

## STRAND 2: CURRICULUM AND QUALIFICATIONS

*Reforming curriculum and qualifications so that more young people are motivated and engaged and so what they learn is a better preparation for life.*

1. Qualifications Reform Programme
2. The Diploma
3. Apprenticeships
4. Foundation Learning Tier
5. Functional skills
6. Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)
7. The revised secondary curriculum
8. Changes to A levels
9. Changes to GCSEs
10. International Baccalaureate (IB)

### 1.0 Qualification Reform Programme

#### **News Flash.....**

##### **Promoting achievement, valuing success: a strategy for 14–19 qualifications<sup>1</sup>**

On 31 March 2008, the DCSF published a new strategy for 14-19 qualifications, for consultation. This green paper sets out the measures needed to ensure the development of new, comprehensive qualification options which better meet the needs of all young people while retaining and simplifying the best and most valued existing qualifications. The consultation (due to end on 23 June 2008) invites views on proposals for how government should act to achieve the vision set out in the 14-19 Education and Skills White Paper - a qualifications system in which every young person can prepare themselves through education and training to make a success of their life.

While high profile new qualifications like the Diploma frolic in the sunlight, other measures sit in the shade grinding away at the bureaucratic necessities, for example:

- The **Qualifications and Credit Framework** (QCF)<sup>2</sup>
- the **Qualification Reform Support Programme**<sup>3</sup>....which in turn is part of

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/14-19qualifications/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_8150.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_8150.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.qrsp.org.uk/>

- the wider UK Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme (UKVQRP)<sup>4</sup>.

The Vocational Qualifications Reform Programme is a UK-wide programme introducing significant changes to the vocational qualifications system, particularly in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, with the aim of creating a system:

- based on learner and employer needs;
- with greater clarity and more flexibility and choice;
- encouraging a more skilled and productive workforce;
- allowing individuals to fulfil their potential; and
- supporting greater social justice and opportunity.

### The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is being replaced by a new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) for England, modelled on the system that already operates in Wales. The QCF introduces the concept of credits, but retains the levels of the old framework. Levels reflect how advanced the qualifications are, whereas credits are assigned to each unit on the basis of the average length of time a learner needs to reach specified learning goals.

The framework is a new way of recognising skills and qualifications, by awarding credit for qualifications and units (small steps of learning). In common with all credit systems, it enables people to gain qualifications at their own pace along more flexible routes. Ministers have asked the regulators of external qualifications in England (QCA), Wales (DELLS) and Northern Ireland (CCEA) to test and trial the framework. The tests and trials involve learners, employers, awarding bodies, sector skills councils, colleges and training providers, and will run through to June 2008. In the light of this experience, ministers in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will decide whether the new framework should be fully implemented.

### Credit and level

Every unit and qualification in the framework will have a credit value (one credit represents 10 hours of learning) and a level between Entry level and level 8 (representing the level of difficulty).

Qualifications will come in three sizes:

- Awards (1 to 12 credits)
- Certificates (13 to 36 credits)

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.qrsp.org.uk/defioftheover/>

- Diplomas (37 credits or more).

So, each qualification title will include the following:

- the level of the qualification (from Entry level at the bottom to level 8 at the top)
- the size of qualification (award/certificate/diploma)
- details indicating the content of the qualification.

In August 2007, the QCA published its **evaluation of the first year**<sup>5</sup> of the QCF (the 'test and trial' phase which lasts until May 2008) Crucially – and perhaps not altogether surprisingly - the report reconfirmed the new unit-based qualifications framework, with a standard unit format being adopted for all qualifications within the framework.

There has also been a consultation exercise on the regulatory arrangements for the **Qualification and Credit Framework**<sup>6</sup> which ran from 29 November 2007 until 29 February 2008. There are two strands to this: the QCF regulatory arrangements set out the arrangements that are intended to apply to organisations and qualifications within the QCF and reflects the qualifications regulators' commitment to a strategic approach to safeguarding the needs of learners. The Implementation proposals outlined timelines and accompanying processes that are proposed to support QCF implementation. The regulatory arrangements will be available in May 2008 are designed to support implementation of the QCF from August 2008 across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Implementation is subject to confirmation by Ministers in the three countries.

While the thrust of the qualification reforms is to bring some order to the current plethora and inflexibility of vocational qualifications, there is scope for a more comprehensive integrated picture to emerge, as Mary Curnock Cook (Director of Qualifications & Skills, QCA) pointed out in March 2007:

The QCF also gives us a new way of looking at 14-19 qualifications.

