

Subject:

**Circular Number:** DEL FE 02/05  
DE 2005/17

**VOCATIONAL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMME 2005/06**

**Date of Issue: 2 June 2005**

**Target Audience:**

- Principals /Directors of FE Colleges
- Chairs of Governing Bodies (FE)
- Principals of post-primary schools
- Principals of Special Schools with Post-Primary pupils
- Chairs of Boards of Governors (schools)

**Summary of Contents:**

This circular, issued by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Education (DE), details the arrangements for school pupils attending Further Education Colleges as part of the Vocational Enhancement Programme. This circular provides details on:

- The background to the Vocational Enhancement Programme;
- The funding available for 2005/06 and the criteria to be used where applications for funding exceed the total sum available;
- The application and approval process for 2005/06 including the timescales for applications and decisions.

**Enquiries:**

Any enquiries about the contents of this Circular should be addressed to:

**Colleges:**

Adrian McMullan  
Learning and Curriculum  
Policy Branch  
Department for Employment  
& Learning  
Adelaide House  
39 – 49 Adelaide Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 8FD

**Schools:**

Ashley Waterworth  
Post-Primary Support Team  
Department of Education  
Rathgael House  
BANGOR  
BT19 7PR

**Governor Awareness:**

Essential

**Status of Contents:**

For information and action by  
colleges  
For information for schools

**Related Documents:**

**Superseded Documents:**

**Expiry Date:**

N/A

**DEL & DE Websites:**

<http://www.delni.gov.uk/home.htm>  
<http://www.deni.gov.uk>

DEL: Tel: 028 90 257513  
Fax: 028 90 257528

DE: Tel 028 91 279438  
Fax: 028 91 279710

## **Introduction**

1. This circular has been prepared by the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL) and the Department of Education (DE) to inform Further Education colleges and post-primary schools about the arrangements for the Vocational Enhancement Programme (VEP) for 2005/06.

## **Background**

2. VEP was introduced following the government's acceptance of the recommendations of the Post-Primary Review Group (the Costello Report). A key feature of the new post primary arrangements is the introduction of an Entitlement Framework which will require all post-primary schools (from 2009) to provide their pupils with access to a minimum number and range of courses at Key Stage 4 and post-16. In its full form, it is envisaged that a minimum of 24 courses will be required at Key Stage 4 and 27 at post-16, with one third of the courses academic and one third vocational. It is unlikely that many schools will be able to provide their pupils with access to the full range of courses within their school and therefore collaboration between schools, and between schools and FE colleges or other training providers, will be necessary. VEP is a short-term initiative which will provide the two Departments with the opportunity to develop models of collaborative working, to test new delivery mechanisms and to disseminate good practice to schools and colleges. This will facilitate the development of collaborative partnerships and extend the vocational offer available to school pupils.
3. In June 2004, DE and DEL launched VEP through the funding of a number of collaborative projects between schools and FE Colleges. During 2004/05, 6 colleges and 34 schools have been involved in the programme and it is intended that more schools and colleges will have the opportunity to participate from 2005/06 onwards. In the first year the aim has been to build on existing partnerships between schools and colleges and build new partnerships, to evaluate this provision and to disseminate the findings to inform and facilitate the development of new arrangements.
4. An independent evaluation of the first year of VEP is almost complete and the findings and recommendations will be available before the end of the 2004/05 academic year. Initial findings from the evaluation show some very positive examples of collaborative working between schools and colleges, with tangible benefits for the pupils, schools and colleges involved. Some of the positive points from the first year include the wide range of courses offered, the variety in the delivery mechanisms and the different age groups involved in the courses. The evaluation also highlights some obstacles to collaborative working such as timetabling, pastoral care and ICT difficulties as well as some structural issues across the two sectors e.g. different funding systems and different qualifications of teachers/lecturers. DEL and DE will be considering the findings and

recommendations of the evaluation as arrangements for 2006/07 are developed.

