

## FOUNDATION LEARNING TIER: LEARNING BELOW LEVEL 2

The Proposed **Foundation Learning Tier (FLT)** is the new term being used to describe the educational provision available to learners aged 14+ working below level 2. The FLT describes and encompasses students' learning programme, any supporting units and any qualifications to be used. Currently, there is some concern about the quality and coherence of such programmes which are often offered to low/under-achieving students at KS4.

The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) have been set the challenge of improving the quality of the current offer below level 2. Particular focus areas for development will include:

- ◆ improved access to a curriculum offer better matched to individual learning needs;
- ◆ recognition of a broader range of achievements relevant to learners working at these lower levels;
- ◆ qualifications with clear purposes that set out stepping stones from entry level to level 2;
- ◆ valued progression pathways
- ◆ development of qualifications that provide progression to level 2 via validated pathways.

The QCA had issued a consultation document about its proposals for FLT and has also invited 'expressions of interest in tests and trials'.

Initially the development of the FLT has resulted in the set of 'principals for a coherent learning programme' (please see below), which will be trialed during the current academic year. It appears that these 'draft' principals are seen as the Key deliverables in any learner programme for the FLT, and as such should feature in any review/planning of 'alternative' curriculum programmes.

The development of a quality 'Foundation Learning Tier'; with valued progression pathways, is an exciting prospect and one that VESA will monitor with real interest.

## FOUNDATION LEARNING TIER: PRINCIPALS FOR COHERENT LEARNER PROGRAMMES

The following 'draft' principles will be trialled during the 2006-07 academic year.

1. In designing and delivering a foundation learning tier (FLT) programme, providers should ensure that they undertake a high-quality initial assessment that covers:
  - prior achievements
  - prior educational experiences
  - personal and other circumstances and needs
  - interests and aspirations
  - preferred learning styles
  - any potential barriers to learning and achievement that need to be addressed.
2. In designing and delivering an FLT programme, providers should ensure that they identify realistic and challenging learning goals to match each learner's needs, interests and aspirations. These learning goals might be small steps of achievement or larger and longer term learning goals.
3. In designing and delivering an FLT programme, providers should ensure that they take into account all information gathered through initial assessment and plan a coherent programme - usually\* integrating three curriculum areas (personal and social development, key and basic skills, and vocational/subject-based learning) - to meet the individual's learning goals. (\* Only by exception, and with clear justification, should one of the curriculum areas be omitted.)
4. In designing and developing an FLT programme, providers should ensure that the learner is involved in the planning of the programme and understands what is expected of him/her and what he/she can expect of the provider. The extent of the involvement and the ways in which learners engage in this process, will vary from learner to learner. However, self-determination for learners should be a key factor in the process.
5. In designing and delivering an FLT programme, providers should ensure that the programme is appropriately personalised. The programme should:

- Use those units and qualifications most suitable for the individual, enabling them to pursue their activities and interests.
  - Use the individual's experiences and achievements in a way that suits their preferred learning styles and promotes personal ownership, autonomy and control of their learning and achievement.
6. In designing and delivering an FLT programme, provider should ensure that they identify and provide appropriate support for the individual and the group within which he/she is learning.
  7. In designing and delivering an FLT programme, providers should ensure that they record achievements, including achievement of units and qualifications, using appropriate methods.
  8. In designing and delivering an FLT programme, providers should ensure that they include time for review, in a regular basis, to check and discuss progress with learners. These reviews will encourage learners to reflect on their achievements and consider how they will meet their next set of targets and progress towards their longer term goals.
  9. In designing and delivering an FLT programme, providers should ensure that they take into account the outcomes and the reviews and, if necessary:
    - adapt the learning programme to ensure that targets and goals can still be met
    - adapt the target and goals where they are found to be unrealistic or not appropriately challenging.