

Diplomas pass another key milestone on road to delivering the new ground breaking qualifications

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- Advanced Diploma to be equivalent to 3.5 A Levels
- Higher Diploma to be equivalent to 7 GCSEs (A*-C)
- Schools and colleges teaching Diplomas to 14-16 year olds will get around £1000 extra per student

The value of the Government's new Diplomas as a progression route enabling pupils to get into Universities and colleges was confirmed by both UCAS and the QCA.

Schools Minister Jim Knight accepted the QCA's recommendation that the new Diplomas should be judged equivalent to 5 GCSEs grade A*-G at the foundation level, 7 GCSEs grade A*-C at the higher level and 3.5 A Levels grade A*- E at the advanced level in the achievement and attainment tables. UCAS also confirmed the tariff to be awarded to the Advanced Diploma.

Jim Knight went on to confirm an investment of a further £45 million in teacher training to support the roll out of Diplomas in 2008/09.

He also announced details of £28 million cash funding for Diplomas in 08/09, meaning schools and colleges teaching Diplomas to 14-16 year olds will receive around an extra £1,000 per Diploma student.

The LSC have also confirmed their funding arrangements for schools, colleges and other providers delivering Diplomas to 16 to 18 year olds. Funding for post 16 students will follow the same principles as that for 14-16 year olds to allow consortia to coordinate their systems across the 14-19 age group.

The new money builds on cash already invested in the system for 14-19 education over the next 3 years, including:

- £110 million so that 14-16 year olds can get hands-on practical experience in schools, colleges and the workplace;
- £15 million to ensure joint working between schools and colleges;

The first five Diplomas in construction, engineering, IT, health and creative and media will be taught to around 40,000 students in England from September this year.

Eventually, 17 Diplomas, including three new Diplomas announced earlier this year in science, languages and humanities, will be offered with the aspiration that the Diploma becomes the 'qualification of choice' for young people in future.

Schools Minister Jim Knight said:

"Diplomas are the first qualification to be developed with such a high level of input from employers and universities. QCA and UCAS are confirming these

are rigorous and challenging qualifications. Pupils can now be confident they will study valuable, first class qualifications when they take a Diploma, and universities and colleges can be assured of their quality. We have reached another important milestone in delivering the Diplomas, with the opportunity to combine theoretical and practical options that brings.

"We want Diplomas to give pupils access to the very best learning and that is why we are investing £45 million to support more teacher training plus a further £28 million to support Diploma learners aged 14-16. This is on top of the existing funding of £110 million to fund the higher costs of practical learning and £15 million to support joint working between schools and colleges".

Bill Rammell, Minister for Higher Education said:

"I am pleased that the UCAS Board has agreed the tariff rating that will be applied to the new Diplomas, aligning them clearly with other qualifications that provide access to university. The Diplomas are an exciting new set of qualifications that will help more young people make the most of their talents and potential, both in work and in higher education. They will increase the options for study that young people have by combining both theoretical and practical studies. Higher education institutions have, and will continue to take an active involvement in developing these Diplomas so we can ensure they provide sound preparation for entry to higher education including for the most demanding university courses."