One way of looking at it is as three distinct pathways: the traditional GCSE/A level route, the occupational route through apprenticeships and the Diploma route which straddles both and provides a genuinely broad route combining both vocational or applied learning with theoretical and academic study.

With the QCF we can integrate these routes to systematically transform 14-19 qualifications into a more coherent phase of education.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/qca-07-3380\\_qcf\\_year\\_1\\_report.pdf](http://www.qca.org.uk/libraryAssets/media/qca-07-3380_qcf_year_1_report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_8150.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_8150.aspx)

And, in response to an enquiry in March 2008 about the place of A levels and GCSEs, QCA responded as follows:

It is QCA's vision that there should be one single qualifications framework that can accommodate all accredited qualifications. The QCF has been developed to accommodate general qualifications in the future should the decision be made by ministers.

### International perspectives

A reflective approach to change requires one to see the bigger picture, and the Nuffield Foundation is helping us all by focusing on 14-19. A **recent paper**<sup>7</sup> looks at how other European vocational education and training systems help to contextualise the English experience.

## 2.0 The Diploma

The present 14-19 reform programme brings together a set of major curriculum changes, behind which the spectre of the **Tomlinson Report**<sup>8</sup> looms large.

The Working Group on 14-19 Reform was set up in March 2003 following the publication of the DfES Green Paper Opportunity and Excellence. An independent committee chaired by Sir Mike Tomlinson, it was tasked with examining ways of improving the educational offer for 14-19 year olds. ... the Working Group proposed a system of diplomas to replace the existing regime of individual qualifications. The diplomas would be available at four levels (entry, foundation, intermediate and advanced), and in 20 lines of learning covering a wide range of vocational and academic disciplines. All diplomas would contain a generic core and main learning. The core would consist of specified levels of achievement in functional maths, communication and literacy and ICT, an extended project (a personal project offering students the opportunity to follow their own interests and work more independently), an entitlement to wider activities, plus the development of a range of common knowledge, skills and attributes that would equip the student for future work or study.

September 2008 sees the launch of new Diplomas, a core part of the government's 14-19 agenda, and a key initiative designed to raise the status of vocationally-related learning in England. The new Diplomas are a central plank in the reforms, as they fill a gap in the current qualifications available for young people, and widen the choice of learning routes and learning styles from 14 onwards. Diplomas offer a new curriculum, based around broad occupational sectors that combine essential skills and knowledge, hands-on experience and

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.nuffield14-19review.org.uk/cgi/documents/documents.cgi?t=template.htm&a=181>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/documents/Final%20Report.pdf>

employer focussed-learning. Following Gateway 2, a total of 72% of secondary schools and 88% of colleges will offer Diplomas in September 2009.

The first 5 Diplomas are:

- Construction and the built environment
- Engineering
- Information technology
- Society, health and development
- Creative and media

When first announced, 14 Diplomas were planned, all linked clearly with occupational sectors. However, in October 2007, the Secretary of State announced that three more were to be added, but significantly these were subject-based – in science, languages and the humanities (available for teaching from 2011). If this process were to continue, it is conceivable that the Diploma might evolve into a broad qualification in which both subject and sector based routes combine to bridge the academic-vocational divide, raising the prospect of the eventual decline or demise of GCEs and GCSEs. Stuttering progress perhaps, but progress nonetheless, towards Tomlinson’s vision of an over-arching Diploma!

A planned review of A levels has been put back until 2013 to allow the new and modified qualifications to settle down. This is the same year in which the leaving age will be raised to 17 (and to 18 in 2015).

Diplomas can be studied at ‘foundation’, ‘higher’, ‘progression’ or ‘advanced’ levels:

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|--------------|--|
| Foundation:  | a level 1 qualification that takes broadly the same time as 4 or 5 GCSEs, starting in Years 10 or 12 |
| Higher:      | a level 2 qualification that takes broadly the same time as 5 or 6 GCSEs, starting in Years 10 or 12 |
| Progression: | a level 3 qualification that takes broadly the same time as 2 A levels, starting in year 12 or above |
| Advanced:    | a level 3 qualification that takes broadly the same time as 3 A levels, starting in year 12 or above |

‘Extended Diplomas’ are to be introduced from 2011, will be designed to extend each of the 17 Diploma lines. They are expected to be equivalent to 4.5 A levels at the Advanced level, 9 GCSEs at the Higher level and 7 GCSEs at the Foundation level. A strengthened core of

English and maths will be a key feature of the new Extended Diploma at all levels. (See [Edexcel's Policy Watch on the topic](#)<sup>9</sup>).