5. The two Departments wish to build on the good start made in 2004/05 and open up the opportunities to other schools and colleges from 2005/06 onwards. The 2005/06 academic year is seen as a transitional year for VEP for a number of reasons. The aim for 2006/07 is to have a more learner focused model and this approach will link with the gradual introduction of the Entitlement Framework. Guidance on the details of the Entitlement Framework will be issued to schools shortly and this will be followed in the autumn with further practical guidance on delivering the Entitlement Framework. Schools will use the 2005/06 academic year to audit their provision, decide on their curricular emphasis and to develop partnership arrangements with other schools and with FE colleges to deliver the Entitlement Framework. It is appropriate therefore that the 2005/06 academic year is seen as a transitional year, giving schools and colleges time to discuss longer-term partnerships from 2006/07 onwards.

### **Funding**

6. The two Departments have committed £4m for the 2005/06 academic year to take VEP forward and to ensure effective collaboration. This amount is in addition to the £3m per annum that DEL is committed to provide in the 2005/06 and 2006/07 academic years for retrospective School Link activity, up until June 2005. DE will also continue funding the Key Stage 4 Flexibility Initiative during the 2005/06 academic year, with allocations to schools dependent on the number of participating pupils.

### **Funding Criteria**

7. A key priority for both Departments is to ensure that vocational education is offered to an increased number of 14-16 and 16-19 year olds through the participation of all 16 FE colleges in VEP in 2005/06. Priority will be given to innovative projects that encourage the development of enterprise skills among young people through the provision of a qualifications-based curriculum related clearly to economic requirements (local and/or regional), promoting employability and entrepreneurship. To ensure opportunities for progression, courses considered for funding will be those that will lead to an accredited qualification or are units of courses that could lead to an accredited qualification. Colleges will be required to submit bids for funding using the attached pro-forma and funding will be assessed and prioritised using the following priority areas.

#### **(a) Skills:** provision that is

- on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); and
- clearly and robustly linked to any of the following 6 priority skill areas;

- Software Engineering
- Electronics
- Manufacturing Engineering
- ICT
- Hospitality, Catering and Tourism
- Construction

As a guide to what is considered suitable provision within the 6 priority skill areas, the Departments will use the 'New Sector and Subject Categories' (NSSC) as outlined in the attached (for the attention of colleges) booklet. More detailed information on these categories can be found on QCA's database of accredited qualifications, [www.openquals.org.uk](http://www.openquals.org.uk). The NSSC will also be used in the second area as indicated below.

**(b) Local relevance:** provision that is

- on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); and
  - clearly in line with the following areas of the NSSC:
    - Area 1 - Health, public services and care
    - Area 3 - Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care
    - Area 7 - Retail and Commercial Enterprise
    - Area 8 - Leisure, Travel and Tourism
    - Area 9 – Arts, Media and publishing
    - Area 14 - Preparation for Life and work
8. It is likely that more applications will be received than funding is available to support and the two Departments will therefore prioritise and assess applications based on the priorities outlined above. In assessing the applications from colleges the two Departments will also have regard to the following factors. The two Departments will wish to support innovative approaches to the delivery of courses such as distance learning, a group of schools collaborating with a college to deliver a single course, or lecturers travelling to schools. It will be important that all colleges are involved in developing collaborative arrangements with schools in their area and both Departments will wish to ensure that the range of projects supported have a good geographic spread, piloting arrangements in both rural and urban areas. In addition, it will also be important that boys and girls, and the two age groups (14-16 and post-16) are well represented in the funded projects. The two Departments will be taking these factors

into account along with the priorities outlined earlier when determining the number and range of projects that can be supported within available resources.

