

FACT SHEET 1 – Foundation Learning Curriculum for adults

April 2010

The purpose of this fact sheet is to set out the policy for the Foundation Learning Curriculum for adults, covering the curriculum offer, transition to the QCF and funding.

Readership

1 Skills Funding Agency Account Managers and clients services teams; colleges and other providers: directors responsible for curriculum development; senior managers and managers responsible for foundation learning curriculum; teachers and tutors of foundation learning curriculum; Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted); Learning and Skills Improvement Service (LSIS); other partners with interest in foundation learning.

Structure

- 2 The fact sheet has 6 sections.
- Section 1 - Foundation Learning Curriculum policy
 - Section 2 - the QCF and foundation learning
 - Section 3 - sets out the funding routes for FLC
 - Section 4 - young people and foundation learning
 - Section 5 - how foundation learning is captured on the ILR
 - Section 6 - example learner journeys and links to other useful documents and information.
- 3 This fact sheet has been prepared by the Learner Services team at the National Office of the Skills Funding Agency (the Agency) and will be posted on the Agency website (www.bis.gov.uk/skillsfundingagency). For further clarification providers should, in the first instance, contact their Skills Funding Agency Account Manager.

Section One: Foundation Learning Curriculum for adults – the policy.

Background

1. The Skills Strategy recognises that ours will be a knowledge economy with more jobs created that need higher and technical skills and fewer low skilled employment opportunities in the future.
2. However, there are many adults who did not achieve the school benchmark of five good GCSE passes including Maths and English but don't return to formal education later in life. Of those adults that do re-engage with education, few with low skills progress sufficiently to achieve the national benchmark for employability, a first full level 2.
3. To support these and other adults there are a range of measures being introduced:
 - a more co-ordinated Informal Adult Learning offer in each locality
 - improved Information Advice and Guidance through the Adult Advancement and Careers Service
 - the introduction of the Skills Account and the Unique Learner Number
 - improved qualifications that are flexible and unitised and can be accumulated over time through the Qualification Reform Programme and the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF)
 - reducing the impact of the digital divide.
4. The Foundation Learning Curriculum is an improved learning offer aiming to support the engagement and progression of those adults with low skills and few or no current qualifications.

What is the Foundation Learning Curriculum?

5. The Foundation Learning Curriculum (FLC) is the generic name used to describe provision at entry level (which is seen as being 'bottomless' so accommodating current 'pre-entry' type provision) and level 1, and includes (but is not limited to) the units and qualifications at these levels within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).
6. *Personalised learning programmes* will be developed for learners following this curriculum that will support progression to appropriate destinations or other agreed outcomes.

What are the aims of the Foundation Learning Curriculum?

7. The overarching aims of the Foundation Learning Curriculum for both young people and adults are to:
 - support improved engagement, participation, achievement and progression through entry level and level 1 towards an appropriate destination;
 - bring coherence to programmes of study at entry level and level 1 to support progression;
 - ensure learners gain a minimum level and range of skills providing a sound foundation for further learning and employment; and

- support the delivery of quality learning programmes that are personalised and appropriate to each learner's needs and which support social inclusion and social mobility.
8. Level 2 has been established as a critical platform for minimal occupational competence and employability. It is an aspiration that as many adults as are capable aim for and achieve this employability skill level. A key objective of the Foundation Learning Curriculum offer therefore is to support this aspiration.

What is the adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer?

9. The adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer is centred around personalised learning programmes drawn from the following skills sets:
- personal and social development (PSD) skills
 - vocational learning
 - functional skills in English and maths (and adult basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ESOL) and ICT

Additionally, for some adults a short episode of learning, known as Formal First Step learning, may be required in order to build their confidence before they embark on a personalised learning programme. More information on Formal First Steps learning is given at paragraphs 18 -20.

10. In order to ensure the different starting points, aspirations and current knowledge and skills of adult learners are properly considered and built upon, it is not mandatory for adults to undertake learning from each of the 3 skills sets within the Foundation Learning Curriculum.

