

National evaluation of Diplomas: Cohort 2 – the first year of delivery

Tami McCrone, Pauline Wade, Gill Featherstone, Clare Southcott and Sarah Golden (National Foundation for Educational Research) and Gill Haynes (University of Exeter)

This research report was commissioned before the new UK Government took office on 11 May 2010. As a result the content may not reflect current Government policy and may make reference to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) which has now been replaced by the Department for Education (DFE).

The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Education.

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Executive summary

Background

The introduction of Diplomas for 14-19 year olds represented a major innovation in educational opportunity for young people in England. Following the establishment of the Coalition government in May 2010, a number of changes to the implementation and delivery of the Diploma qualification were introduced. The Minister of State for Schools announced¹ that development of new Diplomas in science, humanities and languages, which were due to be introduced from September 2011, would be discontinued. Additionally the Diploma entitlement, whereby all young people within an area would be able to access any of the Diploma subjects, would be removed and that the decision about which Diploma subjects would be available to students would in future be made by schools and colleges. Moreover, it was decided that the Gateway application process whereby consortia (of schools, colleges, training providers, employers and Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)) had previously submitted an application to the Department for Education (DfE) for each Diploma subject they wanted to offer would no longer be required for provision commencing from 2012. Other changes included the freedom for institutions to decide whether or not they wanted to work collaboratively to provide Diploma provision. Updates on the Diploma reform can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/diploma/a0064056/diploma-announcements>

This summary reports the findings of research as carried out in spring 2010, which explored experiences of the first year of delivery of the second cohort of Diploma learners (who started their Diploma in September 2009). It presents the findings from surveys of pre- and post-16 Diploma and comparison learners and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders and Diploma learners in a sub-sample of 15 case-study consortia.

Key Findings

- Overall, the majority of students were satisfied with their Diploma course and felt that they had made the right decision to take a Diploma. There was evidence that Year 10 learners who were more satisfied with prior Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), and those who had some employer involvement in their Diploma learning, were more satisfied with the Diploma.
- Diploma learners were intending to progress to either further or higher education or a work-based route, in particular Apprenticeships. Young people believed that the Diploma had not constrained their choices and they indicated that they were considering a variety of options for the future.
- Cohort 2 learners indicated that they selected the Diploma principally because it related to a career they were interested in. The value of high-quality IAG (which details the content and the style of learning required to study a Diploma) is reflected in the evidence of a link between satisfaction with prior IAG and subsequent satisfaction with the Diploma course.

¹ Update from DfE on Diplomas and other qualifications relevant to 14-19 year olds: July 2010

- The Diploma subjects introduced in 2008 were more likely to be associated with learner satisfaction with the Diploma than the subjects from Phase 2.
- The most prevalent models of Diploma delivery were those involving a school and college and an in-house model where all Diploma learning was provided only to an institution's own students. Where collaborative ways of working existed, they worked best when built on pre-existing relationships and were given time to develop.
- Staff teaching the Diplomas were enjoying the experience although they expressed uncertainty about future plans for the Diplomas. They could see the benefit that young people were deriving from it, they liked the involvement of the world of work and partnership working with colleagues, and facilitating applied and independent learning.
- Looking forward, interviewees stressed the importance of future IAG, the value of good working partnerships, the significance of effective planning and the need for simplification and clarification of the Diploma component parts, in particular in terms of functional skills.

Were Diploma learners satisfied with their course?

Overall, the majority of learners were satisfied with, and were enjoying, their Diploma course. Students were finding that the Diploma was a challenging experience that was teaching them a range of new and useful skills and, they believed, was preparing them well for the work place. The evidence indicated that learners appreciated the opportunity to develop independent working skills and that this was facilitated by both the design and structure of the course. Employer engagement was an important factor and contributed significantly to learner satisfaction. There was evidence that Year 10 learners who were more satisfied with prior IAG, and those who had some employer involvement in their Diploma learning, were more satisfied with the Diploma.

Dissatisfaction was linked to the perceived heavy workload (although staff and learners felt that if students were fully engaged in the course they could cope with the workload). Also the course was not always viewed as expected by young people. This highlights the importance of accurate IAG to help young people to fully understand the content of the Diploma and the required learning style.

What were Diploma students planning to do in the future?

The evidence shows that learners who had selected to take a Diploma were at this stage, in the first year of their course, intending to remain in learning after completing their Diploma either in further education (in a college or sixth form) or in higher education. Furthermore, according to young people the Diploma had not constrained their choices as they were also considering the work-based route, in particular Apprenticeships, and were more likely to do so than their peers who had not taken Diplomas. This indicates that young people who choose to take Diplomas are interested in engaging in the world of work and undertaking learning at work which may be one of their reasons for choosing a Diploma.

What were the key factors that informed student choice?

Cohort 2 learners indicated that they selected the Diploma principally because it related to a career they were interested in. It is also evident from the survey of

learners who did not choose to take a Diploma that lack of interest in the subjects, and a preference for other qualifications were the main reasons for not choosing a Diploma.

There is some scope for improvement in terms of raising awareness of the qualification at institution level to ensure that all staff, regardless of whether or not they are delivering the qualification, have sufficient knowledge and understanding in order to advise learners where required.

Moreover, while learners reported having received a range of information about the Diploma, there was evidence which indicated that they would have welcomed more detailed information about the course (a finding also reported by cohort 1 learners). This should be a key consideration in order to ensure that there is a good level of understanding about the content of the course amongst all learners in order to make an informed decision.

How was teaching and learning progressing?

Teachers were largely positive about their experience of teaching Diplomas. While they had not needed to adapt their teaching style significantly, teaching the Diploma had entailed adopting a more applied learning approach. Research findings indicated that ensuring that the learning experience was sufficiently applied, and that learners engaged equally with the applied and more theoretical elements, was one of the challenges for teachers.

Teaching the Diploma was also different because it entailed making more links between their teaching and world of work. This was achieved through involving employers in a range of ways, by using real working environments (RWEs) and integrating reference to the real world into their teaching in the classroom. In addition, teachers were facilitating learners' independent learning and acting more as a guide in doing so (reflecting the views of teachers who taught the first cohort of Diploma learners). While teaching the Diploma had required more planning and preparation than was usually the case, it had also entailed more sharing of teaching with other teachers in some cases and there was evidence that teachers were embracing working with colleagues more closely.

The assessment of Diplomas continued to be one of the more challenging aspects for teachers. Nevertheless, there was evidence that subject leads, and to a slightly lesser extent teachers, were growing in confidence as they became more familiar with the process and gained feedback from Awarding Bodies which gave them guidance and reassurance. Nevertheless, teachers would like more support and guidance from awarding bodies, subject leads and domain assessors. Furthermore, they need time to develop their Diploma teaching, to work on building employer contacts and to more fully engage with assessment and partnership working.

In-house quality assurance procedures were used to monitor Diploma delivery. Monitoring of teaching and learning has to be handled sensitively. Inter-institutional lesson observations in particular were challenging and consortia were progressing with establishing the necessary agreements and procedures in order to overcome these challenges.

How is consortium management progressing?

Commitment to collaborative delivery across cohort 2 consortia was not considered to have improved much from baseline level and it was widely acknowledged that

collaboration only worked well when it developed organically, rather than being imposed. This finding was consistent with cohort 1 where partnership working was reported to have faced challenges in most consortia. The most prevalent models of delivery were those involving a school and college and an in-house model where all Diploma learning was provided only to an institution's own students. This finding reflects the policy development that institutions no longer need to collaborate to deliver the Diploma.

The evidence from this research suggests that, in view of the removal of the need to collaborate, together with the removal of funding for partnership working, institutions and consortia will work together where there is a recognised need to do so and the value is perceived to outweigh the challenges. This will, however, potentially reduce the range of choice of Diplomas available to learners in a local area. The extent of future collaboration will be explored in the next stage of this evaluation.

Which of the key components of the Diploma were particularly valued?

The Diploma qualification, with its different components, is generally regarded as complex by staff and learners, and there is evidence that a more stream-lined Diploma would be more popular. This would not only ease its delivery but would also make it easier to explain to young people and their parents.

There was evidence of more widespread specialist learning on offer than was the case for the first cohort of learners. Only one consortium was offering ASL on a fully-integrated consortium-wide basis and this was also the only one where there was a view that there was progress towards personalised learning through ASL.

Most work placements were organised at institutional level and generally good links with employers were reported. The widespread use of employers to support Diploma learning, indicates that employers have been effectively engaged and are willing to support Diplomas, even in the context of a challenging economic environment.

The Diploma offers students greater opportunities for work-related learning and (as reported above) there was evidence of a link between having taken part in a work placement and subsequent satisfaction with the Diploma course. Students appear to have particularly enjoyed the employer involvement and it is clear that a strength of the qualification, for both staff and students, is the emphasis placed on applied learning.

As was reported by cohort 1 interviewees, the functional skills component of the Diploma was widely perceived as contributing challenges rather than benefits, in particular the concern that students might not achieve the full Level 2 or 3 Diploma because they might not pass functional skills tests at the required level. Staff and students indicated that they would welcome the removal of functional skills from the Diploma so that full achievement of the Diploma was not dependent on passing functional skills.

What lessons have been learnt?

Although interviewees' comments were made in the context of the general election and related uncertainty staff in most consortia were making plans for the future of Diplomas. They considered that it was likely that demand for some Diploma subjects at different levels would be stronger than for others, and in view of the removal of entitlement for all Diploma subjects for all young people it is now likely that demand

for the most popular subjects will increase, while demand for less popular subjects will decrease further.

Looking forward, interviewees stressed the importance of future IAG, the value of good working partnerships, the significance of effective planning and the simplification and clarification of the Diploma component parts, in particular the functional skills component. The key benefits of Diplomas were said to be the offer of an engaging alternative to young people, partnership working, networking and the sharing of ideas, and the range of topics, knowledge and skills involved in teaching the Diploma. The main disadvantages of Diplomas were perceived to be the time involved in administering and delivering a complex qualification and funding perceived to be inadequate to sustain delivery.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- As three-quarters of young people not taking a Diploma said that they did not know much about them, there still appears to be scope to raise awareness of Diplomas more widely. Recent reforms have made it clear that the component qualifications of a Diploma may be delivered on an individual basis to support progression.
- There is also capacity for improvement in terms of raising awareness of the Diploma at institution level to ensure that all staff have sufficient knowledge and understanding in order to advise learners where required.
- Teachers would like more guidance and direction (in terms of, for example, appropriate training on assessment from awarding bodies, strategies for delivering the functional skills component and time for networking opportunities to more fully share information with colleagues) from consortium and subject leads and domain assessors. It is important to ensure that experience is shared and support is provided by awarding bodies to facilitate this.
- It is advisable that it is made clear to learners embarking on a Diploma that they not only have an interest in the subject, but also understand the style of learning (for example, the mix of theoretical, academic and applied learning and the need to be able to work independently) inherent in the qualification.
- To ensure that IAG is accurate and effective, the involvement of current Diploma learners in events should be considered so that they can share their experiences and answer queries amongst potential students.
- The work-placement component of the Diploma is viewed positively at all levels and there would be benefit in consortia with particularly effective practices in employer engagement sharing these widely.
- In general, the functional skills component has presented the most challenges in Diploma delivery and its uncoupling from the Diploma would be widely welcomed.
- The majority of young people taking a Diploma at Level 3 were intending to progress to higher education. However, one of the reasons given by young people who were not taking a Diploma for not doing so was because they wanted to continue to higher education. There would, therefore, be value in continuing to communicate to learners in Year 11 that the Diploma is one of a range of qualifications that are accepted by HEIs for entry onto degree courses so that they make informed decisions.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The introduction of Diplomas for 14-19 year olds was seen as a central part of the Labour government's reform of 14-19 education and represented a major innovation in educational opportunity for young people in England. Following the establishment of the Coalition government in May 2010, a number of changes to the implementation and delivery of the Diploma qualification were introduced. The Minister of State for Schools announced² that development of new Diplomas in science, humanities and languages, which were due to be introduced from September 2011, would be discontinued. Additionally the Diploma entitlement, whereby all young people within an area would be able to access any of the Diploma subjects, would be removed and that the decision about which Diploma subjects would be available to students would in future be made by schools and colleges. Moreover, it was decided that the Gateway application process whereby consortia (of schools, colleges, training providers, employers and HEIs) had previously submitted an application to the Department for Education (DfE)³ for each Diploma subject they wanted to offer would no longer be required for provision commencing from 2012. Other changes included the freedom for institutions to decide whether or not they wanted to work collaboratively to provide Diploma provision. Updates on the Diploma reform can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/teachingandlearning/qualifications/diploma/a0064056/diploma-announcements>

On 25 November 2010, ministers announced plans to reform the Diploma to make it easier to teach and award. This will bring the Diploma into line with other vocational qualifications. Final decisions about the way the Diploma will be reformed will follow Professor Wolf's review of 14-19 vocational education, which reported in March 2011.

The Diploma qualifications are offered at three levels Level 1 (foundation), Level 2 (higher) and Level 3 (advanced) across 14 subjects, and have been implemented in three phases, as Table 1.1 illustrates:

² Update from DfE on Diplomas and other qualifications relevant to 14-19 year olds: July 2010

³ Formerly known as the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Table 1.1 Diploma subjects

<p>Phase 1 subjects Construction and the Built Environment Engineering Information Technology Creative and Media Society, Health and Development</p>	<p>Introduced in September 2008</p>
<p>Phase 2 subjects Business, Administration and Finance Hair and Beauty Studies Hospitality Environmental and Land-Based Studies Manufacturing and Product Design</p>	<p>Introduced in September 2009</p>
<p>Phase 3 subjects Public Services Retail Business Sport and Active Leisure Travel and Tourism</p>	<p>Introduced in September 2010</p>

The Diploma consists of three main components:

- **Principal learning** – sector-related knowledge and underpinning skills needed to progress in relevant sectors.
- **Generic learning** – Functional Skills in English, mathematics and Information and Communication Technology (ICT), development of personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS), and a project or extended project.
- **Additional/specialist learning** – additional subjects that offer the opportunity to study a particular topic in more depth, or to study something different that widens the learner experience such as another language, for example. Additional and specialist learning aims to broaden horizons and help to open up lots of different opportunities in future study and employment.

Diplomas also include learning in the workplace (a minimum of ten days' work experience), and learning through realistic work environments, to enable the development of practical skills and work-related application of learning.

The Diploma components have been designed with the aim of preparing learners for employment or further study through incorporating elements that aim to develop learners' life skills, problem-solving and creative thinking, as well as their Functional Skills in mathematics, English and ICT and subject-specific knowledge. The introduction of the Diploma also aims to benefit employers by enabling young people to enter the workforce with more relevant skills and an understanding of work.

In January 2008, the DfE commissioned the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and the University of Exeter to conduct the national evaluation of the implementation and impact of Diplomas over the period 2008-2013. This report

presents the findings from the first year of delivery of the second five Diploma subjects introduced in September 2009.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The purpose of the national evaluation is to provide policy makers and practitioners with systematic and robust evidence which will enable them to make informed judgements about the outcomes of the Diplomas for different stakeholders and to make improvements to design and delivery, if appropriate. The two main aims are:

- To review the **implementation and delivery** of the Diplomas – in terms of the processes and factors facilitating or hindering successful implementation; the structural issues related to design and content; and the systems for planning, organising and resourcing provision and supporting progression.
- To assess the **impact** of the Diplomas on young people – in terms of their participation in education and training; attainment of qualifications; and progression to further and higher education, training and employment.

The evaluation will also gather the perceptions and experiences of the Diplomas from a range of stakeholders which includes young people, parents, teachers, employers and higher education (HE) staff.

1.3 Research methods

The overall research design for the evaluation provides a complementary mixed-method approach to address the complex range of issues and aims associated with the implementation of the Diplomas. The study has three main strands: surveys of a range of stakeholders (including consortium leads, learners, teaching staff, parents, employers and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)); a longitudinal programme of qualitative case studies; and statistical analysis of external datasets. More details can be found in Appendix A.

This report examines how the implementation of the second phase of the Diploma (five new subjects available from September 2009) was progressing in its first year of Diploma delivery. The following sections outline the research methods adopted to gather the evidence presented in this report.

1.3.1 Selection of the survey sample

A sample of 60 consortia that were commencing delivery of at least one of the new five Diploma subjects in September 2009 was identified. The sample was drawn to include consortia offering all three levels of Diploma and all of the five new Diploma subjects. These consortia included those that had delivered Diplomas from 2008 and those that commenced delivery in 2009. The schools that comprised the sampled consortia were broadly representative of all Diploma-delivering schools in terms of key variables such as achievement bands and the proportion of their pupils who were known to be eligible for free school meals.⁴

⁴ See Appendix B for details of the sample.

1.3.2 Survey of learners

The sample of 60 Diploma consortia comprised 406 institutions including those who only had students up to 16, those who were post-16 institutions only and those who had students pre-16 and post-16. All of these institutions were invited to participate in the survey and each sampled institution was sent questionnaires in February 2010 to give, as appropriate to:

- Diploma learners in Year 10
- Diploma learners in Year 12
- Students in Year 10 who were not taking a Diploma – as a comparison group
- Students in Year 12 who were not taking a Diploma – as a comparison group.

Students from 104 institutions responded to the survey⁵ comprising:

- 730 Diploma learners in Year 10
- 224 Diploma learners in Year 12
- 1397 comparison learners in Year 10
- 338 comparison learners in Year 12.

The questionnaire data was matched by DfE to the National Pupil Database (NPD) which contains details of learners' characteristics and prior attainment. This enabled the analysis to explore representativeness and to examine differences in responses in relation to characteristics and achievement of students.

The Diploma learners who responded to the survey were not representative of all Diploma learners in some key respects⁶. Consequently, the data was weighted by gender and attainment for Year 10 learners, and gender and Diploma subject⁷ for those in Year 12, to be representative of all Diploma learners in these characteristics. Similarly, the responding comparison groups were not representative of all non-Diploma students in schools that offered Diplomas. Therefore, the data was weighted by gender and attainment for Year 10 learners and by gender for Year 12 learners, so that the responding sample of comparison learners was representative of students in schools that offered Diplomas but had not chosen to take a Diploma.

Of the Year 10 Diploma learners, the majority (80 per cent) said that they were taking a Level 2 Diploma while 12 per cent said their Diploma was at Level 1 (the remaining eight per cent were not sure or did not respond). This reflects that the majority of Diplomas studied nationally are at Level 2 (DfE Statistical Release 2010⁸). Among the post-16 Diploma learners who responded to the survey, most (61 per cent) were taking a Diploma at Level 2 while 21 per cent were taking a Level 3 Diploma and 10 per cent Level 1 (eight per cent were not sure or did not respond).

⁵ The evaluation was suspended in May 2010 due to the election therefore the reminder strategy was curtailed

⁶ See Appendix C for details of the representativeness of the responding samples of learners

⁷ There was insufficient attainment data available to weight using attainment

⁸ <http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000967/osr26-2010.pdf>

Among the respondents in Year 10, the most widely taken Diplomas were Creative and Media and Hair and Beauty, while in Year 12 the most common were Creative and Media and Society, Health and Development, as can be seen in Table 1.1 below. Creative and Media is also the most widely taken Diploma nationally⁹ and the survey response reflects this. While the sample of consortia surveyed ensured coverage of the second phase Diploma subjects (all consortia were offering at least one of the phase 2 subjects), the extent to which these were taken by students affects their representation in the survey sample.

Table 1.1 Diploma subjects taken by Diploma survey respondents

Diploma Subject	Year 10 Diploma respondents %	Year 12 Diploma respondents %
First phase subjects (available from 2008)		
Construction and the Built Environment	6	5
Creative and Media	18	27
Engineering	13	4
IT	16	16
Society, Health and Development	11	22
Second phase five subjects (available from 2009)		
Business Administration and Finance	10	12
Hair and Beauty Studies	18	4
Hospitality	4	0
Environmental and Land-based Studies	2	3
Manufacturing and Product Design	1	0
No response	2	7
N=	730	224

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.

Source: NFER / Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Survey of Year 10 and Year 12 Learners 2010

In considering the findings to the surveys of learners it is worth considering that not all Diploma learners responded. Consequently, as is often the case with questionnaire surveys, there is a risk of non-response bias in the data. For example, it may be the case that individuals who have certain characteristics, such as being more motivated, or have a greater desire to express their view of the Diploma as a result of a particularly positive or negative experience, are more likely to respond.

As far as possible we have sought to minimise this impact in the analysis through weighting the data by two variables – attainment and gender – which are likely to be influential on young people’s experience and attitudes (prior attainment and gender are both significant predictors of attainment and attitudes (O’Donnell *et al.*, 2009 and Lynch *et al.*, 2010) at key stage 4). However, it is not possible to weight the data in relation to personal attributes and characteristics as these are not known for the

⁹<http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/STR/d000967/osr26-2010.pdf>

whole population, even where they are known for the responding cohort. Notwithstanding this challenge in conducting analysis of questionnaire surveys, the findings from the survey evidence generally corresponded with the experiences of those who were interviewed and with evidence from other research relating to experience of non-GCSE courses (Golden *et al.*, 2005 and Golden *et al.*, 2006). Consequently, the evidence from the surveys can be said to represent the views of Diploma learners more generally.

1.3.3 Selection of the case-study sample

A sub-sample of 15 consortia was selected for the case studies, from the 60 Diploma consortia used for the surveys. This sample was selected to ensure that the case-studies covered:

- **Diploma subjects** and levels: all Diploma subjects but particularly those in Phase 2, at all three levels, were represented
- **Number of subjects:** the sample included consortia offering different numbers of subjects from Phase 1 and 2
- **Geography:** consortia in each of the nine Government Office Regions (GORs) and in rural and urban areas were included
- **Partnership structure and delivery models:** the sample included different types of institutions involved in delivery, different partnership structures and models of delivery (for example, pre-existing and new partnerships and different types of institution involved in delivery).

Further details about the case-study sample are provided in Appendix A.

1.3.4 Case-studies

Case-study visits were conducted between February and April 2010. The purpose of these visits was to explore in depth the progress in the first year of implementing the Diplomas, with a particular focus on the second phase of Diploma subjects, the extent to which the delivery models were working well and their experience of teaching the new qualifications. The visits also examined learners' experience of, and satisfaction with, the Diploma and their plans, at that stage, for the future.

Each consortium case-study comprised visits to up to four institutions engaged in Diploma delivery in September 2009. Typically, schools and post-16 providers (including FE colleges and sixth form colleges) were included. A total of 32 institutions were visited. Interviews took place with staff in a range of roles. These included consortium leads, subject leads, senior institutional managers, teachers responsible for teaching the Diploma. Interviews were also conducted with Year 10 and Year 12 learners who were taking Diplomas. Details of the number of interviews achieved are presented in Table 1.2.¹⁰ The number of Year 12 learners interviewed was lower than anticipated. This partly reflected the lower take-up nationally of post-16 Diplomas and the lack of a Level 3 offer in some of the consortia visited.

¹⁰ Further details are provided in Appendix D.

Table 1.2 Numbers of interviews achieved

Type of interviewee ¹¹	Number of interviews completed
Consortium leads/strategic managers	13
Diploma subject leads	25
Senior institution managers	29
Diploma teachers	26
Year 10 Diploma learners	97
Year 12 Diploma learners	24

It should be noted that, where consortia were involved in delivering more than two Diploma subjects, two subjects were 'selected' for the focus of the teacher and learner interviews (to minimise the burden on consortia and institutions, but also to ensure, where possible, that views on all subjects were captured across the sample). Moreover, where possible, interviews were conducted with teachers of the second phase Diploma subjects, however institutions were not always able to accommodate this.

The views of staff and young people are presented in this report. In relation to some aspects, the number of consortia where a view was expressed is given. This is to provide some guidance on the extent of an experience or approach within the 15 case-study consortia. However, in considering these figures, it is worth taking into consideration that, during the interviews, interviewees were not all asked identical questions with a set range of responses, as they would be on a questionnaire. Rather, the views expressed in response to a semi-structured set of interview questions will reflect the issues, priorities, concerns and context for each interviewee.

Throughout the report comparisons have been made as appropriate with the evidence from the visits to these consortia in 2009 and with the findings from the Cohort 1 visits when they were at the same stage of delivery.

1.3.5 Analysis of data

As noted above, the survey data was weighted by gender and attainment, using data from the NPD, in order to enhance its representativeness of Diploma learners and non-Diploma learners. The survey data analysis then comprised the following:

- descriptive statistics of the responses to the learner surveys
- comparative analysis, to explore for example, the extent of differences or similarities between the responses Diploma and comparison learners, these comparisons were not subject to tests for statistical significance
- cross tabulations, exploring the relationship between a number of variables (for example, Diploma subject and learner satisfaction)
- factor analysis to aggregate variables from the Year 10 and 12 learner questionnaires in order to produce more robust measures than a consideration of

¹¹ Please note that some staff may have dual roles so these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

the individual items on the questionnaire alone for inclusion in the multilevel models

- multilevel modelling to explore the relationship between Year 10 learners' background factors and outcomes, such as their satisfaction with the Diploma and whether they would consider taking as Diploma in future, whilst taking account of other influences.¹²

1.4 Structure of the report

Chapter 2 explores the management of Diplomas at consortium level which is then further explored at operational level in Chapter 3. This is followed, in Chapter 4, with an investigation of teachers' experience of teaching the Diploma and the nature and extent to which this differs from teaching other qualifications. Chapter 5 discusses the students' choices to take a Diploma, the influences on this and the role of IAG in informing learners' decisions. The evidence of the learners' experience of taking a Diploma is presented in Chapter 6 including their satisfaction with the Diploma learning experience and the influences on this. Students' planned future destinations, and the extent to which taking a Diploma or progressing to higher education features in this, is the focus of Chapter 7. This is followed by Chapter 8 which presents the lessons learned by consortia and their plans for the future regarding the Diploma. Finally, Chapter 9 presents the main conclusions from the evaluation evidence.

¹² Multilevel modelling was not carried out for the analysis of the Year 12 learner surveys, as the number of responding learners was too small.