### **Other Funding Considerations**

9. The two Departments recognise that some pupils will be entering year two of a two year programme that is being delivered through collaborative working and will wish to protect the education of the young people involved. These courses will be subject to the same application process and criteria outlined above, but will be given priority over new cohorts. The types of courses will fall mainly into the following categories:
  - KS4 Flexibility year 2
  - VEP Pilot year 2
  - School Links year 2
10. Any provision that is outside of the criteria listed above is unlikely to be allocated funding. However, if a college feels that there are exceptional reasons, such as specific local skills needs, then additional information must be provided to support any such application.

### **Special Schools**

11. Priority will also be given to young people who attend special schools. Further detailed work is required to determine the appropriate provision for young people attending special schools in line with the Entitlement Framework and therefore it would not be suitable to apply the new criteria to those schools at present.

### **Allocation of Funding**

12. Funding for collaborative arrangements could be allocated in a number of ways, for example, per pupil, per cohort, hourly rate etc. The two Departments are currently assessing the range of options to determine the most appropriate funding mechanism. It is not possible to gauge at this stage whether £4m will cover all of the funding applications, even for those that will fall within the priority areas and if necessary the two Departments will consider how best to allocate resources should this situation arise.

### **Application and Approval Process for 2005/06**

13. Colleges should submit their proposals for collaboration using the attached proforma, detailing the arrangements with schools, and providing the full range of information required to enable the two Departments to assess and prioritise applications. Given the tight timescales involved, colleges are asked to ensure that all of the necessary information is provided, as it will not be possible to seek additional information from

colleges once applications have been submitted. **Applications should be submitted to Learning Curriculum Policy Branch, Adelaide House, 39 – 49 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8FD, by 10 June 2005 and colleges and schools will be informed of the outcome of deliberations by 20 June 2005.**

14. Representatives from DEL and DE will assess and prioritise applications for funding in the week commencing 13 June 2005 and DEL will inform colleges of the successful applications by 20<sup>th</sup> June. ETI and LSDA will assist the two Departments in an advisory capacity.

#### **Arrangements for 2006/07**

15. DEL and DE will be developing guidance for VEP for the 2006/07 academic year, which will include consideration of a range of issues such as:

- Pastoral Care
- Progression Routes and Learning Pathways
- Careers Information Advice and Guidance
- Different modes of delivery
- Service Level Agreements
- Monitoring and evaluation of provision

16. Both Departments will establish a working group to take forward some of the issues outlined above alongside the work that DE are currently engaged in to develop guidance to support the Entitlement Framework. It is anticipated that this work will take place from August 2005 to November 2005 with detailed guidance on VEP for 2006/07 issued to colleges and schools by the end of November/early December 2005. This should allow sufficient time for colleges and schools to plan for collaborative arrangements in 2006/07.

## Application to DEL for VEP Funding 2005/06

Proforma to be completed by a College for each participating school (information may be presented in an alternative format provided all the information requested is supplied)

College Name & Address:

School Name, Address and Reference Number:

School Contact Person and Telephone Number:

College Contact Person and Telephone Number:

Course of Study (Title)	Describe Course of Study (Target Qualification(s)/ modules/units/ level/ Full)	Total Number of Pupils		Breakdown of pupils by Year Group				No. of Classes	Number of Pupils engaged in DE's KS4 Flexibility Initiative <sup>1</sup>		VEP Yr 2 Y/ N	New VEP 05/06 Y/ N	Sch Link Yr 2 Y/ N	Duration of Course (eg 2 hrs X 10 weeks)	Start and End Date (mth/yr)	Which Priority Area(s) <sup>2</sup> does the course link to?	Delivery Mechanism (eg distance learning, on site at College, Mixed)	Total Cost <sup>3</sup>	
		M	F	11	12	13	14		Yr1	Yr2									

<sup>1</sup> As approved by DE (Phase 5) or application pending approval (Phase 6)

<sup>2</sup> See Circular guidance for details of Priority Areas.

<sup>3</sup> A separate break-down of costs must be provided detailing costs such as technicians, lecturers, transport, registration fees, examination fees etc.