

i For information



Leading learning and skills

Providers Requirements for Progression Pathways

Of interest to colleges and other providers in receipt of LSC funding for delivering entry level and level 1 provision to young people and adults

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We welcome comments and feedback on this document, please email cvhQualificationsandFrameworkReform@lsc.gov.uk.

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Introduction and Purpose

These provider requirements are designed to guide colleges and other providers in the building and delivery of coherent Progression Pathways. They are also designed so that the learning experience that learners engage in is made more meaningful, supports their needs, wants and aspirations, and appropriately challenges them to develop their learning potential to progress through work and life.

In addition the provider requirements set out the Learning and Skills Council's (LSC) expectations in terms of the organisation processes and structures needed to underpin the effective delivery of Progression Pathways and make the transition from delivering existing provision at entry and level 1 (in scope for the Foundation Learning Tier) to Progression Pathways.

This document should be read in association with the *Prospectus for Progression Pathways*¹. The prospectus explains the eligibility requirements for qualifications that form part of Progression Pathways and describes the expectations of delivery, achievement and progression of learners. A *Progression Pathways catalogue* is also currently being developed; this will confirm which qualifications accredited into Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) are appropriate and eligible for inclusion within Pathways.

LSC-funded providers delivering Progression Pathways will need to identify and evidence their capacity and readiness to deliver Progression Pathways against the requirements set out in this document. The QCA has developed effective practice principles for designing and delivering the FLT 14–16 framework of learning which articulate with these LSC provider requirements. The Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) effective practice principles can be found on the QCA FLT web pages at www.qca.org.uk/FLT.

The support programme commissioned by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and delivered by the Learning and Skills Network (LSN) produced a Provider Development Framework² that enables providers to:

- review their current practice against the provider requirements;
- identify evidence to support the effectiveness and appropriateness of their current practice against the requirements;
- identify development needs to meet the requirements; and
- create a development and action plan to fulfil the requirements.

The Provider Development Framework will be used as part of any LSC's procurement process for Progression Pathways as a tool to confirm the readiness, capacity and capability of providers wishing to deliver Progression Pathways. The use of a provider-driven Development Framework approach is 'light touch' and fully aligns with moves towards a self-determining, self-regulating system.

¹ The Prospectus is available from the support and resources section of the LSC FLT website <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/flt/>

² The Provider Development Framework is available through the QIA Excellence Gateway at <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/flt>.

Requirement 1: Personalised Learning

- 1.1 Providers must demonstrate that they are working towards increased and improved personalisation of learning.**
- 1.2 Successful providers in terms of learner satisfaction are characterised by a strong commitment to learner welfare and to learner outcomes. There are high expectations of learners supported by good staff-learner relations. In particular, there is an emphasis on tailoring learning to the needs of individuals. Major improvements in learner motivation and outcomes have occurred when achievement goals are negotiated separately with individuals by course tutors on the basis of the learner's personal characteristics and attainment on entry to the course. Learners' experience of all aspects of learning is more likely to be enhanced if they are given an effective voice in the organisation and delivery of their learning.
- 1.3 The delivery of learning programmes should be personalised and designed in partnership with learners through a learner-centred approach to help them achieve their goals, ensuring that these will lead to the achievement of the qualifications identified in the Progression Pathway.
- 1.4 Providers will use Progression Pathways to design programmes which can be personalised according to the abilities and interests of individual learners in response to identified progression aspirations. Progression Pathways will enable providers to balance the personal choice and preferences of learners with the need to provide coherent, meaningful routes which support real progression.
- 1.5 Learners should be engaged appropriately in order to promote ownership, autonomy and control of their learning experience.
- 1.6 To facilitate this, the following should be considered:
 - i. using approaches to teaching and learning which are conducive to learner autonomy
 - ii. discussing with the learner what is expected of them at each stage of their programme
 - iii. encouraging the learner to assess their own learning at each stage
 - iv. actively seeking the learner's ideas and views to create a learner driven and owned curriculum
 - v. encouraging the learner to develop a conscious understanding of how they learn as well as what they learn
 - vi. providing elements of choice in the design and delivery of a programme and access to accreditation
 - vii. providing learners with regular feedback during the programme.
- 1.7 The level of ownership will be different from learner to learner and should be well managed, with recognition of, and response to, the learner's willingness to own their learning.