The Diploma balances practical and theoretical understanding and has three components:

1. Principal learning:
  - sector-related learning
  - mandatory
  
2. Generic learning, includes:
  - Functional skills in English, mathematics and information and communication
  - technology (ICT)
  - Personal, learning and thinking skills: independent enquiry, creative thinking, reflective learning, team working, self-management, effective participation.
  - Work experience  
  - A project offering the chance to show potential, and breadth and independence of learning. The Diploma project will be available at levels 1, 2 and 3.
  
3. Additional and specialist learning.
  - supports choice and progression within a coherent whole programme
  - enables the learner to specialise and/or take up relevant complementary learning
  - consists of qualifications chosen by the learner from the Diploma catalogue
  - provides opportunities to meet particular needs
  - may include some national curriculum key stage 4 entitlement areas at levels 1 and 2
  - may include qualifications from a higher level or modules from higher education.

For specialist learning, each sector will identify qualifications that can be combined to allow learners to explore the sector in ways relevant to them. Where possible, options will be grouped together to create pathways.

At the national level, employers have been closely involved in the design of the new Diplomas through Diploma Development Partnerships. Locally, Diplomas can only be offered by local Consortia approved through the DCSF Gateway process.

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<sup>9</sup> [http://www.edexcel.org.uk/VirtualContent/95085/18\\_Extended\\_Diploma\\_March\\_2008.pdf](http://www.edexcel.org.uk/VirtualContent/95085/18_Extended_Diploma_March_2008.pdf)

A number of organisations are providing extensive central support for the Diploma initiative. QCA is providing curriculum guidance and resources, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) is offering support for school leaders and managers, and the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust (SSAT) is focusing on staff development for curriculum designers. Regionally, the SSAT and Nord Anglia (a public limited company) have set up a network of regional diploma coordinators. The Regional Coordinators for the East of England are:

SSAT – Linda Bostock ([Linda.bostock@ssatrust.org.uk](mailto:Linda.bostock@ssatrust.org.uk))

Nord Anglia – Jan Emery ([jan.emery@qiaproject14-19.org](mailto:jan.emery@qiaproject14-19.org))

The impact of the Diploma will be strongest in the 14-16 period because post-16 there are already well established equivalent qualifications, such as BTEC National Diplomas.

As of September 2008, then, there will be a four pathway model for the 14-19 stage:

1. a general education offer of GCSE and A level;
2. apprenticeships – ‘more occupationally oriented’;
3. school and college based ‘vocational learning opportunities’, i.e. BTECs, OCR and City and Guilds qualifications;
4. the Diploma – ‘an innovative offer of general applied learning for 14-19 year olds’.

Just how the qualification market will shake down remains uncertain.

### 3.0 Apprenticeships

The Secretary of State has made it his priority in the next Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) that every young person who wants an Apprenticeship and who meets the entry requirements should be entitled to a place. This is reinforced by the Leitch recommendation to increase the number of Apprenticeships in England to 400,000 by 2020.

Apprenticeships are primarily delivered on employer premises, tend to have more emphasis on individual coaching and portfolio-building, and are of a flexible length to suit the needs of the individual apprentice. The costs of delivering an Apprenticeship are closely linked to the amount of on-site coaching and assessment involved, and so do not share the same cost structure as other options for young people, which are primarily delivered in groups. If

Apprenticeships were to be funded in the same way as other 16–18 options, that would not encourage growth in this priority programme. So for 2008/09, funding for all Apprenticeships will be allocated and calculated as detailed in the **employer-responsive model**<sup>10</sup> and paid on actual delivery in arrears.

### Young Apprenticeships

A Young Apprenticeship (YA) is a route at Key Stage 4 which allows motivated and able 14 to 16-year-olds to study for vocational qualifications not just in the classroom but in college, with training providers and in the workplace. Pupils are based in school, and follow the core National Curriculum subjects, but for two days a week (or equivalent) they also work towards nationally recognised vocational qualifications delivered by their local Young Apprenticeships Partnership. The government's commitment to increasing participation in training and

learning beyond the age of 16 means that programmes for 14-16 year olds are particularly

important. The first cohort was launched in September 2004. About 1000 students embarked on Young Apprenticeships in art and design, business administration, engineering, health and social care and the motor industry. A **Review of the equal opportunities in Young Apprenticeships** was published in 2007<sup>11</sup>.

