

# **Bolton Data for Inclusion**

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## **Title :**

*One Award for All*

## **Abstract :**

*This paper sets out to examine why past and present attempts to change and extend the range of educational accredited courses have failed to ensure both Disabled and Non Disabled Young Peoples educational attainments are equally recognised when they are enrolling onto further / higher education courses or applying for jobs. I have written the “One Award For All” to demonstrate there is a real possibility that the educational accreditation system can be adapted so that everyone’s differing attainments can be equally valued and recognized.*

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## *One Award for All*

### CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

I have been an active Inclusive Education Campaigner over the past ten years. During this time I have helped families secure mainstream educational provision for their Disabled children using the Special Educational Needs Tribunal legal procedures.

As a People 1<sup>st</sup> Education contact, I have been involved in lobbying and campaigning for Disabled children to have the ABSOLUTE right to attend a mainstream school with the appropriate support. This has included lobbying on the 1993 Education Act and 2001 SEN and Disability Act. I strongly believe that Education Law must be amended so that DISABLED CHILDREN have the right to attend a mainstream school rather than the PARENTS having a choice to send their Disabled children to a special or mainstream school.

I am the author of two published papers on Inclusive Education, titled "*Why Exams and Tests Do Not Help Disabled and Non Disabled Children Learn In The Same School*" and "*Disabled Children With Learning Difficulties Fight For Inclusive Education.*"

I believe that Inclusive Education will only be effective when Disabled learners which must include those with learning difficulties labels, are at the forefront of promoting the campaign. This will require the support of their families and allies. The campaign has to be underpinned by an understanding of the need to change the present educational and accreditation structure, which still truly isn't appreciated by those who advocate for Inclusive Education.

I have written the "One Award For All" to demonstrate there is a real possibility that the educational accreditation system can be adapted so that everyone's differing attainments can be equally valued and recognized.

Many thanks goes to Bolton Institute for the funding of this "One Award For All" Paper.

## **INTRODUCTION**

For many people who are involved in Inclusive Education Campaign work, the main focus has been on ensuring Disabled Learners have the right to be educated alongside their non disabled peers. To have both the physical environment and curriculum adapted appropriately and for learning materials to be available in a range of formats such as on audio tape, in Braille and video together with the provision of personal and learning support assistants with well qualified teachers and other specialists. In addition much thought must also be given on how the educational accreditation can be made more inclusive.

I have always thought that unless we can have an inclusive approach to recognizing the different intellectual, physical and emotional attainment of young people then we will never have a truly inclusive education system.

This paper sets out to examine why past and present attempts to change and extend the range of educational accredited courses have failed to ensure both Disabled and Non Disabled Young Peoples educational attainments are equally recognised when they are enrolling onto further / higher education courses or applying for jobs. I have attempted to give reasons why either the increasing number of academic and vocational certificate courses aimed at certain groups of students or the increasing of grades in traditional qualifications have failed to provide an inclusive accreditation of young peoples differing abilities. I then ask what is it about the Duke Of Edinburgh Scheme, one award for all, that acknowledges and accredits young peoples differing attainment levels and abilities whilst holding it's esteem amongst everyone, and whether such an approach could be transferred into educational establishments.

### ***Background***

*“The decline in the value of certificates, and the associated demand for higher and higher qualification a payment for access to careers, has led to a level of “certificate inflation” which may undermined the nation’s educational system. There comes a point when some certificates*

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*are simply not worth having because, as currency for access to employment, they have become half pennies of education.” \*1*

This has been the consequence of past and present Governments initiatives to increase the range of certificated courses that young people can enroll on in hope of better preparation for employment. Traditionally academic qualifications have always been valued regardless of whether the course content was relevant to the job.

*“A degree never really was a qualification for employment, but because there were relatively few graduates in the past they were in demand by employers.” (Widdowson. \*1*

The emphasis on academic qualifications grew from selecting skilled craft professions such as carpeting and woodwork by the introduction of the O and A Level single subjects. In the hope of trying to assist with motivating a greater proportion of students in gaining qualifications Governments have increased the range of examined courses including GNVQs, NVQs, BTEC Diplomas, City and Guilds courses.

