

## **UCU submission to the select committee inquiry into specialist diplomas**

### **Executive summary**

1. UCU believes that the curriculum for 14-19 year olds should give young people the fundamentals of communications, literacy, numeracy, information technology and lifelong learning on which to base further and deeper learning for employment and/or further study. In its post-16 stages this phase of education and training should further develop knowledge and skills needed for adult life which may include more specific occupational skills.
2. The union was disappointed in the direction taken by the government in the White Paper, 14-19 Education and Skills (February 2005), particularly over the proposed introduction of specialist diplomas.
3. The union felt that the creation of another separate route and set of qualifications for young people would maintain the divide between the academic and applied/vocational routes and the lack of status and esteem in which this latter route and qualifications had been held. The union had supported the Tomlinson proposals for an overarching diploma at four overlapping levels.
4. The fatal flaws in the introduction of both GNVQs and Curriculum 2000 led to a lack of confidence in such reforms amongst young people, parents, teachers and lecturers. A principal fault in the introduction of both sets of qualifications was the speed with which they were started which did not give sufficient time for considered piloting, testing and evaluation.
5. UCU fears that similar mistakes are being made in relation to the introduction of specialist diplomas.
6. The union considers that the time line for the introduction of the first five of the fourteen lines of the specialist diploma, with a subsequent roll-out of the remaining lines to 2013, is too tight. We believe it will not allow proper and realistic piloting and evaluation, publication and dissemination of syllabus content and supporting materials or workforce development to support teaching the diplomas.
7. The actual purposes of the specialist diploma may be problematic as they seem intended to serve multiple and perhaps conflicting purposes.
8. UCU is concerned that because each of the specialist diplomas is being developed by a separate employer-led group, the balance between the three elements making up each diploma - an element of principal learning, additional/specialist learning and generic learning - may be very different.
9. UCU is concerned that those developing the diplomas for employers and Sector Skills Councils may not have the curriculum expertise required.
10. Apart from possibly at partnership or institutional level, UCU is not aware of any current teacher/lecturer activity in preparation for the diploma. Indeed one of our

main concerns is around the timeline for the diplomas being such as to allow sufficient time for such activities. There would appear to be a total lack of concerted action by those responsible for the creation of programmes of workforce development. The change envisaged in the establishment of the diplomas needs considerable workforce development.

11. It is our understanding that single awarding bodies will be responsible for awarding the full diploma but that any awarding body can create the units that make up the full diploma. This seems a sure recipe for confusion and delay between the awarding bodies themselves, and between the regulator and the awarding bodies.
12. The Education and Inspection Act gives local authorities the statutory responsibility to deliver an entitlement to all 14-19 year olds to access the diploma. But it is not clear what powers local authorities will have to enforce the entitlement or to ensure the introduction of all the diploma lines within a local area.
13. In terms of co-operation and collaboration at local level, UCU is uncertain as to the current level of coordination between schools and colleges in any local area.
14. There is still much that is unknown about the final funding of diplomas.
15. UCU considers that overall the information, advice and guidance services for young people are in a state of turmoil and confusion and may not be in state to offer the quality of advice and guidance necessary.
16. Competition between institutions - whether school-school, college-college, or school-college - can severely damage the capacity and willingness of colleges and schools to work in partnership to deliver the diplomas.
17. There has for a number of years been a glaring disparity between the funding of schools and colleges for similar work. One of the practical outcomes of this is the disparity between salary levels for teachers in schools and lecturers in colleges. UCU calculate this still to be significant.

## **Recommendations**

18. UCU recommends that the start date for the first five diplomas should be postponed a year and that they should be introduced in September 2009, and the remaining diplomas rolled out until 2014.
19. UCU also recommends that the review of A levels in 2008 promised when the 14-19 White Paper was published, should be brought forward and widened to consider progress on the introduction of diplomas. We would urge that further consideration is given to the introduction of an overarching diploma in which both A levels and the diploma could be located.
20. UCU recommends that the actual roles and responsibilities of the principal 'players' [ie QCA, DfES and the Skills for Business Network] are made clear and there is a clear understanding where ultimate responsibility for delivering specialist diplomas lies.
21. We understand there are at least six agencies responsible for work-based development in support of the diplomas. We recommend that all these agencies are brought together with the teacher and lecturer unions to begin to identify the issues

involved in the delivery of diplomas and the consequent workforce development needed. To date this has not happened.

