Foundation Learning

Foundation Learning in context

The 14–19 reforms

Foundation Learning is a national programme of learning for those working predominantly at Entry Level or Level 1.

It offers personalised programmes of engaging and rewarding learning focused on progression, and forms part of the government’s reform of education for 14–19-year-olds. The overarching aim of the reforms is to ensure young people will be able to thrive in today’s rapidly changing economy. This means supporting all young people to achieve their full potential, based on their aptitudes, abilities and interests.

By 2015 every young person will be entitled to education and training until they are 18. The government has invested in creating new options for young people to ensure they develop the skills they need to succeed. Foundation Learning is one of the four available pathways, alongside GCSEs and A levels (updated as part of the reforms), the Diploma and Apprenticeships (increasing in number and range). Functional skills and personal, learning and thinking skills will be embedded in all pathways.

With all this change, the right support is important for our young people. Information, advice and guidance services will be improved, and all staff in schools, colleges and other providers will have a role to play in advising learners and their parents or carers. This will ensure that young people get the most out of the reforms and make the right choices that will help them to realise their aspirations.
Foundation Learning in context
14–19 pathways

Foundation Learning is an integral part of the 14–19 reforms, with opportunities for progression on to Diplomas, Apprenticeships, GCSEs and other destinations.
Why Foundation Learning?

Some 25% of young people (approximately 150,000 each year) do not achieve Level 2 qualifications by the age of 19. Although this figure is continually improving, there is some work to do to meet the target of 90% of 19-year-olds achieving Level 2 by 2020.

Achieving Level 2 by age 19 substantially improves life chances. It not only increases employability and access to better paid jobs, but it also helps prevent social exclusion and is associated with better outcomes in a range of areas, such as health.

Foundation Learning provides schools, colleges and other providers with new and more coherent options for engaging learners working at Entry Level and Level 1, with the aim of increasing the number of young people achieving Level 2 by age 19.

Who is Foundation Learning for?

The Foundation Learning cohort is significant in both size and diversity of learner needs. Around a quarter of learners in many mainstream schools and colleges are working predominantly at Entry Level and Level 1. Learners benefiting from Foundation Learning have a very wide range of characteristics. About half of them have special educational needs. Many are at risk of not engaging. And many have ‘spiky profiles’ of attainment in different areas that will make the flexibilities of Foundation Learning particularly relevant.

How Foundation Learning works

A personalised approach

Foundation Learning students follow carefully tailored programmes, based on an initial assessment to identify their prior achievements, educational needs and future goals.

These personalised learning programmes are designed to support the progression of every learner. This may be towards a learning programme at Level 2, as part of a Diploma, GCSE or Apprenticeship programme, or it may be towards independent living or supported employment. A successful Foundation Learning programme provides an integrated and coherent learning experience, which will help the learner move towards their goal.

Both the content and duration of learning programmes are flexible, to suit individual needs. Programmes can be revised as the learner progresses, and ongoing advice, guidance and support are an integral part of Foundation Learning.

“It will create life chances and progression that we did not have before we took on board the philosophy of Foundation Learning.”

Mainstream school, deputy head
How Foundation Learning works

Learning and qualifications

Personalised learning programmes cover three areas:

- **Vocational or subject learning**, which includes both generic skills for working in a vocational context and more subject and sector specific skills.

- **Personal and social development**, covering the generic 14–19 reform element of personal, learning and thinking skills, as well as the wider personal and social needs these learners may have e.g. team building, self-development.

- **Functional Skills**, which are a key element in the 14–19 reforms. This is common to all qualification pathways, not just Foundation Learning.

The balance between each element will depend on the individual learner. For example, for someone with learning difficulties moving towards independent living, the focus may be largely on personal and social development; whereas for another learner progressing towards a Diploma, vocational learning may be a much larger element. Learning is often delivered in an integrated way with, for example, functional skills and personal and social development embedded in vocational or subject learning.

Learners’ achievements are recognised using qualifications from the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). Smaller steps of achievement are recognised more frequently, as learners build up credits at their own pace and combine them in a way that will help them to get where they want to be.