*“To a great extent, tests were used as a means of scoring individuals into the different curriculum in preparation for the future social roles. As long as they classified, their use grew. \*3*

*“In the late 70s and early 1980s which saw the development of pre-vocational certification such as CPVE, in response to widespread youth unemployment and the lack of opportunities in the academic route.” \*2*

From the 80s there have been developments to increase the range of academic qualifications that school leavers can gain either by extending the range of GCSE Grades and introducing a range of Certificate of Achievements for achievement below GCSE Grade G. One may argue GCSE courses are inclusive of almost every student / pupil by providing a greater number of Grades so that more young people are able to leave school with academic qualifications.

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To the contrary as in practice some young peoples achievements will be worth more than others, hence when does a GCSE Grade A = GCSE Grade G? By grading students one is labeling their individual achievements positively or negatively within a hierarchical structure where Grade A is the best grade and Grade G is the worst Grade awarded.

Students with the lower GCSE grades in the past would have been employed in factories, catering out-lets, laundries or on construction sites either performing assembly-work jobs or unskilled labour work. Now that many of these jobs have gone, the challenge is how can we keep these young people motivated who would otherwise be unemployed.

To improve the status of Vocational Qualifications the Government introduced a standardized accreditation framework, similar to the existing academic one. This would bring in all the different vocational certification awarding bodies under one umbrella to provide a range of vocational courses of a similar standard ranging from NVQ level 1-5 and three GNVQ levels.

GNVQ Foundation and NVQ Level 1 = GCSE Grades D - G,  
GNVQ Intermediate and NVQ Level 2 = GCSE Grades A – C  
GNVQ Advance= 2 “A” Levels

and NVQ levels 4 and 5 are equivalent to a Degree.

However when phasing in the new academic and vocational qualifications, the Government did not attempt to deal with the stigmatization of students undertaking these courses.

*“As soon as employers see youngsters that have got number or word power they will say hay, hay these are youngsters that have not survived at school very well otherwise they would had achieved GCSE English or Maths. No kid who gets GCSE English or Maths will do Word Power or Number Power because they do not need to. So it is already an indicator to employers that these are youngsters that did not survive the school process very well and have left school without qualifications, probably did not attend, probably because they did not conform and that is what it is telling them straight away. Telling employers that the young people are at the*

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*bottom of the barrel and have fallen through the system.” Says Sue Welling. (DoE Award Assessor/Organiser)*

The negative reaction from employers does not just stop at students who have academic qualifications below the norm, the GCSE Grade C equivalent. This reaction extends to students who are supposed to have gained a vocational qualification equivalent to the academic counterpart.

*A job applicant said “If you go in there (job interview) and say I haven’t actually got the GCSEs but I have the equivalent they (employer) still look at you down their nose as if to say well why didn’t you bother to do the originals in the first place.” \*4*

It isn’t surprising employers do not value the vocational qualifications. Young people entering onto these courses tend to be those who either achieve lower GCSE grades, or who are disaffected by the educational system or can’t think of anything else better to do.

*“GNVQ students are those who haven’t done well academically at GCSE and aren’t that sure that they want to be in an academic environment.” \*4*

The GNVQ / NVQ qualifications were designed with a cohort student group in mind, those who were academically less able. Consequently the course curriculum, teaching and assessment was performed with this group of students in mind, those who will be undertaking routine jobs and are unlikely to be entering into the professions or enrolling onto a Degree course.

*“NVQs have many features of a low-skill approach to qualifications - their narrow occupations focus on segmentation of tasks rather than their inter-relationship and the relegation of the role of broad vocational knowledge. They focus upon immediate operational demands of training rather than what has been described as long-term “overarching capabilities.” \*2*

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Traditionally in Britain there has been a split between the academic courses mainly emphasizing theory and knowledge and vocational courses stressing the importance of demonstrating occupational and personal skills which out-date very quickly.

*“The pattern of technical education that developed in the nineteenth century was not only institutionally marginalised from mainstream education; it was also intellectually adrift.... In Britain a sharp divide grew up between the two, separating skills and knowledge.” \*8*

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century the realisation of having dual vocational and academic qualification routes has not provided the equal parity of esteem. Consequently the GNVQ Advance courses will be replaced by the new Vocational A Levels. In 2003, a range of GCSE Vocational courses will be available possibly to replace the GNVQ Foundation and Intermediate levels. The aim is hoped to ensure that all the subjects will be equally valued because they would be in theory available to all students under one certificate.

