

Following centres' experiences with Diplomas during 2008/09, we have compiled this guidance to help you plan the **Additional and Specialist Learning (ASL)** element of the Diploma for learners at your centre or in your consortium.



Getting the quantity and combination right

Each level of Diploma requires a minimum amount of ASL (except for the Level 3 Progression Diploma which does not include ASL).

Check very early on that your learners have a valid combination.

Check the Diploma catalogues on the National Database of Accredited Qualifications (NDAQ) at www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk carefully to ensure that the ASL you choose for your learners meets the following criteria:

- The ASL is listed in the catalogue for the level and line of learning.
- There are enough guided learning hours (Foundation – 120, Higher – 180, Advanced – 360).
- The combinations are not barred if you choose to combine small pieces of ASL.

Calculating ASL

You can amend ASL on DAS once the Diploma result has been issued if you want to change the ASL qualifications which will appear on the learner's transcript.

When DAS aggregates a Diploma, ASL is calculated using the following priorities:

- 1 Highest GLH**
- 2 Whatever ASL hits the DAS first**
- 3 Highest grade.**

Therefore, if a learner's prior achievement with their GCSEs hits DAS first, these will most likely be used by DAS for the aggregation. However, they may also have taken another qualification, e.g. a BTEC or OCR National, which is more relevant to their Diploma Line of Learning and they would prefer to use this as their ASL. If the learner wants these to appear on their transcript, you will need to amend the ASL within the DAS before their certificate and transcript are issued.

The role of prior achievement

During 2008/09, prior achievement proved to be an invaluable 'insurance policy' for some learners. This could be vital for any of the following scenarios:

- The learner is ill and unable to complete their planned ASL.
- The learner fails their planned ASL or fails to meet the minimum C grade requirement for a GCSE being used towards a Higher Diploma.
- The learner is struggling to complete their Principal Learning, Project or Functional Skills qualifications. If they have sufficient prior achievement to meet the minimum requirements for the Diploma (or at least part of it), they could reduce or drop the ASL course(s) they are studying for and focus their efforts on the core Diploma components.

We would recommend that all centres ensure that learners' prior achievements are sent to DAS to act as a back up for the planned ASL. Some awarding bodies, including OCR, will regularly check DAS for new learner accounts and automatically send prior achievements where they have a valid ULN stored against them. Learners on Foundation or Higher Diplomas who are aged 16+ and have taken GCSEs or other Level 1 or 2 qualifications are likely to have already fulfilled their ASL requirement.



GCSEs

Most GCSEs can count towards a Diploma, but note that Maths and English Language GCSEs cannot be included as they overlap with Functional Skills.

Making the most of learners' creative talents

It's not just the big qualifications – GCSEs, Nationals, BTECs – which can be used as ASL. Did you know that a range of creative qualifications can also be used? The Diploma catalogues include Music, Drama and Dance qualifications. Refer to the Diploma catalogues for more details:

www.accreditedqualifications.org.uk

Language skills

If any of your students have recently moved to the UK or speak a foreign language, why not take advantage of their linguistic skills by entering them for a proficiency-based qualification in that language to top up their ASL? OCR's Asset Languages qualifications are available in 25 languages (e.g. Arabic, Chinese, Panjabi, Polish, Spanish and Urdu), with each standalone skill (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) being worth the following guided learning hours:



Stage	GLH for each skill
Preliminary	40
Intermediate	40
Advanced	50

This can also act as a valuable insurance policy for learners who don't have any prior achievements to fall back on.



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