2 Diploma Delivery: Consortium Level

Key findings

- Consortium management structure was generally considered sound, but there was scope to improve through enhancing communication and improving strategic leadership in some cases.
- Six consortia already had, or were considering some cross-boundary collaboration with another consortium or local authority. The chief barrier to this was reaching agreement on aligned timetabling.
- There was broad acknowledgement that collaboration worked best when it was identified at local level and then evolved. Evidence of consortia that were operating collaboratively at all levels and among all partners was rare.
- Diploma funding for institutions was allocated on a formula of 'paying the provider'. Although most consortium leads (11) thought the distribution of funding was fair and did not cause concern, institutional managers were generally less positive, with the main unease relating to the future of funding and the level of funding not being sufficient to cover their costs.

Implications for policy and practice

- The removal of the requirement for consortia to deliver Diplomas collaboratively should also remove one of the major challenges for consortia, who operate in a context of institutional independence and logistical complexities when working collaboratively. If institutions are able to choose the method of delivery which best suits their circumstances, it is likely that many will opt for in-house delivery, where possible, for pragmatic reasons, while others will choose some form of partnership delivery, if this offers clear advantages for their curriculum and their students.

This chapter examines the first year of Diploma delivery for those consortia where students had started their Diploma in September 2009 (described as cohort 2 as these courses had been approved through the original Gateway 2 process). It is based on case-study visits to institutions in 15 consortia, and interviews with consortium leads, subject leads, senior institutional managers, teachers and students taking a Diploma in Year 10 or Year 12.

2.1 Consortium management

2.1.1 Diploma subjects delivered

Consortium leads provided information on which Diploma subjects and levels were being delivered from September 2009, and the extent to which this matched their previous expectations.

Table 2.1 Diploma subjects delivered

Phase 1 subjects	Pre-16	Post-16
Construction and the Built Environment	4	0
Engineering	6	0
Information Technology	6	2
Creative and Media	9	5
Society, Health and Development	4	1
Phase 2 subjects		
Business, Administration and Finance	8	3
Hair and Beauty Studies	10	2
Hospitality	1	0
Environmental and Land-Based Studies	4	0
Manufacturing and Product Design	0	0

As can be seen in table 2.1, thirteen case-study consortia were delivering post-16 Diplomas, with one only offering a one-year Level 2 Diploma, and others a mixture of Level 3, Progression and Level 2 Diplomas. All 15 consortia had started pre-16 Level 2 Diploma courses in 2009, and Level 1 Diplomas were provided in nine consortia.

Of the ten Diploma subjects available from 2009, the one provided most often was Hair and Beauty Studies, followed by Creative and Media and Business, Administration and Finance¹³.

Generally the subjects and levels provided in September 2009 were as had been anticipated during the baseline case-study visits in the spring of that year, but in one consortium the decision had been made not to offer any Diplomas at Level 1, because of the conclusion, as reported by the consortium lead, that the Diploma was '*not suited to Level 1 learners*'.

Overall, consortia were delivering subjects as planned, and lack of student take-up was the primary reason for a Diploma subject not being provided as originally anticipated.

2.1.2 Changes to consortium management structures and perceived effectiveness

Changes to consortium management structure, compared to the structure identified during baseline visits in spring 2009, had occurred in only three consortia by the time of these follow-up visits a year later, and these were not major structural changes. In one, a new sub-group had been established to develop consortium policy on Information, Advice and Guidance, in partnership with the Connexions Service. In the other two consortia, the changes related to individual personnel, and were reported to have improved the overall management.

Consortium and subject leads were given the opportunity to consider the effectiveness of their consortium management and the extent to which any weaknesses identified during baseline visits had been overcome. As had been the

¹³ Case-study consortia were selected because they offered at least one of the five Phase 2 Diploma subjects.

case with cohort 1 consortia (O'Donnell *et al.*, (2009) and Lynch *et al.*, 2010), there were sometimes differences of opinion between consortium and subject leads and a wide variation between consortia. There was also a similarly expressed view that although the consortium infrastructure was sound and worked well, the extent to which they could function effectively was dependent on the commitment to the Diploma in institutions, and their willingness to work collaboratively (collaboration is discussed in section 2.2).

Where weaknesses in consortium effectiveness were identified by interviewees (in five consortia), this was due to a lack of strong leadership and communication between strategic and operational levels or between institutions, insufficient time for subject leads to carry out their role properly because of other commitments and ineffective information systems which hampered operational progress. Additionally, in one consortium divisions within the local authority and distraction caused by major reorganisation were perceived to further hamper consortium effectiveness.

Reflecting the evaluation findings from cohort 1 (O'Donnell *et al.*, (2009) and Lynch *et al.*, 2010), the key to consortium effectiveness in cohort 2 was considered to be strong, but flexible leadership and a communications system which ensured information was passed quickly between different groups and institutions. Where these aspects were lacking, interviewees were more likely to consider their consortium was less effective.

2.2 Collaboration

2.2.1 The local authority role and cross-boundary collaboration

The baseline visits to the case-study consortia had established that in most cases, local authorities were involved in Diploma consortia through the broader 14-19 Partnership (McCrone *et al.*, 2010) so that, as one consortium lead explained:

There is no real distinction between the consortium and the local authority – everything is done through the 14-19 Partnership.

Several consortium leads emphasised that it was this Partnership which held overall strategic control for all decisions on 14-19 education and training.

Visits to cohort 1 consortia in 2009 and 2010 had indicated a developing interest in some areas in collaboration between neighbouring consortia, and with other local authorities, as a means of moving towards the full Diploma entitlement in 2013. A similar approach was identified in case-study visits to cohort 2 consortia; however, these visits took place prior to the announcement of the withdrawal of the full Diploma entitlement, and consequently views may be different. In six consortia some cross-boundary collaboration was already taking place, or was under consideration, for some Diploma subjects. The main barrier to achieving this was reaching agreement on an aligned timetable. As it will no longer be necessary for consortia to offer the full Diploma entitlement, such challenges may remove any interest in cross-boundary collaboration, but in others, investigating such possibilities may still be considered worthwhile for the benefit of larger numbers of students.

2.2.2 Consortium collaboration

The baseline case-study visits in 2009 had indicated that collaboration, in terms of the management and delivery of the Diploma across a consortium was in an early stage of development across most of the cohort 2 consortia, and the first year of

delivery does not appear to have brought any substantial change. In the three consortia that were most collaborative there was evidence of a fully integrated Additional and Specialist Learning (ASL) offer, co-located and shared delivery models that were considered to be working well (see Section 3.1.3 for more details of delivery models), and commitment and communication from strategic managers. This was facilitated by a history of partnership working and a willingness to work together to broaden the curriculum for learners.

There was less of a consensus view within the remaining consortia, although interviewees in three consortia reported that there had been progress from the previous year. In one of these, for example, the consortium lead noted a good relationship between a school and college, more regular meetings and particular progress in the appointment of a Diploma coordinator in each participating institution, who played a key role in improving communication. However, he added that '*collaboration across the board has not improved*', and there was not enough '*buy-in from schools*'.

One consortium lead summed up the overall perception when he described '*a failure to embrace the collaborative agenda*'. Although this was not true of all institutions, and there were examples of good partnership working, it was not extensive enough, or strong enough to describe the whole consortium as collaborative. The reasons for institutions' unwillingness to embrace collaboration, or even to commit fully to providing the Diploma to their students, has been discussed in previous reports (MCCrone *et al.*, 2010, O'Donnell *et al.*, 2009 and Lynch *et al.*, 2010) and were reflected again by these visits, but the main barriers were considered to be:

- the perceived complexity of the Diploma and preference for other qualifications, such as GCSEs/A levels and BTECs
- the particular challenges presented by the inclusion of functional skills
- the impact of the Diploma on institutional timetabling, and logistical barriers such as transport for students, and time commitments from staff for meetings and travel
- the lack of trust in the standards and procedures of other institutions
- institutions protecting their own student numbers because of funding implications, or local school reorganisation
- lack of previous partnership working or cooperation between institutions
- lack of leadership at 14-19 Partnership level or consortium level.

Reflecting the views of cohort 1 interviewees, there was an acknowledgement that collaboration only worked well when the need was identified at the local level and allowed to evolve and institutions could see the benefits for their students. In those circumstances challenges could be overcome and disadvantages accepted, but if collaboration was imposed on reluctant partners, it was unlikely to be successful.

These case-study visits took place before the removal of the requirement for consortium collaboration in Diploma delivery. A preference for in-house delivery (which did not necessarily exclude contact and cooperation with other institutions) may in future predominate in many areas, as it was regarded as the most cost-effective and least complicated delivery model (see section 3.1.3 for more details on delivery models). For other institutions, however, if collaboration offers benefits, such as access to specialist facilities and staff skills, and there is a willingness to make the

effort required for this to operate well, then shared delivery and partnership working are likely to continue.

2.3 Funding

Views on the funding for Diplomas from the cohort 2 case-studies were very similar to those expressed by interviewees in cohort 1 areas (Golden *et al.*, forthcoming). Consortium leads reported that funding came from the local authority or 14-19 Partnership, and was then distributed to institutions according to an agreed formula. This involved a system, which with variations followed a pattern of 'paying the provider'. In some consortia this formula had been worked out to give a cost per hour or per Diploma student. As had been reported in some cohort 1 consortia, this could be operated by means of 'virtual transfer', with institutions delivering Diplomas as the 'creditors' and those sending out their students as the 'debtors'. Some consortium leads referred to keeping some funding in reserve for transport costs, or other consortium-level expenditure, such as training courses or Information, Advice and Guidance for students and parents.

Of the 13 consortium leads who commented on funding, all but two appeared to consider that the formula used for distributing funding was fair and did not cause any major concerns. Of the two who raised funding as an issue, one said that there was '*no coherent policy*' for distribution, and the other described the formula as having been devised by '*a small group of headteachers*', with the result that schools and colleges disagreed on how it should be allocated. In this latter consortium, the senior managers interviewed in three institutions all expressed frustration with the funding situation – one interviewee summed up their views:

The funding isn't working because nobody has divided up the money. The formula is there, we're all waiting for something to happen, and nobody's quite sure why it hasn't.

Institutional interviewees' perceptions of funding were generally less positive than those of consortium leads. In addition to comments about confusion over how funding formulae operated, there were specific concerns, all of them reflecting issues that had been raised in Cohort 1 consortia (Lynch *et al.*, 2010):

- **Perceptions of fairness:** Across three consortia, institutional managers did not think that funding was fairly distributed. This was either because of the view that it was more expensive for a college to deliver a Diploma than it was for a school to do so (because of the specialist resources required), or because of the way development funding had been allocated. For example, one senior manager commented:

The capital funding has been allocated to institutions appallingly. The institution that was meant to deliver IT has received funding to put in a new IT suite, but they are not willing to play ball and work in partnership with us, so capital investment is being hived off in a way that is highly unfair.

- **Amount of funding:** Across four consortia, concerns were raised about the level of funding not being sufficient to cover institutional costs. In some cases this was leading senior managers to reconsider the extent of their involvement in Diplomas, as this interviewee explained:

We are out of pocket and we are not going to play the same game next year.

- **Future funding:** Concern about the future of funding was referred to by institution staff in four consortia. Sometimes this related to a specific cost, for example, that Domain Assessor funding would end in August 2010, and then schools would have to provide funding for this role. Otherwise it was related to costs in general, as this senior manager explained:

If the funding is not available in future there will be issues over staffing and maintaining facilities.

Overall, therefore, while at consortium level there was generally satisfaction that the distribution of Diploma funding was working well and fairly, in some consortia, institutions had concerns about how the system operated, or about the extent to which their costs were covered. There was also some unease about future funding and the effect on the sustainability of the Diploma.

2.4 Summary

Diploma subjects and levels provided by cohort 2 case-study consortia were largely as had been anticipated the previous year. A low level of student take-up was the reason why in some cases a subject had not been provided. Consortium management structures were working as originally planned, but could be further enhanced by greater willingness to work collaboratively, more effective communication and improved strategic leadership.

As was the case with cohort 1, cohort 2 consortium leads reported that funding came from the local authority or 14-19 Partnership, and was then distributed to institutions according to an agreed formula. Commitment to collaborative delivery across consortia was not considered to have improved much from baseline level and it was widely acknowledged that collaboration only worked well when it developed organically, rather than being imposed. This finding was consistent with cohort 1 where partnership working was reported to have faced challenges in most consortia.

3 Diploma Delivery: Operational Level

Key findings

- The most widespread delivery models were those involving students from a school travelling to a college or training provider, and the in-house model, where delivery was only to an institution's own learners. In-house delivery was used particularly with the Creative and Media, Information Technology and Business, Administration, and Finance Diplomas, while Engineering, Hair and Beauty Studies, Environmental and Land-based Studies and Construction and the Built Environment were much less likely to be delivered in-house.
- In-house delivery had the most positive response in view of how well it worked, while co-located and shared delivery models were more challenging.
- The overall engagement of employers was reported positively. Training providers were involved in Diploma delivery in three consortia, but in two this had been challenging. Only one consortium had HEI involvement in delivery.
- There was a more widespread specialist learning offer than had been the case in cohort 1 consortia, but only one consortium had an integrated, consortium-wide ASL offer.
- In the majority of consortia (nine), work placements were organised at institution level, and generally colleges and schools with a related specialism (for example, business and enterprise) reported good links with employers.
- In five consortia, work placements would be undertaken as a ten-day block, whereas in others the ten days were divided in a variety of ways.
- Across all consortia the functional skills component of Diplomas, was the component that presented most issues. Key concerns related to its separation in delivery from principal learning and the possibility that students might not achieve the full Diploma because of the need to pass functional skills tests at Level 2.

Implications for policy and practice

- The work placement component of the Diploma is viewed positively at all levels and there would be benefit in consortia with particularly effective practices in employer engagement sharing these widely.
- The ASL component of Diplomas was not fully integrated into the Diploma in most cases, and did not appear to be working as effectively as intended and personalised learning is more likely to be achieved through a well-organised Project element.
- In general the functional skills component has presented the most challenges in Diploma delivery and its uncoupling from the Diploma would be widely welcomed.

This chapter examines the models of delivering Diplomas, including the involvement of training providers, higher education institutions and employers. It also looks at the delivery of the component parts of the Diploma in terms of how they are being delivered and organised.

3.1 Delivery models

The detailed information on delivery models emerged from the case studies and reflected the findings from the cohort 1 case-study consortia, and the student survey responses. The models of Diploma delivery that were used most widely were those involving a school(s) and a FE college/training provider (in ten consortia), and an 'in-house' model, where all Diploma learning was provided only to an institution's own learners (in nine consortia). Although the former can be described as a shared delivery model, it was usually based on co-location, with students attending a college, or occasionally a training provider, for all their principal learning and project work, and sometimes also for ASL. Usually a student's home institution was responsible for delivering functional skills, and often also the additional learning element of ASL. However, there were also examples of principal learning being shared between institutions, a model which was considered by interviewees as a more accurate description of shared delivery.

The other major models of delivery were where a school sent its Diploma learners to another school for all their principal learning and project work, and where two or more schools shared the teaching of principal learning. The perceived advantages and disadvantages of these models are discussed in section 3.1.2.

3.1.1 Delivery models

Table 3.1 shows that 46 per cent of learners undertook at least some of their Diploma learning at their own school while 33 per cent said that they studied some of their Diploma at another school and 36 per cent did so at an FE college or sixth form college. It was less common for learners to study some of their Diploma at a training provider (four per cent) or an HEI (two per cent).

Table 3.1 Location of Diploma lessons

Where do your Diploma lessons take place?	Year 10 Diploma learners %
At own school	46
At another school	33
At an FE college/sixth form college	36
At a training provider	4
At an employer	1
At a university/higher education institution	2
Somewhere else	4
No response	3

N = 730

More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.

The percentages in this table are weighted.

All Year 10 Diploma learners who indicated where they studied.

Source: NFER Year 10 Diploma Learner survey2010

Learners could study at more than one location. Further analysis of these survey responses identified that 30 per cent of Year 10 learners only studied the Diploma at their own school and therefore did not travel to learn. A further 17 per cent of learners studied for their Diploma at both their own school and another location such as a college or training provider. However, the most common location for Year 10 learners surveyed to study their Diploma was at a location outside their school. This could be either at a college or another school. For the Year 12 survey respondents, the proportion studying a Diploma in their own institution was considerably greater (81 per cent), with 13 per cent undertaking a Diploma in another school or college.

Of those who were travelling to learn, in Year 10, three per cent had major problems with travel, 30 per cent had problems which they could manage, and 62 per cent reported no travel problems. Amongst the Year 12 respondents, seven per cent reported major travel problems, 34 per cent had problems that were manageable and 41 per cent reported no problems.¹⁴

Case-study interviewees indicated that in-house delivery models were in use particularly for the Creative and Media, Information Technology, and Business, Administration and Finance Diplomas, while Engineering, Hair and Beauty Studies, Environmental and Land Based Studies and Construction and the Built Environment were much less likely to be delivered entirely in-house. This reflected the student survey responses. Examination of the location of learning of each Diploma subject taken by Year 10 students showed that:

- None were studying Construction and the Built Environment or Environmental and Land Based Studies only in their own school.
- Nine per cent were taking an Engineering Diploma, and 16 per cent Hair and Beauty Studies were studying at their school only, while 57 per cent of Information Technology students, 42 per cent of Business, Administration and Finance students and 36 per cent of Creative and Media students did so.
- The majority of learners taking Construction and the Built Environment, Engineering and Hair and Beauty Studies were doing so at another location (68 per cent, 55 per cent and 69 per cent respectively).

Reflecting cohort 1 case-study consortia, it seems that the decision on how a Diploma subject should be delivered was generally based on pragmatic considerations of avoiding complications (for example of students travelling) where possible, as well as considering where staff expertise and good resources resided. Where consortia were providing several Diploma subjects, they often used a different model, or combinations of them, for each subject. For example, in the two consortia where seven subjects were provided, there were as many different delivery models operating.

One of the cohort 2 consortia was making use of a particular model, also identified in several cohort 1 case-study areas, where all Diploma students for a particular subject(s) attended a City Learning Centre (CLC) for principal learning. Such a 'neutral' learning venue was considered to be particularly useful (as explained in section 3.1.3).

¹⁴ 18 per cent did not respond and the number of Year 10 respondents who were travelling to learn was 41.

3.1.2 Delivery models: advantages and disadvantages

As would be expected, views on what worked well and did not work well with delivery models sometimes varied considerably, not only between consortia, but also within consortia, according to whether the interviewee was from a strategic or operational level, and depending on the type of institution in which they were based. The following overview is distilled from the many detailed comments made by those interviewed at consortium level (consortium and subject leads) and those at institutional level (senior managers and teachers).

In-house delivery

The sole delivery, or 'in-house' model, where a school provided all the Diploma teaching to their own students only, and its equivalent, where a college was sole deliverer to its own students (post-16), was accepted at consortium level as having advantages for institutions. This was because it was less complicated to operate than other models and involved less expense than students travelling to another institution. The general view was that as long as the school had the appropriate facilities and staff expertise, it would not result in any disadvantages to students' learning, and it had an advantage in allowing flexibility within an institution to be able to use non-Diploma time, if this was required, for example for visits or additional teaching.

Its inherent disadvantages were that its sustainability was dependent on staff within the school and that those staff were working in isolation. It was this that led some consortium leads to consider that in-house delivery was in opposition to what was described as 'the Diploma ethos', which was considered to be based on collaborative delivery. By contrast, for most of the institutions that were using in-house delivery, the avoidance of the challenges of collaborative delivery was regarded as a major benefit of this model, as this college senior manager explained:

We would prefer to deliver all courses ourselves in-house, because you have control over what is taught, when it's taught, how the students are handled. We know that everything is at the right standard.

In some cases, particularly in rural consortia, it was also pointed out that the distance from any other institution made this model the only practical choice. There was agreement from interviewees in an institution with in-house delivery in one consortium however, that the number of students who could take their Diploma subject was limited by the number of specialist staff.

Co-located delivery

The use of the model by which a school sent its Diploma students to a college (or training provider) for at least all their principal learning, and sometimes for the Project and specialist learning, gave rise to some particularly diverse views. It was in use across eight consortia, and was accepted at both consortium and institutional level as having an advantage in making the facilities and specialist teaching staff of FE colleges available for students who would not have been able to take the Diploma subject in their school. Consortium leads in the areas where this model operated, college staff and some school staff also agreed that students could also benefit from access to a different and more adult environment. Some college interviewees did not want shared teaching between institutions and considered that the best way to operate this model was for the college to have 'total control' of delivery (meaning that the school(s) only had responsibility for functional skills), because this avoided the

need to negotiate with other institutions. The views expressed by interviewees from both colleges and schools operating this model, indicated that for it to work well, it was necessary to have:

- agreed Quality Assurance of the delivery of all Diploma components
- effective sharing of information about students
- an aligned timetable which included cooperation on the length of the study day and academic terms
- good school-college relationships, with frequent contact and exchange of information
- a transport strategy which avoided students arriving late on a regular basis.

The other main co-location model involved a school sending its students to another school for all their principal learning (operating in two consortia). Although there was no shared teaching, it could operate as a more collaborative model, as in one consortium it was used on a reciprocal basis whereby students were exchanged for different subjects in which the partner school had the expertise. This arrangement was considered to benefit the students from both schools, and to work effectively because, as the senior manager of one school explained:

Communications are good, the staff are similar in their values and have high expectations and standards.

In the other consortium, the schools sent their learners to another school for all principal learning, the Project and specialist learning, as it had the best facilities and expertise in the Business, Administration and Finance Diploma. As was the case with school-college co-location, this model only worked effectively if there was good communication and trust between the institutions.

Shared delivery

The model by which schools and colleges shared the principal learning was regarded as a strongly collaborative model, as this consortium lead explained:

This is a good collaborative model where school and college staff share delivery, so that they can learn from each other, develop their range of teaching styles, and learners see the Diploma as the school and college working together.

However, in addition to the challenges already identified with co-location, there were other considerations to take into account for this to work successfully. These included:

- a clear definition of the roles of each institution
- agreed procedures on behaviour management
- time for joint planning and for regular meetings for the staff involved
- clear procedures on assessment and allocation of responsibility for assessment tasks.

Good communications were regarded as a key element of success and interviewees indicated that it was not wise to pursue this model unless very good communications and planning were in place, and there was a shared will to overcome any challenges that might arise.

The other shared delivery model, and the one that was probably the most complex to operate, was where schools, or a mixture of schools and colleges, all shared in the teaching of principal learning. In two consortia, it was regarded as a good collaborative model, but one with logistical challenges, which meant that it tended to be more appropriate within a confined travel to learn area. As with school-college shared delivery, a senior manager described working across just two sites as follows:

[there are] *a lot of challenges, with timetabling, different systems and school days... You have to want it to succeed and be prepared to put up with the difficulties.*

In the other, three schools and a college were sharing principal learning on a carousel system, with students being based in each institution for certain units. A senior manager and teacher interviewed here reflected that the complexity of this model was under review, as it had been '*complicated and unsettling for students*'. Although this model can be regarded as an effective way of sharing the resources and particular staff expertise that existed for different principal learning units, the evidence suggests it requires particularly careful management and a high level of institutional commitment.

There was one consortium that had a particular model for two Diploma subjects (Business, Administration and Finance and Creative and Media), which was regarded at consortium and institutional level as very successful. This involved a number of schools sending their students to a CLC for all their principal learning, which was delivered by teachers from the participating schools. The advantages of this were that it involved a strong element of collaboration, with teachers and students from different schools working together, but because it was on a 'neutral' site, it avoided some of the perceived challenges of schools sending their students to another school or college. In addition, the facilities provided at the CLC were of a very high standard, so the students benefited from this and the different environment in which they worked.

3.1.3 Involvement of training providers, HEIs and employers in delivery models

Overall, there was widespread use of employers but HEIs and training providers were not used widely. Training provider involvement in Diploma delivery was indicated in three consortia. All the consortia using a training provider were doing so for Hair and Beauty Studies, and interviewees noted some challenges with this approach. These related to concerns over quality of provision and a competitive attitude, which had involved a training provider '*approaching schools on their own in competition with the consortium*'.

Only one consortium had any HEI involvement with Diplomas at operational level, rather than solely being represented on a strategic group. Here, an HEI was involved in mentoring Engineering Diploma students with their Project work, lecturers were helping in the delivery of some aspects of the principal learning for Society, Health and Development, and the HEI also made resources available for the Information Technology Diploma. The consortium lead felt that this successful example of

collaboration with what was described as a 'recruiter' university, had been facilitated by the latter's perception of Diploma students as '*the type of students that they will be looking to attract in two or three years' time*'.

The involvement of **employers** in directly helping to teach Diploma principal learning units was reported in three consortia, with the overall engagement of employers in cohort 2 case-study areas considered to be generally positive. Of the three consortia with employer involvement in teaching, this related to teaching the Customer Services unit of the Business, Administration and Finance Diploma, teaching a unit of the Information Technology Diploma and teaching units of both the Hair and Beauty Studies and Creative and Media Diplomas. In a further seven consortia, employers were reported to be involved in some way in assisting with Diplomas. As had been the case with cohort 1 consortia, and discussed in Chapter 4, this support included:

- hosting visits for students
- giving talks to Diploma students, including delivering masterclasses on a particular aspect of principal learning
- setting assignments for students
- assisting the gathering of evidence for Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS)
- providing work placements.

Of all the cohort 2 Diploma subjects, Hair and Beauty Studies had experienced least difficulty in recruiting employer involvement – support had been achieved for this subject in eight consortia. This was considered by interviewees to have been mainly because of the strong links which already existed between colleges and employers in this sector, as one subject lead explained:

We have been working with businesses and salons for years. We have fantastic links already in place because of apprenticeships, and employers advertise on our boards for staff.

Other factors that facilitated employer engagement were:

- pre-existing links between employers and specialist schools (reported in three consortia for Business, Administration and Finance and two for Environmental and Land Based Studies)
- the assistance of the local Education Business Partnership (EBP) and/or Chamber of Commerce (in eight consortia)
- having someone in the consortium with a role dedicated to promoting links with employers (colleges and some schools had a person dedicated to developing work-related learning)
- subject leads who had been proactive in adopting strategies to promote employer engagement, such as arranging 'employer breakfasts'
- establishing a link between each Diploma subject offered and a major employer in that sector – this appears to have been limited to one consortium in a major industrial city and so its application to other areas could be limited, but as a principle it was considered to be a positive way forward.

