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Prospectus for Progression Pathways

Draft working version for 2008/09: August 2008

This prospectus will be of interest to:

- schools, colleges and other providers delivering entry level and level 1 to young people and adults; and
- awarding bodies, Sector Skills Councils and people and organisations involved in learning and skills at entry level and level 1.

Further information

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Contents

	Page
Executive summary	3
Purpose of the prospectus	5
Background to the Foundation Learning Tier and overview of Progression Pathways	7
The specification and delivery of Progression Pathways	12
Delivering Progression Pathways in post-16 providers	33
Delivering Progression Pathways in schools and other settings for learners aged between 14 and 16	38
The implication of Progression Pathways for awarding bodies and Sector Skills Councils	40

Executive summary

This prospectus supports the design, planning and delivery of Progression Pathways across entry level and level 1 in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). It sets out eligibility requirements for qualifications that form part of Progression Pathways and explains expectations of delivery, achievement and progression of learners.

This version of the prospectus is primarily designed to support those schools, colleges and other providers identified as deliverers of Progression Pathways in 2008/09. It is a revised working version, building on the initial draft working version published in December 2007. As before, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) welcome feedback on this document.

The prospectus is also intended to support awarding bodies in the design and development of qualifications that are eligible and appropriate for inclusion in Progression Pathways. In addition, it should help Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) understand their expected role and responsibilities in the development of Progression Pathways to recognise the importance of entry level (as appropriate) and level 1 provision in the context of Sector Qualification Strategies and Action Plans.

Progression Pathways set down the parameters for designing personalised learning programmes to support individual progression through the achievement of an appropriate combination of qualifications from entry level and level 1 of the QCF. They are supported by a 'wrap-around' of information, advice and guidance, effective initial assessment, comprehensive ongoing review and provider collaboration.

Each Progression Pathway will include three distinct components:

- vocational knowledge, skills and understanding;
- functional skills; and,
- personal and social development.

In 2008/09, the LSC and QCA will begin the phased implementation of developmental delivery of Progression Pathways. These Progression Pathways are intended to provide progression to:

- a first full level 2;
- skilled work or an Apprenticeship;,
- supported employment or independent living; or
- appropriate provision for learners aged 14–19, including a Foundation (level 1) Diploma or GCSEs.

Progression Pathways will be fully implemented across publicly funded entry level and level 1 provision by 2010. The implementation will be phased across

2008/09 and 2009/10. We expect that, over time, all learners working at entry level and level 1 will do so within the context of the Foundation Learning Tier.

Within the rest of this document, the **Purpose of the prospectus** section provides an explanation of the function of this document with the **Background to the Foundation Learning Tier and overview of Progression Pathways** complementing this by providing the operating context and environment for the Foundation Learning Tier reforms and a summary of Progression Pathways as frameworks for learning within the Foundation Learning Tier.

The specification and delivery of Progression Pathways sets out the overarching principles for Progression Pathways, with general curriculum guidance alongside a detailed specification and curriculum guidance for each of the four Progression Pathways.

The next two sections contextualise the Progression Pathways within different settings with:

- **Delivering Progression Pathways in post-16 providers** explaining the implementation of Progression Pathways in colleges, independent providers, specialist providers and third sector, voluntary and community providers in a post-16 context; and
- **Delivering Progression Pathways in schools and other settings for learners aged between 14 and 16** explaining the implementation of Progression Pathways in schools and other settings for learners aged between 14 and 16 (including Pupil Referral Units and special schools for those with special educational needs).

Finally **The implication of Progression Pathways for awarding bodies and Sector Skills Councils** details what the Foundation Learning Tier and Progression Pathways mean for sectors and awarding bodies, covering, for example, Sector Qualification Strategies and qualification developments.

Purpose of the prospectus

- 1 This prospectus supports the design, planning and delivery of Progression Pathways across entry level and level 1 in the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). It sets out eligibility requirements for qualifications that form part of Progression Pathways and explains expectations of delivery, achievement and progression of learners.
- 2 This version of the prospectus is primarily designed to support those schools, colleges and other providers identified as providers of Progression Pathways in 2008/09. It is a revised working version, building on the initial draft working version published in December 2007. As before, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (QCA) welcome feedback on this document in order to inform further refinement and revision prior to full implementation. We expect to revise it annually to take account of emerging practice and the ongoing development and implementation of the QCF. The next version of the prospectus is planned for spring 2009. It will be designed to underpin delivery in 2009/10.
- 3 The prospectus is also intended to support awarding bodies in the design and development of qualifications that are eligible and appropriate for inclusion in Progression Pathways. In addition, it should help Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) understand their expected role and responsibilities in the development of Progression Pathways and in recognising the importance of entry level (as appropriate) and level 1 provision in the context of Sector Qualification Strategies and Action Plans.
- 4 Progression Pathways set down the parameters for designing personalised learning programmes to support individual progression through the achievement of an appropriate combination of qualifications from entry level and level 1 of the QCF. However, they are not qualifications or learning programmes in themselves but can be thought of as frameworks for learning. They are supported by a 'wrap-around' of information, advice and guidance, effective initial assessment, comprehensive ongoing review and provider collaboration. For young people, Progression Pathways represent one of the four national suites of provision which will be available through the implementation of *Promoting achievement, valuing success: a strategy for 14–19 qualifications*¹.
- 5 LSC-funded providers delivering Progression Pathways will need to meet (and prove that they have met) certain requirements as set out in the LSC Provider Requirements. The QCA has developed effective practice principles for designing and delivering the FLT 14–16 framework of learning which articulate with the LSC post-16 provider requirements.

¹ The Strategy is available from <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/publications/14-19qualifications/>

The LSC provider requirements can be downloaded from the support and resources section of the LSC FLT website <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/flt/> and the QCA effective practice principles can be found on the QCA FLT web pages at www.qca.org.uk/FLT.

- 6 In order for qualifications submitted for accreditation into the QCF to be confirmed as eligible and appropriate for inclusion in a Progression Pathway, there are criteria, additional to those for accreditation, which the LSC, QCA and the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (OfQual) will expect awarding bodies to follow. SSCs also have a role and responsibilities in ensuring and approving eligible and appropriate qualifications at entry level and level 1 of the QCF, for inclusion in Progression Pathways. Information for awarding bodies can be found on page 40 and information for SSCs on page 41.

Background to the Foundation Learning Tier and overview of Progression Pathways

The Foundation Learning Tier

- 7 The LSC and the QCA are working together to reform provision below level 2. By 2010 a revised set of credit-based units and qualifications will be in place with clear progression routes through entry level and level 1 to level 2. These aim to increase participation and achievement amongst learners and help them to progress through work and life. This programme of work is known as the Foundation Learning Tier, a term which is also used to describe qualifications at entry level and level 1 within the QCF.
- 8 The Foundation Learning Tier is being developed in response to the concern that for some learners the 'gap' from entry level to level 2 is too large and too complex in terms of qualification structure, or is simply too inaccessible.
- 9 The Foundation Learning Tier is also being developed because there is a significant amount of current provision at entry level and level 1 which fails to lead to any progression and tends to trap learners in a revolving door of engagement and recurring achievement at the same level.
- 10 In addition, the Foundation Learning Tier reforms aim to:
 - improve progression through entry level and level 1 towards level 2, where learners are unable to progress direct to the level 2 threshold (and provide a mechanism to ensure that funding supports progression);
 - provide a sound foundation for employment and progression;
 - create an underpinning minimum threshold around the depth and breadth of skills; and
 - specify requirements around quality of the learning programme, including initial assessment, personalisation and provider collaboration.
- 11 Within the QCF, what we now know as 'pre-entry' will become part of an inclusive entry level 1, which will thus have no lower limit. There is, therefore, provision in this Foundation Learning Tier programme of work² for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (including learners within special schools and independent specialist colleges).
- 12 Provision within the Adult Learning Safeguard is out of the scope of the Foundation Learning Tier programme of work (the Adult Learning

² The level descriptors for the Qualifications and Credit Framework are available from www.qca.org.uk/framework

Safeguard includes family literacy language and numeracy; wider family learning; neighbourhood learning in deprived communities; and personal and community development learning). Provision within the Adult Learning Safeguard will be examined as part of the wider programme of QCF implementation. This will identify which provision outside of Sector Qualification Strategies should or may be brought within the QCF. This work is already underway.

The Progression Pathways

13 A key outcome of the Foundation Learning Tier reform is the development of Progression Pathways. Progression Pathways set down the parameters for designing personalised learning programmes to support individual progression through the achievement of an appropriate combination of qualifications from entry level and level 1 of the QCF. Each Progression Pathway will include three distinct components:

- vocational knowledge, skills and understanding;
- functional skills³; and,
- personal and social development.

14 In 2008/09, the LSC and QCA will begin the phased implementation of developmental delivery of Progression Pathways. These Progression Pathways are intended to provide progression to:

- a first full level 2;
- skilled work or an Apprenticeship;
- supported employment or independent living; or
- appropriate provision learners aged 14–19, including a Foundation (level 1) Diploma or GCSEs.

