

## **Key Diploma messages for DDPs**

On 7 June the new Government announced that the final three Diplomas in Humanities, Science and Languages, originally scheduled for first teaching in September 2011, will be stopped. They will not be taught in maintained schools and colleges. This announcement does not affect Phase 1-3 Diplomas.

On 24 June Ministers announced that the Diploma entitlement will not go ahead; and that the development of the Extended Diploma will be stopped.

The Department set out details of its contribution to the £6bn savings across Government on 7 June (through the Secretary of State's letter to Ed Balls MP). This included £60m savings across the 14-19 programme. This £60m includes savings on further development and delivery of all Diploma lines, including the winding down of Phase 1-3 DDPs before the end of September.

## **DDP funding**

### **Why stop the work of the Diploma Development Partnerships (DDPs)?**

The DDPs were set up to develop the Diploma qualifications. All of the first 14 Diplomas have been developed and will be taught from September 2010 so the DDPs have achieved what they were set up to do. It is not the role of the Department to support or promote one qualification over another.

### **Is this a reflection on the performance of the DDP or the SSC?**

No – this in no way reflects on the performance or the reputation of the DDP or the Sector Skills Council. It reflects a general move by this Government to withdraw intervention from qualifications development and support.

### **What work should DDPs stop immediately? What can carry on until September?**

Since Government does not wish to promote one qualification over another, DDPs need to cease immediately all publicity and promotion work for the Diploma. However, helping admissions tutors in Higher Education to understand the knowledge and skills that a Diploma learner would bring with them to Higher Education is providing necessary information and can continue. Working with employers so that they understand the Diploma and to enable them to respond should a school approach them to engage for example with work experience could also continue.

## **Future of the Diploma**

### **Does this mean the Government no longer supports Diplomas?**

Not at all. There are 14 Diploma subjects at three levels (Foundation, Higher and Advanced) available from this September. However, it is not the role of Government to promote particular qualifications over others. These announcements do not affect existing Diploma learners or those starting Diploma courses in September. Ministers have said that they want to see

how Diplomas work, and to learn from them to improve the quality of vocational education.

**Will the Diploma have currency in five years time? Should we still recommend it to parents/learners/schools when we don't know whether it will continue to exist?**

Qualifications take a long time to establish their currency. Employers and universities will soon be able to judge for themselves whether the Diploma is a rigorous and demanding qualification as they gain more experience of Diploma students. This will be important in establishing the currency of the Diploma.

Young people currently studying for a Diploma or thinking about starting a Diploma this year should be reassured that their Diploma will continue. Ministers will, of course, keep the Diploma under review as part of their work to improve the quality of vocational education, as set out in the Coalition Agreement.

**What about learners planning to start one of the Phase 3 (or any of the) diplomas which are being taught for the first time from September?**

These announcements will not affect current Diploma learners. The first fourteen Diplomas will continue as planned in September. The Diploma Formula Grant will continue as planned in 2010/11 with no reduction in funding. The Local Delivery Support Grant has been reduced and the Department will be writing to local authorities in the next few weeks.

All Diplomas have benefitted from support over the last few years in the build up to the first teaching of these qualifications – including a programme to support the workforce to understand and prepare for the qualifications and resources and guidance. The Government are now moving away from providing guidance and support from the centre.

**Why are you dropping the Diploma Entitlement?**

We want to leave it to local areas to decide what Diplomas will best meet the needs of young people. It is not right to dictate this from the centre. We want to give schools and colleges the flexibility to respond to local demand. This will allow them to decide which qualifications they want to offer to balance their capacity against local demand.

**What will the effect be on learners?**

Dropping the Diploma entitlement will of course mean that learners will no longer have an entitlement to access all the Diploma lines. This may mean in practice that they have a more limited choice than they otherwise would. We expect schools and colleges to provide a range of qualifications so that they can meet the diverse needs of their students. The Diploma remains one of the qualifications available to them.

**What happens if consortia have already been approved to deliver lines?**

Consortia can continue to implement any of the first fourteen Diplomas which they have been approved to deliver. Phase 4 lines have been withdrawn.

**What will be the impact of stopping the entitlement in rural areas?**

Removing the entitlement means that provision of the Diploma will be left to local areas to decide through balancing capacity and demand. This may lead to limited access and range for students wanting to take a Diploma qualification, particularly in rural areas. However there is no reason why courses should not still go ahead in response to local demand and need.