There were five consortia where employer engagement in Diplomas had been more difficult to achieve for at least one subject. The reasons for this were reported to be:

- the challenge of finding suitable employers in the local area. For example, employers associated with the Creative and Media sector were often very small organisations that lacked capacity, or the number of available employers in a rural area was small and widely dispersed
- lack of time for teachers to devote to contacting and building relationships with employers, and (an issue which had been referred to by some employers interviewed in cohort 1 case-study consortia), that teachers sometimes did not have a clear idea of what type of support an employer could most usefully provide
- the economic downturn (in two consortia) was referred to as having affected the level of employer engagement
- the need to ensure that students were engaged in work-related activity that enhanced their learning experience, and avoiding the risk of them being treated '*as a source of cheap labour*', as described by a subject lead. The best way to avoid this situation was considered to be a careful investigation of the experience that individual employers were offering.

As Chapter 6 discusses, employer engagement was one of the key elements that made the Diploma different to the other qualifications that many students took, and was also the element that students particularly enjoyed. The picture emerging from cohort 2 on employer engagement was broadly positive, but it was clear that some consortia and some subjects were encountering ongoing challenges.

3.2 Delivery of component parts

3.2.1 Additional and Specialist Learning

The ASL component of the Diploma comprises additional subjects that offer the opportunity to study a particular topic in more depth, or to study something different that widens the learner experience such as another language for example. ASL aims to broaden horizons and help to open up lots of different opportunities in future study and employment.

There appeared to be a more widespread specialist learning offer (across six consortia) than had been the case in cohort 1 consortia. However, specific specialist learning did not appear to be on offer for any Diploma subjects in seven consortia. In two consortia students were taking specialist learning, but there was no additional learning. In one this was because specialist learning was considered more appropriate in providing practical learning for the students (who were taking Construction and the Built Environment), and only the college where principal learning took place had the resources and qualified staff to provide this. In the other consortium, the colleges delivering Diploma subjects were teaching specialist learning and there appeared to be little communication with schools over this.

In ten consortia, the additional learning provided for pre-16 students was a GCSE subject at their home institution, and for Level 3 students it was an A level. In four consortia, learners had no choice in which additional learning they took – this was because of timetable restrictions, or because of specialist school requirements.

The type of qualification undertaken as specialist learning depended on the level at which the student was working, but was often, for example, a BTEC certificate. The purpose of providing specialist learning was usually to give students the opportunity to undertake more practical learning than was included in the principal learning of the Diploma subject. However, specialist learning was also perceived to give what one teacher described as '*the practical underpinning for the principal learning*' and to provide practical skill development as well as added interest. For example, Hair and Beauty Studies students could take courses in make-up or nail art, and Environmental and Land Based Studies students could take animal welfare or horticulture.

Only one consortium had a fully integrated ASL offer which allowed a student to choose freely from any subject on offer at any participating institution. All pre-16 students took two ASL courses during their two years of Diploma study, and these could be additional or specialist according to context, for example a Certificate in Personal Finance was specialist learning for a Business, Administration and Finance student, but additional learning for a Creative and Media student. Here the perception was that the potential for personalised learning through ASL was making good progress, whereas in other consortia, interviewees felt that there would need to be a much better developed ASL offer for this to be achieved, and that the Project provided better opportunities for personalised learning. The conditions in place for this consortium to be operating a successful ASL model were:

- effective senior management at consortium level
- the involvement of each partnership institution in offering at least one ASL course
- the full participation of learners in deciding on their ASL
- a history of partnership working
- an underpinning transport strategy.

3.2.2 Organisation of work placement

In four consortia there was a consortium-wide approach to the Diploma work placement, while in the other nine it was organised at institution level. In three of the areas using a consortium approach, this was reported to be progressing smoothly, and in one city-based consortium the central organisation responsible for arranging work placements was described as having '*a huge bank of employers*'. In the consortia where each institution was responsible for organising placements, progress was variable and dependent on the type of institution, Diploma subject and how much assistance could be gained from organisations such as the local EBP, Chamber of Commerce, or Connexions service. Colleges generally reported having good links with employers, as did schools with particular specialisms, for example, Business and Enterprise Schools. Some colleges were also able to provide work experience within the institution, for example, where there was a hairdressing salon on site.

In some institutions students were encouraged to find their own placements, if they had the right contacts. In one the subject lead, who was also the teacher, explained that organising their ten-day placement was part of the course, and the students were expected to find a placement linked to a particular area of interest.

Across five consortia, placements were organised in a ten-day block, usually towards the end of Year 10 (in many institutions a work placement had not yet been undertaken by students). This was considered by interviewees to provide sufficient time for students to gain a good understanding of the nature of the employment and to be engaged in worthwhile activities. The approaches used in other consortia were:

- to split the placement between five days in Year 10 and five in Year 11
- to provide a five-day placement related to the Diploma subject and five days 'standard' work experience which all students undertook
- to divide up the ten days into one day per week over several weeks
- to provide one block of five days and then five separate days at different venues.

Dividing the work placement days instead of consolidating them in one block was considered by interviewees to provide a wider range of experience for students and to give greater opportunities for looking at different areas within an employment area. For example, in a consortium where Creative and Media students had five separate days in Year 10 and then a block in Year 11, they could experience diverse working environments such as a theatre, recording studio, or dance company, and then decide which one to follow up for their five day block.

3.2.3 Functional skills

In all the consortia that provided information on functional skills, these were predominantly taught discretely, in the students' home institution. However, reflecting the findings from cohort 1 case-study consortia, some subject leads and Diploma teachers reported that, whenever possible, there was an effort to integrate functional skills into Diploma principal learning. Discrete provision for functional skills either involved Diploma students being taught in separate classes, or they received functional skills tuition within their GCSE mathematics, English and IT lessons. Where the latter model was adopted, interviewees explained that there would often be additional classes for Diploma students in preparation for assessments.

In common with cohort 1 case-study consortia, the prevailing view of functional skills across all consortia was not positive. The main reasons for this were:

- **Level of difficulty:** The perception that it was difficult for students to pass functional skills at Level 2, particularly maths, and that this would jeopardise success rates for students in gaining the full Diploma, even though they were capable of achieving Level 2 in the principal learning. One teacher's comment reflects a wider view:

even bright students are struggling with maths functional skills.

- **Perceptions of fairness:** An objection to the perceived unfairness of only Diploma students having to pass functional skills assessments, which put them at a disadvantage compared to students taking other courses. This view, expressed by interviewees in at least six consortia, was summed up by a school senior manager, who commented:

It's unfair on Diploma students. Functional skills should be uncoupled from the Diploma.

- **Separation from the principal learning:** For various reasons, functional skills were usually taught separately, their purpose was lost, and students often failed to make the connections to their Diploma principal learning. The need to make sure students passed the assessments as soon as possible was widely considered to lead to the situation, described by one teacher as follows:

It's about how to take the test, not do the skills.

- **Impact on Diploma take-up:** Subject leads drew attention to the way in which they considered that the requirement to achieve functional skills was affecting take-up rates for the Diploma and, particularly in the case of Level 3 Diploma students, had a demotivating effect. As a Creative and Media subject lead explained:

Level 3 students don't like it because they've already got an A-C grade in English and maths and they should be accredited for prior learning.

- **Lack of guidance to teachers:** In three consortia concern was expressed about a lack of guidance on teaching functional skills, as reflected by this Business, Administration and Finance teacher, who commented:

Teachers don't know if they're doing it correctly or not. I'd just like a nice clear lead of exactly what we are meant to be putting in place.

An interviewee in one of these consortia explained that this uncertainty had just recently been addressed by a training course which led him to comment; '*now I understand it better*'.

There was sometimes an acknowledgement from interviewees that they did not disagree with the principle behind including functional skills in the Diploma qualification, but that its widespread separation from principal learning, and the fact that only Diploma students had to achieve functional skills, had undermined its purpose. In six consortia there was said to be little communication between those who were teaching functional skills and those teaching principal learning. In one consortium, this was to the extent that the institution responsible for principal learning was not informed that students would miss classes because of functional skills tests in their home school. In another, teachers for three different Diploma subjects expressed concern that students' home schools were not dealing effectively with functional skills. One teacher had decided that in the apparent absence of any functional skills preparation for her students, she would try and teach some functional skills herself, although she felt it was not her role to do so, as a consortium decision had been made that this was the role of the home schools.

Across half the consortia, concern was expressed about the likelihood that not all Level 2 or 3 Diploma students would pass functional skills at the right level, and this would affect Diploma achievement rates.

3.3 Summary

The most prevalent models of delivery were those involving a school and college and an in-house model where all Diploma learning was provided only to an institution's own students. Three consortia reported the involvement of a training provider in Diploma delivery and one had HEI involvement in delivery. The overall level of engagement of employers in cohort 2 consortia was positive, with the Hair and Beauty Studies Diploma reporting the fewest challenges.

Only one consortium was offering ASL on a fully-integrated consortium-wide basis and this was also the only one where there was a view that there was progress towards personalised learning through ASL. In most consortia work placements were organised at institution level, and in five this took the form of a ten day block placement, whereas in the others the ten days were divided up in a variety of ways. As was the case with cohort 1 interviewees, the functional skills component of the Diploma was widely perceived as contributing challenges rather than benefits, in particular the concern that students might not achieve the full Level 2 or 3 Diploma because they might not pass functional skills tests at the required level.

4 Teaching and Learning

Key findings

- Teachers were broadly positive about their experience of teaching the Diploma and, while it had not entailed extensive changes to their teaching style and approach, they had adapted to this to some extent. For example, they were making more direct links to the world of work, using more applied learning techniques, facilitating more independent learning and acting as a guide to learners. In addition delivery involved more sharing of teaching with colleagues and more planning and preparation for some teachers as a result of the more active delivery required.
- Teachers had adopted three key mechanisms for ensuring that the Diploma learning experience was linked to the working world. Involving employers as providers of work experience and in making presentations and discussion with students was widespread. Teachers had also made use of Realistic Working Environments (RWEs) and used practical and enterprise activities in the classroom.
- Where teachers had encountered issues in teaching the Diploma, these included the need to develop independent learning skills in students and to encourage learners to engage with the less applied elements as they were more interested in the applied work. Associated with this was the need to ensure the delivery was sufficiently applied to engage learners. Teachers also noted the challenge of the size and complexity of the Diploma qualification.
- Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) were commonly used to support the delivery of Diplomas, although these were not necessarily consortium-wide. VLEs were used for management information and administration, providing access to teaching and learning information for learners and teachers and providing a forum for interaction between students and between staff and students.
- In five consortia, strategies had been introduced to monitor the quality of teaching while in ten these were under development. Key components of such strategies included having an agreed protocol and some inter-institution lesson observation with agreed criteria and feedback for teaching staff. Ascertaining students' views was also often incorporated through discussions or surveys.
- Agreeing a process for inter-institution lesson observation was one of the main challenges for consortia and there was evidence of reluctance to accommodate this. However, there were indications in consortia who had introduced inter-institution lesson observation that reluctance declined over time and with consultation over criteria.
- The majority of consortia had appointed lead assessors and domain assessors. On the whole, consortia were making progress in building staff's confidence in the assessment process, typically as a result of support and feedback from Awarding Bodies and teachers' increasing familiarity with the process. Nevertheless, it remained an area for development as there were teachers who were less confident about assessment, in particular controlled assessment.

- Satisfaction with support by staff was dependent on staff having time to access it, the extent to which they worked within a supportive context that had appropriate facilities, whether they were able to network and share information and the quality of guidance and direction provided by consortium and subject leads and domain assessors.
- Staff from across more than half of the case-study consortia stated that they needed more time to plan, organise and develop the Diploma workforce. Additionally, time was needed to build employer contacts, engage more fully with the assessment procedures, and establish ways to more fully share information and to support functional skills.

Implications for policy and practice

- While the Diploma provided opportunities to make more use of independent learning, in order for learners to benefit fully from this, it is important to ensure that they have the skills to learn independently, or that these skills are developed.
- Where staff were increasing in their confidence in relation to assessment this was as a result of their increasing familiarity with the requirements and the support received from Awarding Bodies. While this shows that, over time, confidence is likely to increase, it is important to ensure that experience is shared and support is provided by Awarding Bodies to facilitate this.

This chapter explores teaching approaches to the Diploma including how it differs from approaches used for other qualifications and the way in which VLEs are used to support Diploma teaching. It then examines teacher support needs and the way in which the quality of teaching and learning are monitored. Finally, it outlines progress made with assessment.

4.1 Teaching approaches

4.1.1 How teaching the Diploma differs from teaching other qualifications

Teachers, subject leads, senior managers and consortium leads reflected on the experience of teaching, and overseeing the teaching of, the Diplomas in the spring term of the first year of delivery. Overall, teachers were said to have been enjoying teaching the new qualifications and the interviews with teachers themselves also indicated that, in the main, teachers were positive about the experience of teaching Diplomas. It was evident that while teaching the Diplomas had not entailed an extensive change to the teaching approaches adopted by teachers, there were some key differences in teaching the qualification which required staff to adapt their teaching to some extent. Teachers had varied experience of teaching different types of qualifications and, in reflecting on the differences in teaching Diplomas, they contrasted this qualification variously with teaching GCSEs, NVQs and BTECs. The main ways in which teaching Diplomas differed from other qualifications included the following:

- **More involvement of the world of work:** staff in ten consortia observed that they had made greater use of ensuring that what young people were learning was made relevant to the working world. They achieved this through, for example, increased use of involving employers, providing opportunities to see in practice what young people were learning and making the learning in the

classroom like a workplace in its pace and structure. This included making use of external employers and, in some cases, teachers drawing on their own relevant experience as the following comments illustrate:

I'm bringing in more of my industrial experience into my delivery because it is allowing me to.

Having speakers and going on visits are things we don't have on other courses.

- **More applied learning:** interviewees in five consortia identified a key difference as being greater use of applied learning or '*learning by doing*'. They reported that the learners they taught were doing more presentations, planning and undertaking events, setting up their own enterprise or business and that they were developing their schemes of work around an activity. The following comment from a teacher illustrates that, with support, learners were responding well to this opportunity:

It's a different learning opportunity because they learn by doing, which is good. It's brilliant for some students and, with prodding, they are doing well.

- **Acting more as a guide:** reflecting the views of teachers who taught the first cohort of Diploma learners (Golden *et al.*, forthcoming), teachers in three consortia mentioned that their role in teaching Diplomas was more as a guide. They explained that the lessons were less structured and more discursive as one teacher described:

[I] had to think about activities that don't spoon feed, but stimulate enquiry.

- **Facilitating more independent learning:** linked to the guiding role described above, and again reflecting the views of teachers from the first cohort, interviewees in seven consortia particularly noted the greater use of approaches to encourage students to use independent learning skills. The following comments highlight the difference between the Diploma and other qualifications in this respect:

It requires a more flexible approach and there's a high level of independence needed from the students.

It has very much been the case of having to let go a bit, not being so prescribed, and allowing them to be more autonomous, setting their own objectives but within the realms of success criteria being achieved.

- **Smaller groups:** the smaller number of students in Diploma groups compared with other teaching groups was identified by staff in three consortia as allowing for more flexibility and team work.
- **Greater planning and preparation:** staff in two consortia said that they had spent a greater amount of time in planning and preparation for the Diploma lessons they taught than was usually the case. This was related to the more active nature of the delivery rather than because the qualification was new.

- **More shared teaching with colleagues:** teachers in two consortia noted that the content of the Diploma specifications led to a need for teachers with a range of specialisms to contribute to the delivery of the same qualification. The complementary skills of different teachers ensured learners had expert staff teaching each aspect of Creative and Media and the business element of Hair and Beauty Studies. As one teacher of Creative and Media observed:

You can't deliver this qualification as a member of staff on your own and, historically, that is what our teaching practice has been about – being able to stand up and deliver your specialist subject – and that isn't the case with the Diploma.

Finally, one change mentioned in five consortia, that was not specifically related to the Diploma as a qualification, was the need for teachers who usually taught post-16 learners to adapt their teaching for younger 14 to 16 year olds. Staff noted the difference in the level of maturity in the younger learners and the need to adapt language to be more accessible to them. In addition, in two of these consortia staff noted that although they had adapted their teaching style for younger learners they were already experienced in doing so having taught on other programmes for 14 to 16 year olds previously.

In seven consortia, staff had not required additional support to respond to these differences between the Diploma and other qualifications as they were experienced staff who were simply adapting their teaching emphasis to accommodate the Diplomas. In five consortia, subject leads and consortium leads commented that additional support had been required. This tended to be varied according to specific individual needs and included support:

- in relation to taking a less didactic and more applied approach
- in taking a less structured and more flexible approach
- to accommodate more independent learning
- on behaviour management of younger students
- in involving employers.

4.1.2 How teachers made links between the Diploma and the working world when teaching

As one of the key features of the Diploma is the relationship between the learning experience and the application of this knowledge to the working world, teachers outlined how they ensured that they provided a real world context in teaching the Diploma. Three key themes emerged from their responses: involving employers, using RWEs and practical approaches in the classroom.

The most widely mentioned approach (in nine consortia) across a range of Diploma subjects was to make use of employers. In many cases this entailed young people engaging in work experience, undertaking visits and people from the world of work visiting the institution. This provided learners with an opportunity to '*put into practice*' what they had learned either through directly undertaking work or through questioning working people about their role thereby enhancing their understanding of how the theory worked in practice. For example, in one consortium students taking the Society, Health and Development Diploma had discussed with a prison officer how he implemented the equality requirement and treated people equally in practice.

There were instances of Diploma learners undertaking a project for an employer such as Creative and Media students producing a health and safety video for an engineering training centre and a digital prospectus for a local school. These opportunities were regarded as unique to the Diploma in the view of their teacher who commented:

Working with an external client on a commission is not offered elsewhere. They are starting their commissions this week and this work-related aspect is very important.

In addition to work experience with businesses, staff in four consortia noted the use of RWEs to provide the link to the real world. This was particularly the case for Hair and Beauty Studies as the providers had working salons as RWEs but was also mentioned for Environmental and Land based Studies where a working farm was the RWE.

Linking the Diploma to the real world did not necessarily require leaving the classroom. In seven consortia staff said that this was integral to the teaching through, for example including practical activities and enterprise opportunities which one teacher observed the Diploma provided greater opportunities to undertake. In addition, the content of the Diploma itself was felt to require engagement with the real world as one teacher of Environmental and Land Based Studies observed when he commented:

The whole Diploma is related to whole world contexts...These are global issues and the students appreciate that and enjoy learning about them and being able to develop their opinions. It's made them more questioning of what they read in the papers or hear on the news. They don't just accept things at face value. They can have an informed discussion.

4.1.3 Key issues encountered in teaching the Diploma

Although the prevailing view among the teachers and managers interviewed was that teaching the Diploma was a positive experience, it had presented some issues that teachers were working to address.

Issues relating to the learners included:

- **independent learning:** The more independent learning approach required by the Diploma necessitates young people to have the skills to learn independently, study skills and the maturity to work in this way, but these were not evident among all learners in four consortia.
- **applied learning:** Learners were more engaged with, and keen to undertake, the applied aspects of their Diploma course in two consortia and reportedly more reluctant to undertake the associated research and written aspects.

Issues related to the delivery of the Diploma qualification included:

- **ensuring it was sufficiently applied or practical:** In five consortia, teaching staff observed that the Diploma was less practical or applied and more academic than they had anticipated. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, learners had also found the Diploma less practical than they had expected and teachers had worked to make the delivery of the specifications more applied.

- **the size of the qualification:** staff in three consortia commented on the challenge of fitting all of the component parts of the Diploma, in particular the employer involvement, into the time available.
- **the complexity of the Diploma:** related to the size, interviewees in two consortia felt that the Diploma was complex and would benefit from being simplified.
- **co-teaching Level 1 and Level 2:** in two consortia teaching learners on different levels of the Diploma together and accommodating the requirements for the two levels in one lesson, had proved challenging.

In addition, the assessment of the Diplomas had been an issue for teachers which will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.5.

4.2 Support needs

4.2.1 Staff skills

On the whole senior institutional leaders concurred with evidence reported previously (O'Donnell *et al.*, 2009) that they had not recruited staff specifically to teach Diplomas, unless there were particular skills or knowledge that were not already among the teaching staff's skills, for example beauty therapy skills. Rather, as outlined by six consortium leads Diploma teaching teams were made up from existing staff who already had the requisite skills, for example relevant industry experience. It was pointed out in three cases, in FE colleges, that staff had not necessarily achieved fully qualified status (QTS).

The value of training was emphasised by consortium leads in three consortia, not just for the content of the training (discussed below) but also for networking and the exchange of ideas with colleagues as described by one interviewee:

The staff love it [training] because they are working with other colleagues and they start sharing their resources.

This point was also further highlighted by two consortium leads who stressed the importance of the wider contribution of skills and knowledge from Diploma and non-Diploma teachers.

4.2.2 Views on current support

Views expressed by staff, in the spring term of the first year of the second cohort of Diplomas, revealed contrasting levels of satisfaction with support. Although a clear pattern did not emerge from interviewees to explain the variability, the evidence suggests that levels of satisfaction with support were dependent on:

- staff having the time to access appropriate, timely training
- the extent to which they worked within a supportive context, either at institutional and/or consortia level, that had appropriate facilities and networked and shared information
- the quality of guidance and direction provided by consortium and subject leads and domain assessors.

Examples of these contrasting views include the fact that firstly, staff from institutions within eight consortia believed that they *did* have sufficient access to resources. Whereas staff from institutions within five consortia felt that they *did not* have adequate resources. Examples of insufficient resources included lack of access to adequate classrooms and lack of training in how to use Apple computers. These examples suggest that there is considerable variability of support at institutional and consortia levels.

Secondly, staff in five consortia expressed satisfaction with the support provided from awarding bodies. One subject lead described the support as '*fantastic*'. Whereas, as outlined below and reflected in section 4.5, staff across eight consortia wanted more guidance from awarding bodies with regard to assessment for example, a senior institutional manager said that '*there had a been a lack of support from awarding bodies*' particularly in terms of assessment so that teachers could guide students to higher grades.

The explanation for these divergent views could to some extent, be attributable to regional differences (although there was evidence of contrasting views within consortia), to variations within and across awarding bodies, to subject leads and lead assessors and to the pace of developing training needs. It might be that initial training on for example, delivering principal learning was appreciated but there is currently a real need for assessment support. The timeliness of appropriate support was evidenced by the following comment:

We know too little too late very often to be able to make sensible decisions.

4.2.3 Outstanding support needs

Observations were made by staff across nine consortia that, in terms of further support needs, time was needed to develop the skills of staff teaching the Diploma. It was also pointed out that more **time was needed to work on building employer contacts** and to more fully engage with three further support needs:

1. **Assessment procedures:** the provision (from awarding bodies as well as domain assessors) of more exemplar materials, teaching resources and guidance for marking and standardisation were seen as a high priority by staff across eight consortia. A subject lead in one further consortium also pointed out that to ensure accessibility; it would be beneficial for all awarding bodies to put all information available online. Another consortium lead observed that the system for controlled assessment had been set up '*too bureaucratically*' to allow for collaborative ways of working. She remarked:

I am a bright woman and I find it confusing. Teachers who have only taught on one subject do not have the administrative capabilities to organise and plan across institutions and subjects.

2. **Ways to support the sharing of information:** within and across institutions were seen to be important by staff across six consortia. Suggested ways to facilitate this were shadowing teachers from other institutions (especially school teachers shadowing college lecturers and vice versa), shadowing workers in the workplace (for example, one teacher explained how this had given her renewed confidence when she returned to teaching), learning from Diploma consortia a year ahead with delivery and cross-curricular portfolio building within an institution. It was observed with regard to this last point that:

Primary school teachers are much better at this [partnership working within schools] than secondary school teachers.

3. **Functional skills:** was identified as another area that needed further guidance by three consortium leads. It was said to be important to ensure that staff are able to access functional skills training, whether they were Diploma principal learning teachers or those teaching functional skills discretely, in order to derive the benefits from embedded functional skills that were originally planned.

4.3 The use of VLEs to support Diploma teaching

As discussed in Chapter 3, the delivery of the Diploma in most consortia involved some students learning in different institutions from their main home institutions. In addition, as noted above, teachers from different specialisms and locations shared the teaching of the same group. The visits explored the extent to which consortia were using VLEs to support this co-located and shared delivery. While in six consortia a consortium-wide VLE was either in place (three consortia) or under development (three consortia) it was common for individual institutional VLEs to be used which nevertheless could be accessed by learners and teachers from partner institutions where necessary. This was the case in eight consortia, including one which had a consortium-wide VLE. Overall, therefore, it was evidently common for institutions within consortia to have a VLE in place to support Diploma delivery and it emerged that they were used for the following main purposes:

- **management information and administration:** staff reported using the VLE as a location for diaries, agreed protocols, attendance and attainment information.
- **teaching and learning information for learners:** the VLE was said to have been a useful mechanism for storing work that learners were working on, such as developing their portfolios. It also functioned as a location for resources and information that learners could access including, for example, when they had been unwell and were unable to attend a lesson. In addition, it provided a means for learners to access information about employers. For example, in one consortium a local employer had been the focus of a video which outlined for learners the process of establishing their own business and the roles of the individuals within the business.
- **interactive access:** There were also instances of learners accessing the VLE to engage in blogging or forums with other learners and to ask questions of the teachers.
- **sharing between teachers:** to a lesser extent teachers were said to be sharing resources and schemes of work across institutions through the VLE.

Although the VLEs were in place to support Diploma delivery, the extent to which teachers and learners were routinely using them varied. Among the teachers, the key hindrances appeared to be a lack of familiarity with the system and lack of training and the inflexibility of the system to accommodate teaching and learning resources. Overall, the evidence from the case-studies indicates that the use of a VLE is not central to the success of the Diploma delivery but is a useful resource where it is available.

4.4 Monitoring the quality of teaching and learning

The need to monitor the teaching and learning of the Diploma as a new qualification, and in the context of students learning in a different institution to their home institution, presents particular issues and challenges to consortia delivering Diplomas for the second cohort of learners.