22. UCU recommends there is a clear government commitment to closing the funding gap between schools and colleges post 2010.

## **UCU**

23. UCU represents 120,000 academic and academic-related staff in universities, FE colleges, adult and community learning and prison education services. All UCU members have a strong interest in the development of specialist diplomas for young people aged 14-19. UCU members working in higher education will be admitting young people achieving these new qualifications. UCU members in further education colleges and prison education will be delivering specialist diplomas in partnership with schools, work-based learning providers and employers.

## **Specialist diplomas**

24. UCU believes that the curriculum for 14-19 year olds should give young people the fundamentals of communications, literacy, numeracy, information technology and lifelong learning on which to base further and deeper learning for employment and/or further study. In its post-16 stages this phase of education and training further develops knowledge and skills needed for adult life which may include more specific occupational skills.
25. The union considers that the terms academic and vocational are not useful when describing 14-19 education and training. We prefer the terms 'general' and 'applied' education and training. In a world where specific skills that may be required in the workplace rapidly become obsolete given the pace of technological change, the term 'vocational' for a curriculum for young people is a misnomer. Similarly 'academic' knowledge and skills have application in employment.
26. UCU would like all young people to have the opportunity and an entitlement to develop the more general skills which can provide the basis for developing more specific occupational skills for employment and for adult life.
27. NATFHE, one of the unions making up UCU, had long-standing policies on 14-19 education and training. The aim of these was the creation of a coherent and inclusive curriculum and set of qualifications that recognised and valued the full range of young people's achievements.
28. Although NATFHE had reservations about the possible implications of some of the recommendations of the Tomlinson Working Party on 14-19, which reported in late 2004, it supported them as they were aimed at achieving a coherent and inclusive curriculum and qualifications framework. The union was disappointed in the direction taken by the government in the White Paper, 14-19 Education and Skills (February 2005), particularly over the proposed introduction of specialist diplomas.
29. The union felt that the creation of another separate route and set of qualifications for young people would maintain the divide between the academic and

applied/vocational routes and the lack of status and esteem in which this latter route and qualifications had been held. The union had supported the Tomlinson proposals for an overarching diploma at four overlapping levels.

30. It considered that this would have provided the motivation for those young people who were currently often alienated and de-motivated by the national curriculum and more academic qualifications, and could provide challenge and stretch for the more able young people in the age cohort. An overarching qualification would have given the opportunity for assessing the 'softer' of the key skills such as problem-solving, team work and lifelong learning so valued by employers. It would also have given more opportunity for mixing components of general education and the applied curriculum.
31. Despite its disappointment in the direction set out by the 14-19 White Paper, NATFHE considered that it was important to work with all partners and stakeholders to ensure that the development of specialist diplomas was a success. We felt that young people and the 14-19 education and training system could not afford yet another missed opportunity to develop a quality curriculum as well as qualifications in this area.
32. The fatal flaws in the introduction of both GNVQs and Curriculum 2000 led to a lack of confidence in such reforms amongst young people, parents, teachers and lecturers. A principal fault in the introduction of both sets of qualifications was the speed with which they were started which did not give sufficient time for considered piloting, testing and evaluation. The specifications for these qualifications did not arrive in schools and colleges until after teaching on them had started. Curriculum materials had not been published and the necessary workforce development had not happened.
33. UCU fears that similar mistakes are being made in relation to the introduction of the specialist diplomas.
34. The union considers that the time line for the introduction of the first five of the fourteen lines of the specialist diploma, with a subsequent roll-out of the remaining lines to 2013, is too tight. We believe it will not allow proper and realistic piloting and evaluation, publication and dissemination of syllabus content and supporting materials or workforce development to support teaching the diplomas. UCU would argue that the start date for the first five diplomas should be postponed a year and that they should be introduced in September 2009, and the remaining diplomas rolled out until 2014.
35. UCU would strongly urge also that the review of A levels in 2008 promised when the 14-19 White Paper was published, should be brought forward and widened to consider progress on the introduction of the diplomas. We would urge that further consideration is given to the introduction of an overarching diploma in which both A levels and the diploma could be located.

