

A guide to

Foundation Learning

- What is Foundation Learning?
- Who is it for?
- What levels does it cover?

connexions

Northumberland



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Foundation Learning offers a new more flexible way of learning for 14-19 year olds

You will agree an individual learning plan with your key worker that will help you to achieve entry level and level 1 qualifications and move onto level 2 learning without having to repeat previous learning or retake exams.

Foundation Learning is made up of 3 areas that are really important to employers:

- Vocational knowledge, skills and understanding (in your career area)
- Personal, social and employability skills
- Practical English, mathematics and ICT for everyday use (functional skills).

So, if you have struggled with traditional classroom based learning and prefer to learn skills and knowledge that will help you in the world of work and in everyday life Foundation Learning may be for you.

What qualifications could I get?

Foundation Learning Programmes give you an opportunity to gain the new Qualification and Credit Framework qualifications (QCF). These have been developed with employers and are the same type of qualifications that are used in Apprenticeships.

What are Functional Skills? How are they covered in Foundation Learning?

Foundation Learning also gives you a chance to gain Functional Skills qualifications in maths, English and ICT at a level to suit you. These nationally recognised qualifications are designed to teach you the skills employers are looking for to help you do your job.

You'll probably find functional skills slightly different from the maths and English you did at school. They really focus on the skills you need in real life, like using numbers at work. They will also help you in your personal life with things like budgeting your money.

From 2010 Functional Skills will be part of all apprenticeships and college programmes. They are already an essential part of the new Diplomas.

How long do Foundation Learning programmes last? How quickly could I progress onto other courses/ an apprenticeship?

Foundation Learning is tailored to suit you and last as long as you need to develop the skills and confidence to move onto higher level learning.

Your Foundation Learning programme is successfully completed when you are ready to move onto learning at level 2. Along the way you'll gain a range of nationally recognised qualifications. Depending on your starting point you could progress onto an Apprenticeship within 2-3 months. Your friends may require a longer programme and if you've missed a lot of school you can fill in any gaps in your learning with a longer programme.



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How is Foundation Learning valued by education and training providers?

Foundation Learning can help you to progress onto Apprenticeships, college courses, Diplomas or employment. Education and training providers are increasingly using the qualifications you'll gain on Foundation Learning in their entry criteria for level 2 courses. What's more some of the qualifications you'll gain can be reused as you progress in your learning, through a system called credit accumulation and transfer.

Will apprenticeships accept Foundation Learning?

Yes, the qualifications which you'll gain on Foundation Learning will be recognised by employers and colleges. In some areas there can be lots of competition for Apprenticeship places so you may need to study a further qualification at Level 2 before moving into some apprenticeships.

If I don't quite meet the entry criteria for an apprenticeship is Foundation Learning my only option?

No, you still have a range of choices. For some it might be better to start a Diploma at college, for others it might be better to start a level 2 course at college. Many will find that the flexibility of Foundation Learning and the chance to select qualifications that meet employers' entry criteria means that a Foundation Learning programme will provide a quick route to what they want to do.

What is the difference between Foundation Learning and a Foundation Diploma?

Foundation Learning is available at entry level and level 1. The Foundation Diploma is available at level 1 and above. Foundation Learning tends to be a little more flexible than the Diploma as you can mix both the level of qualifications you are taking and explore more than one vocational area. You can easily transfer from a Foundation Learning programme to a Diploma at Foundation or Higher level if it is the right option for you.

Is Foundation Learning valued by employers? What kind of work will Foundation Learning prepare me for?

Yes, Foundation Learning is valued by employers. The qualifications you will gain have been designed in partnership with employers. Most Foundation Learning programmes also include extended work experience which provides an opportunity to find out what's involved in a job and build some experience to include in your CV.

You'll have the opportunity to learn about real jobs. It depends on what is on offer in your area, but most job areas should be available in Foundation Learning. This could mean:

- Retail & Customer Services
- Sport & Fitness
- Health & Social Care
- Business, administration & ICT
- Hair & Beauty services
- Motor vehicle
- Construction trades
- Hospitality & Leisure.

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What happens if I change my mind about the job I want to do when I'm on Foundation Learning?

While you are on Foundation Learning you will be able to learn about different job areas. Some providers will give you the chance to try out different jobs and gain a qualification at the same time.

You will complete small units of work while you learn. This means you can transfer between courses and providers within Foundation Learning and still complete a full qualification.

What might a week on Foundation Learning involve?

If you are in Year 10 or 11 you might spend 1 or 2 days a week away from school developing your vocational skills. You'll spend time in school developing employability skills and practical skills in English, maths and ICT. You might also continue to do some GCSE learning.

A typical week on a post-16 programme might include:

Mon	Vocational skills learning in the training centre
Tues	English at work / ICT in the work place / career planning and making job applications
Wed	Work placement
Thur	Team work project / maths at work
Fri	Vocational skills learning / Progress review.

What funding / support will I receive on Foundation Learning?

If you are interested in Foundation Learning you can get information, advice and guidance from Connexions. If you start the programme you'll have a named personal tutor who you can sit down with on a regular basis and work out how things are going and what support you need.

You could also get EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) if you have left school, of up to £30 a week depending on your family's income. You will also get support for childcare costs and any special equipment that's needed if you have a disability.

How can I find out more about opportunities to study Foundation Learning in my local area?

Speak to your local Connexions service or visit www.my-steps.co.uk