In the first year of delivery it was evident that consortia-wide strategies and procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching had been established in five of the consortia while in the remaining ten this aspect of Diploma delivery was still under development. Nevertheless, while consortia-wide strategies were not yet in place, these consortia were generally making use of their within-institution approaches to monitor teaching of the Diploma (five consortia). They had also gained feedback from learners (two consortia) and had undertaken independent lesson observations but had not adopted a systematic approach for doing so across the consortia as a whole and across all subjects (two consortia). In addition, the lead assessor whose role entails assuring the quality of assessment through quality assuring across Diploma subjects within a consortium, was in place in 11 consortia. Thirteen consortia had domain assessors in place whose role is to undertake internal assessment for the Diploma subject within a consortium. These roles were in place in consortia where a consortium-wide approach to monitoring was still under development.

Where consortia had established systems for monitoring the quality of teaching of the Diploma, the key components emerged as including:

- **agreed protocols** (three consortia) – a key facilitating factor in establishing the system was said to be agreeing the procedure for monitoring, including observation of lessons and the feedback mechanism so that those implementing the strategy could adhere to these agreed guidelines.
- **inter-institution lesson observations** (four consortia) – to monitor and assure quality across all institutions within a consortium that deliver Diplomas managers identified the need for staff from outside the delivering institution to observe some lessons. As reported from the first year of delivery, and will be discussed below, this aspect of monitoring was particularly challenging.
- **agreed criteria for lesson observations** (three consortia) – in order to ensure that lesson observation was conducted consistently it was said to be important to agree the criteria to be used. In some instances, consortia had adopted Ofsted's lesson observation criteria for this purpose.
- **feedback mechanisms** (three consortia) – for the monitoring to be effective consortia managers had included feedback to the teaching staff involved in addition to reporting the outcomes of monitoring to the consortia management group overseeing the delivery of Diplomas. In one consortium, the consortium lead noted the inclusion of support, advice and sharing of good practice with staff who had been observed.
- **feedback from learners** (four consortia) – reflecting the need to ensure that the students' voice was represented in the monitoring of teaching the consortia included mechanisms for obtaining feedback from the learners including discussions with the staff undertaking the monitoring and questionnaire surveys.

For those consortia who had yet to establish such a strategy for monitoring, it was evident that, in addition to the need for consortium managers to have time to plan, agree and implement a strategy, the main barrier to establishing a monitoring plan was related to the issue of inter-institutional lesson observation. As was found in the first year of delivery (Lynch *et al.*, 2010) the issue of staff from another institution observing teachers in the delivery institution was described as being very sensitive and was, for example, said to have been '*heavily resisted*' in one consortium. Consortia needed to overcome issues associated with an acceptable number of observations of staff that could be undertaken, including negotiating with teaching unions, and resistance from head teachers who, it was reported in one consortium for example, were reluctant to allow their staff to be observed by colleagues who were external to their institution.

The evidence from the four consortia that had made progress in establishing inter-institution lesson observations indicated that these issues can decline over time as staff become more accepting of the need for some form of monitoring. For example, in one consortium where a consortium-wide strategy had been established, a teacher observed:

Staff understand that it needs to happen, although there are some issues about observations. It is a very rigorous process and it has to be for collaborative working.

In addition, the agreement of protocols and criteria for observations were said to assist in overcoming concerns about observations. In one consortium, for example, it was agreed that the observations would fit into the institutions' existing cycle of observations and would not result in a 'grade' being assigned or any additional paperwork.

4.5 Assessment

The assessment process for Diplomas was one of the areas where consortia representatives felt least prepared in advance of delivering these new qualifications. In the first year of delivery in 2010 (Lynch *et al.*, 2010) they had made some progress in establishing appropriate mechanisms for managing and overseeing assessment and there was evidence that senior staff such as consortium leads and subject leads were building their skills and confidence in Diploma assessment while teaching staff were beginning to do so.

As noted above, lead assessors were in place in 11 consortia and, in three of these, this role was fulfilled by the consortium lead. In three consortia there was no lead assessor at the time of the interview which was related to local issues such as retirement of the existing lead assessor and a recruitment freeze. Domain assessors had also been appointed in most (13) consortia and this role was often undertaken by the subject lead. The lead assessor role was funded from a range of sources including being integral to their role and not separately funded, or by the LA or group of LAs, or through Diploma specific funding such as the Diploma Support Grant. Interviewees were conscious that the current funding sources may not continue in future and, with the exception of one consortium lead who mentioned saving some funds from the current year in order for posts to be funded in the following year, interviewees tended not to have a plan for ongoing funding of the lead assessor role.

In addition to the lead assessor and domain assessor roles, the following mechanisms had been established in consortia in order to assist with the assessment process and to ensure consistency:

- reviewing and monitoring learners' work (five consortia).
- cross marking and moderating marking was generally undertaken within the consortium but one consortium where only one institution was offering a Diploma subject, the subject lead worked with another consortium to moderate the marking (four consortia).
- regular meetings and close working between the lead assessor and the subject leads and domain assessor (four consortia)
- standardisation exercises or meetings and assessment sessions (four consortia).
- support, guidance and feedback for staff, such as advice on delivery (four consortia).
- sharing practice within and between Diploma subjects (two consortia).
- central creation of supporting paperwork such as evidence forms (two consortia).
- central creation of schemes of work (one consortium).

The evidence from the case-study consortia revealed that confidence in assessment was growing but that some staff were more confident than others. More specifically, consortium or subject leads in five consortia said that staff were either already confident in the assessment approaches or were becoming so. While staff in two consortia felt that teaching staff lacked confidence there was a mixed view in six consortia where consortium-level interviewees said that although confidence was progressing staff would not feel fully confident until they had experienced the whole process and could build up some historical evidence of what was acceptable for the assessment to which they could refer. The view of one consortium lead illustrates the important relationship between staff's confidence and the learning experience:

I think they are still finding their way a bit, and we need to improve the confidence of staff. It is very important that staff give clear instructions to students.

Where staff were more confident, or their confidence was said to be increasing, this was related to having previous experience of similar assessment approaches, increasing familiarity with what was required and support they had received from the Awarding Bodies.

Among the teaching staff that were interviewed, a similar varied picture emerged reflecting to some extent the individual nature of whether a teacher is prepared or confident and the differences for different Diploma subjects. Twelve interviewees in eight consortia said that they felt confident about the assessment procedures. Echoing the views of consortium leads and subject leads, they attributed this to their previous experience, their increasing familiarity and the support and the feedback they had received from Awarding Bodies which, as the following comment shows, had provided some reassurance:

You're not sure what you're doing because it's the first time. But [feedback showed] it was fine, so that's reassuring.

Eleven staff in nine consortia said that they were not confident about assessment. They cited the absence of examples, lack of clarity in the specifications and marking information, not having received training or helpful training and absence of sufficient support from the Awarding Bodies as the reasons for this lack of confidence. The combination of lack of familiarity with this new qualification, and an absence of feedback, contributed to a lack of confidence, as the following comment of a teacher demonstrates:

The lack of knowledge on assessment is an issue because teachers are worried that they are not getting it right and they are not getting any feedback to say if they are doing it right or not. And that knocks your confidence a bit.

It is apparent that the support of Awarding Bodies is one critical element in ensuring that teaching staff at all levels are able to support the assessment of Diplomas effectively. Reflecting on the support they had received from Awarding Bodies, staff in six consortia reported that this had been helpful and the prevailing view was that, once the Awarding Body had reviewed the work in the consortium and were content, the staff were less concerned. Indeed, in some cases, consortia had invited the Awarding Bodies to undertake a review in order to gain some feedback and, potentially, reassurance. In one consortium, staff considered that the support provided had improved but that it would have been valuable at an earlier date. Staff in five consortia felt that Awarding Bodies could provide more support than they had to date for example through providing more guidance, moderations in person and more consistency in the marks awarded and ensuring these aligned with the guidance. Sending the same moderator to schools in a consortium was another means identified that would support effective assessment.

One particular aspect of assessment for Diplomas on which staff commented specifically was controlled assessment. It was evident that staff in eight consortia felt that controlled assessment was not fully established or understood. For example they observed that they were finding it challenging to interpret the requirements and had found that their initial approach was said to be too restrictive. In addition, they reported that it appeared to be more complicated than necessary. Where senior staff considered that they were progressing with controlled assessment (three consortia) this was related to sharing practice, increasing familiarity and moderation from the awarding body.

4.6 Summary

The evidence from teachers and their managers in the first year of delivering Diplomas for the second cohort of participants showed that teachers were largely positive about their experience. While they had not needed to adapt their teaching style significantly, teaching the Diploma had entailed adopting a more applied learning approach. It was apparent that ensuring that the learning experience was sufficiently applied, and that learners engaged equally with the applied and more theoretical elements, was one of the challenges for teachers. Teaching the Diploma was also different because it entailed making more links between their teaching and world of work. This was achieved through involving employers in a range of ways, by using RWEs and integrating reference to the real world into their teaching in the classroom. In addition, teachers were facilitating learners' independent learning and acting more as a guide in doing so (reflecting the views of teachers who taught the first cohort of Diploma learners). They identified the need for students' skills in independent learning to be developed to support them in their learning for the Diploma. While teaching the Diploma had required more planning and preparation

than was usually the case, it had also entailed more sharing of teaching with other teachers in some cases.

The assessment of Diplomas continued to be one of the more challenging aspects for teachers. Nevertheless, there was evidence that subject leads, and to a slightly lesser extent teachers, were growing in confidence as they became more familiar with the process and gained feedback from Awarding Bodies which gave them guidance and reassurance.

While some consortia had made progress in implementing strategies for monitoring the quality of teaching this was an area where consortia were continuing to develop. The key components required for monitoring teaching that emerged included the need to agree protocols, in particular for inter-institutional observation which was one of the key challenging areas for consortia where delivery was co-located. In addition, including mechanisms for gaining feedback from learners and providing feedback to teachers were key aspects of a monitoring strategy.

Looking to the future, teachers reported that they need support to be timely and relevant. Furthermore they need time to develop their Diploma teaching, to work on building employer contacts and to more fully engage with assessment and partnership working.

5 Student Choice

Key findings

- While take-up in 2009 in some consortia was in line with expectations, across six consortia take-up was lower than expected. Overall, the evidence indicated that take-up in relation to Level 1 was lower than expected.
- A variety of reasons were identified as to why take-up was not as envisaged and included: parental concerns; lack of buy-in and promotion amongst institutions; marketing of the qualification and negative stories in the press.
- The majority of case study consortia had a consortium-wide IAG strategy in place, although strategies for raising awareness of Diplomas amongst staff was more variable across institutions.
- Year 10 and Year 12 Diploma respondents were most likely to have chosen the qualification because it related to the career that they were interested in embarking upon in the future (61 per cent and 62 per cent respectively).

Implications for policy and practice

- A consistent approach to IAG by all institutions is important to ensure that learners and parents can make an informed decision regarding whether or not the qualification is an appropriate consideration.
- To ensure that IAG is accurate and effective, it may be worth involving current Diploma learners in events so that they can share their experiences and answer queries amongst potential students.
- As three-quarters of young people not taking a Diploma said that they did not know much about them, there still appears to be scope to raise awareness of Diplomas more widely. Recent reforms have made it clear that the component qualifications of a Diploma may be delivered on an individual basis to support progression.

This chapter explores whether take-up of Diploma subjects was as expected across consortia and, where appropriate, examines the reasons for variation. It then goes on to look at the strategies that have been put in place by consortia and institutions in order to provide learners with IAG. Awareness of Diplomas amongst institution level staff and parents is also explored. Finally, the learner perspective in terms of reasons for choosing a Diploma and satisfaction with the IAG prior to starting the course are examined.

5.1 Take-up of Diplomas

There was no overall consensus amongst consortium-level staff (consortium leads or subject leads) when asked whether take-up of Diplomas (starting in September 2009) matched their expectations (at pre- and post-16 level). Staff across six consortia reported that take-up was lower than they had envisaged. In contrast, four consortia had broadly achieved their target number overall. Responses appeared more varied across a further two consortia.

Consortium leads and subject leads identified a range of reasons why they felt that recruitment had proved challenging even where take-up was increasing. The more frequently cited responses identified the following (many of which were identified as challenges in the first year of delivery (Lynch *et al.*, 2010)):

- **parental concerns regarding a new qualification** (four consortia). One consortium lead for example, said that it would take time for parents to feel reassured that the Diploma would be accepted by universities.
- **lack of buy-in and promotion amongst institutions** (four consortia). For example, according to one interviewee, a considerable number of schools were wary of recruiting learners for any Diploma where a significant part of the delivery was off-site because they felt that they might lose control over the learners.
- **marketing of the qualification** (three consortia). The promotion of the Diploma did not always fully reflect the content and key elements of the qualification as the following comment by one Information Technology subject leader illustrates:

It's great that they sell the equivalencies but what you hear is 'IT'. You don't hear business, or project or all the other things it consists of which opens up [learners] options. Even if it's all written on the brochure, all you hear is IT and you'll think all your options will be in IT. I think the really exciting thing about Diplomas is that they are so broad, almost every single one has business in it, media in it, project management and possibly events management too, and science – but that's not what you hear.

- **negative stories in the media** (three consortia). Interviewees reported how some parents and young people had described unhelpful accounts of Diplomas in the news.
- **lack of understanding amongst institutions** about the qualification or specific Diploma subjects (two consortia). One consortium lead for example, said that the Environmental and Land Based Diploma was difficult to recruit for because a similar subject was not available in the schools which learners could equate to a Diploma.
- **lack of information for learners and parents** (two consortia). It was apparent that some young people, and their parents, in several institutions had still not received adequate information about Diplomas to inform their decisions.

Two consortia highlighted that the implications of low take-up meant that the course was expensive to run, and in one instance learner numbers were insufficient to cover the costs of delivery. One senior institution manager from a further consortium spoke of the considerations that had been made in light of failing to reach target numbers:

There was a discussion that if we postponed it, what kind of message does that send out? If the kids are right for the programme, why are we preventing them from doing it? But there was also discussion about what is the right learning experience, if you go too low [in numbers], how are you going to have students having meaningful discussions and planned group work, and those kind of things?

On the whole, the views held by classroom teachers and senior institution managers regarding take-up of Diploma subjects mirrored those reported by consortium-level staff. Few staff at institution level provided reasons for variation. However, amongst those that did, their observations included: loss of funding because learners would be studying at a different institution, variable IAG, and concerns amongst parents.

Staff in five consortia reported that take-up specifically at Level 1 had been low, or in one instance, no interest had been expressed at all. One senior institution manager attributed this to learners being guided towards more practical opportunities such as childcare and salon services qualifications, while another reasoned that the challenges associated with functional skills and the value placed on the qualification in terms of GCSE equivalencies had hindered interest.

Overall, it appeared that there was a tendency for particular Diploma subjects to be dominated by one gender; identified as a potential outcome amongst interviewees during baseline visits (McCrone *et al.*, 2010). For example, the Construction and Built Environment and Engineering Diplomas had attracted male students (with the exception of one institution in one consortium where it was reported that a small number of female students were undertaking the course pre-16 at Level 2), while Hair and Beauty Studies and Society, Health and Development were predominately being taken by female students. There appeared to be a more equal distribution in terms of students undertaking the Business, Administration and Finance Diploma.

5.2 Promotion and IAG strategies

5.2.1 Consortium-level strategies for promotion of IAG

Across most (12) case-study consortia visited, there was reported to be a consortium-wide IAG strategy in place. In line with findings from the cohort 2 baseline report (McCrone *et al.*, 2010), strategies comprised a range of activities, including:

- attendance at options evenings and parents' evenings (six consortia)
- the creation of consortia-wide materials such as options booklets, prospectuses and handbooks (five consortia)
- events - namely road shows, show case events, careers fair and taster days (four consortia)
- an interview system for students, which in some cases, parents were expected to attend (three consortia)
- IAG subgroups and networks within a consortium (three consortia)
- talks in school delivered by subject leads or consortium leads (two consortia).

Furthermore, three consortia had been involved in an IAG audit in order to identify needs.

In the majority of cases it appeared that a consortium-wide strategy had yet to be fully implemented across institutions. There was some evidence across seven consortia to suggest that the quality and level of information provided to potential students was variable across institutions. One consortium lead, for example, reported that some schools would allow subject leads to play a more active role in promoting the Diploma, including carrying out presentations to students and parents at option evenings. In other schools, they were expected to be visible in case questions were raised but did not proactively present. The following two comments provide an illustration of the perceived reasons for such variation:

They [head teachers] act as gatekeepers, and really determine the timing and pace of Diploma implementation in their school.

It's [IAG] still extremely patchy in practice and impartiality is bound to be an issue because institutions will always want to look after their own interests. At a time of reorganisation, with failing schools and academies starting up, the focus is very much on their own institutions.

Most senior institution managers reported that their institutions had been involved in consortium-wide strategies about Diplomas, which largely echoed those activities described above. However, in two consortia, it was evident that not all institutions were aware that a strategy was in existence. One major aspect of an approach in one consortium, for example, involved staff from the FE college visiting schools to provide information and promote Diplomas depending on the needs of the institution. However, one senior manager in this consortium said that schools were in fact taking their own approach to promoting Diplomas which varied according to individual circumstances.

5.2.2 Successes of consortium-wide IAG strategies

No one approach to consortium-wide IAG emerged as successful across consortia. In two consortia road shows were identified as an effective approach, which in one instance it was felt to have helped raise the profile of the Diplomas:

It's given them [learners] an opportunity [to find out about the qualification] and widened the information that they have been given rather than just being given [it] from their own institutions.

Interviewees from a further two consortia had strategies whereby the consortium lead and subject leads had been able to attend options evenings and actively promote the Diplomas. This they felt had worked well and was also considered successful where institutions had actively sought to ensure that information was available to *all* students and their parents.

Strategic consortium interviewees also had differing views with regard to what had worked less well. Nonetheless, interviewees in two consortia spoke of the reluctance amongst some institutions to embrace a more diverse curriculum which included the Diploma. In one instance this was attributed to concerns about the relevance of the qualification for a large number of their students. One consortium lead commented:

Schools really need to get their heads around the fact that Diplomas are a mainstream offer, and a lot of young people will develop far better skills through good Diploma delivery than they would through being fed GCSEs.

5.2.3 Institution-level strategies for promotion and IAG for staff

Comments from senior institution staff in six consortia indicated that there were no specific strategies in place for raising awareness of Diplomas amongst staff. Where strategies were reported to be in place, more commonly reported *formal* strategies included training sessions (three consortia) and visits to institutions by various staff (including, for example, the senior institution manager in her role as the 14-19 partnership manager and LA staff) (two consortia).

Moreover, senior staff across four consortia identified more *informal* strategies including displaying information in the staffroom, regular newsletters to institutions which in some instances comprised case studies on learners who were taking the Diploma and how they were benefiting from it, information sheets and emails.

5.2.4 Staff satisfaction with IAG

Approximately two-thirds of subject leads indicated that there was some scope for improvement with regard to the IAG provided by institutions to students choosing their options in Year 9 and Year 11, particularly with regard to the Diploma. Interviewees across five consortia highlighted the need to better promote and raise awareness of the Diploma, for example one subject lead remarked:

The schools are giving the bare minimum of information; there is a huge reluctance about the Diploma.

There was recognition amongst subject leads in three consortia that IAG was variable across institutions. However, where it was considered *effective* or *very effective*, reasons included the range and quality of information provided, as well as Diploma learners attending open evenings to share their experiences and answer queries from potential students. Given the importance of ensuring that the learner perspective is conveyed, this might be an approach that other consortia wish to consider adopting.

5.2.5 Promotion of Diplomas to parents

In general (across eight consortia) Diplomas had been promoted to parents at options evenings, open evenings, parents' evenings or information evenings (a finding which is consistent with the cohort 2 Baseline report (McCrone *et al.*, 2010)).

Moreover, in five consortia institution staff stated that parents could access information at Diploma-related events such as taster days, including an evening session for parents, Diploma evenings and road shows. A similar number of institutions (five institutions across five consortia) also identified options booklets and booklets specifically detailing information about Diplomas as a further way in which parents could obtain information.

5.3 Awareness of Diplomas

5.3.1 Awareness amongst staff not directly involved in Diplomas

Overall, it appeared that there was some scope for improvement with regard to raising knowledge and engagement of the Diploma amongst staff not directly involved in its delivery. Around a third of senior institution managers (in seven institutions across five consortia) felt that only particular members of staff (such as

senior staff, those teaching the qualification and Year 9 tutors) were in an appropriate position to advise potential students. One interviewee for example, said that they had deliberately removed the need for staff to advise students on Diplomas. Instead, the process was handled by core members of staff who were perceived to have a good level of knowledge and therefore, were able to assess whether or not the Diploma was an appropriate qualification for students.

In those instances staff were generally perceived to have a sufficient level of knowledge (four consortia) and, in one consortium, this had been achieved through having an experienced workforce. Despite this largely positive response, senior institution managers in two institutions in this consortium highlighted the need to provide more clarity on assessment. Amongst the remaining institutions, however, there appeared to be some way to go in order to ensure staff have the knowledge and understanding of Diplomas required.

In addition to teaching staff, career professionals such as Connexions personal advisers, also had a role in promoting Diploma-related IAG. However, two key barriers to this emerged. These were firstly, that some careers advice professionals lacked understanding about the learning routes outside of the traditional GCSE qualifications. Secondly, the lack of time for such professionals to develop a relationship with each young person was a barrier to being able to offer effective IAG and establish whether the Diploma was appropriate.

5.4. Learners' reasons for choosing a Diploma

Two key themes emerged from the survey data regarding learners' reasons for choosing to study a Diploma, as illustrated in Table 5.1 below. These were:

- **The Diploma related to their future** either in terms of their career aspirations or education pathway. For example, Year 10 and Year 12 survey respondents were most likely to report having chosen a Diploma because it related to a career they were interested in (61 per cent and 62 per cent respectively). This reflects the main reason amongst cohort 1 Diploma learners (Lynch *et al.*, 2010) where 58 per cent of Year 10 learners and 76 per cent of Year 12 learners chose a Diploma because it was related to a career they were interested in.
- **The Diploma itself** in terms of its content or equivalences; 52 per cent of Year 10 learners for example, liked the number of GCSEs that the qualification was equivalent to and 37 per cent thought it sounded interesting.

Table 5.1 Reasons for choosing to study a Diploma

	Year 10 %	Year 12 %
The course related to the career I am interested in	61	62
I thought it might help me to get a job in the future	57	n/a
I liked the number of GCSEs/A Levels that the Diploma is equivalent to	52	28
The course sounded interesting	37	41
I wanted to do something different to the other subjects I am taking	27	10
I liked the idea of doing some of the course outside my school	26	n/a
I thought it might help me get into university/higher education in the future	26	37
I wanted to try a different way of learning	22	15
I thought it would help me get into college in the future	22	n/a
I wanted to gain work experience	20	21
My parents encouraged me to	13	4
I wanted to be one of the first to try a new course	11	8
My school encouraged me to	10	5
I didn't know what else to do	6	6
Other	4	7
I thought it might help me to get an apprenticeship in the future	n/a	11
No response	2	8
N=	730	224

More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Survey of learners 2010

The case-study data revealed that most learners (and in particular, Year 12 learners based at an FE college) appeared *fairly* or *very satisfied* with the range of choices available. The majority of learners who felt less satisfied reasoned that the Diploma prevented them from selecting other courses of interest.

Around a third of learners amongst those commenting, said that they were offered the opportunity to take Diplomas in other subjects (either within their own institution or elsewhere) or were aware of other Diplomas that were available. This finding appeared particularly prevalent amongst learners studying at an FE college. A small minority of interviewees who had not been offered such an opportunity said that, to their knowledge, they could only undertake the course at a particular institution.

Sixty-one per cent of Year 12 learners¹⁵ who were surveyed reported that they were taking other qualifications or courses that count towards their Diploma (as part of their ASL). This compared with just under half (49 per cent) of Year 10 learners. This finding perhaps illustrates the need to raise awareness and understanding of ASL further, particularly amongst Year 10 learners.

¹⁵ 224 Year 12 learners and 730 Year 10 learners responded to the survey.

The most frequently cited responses amongst those Year 12 respondents who were taking other qualifications in addition to their Diploma were: AS Level/A Level (30 per cent) and GCSEs (23 per cent).

Nonetheless, most young people felt that the ASL courses linked *quite well* or *very well* with their Diploma subject. However, the proportion of learners was slightly greater amongst Year 12 students¹⁶ 86 per cent compared with 71 per cent of their Year 10 counterparts. It is worth noting that while specialist learning would be expected to link directly with their Diploma, this is less the case with additional learning.

Table 5.2 below, reveals that around three quarters of Year 10 survey respondents (78 per cent) felt that they had *some* or *lots* of choice about which other qualifications they could take as part of their Diploma. This compares with 66 per cent of Year 12 learners. In contrast, around a quarter of Year 12 learners (26 per cent) and 11 per cent of Year 10 learners reported that they had no choice about their ASL options.

Table 5.2 Extent to which Diploma learners considered that they had a choice about their ASL

	Year 10 %	Year 12 %
I had lots of choice	18	24
I had some choice	59	41
I had no choice	11	26
I don't know / cannot remember	9	6
No response	2	3
N=	348	137

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.

A filter question: all those who were aware of taking the qualifications as part of their Diploma.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Survey of learners 2010

5.4.1 Influences for learners considering each Diploma subject

In general the influences on learners' choice in taking a Diploma were similar across the Diploma subjects. This is in contrast to the views of cohort 1 Diploma learners where there were differences in the reasons for taking different Diploma subjects. Nevertheless, learners who had chosen the Creative and Media Diploma in 2009 were more likely than learners taking any of the other Diploma subjects to have reported that it sounded interesting (43 per cent of Year 10 learners and 56 per cent of Year 12 learners) (Lynch *et al.*, 2010). Overall, there were four main influences that variously featured in the top three responses amongst Year 10 learners across all Diploma subjects¹⁷. These were:

- *I thought it might help me to get a job in the future*
- *The course is related to a career I am interested in*
- *I liked the number of GCSEs it was equivalent to*
- *The course sounded interesting.*

¹⁶ Based on 348 Year 10 learners and 137 Year 12 learners.

*Year 10 response option referred to GCSEs only while the Year 12 response category noted GCSEs and A Levels.

¹⁷ For while these were in the top three reasons across Diploma subjects, the order they appeared in was different for all Diplomas.

The reasons among Year 12 learners were also largely consistent across Diploma subjects. In particular, the most frequently reported reason, across the subjects, for choosing a Diploma was that the course related to the career that learners were interested in (with the exception of learners studying Business, Administration and Finance, who also most frequently reported that the course sounded interesting).