## Design and development of diplomas:

### What progress has been made on the development of diplomas to date? Where have been the sticking points?

36. It is difficult for UCU to know what progress has actually been made in the development of the diplomas or what have been the sticking points as UCU, along with the other teacher unions, has not been party to the detail of the developments. The teacher unions have been invited to QCA conferences and briefings on the diplomas, and some of the Diploma Development Partnerships, such as that for engineering, have included serving teachers and lecturers but others have not.
37. Teachers and lecturers who will actually deliver the new diplomas should be seen as key partners in reform and not passive deliverers of an externally determined model. Teachers and lecturers will be motivated to work towards a new system of diplomas over a development period only if they are included in developing curriculum models, modes of assessment and approaches to learning and teaching. The role of teachers and lecturers has not been made explicit in the designing or the delivery of the new diplomas. This will not inspire teachers' confidence to deliver imposed curriculum specifications/courses.
38. UCU is concerned that the following may be sticking points within the development of diplomas:
39. **Purpose** The actual purposes of the specialist diploma may be problematic as they seem intended to serve multiple and perhaps conflicting purposes. They seem to be intended to provide learning programmes for disaffected young people, for those who have failed to get five A\* to GCSEs - the benchmark at 16, for those wanting to pursue a high quality employer-recognised qualification and those wanting a more 'applied' route to higher education. There may be particular issues for those taking the specialist diploma pre-16 where in some subject areas there may be legal barriers to workplace experience.
40. **Content** UCU is concerned that because each of the specialist diplomas is being developed by a separate employer-led group, the balance between the three elements making up each diploma - an element of principal learning, additional/specialist learning and generic learning - may be very different. It is also likely that the balance of these three elements will be different between the different levels of the diploma. This may render their application by end users difficult (be they employers or education establishments) as comparisons and equivalences between achievements among the diplomas may be difficult, as well as both horizontal and vertical progression within and between the different lines of the diploma. We are also worried that the content between diplomas and between levels, does not at this stage appear to be consistent in terms of the knowledge and skills and demands made on the learner.
41. The exclusion of apprenticeships from the diploma framework may make progression from the diplomas to full apprenticeships problematic.

42. **Assessment** Making assessment within the diplomas 'fit for purpose', clear, understandable and affordable. Some of the elements of the diploma will be graded, whilst other parts will need 'mastery', ie will need to be passed.

### **What role have employers and Sector Skills Councils played in the development of diplomas?**

43. The government's intention was that employers should play a leading role in the development of specialist diplomas. It is our understanding this has happened through the involvement of the relevant Sector Skills Councils on the Diploma Development Partnerships. However it may well be that both the involvement with employers in their Sector Skills Councils and their involvement with the Development Partnerships may be patchy and vary between the different lines of the specialist diplomas. As we have stated above, our concern has been with the involvement of practising teachers and lecturers in developing diplomas. UCU is concerned that those developing the diplomas for employers and Sector Skills Councils may not have the curriculum expertise required and that they are having to adapt a pre-determined template for them which may not necessarily match their needs. We are also concerned that the awarding bodies who do have the expertise in designing qualifications have not as yet had a central enough role, and the role they have may conflict with their position as producers of existing comparable qualifications.