Requirement 2: Recognition of Achievement and Progression

- 2.1 Providers must have processes and systems to offer recognition of achievement (including prior learning and achievement) from the outset of the learner's journey, using qualifications from the QCF as specified in the Progression Pathway(s). Providers will be expected to demonstrate success for learners in their achievements, identify meaningful progression destinations, track learner achievement and onward progress of learners over time.**
- 2.2 Learning programmes must be designed to enable and support learners in achieving and progressing to level 2 or achieve at the highest level possible.
- 2.3 Recognition of achievement is a key entitlement within the QCF, and progression is a core purpose and organising principle. Progression Pathways are therefore designed to recognise learner achievements and support real progression to defined destinations. Providers must be capable of recognising learners' achievements, using qualifications specified in the Progression Pathways.
- 2.4 Learners often want access to recognition of achievement on their learning journey at a point they choose themselves. This means that providers have to be organised to record learning achievements from the outset, in order to encourage and respond to this demand. Providers must be capable of responding to individual needs and recognising individual achievements within Progression Pathways.
- 2.5 Ultimately providers will need to be able to accommodate a range of possibilities, adapting the personalised learning programme to suit individual learner need and pace, while maintaining the momentum towards achievement of the learner's goal and completion of, and progression from, the Progression Pathway(s). Being ready to recognise achievement from the outset is crucial to maintaining that momentum and focus.
- 2.6 Providers must:
- take an approach which assumes that all learners may wish to exercise a right to recognition of achievement at a chosen point on their learning journey;
 - work with the learner to record and recognise achievements from the outset of their learning journey and facilitate production of evidence that counts towards the award of credit. Transparent systems to record and recognise achievements, including through the use of accreditation of prior learning, must be in place;

- secure the necessary approval to award the credits and qualifications from the QCF specified in the Progression Pathways;
- have meaningful progression destinations in place which meet the objectives of each Progression Pathway offered; and,
- be able to track and produce evidence of learner achievement and onward progression over time.

2.7 RARPA (Recognising and Recording Progress and Achievement) is not applicable to the Foundation Learning Tier or to Progression Pathways. It is important to understand that the RARPA process has been developed as a system of recognising both anticipated and unanticipated learning outcomes arising from non-accredited programmes.

2.8 The Foundation Learning Tier is entry level and level 1 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Progression Pathways are frameworks for learning that will be built from entry level and level 1 qualifications from the Foundation Learning Tier (that is from entry level and level 1 of the QCF). The QCF is intended to be a more inclusive and flexible qualification system than the present National Qualifications System and will embrace some degree of what was previously seen as 'non accredited provision'.

2.9 Qualifications within the QCF (and therefore the Foundation Learning Tier and Progression Pathways) are accredited provision and therefore RARPA as an approach for non-accredited programmes is not currently applicable to the Foundation Learning Tier or to Progression Pathways.

2.10 RARPA however continues to be recognised by Ofsted as measure for non-accredited provision, and many providers will find it a helpful process.

Requirement 3: Coherent Progression Pathways

- 3.1 Providers must demonstrate that learners have access to a coherent integrated curriculum offer which includes vocational knowledge, skills and understanding; Functional Skills; and, Personal and Social Development skills.**
- 3.2 Vocational and subject learning: Providers should ensure that vocational learning is focussed on the development of cross-cutting employability skills, and, where appropriate for individuals, is work related in specific sector contexts. This curriculum should be delivered in realistic work environments or real work contexts in partnership with employers.
- 3.3 Functional skills for life and work: 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. These skills are essential to everyday life as well as supporting progression to further learning and employment.
- 3.4 Personal and Social Development: These are skills to help individuals become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. These generic skills, together with the Functional Skills, are essential to success in life, learning and work. There may also be personal blocks to progression for learners on Progression Pathways, personal and social development learning should be available to learners if it helps unblock such obstacles and improves their chances of sustained engagement in learning and employment.
- 3.5 The individual learning plan should be used to support embedding alongside the achievement of qualifications.
- 3.6 Teaching and learning of the Functional Skills and personal and social development aspects of Progression Pathways should be embedded within the vocational area, so that the learning is fully contextualised wherever possible.
- 3.7 Coherently designed learning programmes should be supported by high quality provider delivery to improve the learning experience of learners through a holistic approach. A range of factors will contribute to high quality teaching, delivery and learning experiences. These include:
 - planning teaching and learning activities that take account of the learner's needs, wants, aspirations, barriers and capacities
 - using a range of teaching and learning methods to stimulate and engage
 - checking the learner's understanding and providing feedback on the learning undertaken
 - using appropriate assessment techniques
 - evaluating teaching and learning activities by the learner and the provider.