Interviewees in case study consortia supported these findings. However, there was evidence to suggest that Creative and Media students were particularly attracted to the course because it allowed them to engage in areas of interest (such as drama), as illustrated by the following two comments:

Drama and media are my favourite things – the most important thing that influenced me was drama as I enjoy it.

[I] like acting and dance and want to do that when I am older. I have been dancing since I was four years old.

5.5 Learners' reasons for not choosing a Diploma

Survey respondents undertaking alternative qualifications were asked why they had chosen *not* to undertake a Diploma. While the most common reasons given by learners across both year groups were similar, the order in which they were reported varied. For example, the most commonly reported reason amongst Year 10 learners was that they had no interest in the subject area(s) offered (50 per cent). This was considered less of a concern amongst Year 12 students (17 per cent). Other more frequently cited responses included:

- a preference to only take GCSEs/other qualifications (33 per cent of Year 10 learners compared with 25 per cent of Year 12 students whose preference was A-Levels/other qualifications)
- the Diploma would not help with their future (23 per cent compared with eight per cent of Year 12 learners)
- slightly more Year 12 learners said that they lacked knowledge about the course (29 per cent compared with 23 per cent of their Year 10 counterparts).

Satisfaction with IAG received amongst non-Diploma learners was generally positive; over three-fifths of Year 10 respondents (61 per cent) who had decided not to take a Diploma said that they were satisfied (either 'quite satisfied' or 'very satisfied') with the IAG they had received about the Diploma. However, a quarter of non-Diploma learners (25 per cent) said that they were not satisfied (either 'not very satisfied' or not at all satisfied').

Over three quarters of non-Diploma learners (76 per cent) said that they had heard about Diplomas but did not know a lot about them; perhaps a reflection of the dissatisfaction with Diploma-related IAG. Moreover, around one-fifth (19 per cent) of respondents had heard of the qualification and knew a lot about them.

5.6 Learners' satisfaction with IAG

5.6.1 IAG for learners

The survey data revealed that the majority of Year 10 learners (72 per cent) and 61 per cent of Year 12 learners were either *very satisfied* or *quite satisfied* with the IAG received about their Diploma prior to starting the course (as illustrated in Table 5.3 below). This reflects the views of the first cohort of Diploma learners (Lynch *et al.*, 2010) and also emerged in the case study data.

Table 5.3 Extent to which Diploma learners were satisfied with IAG received

Level of satisfaction	Year 10 Diploma learners	Y12 Diploma learners
	%	%
Very satisfied	20	18
Quite satisfied	53	44
Not very satisfied	13	23
Not at all satisfied	8	10
Not sure	4	3
No response	3	3
N=	730	224

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Survey of learners 2010

Although based on small numbers¹⁸, the survey responses suggest that Year 10 learners who had chosen the Hospitality or Environmental and Land-Based Studies Diploma were most satisfied with the IAG received (either 'quite' or 'very'). Reasons for learner satisfaction with Diplomas amongst case-study interviewees are explored in detail in Section 6.1.

The more frequently cited ways in which Year 10 case-study learners had been provided with IAG included taster sessions/days, reading materials such as leaflets and options booklets and discussions with a range of staff including, for example, subject leads and senior institution managers. The main approaches adopted were largely similar to those reported by the first cohort of learners (Lynch *et al.*, 2010).

Few responses were provided by Year 12 case-study learners regarding the types of IAG received; however amongst those who had, open evenings and reading materials were examples of the ways in which information had been received. The majority of Year 12 learners from one institution felt that the IAG received from their institution was not useful, and as a result, gained much of their information from the college. Overall, this was considered to be sufficient in order to allow the students to make an informed decision about whether or not to undertake the course. However, on reflection it was considered that more in-depth information may have been helpful.

¹⁸ A total of 27 respondents were studying Hospitality and 12 Year 10 learners were taking the Environmental and Land-Based Diploma.

Despite reports that learners had been provided with a range of information, across the majority of consortia, there was evidence that, on reflection, learners (at both pre and post-16 level) could have, or would like to have received more information about the Diploma (a finding reported in the cohort 1, first year of delivery report (Lynch *et al.*, 2010)). Approximately half of cohort 2 learners, for example, had an expectation that the course would involve more practical activities. Moreover, around a quarter of learners said that they had not been informed that the course would comprise functional skills. One group of Year 12 learners spoke of their frustration when they were informed of this, having recently achieved a grade C or above in English and mathematics at GCSE. In addition, a small number of other comments suggested that learners would have valued more detailed information about the content of the Diploma or what the different units would cover.

Year 12 learners from one consortium reported that the course (either the Business, Administration and Finance or Information Technology Diploma) had been more challenging than initially anticipated, in terms of, for example, the amount of work and the timescales given to complete assignments.

5.7 Summary

There was no overall consensus amongst consortia with regard to whether or not take-up matched expectations. However, it is also evident from the survey of learners who did not choose to take a Diploma that lack of interest in the subjects, and a preference for other qualifications were the main reasons.

There is some scope for improvement in terms of raising awareness of the qualification at institution level to ensure that all staff, regardless of whether or not they are delivering the qualification, have sufficient knowledge and understanding in order to advise learners where required.

Moreover, while learners reported having received a range of information about the Diploma, there was evidence which indicated that they would have welcomed more detailed information about the course (a finding also reported by cohort 1 learners). This should be a key consideration in order to ensure that there is a good level of understanding about the content of the course amongst all learners in order to make an informed decision.

6 The Student Experience

Key findings

- The majority of students were either satisfied or very satisfied with the Diploma course (80 per cent of Year 10 and 75 per cent of Year 12 students). There was evidence that Year 10 learners who were more satisfied with prior IAG and who had taken part in a work placement were more satisfied with the Diploma course. Year 10 IT and Society Health and Development students were significantly less satisfied with their Diploma than those on other subjects.
- Students were most likely to cite enjoyment of the course, largely related to the style of teaching and learning, and the opportunity to learn a lot or acquire new skills as the reasons for satisfaction. Additionally, those who had completed a work placement were more positive about the level to which the Diploma was preparing them with skills for the future.
- Dissatisfaction related to the perceived workload and difficulty of the course or the Diploma not meeting expectations. However, interviewees generally felt able to cope with the workload and both staff and students concurred that this was due to their level of engagement in the course and its design (for example, regular assessment and whole days dedicated to the Diploma).
- Creative and Media students interviewed were the most positive about the level of practical learning on their course (they were least likely to cite this as a reason for dissatisfaction and were least likely to agree that they had expected more).
- Staff support for students was generally felt to be adequate by both staff and students, although there was some evidence which indicated that communication between institutions could be improved.
- Student interviewees reported that they experienced more independent learning on the Diploma which they enjoyed, with sufficient support from staff. There is some evidence to suggest that smaller class sizes and whole days on the Diploma encouraged positive, trusting relationships between staff and students which supports learning.
- Students enjoyed learning about the world of work from employers. Those who were less positive noted the limited extent to which they could take part in activities in the workplace, usually due to their age.
- Staff perceived that students are most suited to the Diploma course where they are able to work independently and understand the ratio of practical and theoretical content.

Implications for policy and practice

- On the whole, students were not aware how much practical work to expect and in this first year of the cohort 2 course were disappointed by the level received. While IAG is important, it may also be the case that both the course designers and practitioners could further reflect on how the course could be more active (this was particularly evident in relation to the Society Health and Development Diploma).

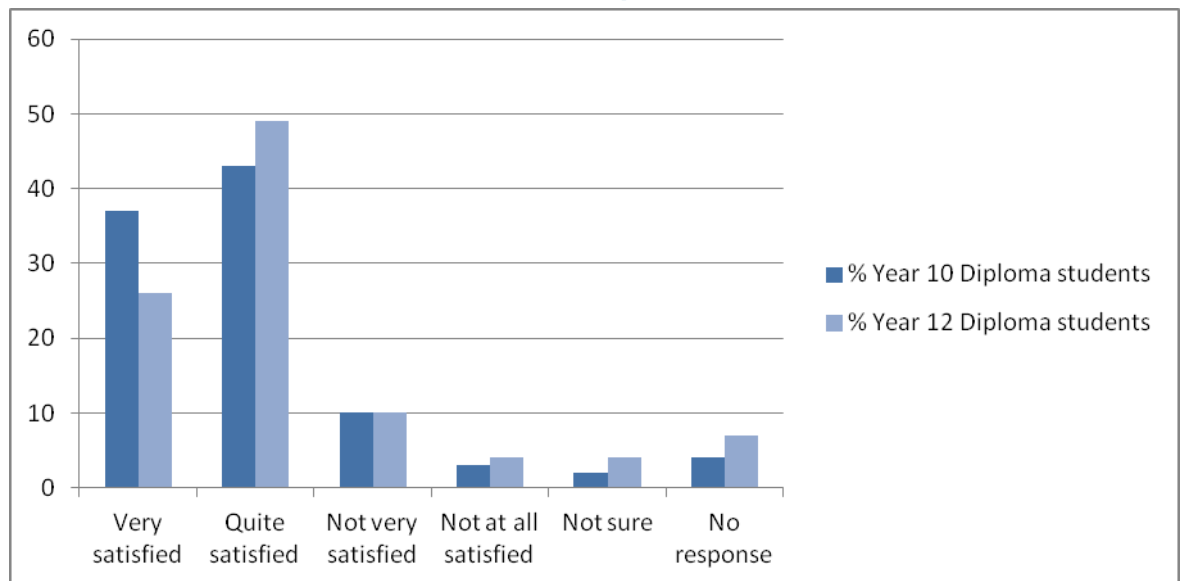
- Independent learning is central to the course, and while staff consider it important to recruit students who are able to work in this way, it may be that they need to further consider how they can support learners without these skills, so that all learners have the opportunity to develop them. Supporting all students in this way will enable them to meet the deadlines of the course and manage their workload.

This chapter examines learners' experience of the Diploma and learning in general and their satisfaction with the Diploma. It details the reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction, how the Diploma compares to other courses studied simultaneously (particularly in relation to teaching and learning) and learner experience of both studying away from their home institution (where relevant) and employer contact.

6.1 Learner satisfaction

Chart 6.1 below shows that the majority of students (79 per cent of Year 10 and 74 per cent of Year 12 students) were very or quite satisfied with their Diploma course while just over a tenth (14 per cent of Year 10 and 15 per cent of Year 12 students) were not very or not at all satisfied. These proportions are similar to those of cohort 1 (Lynch *et al.*, 2010) students in their first year of Diploma study (79 per cent of Year 10 and 76 per cent of Year 12 learners were satisfied).

Chart 6.1 Students' satisfaction with the Diploma



N = Year 10 = 730 Year 12 = 224

The percentages in this chart are weighted.

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2010

To explore the satisfaction with Diplomas further, and identify the factors associated with being satisfied or dissatisfied with the Diploma course, a range of survey questions were grouped together using factor analysis, which consolidates the data in order to produce more robust measures than a single question would do. Multi-level modelling analysis (see Appendix A) was then undertaken to examine the characteristics of learners and their experiences of the Diploma course that were associated with being more or less satisfied with the course. This revealed that Year 10 Diploma learners¹⁹ with the following characteristics were **more satisfied with the Diploma course**:

- learners who had taken part in a work placement
- learners who were more satisfied with IAG before commencing the course
- learners who had a positive attitude to learning.

The latter two factors were also positively associated with Diploma satisfaction for cohort 1 learners in the first year of their course.

Learners who were undertaking IT and Society Health and Development Diplomas were **significantly less satisfied** than their peers (taking Creative and Media).

In terms of **attitudes to the Diploma (Factor 1²⁰)**, analysis revealed that Year 10 Diploma learners with the following characteristics had a more positive attitude towards the Diploma:

- learners who were more satisfied with IAG before commencing the course
- learners who were more committed to learning.

Learners who were taking the IT and Society, Health and Development Diploma were overall **significantly less positive** compared to their peers who were taking Creative and Media.

Staff interviewees concurred with survey findings. Across nine consortia they felt young people were generally satisfied with their Diploma experience. Some staff in four consortia were less convinced that students were satisfied and observed that the students were not suited to the course (the reasons for such are detailed in section 6.1.3 on appropriateness of learners for the course).

Around three-quarters of Year 10 students (72 per cent) and almost two-thirds of Year 12 students (65 per cent) agreed to some extent that they had made the right decision to take a Diploma course. Additionally, almost a half of all Year 10 students would recommend the Diploma to a friend (46 per cent) and a further 32 per cent said that they would consider recommending the Diploma. Just over a tenth (14 per cent) said that they probably or definitely would not. Interview data demonstrated that, as reported by cohort 1 students (Lynch *et al.*, 2010), they would generally only recommend the Diploma to those with a strong interest in the subject area, who suited the learning style of the Diploma and who understood the various features of the qualification.

¹⁹ Lower levels of Year 12 responses mean that modeling of data was not possible.

²⁰ See Appendix A1.3 for more detail on the factors.

6.1.1 Reasons for satisfaction

Three-quarters of students (78 per cent of Year 10 and 71 per cent of Year 12) agreed, to some extent, that they were enjoying the Diploma course. Staff were also most likely to cite students' enjoyment of the course as the main reason for satisfaction (reported by staff in ten institutions) and some of these observed that students either '*really like*' or '*love*' their experience of the Diploma.

The evidence suggests that enjoyment of the course was linked to the learning and teaching style adopted. Staff in 11 institutions felt that lessons with practical application held the most appeal for young people, with four highlighting the opportunity for independence that practical activities offered to young people. Some staff explained that students found the learning style different to that previously experienced and that trips out, offsite learning and employer engagement had further contributed to the course being perceived as enjoyable. Additionally, staff felt that young people enjoyed the new responsibility for independent learning and the chance to see results of their own work, rather than being teacher or text-book led.

A total of 73 per cent of Year 10 learners and 69 per cent of Year 12 learners agreed that the content of their Diploma course was interesting. The majority of learners (84 per cent of Year 10 and 75 per cent of Year 12) agreed to some extent that they were learning useful skills on the Diploma course. Indeed, case-study interviewees highlighted how independent working, team-working and practical application on the course was relevant to the development of these skills. For example, one student said:

I think our communication skills will improve because you're not always working in your friendship group, you have to work in different teams quite a lot.

In another institution a student who had been involved in arranging an event explained:

We had to split into two teams and then we each had a role... You learn quite a lot that way, because you have to work out what to do when things go wrong, and you learn about team work.

A post-16 teacher also described the skills that young people had acquired:

...learners feel like they are having real input to the organisation of the College Summer Ball, also they are doing something real and they are going to see results. So the group is really involved in this now, and will be making things for it, organising it, ringing suppliers, hiring things...

Around three-quarters of learners (77 per cent of Year 10 and 73 per cent of Year 12) agreed to some extent that the Diploma will help them to get a job in the future. In terms of progression, 71 per cent of Year 10 students agreed that the Diploma might help them to get into college in the future. Looking ahead, 60 per cent of Year 10 students and 68 per cent of Year 12 students believed that taking a Diploma would help them to get into university in the future. Chapter 7 explores learners' future plans in more detail.

6.1.2 Reasons for dissatisfaction

Where survey respondents provided reasons for dissatisfaction with their Diploma course in response to an open question, the two main reasons were associated with dissatisfaction with the workload and the course not being in line with expectations.

In response to an open question, young people surveyed identified issues relating to the workload. Six per cent of respondents in both year groups said that there was too much work in general, additionally three per cent of those in Year 10 and six per cent in Year 12 said that there was insufficient time for them to complete all the work required. In addition, three per cent of Year 10 learners and four per cent of those in year 12 said that there was too much coursework. While five per cent of Year 10 Diploma learners found that there was too great a time commitment, none of those in Year 12 identified this.

Insights from the interviews with teachers revealed that staff generally felt that the students had been surprised by the amount of work they had to do in the time available. However, they reported that, in their view, the young people were managing well, particularly as some were enjoying the tasks and appreciated the need to record and reflect on an activity (which often added to the workload). Indeed, 70 per cent of Year 10 students and 67 per cent of Year 12 students agreed that the Diploma was a challenging course, while 69 per cent of Year 10 students and 60 per cent of Year 12 students agreed that they could cope with the amount of work. Staff suggested that student focus and course momentum were assisted by:

- coursework assessment (in contrast to exams)
- the fact that assessment was undertaken in a controlled environment, and
- where possible, whole days being dedicated to the Diploma.

So despite the challenge that the workload presented (and students giving this as a reason for dissatisfaction), staff considered that it helped young people to remain focused. Additionally, for students who were interviewed, the issue that their workload had been increased by disorganisation in the course (Lynch *et al.*, 2010), was less commonly mentioned. Although this was the case for some, it seemed to be less of an issue for cohort 2 students.

Cohort 2 students were less likely than their cohort 1 (Lynch *et al.*, 2010), counterparts at the same stage of the course to agree that the Diploma involved more work than their other courses (71 per cent of Year 10 students in cohort 2 compared with 83 per cent in cohort 1, and 64 per cent of Year 12 students in cohort 2 compared to 58 per cent in cohort 1). This may reflect better organisation and pace of the courses, or that the students who participated were more able to cope with the nature of the work involved.

The difference between students' expectations and their experience was a key issue in relation to their dissatisfaction with the Diploma. Specifically, seven per cent of Year 10 learners and five per cent of Year 12 learners in response to an open question in the survey said that the Diploma was not as they had expected. Thirteen per cent of Year 10 learners surveyed noted that the Diploma was less practical than they expected and this was the case among eight per cent of Year 12 Diploma learners.

Furthermore, 57 per cent of Year 10 and 49 per cent of Year 12 students agreed to some extent that they thought there would be more practical learning opportunities. Staff in five institutions also felt students would have preferred more practical work. This was the most common reason for dissatisfaction amongst students on Year 10 Hair and Beauty Studies (28 per cent), Engineering (20 per cent) and Society, Health and Development (18 per cent) Diplomas. Students studying the Creative and Media Diploma were least likely to cite misguidance on the level of practical learning as the reason for any dissatisfaction (five per cent of their responses) and least likely to agree that they thought there would be more practical learning (41 per cent of Year 10 and 38 per cent of Year 12 Creative and Media students disagreed with this statement). This reason for dissatisfaction with the Diploma course underlines the importance of comprehensive, accurate IAG which reflects the content of each Diploma subject accurately.

Further analysis showed that Year 10 students on the Society, Health and Development Diploma and those on the IT Diploma were significantly less likely to be satisfied with the Diploma and have a positive attitude to the course than other students. There was no subject area where students were significantly more satisfied than others.

Additionally, Year 10 students on the Society Health and Development Diploma were less satisfied than learners on other Diploma subjects with their IAG (see chapter 5 for more detail). In response to an open question they gave the following reasons for dissatisfaction:

- they felt misled about the level of practical work to expect (16 learners)
- there were not enough trips (13 learners)
- they found some of the work difficult/stressful or demanding (ten learners).

Year 10 IT students surveyed gave the following reasons for dissatisfaction:

- that the work was boring or repetitive (ten learners)
- that there was too much work generally (nine learners).

6.1.3 Appropriateness of learners for the course and levels of support

Despite some level of dissatisfaction amongst students, staff in all but one institution specified that drop-out was minimal and generally similar to, or less than, other courses. No interviewee felt drop-out on the Diploma was relatively high compared with other courses and it was generally limited to one or two students. Drop-out was largely attributed to young people re-evaluating their choice at an early stage of the course, personal issues or behaviour. However, nine per cent of learners surveyed said that they expected to leave their course before it ended. This suggests that there would be value identifying where students are at risk of dropping out and ensuring that sufficient support is in place to minimise the risk of students leaving early.

It was generally felt by both staff and students that support available to learners was adequate. Staff across seven consortia said that students had access to the normal pastoral support service within the institution, while staff in five consortia (including one of those identified above) reported that additional support had been provided for the students. This included an individual member of staff (usually the Diploma coordinator) having pastoral responsibility for the young people or a Teaching

Assistant attending classes. While the former was generally felt to be adequate, those who detailed the latter felt that it worked particularly well. This was often the case where communication was needed with a link or partner institution around individual students' needs. Conversely, staff in five consortia said there was little communication between partner institutions in respect to student support and there were differing levels of concern about the need for this. Without this kind of communication, there were instances of college staff being unaware of some individuals having Special Educational Needs (SEN). This would suggest that institutions where there is co-located delivery need to be aware of the importance of discussing students' needs both at the beginning and during the course. This was also a recommendation of Ofsted in their recent report on the Diplomas (Ofsted, 2010).

Despite the low drop-out rate, however, interviewees emphasised the importance of ensuring that students were appropriate for the Diploma course. In five consortia staff were largely positive about the suitability of the students on the course. The reason that was predominately given by staff in these consortia was that staff had been careful about recruitment, as one school manager said:

As far as possible we have tried to make sure that learners are able to cope with the Level 2 Diploma.

Staff elaborated that in order to ensure this; they had examined Key Stage 3 assessment levels and held interviews with students to ensure they were appropriate for the course. For example, one FE college asked prospective students to make a presentation in front of staff and their parents to show that they had understood what the Diploma entailed, as the following comment illustrates:

[To] see that it was a demanding course. Only then were they allowed to apply.

Across four consortia students were largely considered to be inappropriate for the course. Staff in six institutions felt the Diploma was too challenging for those who had chosen it. Staff highlighted that students needed to be independent learners and needed to understand the ratio of practical learning to more theoretically based work. A lack of practical learning was considered by staff to be a particular issue amongst Level 1 learners in two consortia and both consortia had decided to discontinue the Level 1 course and not start any new learners next year. There were two institutions where staff felt that their Level 2 students were not suited to the Diploma given their interest in for more practical learning, and both said that, on reflection, they had wrongly promoted the amount of practical learning to these students. One of these courses (a Hair and Beauty Studies Diploma) had now been discontinued as a result of the response of the learners.

The evidence indicates that students need to be either carefully selected for the learning style and content of the course or made fully aware of what to expect and supported to develop learning skills they may not yet possess.

The majority of case-study students believed that they were progressing well on their Diploma course. Many made this judgement based on verbal or written feedback from their teachers. It was clear that, across courses, this feedback included actual grades for their work for some and more broad feedback and ideas for improvement for others. A number of students were simply reflecting on the fact that they had managed to keep up with assignments or that they had managed to stay engaged in the course and well behaved.

6.2 Diploma and non-Diploma Learners' Experience

In order to explore the extent of any difference between learning for a Diploma, and other courses followed by young people, survey respondents and interviewees compared their Diploma course with their wider curriculum. This section explores the different elements of learning experienced by diploma learners and comparison learners. It then examines the views of Diploma students when considering the nature and value of the Diploma in comparison to other courses. The remainder of this section outlines the experience of those studying a Diploma outside of their normal school or college and their experiences and views of employer involvement in the Diploma.

6.2.1 Students' views on all current subjects taken

Table 6.1 below shows the approaches to learning experienced by students in their curriculum as a whole (that is across all qualification types), and compares the views of Diploma learners in Years 10 and 12 with their peers who were not taking a Diploma.

Table 6.1 Students' engagement in the following activities in all or most lessons

How often do you do the following activities in your lessons?	Year 10 Diploma learners %	Year 10 comparison Learners %	Year 12 Diploma learners %	Year 12 comparison Learners %
Do this in all or most of my lessons				
Work alone	59	67	57	70
Contribute to class discussion	58	58	71	67
Work from textbooks and worksheets	57	64	37	57
Group work	49	43	59	60
Problem solving activities	41	36	45	43
Practical activities	32	37	37	42
Record your own progress or achievements	25	19	35	32
Give presentations	22	12	20	26
N =	730	1397	224	338

A series of single response questions.

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 learner surveys, 2010

The survey indicates that Diploma learners had a different learning experience overall than their peers. As can be seen, in both year groups, Diploma learners were more likely to record their own progress or achievements (25 per cent of Year 10 and 35 per cent of Year 12) than comparison students (19 per cent of Year 10 and 32 per cent of Year 12). In addition, Diploma learners in Year 10 were:

- more likely to give presentations (22 per cent of Year 10) than other students (12 per cent of Year 10 comparison learners).
- more likely to do group work (49 per cent compared to 43 per cent).

In addition, Year 12 Diploma students were more likely than other learners in their year group to contribute to class discussion (71 per cent compared to 67 per cent).

Across both year groups, Diploma learners were less likely to:

- **work from textbooks and worksheets** (57 per cent of Year 10 and 37 per cent of Year 12) than other learners (64 per cent of Year 10 and 57 per cent of year 12)
- **undertake practical activities** (32 per cent of Year 10 and 37 per cent of Year 12) than other learners (37 per cent of Year 10 and 42 per cent of Year 12)
- **work alone** (59 per cent of Year 10 and 57 per cent of Year 12) than other learners (67 per cent of Year 10 and 70 per cent of Year 12).

Overall, therefore, it is apparent that Diploma learners had more experience of interactive learning opportunities such as group work, discussions and presentations and less use of textbooks and worksheets. However, they were less likely to have engaged in practical work than their peers, whereas it might have been expected that they would have more experience of this as the Diploma is an applied qualification.

Case-study interviews provided more detailed views on the Diploma. Interviewees across six consortia reported that they had experienced a wider variety of active learning opportunities on their Diploma course. For example, one Year 12 Diploma student taking the Creative and Media Diploma said:

The Diploma is different, there's designing and computer work, so it's not just writing...there's more discussion and making things...it's more varied than the AS Level.

As can be seen in Table 6.2, in comparing their Diploma with other courses the majority of young people surveyed in both year groups felt that they were gaining more skills or experience from their Diploma and considered that it would be more helpful for their future. The Diploma was felt by the majority to involve more work but only a minority said that that they had found it harder to learn than their other courses. Reflecting the findings in Table 6.1, Diploma learners were less likely to report that their Diploma course was more practical again highlighting that, for many, the Diploma was not viewed as a particularly practical course. However, there were generally fewer students on Diploma courses than on other courses and, as discussed earlier, interviewees revealed that this enabled learners to feel more supported.

Table 6.2 The Diploma compared to other courses

How much do you agree with the following:	Year 10 Diploma students	Year 12 Diploma students
	Agree or Strongly agree %	
My Diploma course is giving me more skills/experience	83	75
The classes in my Diploma course have fewer people	75	67
My Diploma will be more useful for my future	73	62
My Diploma course involves more work	71	64
My Diploma course is more practical	59	55
I find it harder to learn on my Diploma course	14	14
My Diploma course is less interesting	14	14
N=	730	187

A series of single response questions.