*“The fact that vocational courses have been downplayed has had a damaging effect on our economy. But one-off announcements like this will not solve the problem...We need a coherent structure bringing the two together, an end to the vocational label and one qualification for both physics and plumbing.” John Dunford, General Secretary of the Secondary Heads Association said after the Government announced they would introduce a range of vocational GCSEs. \*28*

Dunford has very good reason to be concerned about the potential success of the introduction of GCSE Vocational subjects based on the French experience of widening out their prestigious *Baccalaure'at certificate* to include vocational subjects.

The French *Baccalaure'at* has both academic and vocational pathways which were examined and assessed under one certificate. What the French discovered that the students who are studying the academic subjects were in a better position when competing for jobs or university places. This is despite having one certificate. Similarly, this is likely to happen when universities and employers select students on traditional GCSE and A Level traditional academic subjects. The prestige universities and national and multi-national employers are unlikely to be

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impressed with A Level or GCSE Catering, Engineering and other similar vocational subjects. This is likely to be because the students enrolling on the vocational route will be those who are perceived to be academically less able. \*6, \*12

The reason why vocational subjects are not held in the same esteem as academic subjects is because the knowledge and skills are not a requirement to perform the occupational duties. Recruiters in the Catering, Retail, Construction, Hair and Beauty and Tourism industry are less interested with previous training, knowledge and experience than with the transferable employable skills.

In the future employers will no longer want employees who can only do one job on the shop floor or on an assembly line. Employers are no longer specializing in one area of trade. Major businesses have a range of products and services they have to offer customers. As a result, employers are increasingly looking for potential employees who are able to perform a range of tasks and can work within teams. As technology, manufacturing and management techniques keep evolving the more employees will be expected to adapt and work flexibly. Businesses with the competitive edge will be those who are able to offer their customers something different.

Consequently vocational training would require students to have both the knowledge associated with the occupation together with an understanding of how the business fits into our social world. One of the biggest hotel and restaurant chains identified amongst it's nine key skills, they would look for in their potential workers are knowledge, concepts and skills; basic communication skills; basic literacy skills (able to spell and punctuate sentences, basic numeracy skills (add, take, divide, multiply and perform percentages), computer skills (input and extract data) and the ability to acquire new specialist knowledge alongside having general knowledge about how society and business work.

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In order for the education system to prepare young people with what employers such as the Grand Met and Marks and Spencers are looking for, there would need to be a radical change in how students are assessed for entering into work or into further and higher education.

The approach of offering an academic and vocational course under one umbrella or a range of certificates has shown that vocational and academic study has not been perceived as of equal value either by the students, employers or universities.

It was back in the 1940s when the Norwood Committee recommended that there was a case for a new form of school leaving certificate. This recommendation stems from concern about the failure of the School Certificate Examination to provide an informative leaving document and partly from unease about its domination over the framework and the content of the curriculum. The Committee recommended that the new certificate should be in two parts. The first part would contain a record of the participation of the pupil in the general life of the school and the second would contain the record of the pupil's achievements in the examination taken at the end of the "Main School" course. The idea of a Record of Achievement did not gather support until the 70s when the school leaving age was increased from 15 to 16 during the time of increasing unemployment. Young people at 15 years old who would have left school and found work are required to stay on another year at school. It was not until the early 80s that the Government considered introducing National Record Of Achievements for all students with the aim for;

*"Pupils to provide to identify educational and personal goals which are both challenging and attainable, and recognize their success and achievement in relation to their own progress in this context."*

Unfortunately, the Record of Achievement has not gained overall respect amongst pupils, employers and educational establishments. The primary reason for introducing the award was to motivate young people staying on school who would otherwise be unemployed or have gained few qualifications. In effect the target group were the less academically able school leavers even though it was hoped that all young people would value having such Records of Achievements.