Requirement 4: Effective Initial Assessment and Ongoing Review

- 4.1 **Providers must demonstrate that their processes and systems for initial assessment and ongoing review will support successful progress through the Progression Pathways. Systems and processes must adhere to the nine specified principles.**
- 4.2 Initial assessment and ongoing review is a continual learner-centred process to establish a skills profile of the learner and which Progression Pathway is most appropriate for them. Alongside the skills profile a personalised learning programme and support plan are identified with the learner, and these are then regularly reviewed and amended as the learner progresses. This process is especially important for learning at entry level and level 1 as without it, it is not possible to fully understand learners and their needs, or to plan learning and support to help them succeed.
- 4.3 The purpose of the initial assessment is to identify, understand and record:
- identifying a learner's starting point based on any previous experience and achievement
 - the learner's strengths and weaknesses
 - any potential barriers to learning and achievement that need to be addressed
 - the learner's specific needs in relation to the three content areas (vocational knowledge, skills and understanding; functional skills; and personal and social development) taking into account that learners' skills will be at different levels in each (that is, learners will have 'spiky' profiles)
 - the learner's specific additional support needs
 - an appropriate starting point for each learner, against which their progress can be measured
 - an appropriate, individual learning programme matched to the learner's interests, aspirations and identified progression route.
- 4.4 Providers should assist the learner to set realistic and challenging learning goals that match their needs, interests and aspirations, ensuring that these include the achievement of accredited units and qualifications within an appropriate Progression Pathway.
- 4.5 Learning goals should represent steps towards the achievement of the Progression Pathway and should be measurable and achievable against the baseline set by initial assessment.
- 4.6 Learning goals should be recorded in an individual learning plan owned by the learner.
- 4.7 Ongoing review should follow on from the initial assessment at agreed intervals and should be thoroughly documented by providers.

- Ongoing review should be used to actively shape the programme in response to the learner's progress and changing needs.
- Providers and learners should agree when ongoing reviews should take place and how best to conduct them.
- Reviews should refer to the initial assessment and the learner's individual learning plan.
- Reviews should encourage the learner to discuss their experience, reflect on any positive and negative aspects of the learning programme, seek guidance and advice, and consider any changes that may need to be made to the programme.
- The learner's progress and achievements, including against individual learning goals and achievement of units and qualifications, should be recorded at the end of each review.

4.8 Providers must provide evidence that demonstrates that their processes and systems for initial assessment and ongoing review meet the following principles:

- i. Be a planned, clear, consistent and well managed process, where learners understand its purposes, the contribution that different elements in the process make, and how the results will be used.
- ii. Ensure that information gained from the process is used so that there is a clear relationship between the outcomes and an individual's learning and support plan, and any targets and/or objectives.
- iii. Ensure the involvement and engagement of learners with professionals in processes which incorporate self-assessment, feedback and dialogue in order to promote ownership, self reflection and learner autonomy.
- iv. Operate as a continual process so that targets and objectives, and the learner's progress, learning and support activities, are regularly reviewed with the learner and any changes to the learning plan are mutually agreed.
- v. Look at the whole person; offer breadth and depth by using a diverse range of activities to identify and recognise the full range of achievements, skills and experiences as well as the aspirations, aptitudes, circumstances and full range of needs of all learners.
- vi. Be a positive and developmental process for the learner which promotes motivation, commitment to learning goals and targets, and a shared understanding of any criteria for assessing progress and achievements.
- vii. Provide opportunities to gather and record evidence of achievements and where appropriate to formally recognise achievements through the award of credit, including the use of the accreditation of prior learning.
- viii. Focus on how the learner learns and is assessed as well as what they are or will be learning.
- ix. Be undertaken by skilled professionals who are properly trained and supported in the range of activities and processes that support initial assessment and ongoing review.

Requirement 5: Reaching Priority Learners

- 5.1 Providers must demonstrate that they have effective strategies for reaching priority learners and motivating them to succeed.**
- 5.2 Access to Progression Pathways will be an entitlement for key groups of priority learners. Broadly speaking priority learners are identified as those adults and young people without level 2 qualifications and who would be unable to progress directly to level 2 qualifications. These may include for example people with:
- learning difficulties and disabilities (for whom lower level discrete learning programmes address those needs)
 - poor learning skills who need learning programmes to help them progress to their first full level 2, and for whom skills for life learning alone is insufficient.
- 5.3 The LSC publishes information and guidance in its *Statement of Priorities* and *Regional Commission Plans*. These documents and other supporting national and regional documents can help to identify priority learners more specifically.
- 5.4 Priority learners are not a homogenous group within the population, and therefore providers need to understand the different needs and motivations of priority groups in their locality. This understanding should be matched by knowledge and understanding of the labour market and demands and requirements of local employers.
- 5.5 Reaching priority learners requires effective and often innovative strategies. In addition to the more conventional methods these may include for example interpersonal methods, using trusted individuals and settings to reach and support learners. Partnership working can often be crucial in this context.
- 5.6 Strategies and arrangements for reaching priority learners should demonstrate how the provider:
- uses market intelligence and understanding of different segments of the target population to reach and support people to learn successfully
 - uses this knowledge and information to influence and shape provision
 - employs a detailed understanding of the labour market and requirements of local employers
 - uses innovative ways of reaching the members of the priority group(s)
 - demonstrates the ability to deliver Progression Pathways in a range of settings appropriate to the priority group(s).