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2010

Year 10 students' responses to the survey regarding the extent to which their Diploma had prepared them for the future were grouped using factor analysis into a single measure. (Factor analysis consolidates the data in order to produce more robust measures than a single question would do.) Multi-level model analysis²¹ was then conducted to explore the characteristics of learners that were associated with feeling that the **Diploma prepared them for the future** (Factor 2)²². This revealed that Diploma learners were significantly more likely to consider that their Diploma would prepare them for the future where they:

- had spent time on a work placement or with someone from the world of work as part of their Diploma course, compared with their similar peers who had not
- were satisfied with their Diploma-related IAG before commencing the course (compared with those who were not but were otherwise similar)
- had a positive attitude to learning (compared with their similar peers with a less positive attitude)
- where they had a preference for teamwork and practical learning, compared with their similar peers with less preference for this way of learning.

²¹ See Appendix A for details of factor analysis and the multi-level model.

²² See Appendix A1.3 for more details on the factor..

Diploma learners in Year 10 were significantly less likely to feel that their Diploma would help them for the future where they:

- were female (compared to their otherwise similar peers who were male)
- were taking a Level 1 Diploma (compared with their similar peers who were taking Level 2)
- studied their Diploma at their schools and another location (compared to their similar peers who studies only at other locations)
- were working towards the Diploma in IT.

This shows, therefore, that, in addition to students' own attitudes, there are aspects of delivery of the qualification that can contribute to learners' seeing its value for their future. Specifically, this was being well-informed before starting a Diploma and engaging with employers as part of the course.

6.2.2 Learners' experience of studying for a Diploma outside of their own school

For 69 per cent of learners in Year 10 some components of the Diploma course took place at an institution other than their 'home' school (as reported in Chapter 2). Students were generally positive about the experience. Year 10 students²³ reported the following:

- 81 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they were treated more like an adult during Diploma lessons taken outside of their school
- 80 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they like working with students from other schools on their Diploma course and 73 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that students from their school mix well with other students
- 59 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they get more one-to-one help from teachers/tutors where they study for the Diploma
- 59 per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they find it easier to learn in lessons taken outside their own school.

Only ten per cent agreed or strongly agreed that they did not enjoy working with teachers/tutors from outside their normal school.

Case-study interviewees largely concurred and also reported that travel arrangements had been generally successful (particularly where organised by their own or their host institution), while others commented on having access to some good facilities as a result. While the prevailing view among learners in the second term of the first year was therefore positive about learning away from schools, among the first cohort there were indications of a decline in their contentment with learning away from their home school in the second year (Golden *et al.*, forthcoming) as the pressure increased to complete the course. The visits to consortia in 2011 will investigate whether this is also the case among cohort 2 participants.

²³ Year 12 students were very unlikely to be taking a Diploma away from their home institution and therefore, given the low response rate, their responses are not reported.

6.2.3 Learners' experience of employer involvement in Diploma delivery

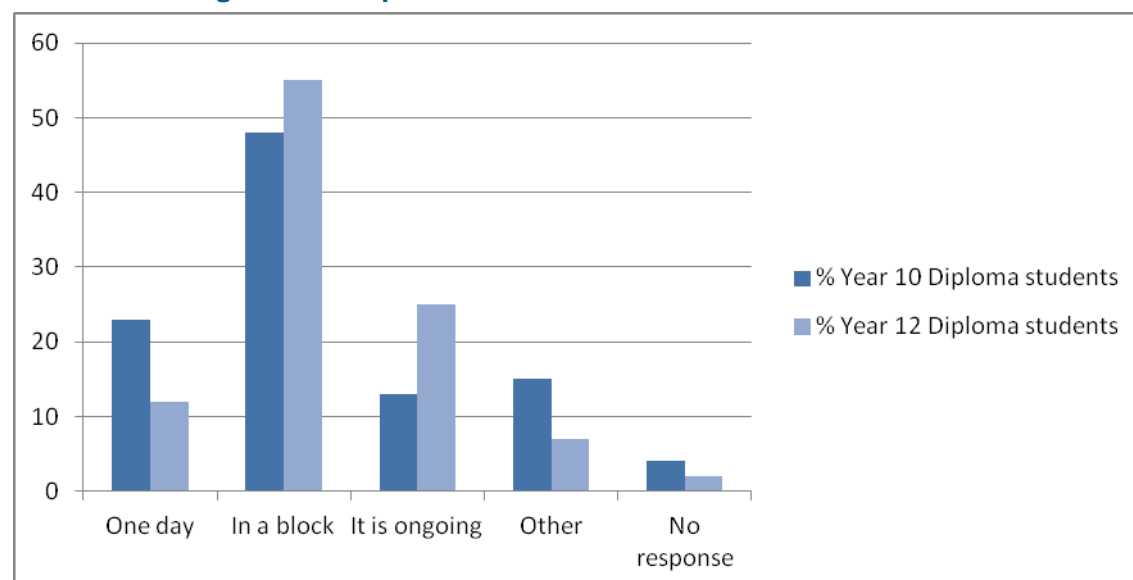
The Diploma is designed to give students ten days of work experience alongside other employer engagement activities and as outlined in Chapter 3, most teachers had arranged some employer involvement in delivery. At the time of the survey, in the spring term of Year 10 and Year 12, 90 per cent of Year 10 learners and 82 per cent of those in Year 12 had experienced some employer involvement in their Diploma.

Among Year 12 Diploma students, 49 per cent had spent time on a work placement while 36 per cent of those in Year 10 had done so. Furthermore as noted in section 6.1 there was a positive association between having done an employer work placement and learners' satisfaction with the Diploma.

Work placements were most likely to have been undertaken in a block (see Chart 6.2 below). Year 12 students were more likely than Year 10 students to have an ongoing placement, while Year 10 students were more likely than their older counterparts to have completed just one day of work experience. It is possible that pre-16, schools were planning to use the regular week of work experience provided in Year 10, while learners in Year 12 have more scope for ongoing placements due to a more flexible timetable post-16.

IT students in Year 10 were most likely to report that their work placement had been just one or two days. Although most interviewees had yet to undertake their work experience at the time of the interviews, the IT case-study interviewees reported that they were generally satisfied with the amount of employer contact in terms of visits to the workplace.

Chart 6.2 Length of work placement



N Year 10 =266, Year 12 = 144

More than one answer could be given

The percentages in this table are weighted.

A filter question: all those who answered that they had taken part in a work placement

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2010

In addition to work experience, it was evident that most young people had experienced alternative contact with employers, primarily employers giving talks and visits to workplaces (see Table 6.3 below).

Table 6.3 Activities undertaken with an employer/someone from the world of work

	Year 10 Diploma students %	Year 12 Diploma students %
Someone from the world of work visited my school/college to talk to us	67	68
I visited a workplace with other students	64	63
I had advice/help from someone from the world of work (e.g. a mentor)	53	43
I have undertaken projects or challenges with someone from the world of work	47	37
Someone from the world of work teaches my Diploma lessons	41	36
N =	730	224

A series of single response questions.

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2010

In addition to work experience, interviewees had experienced other engagement with the world of work as part of their Diploma. Interviewees in four consortia had experienced one or two employer involvement 'events', while others in two further consortia listed four or five events (at what is a relatively early stage in the course) but some still felt that contact had been minimal.

Examples of specific employer involvement identified by young people included:

- learners on a Hair and Beauty Studies Diploma course had been visited by fire-fighters to explain health and safety (relating to a specific unit of principal learning). They had also visited a beauty salon to see how the reception operated and had been taught by a professional hairdresser for part of the course.
- a Society, Health and Development student explained that their group had visited the local custody suite at the police station and a Community Support Officer visited them in one of their lessons. She said:

...it made us understand what it would be like to do the work in the real world.

...I didn't know that police officers also work with people from health, early years and social care.

- a Creative and Media student described a breakfast meeting he attended with representatives from the local theatre, and the radio station amongst others. Here they spoke about the Diploma and what input the employers might have.

- a Business, Administration and Finance student explained that his course had been visited by representatives of a Building Society who told them about the job application process. Another bank visited to explain money management and budgeting to them.
- students on a Level 3 Creative and Media course had been commissioned by their college to develop a promotional DVD which they would then promote to employers as an example of their work.

Table 6.4 below presents the views of survey respondents on their experience with an employer. Most students agreed that employer contact was useful because they had undertaken worthwhile tasks and activities (64 per cent of Year 10 and 58 per cent of Year 12), that it helped them to learn about the types of jobs they could get after finishing the Diploma (61 per cent of Year 10 and 56 per cent of Year 12), and that it helped them to learn more about how businesses work (53 per cent of Year 10 and 51 per cent of Year 12).

Year 10 students were slightly more certain (53 per cent) than Year 12 students (48 per cent) that employer contact had helped make the Diploma more interesting, that it had helped them to understand their Diploma course better (52 per cent compared to 36 per cent) and that it had helped them to use the skills they were learning on their Diploma course (51 per cent compared to 44 per cent). It is important to note that, where responses were less positive, students were much more likely to respond that they were “not sure” rather than disagree with a statement.

Table 6.4 Student views on contact with an employer/someone from the world of work

	Year 10 Diploma students	Year 12 Diploma students
	Strongly Agree or Agree %	
It was useful because I did worthwhile tasks and activities	64	58
It helped me to learn about the types of jobs I could get after finishing my Diploma	61	56
It has helped me learn how businesses work	53	51
It has made my Diploma course more interesting	53	48
It has helped me to understand my Diploma course better	52	36
It allowed me to use the skills I am learning on my Diploma course	51	44
It was helpful for me in deciding what job I might do in the future	50	44
It was with an employer in an industry relevant to my Diploma subject	49	47
I did not enjoy my experience	11	9
I did not see the link between this experience and my Diploma course	11	10
N =	667	185

Series of single response questions. The percentages in this table are weighted.

A filter question: all those who answered that they had had some contact with an employer

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2010

The following comments from case-study interviewees illustrate the value of including the employer component in their Diploma learning:

I think it is really good because in the lesson you would learn about the theory behind the topic and you'll go off and do a mini project on it and then you will actually go out into the workplace and see how real businesses use it so it's not like theory.

[I like] talking to them [employers] first hand. It's different to talking to teachers and we can have discussion about how we get to certain pathways... It's encouraging to see what can be accomplished rather than the teacher just telling you about it.

We're building up confidence by meeting people and getting information. It's good because it might not be the job you want to do in the future, but you get to see other things and pick up things for your future... and then we the homework that day and it's like exactly what they've said on it, so it sort of helps with our homework.

6.3 Students' Attitudes to Learning

6.3.1 Attitude to learning in general

The surveys of Year 10 Diploma learners and the comparison group included questions to explore their attitudes to learning and their preferred learning style. By asking both groups of young people the same questions, it is possible to compare the views of each. A range of survey questions which explored attitudes or learner preferences were grouped together using factor analysis, which consolidates the data in order to produce more robust measures than a single question would do.

These factors were then included as variables, along with others, in multi-level modelling analysis (see Appendix A), which takes into account a range of influential variables, to assess whether young people who take Diplomas differ from their peers in their views and attitudes. The models explored whether Diploma learners differed from similar students in their attitudes and whether Diploma learners taking each subject differed from their peers not taking a Diploma. The analysis revealed that Year 10 learners with the following characteristics held a **more positive attitude to learning in general (Factor 3²⁴)**:

- learners for whom English was an additional language
- learners who were studying for an IT or a Business, Administration and Finance Diploma.

Year 10 learners with the following characteristics were less likely to hold a positive attitude to learning:

- learners who were studying for a Hair and Beauty Studies Diploma.

In terms of **commitment to learning (Factor 4)** in general, Year 10 learners with the following characteristics were more committed than their peers not taking Diplomas:

²⁴ See Appendix A1.3 for more details on the factors.

- girls
- learners for whom English was an additional language
- learners with higher key stage 3 mean score
- learners who were studying for an IT Diploma.

Year 10 learners with the following characteristics were less committed:

- learners who were studying for a Hair and Beauty Studies Diploma.

The finding that IT Diploma students had a more positive attitude and commitment to learning is perhaps surprising given that they were shown to be significantly less satisfied with the Diploma overall. This reflects cohort 1 (Lynch *et al.*, 2010) findings during the first year of the course and may indicate that dissatisfaction with their experience of learning to date may have led them to choose to take a Diploma in the first place.

6.3.2 Learning styles

There were relatively few differences between the preferred learning style of those on Diploma courses and those who were not. However, further analysis (as described above) showed that Year 10 learners with the following characteristics had a stronger **preference for teamwork and practical learning (Factor 5²⁵)**:

- boys
- learners who were studying for a Hair and Beauty Studies Diploma.

Learners with the following characteristics had less of a preference for this type of learning:

- learners studying for a Society, Health and Development Diploma.

In terms of confidence in learning skills, Year 12 students were generally more confident about using certain learning skills than their younger counterparts. However, there were a few interesting differences between those who studied for a Diploma and those who did not. For example, **Year 10 Diploma learners were more confident than those on other courses** in terms of the following:

- thinking about their progress in class (61 per cent of Year 10 Diploma learners agreed with this to some extent compared to 55 per cent of other learners in Year 10)
- understanding what they will need to do in a job (78 per cent compared to 71 per cent)
- working with adults and other young people (76 per cent compared to 73 per cent)
- managing their own work (69 per cent compared to 64 per cent).

²⁵ See Appendix A1.3 for more details on the factors.

However, the picture is slightly different for Year 12 Diploma students who seemed less confident about some of their skills. For example, **Year 12 Diploma learners were less confident than those on other courses** in Year 12 in terms of the following:

- communicating clearly in writing (64 per cent of Year 12 Diploma learners agreed with this to some compared to 79 per cent of other learners in Year 12)
- using their initiative (78 per cent compared to 86 per cent)
- managing their own work (67 per cent compared to 75 per cent).

The experience of learners (as reported in section 6.2) is that some Diploma students felt particularly challenged by the amount of writing and the workload of their course.

6.4 Summary

Overall the majority of learners were satisfied with, and were enjoying, their Diploma course. Students were finding that the Diploma was a challenging experience that was teaching them a range of new and useful skills and preparing them well for the work place. The evidence indicated that learners were appreciating the opportunity to develop independent working skills and that this was facilitated by both the design and structure of the course. Employer engagement was an important factor and contributed significantly to learner satisfaction.

Despite their satisfaction level Diploma students considered that the course was not quite as expected (and there was a decline in contentment with learning away from their home school reported by cohort 1 learners in the second year as the pressure increased to complete the course) and this reflects on the importance of high quality IAG.

7 Students' Planned Future Destinations

Key findings

- Young people in Year 10 who were taking a Diploma were slightly more likely than their peers to be considering pursuing a work-based route, such as a job with training or an Apprenticeship, after the end of Year 11.
- Diploma learners in Year 12 were also more likely to be considering an Apprenticeship after Year 13 than their peers.
- Around half (54 per cent) of the Diploma learners in Year 10, and 60 per cent of those in Year 12, intended to continue in learning or employment that was related to their Diploma subject in future.
- Nearly half of the Year 10 Diploma learners were considering taking a further Diploma either immediately (14 per cent) or at some time in the future (31 per cent).
- Most (71 per cent) of the young people in Year 12 who were taking a Level 3 Diploma said that they intended to continue to higher education in future.
- Experience of the Diploma had helped some young people to refine their decision about their future career or education by providing insights into employment in the sector and experience of different elements of a broader subject area.

Implications for policy and practice

- It is worth ensuring that Diploma students considering work-based routes post-16 are provided with advice on seeking employment that provides further learning and progression opportunities. This would minimise the risk that they might enter a job without training. Such support could be targeted at those who are more likely to intend to pursue a work-based route post-16 which appeared to be those taking Engineering and Hair and Beauty Diplomas pre-16.
- The majority of young people taking a Diploma at Level 3 were intending to progress to higher education. One of the reasons given by young people who were not taking a Diploma for not doing so was because they wanted to continue to higher education. There would therefore be value in continuing to communicate to learners in Year 11 that the Diploma is one of a range of qualifications that are accepted by HEIs for entry onto degree courses so that they make informed decisions.

This chapter will explore learners' plans for their future when they were in Year 10 and Year 12. It compares the plans of young people engaged in taking a Diploma and those who were not taking this qualification and the main influences on their intended choices. In addition, it outlines whether any of the young people surveyed anticipated taking a Diploma in future.

7.1 Year 10 Students' Planned Future Destinations

7.1.1 Intended future routes

In Year 10, young people were considering what they might choose to do after they left school at the end of Year 11. While their views may reflect their initial plans which subsequently may change when they reach the end of Year 11, or indeed once they know their achievements at the end of Year 11, their views provide an early indication of the extent to which they planned to remain in learning, and the nature of their intended future destinations.

Table 7.1 shows that the majority of young people in both groups intended to remain in learning post-16 either in a school sixth form or college. Young people could select more than one of the options, to reflect the range of considerations they may have, and it is evident that the work-based route was also appealing to a notable proportion of young people as more than one fifth (24 per cent of Diploma learners and 20 per cent of their peers) were planning to get a full-time job with training after Year 11 and 18 per cent were considering an Apprenticeship while this was the case for 11 per cent of the comparison group. Overall, the survey evidence suggests that Diploma learners were slightly more likely to consider a work-based route, such as a job with training or an Apprenticeship, than their peers who were not taking a Diploma. Of the other plans that were not listed but were identified by young people in both groups these included getting a part-time job, entering the Army and progressing to higher education.

Table 7.1 Year 11 students' intended future destinations: Diploma students and comparison students

Intended destinations after finishing Year 11	Diploma students	Comparison students
	%	%
Do a course in a school sixth form ²⁶	20	23
Do a course at college/sixth form college	67	66
Do a course at a training provider	5	4
Do an Apprenticeship/Advanced Apprenticeship	18	11
Get a job with training	24	20
Get a full time job without training	5	4
Something else	6	6
Don't know yet	8	10
No response	4	2
N =	730	1397

More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Survey of learners 2010

²⁶ Not all students would have attended a school with a sixth form.

There were some key differences in the intentions of learners taking different Diploma subjects²⁷ revealing a preference among some for a course-based route and others a work-based route. More specifically:

- young people taking Business, Administration and Finance and Creative and Media were more likely than was the case overall to plan to continue into a school sixth form (37 per cent and 31 per cent respectively) while those taking Society, Health and Development were more likely to intend to progress into a course at college or sixth form college (79 per cent).
- young people taking Hair and Beauty Studies and those taking Engineering were more likely to plan to enter an Apprenticeship (25 per cent and 42 per cent respectively) and those taking Engineering were also more likely to plan to get a job with training (33 per cent) than was the case with their peers.

In considering their future options, around half of the young people taking a Diploma planned to pursue a job or course that was related to their Diploma subject (54 per cent). This was particularly the case among those taking Engineering (68 per cent) and Society Health and Development (75 per cent). While many young people (29 per cent) did not yet know if they planned to continue their interest in their Diploma subject, 11 per cent said that they did not (six per cent did not respond).

Interviews with Diploma learners during the case-study visits revealed that, at that time (spring term of Year 10) they were, as might be expected, quite undecided about the specific aspects of their plans after Year 11. Nevertheless, they were considering a range of options and tended to have discussed these mainly with their parents or carers, their teachers (including Diploma teachers) and, in some cases, careers advice professionals such as Connexions Personal Advisers. The young people interviewed could be described as representing three broad groups:

- **Young people who were clear about their future choices:** such young people had a reasonably definite plan, albeit dependent on their achievements at the end of Year 11, and either had explored, or were in the process of exploring, how to follow that plan. These young people included those who intended to continue in their Diploma subject area although this was through a variety of routes including employment or self-employment and further learning including higher education in the medium-term.
- **Young people who had refined their future plans:** among the interviewees were young people who had reflected on their original intention for the future and refined this in light of their Diploma experience. This included examples of young people who had experienced the workplace through their Diploma and found that working in that subject area was not as they expected, for example they had observed that it was physically tiring. In addition, as the Diploma comprised different components of a broad subject, young people had refined their choices to focus more on one component than another. For example, a young person taking a Hair and Beauty Diploma had decided to focus on hairdressing, rather than beauty therapy while a learner taking Environmental and Land-Based Studies had decided to focus on animal care in future rather than plant-related studies. Moreover, experience with employers had assisted in highlighting which aspect of a career they would be most interested in.

²⁷ The analysis included only those subjects where sufficient numbers of learners were available. It therefore excluded those with fewer than 50 respondents: Construction and the Built Environment, Hospitality, Environmental and Land-Based studies and Manufacturing and Product Design.

- **Young people who remained undecided:** The interviewees included young people who were as yet very undecided about their future plans and, for these young people, their experience of the Diploma was just one of a range of experiences that might influence their future choices.

7.1.2 Whether young people considered taking a Diploma post-16

One of the possible qualifications that young people who planned to continue into post-16 learning could choose to take is the Diploma. Indeed, some consortia visited for the cohort 1 evaluation (Lynch *et al.*, 2010) had adopted a strategy to generate a post-16 cohort by engaging young people in the Diploma pre-16 and then encouraging them to pursue the higher level (usually Level 3) post-16 and this continued to be evident in their plans for the future when visited in 2010. Among the second cohort of Diploma learners surveyed, it was evident that taking a further Diploma was a consideration for nearly half of Diploma learners but less so for the comparison group, as illustrated in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2 Students' intentions to take a Diploma in future: Diploma students and comparison students

Would you consider doing another/a Diploma in the future?	Diploma students %	Comparison students %
Yes, I plan to take another/a Diploma immediately after finishing Year 11	14	4
I may take another/a Diploma at some time in the future	31	28
Probably not	20	34
Definitely not	6	9
Not sure yet	25	23
No response	4	2
N =	730	1397

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Due to rounding, percentages may not sum to 100.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Survey of learners 2010

As can be seen learners who had already taken a Diploma pre-16 were more likely to consider taking one post-16 and the proportion who were decided about this was noticeably greater among Diploma learners (14 per cent) than other learners (four per cent) although the proportions of those who were considering taking a Diploma at some time in the future were more similar. Further analysis that examined the probability of considering taking a Diploma in future, while controlling for other influential factors such as prior attainment and background characteristics, confirmed that being a Diploma learner was associated with a higher probability of planning to take a Diploma in future.

Of those Year 10 Diploma learners²⁸ who were considering taking a Diploma in future, most (68 per cent) planned to take a Diploma at Level 3 which, given that the majority of learners who responded to the survey (80 per cent) were taking a Level 2 pre-16, represents a progression to a higher level post-16. While 14 per cent of young people did not know what level they would consider, 20 per cent were considering a Level 2 Diploma while three per cent thought that they would take a Level 1 Diploma in future. As nearly all learners were already studying at Level 2 or above, their intention to progress to a Level 1 course may reflect a lack of understanding of levels.

In considering their options, as was found in the survey, Diploma learners who were interviewed were generally willing to consider a Diploma as an appropriate next qualification. Where this was the case it was because they enjoyed the subject, saw it as a useful qualification or had enjoyed their experience of taking the Diploma pre-16. Where they were not considering a Diploma this tended to be due to wanting to pursue a different subject area or because they believed, or had found, that it was not the appropriate qualification for their future. In addition, as reflected in the survey, some young people preferred to progress into employment after Year 11 rather than into further course-based learning.

The main reasons provided by the comparison group of learners surveyed, in an open question, for not considering taking a Diploma in future reflected in some cases a considered decision. However, their comments, detailed below, also reveal that some may be making a decision without having sufficient information, for example about where you can study or whether a Diploma is appropriate for entry to higher education. The main reasons included that:

- they felt that the Diploma would not be useful for the job or course they wanted to pursue in future (16 per cent)
- they were not interested in the Diploma (16 per cent)
- they had other plans (ten per cent)
- they did not know much about them (seven per cent)
- the Diploma was not available in a subject in which they were interested (seven per cent)
- they would rather take a variety of subjects and therefore take A Levels (six per cent)
- they want to study at a college or sixth form college (six per cent)
- they want to get a degree (four per cent).

7.2 Year 12 Students' Planned Future Destinations

7.2.1 Intended future routes

Most of the young people in Year 12 taking a Diploma who were surveyed said that they were taking Level 3 (61 per cent) while others were taking Level 2 (21 per cent) and Level 1 (ten per cent). Among the comparison group 84 per cent indicated that they were taking a Level 3 qualification. If they achieve their Level 3 qualifications, one option that they can consider is higher education. For those young people taking

²⁸ N=327 young people who were considering taking a Diploma in future

Level 1 and 2 qualifications, employment and further learning would be the two main options to consider. As can be seen in Table 7.3, 52 per cent of Diploma learners said that they were intending to progress to higher education and a slightly higher proportion of their peers (58 per cent) planned to do so. Among those taking Level 3 Diplomas, the proportion intending to progress to higher education is higher (71 per cent) as is the case among the comparison group taking Level 3 qualifications (68 per cent). Overall, reflecting the findings from the first cohort of Diploma participants (Lynch *et al.*, 2010) the evidence shows that higher education is considered to be a potential route after Year 13 by the majority of Level 3 Diploma learners.

As was the case among Diploma learners in Year 10, outlined above, a greater proportion of Diploma learners in Year 12 intended to progress onto an Apprenticeship after Year 13 (14 per cent) than was the case among their peers (seven per cent). Indeed, as might be expected at this stage of their lives, the employment route in general, either in a job with or without training or an Apprenticeship was the intended next step for many young people surveyed in both groups.

Table 7.3 Year 12 students' intended future destinations: Diploma students and comparison students

Plans after finishing your Diploma	Diploma students	Comparison students
	%	%
Do a course in a school sixth form	0	6
Do a course at college/sixth form college	23	9
Do a course at a training provider	2	1
Do an Apprenticeship/Advanced Apprenticeship	14	7
Get a job with training	19	23
Get a full time job without training	9	10
Do a course at a university/higher education institution	52	58
Something else	6	5
Don't know yet	10	10
No response	3	0
N =	224	338

More than one answer could be given so percentages may sum to more than 100.

The percentages in this table are weighted.