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*“The future of education is glorious – through it has nothing to do with schools and colleges. Education is busting out of the schooling system. School is a feudal industrial concept, and is obsolete. School systems must develop into communication centres. They must cut down on their industrial rituals, grades, hierarchy, competitive rather they must foster a love of learning.” (National Assoc. of Secondary School Principals Bulletin Vol 73 Number 514 – Fe 1989 reproduced in Education Now)*

*“Some young people expressed frustration with the limitations of examinations and academia as “giving a false impression of what they can do which is why they want to see a wider range of achievements recognised in the proposed certificate.” \*9*

*”Now the school not only has to battle for Shaz to be allowed to submit a “virtual” design for his design and technology GCSE... but he is consigned to a demotivated bottom science set, because his physical limitations exclude him from the higher tier exam. The same is true of Khizer, now valiantly eye-pointing his way through his GCSE English course-work. Intellectually he is capable of an A Grade. But writing the quantity – not the quality – required for an A grade, letter by letter, would take years. So he must be satisfied with a lower-tier syllabus, and at best a C.” says Shaz \*26*

*“Katie has been told she can’t take the “Speaking and Listening” component of GCSE English Language, which shows how unaware and discriminatory the exam boards are.” says Midge Caryer. \*32*

Other people would assume that Katie couldn’t speak and listen, participate in discussions, as she would have received no grade in this section. Katie is a member of the Young and Powerful and has demonstrated her ability to communicate very effectively using her communication aid.

The examination grades do not portray accurately what disabled young people can do and achieve. The QCA \*23 reported approximately 20% of students would receive a higher grade

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after appealing that their examination grade did not reflect their ability. This figure excludes the percentage of students who may have increased the number of marks without receiving a higher grade. However only 2% of students were successful with appealing for a higher grade for their course-work. However, with the finer grading of success and failure, students and pupils are in a position to decide to appeal.

*“If we increase the number of grades, we might make the test more precise, but we would probably increase the number of students who are given the wrong grade... In general increasing the precision of an assessment is likely to reduce the accuracy...If we had a test to classify students who are successful or unsuccessful at understanding a particular topic, then we would have a test of low precision (because there are only two outcomes), but it might be more accurate) \*14*

The examination grade may not even reflect what the most academically able students can achieve. There is only so much time allocated to answer the examination questions. If the student goes outside the syllabus to study more advanced knowledge then s/he will not be awarded accordingly.

It is not only the students that appear to think that the grades do not accurately reflect their intellectual abilities. Many large employers such as Woolworth's, Sainsburys, Petworld, Tesco and WH Smiths have administrated their own numeracy and literacy tests, which everyone must take. A typical written Maths test will cover subtraction, addition, multiplication and division. These Retail tests are supposed to be much less demanding than the GCSE. Furthermore, Graduate recruiters also administrate their own intelligence tests, so no longer relying on students gaining usually a First or Second class Honours Degree as a reliable indicator of intelligence or satisfactory transferable skills.

Generally companies do not think that even a Software Engineering Degree accurately reflects their ability or even inability to design and test software programmes which is why everyone including these Graduates are required to undertake more rigorous intelligence style tests.

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However, interestingly if the job involves driving a vehicle the only requirement is that the applicant has a “clean” driving license for a minimum of two years. Many companies do not usually require their applicants to pass their own driving test as part of the recruitment process. Disabled people with learning difficulties have passed their driving tests without too much outcry that the driving test standards have dropped. In theory the driving test instructors can pass everyone who has completed their test. Also there is a consensus that everyone who has passed their test are considered as safe drivers. This is because instructors will only pass candidates who have completed all the driving tasks to a minimum standard. It would be unwise to have a driver who was brilliant at reversing, stopping at lights if they can’t park safely nor do a three-point turn. In addition if candidates fail their driving tests then they will be told there and then which driving tasks were unsatisfactory. The driving test instructors will only pass or fail their candidates and passing such a test is held in high esteem amongst employers who need car drivers. This is similar for other life-saving tests such as First Aid Certificates, Basic Food Hygiene Certificate where there are no grades, and no upper or lower limit of passing applicants.

These tests are held in high esteem because everyone (including Disabled People with Learning Difficulties and People labelled gifted) takes these tests.

It is therefore clear from these perspectives that recording student’s abilities via grades does not reflect what they can do nor does the mark given for examination performance.

Entry-level job recruiters only want to be sure that applicants have basic numeracy, written and communication skills whilst Graduate recruiters are looking for more general intellectual skills.

### *Achievement*

By what means does one accurately reflect on a young person’s attainment? This will depend on what is meant by achievement. The Oxford Dictionary offers several definitions of achievements.

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- |   |  |                      |
|---|--|----------------------|
| 1 | reach or attain by effort              | (achieved victory)   |
| 2 | acquire, gain, earn                    | (achieved notoriety) |
| 3 | accomplish or carry out                | (a feat or task)     |
| 4 | be successful                          | (absol)              |
| 5 | attain a desired level of achievement. |                      |

Achievement is a combination of all the five definitions. “Achievement” does not make any reference to either the first past the post or how well one does against the next person. Achievement is absolute rather than relative which therefore can be self-defining rather than defined by other people through grades and marks.