Qualifications that are eligible and appropriate to support Foundation Learning programmes are listed in the Foundation Learning qualifications catalogue at [www.qcda.gov.uk/flqcatalogue](http://www.qcda.gov.uk/flqcatalogue). Currently there are around 700 Foundation Learning qualifications in the QCF. The catalogue provides information on AAT points and qualifications by sector area and level.

Foundation Learning is designed to be inclusive, accessible and to help motivate learners. QCF qualifications include recognition of learning outcomes that may previously have been unaccredited, particularly in the area of personal and social development. Learners can benefit from ‘bite-sized’ progression, e.g. taking Level 2 units as part of a Level 1 qualification or adding units to grow a small sized qualification into one larger one.

For 14 to 16-year-old learners, Foundation Learning programmes must reflect the national curriculum, even where some provision is delivered off-site. A Foundation Learning programme may often be taken alongside GCSEs or other provision, to support progression onto a full GCSE programme or a Diploma. Where this is the case, the different learning elements are integrated as far as possible to work towards the learner’s intended destination.

Flexible and accessible delivery

“Foundation Learning includes the opportunity for all learners (including the ‘old’ pre-entry learners) to gain a nationally recognised qualification. Another benefit is students being able to achieve a qualification in small incremental gains and see more immediate rewards for their effort.”

Teacher, FE College
Frequently asked questions

What are the benefits of Foundation Learning?
Evidence suggests that successful delivery of Foundation Learning can have a range of positive impacts for learners and more widely, including:
• increased confidence, motivation and engagement
• better attendance and behaviour
• higher morale and motivation amongst practitioners involved
• increased cross-departmental or wider partnership working.

When will Foundation Learning be implemented?
All areas need to deliver some Foundation Learning for 14 to 19-year-old learners by September 2010 as a basis for full implementation. Local authorities and 14–19 Partnerships are leading this process, working with consortia and actively involving all schools, colleges and other relevant providers.

By 2010/11, all post-16 programmes at this level will be delivered as Foundation Learning. By 2011/12, the majority of schools should be involved, as the incoming Year 10 will be the first cohort with an entitlement to education or training until 17. These learners need to have the best possible Key Stage 4 experience so that they are keen to continue in further learning.

What existing provision will become part of Foundation Learning?
The Key Stage 4 Engagement programme and the Entry to Employment programme for 16-18-year-olds will both become part of Foundation Learning from 2010/11. Other local initiatives and schemes for learners at this level should also be developed to become part of Foundation Learning.

What about learners who aren’t yet ready for accredited learning?
The QCF qualifications for Foundation Learning are flexible and inclusive. They can capture softer learning outcomes that may previously have been unaccredited. Personal and social development qualifications (including units on, for example, team building or self development) may be particularly useful here. There’s no requirement for learners to be doing all three component areas of Foundation Learning throughout their programmes – initially, for some learners, a focus on one area may be more effective for re-engagement.

Can learners below Entry Level 1 do Foundation Learning?
Foundation Learning is flexible and inclusive, with no ‘pre-entry’ provision. For those who would find most Entry Level 1 qualifications provision too stretching, there are ‘Personal Progress’ qualifications, based on a set of units and a fully inclusive ten-stage continuum that starts, for example, by recognising successful ‘encounters’ for learning. Taken together, these units can cover all three components of Foundation Learning.

Do all qualifications in the Foundation Learning qualifications catalogue attract Achievement and Attainment Table (AAT) points?
All these qualifications attract AAT points and count towards other performance measures (Ofsted, School Report Card, Framework for Excellence).

How can Foundation Learning support adult learners?
The Foundation Learning Curriculum will offer a framework to help adults progress ultimately to Level 2, built on a clear assessment of individual need and underpinning LSC/SFA funded sub-Level 2 programmes.

This Curriculum identifies the mix of skills that adults need for confidence in learning, minimal occupational competence, employability and independent living. Programmes will be tailored to take account of the needs of individual learners drawing from the three main elements of Foundation Learning – functional skills, vocational training and personal and social development.
Case studies

Bridgemary Community Sports College, Hampshire (mainstream school for 11–16-year-olds)

Bridgemary Community Sports College has developed personalised learning programmes which have really improved engagement and attendance.