What is the likely profile of adults who may need to access the adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer?

11. The adult Foundation Learning Curriculum is relevant for those learners aged 19 and over (with the exception of those learners with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (S139A) aged 19-24 years.¹) Learners will have skills needs at level 1 or below; may have no or few qualifications; may have been out of formal learning for some years; may have learning difficulties and/or disabilities; may be unemployed; and/or may be offenders in the community referred by probation.

How does the Foundation Learning Curriculum support the needs of adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities?

12. The Foundation Learning Curriculum is available to all eligible adult learners and personalised learning programmes designed for adult learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities will offer the same flexible approach and may be tailored to take account of the needs of individual learners. Personalised learning programmes will also consider the 3 skills sets of functional skills, vocational learning, and personal and social development, alongside, where relevant, Formal First Step learning with the intention of developing the employability or the skills associated with independent living and/or supported employment at entry levels and level 1.

¹ Those with a Learning Difficulty Assessment (S139A) will not be eligible to access the adult FLC until the age of 25. In addition, those serving custodial sentences are considered adult when aged over 17; for those serving sentences in the community, aged 19 or over.

13. Despite the flexibility of the QCF there may be valuable provision that currently sits outside the QCF framework, and adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities may have their personalised foundation learning programmes created from such provision where there is no alternative provision on the QCF. Such provision will still be identified as part of the foundation learning curriculum offer (providing it is at entry level or level 1). This activity would be funded through the Adult Learner Responsive *Developmental Learning* allocation and normally will be agreed with the provider during the allocations process.

How does the Foundation Learning Curriculum support the needs of Offenders?

14. Offenders serving their sentence in the community have access to all mainstream programmes and funding, including the Foundation Learning Curriculum. With many offenders having skill needs below level 2 the FLC will often be the preferred offer where it supports the identified needs of the individual.

15. Offenders serving their sentence in custody will follow a 'Core Curriculum' as set out in specific contracts. This curriculum closely follows the Foundation Learning Curriculum - employability skills; functional skills (in English, maths and ICT); vocational qualifications; and developmental learning (similar to informal adult learning provision).

16. The alignment of Offender Learning Core Curriculum with the mainstream FLC offer helps offenders released from custody to continue courses or training begun in prison.

17. For further information on Offender Learning see:
<http://olass.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/>

Where does Formal First Step learning fit?

18. A Formal First Step is a short episode of learning designed to build learners' confidence and support their planned progression into longer (often pre-level 2) formal learning. Not every learner at entry level and level 1 will require this provision but it will be appropriate for some learners.

19. Increasingly, a Formal First Step within the Foundation Learning Curriculum should be a single, short QCF unit at entry level or level 1 - however, for 2010/11 non-accredited provision which currently does not form part of the QCF will also be eligible for funding. This flexibility may be removed in the future and the Skills Funding Agency will review this situation during 2010/11, with special reference to the needs of those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

20. Unlike Formal First Step, Adult Safeguarded Learning (learning which is covered by the policy on Informal Adult Learning) does not require progression as an outcome. Because of this difference, provision delivered through the Safeguard is not seen as part of the adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer. However, some provision funded through the Adult Safeguarded Budget may be drawn from Foundation Learning Curriculum (for example, Family Literacy, Language and Numeracy).