15 We expect that, over time, all learners working at entry level and level 1 will do so within the context of the Foundation Learning Tier. This is part of the Government's aspiration to move towards a more comprehensive but also more coherent qualification offer for both young people and adults. For young people, Progression Pathways will form one of the national suites of provision alongside Diplomas, GCSEs, A Levels, and apprenticeships, as described in *Promoting achievement, valuing success: a strategy for 14–19 qualifications*. For adults, Progression Pathways, and more generally the QCF, will begin the development towards a more coherent and 'joined up' offer. This will encompass Skills for Life / Functional Skills and, in time, Integrated Employment and Skills provision.

³ Functional skills are practical skills in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology (ICT) that allow individuals to work confidently, effectively and independently in life. To ensure that Functional Skills are readily available to the full range of learners, they are being offered as free-standing qualifications at entry level, level 1 and level 2 during the three-year Functional Skills pilot that began in September 2007; further information on Function Skills is available at www.qca.org.uk/functionalskills.

16 Progression Pathways will be supported by a wrap-around of:

- information, advice and guidance;
- effective initial review / assessment;
- comprehensive ongoing review; and
- collaborative delivery.

This is to ensure that the scale and volume of the components the learner will have to undertake to complete the Progression Pathway takes into account and recognises:

- their learning capacity;
- where they are in their learning journey; and
- their aspirations and needs, to ensure access to appropriate levels of achievement and progression destinations.

17 Where an individual has already achieved the appropriate threshold in one or more of the identified components of the Progression Pathway, they would only need to do what is necessary to complete the Pathway. Placing Progression Pathways within the QCF allows prior achievement to be formally acknowledged by credit that can be accumulated, and can contribute towards qualification achievement. In addition, the component structure of the Progression Pathways means that individuals do not need to undertake everything within the Progression Pathway if initial assessment and diagnosis does not require it and if they already have achieved some of the component parts.

Phased implementation of Progression Pathways

18 Progression Pathways will be fully implemented across publicly funded entry level and level 1 provision by 2010. The implementation will be phased across 2008/09 and 2009/10.

19 During 2008/09 the LSC will support approximately 200 identified providers from across the nine English regions in the developmental delivery of Progression Pathways. These Progression Pathways will need to be completely constructed from provision drawn from the QCF to fulfil the specifications for Progression Pathways and satisfy all of the provider requirements, as detailed later in this document. Over the same timescale, QCA will support approximately 120 schools and other providers working with learners aged between 14 and 16 across England in the piloting of the Progression Pathway to a Foundation Diploma or GCSEs. This will also be constructed from provision drawn from the QCF, and providers will have to fulfil QCA's effective practice principles for designing and delivering the FLT 14–16 framework of learning.

20 All providers participating in the developmental delivery of Progression Pathways in 2008/09 will benefit from a support and development

programme commissioned by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) and delivered by the Learning and Skills Network (LSN)⁴. Opportunities will also be made available through the programme to support providers preparing and planning for delivery in 2009/10.

- 21 The QIA and Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) are working together to ensure alignment and synergy between the QIA programme of provider development and support for the Foundation Learning Tier and the implementation of the LLUK *Workforce Strategy for the Further Education Sector in England, 2007–2012*⁵.
- 22 To support the development and implementation of Progression Pathways, the LSC will ensure that from 2008/09 to 2009/10 it continues to appropriately manage the mix of programmes and the balance of existing provision at entry level and level 1 to secure a breadth of provision that could potentially support Progression Pathways for adults. We will also continue to work closely with providers to identify current provision which is valuable (particularly within the context of Developmental Learning) and seek to support that provision for accreditation into the QCF.
- 23 We anticipate that delivery of Progression Pathways will increase in scale and volume by 2009/10, depending on the rate at which appropriate and eligible qualifications at entry level and level 1 are accredited into the QCF. We therefore expect to see a significant increase in the number of providers delivering Progression Pathways in 2009/10 in preparation for full implementation in 2010/11. This means we would also expect to see a corresponding reduction in current arrangements for learners at entry and level 1 in terms of the Key Stage 4 Engagement Programme, Entry to Employment, Foundation Learning in Further Education and some aspects of First Steps learning (specifically that provision which can be accredited into the QCF). The LSC's implementation strategy for the QCF will be published alongside the Annual Statement of Priorities in autumn 2008 (and will also contain further information on Foundation Learning Tier implementation).
- 24 By 2010/11 we expect that the implementation of Progression Pathways will be more or less complete (again, depending on the range and sufficiency of appropriate and eligible qualifications at entry level and level 1 being accredited into the QCF). We do, therefore, anticipate that by 2010/11 Progression Pathways and other associated curriculum reforms (such as the introduction of Diplomas and the Entry to Learning programme) will have completely replaced the current arrangements for learners at entry and level 1, as described above.

⁴ Further information and resources can be found at <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/flt>.

⁵ Lifelong Learning UK is the Sector Skills Council responsible for the professional development of all those working in community learning and development; further education; higher education; libraries, archives and information services; and work-based learning. More information and the Workforce Strategy are available at www.lifelonglearninguk.org/.

- 25 Over time, the LSC will concentrate more of the funding identified for the Foundation Learning Tier on Progression Pathways. This is in line with the LSC policy published in the *Addendum to statement of priorities: aligning public funding with priority vocational qualifications in England in 2008/09*⁶, where the LSC signalled that by 1 August 2010, public funding of provision in England would be focused on the QCF. Decisions about the public funding of qualifications which fall outside of Progression Pathways will be based on clear criteria, including the extent to which Progression Pathways are able to meet the needs of all learners working at entry level and level 1 of the QCF. These decisions and criteria will be taken forward through the developing arrangements for the pre- and post-19 sectors after the implementation of Machinery of Government⁷ changes. The Government's qualifications strategy for learners aged 14–19, *Promoting achievement and valuing success*, identifies the role of the Joint Advisory Committee for Qualification Approval with regard to qualification approval outside of the national suites available for young people. It is anticipated that the Young People's Learning Agency and the Skills Funding Agency will work closely together to arrive at a consistent and transparent approach to the public funding of qualifications for young people and adults which may fall outside Progression Pathways.
- 26 The *Prospectus for Progression Pathways* is a working version for 2008/09. The document will be further developed, refined and articulated through consultation with stakeholders, partners, awarding bodies and providers, both those working with learners aged 14–19 and those working with learners over the age of 19. Providers within the QIA support and development programme have already been working with, and are responding to some of the information in this prospectus.

⁶ The addendum, and the subsequent update, is available from <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvgrp/support/>.

⁷ More information on the Machinery of Government changes is available at <http://www.number10.gov.uk/output/Page12164.asp> and <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/furthereducation/>

The specification and delivery of Progression Pathways

Overarching principles

- 27 The LSC will own Progression Pathways⁸ and determine the title and number of Pathways. Working with QCA, the LSC will also determine the specifications of each Progression Pathway. Specifications will detail the minimum requirements in terms of level, credit and content, and will provide the basis for confirming qualifications as eligible and appropriate for inclusion within Progression Pathways.
- 28 For qualifications to be confirmed eligible for inclusion within a Progression Pathway, awarding bodies will have to provide specific information, additional to that required for accreditation, which will provide evidence that the qualification fits the minimum requirements and purpose of the Progression Pathway. This will be through the web-based accreditation (WBA) process⁹ for the QCF. QCA and Ofqual will have responsibility for confirming which qualifications fall into which Progression Pathway and will work with the LSC to ensure there is a robust process for confirming and flagging qualifications accredited into QCF as appropriate and eligible for inclusion within Pathways. The QCA will work with the LSC to establish a Progression Pathways 'catalogue' to enable providers and others to access information on the qualifications eligible to be within Progression Pathways. The LSC will oversee the process for monitoring and sampling the packages of provision within Progression Pathways to ensure conformity to criteria.
- 29 Progression Pathways must be built using qualifications from the QCF¹⁰ that are confirmed as eligible and appropriate for inclusion within Progression Pathways.
- 30 A Progression Pathway is a combination of appropriate qualifications drawn from entry level and level 1 of the QCF and, as such, may be regarded as a framework for learning. For learners aged 14–19, it is also one of the four national suites of provision. A Progression Pathway is not a qualification or learning programme in itself. There is no achievement or certification associated with the completion of a Progression Pathway.
- 31 Across all Progression Pathways, the appropriate development of an individual's employability skills is implicit, not least through the deliberate inclusion of vocational qualifications. Successful achievement of these help equip learners with the knowledge, skills and/or competence directly relevant to work or employment. They also provide a range of

⁸ With the exception of 14–19, which will be developed and owned by QCA.

⁹ Please see http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_4222.aspx for more information.

¹⁰ The technical specifications for the QCF and other related information can be found at www.qca.org.uk/framework.

sector-related knowledge, skills and capabilities that serve as a pre-entry qualification for preparation for employability in that sector¹¹.