How is achievement perceived will determine the assessment model being used, which there after influences the type, and quality of students learning experiences. There are generally two types of learning styles, the Quantitative Learning Style and the Qualitative Learning Style.

### ***Quantitative Learning Style***

Quantitative learning style is emphasized in our Education System, which is heavily linked to standardized examinations and assessments of children’s Intellectual abilities. Students take the “surface” approach where learning is simply acquiring a large amount of facts and being able to demonstrate how they can be applied to a very small range of problems within a fixed amount of time (e.g. under timed examination conditions).

This approach involves breaking up the learning experience into a number of tasks so that each task can be independently assessed and marked accordingly so consequently the emphasis is on demonstrating how to complete each task rather than the job as a whole.

Such an approach does not mean that the student is able to perform the job as a whole. Students may gain high marks in one task but zeros marks in another task and still pass even though they have demonstrated their inability to perform the whole job. For example a Home Economics student is required to bake a cake as part of their practical assignment. The student will be

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marked for writing up the recipe, selecting and buying the right ingredients, preparation of ingredients, the actual cooking and the presentation. The student may perform extremely well on all the tasks other than the actual cooking. This would mean students could gain a Grade C or B without knowing how to actually bake the cake. Similarly students could gain a low grade for not writing up their recipe and spending time with the presentation of their cakes even though the cake was well baked and good to eat. This clearly shows students gaining a low grade may actually bake more edible cakes than students with higher grades. This scenario can be applied to any subject that will be examined, anything from Maths to Physics to Art and Physical Education. Usually students only either have one or a limited range of answers to a narrowly focused hypothesis.

The Quantitative Learning Approach is directly linked to the more traditional forms of mass production where young people are trained only to learn how to follow and apply instructions to a limited range of tasks without having to understand how the tasks fit into completing the whole job. For example when making television sets, workers may be assigned to one task only without having the need to know how a television set is assembled together.

Similarly students just need to keep on improving their ability to perform certain tasks well rather than having the satisfaction of being able to complete the whole job even though this may mean sacrificing some marks along the way.

Classroom assignments and tasks are designed for individual young people to work by themselves and asking for assistance from another colleague is often associated with cheating. Teachers will offer direct feedback to the young person. The emphasis is on individual attainment.

*“Educators should have the simple goal of helping people learn to think rather than digest facts, and that time should be spent mastering a few essential skills and areas of knowledge.Sizer believes schools should stress values that society considers as important such as trust,, decency and meeting high standards without anxiety, and that teachers should act as coaches not lecturers. With respect to the core subjects in the curriculum of the primary and secondary*

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*schools. It is now much more important than before for most students not simply to know basic facts and to be able to do important procedures, but to understand the structure of knowledge in the discipline, to have acquired a conceptual mastery of it that will enable them to interpret the world and go on learning in ways that have been all too rare until now.“ \*6*

*Many students need more opportunities to engage in parallel activities while still at schools, such as well-designed projects, especially where this is linked to some activity in the work place or the community, rather than school. (ref 10 David Hargreaves (QCA Chief Executive).*

### ***Qualitative Learning Style***

The qualitative learning approach emphasizes the whole is more important than the sum of the parts. This means approaching the problem as a whole rather than just successfully completing a number of tasks. This type of learning requires the student to look at the problem within a wider social context and to select the appropriate facts and methods to come up with an answer. This may also include adapting appropriate methods and concepts so that they can be applied appropriately to the hypothesis or problem.