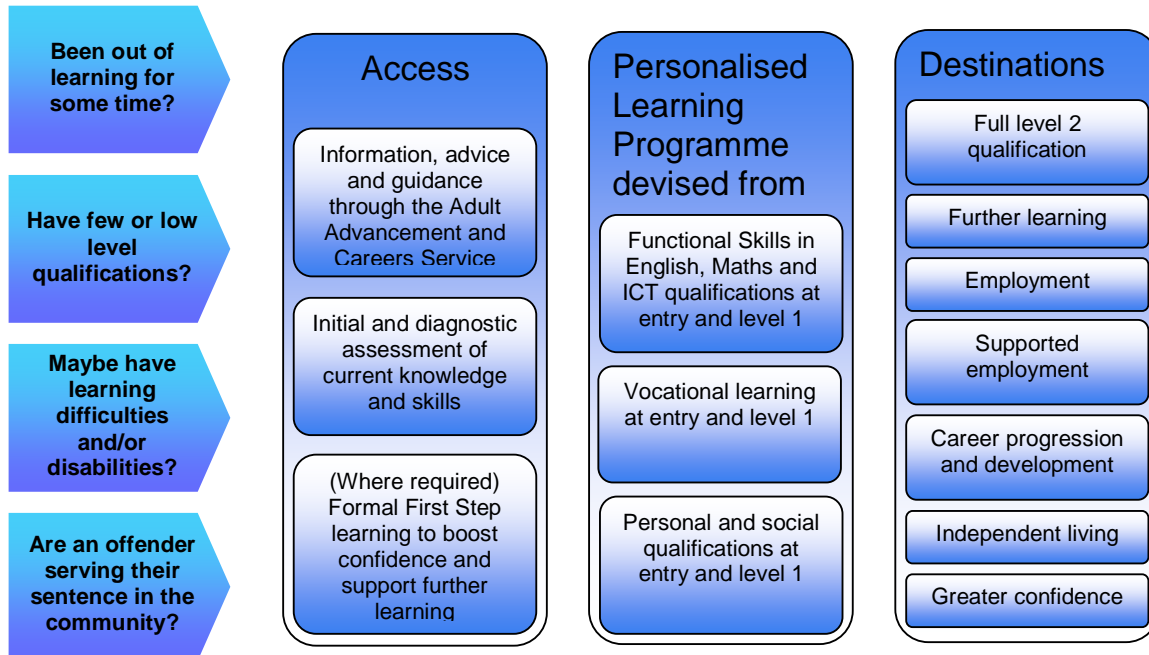
How will personalised learning programmes be developed?

21. The personalised approach is central to the Foundation Learning offer. It will be built on a clear analysis of each individual's needs to ensure they receive the mix of skills that is right for them. An essential component is the 'wrap around' information and advice, to include high quality, detailed initial assessment and comprehensive ongoing review.
22. With this in mind the individual's initial assessment should make clear the areas that require learning and skills acquisition. For some adults this may be all 3 skills sets preceded by Formal First Step learning, for others it could be just one or two of the skills sets without the need for any preceding Formal First Step. The learning may also be at different levels, for example, entry level 3 literacy and a level 1 vocational qualification and of-course functional skills and personal and social development can be embedded into vocational qualifications. Examples of learner journeys are included at Section 6.

A summary of the adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer

23. To summarise, the adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer can be described as:
 - provision below level 2 covered by the 3 skills sets of:
 - personal and social development skills
 - vocational learning
 - functional skills in English and maths and ICTsupported by, but only where appropriate formal first step learning.
 - when designing an individual's personalised programme it is not mandatory to include all 3 skills sets or formal first step learning – only the components that are identified at the initial assessment stage and appropriate to the individual learner should be included.
 - an adult FLC learner can be described as someone who has a personalised learning programme and follows any one or more of the 3 skills sets.

The adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer



Personalised learner journeys devised to support individual's aspirations

Section Two: The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

24. The Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) allows learners to build on success, through the accumulation of qualifications and credits. This ability to accumulate and transfer credit is very important in supporting learner progression.
25. Provision within the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) below level 2 is an important and necessary component of the adult Foundation Learning Curriculum.
26. From April 2010, the Skills Funding Agency will be responsible for confirming provision for public funding for post 19 learners in England.
27. It is the intention to focus funding on priority vocational qualifications in the QCF from August 2010 and in line with national guidance providers should continue to move to QCF provision.
28. In order to ensure providers have access to lists of QCF qualifications confirmed for funding, a 'live' list will be available on the Skills Funding Agency website http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvqrp/support/listhttp://readingroom.skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/sfa/nat-QCF_Qualifications_confirmed_for_public_funding.xls which will be updated on a regular basis and provide the earliest notice of newly approved provision. A 'freeze' of the list will be taken on the 1st April 2010 and on the 1st September 2010. These will form the definitive lists for delivery as of 1st August 2010 and 1st January 2011 respectively. The Agency operates a QCF Service Desk to which queries relating to vocational qualification reform and QCF implementation should be directed. The email address is: qcfservicedesk@lsc.gov.uk

29. Qualifications and units approved for funding will continue to be added to the Learning Aims Database (LAD), which will remain the primary source for funding information and will include funding rates and programme weighting factors.
30. Provision such as Skills for Life and Functional Skills remain outside the QCF and will continue to be funded by the Skills Funding Agency.
31. The Skills Funding Agency has already confirmed that new processes must take account of funding approval arrangements pre-19, specifically the Joint Advisory Committee for Qualification Approval (JACQA) – which is jointly administered by the Young People’s Learning Agency (YPLA) and the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA).
32. For further information on the QCF see:
http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/QCF_Policy_Update_Issue_4_December_2009_Final.pdf

Section 3: Funding the adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer

33. The Skills Funding Agency will make funds available to support the delivery of the adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer from within its Adult Learner Responsive (ALR) and elements of the offer from its Employer Responsive (ER) funding streams subject to the Skills Funding Agency’s funding approval process set out in section 2. The funding route is dependent on the programme of learning most appropriate for the learner. All requirements of the standard funding guidance apply to the Foundation Learning Curriculum².
34. Note: the Offenders’ Learning & Skills Service (OLASS) custodial budget funds the OLASS Core Curriculum (those serving their sentence in custody are funded through this ring-fenced budget, those serving their sentence in the community will be funded through mainstream budgets).
35. Responsibility for the allocation of funds in further education will be split between the Skills Funding Agency and Young Peoples Learning Agency (YPLA). The YPLA will fund learners that are aged 16, 17 or 18 on 31st August in the relevant funding year, and the Skills Funding Agency will fund learners that are 19 or above.
36. Funding policy is to fund a learner consistently with their status at the start of their current programme of learning. Thus, for young people who start their Foundation Learning programme aged 16, 17 and 18 on 31st August in the funding year and turn 19 but do not complete their programme of learning, the Skills Funding Agency will continue to fund their learning programme from the start of the relevant funding year and until they complete, based on 16-18 eligibility, curriculum and rates. In some cases this will mean the Skills Funding Agency will be funding qualifications that it has not approved for funding through its normal process.
37. If a learner starts their programme when they are 19 or over, the funding rates and eligibility rules determined by the Skills Funding Agency will apply.

² With the exception of funding delivered through the Offender Learning in Custody contracts, where funding is delivered in line with provider contracts.

What Foundation Learning Curriculum can be funded through the Adult Learner Responsive (ALR) budget?

38. The Adult Learner Responsive budget funds the following Foundation Learning Curriculum:

- QCF vocational units and qualifications that are approved and recommended by Sector Skills Councils for funding, at entry level and level one;
- Shared personal and social development (PSD) provision at entry level and level one on the QCF;
- Award in Functional Skills English, Mathematics and ICT (entry level, level 1)
- Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy (entry level, level 1)
- Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (entry level, level 1)
- Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening) - (entry level, level 1)
- Non-approved pre-entry and entry level certificates in Adult Literacy and Numeracy, and certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (up to 10% of all pre-entry and entry level Skills for Life provision in 10/11).
- Some NQF and non-accredited provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities where there is currently no alternative provision on the QCF. Such provision would be heavily tailored, reflecting the very specific needs of individual learners who require provision that is designed to maintain and enhance personal independence rather than progression within accredited awards. This dedicated provision may be non-accredited, and where success is measured by 'RARPA'; such provision is funded through the Developmental Learning budget line.
- As part of Formal First Step learning QCF units and (for 2010/11) some non-accredited and NQF provision but only where a suitable alternative is not yet available on the QCF.