### **Who is responsible for the coordination and development of diplomas?**

44. It is our understanding that the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority with the DfES and the Skills for Business Network are responsible for overall lead, coordination and development of the diplomas. The detailed work on developing the diplomas has been given to Diploma Development Partnerships led by the appropriate Sector Skills Council. Further, it is our understanding that there is an implementation group at the DfES for 14-19 policy and that developments on the diploma are reported to this body. UCU is represented on this implementation group. Clearly all would benefit if the actual roles and responsibilities of the principal 'players' were made clear and it was defined who exactly is going to take ultimate responsibility, especially if the development of diplomas becomes problematic, as UCU believes it will.

### **Is there a case for a stronger co-ordinating role for one of the agencies involved, or for the appointment of a senior responsible officer or champion?**

45. UCU believes that the role of QCA and its partners should be sufficient for coordination of developments around the specialist diplomas. To appoint a senior responsible officer or champion may well confuse matters and lead to problematic lines of communication between the main stakeholders. Nonetheless, we refer to

our response above stating that there does need to be greater clarity as to roles and responsibilities and which agency or department is ultimately responsible.

### **Is there a clear system for accrediting and awarding the diplomas?**

46. There appear to be clear systems emerging for accrediting and awarding diplomas. However UCU does have some concerns about how understandable some of these systems will be especially those around assessing the diplomas. There are issues around the grading of the diploma overall; for example which units within the diploma will require pass/fail results and not be graded; for which units will there be 'compensation' allowed from other parts of the programme, and which units where 'compensation' will not be allowed; and how functional skills will be embedded within programmes and assessed.
47. Additional complications for the process of creating the new diplomas and establishing a clear system for accreditation and awarding arise from the decision to create a 'free market' in awarding the diploma and constructing the units that will go to make up any diploma. It is our understanding that single awarding bodies will be responsible for awarding the full diploma but that any awarding body can create the units that make up the full diploma. This seems a sure recipe for confusion and delay between the awarding bodies themselves, between the regulator and the awarding bodies. It will also be very confusing for young people, parents and end users such as employers and higher education institutions.

### **Teacher and lecturer training:**

#### **What are current levels of teacher/lecturer training activity in preparation for diplomas? Is this sufficient to make diplomas a success?**

48. Apart from possibly at partnership or institutional level, UCU is not aware of any current teacher/lecturer activity in preparation for the diploma. Indeed one of our main concerns is around the timeline for the diplomas being such as to allow sufficient time for such activities. There would appear to be a total lack of concerted action by those responsible for the creation of programmes of workforce development. The change envisaged in the establishment of the diplomas needs considerable workforce development.
49. Although school teachers, college lecturers and work-based trainers all have experience of some part of the areas covered by the diplomas, all will need additional support for areas that are relatively new to them: school teachers in vocational/applied work, college lecturers and work based trainers in working with under 16s and in the delivery of the national curriculum.
50. All those working on the new diplomas, as well as requiring professional development in areas that are particularly pertinent to them, need to be brought together with teachers, lecturers and trainers in the spread of partner organisations to develop the curriculum and materials across the diploma curriculum no matter where it is delivered. Teachers need to pick up on what happens in colleges, work-

based training and with employers; lecturers and trainers need to know what has happened in schools. In a survey of NATFHE members on their experiences of work in colleges with students under 16, one of the chief complaints made was the lack of information from schools about the students they were expected to teach.