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Survey of learners 2010

Interviews with Year 12 learners revealed that they were at different stages of decidedness in relation to their future options. All but three of those interviewed were taking a Level 3 Diploma and they were generally exploring higher education as one of their potential choices at 18. In some cases they were doing so alongside the work-based route, including Apprenticeships and self-employment.

Learners who were studying a Diploma at Level 2 or Level 1 in Year 12 were generally planning to continue in learning after they had completed their Diploma including four learners in one consortium who aimed to progress to a Diploma Level 2.

Similarly to their Year 10 peers, most Diploma learners surveyed in Year 12 (60 per cent) planned to continue to engage in employment or learning that was related to their Diploma subject in future. Eight per cent said that they would not while 24 per cent were unsure (eight per cent did not respond). This suggests that, while for some the Diploma subject choice they made was related to a longer term interest, for others the Diploma subject did not constrain their future choices.

7.2.2 Whether young people consider taking a Diploma in future

Most (61 per cent) of young people in Year 12 who responded to the survey were already studying a Level 3 Diploma, and so would be unlikely to take a further Diploma at the same, or a lower level. Of those who were taking a Level 2 or Level 1 Diploma²⁹ 27 per cent said that they planned to take another Diploma immediately after completing their current Diploma course while a further 21 per cent said that they would consider doing so at some time in the future. In most cases among the small number who responded, this would be at Level 3 (65 per cent³⁰) while for 24 per cent it would be at Level 2. Overall, among both the Year 10 and Year 12 Diploma learners surveyed a notable proportion (48 per cent in year 12 and 45 per cent in Year 10) were considering taking another Diploma in future which suggests that the strategy of engaging young people pre-16 and supporting them to progress to a higher level Diploma in future may have been a successful strategy.

Among the comparison group of learners who had not taken a Diploma, 36 per cent planned to take a Diploma immediately or would consider doing so in the future. However, among those not taking Level 3 courses in Year 12, 51 per cent were considering taking a Diploma either immediately or in the future.

7.3 Summary

Overall, the evidence shows that learners who had taken Diplomas were at this stage intending to remain in learning either in further education (in a college or sixth form) or in higher education. Nevertheless, they were also considering the work-based route, in particular Apprenticeships, and were more likely to do so than their peers who had not taken Diplomas. This indicated that young people who choose to take Diplomas are interested in engaging in the world of work and undertaking learning at work which may be one of their reasons for choosing a Diploma.

According to young people the Diploma had not constrained their choices and they indicated that they were considering a variety of options for the future. For example higher education and future courses in the same, and alternative, subject area as their Diploma.

²⁹ N=73 young people who were taking a Level 1 or Level 2 Diploma in Year 12

³⁰ N=36 young people who planned to take a Diploma in future and indicated a level.

8 Lessons Learned and Future Developments

Key findings

- More than half of consortium leads believed that the number of learners opting to take Diplomas from September 2010 would be the same or higher than previously.
- There were indications that increases in future take-up would progress either by level, for example greater provision of Level 3 Diplomas for students completing Level 2 qualifications, or by Diploma subject.
- Consortia, subject and institutional leads highlighted the importance of IAG, the value of good working partnerships, the significance of effective planning and the need for simplification and clarification of the Diploma component parts, in particular functional skills, as instrumental to the successful implementation of Diplomas.
- Institutional staff from ten consortia outlined the key benefits of Diplomas. These were: the belief that the Diploma had broadened choice for young people, both in terms of an engaging alternative course, but also in terms of experiencing different learning institutions; the sharing of ideas and partnership working and the enjoyment derived from the range of topics, knowledge and skills involved in teaching the Diploma.

Implications for policy and practice

- Although since these interviews took place the 14-19 entitlement, and the *need* to collaborate, have been removed, interviewees highlighted the need to further support IAG, employer engagement and partnership working as the sharing of good practice was recognised as beneficial to both students and teachers. It is possible that methods of partnership working might further evolve, given a system of voluntary participation.
- Lessons learnt from the early implementation of Diplomas indicate that there was recognition that Diplomas have unique attributes that appeal to a range of young people and that enhanced IAG would ensure that young people and their parents fully understand the Diploma.
- Diplomas would also benefit from time, simplification, clarification and support (in terms of, for example assessment clarification from awarding bodies) in order to ensure that education professionals fully understand the qualification.

Case-study interviews and surveys were carried out early in 2010 prior to the change of government and recent policy changes with regard to the Diploma (such as the removal of entitlement) so consortia and institutional interviewees discussed future plans within this context. Although interviews were clearly influenced by the imminent election, and the 2011 stage of the evaluation will provide post-election plans, nevertheless there are some worthwhile observations with regard to future planned delivery, further support needs and lessons learned as detailed below.

8.1 Lessons Learned and Advice for Future Consortia

8.1.1 Lessons Learned

In the spring term of 2010 consortia and subject leads and institutional staff were asked what lessons they felt they had learnt which might inform the future implementation and delivery of Diplomas. Three main messages emerged and these are discussed below:

The importance of IAG

Both at consortia and institutional levels staff from across eight consortia spontaneously stressed the significance of having appropriate students on the right level of course. One consortium lead explained the need for Diploma students to be '*motivated and capable*'. Additionally a subject lead in another consortium stressed the importance of recruitment and selection of suitable students at an early stage. Another described how the college in their consortium carried out a '*very strict skills scan of students to identify study and research needs*' as these skills were recognised as important for Diploma students to have, as discussed in Chapter 4. Staff in five of these consortia specifically noted the importance of the taster day and how, for example it should be a full day and should clearly demonstrate the combination of applied, theoretical and academic learning inherent in the Diploma. One senior school leader believed that the taster day was critical to enable the students to achieve a '*real feel*' for the Diploma as:

They [the students] always think it's going to be practical – so we need either a longer taster session or a couple of taster sessions.

She would also like the parents to be better informed as:

Parents are worried: they don't want their children to be guinea pigs. We need to be able to talk to them properly about Diplomas and what is different about them.

The value of good working partnerships and planning

Interviewees were expressing their views on the lessons learnt to inform the future implementation and delivery of Diplomas *before* entitlement to access all Diploma subjects from 2013 was removed. Staff across eight consortia believed that creating good working partnership and working collaboratively to deliver Diplomas across institutions within consortia was important. This entailed suggestions for working more collaboratively than was currently the case in order to, for example provide a more comprehensive range of ASL subjects and also to ease practical arrangements across consortia, such as options days, by having a central consortia calendar or by more use of a consortium VLE.

However there was recognition that partnership working was not always easy as trust was necessary and competition between schools still exists. One senior leader said:

Until accountability changes, sending pupils to another school will hinder partnership working.

As has been noted earlier in this report (see section 2.2 for example) collaboration, when allowed to evolve organically appeared to be more accepted than when imposed centrally.

Additionally, effective planning was viewed as important by staff across eight consortia. This encompassed the need to ensure the consortium Diploma timetable was streamlined to suit all institutions' needs, (such as staff training days) and, wherever possible, to avoid days where learners are needed by different institutions at the same time, for example for 'stop the clock days' (days on which the school timetable is suspended and the entire year group work on one activity). Consortia and institutional staff across six consortia stressed the importance of carrying out planning early. Not only was advanced planning viewed as important in terms of generic requirements such as travel and finance, but also in terms of more specific requirements such as planning the extended project early enough to facilitate completion within the timescale and planning and coordinating employer involvement at consortium level.

The Diploma, in particular the functional skills component, would benefit from simplification and clarification

Across six consortia staff stressed that the Diploma would benefit from being simplified both in terms of the model of delivery (and this has been achieved as entitlement and working in collaboration are no longer requirements of Diploma delivery) and in terms of the functional skills component in particular. One consortium lead summarised one of the key underlying concerns among interviewees with regard to functional skills and whether they should be part of the Diploma:

The message coming through is that it is a real benefit to have functional skills but at the same time the message is that not everybody has to have the qualification. It's a mixed message which is confusing local authorities, let alone schools and collegeswhy would you do a Diploma with functional skills attached when you can do a BTEC without functional skills attached?

Additionally, staff across eight consortia offered suggestions for improving delivery of Diploma components such as:

- incorporating more practical learning where possible not only because it was acknowledged that many Diploma learners enjoy practical elements maximising the benefits of employer involvement by having more employer events, but well-planned and spaced out over the year. In that way each speaker or event would have greatest impact
- encouraging more research and independent learning. One interviewee, teaching on the Environmental and Land-Based Diploma, recognised that he had learnt to change his teaching technique as he had been teaching from 'a science teacher's point of view, delivering the lesson like a three-hour science lesson'. He changed his style of teaching and used the school VLE to set assignments. He gave the students an hour to research, then to talk about it in a group and then to write up what they found. He believed it was a very different way to science teaching and noted that:

It gives the students a lot more independence and they have grown in confidence.

8.1.2 Impact of the Diploma

There was a general acknowledgement that, to date, the implementation and take-up of Diplomas had been small and therefore, although there was a clear impact in areas such as timetabling and increased partnership working, there was also acceptance that the impact would be likely to increase in future in proportion to the number of students.

Benefits

The main benefit of Diplomas, reported by institutional staff across ten consortia involved in teaching the second cohort of Diploma students, was that the Diploma expands the curriculum and offers an engaging alternative to young people. For example, one teacher observed:

The Diploma enriches the curriculum and is more relevant for some of them [young people].

Their vocational appeal was seen as beneficial to learners of all ability, for example it was observed that:

The experience has turned some of them [learners] around; they are now so enthusiastic and motivated

If one or two lines survive and are added to the vocational arm of education that will be good.

Another believed that the Diploma:

Stops them [young people] from becoming NEET [not in employment, education or training].

While a senior leader observed the importance of the Diploma offer for more able students:

With the applied learning and so on, it is an engaging and challenging and different programme for middle to higher ability students, who may never end up in that vocational area.

Partnership working was also perceived to be beneficial by staff across six consortia. For example, one teacher observed that it had:

....been good to talk to people in other schools and build better relationships.

Sharing ideas and 'developing a wider network' was also seen to be a positive experience and beneficial to all concerned.

College staff in four consortia appreciated that offering the Diploma had widened the number of young people who were aware of their local college, so the Diploma had 'showcased' the college and:

Promoted the college facilities and specialisms to pre-16 students.

It was expected that this would promote progression post-16. This will be explored further in the next stage of the evaluation.

In terms of the positive impact the Diploma was perceived to have had on teachers, interviewees across nine consortia reported that they were enjoying aspects of teaching the new Diploma, as the following comments illustrate:

I'm out of my comfort zone and it's interesting and exciting

It's opened up a different way of teaching.

It's helped me to not be so controlled and give them [the learners] a free rein, let them have their own ideas and run with them...and make their own mistakes.

On reflection, from the teachers' perspective, the range of topics, knowledge and skills involved in the Diploma was a positive aspect of the new qualification.

Disadvantages

The main disadvantages of Diplomas were perceived by institutional staff to be: firstly the time involved in administering and delivering the qualification. Staff across seven consortia felt the time involved in teaching Diplomas was onerous. This was summed up by one teacher who observed:

I find it hard to understand how many hours I spend on the administrative side for a course I only teach three hours a week. I teach 18 hours a week in total, so it should take one-sixth of my time but it actually takes half of my time.

Secondly, funding was not seen to be adequate to introduce and sustain the Diploma by senior managers and teaching staff from institutions across five consortia. For example, some staff commented that it was 'expensive' to deliver and that the level of funding was not 'comparable' to that of other qualifications. Finally, interviewees from three consortia particularly emphasised the fact that the Diploma was viewed as a complex qualification, made up of many component parts, which was difficult to fully understand.

8.2 Expected Future Delivery and Take-up of Diplomas

In the spring of 2010 consortium leads were asked which Diploma subjects they were planning to deliver within their consortium from September 2010. The majority of consortium leads (between eight and eleven for each subject) expected to run the following Diploma subjects:

- Business, Administration and Finance
- Creative and Media
- Engineering
- Sport and Active Leisure
- Society, Health and Development
- Construction and the Built Environment

- Information Technology
- Hair and Beauty
- Hospitality.

Fewer than half (between three and six for each subject) of consortium leads were planning to provide Environmental and Land Based Studies, Public Services, Travel and Tourism, Manufacturing and Product Design, and Retail Business Diplomas from September 2010.

More than half (eight) of consortium leads believed that the number of learners opting to take Diplomas from September 2010 would be the same or higher than previously. There were indications that increased future take-up would follow natural progression either by level for example greater provision of Level 3 Diplomas for students completing level 2 qualifications, or by Diploma subject as developing demand would emerge for some subjects which appeared to fill a gap in the market. National take-up indicates that Environmental and Land-based Studies and Manufacturing and Product Design are already among the least widely taken-up subjects and it appears that among the final four subjects the most popular will be Sport and Active Leisure. Increasing demand for subjects might be enhanced by student ambassadors who have actually experienced the subjects.

There was evidence in four consortia that Diploma provision would decline from September 2010. Reasons for this included firstly, Level 1 was not seen to be an appropriate qualification for Level 1 learners and foundation learning was viewed as more suitable, for example one consortium lead explained that they were not delivering Level 1 in their consortium from September 2010 as it was '*not fit for purpose*' and they were going to focus on other qualifications.

Secondly, IAG was not always perceived to have been effective in terms of the provision of information on Diplomas and in terms of guidance for example one consortium lead felt that IAG was '*not getting through*' to students.

Thirdly, competing qualifications were perceived to be superior to Diplomas, as explained by one senior leader:

There's a dilemma as to whether to go down the Diploma route, or the new BTECs which are more flexible and interesting than before. BTECs have greater flexibility and the Diploma is too big and inflexible. The principal learning needs to be smaller and ASL bigger.

8.3 Summary

Although interviewees' comments were made in the context of the general election and related uncertainty staff in most consortia were making plans for the future of Diplomas. They considered that it was likely that demand for some Diploma subjects at different levels would be stronger than for others, and in view of the removal of entitlement for all Diploma subjects for all young people it is now likely that demand for the most popular subjects will increase, while demand for less popular subjects will decrease further.

Looking forward, interviewees stressed the importance of future IAG, the value of good working partnerships, the significance of effective planning and the

simplification and clarification of the Diploma component parts, in particular the functional skills component. The key benefits of Diplomas were said to be the offer of an engaging alternative to young people, partnership working, networking and the sharing of ideas, and the range of topics, knowledge and skills involved in teaching the Diploma. The main disadvantages of Diplomas were perceived to be the time involved in administering and delivering a complex qualification and funding perceived to be inadequate to sustain delivery.

9 Conclusions

This report has focused on the delivery and implementation of the second cohort of Diploma subjects introduced in September 2009. The interviews and surveys were conducted before the general election in May 2010, and the subsequent removal of the entitlement of young people to all Diploma subjects originally planned in 2013, and the need for institutions to collaborate. Overall, although there was uncertainty expressed by staff about their future plans for Diplomas staff teaching the Diplomas were enjoying the experience. It was clear that the majority of students were satisfied with their Diploma course and felt that they had made the right decision to take a Diploma.

How are Cohort 2 Diploma learners progressing?

Overall, the majority of students were very or quite satisfied with their Diploma course. Around three-quarters of Year 10 students and almost two-thirds of Year 12 students agreed to some extent that they had made the right decision to take a Diploma course. There was evidence that Year 10 learners who were more satisfied with prior IAG, and those who had some employer involvement in their Diploma learning, were more satisfied with the Diploma.

The main reasons students were satisfied with their Diploma course were linked to their enjoyment of it, largely due to the teaching and learning style, and to the perception that they were acquiring skills for the future. Dissatisfaction was linked to the perceived greater workload (although staff and learners felt that if students were fully engaged in the course they could cope with the workload). Also the course was not always viewed as expected (for example, in terms of the amount of practical work, this was particularly evident amongst those learners taking the Society, Health and Development Diploma). This highlights the importance of accurate IAG to help young people to fully understand the content of the Diploma and the required learning style.

Learners (and staff) generally felt that learners were well-supported, although more communication between institutions would enhance this. The smaller class sizes and whole Diploma days were associated by learners with feeling well-supported.

Year 10 Diploma learners were more confident than those on other courses in terms of: thinking about their progress; understanding the needs of employers; working with adults and other young people; and managing their own work.

What were Diploma learners planning to do next?

On the whole, in future, Diploma learners were intending to progress to either further or higher education. Nevertheless they were also considering the work-based route, in particular Apprenticeships (18 per cent of Year 10 Diploma learners and 14 per cent of those in Year 12 intended to follow this route), and were more likely to do so than their peers who were not taking Diplomas (11 per cent of Year 10 and seven per cent of Year 12 comparison learners said that they planned to do an Apprenticeship). It is evident that the Diploma had not constrained their choices in the view of the young people. The evidence showed that Diploma learners were considering a range of routes, including higher education, in the same way as their peers who were not

taking a Diploma. Moreover, the finding that while some were intending to continue in the same subject area as the Diploma, others planned to pursue an alternative subject area in future, suggests that they felt able to explore a variety of options.

How are the Diploma subjects and Levels progressing, in particular the five Phase 2 subjects introduced in 2009?

While take-up in 2009 in some consortia was as expected, across six consortia take-up was lower than expected but there was no clear tendency for this to be greater in any one particular subject. The Business Administration and Finance Diploma (and IT and Creative and Media Diplomas introduced in 2008) were most likely to be delivered in-house only, while the Hair and Beauty Studies and Environmental and Land-based Studies Diplomas (and Construction and the Built Environment and Engineering introduced in 2008) were less likely to be delivered in-house.

The Diploma subjects introduced in 2008 were more likely to emerge from the analysis as being associated with satisfaction with the Diploma than the subjects from Phase 2. Among Year 10 learners, IT and Society, Health and Development students were significantly less satisfied with their Diploma than those on other subjects. Creative and Media students interviewed were the most positive about the practical learning.

In terms of anticipated take-up in September 2010 (interviews took place in the spring term of 2010), it was apparent that all five of the Diploma subjects introduced in 2008 were widely expected to be offered by consortium leads. In addition, three of the five Phase 2 Diploma subjects – Business, Administration and Finance, Hair and Beauty Studies and Hospitality – and one of the Phase 4 Diploma subjects – Sport and Active Leisure – were more likely to be offered than Public Services, Retail Business and Travel and Tourism, from the Phase 3 subjects, and Manufacturing and Product Design and Environmental and Land Based Studies from the Phase 2 subjects.

Additionally, consortium leads from eight consortia believed that the number of learners opting to take the Diplomas from September 2010 would be the same or higher than previously. Part of this would be due to progression of Level 2 learners to Level 3 in the same subject area. However, recruitment to Level 1 emerged as more problematic as the content was seen as insufficiently practical for foundation stage learners. Consortium leads in four consortia believed take-up would decline. This was partly due to ceasing to deliver Level 1 Diplomas but also due, in part, to the complexity of the Diploma, the perception that some other qualifications are perceived to be of more value than the Diploma and to concerns that the level of future funding would be insufficient to cover the costs.

How is IAG progressing?

The role of impartial, informed and consistent IAG to the decisions that young people make about the qualifications and pathways they take at 14 and 16 years old is pivotal to their futures. The Diploma qualification is new and, to benefit the young people for whom it is intended, it is essential that all learners gain a sound understanding of the fundamental philosophy underpinning the Diploma. The value of this is reflected in the evidence of a link between satisfaction with prior IAG and subsequent satisfaction with the Diploma course.

Cohort 2 learners indicated that they selected the Diploma principally because it related to a career they were interested in. Nevertheless, in addition to this motivation, it is advisable that they understand the style of learning (for example the mix of theoretical, academic and applied learning and the need to be able to work independently) inherent in the qualification.

Students not taking Diplomas cited lack of interest in the available subject areas and a preference for traditional GCSEs and A Levels. Also, as three-quarters of young people not taking a Diploma said that they did not know much about them, there is scope for further progress in terms of raising awareness of Diplomas more widely and ensuring that staff not delivering them have a full understanding. To ensure that IAG is accurate and effective, it may be worth involving current Diploma learners in events so that they can share their experiences and answer queries amongst potential students.

How is consortium management progressing?

There was evidence in three consortia that the management of the consortia was progressing well, which had resulted in an overall perception that the institutions within the consortia were working together in an effective and collaborative way (to a large extent) in the best interests of the young people. This had been achieved principally by successful, strategic consortium leadership which had built on pre-existing partnerships and relationships to provide a context where collaborative ways of working had been able to evolve from an identified local need.

A further three consortia displayed elements of effective consortium management, in terms of resulting collaborative ways of working. There was evidence of co-located Diploma provision and, in some areas, localised aspiration to embrace the collaborative model of Diploma delivery. However this had largely not translated into widespread organised partnership working.

In five consortia there was evidence of little progress in terms of management of an effective partnership model of consortia working. This lack of progress was generally linked to a widespread reluctance at institutional level to work collaboratively (associated with a lack of belief in the value of full collaboration) and in some cases to less well developed communication and strategic leadership. There was a general perception that the will to collaborate had to be considerable in order to overcome the organizational challenges.

The most widespread delivery models were either where the school or college delivered all the Diploma components in-house to its own students or where delivery was co-located between two or more institutions, for example where learners attended college or another school for their principal learning, project or specialist learning. Challenges were identified by those involved with co-located and shared delivery models.

The evidence from this research suggests that, in view of the removal of the need to collaborate, together with the removal of funding for partnership working, institutions and consortia will work together where there is a recognised need to do so and the value is perceived to outweigh the challenges. This will, however, potentially reduce the range of choice of Diplomas available to learners in a local area. The extent of future collaboration will be explored in the next stage of this evaluation.

Which of the key components of the Diploma are particularly valued?

The Diploma qualification, with its different components, is generally regarded as complex by staff and learners, and there is evidence that a more stream-lined Diploma would be more popular. This would not only ease its delivery but would also make it easier to explain to young people and their parents.

Additional and specialist learning

Although a full ASL offer was only reported in one consortium, and the concept of ASL was still largely driven by pragmatics rather than the concept of personalised learning, there was evidence of more widespread specialist learning on offer than was the case for the first cohort of learners. On the whole learners were unaware that ASL was a component part of the Diploma and of the intended purpose of ASL (that is to personalise the overall content of the Diploma to the young person) but most felt that the ASL courses linked quite well or very well with their Diploma subject.

Experience of the world of work

Most work placements were organised at institutional level and generally good links with employers were reported. The widespread use of employers to support Diploma learning, indicates that employers have been effectively engaged and are willing to support Diplomas, even in the context of a challenging economic environment.

The Diploma offers students greater opportunities for work-related learning and there was evidence of a link between having taken part in a work placement and subsequent satisfaction with the Diploma course. Students appear to have particularly enjoyed the employer involvement and it is clear that strength of the qualification, for both staff and students, is the emphasis placed on applied learning.

Functional skills

Across all consortia concerns were expressed by staff about this component of the Diploma, particularly in terms of its inclusion in the Diploma qualification, and the likelihood that young people may not achieve their full Diploma as a result of not achieving functional skills at Level 2. Staff and students indicated that they would welcome the removal of functional skills from the Diploma.

How is teaching progressing?

On the whole teachers were enjoying teaching the Diploma mainly because they could see the benefit that young people were deriving from it. They enjoyed the involvement of the world of work and partnership working with colleagues, and facilitating applied and independent learning. Additionally, although there was recognition of the extra work involved in implementing this new qualification, and in particular one such as the Diploma with a new underpinning ethos, there was some evidence that teachers were embracing working with colleagues more closely.

In order to facilitate further progress teachers would like more guidance and direction (in terms of, for example, appropriate training on assessment from awarding bodies, strategies for delivering the functional skills component and time for networking opportunities to more fully share information with colleagues) from consortium and subject leads and domain assessors. They also believed that Diplomas would benefit

from more time, simplification, clarification and support (in terms of, for example improved Diploma IAG and assessment clarification from awarding bodies) in order to ensure that education professionals, young people and their parents fully understand the qualification.

In-house quality assurance procedures were used to monitor Diploma delivery. Monitoring of teaching and learning has to be handled sensitively. Inter-institutional lesson observations in particular were challenging and consortia were progressing with establishing the necessary agreements and procedures in order to overcome these challenges.

Overall, so far, findings from the cohort 1 and 2 evaluation of the implementation and impact of Diplomas has revealed that the Diploma is viewed to be an appropriate qualification, by teachers and learners, for young people who are interested in the subject area, motivated and able to learn independently and who particularly enjoy input from the world of work. However, the Diploma would benefit from simplification, in terms of the number of the component parts and their assessment and enhanced IAG to ensure the appropriate young people take up the qualification.

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Appendix A: Research Methods and Analysis

A1 Survey analysis

A1.1 Matching to National Pupil Database

Information on gender and date of birth provided by learners on the questionnaires was then matched to background information held on the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) and NPD, where possible, to explore differences in responses in relation to their background characteristics.

A1.2 Weighting

The survey responses were **weighted** to ensure that the responding samples were representative of Diploma and comparison learners in England. Population data from the Diploma Aggregation Service (DAS) and background data from the National Pupil Database (NPD) were used to derive the weights.

Year 10 Weighting

The samples of Year 11 Diploma and comparison learners were significantly different from their corresponding national populations in terms of gender and key stage 4 attainments. The samples were therefore weighted by these two variables, and were subsequently representative of the corresponding national populations in relation to these factors.

Year 12 Weighting

As there was insufficient attainment data to weight the Year 12 Diploma and comparison learners in relation to this, the Year 12 Diploma learners were weighted by gender and Diploma subject, and the comparison group by gender.

A1.3 Analysis undertaken

Cross-tabulations

The further analysis of the learner surveys included **cross-tabulations**, which explored the relationships between two categorical variables.

Factor analysis

Exploratory factor analyses were carried out on the cohort 1 data in 2009 (in 2010 the same factors were used, after their reliabilities were checked (that is, the extent to which the questions in each factor were measuring a consistent underlying trait) to consolidate a number of individual items included in the questionnaires for Year 10 and Year 12 Diploma and comparison learners. Some questions were identical on each questionnaire, in order for comparisons to be made between the attitudes of Diploma and comparison learners. Some were specific to Diploma learners, as they asked about their experiences of their Diploma course. Aggregated variables produce more robust measures of learners' attitudes than a consideration of the individual items on the questionnaire alone.