**Why have you stopped the Development of the Extended Diploma?**

The extended Diploma was announced by the previous Government. We don't believe it is the role of Government to introduce unnecessary bureaucracy. The Extended Diploma would make the system more complicated with no real benefit to learners, who already have the flexibility to take additional learning alongside their Diploma.

**What is happening to Functional Skills? Is the Government withdrawing funding for promotion of all qualifications?**

Functional skills qualifications are now being accredited by Ofqual, and will be required for those doing Diploma qualifications. The Government will be making an announcement in due course about its longer term qualifications strategy.

**What will happen to the Diploma Gateway process under the new coalition government?**

Ministers have decided not to hold any more Gateway rounds in the future. After four Gateways there is a considerable amount of expertise in local authorities, schools and colleges. All local authorities have consortia approved to offer Diplomas from September 2010 (some jointly with consortia in neighbouring authorities); around 95% of schools and colleges are involved in consortia; and 74% of consortia have been approved to deliver 6 or more Diplomas by 2011. The remaining stages of Gateways 3 and 4 will run through to completion, and so those consortia which still wish to offer Diplomas from 2011 and have not yet met their conditions will need to go ahead with their autumn review.

In addition, the Government are relaxing the requirement to offer the Diploma collaboratively through consortia. Schools and colleges already work in partnership on many fronts because there are advantages in doing so, and they may decide to continue to collaborate on delivering Diplomas. But we want to open up the possibility of individual schools and colleges offering Diploma courses at a level which suits their learners without stipulating that it has to be as part of a consortium. This will allow schools and colleges to widen their offer to students, providing students with an increased range of qualifications to better suit their needs.

In removing these barriers, we hope that schools and colleges will find it easier to make decisions about which Diplomas to offer and when, to the greater benefit of their students.

## **Employer and HE engagement**

### **What do funding cuts say about employer engagement in 14-19 education as a whole? Is it still important?**

We value the contribution that employers have made to the development and delivery of the Diplomas. We expect employers to want to continue to be involved, and we welcome this involvement.

### **What is the role of employers in working with schools to teach the Diploma?**

Employers can offer work experience placements so that learners on Diplomas can fulfil the ten days work experience requirement. Locally, it is for schools and local employers, working through Education Business Partnership Organisations, to discuss how employers might be able to offer their knowledge and expertise in supporting a school when it teaches Diplomas.

### **What is happening to the Diploma Employer Champion Network? The Education and Employers Taskforce?**

Diploma Champions were recruited to promote the Diploma. We greatly value the commitment and the contribution these employers have made. However, in the context of ending government funded support for the Diploma we are looking at their future role.

The Taskforce will continue as an independent charity. The Secretary of State has said that he wants to preserve the Department's dialogue with the Taskforce going forward.

### **Should DDPs continue to work with/encourage employers to be involved in Diploma delivery from September?**

DDPs should continue to work with employers that they are currently engaged with. They would not be expected to proactively approach new employers but can continue to support employers who have expressed an interest in working with schools.

### **Can DDPs/employers continue to promote the Diploma if funding is found elsewhere?**

Employers, Sector Skills Councils, the Education and Employers' Taskforce and DDPs can of course continue to support the Diploma using their own funding and resources – it is government supported communications and support for the Diploma that will stop.

### **Can information about number of applicants to HE by Diploma line be used publicly?**

We have shared the findings of the Diploma tracking work (seeing where Diploma students are applying) with the members of our Higher Education Progression Board, which includes representatives of all the HE Mission Groups. However, this information is not for wider circulation. It is also important to note that these are provisional figures. Final figures will not be available until autumn.

### **What is the future of Diploma ITT; Will DDPs have any involvement with ITT strand 2?**

TDA will not be asking for DDP involvement with ITT strand 2 or any other workforce support. The future of Diploma ITT more widely is currently under review.

### **Workforce**

#### **What is happening to the workforce support programme, and where will the £14m cuts come from?**

£14m of savings are to be made by bringing to an end the centrally funded 14-19 support programme in its current form from the end of August 2010. Any remaining requests for support should therefore be made as soon as possible. The closure of the programme also means that the services that have been provided by the regional field forces, such as the consortium advisers and regional advisers, will also finish at the end of August.

Centre support will however continue to be available from QCDA for Diploma awarding this summer, to ensure all students who achieve a Diploma receive it on time.