39. The Adult Learner Responsive (ALR) funding stream does not fund the following as part of the Foundation Learning Curriculum offer:

- Key Skills in Application of Number and in Communication (level 1)
- GCSE's in any subject do not form part of the FLC offer
- Award in Functional Skills English, Mathematics and ICT (level 2)
- Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy (level 2)
- Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (level 2)
- Certificate in ESOL Skills for Life (Speaking and Listening) (level 2)
- Adult safeguarded provision or informal adult learning, for example, Personal and Community Development Learning; Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities, Family Learning.

What Foundation Learning Curriculum can be funded through the Employer Responsive funding stream?

40. The Employer Responsive (ER) budget funds the following Foundation Learning Curriculum:

- Vocational qualifications at level 1 on the QCF recommended by Sector Skills Councils for funding;
- Certificate in Adult Literacy and Numeracy and ESOL Skills for Life at entry level and level 1.

41. The Employer Responsive funding stream does not fund:

- personal and social development,
- Formal First Step learning,
- non-accredited or NQF vocational qualifications
- Functional Skills in English, Maths or ICT at entry level and level 1

42. In addition some entry and level 1 units are being delivered through the Unit Funding Trials in Developmental learning.

Section 4: Young People's Foundation Learning Curriculum

43. Foundation Learning for young people (14-19) has the same overarching aims as that of the adult Foundation Learning Curriculum as set out in paragraph 7 of this document.

44. In line with 14-19 reforms and Qualification Strategy, Foundation Learning for young people is one of four national routes alongside GCSEs, Diplomas and Apprenticeships, that look to support progression.

45. Foundation Learning for young people is expected to translate into broad learning programmes – in practice, this means covering all three skills sets in an appropriate way, given learners' needs, prior attainment and intended destinations:

- Personal and Social Development
- Functional Skills
- Vocational content

46. Foundation Learning for young people (14-19) has been well documented, and links to relevant documents are included at Section 6.

Section Five: What should be recorded on the ILR as a Foundation Learning 'programme' for adults?

47. Funding Guidance for 2009/10 states an expectation that Foundation Learning programmes are recorded on the ILR as programme level aims, meaning a programme level aim must be recorded in addition to the individual learning aim(s) of the qualification(s) being taken. **However, this is not the case for adult learners following the Foundation Learning Curriculum for 2010/11.**

48. For the purpose of the ILR in 2010/11 providers do not need to complete field A15 (programme aim) or A46 (destination code) for adults following the Foundation Learning Curriculum. These fields only need to be completed for young people following Foundation Learning.

49. When dealing with adults undertaking any combination of the Foundation Learning Curriculum providers should simply record the individual learning aim(s). This is due to concerns over increased administrative burden on providers when a learner is only undertaking one learning aim, but would also be required to enter a programme aim. Also completion of A15 mandates completion of A46 (programme aim) and it was felt the four possible destinations, whilst supportive of young people, were not always appropriate for adults.

50. More information on the ILR specification for 10/11 can be found at <http://www.theia.org.uk/downloads/ilrdocuments/>

Section Six: Learner journeys and useful links

51. Below some example learner journeys have been set out and some links to other useful documents and websites.

- **Example 1:** Nancy enquires at her local FE college about reading classes as she wants to be able to help her grandchildren to learn to read.

She has been employed as a cook in the local school for 23 years. She enjoys her job and arrived with no aspirations to progress at work. She appears to have good verbal communication and personal skills.

Through assessment and in her advice sessions no Personal and Social Development training is identified but she has a current reading and writing level of entry level 2 and numeracy skills at entry level 3. She has also expressed an interest in following a book-keeping and accounts course as she would be able to apply for canteen team leader with this qualification.