Factor analysis looks for variables that correlate highly with each other. The existence of such correlations between variables suggests that those variables could be measuring aspects of the same underlying issues. These underlying issues are

known as factors. Thus, the aim of the factor analyses was to derive a smaller number of 'attitude' composite variables from selected questions on the questionnaire which could be used to explore the attitudes of learners in further detail. The 'factors' which are identified can also be used in more sophisticated analysis (multilevel modelling).

For **Year 10 learners**, five separate factors were identified, as follows:

- Attitude to the Diploma (Diploma learners only)
- Impact of the Diploma on my future (Diploma learners only)
- Positive attitude to learning (both groups)
- Commitment to learning (both groups)
- Preference of teamwork and practical learning (both groups)

A description of the individual items on the questionnaire that made up each factor is presented below:

Factor 1: *Attitude to the Diploma*

- I am enjoying my Diploma course
- The work I do in lessons is interesting
- I would like to spend less time on my Diploma course
- I can cope with the amount of work
- My Diploma course is more practical (than other subjects)
- My Diploma course is less interesting (than other subjects)
- I find it harder to learn on my Diploma course (compared with other subjects)

Factor 2: *Impact of the Diploma on my future*

- I am learning new skills on my Diploma course
- My Diploma will help me get a job in the future
- My Diploma will help me get into college in the future
- My Diploma will help me get into university/higher education if I want to go in the future
- My Diploma will be more useful for my future (than other subjects)
- My Diploma course is giving me more skills/experience (than other subjects)

Factor 3: *Positive attitude to learning*

- The subjects I am doing make me want to learn
- The subjects I am doing make me feel ready for work in the future
- The subjects I am doing make me feel confident about what I can do
- The subjects I am doing are giving me useful skills
- Most of the time I like going to school
- School work is worth doing
- I enjoy learning

Factor 4: Commitment to learning

- I always do my homework/coursework
- I am well behaved in school
- The work I do in lessons is a waste of time
- I am often late for school or lessons
- I sometimes play truant/skip lessons

Factor 5: Preference of teamwork and practical learning

- I like working in a team
- I prefer practical work to lots of writing
- I learn best when I put something into practice
- I don't like lessons where we work in groups

Five separate factors were also identified for **Year 12 learners**, as follows:

- Attitude to the Diploma (Diploma learners only)
- Impact of the Diploma on my future (Diploma learners only)
- Impact of subject on motivation to learn (both groups)*
- Intrinsic motivations for learning (both groups)*
- Preference of teamwork and practical learning (both groups)

**Note that although the questions relating to these factors were the same for Year 10 and 12, the items correlated with each other differently for each Year group, meaning that slightly different factors emerged for each.*

A description of the individual items on the questionnaire that made up each factor is presented below:

Factor 1: Attitude to the Diploma

- I am enjoying my Diploma course
- The work I do in lessons is interesting
- I would like to spend less time on my Diploma course
- I can cope with the amount of work
- My Diploma course is more practical (than other subjects)
- My Diploma course is less interesting (than other subjects)
- I find it harder to learn on my Diploma course (compared with other subjects)

Factor 2: Impact of the Diploma on my future

- I am learning useful skills on my Diploma course
- My Diploma will help me get a job in the future
- My Diploma will help me get into university/higher education if I want to go in the future
- My Diploma will be more useful for my future (than other subjects)
- My Diploma course is giving me more skills/experience (than other subjects)

Factor 3: *Impact of subject on motivation to learn*

- The subjects I am doing make me want to learn
- The subjects I am doing make me feel ready for work in the future
- The subjects I am doing make me feel confident about what I can do
- The subjects I am doing are giving me useful skills

Factor 4: *Intrinsic motivations for learning*

- Most of the time I like going to school
- School/college work is worth doing
- I enjoy learning
- I always do my homework/coursework
- I am well behaved in school

Factor 5: *Preference of teamwork and practical learning*

- I like working in a team
- I prefer practical work to lots of writing
- I learn best when I put something into practice
- I don't like lessons where we work in groups

All of the items for each factor are consolidated and scaled to provide an average score for learners overall of between zero and ten (with ten being the most positive score).

Multilevel modelling

Further exploration of the relationship between Year 10 learners' attitudes and various background factors that might have an impact on outcomes for learners, such as satisfaction with the Diploma, was carried out using **multilevel modelling**, which estimates the true relationship between each background factor and the outcome of interest, whilst taking account of other influences. Multilevel modelling was carried out to explore the following outcomes for learners:

- Attitude to the Diploma (Diploma learners only; Factor 1 above).
- Satisfaction with Diploma course (Diploma learners only; question 14 in Year 10 Diploma learner survey).
- Possibility of doing a Diploma in the future (question 25 in Year 11 Diploma learner survey and question 14a in comparison survey); separate models for Diploma and comparison learners.
- Views on whether the school was preparing learners for their future
- Positive attitude to learning (two models, one comparing Diploma and comparison learners overall, and another comparing Diploma learners doing each line of learning and comparison learners).
- Commitment to learning (two models, one comparing Diploma and comparison learners overall, and another comparing Diploma learners doing each Diploma subject and comparison learners).

- Preference for teamwork and practical learning (two models, one comparing Diploma and comparison learners overall, and another comparing Diploma learners doing each Diploma subject and comparison learners).

Multilevel modelling was not carried out for the analysis of the Year 12 learner surveys, as the number of responding learners was too small to conduct a robust analysis.

Details of the variables included in each model are provided below.

Table A1 Variables included in the Year 10 model outcome 'attitude to the Diploma' (Diploma learners)

Variable	Explanation of variable	Fixed effects
		Attitude to the Diploma
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)	-.213
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)	-.062
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)	-.072
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)	-.074
Ethnic	Whether learner is in a Black or Minority Ethnic group	-.169
KSmean	Mean TA point score for KS3 English, maths and science	.028
Idaci	Deprivation index	-.734
Lv1	Diploma level – Level 1 (model compares learners to those doing a Level 2 Diploma)	.059
Lvdk	Diploma level – Don't know (model compares learners to those doing a Level 2 Diploma)	-.343
Q7own	Location of learning – own school only (model compares learners to those doing a Diploma in other locations only)	.138
Q7mix	Location of learning – own school and other locations (model compares learners to those doing a Diploma in other locations only)	-.328
Q8ayes	Spent time on a work placement with employer/ someone from the world of work as part of Diploma – Yes (model compares learners to those without work placement experience)	.237
Q8adk	Spent time on a work placement with employer/ someone from the world of work as part of Diploma – Don't know (model compares learners to those without work placement experience)	-.221
Q9num	Number of employer activities done as part of Diploma (from 0 to 5)	.063
Q11	Extent to which learners were satisfied with IAG received before embarking on a Diploma	.493*
Factor 3	Positive attitude to learning factor score of 0 to 10	.072
Factor 4	Commitment to learning factor score of 0 to 10	.176*
Factor 5	Preference of teamwork and practical learning factor score of 0 to 10	.056
ICT	Diploma subject – ICT (model compares learners doing ICT with learners doing subjects other than ICT and SHD, amongst whom no significant difference was found)	-.970*
SHD	Diploma subject – SHD (model compares learners doing ICT with learners doing subjects other than ICT and SHD, amongst whom no significant difference was found)	-.829*

* indicates a significant difference at the 5% level.

Table A2 Variables included in the Year 10 model outcome 'satisfaction with Diploma course' (Diploma learners)

Variable	Explanation of variable	Fixed effects
		Satisfaction with Diploma course
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)	-.024
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)	-.198
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)	.044
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)	-.051
Ethnic	Whether learner is in a British Minority Ethnic group	-.134
KSmean	Mean TA point score for KS3 English, maths and science	.000
Idaci	Deprivation index	-.115
ICT	Diploma subject – ICT (model compares learners doing ICT with learners doing subjects other than ICT and SHD, amongst whom no significant difference was found)	-.424*
SHD	Diploma subject – SHD (model compares learners doing ICT with learners doing subjects other than ICT and SHD, amongst whom no significant difference was found)	-.520*
Lv1	Diploma level – Level 1 (model compares learners to those doing a Level 2 Diploma)	-.060
Lvdk	Diploma level – Don't know (model compares learners to those doing a Level 2 Diploma)	-.205
Q7own	Location of learning – own school only (model compares learners to those doing a Diploma in other locations only)	.067
Q7mix	Location of learning – own school and other locations (model compares learners to those doing a Diploma in other locations only)	-.159
Q8ayes	Spent time on a work placement with employer/ someone from the world of work as part of Diploma – Yes (model compares learners to those without work placement experience)	.250*
Q8adk	Spent time on a work placement with employer/ someone from the world of work as part of Diploma – Don't know (model compares learners to those without work placement experience)	-.028
Q9num	Number of employer activities done as part of Diploma (from 0 to 5)	.012
Q11	Extent to which learners were satisfied with IAG received before embarking on a Diploma	.381*
Factor 3	Positive attitude to learning factor score of 0 to 10	.096*
Factor 4	Commitment to learning factor score of 0 to 10	.034
Factor 5	Preference of teamwork and practical learning factor score of 0 to 10	-.017

* indicates a significant difference at the 5% level.

Table A3 Variables included in the Year 10 model outcome 'learning helps with future skills' (Diploma learners)

Variable	Explanation of variable	Fixed effects
		Learning helps with future skills
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)	-.567*
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)	.089
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)	-.076
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)	-.035
Ethnic	Whether learner is in a British Minority Ethnic group	-.218
KSmean	Mean TA point score for KS3 English, maths and science	-.030*
Idaci	Deprivation index	-.025
ICT	Diploma subject – ICT (model compares learners doing ICT with learners doing other subjects, amongst whom no significant difference was found)	-.494*
Lv1	Diploma level – Level 1 (model compares learners to those doing a Level 2 Diploma)	-.506*
Lvdk	Diploma level – Don't know (model compares learners to those doing a Level 2 Diploma)	.053
Q7own	Location of learning – own school only (model compares learners to those doing a Diploma in other locations only)	-.088
Q7mix	Location of learning – own school and other locations (model compares learners to those doing a Diploma in other locations only)	-.514*
Q8ayes	Spent time on a work placement with employer/ someone from the world of work as part of Diploma – Yes (model compares learners to those without work placement experience)	.365*
Q8adk	Spent time on a work placement with employer/ someone from the world of work as part of Diploma – Don't know (model compares learners to those without work placement experience)	-.013
Q9num	Number of employer activities done as part of Diploma (from 0 to 5)	.024
Q11	Extent to which learners were satisfied with IAG received before embarking on a Diploma	.329*
Factor 3	Positive attitude to learning factor score of 0 to 10	.248*
Factor 4	Commitment to learning factor score of 0 to 10	-.003
Factor 5	Preference of teamwork and practical learning factor score of 0 to 10	.164*

* indicates a significant difference at the 5% level.

Table A4 **Variables included in the Year 10 model outcome 'possibility of doing a Diploma in the future'(comparing Diploma and comparison learners overall)**

Variable	Explanation of variable	Fixed effects
		Possibility of doing a Diploma in the future
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)	.073
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)	.002
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)	.026
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)	.083
KSmean	Mean TA point score for KS3 English, maths and science	-.030*
Idaci	Deprivation index	.174
Ethnic	Whether learner is in a British Minority Ethnic group	.062
Q11 IAG	Extent to which learners were satisfied with IAG received before embarking on a Diploma	.046
inDiploma	Indicates whether learner is in Diploma or comparison group	.361*
pcFSM	School-level free school meals eligibility	.003

* indicates a significant difference at the 5% level.

Table A5 Variables included in the Year 10 model outcomes ‘positive attitude to learning’, ‘commitment to learning’ and ‘preference of teamwork and practical learning’ (comparing Diploma and comparison learners overall)

Variable	Explanation of variable	Fixed effects		
		Positive attitude to learning	Commitment to learning	Preference of teamwork and practical learning
Gender	Male/Female (model compares female learners to male learners)	-.020	.207*	-.197*
FSM	Eligibility for free school meals (model compares learners eligible to FSM to learners not eligible to FSM)	-.113	-.218	.019
SEN	Special Educational Needs (model compares learners with any SEN to learners without SEN)	.075	-.161	-.169
EAL	English as an Additional Language (model compares learners with EAL to learners with English as first language)	.656*	.721*	.163
Ethnic	Whether learner is in a British Minority Ethnic Group	-.140	.001	.021
KSmean	Mean TA point score for KS3 English, maths and science	.010	.047*	-.005
Idaci	Deprivation index	.343	-.219	-.025
InDiploma	Indicates whether learner is in Diploma or comparison group	.018	-.173*	.037
pcFSM	School-level free school meals eligibility	.003	.004	-.009

* indicates a significant difference at the 5% level.

Appendix B: The consortia sample

Selection of the survey sample of 60 consortia

A sample of 60 consortia was selected to be involved in the learners surveys. The sample was selected with the aim of ensuring that the Diploma learners surveyed could be considered representative of Diploma learners in general. In order to achieve this, the characteristics of consortia, and schools within consortia, were used as the sample frame. These consortia were selected according to the following criteria:

- **Not selected in other samples** – the sample frame excluded consortia who were sampled as part of the evaluation for the first cohort of Diploma learners. In addition, consortia were excluded where they were known to be involved in other research and evaluation of the Diplomas.
- **Consortium lead agreement** – only those consortia who agreed in principle during the telephone interview to be involved in the next stages were sampled.
- **Diploma subjects and levels offered** – to ensure that all Phase 2 lines of learning and levels were represented. The sample was drawn to over-represent the larger consortia (in terms of the number of subjects offered, and the number of estimated learners) and under-represent the smaller consortia.
- **Involvement in Cohort 1** – the sample was selected to include some consortia that began delivering Diplomas in September 2008, and were due to embark on new Diplomas in September 2009 (Cohort 1 and Cohort 2), as well as some who were due to start in September 2009 (Cohort 2 only).
- **School-level variables** - in order to ensure that the sample can be said to be representative of Diploma students as a whole, the sample of consortia was selected to be representative in terms of school-level variables (for example, achievement, and Free School Meal eligibility). Schools' membership of a consortium was based on information provided by DfE which drew on consortia's applications to deliver the Diploma.
- **Government Office Region at consortium level** – to ensure a geographical spread of consortia.

The table below details the key characteristics of the Cohort 2 sample – at a school level. In summary, the sample is broadly representative in terms of:

- **School type**
- **Free school meal eligibility**
- **Achievement of schools.**

Table B1 Representativeness of institutions in the sample consortia

Characteristic	Sample of institutions		All institutions involved in Diplomas	
	Number	%	Number	%
School type				
Middle deemed secondary	1	<1	4	<1
Secondary Modern	38	6	120	4
Comprehensive to 16	222	32	887	29
Comprehensive to 18	212	31	1167	38
Grammar	23	3	84	3
Special schools	64	9	271	9
Pupil referral units	8	1	48	2
6th Form colleges	21	3	80	3
Tertiary colleges	12	2	39	1
FE colleges	66	10	323	10
Academies	21	3	63	2
N=	690		3104	
Eligible for FSM 2008				
Lowest 20	29	5	125	5
2nd lowest 20	126	21	526	20
Middle 20	153	26	688	26
2nd highest 20	165	28	711	27
Highest 20	115	20	590	22
N=	588		2640	
Achievement Band (total GCSE point score 2008)				
Lowest band	153	28	645	26
2nd lowest band	109	20	479	19
Middle band	105	19	451	18
2nd highest band	87	16	452	18
Highest band	102	18	451	18
N=	556		2478	

Appendix C: The responding samples

Details are given below about the characteristics of the responding samples of learners, teachers and parents.

C1 The responding learner sample

A total of 730 Year 10 and 224 Year 12 Diploma questionnaires were returned, along with 1397 Year 10 and 338 Year 12 comparison questionnaires. Responses were received from 104 institutions across all 60 consortia

Tables C1 and C2 present the characteristics of the Year 10 Diploma and comparison learners who responded to the survey. Diploma respondents are compared with all Diploma Year 10 learners nationally (those registered on DAS in April 2010) and with all learners nationally. The responding comparison learners are compared with all Year 10 non-Diploma learners in all schools which have any Diploma learners, as well as all learners nationally. Tables C3 and C4 show the equivalent information for Year 12 Diploma and comparison learners.

Table C1 Background characteristics of Year 10 Diploma learners – responding learners, all Year 10 Diploma learners registered on DAS, and all Year 10 learners nationally

Characteristic	Year 10 Diploma respondents to the survey %	All Year 10 Diploma learners (from DAS data) %	All Year 10 learners in England %
Gender			
Male	43	52	51
Female	55	48	49
Missing	2	0	0
Eligibility for free school meals			
Not eligible	70	84	85
Eligible	12	16	15
Missing	19	.0	0
Special Educational Needs			
No SEN	65	65	76
School Action/Plus	14	14	20
Statement	2	2	4
Missing	19	19	0
Ethnicity			
White - British	72	82	78
White - Other	2	4	4
Gypsy/Roma	0	0	<1.
Mixed	2	3	3
Asian - Indian	1	1	2
Asian - Pakistani	1	2	3
Asian - Bangladeshi	0	1	1
Asian - Other	2	1	1
Black - Caribbean	<1	1	1
Black - African	1	2	3
Black - Other	<1	1	1
Chinese	<1.	<1.	<1.
Other	1	1	1
Preferred not to say	0	1	1
Missing	20	1	1
Key Stage 2 Average³¹			
Below Level 2	1	1	3
Level 2	2	3	4
Level 3	18	23	20
Level 4	46	57	49
Level 5	11	12	19
Level 6	0	0	0
Level 7	0	0	0
Level 8	0	0	0
Missing	21	4	5
Total N =	730	18408	576,569

³¹Based on a truncated average National Curriculum level from Key Stage 2 SATS tests in English, Maths and Science

Table C2 Background characteristics of Year 10 comparison learners – responding learners, all Year 10 non-Diploma learners in schools with any Diploma students, and all Year 10 learners nationally

Characteristic	Year 10 comparison respondents to the survey %	All Year 10 comparison learners (in schools with any Diploma learners) %	All Year 10 learners in England %
Gender			
Male	48	51	51
Female	51	49	49
Missing	1	0	0
Eligibility for free school meals			
Not eligible	72	84	85
Eligible	8	16	15
Missing	20	0	0
Special Educational Needs			
No SEN	67	76	76
School Action/Plus	11	22	20
Statement	2	2	4
Missing	20	0	0
Ethnicity			
White - British	72	79	78
White - Other	1	4	4
Gypsy/Roma	<1	<1	<1
Mixed	2	3	3
Asian - Indian	1	2	2
Asian - Pakistani	1	3	3
Asian - Bangladeshi	<1	1	1
Asian - Other	<1	1	1
Black - Caribbean	<1	1	1
Black - African	1	3	3
Black - Other	0	1	1
Chinese	<1	<1	<1
Other	1	1	1
Preferred not to say	1	1	1
Missing	20	1	1
Key Stage 2 Average³²			
Below Level 2	1	2	3
Level 2	1	4	4
Level 3	14	21	20
Level 4	47	50	49
Level 5	15	17	19
Level 6	0	0	0
Level 7	0	0	0
Level 8	0	0	0
Missing	22	5	5
Total N =	1397	309797	576569

³²Based on a truncated average National Curriculum level from Key Stage 2 SATS tests in English, Maths and Science

Table C3 Background characteristics of Year 12 Diploma learners – responding learners and all Year 12 Diploma learners registered on DAS.

Characteristic	Year 12 Diploma Respondents to the survey %	All Year 12 Diploma learners (from DAS data) %	All Year 12 students in England %
Gender			
Male	47	50	51
Female	53	50	49
Eligibility for free school meals			
Not eligible	28	86	88
Eligible	9	14	12
Missing	63	<1	<1
Special Educational Needs			
No SEN	23	71	72
School Action/Plus	6	15	12
Statement	7	8	8
Missing	64	7	8
English as an additional language			
No EAL	33	85	84
EAL	3	8	8
Missing	64	7	8
Ethnicity			
White - British	29	75	75
White - Other	1	3	2
Asian	1	6	6
Black	3	4	3
Mixed	2	3	3
Other	1	1	1
Missing	64	8	10
Key Stage 4 achievement (based on GCSE and all equivalent qualifications)			
Achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C	22	64	71
Achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-G	7	33	23
Achieved at least one GCSE or equivalent at grade A*-G	<1	3	4
Achieved any passes at GCSE or equivalent	<1	<1	1
Achieved no passes at GCSE or equivalent	0	<1	1
Missing	70	0	0
Total N =	224	4163	573, 200

**The missing data for the responding sample is because of a low match to NPD, caused by learners' transition between institutions at age 16.*

Table C4 Background characteristics of Year 12 comparison learners – responding learners and all Year 12 non-Diploma learners in schools with any Diploma students.

	Year 12 comparison respondent s to the survey	All Year 12 comparison learners (in schools/colleg es with any Diploma learners)	All Year 12 students in England
Characteristic	%	%	%
Gender			
Male	41	51	51
Female	58	49	49
Missing	1	0	0
Eligibility for free school meals			
Not eligible	26	87	88
Eligible	2	13	12
Missing	72	<1	<1
Special Educational Needs			
No SEN	24	73	72
School Action/Plus	1	13	12
Statement	4	8	8
Missing	72	6	8
English as an additional language			
No EAL	25	86	84
EAL	3	8	8
Missing	72	6	8
Ethnicity			
White - British	22	77	75
White - Other	1	2	2
Asian	<1	6	6
Black	2	4	3
Mixed	1	3	3
Other	1	1	1
Missing	72	7	10
Key Stage 4 achievement (based on GCSE and all equivalent qualifications)			
Achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-C	25	72	71
Achieved five or more GCSEs or equivalent at grades A*-G	3	24	23
Achieved at least one GCSE or equivalent at grade A*-G	<1	4	4
Achieved any passes at GCSE or equivalent	0	<1	1
Achieved no passes at GCSE or equivalent	0	1	1
Missing	73	0	0
Total N =	338	208,017	573, 200

**The missing data for the responding sample is because of a low match to NPD, caused by learners' transition between institutions at age 16*

Amongst the responding Diploma learners, all Diploma subjects were represented (see Table C5).

Table C5a Diploma respondents, by Diploma subject

	Year 10 %	Year 12 %
Creative and Media	8	17
Engineering	28	22
Construction and the Built Environment	22	11
Society, Health and Development	21	23
Information Technology	17	27
No response	3	-
N =	477	176

A single response item

Based on weighted data

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 and 12 Diploma learner survey, 2010

As shown in Tables C5b and C5c, almost all responding learners who were taking an Engineering Diploma or a Construction and the Built Environment Diploma, pre- and post-16, were male. However, this reflects take-up of these subjects nationally, based on information on the take-up of Diplomas in Cohort 1 (2008/09) recorded on the DAS in April 2009. Response from males and females doing an Information Technology Diploma also closely reflect take-up nationally, as around three quarters of learners doing an Information Technology Diploma nationally are male. Almost all learners taking a Society, Health and Development Diploma nationally are female, pre- and post-16, and therefore the survey respondents reflect the national picture.

Table C5b Year 10 Diploma respondents, by gender and subject

	Males	Females	Total N*
Creative and Media	53	75	128
Engineering	80	1	81
Construction and the Built Environment	36	1	37
Society, Health and Development	2	87	89
Information Technology	83	24	107
Business, Administration and Finance	39	29	68
Environmental and Land-Based Studies	4	8	12
Hair and Beauty studies	1	145	146
Hospitality	9	18	27
Manufacturing and product Design	6	1	7
No response			28
N** =			730

Based on unweighted data/actual response

**Total number of learners providing information on Diploma subject*

***Total number of learners providing information on both subject and gender*

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 10 Diploma learner survey, 2010

Table C5c Year 12 Diploma respondents, by gender and line of learning

	Males	Females	Total N*
Creative and Media	22	23	45
Engineering	12	0	12
Construction and the Built Environment	15	2	17
Society, Health and Development	3	52	55
Information Technology	24	2	26
Business, Administration and Finance	15	17	32
Environmental and Land-Based Studies	5	4	9
Hair and Beauty studies	0	13	13
Hospitality	0	0	0
Manufacturing and product Design	0	0	0
No response			15
N** =			209

Based on unweighted data/actual response

**Total number of learners providing information on subject*

***Total number of learners providing information on both subject and gender*

Source: NFER/Exeter Evaluation of Diplomas: Year 12 Diploma learner survey, 2010

Appendix D: Case-study Sample

D1 The case-study sample of consortia

A sub-sample of 15 consortia was drawn from the Cohort sample to be involved in the case-study elements of the evaluation. These consortia were selected to ensure that the following were covered:

- All Phase 2 subjects, at all three levels
- Consortia offering different numbers of subjects from September 2009, so that consortia of different sizes and complexity are represented.
- A geographical spread across Government Office Regions, including rural and urban areas.
- Consortia that were involved in Cohort 1 delivery, as well as those that are only involved in Gateway 2.
- Different types of institutions involved in delivery across the 15 consortia

Further details of the case-study sample are given below:

Table D1 Number of consortia represented in case study sample by criteria

Criteria	Number of consortia in sample
Government Office Region	
East	2
East Midlands	1
London	2
North East	1
North West	2
South East	2
South West	2
West Midlands	1
Yorkshire and the Humber	2
Urban/rural³³	
Urban	10
Rural	4
Mixed	1
Phase 2 subjects [note that all levels offered by consortia are represented]:	
Business, Administration and Finance	8
Hair and Beauty Studies	14
Hospitality	6
Environmental and Land Based Studies	5
Manufacturing and Product Design	3
Number of subjects:	
Five	0
Four	1
Three	6
Two	6
One	2

³³ Urban/rural/mixed categories were based on an analysis of census data relating to the number of homes in hamlets in an LA.

The Table below shows the number of teachers and subject leads interviewed for each Diploma subject.

Table D2 **Number of interviewees teaching each Diploma subject**

Criteria	Number of interviewees
Subject Leads	
Business, Administration and Finance	5
Hair and Beauty Studies	7
Environmental and Land Based Studies	3
Hospitality	1
Construction and the Built Environment	2
Creative and Media	4
IT	3
Society, Health and Development	0
Engineering	0
Total	25
Teachers	
Business, Administration and Finance	4
Hair and Beauty Studies	7
Environmental and Land Based Studies	3
Hospitality	0
Construction and the Built Environment	0
Creative and Media	3
IT	5
Society, Health and Development	2
Engineering	2
Total	26

Ref: DFE-RR126

ISBN: 978-1-84775-930-6

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June 2011