Ministers agreed funding for a fourth cohort from September 2007. The East of England Cohort 4 resulted in a total of 993 places being funded.

A 'Pre-Apprenticeship' offer was also made available. This is based around the 'Entry to Employment' programme for young people that have potential but are not yet ready or able to enter an Apprenticeship or maybe currently disengaged and disenfranchised from learning.

**The Apprenticeship Review**<sup>12</sup> (published 28 January 2008)

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<sup>10</sup> <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-16-18-adult-learner-and-employer-responsive-funding-models.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/444.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/world\\_class\\_apprenticeships.pdf](http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/world_class_apprenticeships.pdf)

The start of 2008 saw the publication of the 'Government's Strategy for the future of Apprenticeships in England', a review jointly carried out by DIUS and DCSF. Consultation on the Apprenticeship proposals closed at the end of March.

A big expansion of Apprenticeships is needed to meet the Leitch proposals for at least 500,000 apprenticeships in the UK (400,000 in England) by 2020. Meeting this target will require the expansion of the Apprenticeship route for young people, specifically 90,000 more places for 16 – 18 year olds by 2013.

Highlights from the Review include:

- Entitlement to an Apprenticeship place for each suitably qualified young person from 2013
- Apprenticeships to be a mainstream option for 16-18 year olds
- Strengthen apprenticeships through:
  - Define the Apprenticeship experience
  - National completion certificate
  - Improve the quality of Apprenticeships
  - Integrate Apprenticeships with the rest of learning
  - Protect the Apprenticeship brand
- A new delivery system
  - Introduce a new National Apprenticeship Service (NAS):
  - Dedicated field force
  - Director of the Apprenticeship programme (appointed jointly by DIUS, DCSF and LSC)
  - Significant staffing at regional and sub-regional levels
- Boosting employer supply
  - Greater range and flexibility for Apprenticeships, e.g. employer apprenticeships
  - All Apprenticeship experience will be recognised as 'an Apprenticeship', i.e. even where public funding is not used, the experience will still be recognised and recorded
  - Direct incentive payments will be introduced
  - Support for more employer 'ownership' of Apprenticeships
  - Public sector targets and duties will be introduced
  - Promote Apprenticeships in strategic projects, e.g. 2012, Crossrail, BSF.
- Match people with jobs, via an Apprenticeship Matching Service using a national database
- Raise the profile of Apprenticeships through high profile events
- Clear progression routes to higher education
- Addressing inequality through positive action:
  - Fund more places for under-represented learners
  - Pilots to get to critical mass at certain sites
  - 'Super mentors' to support under-represented learners

- Fully enforce wage regulations set by the LSC

An obvious challenge will be to align the new NAS with other priorities, e.g. common application process, and with other qualifications.

#### 4.0 The Foundation Learning Tier (FLT)

The Foundation Learning Tier represents a significant push to tidy up the current provision at Entry Level and Level 1, and improve the experience of learners. Historically, this is neglected territory – for both 14-19 and adults – and Government believes big improvements can be made here. The aim is to have the FLT fully in place by 2010.

The [LSC National Prospectus for Progression Pathways \(December 2007\)](#)<sup>13</sup> summarises the weaknesses of current provision at Entry and Level 1 as follows:

- Too much provision leads nowhere.
- The 'gap' from Entry Level to Level 2 is too big and too complex.
- The range of qualifications in the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) is poor.
- The purpose of these qualifications is not clear.

The elements of the FLT are:

- Validated Progression Pathways;
- Enhanced IAG and learner support;
- Measuring prior achievement; and,
- Learner identification, through the Unique Learner Number (ULN).

The [GHK Summary Report into FLT trials](#)<sup>14</sup> - published in September 2007 – included the following conclusions:

##### **Support for the FLT remains very high**

- There is widespread agreement that current provision below Level 2 is in need of reform. FLT has the potential to add coherence, quality and progression to Entry and Level 1 provision and, therefore, better meet the learning and skills need of individuals and employers.