51. UCU, in association with the Institute for Learning, the professional body of post-compulsory teachers and lecturers is in the process of surveying its members as to the continuous professional development on offer to college lecturers, including that around 14-19 education and training. We will be happy to share the results of this with the select committee. In two surveys conducted by UCU branches, the development and training on offer for work with under 16s in colleges was minimal.
52. LECAN, a national network of local authority advisers inspectors, advisers, officers and consultants working on 14-19 surveyed their members on 14-19 developments. (LECAN 'Challenges facing partnerships' 2006). The questions they asked included a number around the priority given to staff development within local authority strategic planning. They found that although the majority of local authorities are planning to upskill staff to deliver the diplomas, some had not targeted either staff development or workforce reform for the diplomas within their strategic plans. LECAN commented:
53. "The current situation may have implications in terms of local authorities' capacity to work towards introducing the proposed curriculum reform measures, considering that a significant proportion of vocational provision is currently delivered in school by school staff with limited sector experience."
54. LECAN also asked the respondents to their survey to identify the key barriers to delivering the diplomas. The two most mentioned responses were "engagement and will" mentioned by 96% of respondents, and "capacity and skill" mentioned by 85 per cent. LECAN considered the high response rate on the first barrier demonstrated that schools were either poorly informed or antagonistic to the changes or expected the whole initiative "to go away". It may be that a concerted effort to deliver workforce development that was rooted in the real experiences of teachers, might begin to build some of this engagement and will.
55. The LECAN survey indicated that even where there was a willingness to engage with the 14-19 agenda, the 'distance to be travelled' to 2013 and full roll out of the diplomas, is significant. Many of the LECAN respondents commented on the lack of infrastructure and questioned the feasibility of building capacity required with no explicit and sustainable funding stream for support. LECAN went on to comment:
56. "There were concerns about the availability of appropriately qualified staff to deliver the specialist learning components of the diplomas."
57. The report went on to describe comments from respondents that there were current difficulties around recruitment of staff and the challenge of accessing high quality staff development, including the issue of getting staff released for training, and the fact that in many cases capacity is currently insufficient to meet the potential demand that might be made by delivering the diplomas.
58. We understand there are at least six agencies responsible for work-based development in support of the diplomas: the Training and Development Agency



(TDA), Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK), The Specialist Schools Trust, The Centre for Excellence in Leadership (CEL), National Schools Leadership College and the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA). No organisation representing teachers and/or lecturers is in touch with all these agencies. UCU has good working relations with LLUK, CEL and QIA, but not with the TDA, Specialist Schools Trust or the National Schools Leadership College. The position is reversed for the school teacher unions. UCU has asked repeatedly at the DfES 14-19 Implementation Group that all these agencies are brought together with the teacher and lecturer unions to begin to identify the issues involved in the delivery of diplomas and the consequent workforce development needed. To date this has not happened.

59. It is worth remembering that although the first diplomas are aimed to be delivered in September 2008, to be ready teachers and lecturers will need to start on training and development by at least September 2007. Given the long summer break this would seem to indicate that such workforce development programmes should be ready by June/July 2007. It would be helpful if the six agencies concerned with the delivery of such programmes consulted the organisations representing the teachers and lecturers who will be actually teaching the new programmes at the earliest opportunity.

## **Co-ordination between schools and colleges**

### **What is the current level of co-ordination between colleges and schools in local areas?**

60. The recent Education and Inspection Act gave the strategic lead on 14-19 to local authorities. Other recent statements seem to give local authorities the lead role in 14-16 provision and the LSC on 16-19. UCU is unsure how these arrangements will work in practice. For example who arbitrates if a local authority's strategic lead role leads it to decisions on 16-19 that conflicts with those of the LSC in respect of this provision?
61. There are additional complications in that both local authorities and the LSC are subject to current and recent restructuring and change. The Further Education and Training Bill currently before Parliament will abolish local LSCs. In their place the LSC, after three reorganisations in five years, is creating 153 local teams which will largely be coterminus with local authorities. This could mean greater integration between decision making in the local authority and LSC in respect to 14-19. However there are concerns about how local voices will be heard by the regional LSCs and whether LSC local teams have the status and power to negotiate successfully with local authority officers.
62. The Nuffield Foundation is conducting a long term review of 14-19 education and training. In its most recent Annual Report 2005-2006, it describes the lack of capacity at local level in the LSC and in local authorities. The Report quotes the LGA in saying that local authorities have shed many of their post-16 specialists and had "staff, skills and resources stripped out" The latter indeed are no longer even local

education authorities but Childrens' Trusts sometimes with an educationalist in overall charge, sometimes not. Many unitary local authorities, are very small and may not have the staff to carry out the functions envisaged in the 14-19 Implementation Plan.