- 32 In some circumstances, some learners may require some engagement provision prior to committing to or commencing the formal learning required for a Progression Pathway. In this respect, a short engagement programme, containing some units from an identified qualification within a particular Progression Pathway, may be appropriate. Any engagement programme must contain the facility for the learner to accumulate some credit towards the Progression Pathway onto which they will progress.
- 33 In identifying four Progression Pathways, it is important to state that, for some learners, progression may be across Progression Pathways and that the Progression Pathways themselves share a degree of commonality and interdependencies to facilitate this. Although Progression Pathways must provide structure for the individual, the inherent flexibility of the technical specifications of the QCF must be utilised where appropriate to take account of learners who seek to start one Progression Pathway but then move across to another.
- 34 Horizontal progression and accumulation of accredited achievement for small steps of learning will be important for some learners for whom vertical progression, including to level 2, may not be appropriate. However, we would expect the majority of learners to progress to level 2. The LSC would only expect to fund horizontal progression:
- where a learner begins on one Progression Pathway, accumulates achievement but decides that they should be on another Progression Pathway. However, we would expect, given the emphasis on effective information, advice and guidance, and robust initial assessment, that such circumstances would be rare. Furthermore, where this did occur we would expect it to occur with individual learners and not whole cohorts of learners;
 - where we must support the relatively small number of learners for whom vertical progression is not a reality. This is in line with emerging adult policy and Progression through Partnership. These learners may either leave with achievement at their potential or seek horizontal progression.
- 35 To ensure there is opportunity for learner progression, qualifications within Progression Pathways will need to make use of the full flexibilities of the QCF. They should also offer the opportunity to achieve at a higher or lower level than the overall qualification where possible and appropriate. Within some Progression Pathways, it is possible that some level 2 units achieved will map against the component qualifications of the full level 2 offer. The credit achieved should, therefore, be in a proportionate relationship to the credit value of the destination towards

¹¹ Taken from the definition of vocational qualifications as agreed by the UK VQ Reform Programme Board.

which the learner is progressing. Where the qualification is part of the Progression Pathway to skilled work or an Apprenticeship the expectation is that, where possible and appropriate, it will include units towards QCF qualifications at level 2 within the destination Apprenticeship framework. For example, some units in the vocational qualification in the Progression Pathway to skilled work might also appear in the Technical Certificate in the destination Apprenticeship framework.

36 Progression Pathways cover the three curriculum areas of:

- vocational knowledge, skills and understanding
- Functional Skills; and
- personal and social development skills.

These should be combined to fulfil the minimum requirements as specified for each Progression Pathway later in this document. The weighting and combination of these three areas will depend on the requirements of the Progression Pathway and the learner's:

- aims and aspirations;
- prior achievement or attainment;
- starting point; and
- learning capacity.

Where learners have already achieved the necessary threshold of achievement in one of these strands, we would not expect the individual to repeat that learning. However, they might seek achievement at a higher level or simply seek to achieve enough to complete the Progression Pathway.

- 37 English, Mathematics and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills are essential components of Progression Pathways. Currently these skills are only accredited within the QCF as part of the Functional Skills qualification, and Functional Skills are, therefore, a required element of Progression Pathways. As such, and given that 2009/10 will be the first year when delivery of Progression Pathways becomes an established part of mainstream provision, Progression Pathways will form part of the transition between existing arrangements and Functional Skills. This also ensures that Progression Pathways are only built from QCF provision.
- 38 Where a learner does not have an appropriate English, mathematics or ICT qualification they must achieve the relevant Functional Skills qualification as part of their Progression Pathway.
- 39 Learners are not expected to achieve multiple qualifications in the same Functional Skills area at different levels within a Progression Pathway. Therefore, effective initial assessment will be required to ensure that

learners are put into the correct level to enable stretch and promote progression.

- 40 English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications from within the QCF might be eligible for inclusion within Progression Pathways within the LSC's existing funding eligibility restrictions. We anticipate that by 2010 there will be a sufficient range and depth of ESOL provision accredited within the QCF to support Progression Pathways.
- 41 In identifying the personal and social development aspects of an individual learner's Progression Pathway, consideration must be given to the full range of personal and social development learning. This includes personal/interpersonal skills, and skills relating to the wider community (such as citizenship or rights and responsibilities). This needs to be balanced with any vocational learning and the focus on the best choices to achieve progression¹².

General curriculum guidance

- 42 Eligible and appropriate QCF qualifications for each Progression Pathway are listed in the Progression Pathways Qualifications Catalogue.
- 43 Although all Progression Pathways will contain elements of vocational learning, Functional Skills and personal and social development, and there are standard minimum qualification and credit requirements for each of the four Progression Pathways, there is a great deal of flexibility about how these requirements can be met. Within each Progression Pathway, programmes will differ according to the learner's planned destination and their starting point, as well as their strengths and weaknesses, interests and aspirations. Local and regional differences in relation to facilities, resources, job opportunities and skills needs are also likely to play a part in programme design.
- 44 Programmes both for individual learners and groups of learners are likely to differ in terms of:
 - length;
 - content;
 - context or setting;
 - weighting of the different components;
 - number of credits;
 - range of credits at different levels; and

¹² The Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills framework (for further information see http://www.qca.org.uk/qca_13476.aspx) covers the same area of skills as Personal and Social Development. As part of the phased implementation of Progression Pathways, we will be moving towards using one framework (PLTS) by 2010/11, ensuring that it is appropriate for both young people and adult learners.

- qualifications used to recognise achievements.
- 45 The learner's starting point and planned destination will be key determining factors in designing their Progression Pathway programme. Providers will need to offer a programme which will equip the learner with the necessary skills, knowledge and understanding to allow them to progress from their starting point to their planned destination. They should then select QCF qualifications from the catalogue which will allow them to recognise and gain formal accreditation for the learner's achievements in relation to their programme.
- 46 Returning to the list of variables above, some learners will need to take a longer period of time than others, due to a lower level of existing skills or a more complex set of barriers to learning which will take time to dismantle or address. Some learners (including some of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) will simply learn at a different speed than others.
- 47 What the learner needs to know, understand or be able to do will dictate the *content* of the Progression Pathway. The content will vary in accordance with the planned destination (for example, according to the different demands of the jobs for which they are aiming or the entry requirements of particular Apprenticeship frameworks on the Progression Pathway to skilled work). They will also vary according to starting points. Some learners aiming for independent living, for example, may need to acquire the skills to travel independently; others may already have these skills and need to focus on aspects of home care.
- 48 *Contexts* for learning will also vary according to learners' interests and aspirations; for example, many learners across Progression Pathways will need to develop employability skills. For some learners it might be appropriate to deliver these largely through a work placement; for others a classroom setting might be needed, especially initially. The same skills could be developed through different sectors. For learners who know the sector that they want to enter, the programme might be focussed on a single sector. For those who are less certain, employability skills might be developed through the exploration of a range of sectors.
- 49 Learners will need different emphases to their programme, with the *balance of the three components* (that is the vocational learning, Functional Skills and personal and social development) varying according to prior achievement and learning needs. For example, a learner who has already achieved a Functional Skills qualification in ICT, or a recognised equivalent, will not necessarily need to include any further ICT in their programme. Where significant difficulties with social skills have been identified, a large proportion of the learner's programme may be taken up with personal and social development content, and the

number of credits they achieve may end up exceeding the minimum requirement for personal and social development.

- 50 It is important to remember that the minimum requirements are just that. Where it is appropriate to exceed them in terms of volume or level, providers should design programmes that incorporate either a larger *number of credits* or credits at a higher level than the specified minimum. For example, a learner who has only just begun to consider supported employment as a realistic goal may need to acquire a much greater range of employability skills than a learner whose learning experiences have already been tailored to this end over several years.
- 51 Many learners will bring with them relevant knowledge, skills and understanding that have not been formally accredited through qualifications. Every opportunity must be taken through Recognising Prior Learning (RPL) procedures to recognise this learning through QCF units and qualifications and to ensure that the learner is awarded the credits to which they are entitled. This may mean a learner taking the associated assessment for one or more units without needing to undertake the related learning or gathering evidence to show that they have already met the learning outcomes for one or more units of a qualification within their Progression Pathway programme. For a learner in these circumstances, their programme may be shorter than average. As the QCF becomes more widely used, it is likely that some learners will have already achieved some relevant units before they enter their Progression Pathway programme. They will be able to bring the credits for these units forward and hence their Progression Pathway programme might contain fewer than the minimum requirements.
- 52 Alternatively, they could decide to take units at a higher level in order to extend their learning. It is important and motivating for learners, where possible, to build on existing strengths rather than simply address deficits. A learner who is particularly confident in relation to ICT, for example, might take a level 2 Functional Skills ICT qualification, rather than the required minimum level. Similarly, where learners have a very low starting point (for example in some aspects of personal and social development), it might be appropriate to include a range of credits at entry level 1 or entry level 2.
- 53 Because of the varied nature of learner profiles, often particularly marked amongst some of the target groups for Progression Pathways, learners are likely to achieve credits at a range of levels. It will be important for those aiming to progress to level 2, and who are capable of doing so, to achieve some aspects of their programme at level 2 to ease their transition to the next level. For example, adults aiming for their first full level 2 qualification may be able to incorporate in their programme level 2 units that appear in the rules of combination for both a level 1 qualification and the related full level 2 qualification.