Requirement 6: Partnerships

- 6.1 **Providers must show how they work in partnership with support agencies, employers and other providers to implement Progression Pathways.**
- 6.2 Partnerships are essential to successful implementation of Progression Pathways. Partnerships should address effective reach, delivery and support for learners.
- 6.3 Individual providers may find it challenging to deliver personalised and coherent Progression Pathways providing real progression opportunities for the full range of learners. Usually, partnerships that support the range of content, delivery modes and progression opportunities are needed.
- 6.4 Developing effective employer links will be important to successful delivery and progression for learners. Providers' engagement with employers should support delivery of work placements where relevant; as well as ensuring an understanding of the requirements of employers and the labour market locally.
- 6.5 Providers must also be clear about their primary role in learning, and work in partnership with other public and voluntary services and agencies as necessary to reach and support priority learners.
- 6.6 In relation to helping learners progress into supported employment, partnership working, in particular with supported employment services, is especially important in facilitating success for learners. Supported employment services specialise in working with disabled people to help them find and keep work. Supported employment services are provided by:
- voluntary sector organisations such as Mencap Pathways services
 - social services departments in some areas
 - organisations such as Remploy which deliver a number of Government funded employment programmes for disabled people.
- 6.7 All partnership arrangements should demonstrate:
- a comprehensive range of provision to meet the needs of priority learners, where each partner works to their strengths
 - evidence of clearly defined individual and mutual accountability, with the responsibility of each provider or agency clearly defined.

Requirement 7: Support for Learners

- 7.1 Providers will need to show how support for learners is used to improve access to and progression through the learning related to identified needs of learners.**
- 7.2 Support for learners includes pastoral support (mentoring, personal tutors, personal development programmes), support services, Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG). Support for learners may also include, for example, access to childcare or transport, as well as access to (through partnership and collaboration) for example, children's services, mental health services, social services, financial and housing advice services.
- 7.3 Learners should be positively supported throughout their learning programme. Providers should identify any support requirements during the initial assessment and keep these under review throughout the programme. Providing support may involve making reasonable adjustments to the programme and/or learning environment.
- 7.4 Providers are also expected to ensure learners have appropriate information about the availability, entitlement and eligibility for Learner Support Funds, including (but not limited to) Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), Adult Learning Grant and Care to Learn where appropriate and relevant.
- 7.5 Providers will be expected to show positive evidence that support for learners improves retention and progression. Where necessary, innovative approaches to offering or collaborating to provide such services will be expected.
- 7.6 Providers should hold, or be working towards an appropriate IAG accreditation, for example matrix accreditation. IAG should be connected with initial assessment and ongoing review, and embedded in the curriculum where possible. Providers will be expected to demonstrate how learners will have access to joined-up referral, monitoring and review systems and practice.

Requirement 8: Organisation and Management

8.1 Providers need to demonstrate that they have high standards within their organisation, appropriate organisational structure and effective organisational processes to implement the Progression Pathways successfully.

8.2 High standards should be evident in:

- Leadership and Management
- Workforce Development
- Resources

8.3 Leadership and management: High quality leadership and management, which demonstrates commitment to the success of learners on Progression Pathways is essential.

8.4 Effective leadership and management should include, and not be limited to:

- senior management and governing bodies demonstrating commitment to the Progression Pathways
- clear strategies to plan and manage the learner's journey and their curriculum ensuring the learning programme supports coherent Partnership Pathways
- suitable provision and effective use of physical, financial and human resources
- effective internal and external communication
- the collection and use of management information
- delivery staff demonstrating appropriate knowledge, skills and experience, with regular opportunities to update such knowledge (that is, continuing professional development)
- clear strategies to promote and monitor equality and diversity
- robust quality assurance arrangements and clear strategies to promote continuous improvement, including the sharing of best practice.

8.5 Workforce development: Providers need to demonstrate an understanding of the skills and qualities of staff needed to successfully reach priority learners and support their successful progress through Progression Pathways. They must show commitment to necessary training and development for existing staff, and to recruiting new staff where gaps and weaknesses have been identified.

8.6 Resources: Providers need to demonstrate that they have the necessary resources – accommodation, equipment, facilities – to support high quality teaching and learning for the Progression Pathways. Where relevant some resources may be shared amongst partnership members and partnership arrangements should reflect this.

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