63. The Education and Inspection Act gives local authorities the statutory responsibility to deliver an entitlement to all 14-19 year olds to access the diploma. But it is not clear what powers local authorities will have to enforce the entitlement or to ensure the introduction of all the diploma lines within a local area.
64. Local co-ordination is not assisted by the Gateway process for the introduction of diplomas. It is rigorous which UCU welcomes. It is also lengthy and somewhat bureaucratic. Possible providers of the diploma have been asked to form consortia to put in expressions of interest at a point when the diplomas had not been completely designed. These consortia were asked to indicate how many learners were likely to take the diplomas: a difficult task with the uncertainty about the content of the diplomas and with many other qualifications still being offered in this part of 14-19 education and training.
65. In September 2006 the DfES published more detailed criteria for selection of eligible partnerships to deliver each of the diplomas, and interested consortia had until December 2006 to submit more detailed proposals. The results of this are expected in early 2007. Such a process makes the timetable of the delivery of the diplomas even more problematic, giving around a year for the successful partnerships to make their preparations for delivery, including the necessary staff development and training.
66. The LECAN Report had asked a series of questions about local authority preparations around the introduction of diplomas. The results are not encouraging. Although all the local authorities responding indicated that they were auditing their curriculum provision as part of their 14-19 developments, many also indicated their inability to match current provision to that required for the diplomas. Future planning was difficult when details and resources required were unknown.
67. The report concluded that there was "significant distance to travel in order to move from a random and sometimes opportunistic approach to planning across a local authority area to a more structured, coherent and agreed delivery." Although the majority of local authorities managed the strategic oversight of 14-19 development through a Strategic/Executive/Task Group consisting of representatives from providers and strategic partners, there seemed to be no discernable pattern for other structures or groups involved in supporting 14-19 developments. LECAN stated "that the pattern at local level appears to be driven by a combination of opportunity and circumstances...there is no consistency in the structures/groups responsible for 14-19 development. Care should be taken in assuming such structures exist and they have common features."
68. In terms of co-operation and collaboration at local level, UCU is uncertain as to the current level of coordination between schools and colleges in any local area. We assume that it is patchy even within one area. Where schools and colleges are already in partnership then it may be expected that the co-ordination is at least

satisfactory. From investigations made at the start of the Increased Flexibility funding for 14-16 year olds, NATFHE found that relationships between one college and a number of schools could vary greatly, with good coordination reported in some and others 'dumping' school pupils with behaviour problems or before external examinations or OFSTED inspections. The LECAN report noted that the majority of vocational provision for students over the age of 16 is delivered independently and thus these schools feel little need to co-ordinate. Choice of vocational courses currently on offer in schools for young people 14-16 is limited. The average choice is between 2 or 3 lines. "The capacity to deliver all 14 lines at 3 levels will be logistically difficult as we do not currently have the staff to do this."

### **What are the barriers to coordination?**

69. As we have already stated UCU does not yet have a detailed picture of what is happening on the ground with regard to the introduction of the diplomas. To the ever present difficulties of partnership working, which a leading FE practitioner once likened to "the suppression of mutual hostility in pursuit of funding", we would argue that certain characteristics of the introduction of the diplomas makes co-ordination at local level even more difficult. We would identify the following:
70. **Precarious funding:** the introduction of diplomas has been preceded by a Pathfinder programme across 39 areas in England to test and pilot various aspects of the 14-19 reform including cross-institutional collaboration. Whilst the final evaluation report identified 9 key legacies including examples of best practice, the Nuffield Report reported that funding for these Pathfinders combined with the other uncertainty around the diploma introduction, militated against the dissemination of this good practice. The Report stated that the Pathfinders "are often not in a position to form sustainable networks of trust."
71. There is still much that is unknown about the final funding of diplomas. In relation to funding for the diploma for 14-16 year olds, the final details of this funding are awaited but there are still a number of important issues to be addressed, such as funding to sustain teaching in schools where many 14-16 year olds are 'off-site' taking diploma programmes at colleges, work-based trainers or employers. For colleges there are questions of how necessary activities that are not teaching, such as lunch time and supervision between lessons, are going to be funded.
72. **Timetable:** as we have attempted to indicate we would argue that the whole timetable for the introduction of the diplomas is too fast as there are still too many unknowns for those who are intended to deliver these programmes. If the 'playing field' is not yet completely known, this cannot help local coordination and collaboration.
73. **Uncertainty from the Gateway process:** Again as we have already indicated because the Gateway process is both lengthy and somewhat bureaucratic, the results of who will actually first deliver the diplomas is as yet unknown. The period from when the results are known and the first actual delivery of the diplomas will be

