

FUNDING WATCH

2009/2

6 May 2009

Funding the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT)

Introduction

The Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) is the name for the revised set of credit-based units and qualifications which will be available through the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) by 2010. The aim is to reform all provision below level 2.

The main organising structures and progression routes within the FLT are called *Progression Pathways*. These are frameworks for learning that are built up of qualifications drawn from entry level and level 1 of the QCF. While the FLT has been trialled, there have been four progression pathways. Evaluation has shown these to be inflexible, and there are moves to make these more flexible so learners can pick and mix from a wider framework. However, the funding methodology will not change.

What will the FLT replace?

FLT will replace Entry to Employment, Foundation Learning in Further Education and First Steps learning. Provision for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is within the scope of the work, and the work incorporates provision currently known as 'pre-entry'.

Adult safeguarded learning, which includes personal and community development learning, family literacy, language and numeracy, and neighbourhood learning in deprived communities, will not be replaced by FLT.

Where does the LSC want to be?

The LSC wants to ensure that the FLT Progression Pathways are the principal learning offer at entry level and level 1 for both young people and adults. The target is for 30% of all foundation learning starts to be on the FLT by 2009/10, and for all foundation learning starts to be on the FLT by 2010/11. These figures are being used for planning purposes and the LSC recognise that some centres will be able to deliver FLT sooner than others. They also recognise that come 2010/11 not all providers may be able to deliver the FLT due to, for example, a lack of relevant qualifications available on the FLT. They will deal with such instances on a case by case basis and will fund provision outside the FLT if providers have evidence to show the provision is needed. The LSC will not withdraw public funding from high take-up vocationally-related qualifications outside the FLT until appropriate alternatives are available to all young people within the FLT.

Funding the FLT

What will be funded under FLT

Progression Pathways incorporate three curriculum areas; vocational knowledge, skills & understanding, functional skills, and personal and social development learning. Learners do not have to follow every part of the programme if they do not need to. The idea is to bring learners

up to a standard, not to deliver a set pathway to each learner; they will not have to repeat what they have already done.

Does the FLT have its own funding methodology?

The FLT does not have a funding methodology of its own. It is funded just like most other LSC funded provision, i.e. through the demand-led funding methodology. This is summarised below, but the full LSC demand-led funding guidance can be found on the LSC website, <http://www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/demand-led-funding/>. Edexcel have published a simple guide to the LSC funding methodology which can be purchased here, <http://www.edexcel.com/Policies/Pages/GuidetoPost-16funding.aspx>.)

Can the funding methodology follow the flexibility of the QCF?

The QCF is flexible, but the current funding methodology is not. In order to flex up funding the LSC will have to rely on careful planning. By planning provision in discussion with providers the LSC may be able to free up funding to use in a more flexible manner. This will rely on agreements as to what the LSC is expecting centres to deliver as part of their funding allocation.

What funding models within the funding methodology will the FLT be funded through?

FLT will be funded via the 16-18 funding model, and the adult learner-responsive funding model. FLT funding does not come via the employer-responsive funding. This will have no effect on the way the FLT is delivered.

What is the funding formula?

The funding formula is as follows:

$$\begin{array}{c} \boxed{\text{SLN (Standard Learner Number)}} \\ \times \\ \boxed{\text{NFR (National Funding Rate)}} \\ \times \\ \boxed{\text{PF (Provider Factor)}} \\ + \\ \boxed{\text{ALS (Additional Learner Support)}} \\ = \\ \boxed{\text{Funding}} \end{array}$$

What are Standard Learner Numbers?

The Standard Learner Number (SLN) is a new volume of measure that replaces the National Base Rate as the first element in the new funding formula. Every enrolment has an SLN value, based on the sum of the SLNs of the qualifications taken. SLNs are either set by the LSC (listed), or determined by the actual course duration (unlisted). The LSC publishes 16-18 and adult learner-responsive SLN values as guided learning hours (glh), called SLN glh. SLN glh is converted into SLN by dividing by 450.

$$\text{SLN glh}/450 = \text{SLN}$$

What is Additional Learning Support?

Additional Learning Support (ALS) is funding for additional activities that provide direct learning support to learners. For example, it may pay for a communication support worker or additional tutor support. ALS is added as the final element in the demand-led formula.

The way ALS is allocated in 2008/09 has changed and this will impact on providers with ALS allocations and in some cases considerably. Because of this the LSC will allocate 60% of the allocation in 2008/09 using the formula, and the remaining 40% will be negotiated with the LSC.

The formulas for the 16-18 and adult learner-responsive ALS allocations are based on provider delivery in 2006/07 and are complex and different. However, both formulas are designed in such a way that the lower the prior attainment or levels of study, the higher the ALS allocation. 16-18 ALS allocations are based on point scores for English and mathematics GCSEs. Adult ALS allocations are based on previous levels of study.

What is the entitlement?

16-18 learners attract entitlement funding which is used to pay for regular tutorials and enrichment activities that are delivered in additional to the main programmes. To be eligible for entitlement funding, learners must be studying on a full-time basis as defined by the LSC. The definition of full-time is 0.75 SLN or 336 glh per year. Providers must physically claim this on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) as it won't be funded automatically.

Tools for centres

The [progression pathway catalogue](#) should be the first port of call for providers if they need to check for qualifications available in the FLT. If a provider can't find what they need they should contact QCA or the awarding organisation. Full funding details for qualifications can be found on the LSC's [Learning Aims Database](#) (LAD). If a qualification is not on the learning aims database providers should contact the LSC.

A Ready Reckoner - a spreadsheet which will help centres work out how much each pathways is worth - is currently being developed by the LSC. It will allow providers to work out if the components they wish to offer on a progression pathway can be funded, and how much funding they will attract. This should be available on the LSC website once it has been finalised and will be regularly be updated as more qualifications are accredited under the FLT.

Edexcel Funding Watches are intended to help colleagues keep up to date with national developments. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of information given.

Providers can access the LSC's Learning Aims Database which allows them to search for aims and view aim details at: <http://providers.lsc.gov.uk/LAD/>. The last word on funding lies with the LSC. Providers will be in contact with their LSC in relation to the planning and funding of their provision.