‘The mathematics and English are OK but I prefer the other stuff. I’ve been doing painting and decorating, bike maintenance and cooking. I was nearly permanently excluded in Year 9 but I’m doing OK now and I enjoy school much more.’

Key Stage 4 student

Learning programmes consist of vocational and personal and social development (PSD) learning, with functional skills either delivered discretely or through GCSE classes depending on the individual learner. Functional skills are further demonstrated and reinforced through the vocational and PSD learning and assessment activities. The school has also found that the flexibility of the QCF makes meaningful accreditation easier, and that this helps motivate learners and build their confidence.

“You can see some of them light up when they receive formal accreditation for their efforts so early into Key Stage 4. The credit accumulation is extremely motivating.”

Learning Director

Danum School Technology College, Doncaster (mainstream school for 11–18-year-olds) and Engage Training & Development Ltd (training provider)

Danum School Technology College has worked in partnership with a local training provider to deliver personalised learning programmes. Learners spend one day per week offsite, and appreciate the more adult environment, with a positive impact on behaviour being carried back to the school.

‘I like the way we’re treated like adults – with respect.’

Learner

The programme puts a strong emphasis on building skills for progression, ensuring that learners can see the relevance of what they are doing. After a short induction period, learners worked on PSD and functional skills in the first term, building up to start an employability qualification in the second term. Early feedback has been extremely positive, with a real impact on learners’ motivation, engagement and achievement.

‘I like PSD. It gives you skills for when you get a job in the real world.’

Learner
Case studies

Peterborough Regional College (FE college)
The college’s Foundation Learning offer is designed to support learners to progress into its own Apprenticeship programme or other Level 2 learning. Foundation Learning programmes consist of separate qualifications in functional skills, PSD and vocational learning, with a focus on hospitality and business administration, which are seen to offer students the best chances of progression. Learners also spend one day per week doing work experience, through the College’s network of employer relationships.

Using a focused approach to information, advice and guidance – a core element of Foundation Learning – staff discuss Apprenticeships and other future options earlier than usual. This has helped to raise the aspirations of learners, many of whom had poor experiences at school and had left with few qualifications.

The Surrey Foundation Learning collaborative
A diverse group of 12 special schools are working together with a mainstream school and a PRU to develop and deliver personalised programmes for 14–16-year-old learners. Mapping existing curricula and activities against qualifications available for Foundation Learning, practitioners were thrilled at the opportunities to recognise learning that was previously unaccredited.

The Abbey School also helped to develop a simple but effective individual learning plan template to support ongoing progress reviews. By making joint decisions on qualifications and liaising with 16+ providers, they have also ensured real progression opportunities for their learners, including some who may continue to work towards the same qualification but in a 16+ setting. The collaborative is also actively working to disseminate good practice to all secondary schools in the county.

Case studies provided by the LSIS Foundation Learning support website: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/foundationlearning They are based on evidence from Foundation Learning delivery in 2008–9.

Further information and support

- The 14–19 reforms area of the DCSF website includes up-to-date information about the 14–19 reforms and an overview of Foundation Learning: www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19
- The 14–19 Reforms and You booklet provides a useful overview of the reforms: www.14-19reforms.co.uk
- For overall information and support on the 14–19 reforms including Foundation Learning: www.14-19support.org
- The Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS) provides resources and support to local authorities, schools, colleges and other providers in planning and delivering Foundation Learning. This is the most comprehensive website for related information and resources on Foundation Learning: www.excellencegateway.org.uk/foundationlearning
- The Foundation Learning qualifications catalogue (also available via the LSIS website: www.qcda.gov.uk/flqcatalogue)
You can download this leaflet or order copies online at
www.teachernet.gov.uk/publications
Search using reference DCSF-01159-2009

You can also order more copies by calling 0845 60 222 60;
textphone 0845 60 555 60. Please quote reference 01159-2009LEF-EN.

For further information, see www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachingandlearning/14to19/dg

For more information about the new 14–19 curriculum, visit www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19

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