#### **What are the areas where support will continue to be available?**

Support for Diploma awarding this summer will be protected, including centre support from QCDA to ensure all students who deserve a Diploma receive it on time. Some support from QCDA for exam officers will remain in the autumn term. This will cover induction training for new exam officers, those in centres offering the Diploma for the first time in September 2010, and those newly appointed to existing Diploma centres who have not previously received training in administering the Diploma. Apart from that, the National Strategies support on Functional Skills will remain in place to March 2011, subject to any Ministerial policy decisions on functional skills, and the Department is currently working with TDA and the Learning and Skills Improvement Service on the possibility of some activity that would enable the sector to support itself and would build the capacity for peer support. Schools and colleges are encouraged to take advantage of training and development opportunities that are available from other sources.

#### **What is happening to the Local Delivery Support Grant?**

A £13.2m savings was announced on 7 June as part of the Department's savings package, and revised allocations were sent to all local authorities on 24 June. We intend to pay the first instalment in July and the final instalment in January 2011.

#### **What is the future of SSAT?**

LSIS's contract with SSAT finishes at the end of August, so SSAT's involvement in any centrally-funded activity will stop then. The Learning Networks are part of this contract and funding will stop at the end of August.

### **What does the communications spending freeze mean for DDP website activity?**

The marketing and advertising freeze means that any paid for communications will only be able to continue if they meet the exemption criteria and have been approved by the Communications Group Senior Management Team at the Department for Education and, for activity over £25,000, also by the Cabinet Office Efficiency Reform Group (ERG). We will be looking to put together one exemption case for all DDP communications activity to enable DDPs to update their sites and transfer information to their host SSC servers where they are dependent on procuring external services. Assuming that all the necessary financial information is available and the total cost for all DDP communications activity is below the threshold for approval by ERG; we would hope to get a response within a week.

The marketing and advertising freeze only affects paid for activity. Therefore maintenance and updating of websites can continue internally where it is done with no external costs.

### **Apprenticeships:**

#### **Will you keep the Apprenticeship 'Offer' as part of Raising the Participation Age?**

We are still considering our approach to both these issues using the guiding principles expressed in the Coalition agreement. The Secretary of State recently addressed the National College's annual conference, setting out his vision for education from the Coalition's perspective.

Government is reviewing the need for any new legislation. Ministers will be considering the implications of implementing the Apprenticeship elements of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act, including the 'offer' and the Specification of Apprenticeship Standards in England (SASE), over the summer. We hope to be able to provide clarification once Ministers have had time to consider the options fully.

#### **Will Providers have to deliver Functional Skills as part of their Apprenticeship frameworks from September 2010?**

Ministers recently announced that Key Skills will be extended until March 2011 for use in Apprenticeship frameworks to allow providers who are not ready to deliver Functional Skills as part of their frameworks an extra six months to prepare. They'll have the choice of offering Key Skills or Functional Skills qualifications from September 2010 until March 2011.

## **YAs and YA with Diplomas**

### **What is the present position of the YA programme, and the YA with Diplomas?**

The new Government has agreed that learners expecting to start a Young Apprenticeship (YA) in September 2010 should begin their YA programmes as planned. This includes the Level 1 pilot activity.

However, Ministers do not wish to continue with the YA with Diploma pilot. Therefore there will be no new YA/Diploma starts this September (fewer than 500 pupils were due to start a YA with Diploma in September). This message has been communicated to the lead delivery partnerships affected by regional YPLA staff. The home school should work with these students to agree appropriate alternative provision. In planning terms the expectation is that the majority of these young people will continue on the standard YA model but they may choose a Diploma or a Young Apprenticeship or other qualifications.

Those already on a YA with Diploma (cohort 6) will complete their programme and have the opportunity to achieve both their Diploma and their YA.

### **When will the contracting process for the September intake be finalised?**

The process is finalised bar the YPLA issuing their LA contracts. This is a central process and YA funding is just part of it. This will be completed as soon as the YPLA is able to do so.

Queries should be directed to YPLA regional leads initially. If they cannot help resolve concerns then John Wilson at the YPLA will offer advice.

### **Why have Ministers made this decision?**

Ministers have said there are to be no new starts for the YA with Diploma programme in September 2010. This reflects concerns over the size and complexity of the programme and concerns over value for money at what is an exceptionally high cost programme - averaging £5,200 over the 2 years in top-up fees. This is not sustainable in the current climate and this decision should affect very few pupils (fewer than 500).