

Foundation Learning Curriculum for adults

Questions and Answers

Q1: What is the Foundation Learning Curriculum (FLC)?

A1: The FLC replaces what was formerly called the Foundation Learning Tier (FLT) and is the skills 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).

Q2: What is the purpose of the FLC?

A2: Many adults with low skills never return to formal education and of those that do return few progress sufficiently to achieve the national benchmark for employability, a first full level 2. The purpose of the Foundation Learning Curriculum is to raise the profile of lower level learning in order to support more adults with no or low skills to progress and achieve a minimum level and range of skills providing a sound foundation for further learning and employment. It does this by giving entry and level 1 provision a recognisable name, and bringing coherence to qualifications at this level.

Q3: How is the FLC offer different to what I offer now?

A3: The FLC offer is based on good information and advice, robust initial and diagnostic assessment and the development of a personalised programme of learning for each learner based on the initial assessment and aspirations of the learner. Many excellent providers already present such an offer, but the FLC seeks to place such good practice as the norm rather than the exception and looks to be more ambitious for our learners, especially in an economic climate where more and more jobs will require higher skill levels.

Q4: What is the offer?

A4: In developing the foundation learning curriculum 3 skills sets were agreed to be of primary importance:

- personal and social development skills
- vocational learning
- functional skills in English and maths and ICT (including adult basic skills in literacy and numeracy and Skills for Life ESOL)

The adult Foundation Learning Curriculum offer draws from these 3 skills sets.

Q4: Do all adult learners have to under take an element of vocational, functional skills and personal and social development?

A4: No, the current knowledge and aspirations of the learner should be considered, and skills needs identified through initial assessment. An adult learner may only require a short intervention of a single element, for example, a literacy qualification, or require a longer programme, for example a personal and social development qualification, vocational qualification with a numeracy qualification embedded.

Q5: Do foundation learning programmes all follow a set number of guided learning hours?

A5: No, there is no set amount of time for a programme of learning, it depends entirely on the skills needs of the learner and the mixture of chosen qualifications and units. For some learners a short intervention may be all that's required, for others a longer programme of learning will be developed.

Q6: As a provider do I have to undertake an initial assessment for every learner?

A6: Initial assessment is a holistic process where providers can start to build up a picture of an individual's achievements, skills, previous learning experiences, goals and learning needs. Importantly an initial assessment should also identify the learner's literacy, language and numeracy skill level. The outcome of the initial assessment should demonstrate the level at which the individual is currently operating at, to then inform which level they enrol on to. It is the Skills Funding Agency's expectation that a provider delivering Agency funded programmes should undertake such assessment.

Q7: Can learners with learning difficulties and disabilities assess the Foundation Learning Curriculum?

A7: Yes, the Foundation Learning Curriculum is available to all 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.

Q8: I currently offer tailored provision to my learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities for which there is currently no equivalent on the QCF. Can I continue to offer this and receive funding from the Skills Funding Agency?

A8: 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.

Q9: I have a contract to deliver to offenders in custody, can I offer FLC?

A9: Offenders serving their sentence in custody will follow a 'Core Curriculum' as set out in specific offender 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). The alignment of Offender learning Core Curriculum with the mainstream offer helps offenders released from custody to continue courses or training begun in prison. For further information on Offender Learning see: <http://olass.lsc.gov.uk/>

Q10: What is Formal First step learning?

A10: Some adults may require a short episode of learning known as Formal First Step learning which may be used to build their confidence before they embark on a personalised foundation learning programme. A key element of Formal First Step learning is the recognition that this learner will progress to further learning.

Q11: Is a Formal First Step part of the FLC?

A11: No, it is not formally part of the Foundation Learning Curriculum offer, but can be a stepping stone towards beginning a foundation learning programme.

Q12: Will only QCF qualifications and units form part of the Foundation Learning Curriculum?

A12: In the main the bulk of the FLC comprises units and qualifications from the QCF, but there are some important exceptions that are not on the QCF but form part of the FLC offer. For example, functional skills in English, maths and ICT; and adult basic skills in literacy, numeracy and Skills for Life ESOL. Also adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities may have their personalised foundation learning programmes created from provision outside of the QCF where there is no alternative provision currently available on the QCF.

Q13: Will the Skills Funding Agency fund entry and level 1 provision that is not on the QCF?

A13: The Agency, in line with standard national guidance, will not fund any vocational or personal and social development qualifications or units that are not on the QCF from 2010/11, with the exception of some such provision for adults with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, provision such as functional skills in English, Maths and ICT, adult basic skills in literacy and numeracy and Skills for Life ESOL will continue to receive funding for adults through the Skills Funding Agency although not yet part of the QCF. Formal First Step learning which draws learners into personalised foundation learning programmes can also draw on provision outside of the QCF.

Q14: Is all entry and level 1 provision funded by the Agency part of the FLC?

A14: No. There is some entry level and level 1 provision which will be funded by the Agency but does not form part of the FLC offer. For example, GCSEs at level 1, Offender Learning provision offered to those serving their sentences in custody and provision offered through the adult safeguarded offer.

Q15: How do I find out which qualifications the Skills Funding Agency will fund?

A15: QCF qualifications that have been confirmed for Agency funding will form a 'live' list available on the Skills Funding Agency website http://qfr.lsc.gov.uk/ukvgrp/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 will provide the earliest notice of newly approved provision.

In addition all qualifications and units approved for funding (both QCF and other provision) 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.

Q16: Does the Skills Funding Agency use QCDA's Foundation Learning catalogue?

A16: No. The Skills Funding Agency does not recognise or use the QCDA's FL catalogue. The primary use for this catalogue has been Young People and the Skills Funding Agency has established its own funding approval process. Approval for funding Foundation Learning Curriculum on the QCF will follow national guidance as set out in:

http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/QCF_Transition_Paper_Final_March_2010.pdf

Q17: What will happen to learner who begins their learning at 16-18 but doesn't complete before their 19th birthday, will their learning continue?

A17: Yes. Young people aged 16, 17 and 18 on 31st August in the funding year when they begin a programme of study will continue to be funded as '16-18 year olds' until they complete that programme. 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 16-18 and continue age 19, the Skills Funding Agency will take over the funding of their learning programme from the start of the relevant 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.

Q18: Similarly, will learners with assessed learning difficulties and/or disabilities also be able to continue a programme of learning begun at 16 or under?

A18: Yes. Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities aged 16 to 24 on 31st August in the funding year when they begin a programme of study will continue to be funded until they complete that programme, this includes Additional Learner Support funding where used.

Q19: Where can I find more information about the Foundation Learning Curriculum?

A19: More information will be posted on the Skills Funding Agency's website at: www.bis.gov.uk/skillsfundingagency.

In addition resources are available from the LSIS support programme:

<http://www.excellencegateway.org.uk/FLT>.

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>

And 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