

## POLICY WATCH

2007/57

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### 14 - 19 policy round up for the end of the summer term 2007

Nearly the end of term and time to tidy up. The largest folder may well be labelled 14 - 19, so what latest developments should go into that?

Top priority for many people will be the Diploma specs and when they can get hold of them. Diplomas are of course being developed in three waves for starts in 2008, 9 and 10 respectively. The specs for the first wave, that's 5 Diplomas at 3 levels are currently lining up for sign off by the end of July and will gradually become available during August from respective Awarding Body websites and mail outs with title details in due course in a QCA catalogue. As promised, however, they will be available for the start of the new academic year and one year ahead of first teaching. Specs here refer to the Principal Learning components which will be presented in unit format along with guidance. Project details will be set out separately. Each Diploma Awarding Body, DAB in the trade, may present and package the programme slightly differently thus allowing for choice.

Other components, notably the Functional Skills and the Additional/Specialist Learning may be appearing separately either because in the case of the former they are being prepared for piloting or in the case of the latter are part of individual Awarding Body packages. The all important Functional Skill (FS) standards are on the QCA website. Awarding Bodies leading on the FS trials are currently working these up these up into a full spec to include the assessment regime and support materials. These will be ready for September piloting either as a stand alone qualification or embedded in appropriate GCSEs. Much of the interest here will be in the assessment approaches piloted and delivery models adopted.

Before leaving the specs, it's worth noting that consultation has just finished on the lines of learning for the next wave of Diplomas, those due to start in 2009; detailed work on the specs gets under way in the next month or so. As for the third wave, those due to start in 2010, they too are homing into view with the first meetings of Diploma Development Partnerships for these just getting under way.

Secondly, and more obliquely, what about the recent changes at a political level, what messages there? Clearly there has been some concern about the splitting up the old DfES and any possible impact on 14 - 19 developments. There are two views out on this; either it will help bring a more concentrated departmental focus, "laser like" as one Minister described it, on the needs of young people particularly with 16 - 19 funding transferring into the Dept for Children, Schools and Families and thus strengthen developments or it will distance 14 - 19 learning from wider skill and progression issues and thereby if not slow it down, at least compartmentalise it. It's too early to say at this stage which it will be even though some bloodhounds are scenting worst case scenarios. Either way, Jim Knight, who as Schools Minister over the last year has had 14 - 19 Diplomas in his in tray soldiers on with that responsibility so Ministerial responsibility at least remains constant.



More clear is the fact that in his pre Queen's speech list of legislation for the forthcoming year, outlined by Gordon Brown last week, is another Education Bill. This one includes some skills proposals but principally is to enact the Green Paper proposals on extending the learning leaving age first to 17 then 18 from 2013 and 2015 respectively. While this may not immediately hit those beaver away on 14 - 19 developments, it remains important partly because participation beyond 16/17 remains a high policy concern and partly because Diplomas are intended to be one of the main attractions for those staying on. Consultation on the proposals closed last month but the Bill appears to have gone ahead with controversial proposals for 'an enforcement process and a system of penalties' along with a spraying out of 'duties,' on parents, employers, Local Authorities and on young people themselves.

Still on the political front, the recent proposals to include a Science indicator for Key Stage 4 performance tables this year continues to cause some consternation about which particular Science qualifications will be permitted as counting. The new Dept is expected to rule shortly. Also a Science Diploma may have been ruled out at present but the 10 Year Science and Innovation Programme remains central.

Moving to funding, this has been the subject of various consultations this year, both pre and post 16. The transfer arrangements for 16 - 19 funding from the LSC to Local Authorities will take some time to sort out, perhaps 2010/11 following consultation then legislation, but some funding principles are clear and were confirmed in a statement in June. These include ensuring stability for 14 - 19 funding throughout the 2008 - 2011 spending cycle period, the use of a specific formula grant for 14 - 16 year olds taking Diplomas and the granting of discretion to Local Authorities to determine how funds are distributed. A further announcement on 14 - 16 funding is due in the next month once cost modelling is completed while details on the broader demand led funding model will be announced with the LSC Statement of Priorities this autumn.

The infrastructure side may sound as if it's been populated by strange sounding beasts of which perhaps MIAP, Managing Information Across Partners, is the most prominent but bit by bit the technical capacity to allow individual learner achievement to be captured and collated is being built. A Learner Registration Service which will assign a unique learner number (ULN) and thus allow the capture of component 'results' at an individual learner level will be rolled out from this September. 'Collect once, use many times' remains the maxim here. The National Assessment Agency (NAA) is currently sending out invitations to all Exams Officers to participate in awareness events this autumn. A formal guide is promised by Sept.

The new autumn term will also see amongst other things a significant marketing campaign around Diplomas, 14 - 19 area prospectuses in most areas and confirmation of the procedures for Gateway 2 with applications to be in by 3 December 2007.

So, as the school gates close on another busy year, how do things look on the 14 - 19 front. The recent research by YouGov for the Edge organisation neatly captures the mix of anticipation and apprehension. Elsewhere, difficult 'challenges' remain around the fit with Apprenticeships, acceptance by HE and development of the Foundation Learning Tier but plenty of help is on hand. The recent Professional Development Directory has 50 pages of checklists - time to get a bigger folder.

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