a **further two years of funding for Foundation Learning at KS4**, totalling £24.8m in 2011-12 and again in 2012-13. This will be included in the very recently announced **Early Intervention Grant** ([www.education.gov.uk/LAletter](http://www.education.gov.uk/LAletter) and [www.education.gov.uk/EIG/FAQ](http://www.education.gov.uk/EIG/FAQ)) which will bring together LA funding for services for the most vulnerable children and young people. The EIG will not be ring fenced; it is for LAs and partners to determine priorities and plans for this grant. Any plans for FL will need to take account of the Wolf Review on vocational education due in February 2011.

You may already be aware that DfE is currently undertaking a **national evaluation of FL**, early findings from which will feed into the Wolf Review. Thanks to everyone who has contributed to this evaluation so far through the LA survey. If you would like to participate but haven't yet been contacted, please get in touch with a member of the Foundation Learning team at Ekosgen ([foundationlearning@ekosgen.co.uk](mailto:foundationlearning@ekosgen.co.uk), telephone: 0845 644 5407). The next stage will involve provider surveys (in up to 40 LA areas) and more detailed case studies; the evaluators (Ekosgen) will be asking some LAs if they would like to contribute to these stages over the next few weeks.

QCDA will produce a **final update of the FL qualifications catalogue** later this month. No further updates are planned – due to a combination of QCDA closure, the Wolf Review and the interim arrangements (pending recommendations from the Wolf Review) for section 96 approvals of qualifications for the purposes of public funding. The catalogue lists the qualifications in the QCF, as well as the functional skills qualifications, that have been developed specifically for Foundation Learning; however providers are not restricted to QCF qualifications for Foundation Learning programmes and should use their own judgements about which qualifications to offer.

## Diploma awarding support from QCDA

QCDA is offering support to schools and colleges with students expecting to claim Diplomas in August 2011, to help them complete the administrative tasks that are crucial to successful Diploma awarding.

Lists of the tasks that are critical to the successful awarding of Diplomas are provided by QCDA at the start of each term to help schools and colleges keep track of their progress. The task list for autumn 2010 was issued in early November for completion by 16 December. The task list for spring 2011 will be issued in early January for completion by 30 March.

Schools and colleges are asked to update QCDA as they progress through the tasks so QCDA can tailor the help and support they provide. All the information collected will be confidential and shared only with QCDA and the Department for Education.

Help in completing Diploma administrative tasks is available from QCDA's [centre support officers](#), or the Diploma helpdesk on 0300 100 0100 or email [diploma@qcda.gov.uk](mailto:diploma@qcda.gov.uk). Further information about the support and advice available from QCDA, can be found on the [Summer 2011 Diploma Awarding](#) website.