- 54 The qualifications selected from the catalogue will vary, as providers will have chosen those that best match the needs of the learner or group of learners. The QCF allows qualifications to be designed in such a way that providers will be able to use them flexibly to meet a range of differing needs. Some qualifications contain units at more than one level within their rules of combination, allowing providers to use a single qualification for learners working at entry level and level 1. Rules of combination are being designed, where appropriate, to allow for a great deal of learner choice. For example, there are extensive optional suites from which learners can select units at an appropriate level and with suitable content to match their learning needs. Some awarding bodies are developing suites of qualifications where all the units for the award (1–12 credits) sit within the rules of combination for the corresponding certificate (13–36 credits), and the certificate then sits within the diploma in the same way. This means that it might be possible for some learners in a group to aim for the award while others work towards the certificate. Over time, awarding bodies are likely to take further advantage of the flexibilities afforded by the QCF.

The Progression Pathways

The Progression Pathway to a first full level 2 (in the QCF)¹³

- 55 This Progression Pathway has been designed to provide the basis for progression to level 2 for those adults who would be unable to progress directly to a first full level 2. The target group is likely to include adults with no or a few low-level qualifications, those who have been out of formal learning for some years and those who have been out of employment or are in employment with very limited opportunities to train or have their training recognised. We expect that on successful completion of the Progression Pathway, learners will be ready to progress to a relevant first full level 2 qualification.
- 56 For a small number of learners, the Progression Pathway to a full level 2 might end with progression into skilled work. Here, the full level 2 would be offered as part of the on the job training, perhaps as part of Train to Gain.

Minimum qualification and credit requirements to complete the Progression Pathway

All qualifications must be selected from the *Progression Pathways qualifications catalogue*.

¹³ Ministers are currently agreeing the redefinition of a full level 2 in the context of the QCF. We propose to trial the new definition until 2010. The proposal is that a full level 2 should be a 'certificate' or 'diploma' in the QCF, as determined by SSCs and agreed with the LSC. We propose to implement the new definition of full level 2 between August 2008 and July 2010, during which period the LSC will monitor and evaluate delivery to inform the final decision.

- A level 1 vocational award or certificate (vocational qualifications will include the potential for learners to achieve some level 2 units within their rules of combination)¹⁴
 - Four credits of personal and social development skills
 - Functional Skills in ICT at least at entry level 2 (5 credits)
 - Functional Skills in Maths at least at entry level 2 (5 credits)
 - Functional Skills in English at least at entry level 3 (5 credits).
- 57 The levels for the achievement of Functional Skills represent the level below the standard benchmark in a broad level 2 offer.
- 58 The achievement of credits in personal and social development may be embedded within other qualifications, as appropriate.
- 59 The focus of the vocational qualification must be the development of vocational knowledge, skills and understanding, which includes developing cross-cutting employability skills.
- 60 The size of the vocational qualification needed to facilitate progression to a first full level 2 will depend on the nature of the level 2 qualification the learner is planning to progress towards. This will vary from sector to sector. A full level 2 is defined as a 'certificate' or 'diploma' in the QCF as determined by the appropriate SSCs and agreed with the LSC. We expect that where an SSC identifies a certificate as the full level 2 qualification for their sector, the vocational qualification selected for the Progression Pathway will normally be an award. Where the full level 2 qualification is a diploma, the vocational qualification for the Progression Pathway will normally be a certificate. In time, it is likely that SSCs will specify the appropriate vocational qualifications to enable progression into specific occupations. When and where such qualifications have been identified, learners will be expected to include these in their Progression Pathway programmes, as appropriate.

Curriculum guidance

- 61 The two key variants in the design of personalised programmes for this Progression Pathway will be the full level 2 qualification towards which the learner is aiming and their starting point. Adults entering this Progression Pathway are likely to have had very diverse previous experiences and opportunities. They will, therefore, be coming to the programme with highly individual skill sets and learning needs. Their ability to engage with formal learning will also be variable. Consequently, the time they take to complete programmes (even those of a very similar size) may be very different.

¹⁴ For the first year of the phased implementation (2008/9), it will not be a requirement that the level 1 qualifications to include level 2 units but it will be thereafter.

- 62 It will be essential to conduct careful and thorough initial assessment for learners at the start of their programme to identify just what they do bring with them. Although it may be relatively easy to determine levels of learning required for learners who have recent experience of education and training (for example, a learner with a basic skills literacy qualification at entry level 1 might be placed on an entry level 2 Functional Skills course), where learners have no qualifications and are not familiar with the concept of NQF or QCF levels, identifying an appropriate level may take more time. Once an initial decision has been made, closer monitoring of progress might be needed.
- 63 For learners who do have some qualifications, there will be a need to identify any equivalents within the QCF minimum requirements, to ensure that learners are not repeating learning for which they already have accreditation. In this case, exemptions can be made. It is likely that a considerable number of learners will bring with them relevant knowledge, skills and understanding that have not been formally accredited. Every opportunity must be taken through RPL procedures to recognise learning through QCF units and qualifications and to ensure that the learner is awarded the associated credits. This may mean a learner taking the associated assessment for one or more units without needing to undertake the related learning or gathering evidence to show that they have already met the learning outcomes for one or more units of a qualification within their Progression Pathway programme. For a learner in these circumstances, their programme may be shorter than average.
- 64 Programmes will also vary, both in size and content, according to the nature of the level 2 qualification towards which the learner wishes to progress. It is possible that some learners will not be absolutely clear at the start of the programme where they are headed. Time should be spent with these learners to help them identify a suitable sector and to understand the requirements of the associated level 2 qualification. This exploratory activity (which may also be diagnostic) might be used as a context for developing the personal and social development skills required for the Progression Pathway. It might also be used to acquire some cross-cutting employability skills, which should be embedded in all programmes.
- 65 Once the destination qualification has been identified, a programme can be designed which will help the learners progress to that qualification from their individual starting points. Where the level 2 qualification is a diploma (that is more than 37 credits), it is expected that the chosen vocational qualification should normally be a certificate (that is between 13 and 36 credits) to allow the learner to develop the range of knowledge, skills and understanding needed to progress to level 2. Where the level 2 qualification is a certificate, the learner will normally choose an award (that is 12 credits or fewer). Where the learners are

capable of doing so, they should include level 2 units within their level 1 qualification in order to ease the transition between levels.

- 66 The choice of personal and social development skills for inclusion in the programme will be highly individualised. A wide range of different skills can be integrated into the main body of the programme, with each learner following a slightly different 'menu' based on identified need. For example, some learners may need to focus more on skills relating to working with other people (for example communication and team work) while others might need to focus on skills relating to organising their own learning. In some cases, the sector to which the learner is seeking to progress, or in which they intend to develop their career, will have a bearing on their choice of personal and social development skills.
- 67 Although there might be a need for some discrete teaching and learning in relation to Functional Skills, it is expected that much of it will be embedded in the vocational element of the programme. Learners may take each of the three Functional Skills at different levels, provided they meet the minimum requirements in relation to level. Their starting point, ability and planned destination will dictate which level would be most suitable. Learners should be encouraged to take the qualifications at the highest level at which they are capable of succeeding.
- 68 It is the expectation that providers will also spend some time supporting the learners to find the appropriate training (and provider) for further progression once they have completed the Progression Pathway.

The Progression Pathway to skilled work or an Apprenticeship

- 69 This Progression Pathway has been designed to help young people aged between 16 and 18 and adult learners aged 19 and over to progress into sustainable employment. The jobs to which the learners progress should ideally be jobs with training, including Apprenticeships. By 2013 when all young people up to the age of 18 will need to be in education or training (including jobs with training) as a result of Raising the Participation Age legislation, it is likely that the destination for this Progression Pathway will be redefined in line with publicly agreed national definitions. For some adults and young people, however, it may initially be that the preferred option is progression into employment. In such cases, the LSC expects providers to continue to work with the individual to ensure appropriate access to on-the-job training opportunities, including possibly an Apprenticeship in due course.
- 70 The Progression Pathway is mainly intended for learners working predominantly at level 1, although it may also be suitable for some learners working at entry level. For these learners, the achievement of entry level qualifications within this Progression Pathway should

generally be seen as a ‘staging post’, with an expectation that at a later point they will move on to level 1 achievement and from there to level 2. There will be a small number of learners who are not capable of such progression. For these learners, an entry level or level 1 destination would be appropriate. The Progression Pathway will also include the potential for the inclusion of level 2 achievement, where appropriate.

