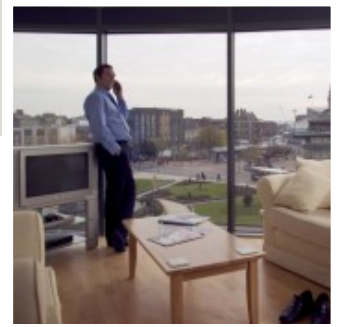
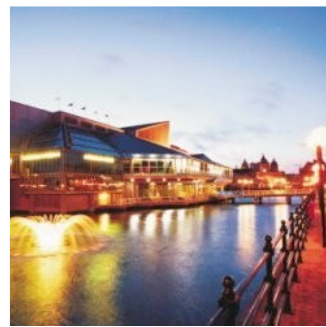


# Diplomas: What Employers Need to Know

Factsheet 18  
March 2008



## What are Diplomas?

The Diploma is a new 14 - 19 qualification designed to provide an alternative to traditional qualifications and is being billed as the most important change to the country's education system since the introduction of GCSEs in 1986. They are designed to provide young people with a mixture of practical and theoretical learning enabling them to enter the workforce with more relevant skills and a better understanding of work.

Schools Secretary, Ed Balls, indicated at the launch of the scheme that Diplomas could replace A Levels as the "qualification of choice" in England. Although A Levels won't be disappearing soon, there are no guarantees about their future after a Government review scheduled for 2013. Alan Johnson has said "Diplomas will provide the missing link - creating the mix of vocational and academic education which we've lacked for so long."

## There are four levels to the qualification

The *Foundation Diploma*: takes the same time to do as four or five GCSEs and can be started in Year 10 or above.

The *Higher Diploma*: takes the same time to do as five or six GCSEs and can be started in Year 10 or above.

The *Advanced Diploma*: takes the same time to do as three A levels and can be started in Year 12 or above.

A *Progression Diploma*: is also available, which takes broadly the same time as two A Levels. This is a smaller programme and can be combined with another qualification.

## Basic Skills

Diplomas will incorporate basic skills such as English, maths and ICT in addition to the main chosen subject. They are designed to be flexible and will allow GCSEs and A levels to be included within them. Diplomas and Apprenticeships differ in that someone who has completed an Apprenticeship will be fully skilled and competent in a particular job while Diplomas are being created to introduce young people to a sector and prepare them for further training and development.

In 2008, there will be up to 40,000 Diploma places in over 1,300 selected schools and colleges in England. The first schools and colleges will be offering Diplomas in September 2008 in Construction and the Built Environment, Creative and Media, Engineering, Information Technology, and Society, Health and Development.

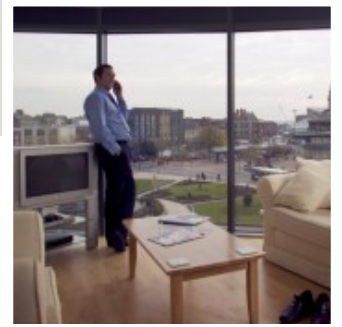
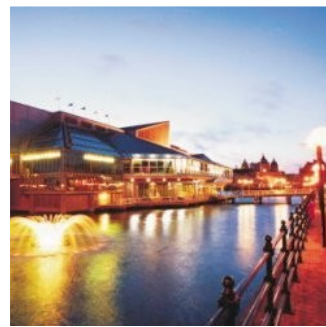
From 2009: Business, Accounting and Finance, Hair and Beauty, Land-based and Environmental, Hospitality and Catering, Manufacturing and Product Design.

From 2010: Public Services, Retail, Sport and Leisure, Travel and Tourism.

From 2011: Humanities, Science, Languages.

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### What does it mean for employers?

The Diploma is an employer-designed and supported qualification which offers a chance for employers to contribute to the education of potential employees. Nationally, diplomas have had support from several big businesses including Cisco, Microsoft, Land Rover, Vodafone, BT, airline Flybe and Network Rail and many of these companies have been actively involved in the Diploma's development. McDonald's, the fast food giant, has also won approval to offer courses which could form part of a qualification at the standard of A Levels or advanced Diplomas.

Employers should benefit from better prepared, more knowledgeable young people as employees and will have access to a more effective method recruitment for the future.

Local employers also will be asked to provide the opportunity to help young people develop work-relevant skills and an understanding of how businesses operate. Although students will be based in their own school they will get the opportunity to learn in a different setting - another school, a local college, or in the workplace. Students will spend at least ten days working with an employer.

Hull has been given permission to deliver the IT Diploma from September 2008 but three other subjects areas (Construction, Creative & Media, Engineering) were given Category 3 status meaning that Hull is not ready for September 2008 but if conditions were met they could be taught from September 2009.

### Funding

The Government has set aside £90m of central funding to help formulate the detail of the new qualifications in each area. Each successful consortium of schools and colleges, preparing for 2008, will receive £30,000 for each type of diploma they will offer, to help them train and recruit staff.

### Comments & Criticism

"The University of Hull will welcome applications from students studying the Diplomas. Tutors will assess suitability for the programme, as with all applicants, for specific required subject knowledge."

Critics have complained the focus on vocational subjects such as hair and beauty and the fact that they are to run alongside A Levels mean they could be seen as second-class qualifications. Another concern is that many schools are unlikely to have the expertise or equipment to deliver all the Diplomas so they are being developed by partnerships and will typically involve schools, colleges and employers working in collaboration. The issue of teaching across partnerships does raise its own logistical problems as students will have to travel to a variety of sites to access the practical training.