



BTEC QUALIFICATIONS AND THE 14-19 STRATEGY

In March 2008 DCSF published a consultation paper, *“Promoting achievement, valuing success: A strategy for 14-19 qualifications”*, which set out the clear intention to move towards a more streamlined and more understandable qualifications offer for young people aged 14-19 in England. Further details of these plans can be found on the DCSF website at

<http://publications.dcsf.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=CM%25207354&/>

The 14-19 strategy envisages that by 2013 the qualifications offer to young people will be delivered through four national learning routes:

- GCSE and A level
- Diplomas
- Apprenticeships
- Foundation Learning Tier

Each of the routes will offer young people choice and flexibility to build a learning programme that meets their needs and preferences, opportunities to develop core skills as well as stretch and challenge and enable progression to further learning and work. From 2013, a qualification will only be eligible for funding outside the four national routes (ie as a ‘stand-alone’) where learners’ needs cannot be met through the four national routes.

DCSF has established a new committee - the Joint Advisory Committee on Qualifications Approval (JACQA) - to advise the Secretary of State on which qualifications for pre 19 learners should be eligible for public funding. There is an explicit intention to rationalise the qualifications offer for pre 19 learners with Stand Alone qualifications (those intended to be delivered outside of the four national learning routes) only approved as eligible for public funding where there is strong evidence that they meet a need that cannot be met by qualifications within the four national routes.

DCSF has also made clear that it does not expect to cease approving public funding for existing stand alone qualifications taken by a significant number of young people, such as BTECs, before 2012 and that where evidence shows it is appropriate to withdraw particular qualifications as stand alones, that sufficient time will be given to ensure that learners and providers are not disrupted and to enable institutions to make a smooth transition to alternative qualifications within the four routes. Any decisions to withdraw particular qualifications as stand alone qualifications will not affect their delivery inside the four national routes - where they are integrated within the national routes they will continue to be eligible for public funding.

BTECs (and other VRQs) will play an important role in the future qualifications offer to young people within the national routes:

- they will continue to be an integral part of many Apprenticeship frameworks;

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- they are increasingly available as Additional and Specialist Learning within the Diploma - as of September 2009 over 50 new BTEC qualifications have been created, and approved by DDPs, specifically to provide high quality Specialist Learning for the Diploma. In addition the full range of BTEC First Certificates and National Awards are available as Additional and / or Specialist Learning in the Diploma catalogues;
- they comprise a major part of Foundation Learning;
- DCSF is currently working with LSC and other stakeholders to determine what scope there should be for young people to take vocational and other non GCSE / A level qualifications within the GCSE / A level route.

BTECs may also continue as stand alone qualifications where clear evidence of need can be demonstrated to make them eligible for public funding.

Next steps

Looking forward, Edexcel has started an evaluation of its new qualifications, including Diplomas and those BTECs which are being re-developed for first teaching from September 2010. The evaluation includes reviewing the relationship between the two sets of qualifications to establish the degree of overlap between the Principal Learning element of a particular Diploma and the relevant BTEC. Where there is a significant degree of overlap, Edexcel will monitor the success and take up of those Diplomas in order to put in place a managed transition programme for BTEC centres.

An update on the progress of the work being undertaken will be published in January 2010.