relatively short and, it is UCU's contention, too short for proper preparation and workforce development.

74. **Information, advice and guidance:** The key to successful introduction of any 14-19 curriculum change, especially one involving young people and their parents/carers taking crucial decisions as to future routes of learning and achievement depend on the quality of the information, advice and guidance available to young people, their parents and carers. UCU considers that overall the information, advice and guidance services for young people are in a state of turmoil and confusion and may not be in state to offer the quality of advice and guidance necessary.
75. These services have been through a number of re-organisations, the latest being the creation of Connexions. Since the publication of the Green Paper, 'Youth Matters' (2005) the intention has been to give local authorities the overall responsibilities for information, advice and guidance for young people, although the Green Paper suggested that schools and colleges should have the right to directly contract for such services if those under the responsibility of the local authority were considered not be of a high enough quality. Some have suggested that this could lead to fragmentation of these services.
76. The government in its 'Next Steps' response to the consultation on Youth Matters has modified these proposals. Nonetheless there has to be some concern that the information, guidance and advice services will be sufficiently strong and robust enough to give the independent and impartial information and advice that young people will require when making crucial decisions about what learning programmes to take from the age of 14.
77. The evaluation of the DfES 14-19 Pathfinders revealed that the division of responsibilities between schools' career staff and Connexions advisers has been ambivalent. If the new arrangements for IAG are to be shared between local authorities, Children's Trusts and schools and colleges, then the coordination of such work must be made transparent to all the providers named. Local partnership arrangements set up by Children's Trusts must effectively incorporate schools' work on children's well being and pastoral care, as well as individual advice and guidance for pupils.
78. **Institutional competition:** In the judgement of UCU the largest barrier to co-ordination between schools and colleges is the focus on institutional competition that lies at the heart of government policies towards both schools and colleges. At the very least there can be seen a contradiction between the institutional co-operation and partnership which the government seeks to underpin its plans for 14-19 education, and especially the delivery of the diploma, and the competition between institutions.
79. This can be seen in the White Paper 'Higher Standards, Better Schools for All!' (2005) and the Education and Inspection Act 2006 which focus on institutional diversity, specialisation and the creation of new school 6th forms with reinforcement of school autonomy, parental choice and competition for the most able learners at 11 and 16.

80. This kind of institutional competition is underpinned by the existing mechanisms of the school performance tables with their focus on the importance of the five A\*-C GCSE benchmark at 16. Colleges will increasingly face the severe penalties of competitive tendering for all or part of their provision, should it fall below what is perceived as good or excellent. Thus many believe that individual institutional performance has been incentivised at the expense of collective thinking and area planning.

**What are the lessons that can be learned from areas where there is strong co-ordination on 14-19? What are intermediary bodies such as LEAs and LSCs doing to foster co-operation?**

**How engaged are headteachers and college principals in the diploma agenda?**

81. UCU is unable to give responses on these questions as we do not have the information on these issues as to what is happening at local level.

**How are the rules on post-16 expansion likely to affect the roll out of diplomas?**

82. We have argued above that competition between institutions - whether school-school, college-college, or school-college - can severely damage the capacity and willingness of colleges and schools to work in partnership to deliver the diplomas. The new procedures and rules on post-16 expansion, including extending the presumption to colleges that the most successful should be able to expand, and introducing competition for 16-19 provision in localities where this is judged to be weak, may affect adversely the roll out of diplomas in some areas. Potential partners in these areas may be focused on preserving their existence rather than working to collaborate on qualifications that are as yet unknown and untested.