- 71 Learners for whom this Progression Pathway will be suitable will range from those intending to progress to an Apprenticeship in a particular sector to those who want to move into employment but are not necessarily sure about the nature of the job role or the sector in which they would like to work. The flexibility of the Progression Pathway will allow appropriate programmes to be designed and suitable qualifications to be selected for all the learners covered by this range.

Minimum qualification and credit requirements to complete the Progression Pathway

All qualifications must be selected from the *Progression Pathways qualifications catalogue*.

- A single vocational certificate or a combination of vocational awards and/or certificates which together amount to at least 13 credits (level 1 qualifications will include the potential for learners to achieve some level 2 units within their rules of combination)¹⁵
 - four credits of personal and social development learning
 - Functional Skills in ICT (5 credits)
 - Functional Skills in Maths (5 credits)
 - Functional Skills in English (5 credits).
- 72 The achievement of the personal and social development credits may be embedded within other qualifications, as appropriate.
- 73 The levels of achievement for the Functional Skills will be based on the planned destination as well as the learner’s starting point.

Curriculum guidance

- 74 The learner’s starting point and planned destination will be key to the design of their programme and to the choice of supporting qualifications. Programmes should take account of learning needs in relation to the planned destination but also build on existing strengths, as identified through initial assessment. This will mean that programmes will vary in

¹⁵ For the first year of the phased implementation (2008/9), it will not be a requirement that the level 1 qualification include level 2 units. But this will be a requirement thereafter.

length, content, weighting of the different components, number of credits and qualifications selected.

- 75 It is important to recognise that the qualification and credit requirements for the Progression Pathway are *minimum* requirements for achievement. Where some of these requirements have already been met (for example, a learner has already achieved level 1 Functional Skills in English), they will not need to repeat that learning. Equally where initial assessment has revealed a significant deficit in a particular area, then it may be appropriate to include more credits than the minimum requirement (for example, where a provider identifies a lack of social skills as the key barrier to gaining employment, the personal and social development component of their programme is likely to exceed four credits quite considerably).

Apprenticeships

- 76 Learners wishing to progress to a specific Apprenticeship will need a programme which will help them to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding to prepare them for an Apprenticeship. This includes relevant employment rights and responsibilities. For these learners, it is likely that sector-specific learning will make up a significant proportion of their programme.
- 77 The qualifications selected should align with the entry requirements of the specific Apprenticeship framework towards which the learner wants to progress. They should also give the learner the opportunity to begin to accumulate credit towards the vocational component of the Apprenticeship framework where it exists within the QCF. There is, however, no requirement that they should mirror precisely the Apprenticeship framework itself. It may be appropriate to include awards from two related sectors (for example, construction and engineering for a construction Apprenticeship), perhaps supplemented by a further award which will recognise the achievement of relevant employability skills.
- 78 Some learners may have identified that they wish to progress to an Apprenticeship but have yet to decide on a sector. It may then be appropriate to spend some time at the beginning of the programme exploring several sectors in order to help the learners make an informed decision. Learners may use this exploration activity to develop general employability skills, personal and social skills, Functional Skills and/or sector-specific learning. The achievement of any of these can be captured through relevant QCF qualifications.

Other skilled work

- 79 Some learners wishing to progress into employment (preferably with training) but not to an Apprenticeship will know the sector and perhaps even the job role(s) towards which they would like to progress. For these

learners, their programme will need to help them gain the necessary entry requirements for employment in the chosen sector.

- 80 It is not usual for employers in any sector to require particular qualifications of job applicants at this level. But where this is the case, these qualifications should be included if learners have not already achieved them. More commonly, employers will identify necessary skills, experiences and aptitudes which are then reflected in job descriptions and person specifications. Providers should select qualifications which will allow these to be formally recognised and accredited. It may be appropriate to develop the skills in a sector-specific context or across several sectors. Some of the sector-specific learning might be captured in a sector-specific qualification.
- 81 Other learners may be far less focussed at the beginning of their programme. Their aspirations may be no more defined than 'I want to get a job'. For these learners, as with those who do not know what sort of job or employment sector they would wish to move on to, it might be appropriate to spend some time exploring different options following initial assessment. As described above, the wide range of possible achievements gained through this activity can be recognised through QCF qualifications. Once the learner has identified a suitable sector (or sectors), some sector-specific learning can be introduced, and a corresponding qualification selected from the catalogue. Vocational qualifications available within this Progression Pathway will include those based around a 'core and options' approach, allowing learners to take a variety of vocational 'taster' units.
- 82 We expect that providers will guide learners in their choice of job, helping them to find jobs with training wherever possible. They should also offer some form of aftercare to learners entering employment. They should be following up to check if any promised training, whether formal or informal, is being delivered and to encourage learners who have entered jobs with little or no training to seek out further opportunities, including Apprenticeships.

Using entry level qualifications

- 83 For those learners working predominantly at entry level and considering their achievement at this level as a staging post, it will clearly be appropriate for the majority of the qualifications selected from the catalogue to be at entry level. On the whole, these qualifications should be at entry level 3. Where the learner has particular strengths, however, these should be built on at a higher level (for example a learner working mainly at entry level may be able to gain Functional Skills in ICT at level 1). As with all learners on the programme, their planned destination will influence their choice of qualification content and level.

- 84 We expect that the vocational qualifications selected for learners aiming for an Apprenticeship will be mainly level 1 awards or certificates. It may be appropriate, however, for one award to be at entry level, depending on the combination of qualifications taken and the Apprenticeship framework entry requirements. Entry level qualifications may also be appropriate for recognising the personal and social development and Functional Skills gained through the programme. But, again, levels should reflect the entry requirements of the destination Apprenticeship.

The Progression Pathway to supported employment or independent living

- 85 This Progression Pathway has been designed for young people aged between 16 and 18 and adult learners aged 19 years and over who wish to move to supported employment or who are seeking to increase their levels of independence. We anticipate that the majority of learners following the Progression Pathway will have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. It is not, however, the only Progression Pathway suitable for such learners. Some learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will access other Progression Pathways or provision above level 2. Providers should not place learners on this Progression Pathway simply because they have a learning difficulty or disability – the Pathway is only suitable for those learners for whom supported employment or increased independence are appropriate destinations. Because these two aims are rarely mutually exclusive, the two destinations are presented within a single Progression Pathway, with slightly differing requirements.
- 86 The Progression Pathway will be suitable for:
- learners (in most cases with a disability, including a learning disability) who would benefit from supported employment services, that is help in finding employment and ongoing support once they are in a job. Jobs would normally be ‘a real job in the community’ rather than sheltered employment;
 - learners seeking to develop their independent living skills, where ‘independent living’ is defined in line with the Disability Rights Commission’s definition of the term as referring to “all disabled people having the same choice, control and freedom as any other citizen – at home, at work, and as members of the community. This does not necessarily mean disabled people ‘doing everything for themselves’, but it does mean that any practical assistance people need should be based on their own choices and aspirations.”
- 87 We expect that the majority of learners following this Progression Pathway will be working towards supported employment as their planned destination. It may be appropriate for these learners to include some

aspects of independent living skills within their programme. Initial assessment, however, is likely to identify that for some learners increased independence will be the more relevant goal. Some of these learners may go on to work towards supported employment at a later stage. For them, independent living may be seen as a staging post. For others, increased independence will be their planned destination.

- 88 The LSC recognises the concerns raised with regard to specifying achievement of whole qualifications within this Progression Pathway rather than a credit threshold. As part of the proposed trials of unit-based funding within the QCF, which are due to commence in 2008/09, the LSC will seek to trial some unit-based funding within this Progression Pathway. As part of these trials, the LSC will also trial a Credit Success Rate measure to determine whether potential access and achievement issues raised by the use of qualifications can be addressed by the introduction of credit achievement. Trials will involve a small cohort of learners and will inform revisions to the Prospectus for 2009/10.

Minimum qualification and credit requirements to complete the Progression Pathway

All qualifications must be selected from the *Progression Pathways qualifications catalogue*.

– Supported employment

- One award-sized qualification of at least six credits
- four credits of personal and social development learning
- Functional Skills in English (5 credits)
- Functional Skills in Maths (5 credits)
- Functional Skills in ICT (5 credits)

- 89 The achievement of units and award of credits in personal and social development may be embedded within other qualifications, as appropriate.

- 90 We recommend that awards developed by awarding bodies for supported employment should contain in the rules of combination the common entry level 1 unit Developing Work Skills or the common personal and social development unit Preparation for Work at entry level 2, entry level 3 or level 1. But this is not a requirement. This position may change in 2009/10, depending on the outcome of the evaluation of this Progression Pathway.

– Independent living

- One award-sized qualification of at least six credits where the focus is on personal and social development
- Where relevant and appropriate, either Functional Skills qualifications or the appropriate common entry level 1 units relating to reading, writing, numeracy or ICT.