Her personalised learning programme notes her destination as a level 2 book-keeping and accounts and notes the following qualifications:

Adult basic skill literacy qualification at entry level 3

Adult basic skill literacy qualification at level 1

Adult basic skill numeracy qualification at level 1

Level 2 award in book-keeping and accounts

The college has offered to enrol her on literacy entry level 3 in the first year, and in the following year she can begin the book-keeping and accounts qualifications with numeracy and literacy embedded.

On the ILR the college would record the literacy level 1 learning aim. The following year the college would record the 3 learning aims for book-keeping and accounts level 1, literacy level 1 and numeracy level 1.

- **Example 2:** Mike has been working in a distribution warehouse. He called the advice helpline and met with a Next Steps adviser. He's unhappy with his job and is looking for a career change. He is interested in computers.

At his interview with the next steps advisor a Skills Account was opened which showed him what qualifications he can achieve and funding he may be eligible for. Mike then talks to a local training provider who assesses his skills.

Initial assessment shows Mike has literacy and numeracy skills at entry level 3, although with some numeracy skills at level 1 also. His IT skills are at level 1. Mike could also benefit from some employability skills development. Whilst he is ambitious and dreams of reaching a full level 2 in IT he is very nervous about going back to learning after bad experiences at school, and fears failure. It is decided that before he begins his formal programme of learning he undertakes a Formal First Step, a unit on the QCF, which, if successful can go towards a formal PSD qualification. This aims to boost his confidence to carry on with his studies.

His personalised learning programme notes his destination as a full level 2 in IT and notes the following qualifications:

Formal First Step – Effective communication for work (Entry 3)

Entry Level Certificate in Preparing For Employment (Entry 3)

Adult basic skill literacy qualification at level 1

Adult basic skill numeracy qualification at level 1
Level 2 Certificate for IT Users - ITQ

On the ILR the college would enrol him on his Formal First Step learning followed by the Certificate in Preparing For Employment (entry 3) and literacy at level 1 in the first year. In the second year, following successful achievement of both qualifications, he would enrol on to his level 2 in IT with adult basic skill numeracy qualification at level 1. The numeracy element could be embedded into the level 2 qualification.

- **Example 3:** Julie is a 46 year old learner with learning difficulties who has few accredited qualifications, mainly individual units at pre-entry and entry level 1. She accesses learning as part of a programme of care and support designed to develop her independence and reduce her dependence on services and carers.

Julie struggles with numeracy and numbers but has been making progress in communication and is due to complete a Certificate in Adult Literacy (entry level 1) and progress onto an entry level 2 literacy programme that she is not expected to complete this academic year. Numeracy is supported through non-accredited learning within other independence enhancing activities that Julie participates in at the college and with the adult employability team at the local authority - principally through voluntary work placements in local social enterprises.

On her personalised learning programme her destination is noted as increased independent living.

On the ILR the college would record the literacy entry level 1 and entry level 2 learning aims. The following year the college would record the learning aims for literacy entry level 2 and non-certificated numeracy at entry level.

Useful links

52. Below are some link to websites that hold further information on foundation learning and the QCF:

- Resources to support the delivery of the Foundation Learning curriculum are available from the LSIS support programme: <http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/FLT>
- Functional Skills support programme <http://www.fssupport.org/>
- Further information on Foundation Learning for young people is available from: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/14-19/index.cfm?go=site.home&sid=3&pid=227&ctype=TEXT&ptype=Single>
- Further information about the QCF is available from: <http://www.qcda.gov.uk/8150.aspx> and recent policy updates at: http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/QCF_Policy_Update_Issue_4_December_2009_Final.pdf

www.bis.gov.uk/skillsfundingagency.

Extracts from this publication may be reproduced for non-commercial educational or training purposes, on condition that the source is acknowledged and the findings are not misrepresented.