**Concluding points**

83. As we have already stated, UCU would have preferred to see an overarching diploma along the lines recommended by the Tomlinson Working Party. We have also stated that given the recent history of qualification change we do want the work on diplomas to come to fruition. But UCU has severe reservations as to whether diplomas can fulfil the ambitions of the government, again most recently described in the Leitch Report. Diplomas will have to coexist with GCSEs and A levels and with successful known and respected 'applied' qualifications such as BTEC National awards. In UK education there is always the ever present danger of academic drift with 'vocational' qualifications for young people becoming more general so that they can be taught in schools. Despite the avowed intention that diplomas must be delivered by partnerships of schools, colleges, work-based trainers and employers, this possibility hangs over the proposed diplomas.
84. UCU would identify a number of additional barriers to the ones we have already described, to successful delivery of diplomas:

85. **Disparities in pay and professional status** There has for a number of years been a glaring disparity between the funding of schools and colleges for similar work. Even the government now acknowledges this and is committed to reducing the funding gap from the current 13% to 8% by 2008 and by another 3% by 2010. This however will mean that there is still a 5% funding gap which works to favour schools over colleges. One of the practical outcomes of this is the disparity between salary levels for teachers in schools and lecturers in colleges. UCU calculate this still to be significant. It is a source of great anger among college lecturers that they are paid so much less for teaching what increasingly are the same students. With the introduction of diplomas and increasing numbers of young people being taught in both schools and colleges, these pay differentials become ever more difficult to justify and serve to lower the morale and willingness of college lecturers to become completely involved in the preparations to deliver the diplomas. Similar disparities exist in the professional status of school teachers and lecturers. In September 2007 Qualified Teacher Status is being introduced for college lecturers. This has not equivalency with Qualified Teacher Status in schools. The position will be that school teachers with QTS (Schools) will be able to teach in FE colleges, yet lecturers with QT(Learning and Skills) will not be able to teach in schools. This disparity of esteem and status continues to rankle with FE and does nothing to promote collaboration and partnership.
86. **The engagement and willingness of schools to engage with the 14-19 agenda** With so many initiatives hitting schools at present there are doubts about how they will cope with diplomas. There is in addition cynicism following the decision not to implement Tomlinson, and a fear that diplomas will be a second-class option. Finally, where schools are at present, varies enormously, in terms of experience, local links and staff expertise to deliver vocational provision.
87. **The uncertainty and instability in colleges** The multiplicity of initiatives and policies facing schools has resulted in uncertainty and doubts, and is mirrored in the uncertainty and instability in colleges because of the introduction of contestability and colleges are under threat where quality of provision is considered weak or even 'coasting'. There are also major changes proposed in the very recently published Leitch Report on future skills, which proposes that all adult vocational learning is turned over to the employers through Train to Gain programmes and individuals through learning accounts.
88. **Funding** We have highlighted some concerns on the part of both schools and colleges around funding and its uncertainty. For schools the issues are around off-site delivery and the cost involved. For colleges the concern is especially the cost of non-teaching activities. The biggest issue overall is uncertainty. This includes concerns about the volume of future funding and the resources needed to sustain diploma provision.
89. **Communication and understanding** The government is talking about a three year pilot for each diploma wave. It is hoped that this will lessen the concern surrounding stage 2 (the working up of the qualification). The DfES Implementation Plan calls for communication strategies around the introduction of the diploma. UCU

has made the point in the DfES 14-19 Implementation Working Party that all too often these communication strategies are aimed at the leaders and managers of institutions and agencies rather than the practitioners who will actually teach, lecture and train on the new diploma programmes. We still await plans for the kind of communications strategy that will garner ownership among practitioners for the diplomas.