91 We recommend that awards developed by awarding bodies for independent living should contain in the rules of combination a range of common entry level 1 units relating to different aspects of independent living. But this is not a requirement. This position may change in 2009/10, depending on the outcome of the evaluation of this Progression Pathway.

Curriculum guidance

92 The personalised programmes for learners on this Progression Pathway will be designed primarily to help learners develop the skills either to:

- enter and sustain supported employment; or
- express their choice, control and freedom to lead more fulfilling lives.

93 Although the two destinations within the Progression Pathway are quite distinctive, it is highly likely that there will be some overlap in terms of content across the two approaches. In particular, learners hoping to gain supported employment are likely to need to acquire some independent living skills, such as the ability to travel independently.

– Supported employment

94 The type of supported employment that the learner is seeking will have some influence on the nature of the programme, particularly in terms of the context for delivery. For example, a learner who knows that they would like to work with animals in some way may spend a part of their programme on a supported work placement on a farm or at kennels or a cattery. There will be other learners who are not clear at all about the type of work that they would like to do. These learners may need a more exploratory programme within which they gain experience in a range of settings.

95 In both cases, general employability skills, rather than sector-specific learning, are likely to form the greater part of their programme, along with personal and social development and functional skills. All these skills can be developed in a wide range of different settings. Although some discrete teaching and learning might be needed in relation to functional skills, it is expected that much of it will be embedded in the rest of the programme where the context(s) has been chosen to match the learner's interests and aspirations.

- 96 As learners move towards the end of their programme, particularly once a possible employer and position have been identified, it may become relevant to introduce some highly specific learning about the actual environment and particular job role towards which they will be progressing. This might mean identifying their route and means of travel to work, practising the journey, determining appropriate clothing and finding out about the tasks they will need to undertake. Some of this activity may take place on site with the future employer, thus easing the learner's transition from the Progression Pathway to the place of employment.
- 97 The learner's starting point will be the other key determining factor in the design of their programme. Initial assessment should be used to identify where the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding need further development if they are to reach their goal of securing supported employment. Their programme can then be weighted in terms of the different components to ensure that sufficient time is spent on developing each area. They may also need to work at different levels in different areas of the curriculum. For example, some learners may be able to work at level 1 in relation to working with others but need to work at entry level 1 in numeracy. Opportunities to build on existing strengths should also be taken so that learners are not spending all their time on aspects of the curriculum that they find difficult and where they may have experienced failure in the past.
- 98 Providers will need to select one or more qualifications from the Progression Pathways Qualifications Catalogue (alongside the three Functional Skills) which allow the range of achievements arising from the programme to be recognised. We recommend that at least one selected award provide access to the common entry level 1 unit Developing Work Skills or the common personal and social development unit Preparation for Work at entry level 2, entry level 3 or level 1. Over time all awards confirmed as eligible for this Progression Pathway will contain either one or both of these units, so providers will have a range to choose from. For the first year of the phased implementation (2008/09), learners will not be required to include these units in their programme. But we will review this position for 2009/10.
- 99 Many of the qualifications available on this Progression Pathway will contain units at a variety of levels, including entry level 1, 2, or 3, level 1 and in some cases level 2. Some will also have a large number of optional units, covering a wide range of related skill areas (including both employability and personal and social development skills). These design features will allow providers to use a single qualification to recognise relevant achievements for a group of learners and to accommodate individual profiles.

– Independent living

- 100 This Progression Pathway is intended to provide maximum flexibility in terms of curriculum design, to meet the needs of a very diverse range of learners – from those whose curriculum will be largely sensory through to those who are preparing to move into their own homes. Planned destinations will be highly individual, but all should have in common targets that are realistic, challenging and relevant to the learner.
- 101 The learner's starting point and goal, rather than any external, determining factors (such as entry requirements for courses), will be the two factors that guide curriculum design. For example, one learner's aims may relate to improving communication with tutors, support workers, carers and peers through the use of pictures or symbols from a starting point where their verbalisations and gestures are generally understood only by their speech therapist and main tutor. Improved communication will allow them to begin developing the ability to express preferences, such as meal choices or activities within the classroom. Another learner may be seeking to move out of long-term residential care into sheltered housing. They may have had little opportunity to develop the necessary skills up until now and so need to work on aspects of personal safety, home care and cooking for themselves.
- 102 The two different programmes needed for these individuals are likely to take very different lengths of time. They will certainly require a completely different curriculum and the two learners will be working at very different levels. The achievement of the range of targets that relate to the broad aims for both learners could be recognised through the entry level 1 common units, which have been designed to capture learner-referenced achievements. These units are likely to appear within the rules of combination for a range of qualifications eligible for use in this Progression Pathway. For the first year of the phased implementation (2008/09), learners will not be required to include these units in their programme. But we will review this position for 2009/10.
- 103 Entry level 1 should not be seen as a 'ceiling' for this Progression Pathway. Where appropriate, learners' achievements at higher levels should also be captured. It can be particularly motivating for learners to build on existing strengths while addressing other learning needs.
- 104 We recognise that the Functional Skills qualifications will not be accessible for many of the learners on the independent living strand, as they do not extend below the highest end of the spectrum of achievement covered by entry level 1. If an individual however *is* capable of achieving one or more of the qualifications, and it is relevant to their programme given their planned destination, then the qualifications should be included. If the general content is relevant but the level of achievement required is too demanding, learners should use the entry level 1 common units in reading, writing and ICT to accredit their achievements. These units recognise related skills at an earlier stage on the spectrum within entry level 1.

The Progression Pathway to a Foundation Diploma or GCSEs

- 105 The purpose of this Progression Pathway is to support Key Stage 4 learners who are working predominately at entry level. It aims to give learners the skills base to allow progression towards a Foundation (level 1) Diploma, GCSEs or other appropriate destinations. It will be available to learners from the start of Key Stage 4. It has been designed to help providers to offer a motivating and engaging experience for learners and, therefore, will be particularly appropriate for those at risk of disengaging. There will be a small number of learners working at entry level, particularly at the earliest stages of entry level 1, for whom level 1 is not a realistic goal. This Progression Pathway is not appropriate for these learners.
- 106 It might be appropriate for some learners to move from this Progression Pathway to the Progression Pathway to skilled work, or even – in some circumstances – to an Apprenticeship at level 2.
- 107 The Progression Pathway is intended to support the aims of the revised National Curriculum, with programmes of learning focussed on building skills across the curriculum. It has the aim of helping all children become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. It is also intended to support the five aims of Every Child Matters: that children are supported to be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic wellbeing.
- 108 During 2008/09 and 2009/10, this Progression Pathway will be piloted with learners aged 14–16 who are capable of progression to level 1. Over time, we expect the Pathway to be available made available for learners aged 14–19. The vision for the position of Progression Pathways within the learning offer for those aged 14–19 is set out within *Promoting achievement, valuing success: a strategy for 14–19 qualifications* (published March 2008 as a Green Paper for consultation). This Progression Pathway is proposed as the entry level element of the strategy.
- 109 As part of the pilot implementation of the Progression Pathway, the Department for Children, Schools and Families, the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and QCA will consider how best to incentivise completion and progression in the pre-16 context. This will include how funding, performance and inspection levers could be used, and the potential role of the QCF.

Minimum qualifications and credit requirements to complete the Progression Pathway

All qualifications must be selected from the *Progression Pathways qualifications catalogue*.

- one certificate-sized qualification at entry level 1, 2 or 3
- four credits of personal and social development learning
- Functional Skills in English (5 credits)
- Functional Skills in Maths (5 credits)
- Functional Skills in ICT (5 credits)

110 The focus of the certificate-sized qualification may be sectoral / vocational, and will focus on developing cross-cutting employability skills or subject knowledge.

Curriculum guidance

111 The nature of the learner's programme will differ in accordance with the planned destination. Learners planning to progress onto GCSEs need to include a qualification based on subject knowledge. Those planning to move on to a Foundation Diploma will want to select a vocational or sector-based qualification. Learners who know the Foundation Diploma they wish to progress to (for example the Foundation Diploma in ICT) or who are interested in a particular job in later life may wish to include an entry level certificate in the relevant vocational area. Those who are undecided may select a qualification which focuses more broadly on cross-cutting employability skills. In either case, the purpose of vocational learning will be to develop practical skills for employability and later life.

112 The Progression Pathway has been designed to support the achievement of Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS). In the post-16 context, this strand of Progression Pathway content has been referred to as personal and social development. The Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills framework covers the same area of skills, and will support the achievement of the citizenship programme of study. Where appropriate, the draft common units in personal and social development currently being trialled within the QCF will provide a vehicle for accrediting these skills.

113 Within the personal and social development strand, provision should develop attitudes and behaviour expected in the workplace and for further study or training. Achievement of credits in this area may be embedded within vocational / subject-based qualifications, as appropriate.