##### **Trials to date have provided limited insight**

- Within the timescales for the Trials, it has not been possible to fully test a number of key elements within the FLT. This is put down to the complexity and technical difficulties associated with developing some of these different elements, and particularly as they relate to the QCF and Validated Progression Pathways.
- A number of questions therefore remain unanswered as phased implementation proceeds.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/nat-prospectusprogressionpathways-dec07.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> [http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/FLT\\_Summary\\_Report.pdf](http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/FLT_Summary_Report.pdf)

**The relationship between the FLT and 14-19 developments remains less clear.**

- There remains confusion about how the FLT relates to 14-19 Specialised Diplomas, the new 14-19 Diploma which is available from September 2008 at Levels 1-3, and the extended learner entitlement.

**The relationship between the FLT and the QCF is critical.**

- The reason for this is that the units and qualifications that will populate a Validated Progression Pathway will need to be drawn from the QCF.

**More attention to and support for the phased implementation of the FLT, e.g. to provide**

- opportunities to examine Validated Progression Pathways in appropriate contexts;
- access to units and qualifications within the QCF (this work is currently being fast-tracked by the QCA);
- examples and case studies as soon as possible that can help the sector better understand what the FLT will mean for them in practice;
- opportunities to share experience and exchange information on issues arising from the FLT, particularly in utilising the models that have been developed for Validated Progression Pathways.

**Clear guidance is needed for stakeholders and providers on moving from the NQF to the QCF and what this means in terms of operational logistics, e.g.:**

- How to combine units, qualification and credits within Validate Progression Pathways;
- How providers understand this from an IAG point of view.

**Funding is an important issue, especially the continuity of funding of E2E into the FLT and what will be funded within the FLT, pathways or units. E.g.**

- To what extent is a funding model for the FLT required that is different to that to be developed for the QCF?
- How are additional measures included in the FLT over and above the QCF to be funded? In particular, would it be possible to fund progression pathways as opposed to volumes of units and qualifications? If not, how will the costs of additional learner support be funded?

**Understanding the implications for measuring provider performance is critical.**

- How will measuring provider performance relate to Validate Progression Pathways?
- FLT offers potential benefits in terms of enhanced partnership by broadening the offer and provision to learners.
- The 'ownership' of the learner will need to be clarified under FLT arrangements, particularly as they relate to targets and success measures. (All providers delivering Validate Progression Pathways in 2007/08 need the capacity and capability to use the Unique Learner Number (ULN) and the Learning Aim Reference (LAR) systems for all learners on QCF provision.)

**A major communications effort is needed, e.g.**

- Raise the profile of the FLT within the wider FE sector to reinforce the FLT is here to stay.
- Communicate what the FLT is and what it is hoping to achieve
- Make clear how the FLT relates to other important ongoing 14-19 developments and qualification reform.
- Undertake more consultation with training providers, and schools in particular.
- Expectations on local and regional LSC partnership teams.
- Marketing Validate Progression Pathways as a single brand across the ability range and across the full age range.

5.0 **Functional Skills**<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.qca.org.uk/qca\\_6062.aspx](http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_6062.aspx)

Functional skills are practical skills in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) that allow individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life.

They are being offered as free-standing qualifications at entry level, level 1 and level 2 during the three-year functional skills pilot that began in September 2007; this is to ensure that functional skills are readily available to the full range of learners.

Functional skills will also be constituent qualifications of new Diploma qualifications at levels 1, 2 and 3.

Assessment will be based primarily on task-based scenario questions with a limited duration and delivered in a controlled environment. The assessments will use and reinforce skills-based, problem solving learning techniques.

Functional skills qualifications (the latest incarnation of key/basic skills) are due to be implemented from 2010, following a three year pilot programme which began in September 2007; they will cover English, mathematics, and information and communication technology.

## 6.0 **Personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS)**<sup>16</sup>

The personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) cover many of the qualities and skills needed for success in learning and life. They are complementary to the functional skills of English, mathematics and ICT.

The PLTS framework embraces: social and emotional aspects of learning, employability, responsible citizenship, enquiry skills and creativity, self-direction and independent study, reflection on learning (learning to learn and assessment for learning).

The framework comprises six groups of skills:

- independent enquirers
- creative thinkers
- reflective learners
- team workers
- self-managers

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<sup>16</sup> <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/skills/plts/index.aspx>

- effective participators.

For each group of skills, a focus statement sums up the range of skills and qualities, and is accompanied by a set of outcome statements indicative of the skills, behaviours and personal qualities associated with each group.