114 Although some discrete teaching and learning might be needed in relation to Functional Skills, it is expected that much of it will be embedded in the rest of the programme where the context(s) has been chosen to match the main focus of the learner's programme. Learners may take each of the three Functional skills at different levels, according

to their starting point, ability and planned destination. For example, a learner wishing to progress to an Engineering Foundation Diploma might be advised that they should aim for Functional Skills in Mathematics at entry level 3, so that they can cope with the demands of the Foundation Diploma. Some learners may have a particular strength in ICT, which would allow them to access the level 1 or even level 2 Functional Skills ICT qualification. In this case they should be encouraged to aim for the highest, realistic level.

- 115 Learners find themselves working at entry level at Key Stage 4 for a variety of reasons. Some have the potential to progress rapidly to level 1 and beyond once particular barriers have been addressed or negative attitudes to learning reversed. Delivery of the programme, therefore, needs to be flexible. Learners should not be required to achieve at entry level before moving on to level 1 or 2 achievement, and qualifications selected within the Progression Pathway should include the potential for level 1 achievement, where appropriate.
- 116 Where appropriate, qualifications (and units within qualifications) available within this Progression Pathway will also feature in the Additional / Specialist Learning element of the Foundation Diploma. This will enable learners to achieve partial credit towards the Diploma during their Progression Pathway learning programme.
- 117 This Progression Pathway is designed to support the delivery of the national curriculum statutory programmes of study for the core subjects (English; Mathematics; Science, ICT; Physical Education and Citizenship) as well as Religious Education, sex education and work-related learning. Although the Progression Pathway learning programme will not cover all these subjects, it is expected to form part of a learner's overall curriculum time, and contribute, as appropriate, to these aims.

Delivering Progression Pathways in post-16 providers

- 118 This section provides guidance for providers on implementing Progression Pathways. It builds on the information on phased implementation that appears in the background and overview section.
- 119 The LSC will expect providers delivering Progression Pathways to ensure that the portfolio of qualifications offered within each Pathway is coherent and drawn from the *Progression Pathways qualifications catalogue*. Some providers may choose all the component qualifications from the same awarding body. However, the LSC also recognises that some providers may well seek further flexibility and choice by selecting qualifications from several awarding bodies. Whether a provider decides to use qualifications from one or more awarding bodies, there must be evidence of the following:
- the offer is coherent and the purpose of the qualification selected has been considered alongside the likely progression route of the Progression Pathway;
 - the package will support embedding and integration of learning across vocational knowledge, skills and understanding; Functional Skills; and personal and social development;
 - the requirements of the qualifications selected do not dictate a curriculum or approach to teaching and learning that works against the learning needs of the individual; and
 - there is an appropriate range of shared units across the qualification(s) so that credit can be accumulated and transferred and that the assessment burden for the learner is streamlined (although this must not compromise appropriateness or rigour). In selecting qualifications from a range of awarding bodies, providers should consider not just the outcomes but also how the qualification can act as a motivating factor.
- 120 The LSC provider requirements offer further checks and balances to support providers in building and delivering Progression Pathways in a coherent way. These requirements also form the basis of the Provider Development Framework, which will drive the commissioning and procurement process (see paragraphs 125 and 126 below). So coherence, therefore, becomes an essential part of the criteria for providers wishing to deliver Progression Pathways.
- 121 Coherence of the content of Progression Pathways will also be driven by the delivery and the ‘wrappers’ around the learning programme. This applies particularly to: effective information advice and guidance, robust initial assessment and ongoing support. The requirements, therefore,

cover both curriculum design and delivery, as well as the structural and organisational aspects for Progression Pathway, including:

- personalised learning;
- recognition of achievement and progression;
- coherent Progression Pathways;
- effective initial assessment and ongoing review;
- reaching priority learners;
- partnerships;
- support for learners; and
- organisation and management.

122 The full version of the requirements is available from the support and resources section of the LSC FLT website <http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/flt/>.

123 The LSC will also expect providers to:

- determine first that the learner genuinely needs Foundation Learning Tier provision before progressing to their higher level destination;
- identify potential destination routes (including other providers who may be offering Apprenticeships or Diplomas); and
- where appropriate, map the Progression Pathway offer against receiving provider destinations.

LSC commissioning of Progression Pathways

124 The LSC will initially procure Progression Pathways as negotiated provision through provider dialogue. There are two instances where tendered commissioning might take place for Progression Pathways. The first is where, following negotiated commissioning, significant gaps still remain in the availability of provision. The second is where the legacy provision is deemed to be poor.

125 The 2007/08 QIA support and development programme produced a Provider Development Framework¹⁶ that enables providers to:

- review their current practice against the LSC Provider requirements;
- identify evidence to support the effectiveness and appropriateness of their current practice against the requirements;
- identify development needs to meet the requirements; and
- create a comprehensive, detailed and robust development and action plan to fulfil the requirements.

¹⁶ The Provider Development Framework is available on Foundation Learning Tier website available through the QIA Excellence Gateway at <http://excellence.qia.org.uk/flt/>.

126 The Provider Development Framework will be used as part of any procurement process for Progression Pathways (whether negotiated or tendered commissioning) as a tool to confirm the readiness, capacity and capability of providers wishing to deliver Progression Pathways. The use of a provider-driven Development Framework approach is 'light touch' and fully aligns with moves towards a self-determining, self-regulating system.

Funding of Progression Pathways

127 The current proposed approach to funding Progression Pathways is outlined in *16–18, Adult learner and employer responsive funding models*, published by the LSC in November 2007 and updated in May 2008. The LSC funding guidance for 2008/09 has been written as a single set of guidance for providers and consists of a suite of documents covering:

- the funding rates and formula;
- funding principles, rules and regulations;
- learner eligibility;
- funding compliance advice and audit guidance for providers; and
- funding claims and audit returns¹⁷.

128 The LSC is currently in discussions with The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills concerning extending trials of unit-based funding in the context of the QCF during 2008/09. Further work will be undertaken to scope and confirm the extended trials (including where they will be taken forward in the context of Progression Pathways) once the discussions are complete and outcomes known. Within the context of continuing development of Progression Pathways, this work will support incremental achievement and small steps of learning. This applies particularly to re-engagement and the Progression Pathway to supported employment or independent living. The LSC is aware of the concerns about defining achievement thresholds in terms of qualifications for some groups of learners, and further work on supporting incremental achievement and small steps of learning will inform how achievement thresholds are finally defined across this Progression Pathway in particular. The outcomes of any work and implications for Progression Pathways will be included in the next annual revision of the Prospectus for 2009/10.

¹⁷ The updated models document and other key information on funding, such as the funding guidance documents are available on the LSC website at www.lsc.gov.uk/providers/funding-policy/strategic-overview/.

Recording Progression Pathways on the Individualised Learner Record

129 Information regarding the recording of Progression Pathways on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) in 2008/09 has been published on the Further Education Information Authority website in the document entitled *Recording Programmes in the ILR for 2008/09*¹⁸.

Success measures for Progression Pathways

130 The Framework for Excellence¹⁹ provides a comprehensive approach to managing performance. It is a single, unified framework that will help increase both the quality of further education provision and the way in which that provision meets the needs of all users. In 2008/09 the LSC expects to explore success measures for providers relating to the anticipated participation, achievement and progression for Progression Pathways. It will also explore how these may inform Performance Indicators being developed under the Framework for Excellence.

131 Once these measures are developed, there will be a need to consider them in relation to provision for learners aged 14–16 and the alignment to the current school's performance measures.

132 The LSC has undertaken some initial work on the development of a Credit Success Rate measure to sit alongside the existing Qualification Success Rate measure. It will pilot this Credit Success Rate during 2008/09. The pilot will have the specific purpose of identifying, understanding and evaluating the practical issues for providers in entering and collating Credit Success Rate data and identifying the potential future uses of the Credit Success Rate. This pilot will include provision at entry level and level 1 as identified within Progression Pathways. It will also, as indicated above, form the package of work for QCF within the wider Framework for Excellence programme.

133 LSC and Ofsted will continue to use the existing Qualification Success Rate measure. This means that as qualifications move from the existing NQF to the QCF, or are developed as new qualifications in the QCF, learner achievements will continue to be captured through the current Qualification Success Rate and the definition of the Qualification Success Rate will remain unchanged.

134 For providers participating in the developmental delivery of Progression Pathway in 2008/09, the qualifications they deliver as part of those Progression Pathways will count towards the provider's Qualification

¹⁸ The Information Authority website address is www.theia.org.uk and the document referenced can be downloaded from http://www.theia.org.uk/NR/rdonlyres/1E13E7C6-ADF0-4BDE-84EE-F1822B961C60/0/natILRProgrammeRecordingGuidancefor2008_09v1dc7May08.doc.

¹⁹ More information on the Framework for Excellence is available on the LSC website at <http://ffe.lsc.gov.uk/>.

Success Rates. They will, therefore, contribute towards the provider's Overall Performance Rating.

Monitoring Progression Pathways

135 The LSC will monitor and sample the ongoing progress, development and implementation of Progression Pathways, working closely with providers, awarding bodies and SSCs. As indicated above, we will consider appropriate success factors related to Progression Pathways in the context of the Framework for Excellence and with regard to:

- learner feedback;
- retention rates;
- completion rates; and
- progression rates.

136 As part of the more general monitoring of Progression Pathways, and as part of the LSC's wider implementation of the QCF, we will monitor the range and sufficiency of qualifications identified as eligible and appropriate for inclusion within Progression Pathways as part of the (web-based) accreditation process. To achieve this, we will work closely with QCA (and in particular OfQual). Part of this monitoring will be aligned to aspects such as use of shared units, balance and mix of provision, and the wider process of switching funding from NQF to QCF provision. In particular, the LSC will be seeking to ensure that the process for confirming eligibility and appropriateness is robust, transparent and consistent, so that providers can build Progression Pathways from a wide range of qualifications that have identified as eligible and appropriate for inclusion.

Delivering Progression Pathways in schools and other settings for learners aged 14 to 16

- 137 This section provides guidance on implementing the Progression Pathway to Diploma/GCSEs or other appropriate destinations, for pre-16 providers (the purpose and aims of this Progression Pathway are as outlined in paragraph 105).
- 138 During 2008/9 and 2009/10, QCA will trial the implementation of the Progression Pathway with learners aged 14–16. During 2008, 14 local authorities are involved, working with approximately 120 centres, including schools, special schools, colleges, Pupil Referral Units and others. The purpose of this trial is to establish the appropriateness of the current Progression Pathway specification, delivering the minimum requirements through accredited QCF qualifications.
- 139 Over time, we expect the Pathway to be available made available for learners aged 14–19. The vision for the position of Progression Pathways within the learning offer for those aged 14–19 is set out within *Promoting achievement, valuing success: a strategy for 14–19 qualifications* (published March 2008 as a Green Paper for consultation). This Progression Pathway is proposed as the entry level element of the strategy.
- 140 The QCA will expect centres participating in the trial to ensure that the portfolio of qualifications offered within each Progression Pathway is a coherent offer and drawn from the *Progression Pathways qualifications catalogue*. Some centres may choose all the component qualifications from the same awarding body. However, some will seek further flexibility and choice by selecting qualifications from several awarding bodies. Where centres are using several awarding bodies, there must be evidence of the following:
- the offer is coherent and the purpose of the selected qualification has been considered alongside the likely progression route through the Progression Pathway;
 - the package will support embedding and integration of learning across vocational knowledge, skills and understanding; Functional Skills; and personal and social development;
 - the requirements of the selected qualifications do not dictate a curriculum or approach to teaching and learning that works against the learning needs of the individual; and
 - there is an appropriate range of shared units across the qualification(s) so that credit can be accumulated and transferred and that the assessment burden for the learner is streamlined (although this must not compromise

appropriateness or rigour). In selecting qualifications from a range of awarding bodies centres should consider not just the outcomes, but also how the qualification can act as a motivating factor.

141 To support centres in addressing these issues, the 10 effective practice principles (annexed to this document) have been developed, covering the following areas:

- 1 Embedding progress and progression opportunities
- 2 Personalising the learning plan/programme
- 3 Conducting an initial review/assessment of every learner
- 4 SMART target-setting in the learning plan/programme
- 5 Using units of credit-based assessment for learning plans/programmes
- 6 Ensuring high-quality provider collaboration in delivering the learning plan/programme
- 7 Facilitating a supportive learning experience for the learner
- 8 Conducting ongoing reviews with the learner after Initial review/assessment and during plan/programme delivery
- 9 Effective leadership and management at the learning organisation behind the learner, and the design and delivery of the learner plan/programme
- 10 Embracing equality and diversity in learning at entry level and level 1.

142 The full version of these principles provides further information and is available from the QCA FLT website at www.qca.org.uk/flt.

143 The QCA expects providers to determine first that the learner genuinely needs Foundation Learning Tier provision before progressing to their higher level destination and that they have identified potential destination routes.

144 During the course of the trial, the DCSF 14–19 Expert Advisory Group will advise on the strategic direction of the 14–19 qualifications offer. In this context, it will consider how this Pathway might fit as the entry level element of the 14–19 qualifications strategy. As part of this, it will look at how best to incentivise completion and progression in a 14–19 context, including how funding, performance and inspection levers could be used.

The implication of Progression Pathways for awarding bodies and Sector Skills Councils

Awarding bodies

- 145 This section explains the requirements for awarding bodies to have accredited QCF qualifications confirmed as eligible and appropriate for inclusion within Progression Pathways. It provides information on the requirements, which will apply to all qualifications being put forward for use within any of the four Progression Pathways²⁰. It should be read in conjunction with the regulatory requirements for the QCF which are available at www.qca.org.uk/framework and the Foundation Learning Tier qualifications strategy which is available at www.qca.org.uk/flt.
- 146 All qualifications eligible for inclusion within any Progression Pathway must:
- be accredited within the QCF, using the regulations of the QCF;
 - align with the aims and purposes for entry level and level 1 qualifications set out in the Foundation Learning Tier qualifications strategy and agreed with QCA and Ofqual via early dialogue;
 - support the aims and purposes of the Progression Pathway(s) within which they sit; and
 - consist of shared units²¹, including those that have been specifically developed for one component across all Progression Pathways (for example personal and social development, at entry level 1, and in Functional Skills).
- 147 At the point of accreditation, awarding bodies will be asked to indicate which Progression Pathway(s) a qualification supports through a series of questions on the web-based accreditation system. QCA and Ofqual will endorse this indication through standard accreditation review and, prior to this, via early dialogue. This indication will be flagged onto the National Database of Accredited Qualifications and indicated on the Learning Aim Database to allow providers to choose from available qualifications to complete each Progression Pathway. The QCA will work with the LSC to establish a Progression Pathways 'catalogue' to enable providers and others to access information on the qualifications eligible for use within Progression Pathways and to provide further guidance on

²⁰ The requirements set out in this section are not requirements for accrediting qualifications. They are requirements for recognising them within Progression Pathways. The qualification regulators will accredit qualifications at entry level and level 1 which do not support Progression Pathways, where these meet learner/employer need.

²¹ The level of information contained in QCF units is sufficient to support the accumulation and transfer of credit as appropriate. A unit does not contain information or guidance to learning providers or learners themselves on the supporting curriculum, content or assessment method of that unit.

using those qualifications to construct coherent and appropriate Progression Pathways.

- 148 All awarding bodies submitting qualifications for inclusion within Progression Pathways will be expected to agree plans for entry level and level 1 qualifications development with QCA. . They will need to indicate what provision they intend to develop and how this supports the aims of Foundation Learning Tier and which Progression Pathways it will support, if any.
- 149 Awards developed for supported employment should normally contain the common entry level 1 unit Developing Work Skills or the common personal and social development unit Preparation for Work at entry level 2, entry level 3 or level 1 within the rules of combination. But this is not a requirement. This position may change in 2009/10, depending on the outcomes of the evaluation of the first year of implementation.

Sector Skills Councils

- 150 This section sets out the role, responsibilities and expectations of SSCs in the development of Progression Pathways.
- 151 Qualifications (including those at entry level and level 1) that are to be accredited within the QCF, and which are therefore eligible to be within a Progression Pathway, must carry support from appropriate bodies. In the case of vocationally-specific qualifications, this will be the relevant SSC or Standard Setting Body and be set out in Sector Qualification Strategy Action Plans. Where qualifications cover multiple sectors or employability skills, the responsibility for providing support is for Asset Skills, working on behalf of the Alliance of SSCs.
- 152 The purpose of requiring sector-body support is to ensure that the content of vocational qualifications is relevant and up-to-date. Most entry level and level 1 qualifications will aim to develop employability or generic job skills. In most cases, they will not develop job competence or facilitate progression into a sector or job role. The use of an individual sector is normally as a context for learning that engages and motivates learners. Therefore, SSCs and sector bodies, when considering support for qualifications, should focus on whether the qualification is likely to provide this engaging and motivating context for developing work-related skills. They should not focus on whether the qualification supports progression into a job role, unless this is an explicitly stated aim.
- 153 Both QCA and the LSC are working with the UK Commission for Employment and Skills and the Alliance of SSCs to ensure that sufficient vocational provision for building Progression Pathways is available across entry level and level 1 of the QCF. Existing NQF provision at entry level and level 1 identified in SSC sector footprints will be priorities for development within the QCF, alongside specific work with selected SSCs.

154 The Alliance of Sector Skills Councils has identified employability skills as a major cross-cutting theme emerging from work on Sector Skills Agreements. The Employability Matrix Framework led by Asset Skills has established a single statement of employability skills to apply across the network and in different sector contexts. This allows all vocational qualifications to reference a single set of employability skills. This work will contribute to the Foundation Learning Tier and enable SSC input to the development of Progression Pathways, with particular focus on progression routes to full level 2 provision, Apprenticeships and the Foundation Diploma.

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