## 7.0 The revised secondary curriculum

### What's different in the **new secondary curriculum**?<sup>17</sup>

All current National Curriculum subjects remain, but there is less prescribed factual content, giving teachers the flexibility to offer catch up provision for struggling students, especially in English and mathematics, and to stretch all students, including those with particular gifts or talents. A common format across all study programmes makes it easier for teachers to make connections between subjects and identify cross-curricular themes such as financial capability, diversity and creativity. The new approach will create time and space for teachers to develop a sharpened approach to subject study, and help students better understand what they are studying and why.

The overall effect of these changes will be to create a coherent learning environment, in which teachers can view the curriculum and education as a whole; personalise their learning to meet the needs of all students as individuals; and exercise their professional judgment in designing and delivering their subjects.

The revised programmes of study share a common format:

- Importance statement – why the subject matters and how it can contribute to the aims
- Key concepts – identifies the big ideas that underpin the subject
- Key processes – identifies the essential skills of the subject
- Range and content – outlines the breadth of subject matter from which teachers should draw to develop knowledge, concepts and skills
- Curriculum opportunities – identifies opportunities to enhance and enrich learning, including making links to the wider curriculum.

The components of the new curriculum and Key stages 3 and 4 are detailed on the new **QCA website**<sup>18</sup>.

## 8.0 **Changes to A levels**<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=37&pid=312&ctype=TEXT&ptype=Single>

<sup>18</sup> <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/subjects/index.aspx>

<sup>19</sup> [http://www.actiononaccess.org/?p=2\\_3\\_12](http://www.actiononaccess.org/?p=2_3_12)

Changes to A levels also start in September 2008 – e.g. fewer units to allow greater depth; a new A\* grade; more synoptic assessment; the extended project as a separate qualification.

Most subjects will see a reduction from six units to four (music and the sciences will remain at six units). This will help to reduce the burden of assessment

The introduction of stretch and challenge at A2 will prepare students better for higher education and employment. The emphasis on developing thinking and problem-solving skills should be more motivating for students. The changes include:

- A broad range of question types to ensure that a wide range of skills is assessed.
- A requirement for extended writing (the 'extended project') to give students the opportunity to demonstrate the full breadth and depth of their knowledge and understanding.
- Synoptic assessment that will test students' understanding of the subject as a whole and their ability to make links between different areas of the subject.

An A\* grade will be introduced to the grading of A level (not AS) to reward the most exceptional candidates. It will be awarded to students who achieve a grade A overall at A level and also achieve 90% or more on the Uniform Mark Scale across their A2 units. The first A\* award will be in 2010.

## 9.0 **Changes to GCSEs**<sup>20</sup>

Functional skills in English, maths and ICT are to be included in GCSEs, for first teaching from 2010. Candidates will need to achieve the relevant functional skill qualification at level 2 in order to be awarded grade C or above.

The range of Applied GCSEs (formerly known as GCSEs in vocational subjects) will continue to be expanded. They may be taken as part of the new Diploma or alongside other GCSEs. Pilots in Construction and the Built Environment; Hospitality and Catering; Media; and Applied PE are ongoing. All these subjects should be available for teaching by September 2009.

## 10.0 **International Baccalaureate (IB)**<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.children.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?sid=3&pid=230&ctype=TEXT&ptype=Single>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ibo.org/>

In 2006, the Prime Minister announced that the International Baccalaureate (IB) would be available in a maintained school or college in every area of the country. From September 2010, there will be at least one institution offering the IB in every local authority outside London. This will complement the roll out of Diplomas and will be built into the Diplomas Gateway process.

**News Flash.....**

However, the March 2008 Green Paper *Promoting achievement, valuing success: a strategy for 14–19 qualifications* withdrew this promise. The plan is now to treat the IB in an identical fashion to all other accredited qualifications.

The International Baccalaureate Diploma qualification is a 2 year post-16 programme of study. The curriculum contains 6 separate subject groups:

- their own language
- a second language
- a subject from the 'individuals and societies' group (e.g. history, geography, economics, philosophy)
- an arts subject
- a science subject.
- Maths or computer science

There are also three compulsory core requirements: an extended essay; Theory of Knowledge; and 'Creativity, Action, Service' (CAS), which encourages students to be involved in artistic activities, sports and community service, raising their awareness and appreciation of life outside academic study.