As technology is becoming ever more advanced and cheaper to use, the amount of information that is available is also increasing. In a rich information age, it would be unlikely that any one person will either have all the knowledge or can remember everything that s/he has read and acquired. In addition more and more detailed information or facts is also available. The skills will no longer be about remembering how to apply a few instructions to any given task as workers will need the general skills to move from one task or product to another and even from one company to another with different cultures and working styles. In addition companies and workers are increasingly competing globally to buy and sell services and goods so that young people will now need to be aware of the cultural impact upon what they do and think and be aware of the increasingly complex ethical questions which science and technology generates. In addition with such conflicting information and ideas young people will need to understand why such inherent conflicts arise when drawing their own conclusions or applying their ideas to problems or hypothesis. Unlike in the past where there was one answer to a question, today,

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there is more than one answer to any given problem. This is the kind of information that a Qualitative Learner will want to know: -

How do you know what you know?	(Evidence)
From whose viewpoint is this being presented?	(Perspective)
How is this event or work connected to others?	(Connections)
What if things were different?	(Supposition)
Why is this important?	(Relevance)

For example if a student wants to learn about the Human Geno project then s/he may be required to display knowledge of the structure of human genes, what genes can determine alongside with why the human geno project is both being supported and opposed and whether such conflicts of interests can ever be resolved.

Another example may be that students will run their student enterprises using different management and motivation structures and seeing how they affect the well being of the workers and the mini market place and then comparing their findings with what happens within local and national and multi-national companies. Such an approach is more about learning to think and being critical and seeing the problem within the broader context.

For such an approach the emphasis is on teamwork, as it is unlikely that any individual on their own can have all the answers. Universities and colleges are now setting more realistic problems and hypothesis, which require more than one person to research, analysis and complete the project or assignment. In Japan it has also acknowledged that a child's achievement is not solely dependent on his or her ability but the involvement of the parents, school and the local community. Japanese young people are encouraged to learn and work as part of a team and that the team as a whole will receive feedback.

*“There is a need to rethink and broaden the notion of life-long learning education. Not only must it adapt to changes in the nature of work, but it must also constitute a continuous process of forming whole human beings – their knowledge and aptitudes as well as the critical facility and*

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*ability to act. It should enable people to develop awareness of themselves and their environment and encourage them to play their social role at work and in the community.” \*33*

“Young people when they were being interviewed by Bristol University on the Government’s proposed Graduate Certificate said *“The new certificate must be challenging and something you had to work for or earn and deserve, that is it should reflect achievement rather than simply being which everyone gets.” \*16, \*17*

One of the reasons why it appears to be essential to ensure a deliberate attempt must be made with failing students is because;

*“If it’s targeting young people who haven’t got anything else so far, there then becomes a stigma about it...Like the old idea that if you weren’t good enough to do (O Levels) you did CSEs...It could carry the label, that this is the certificate that everybody gets and it’s just because they’re not good enough to do anything else.” \*16, \*17*

To the contrary, if there is one certificate that in theory everyone can obtain which stresses their individual’s talents and interests then the likelihood of bridging the split between vocational and academic areas of interest together with verification of individual achievement will be strengthened.

### ***Duke Of Edinburgh Award***

Such an award exists and is very well respected by the young people themselves, employers and colleges of both further and higher education. The Duke of Edinburgh (DoE) was first introduced in 1956 with its aim to be inclusive.

*“What we (employers) are looking at is a damn good CV. An overarching certificate which really represents the person. A good personal profile with back-up and evidence that they are who they say they are and they have done what they’ve done.” \*16, \*17*

### ***Why Is The Award Well-Respected?***

*“There is one award which is available to young people who wish to take up it’s challenge, with no discrimination on grounds of gender, cultural background, religion or political affiliation. An award is gained through individual Improvement and achievement, which means that young people are able to benefit from improvement in the Programme whatever their starting (and finishing) points are.” \*7, \*34*

One of the reasons why the award is valued even though disabled young people with learning difficulties may achieve a different standard from their non disabled peers is because the award was initially aimed at academically able students to assist with their social development.

Any award or certificate, which is introduced, must have the take-up from all young people for it to have any worth for the young people and employers alike. This is echoed by a DoE Award Instructor and Teacher herself,

*“I think it is because of the multi-faceted approach and is always self-selecting and that it is not linked to any social issues. The Princes Trust is linked to social issues, which we want to change the young people’s attitudes about themselves. The DoE is not targeted at a particular group (e.g. unemployed).” Says Heather Lovering, a former DoE Assessor and Trainer.*

The Duke Of Edinburgh Assessment criteria in all four sections, Skills, Physical Recreation, Service and Expedition/Exploration are as follows: -

*“The award is a personal challenge and not a competition against other individuals. The only set standards are those necessary to ensure a consistent challenge and the safety of participants. The award programme should reflect the abilities and interests of individual participants. An award is gained through individual improvement and achievement which means that all young people are able to benefit from the Programme whatever their starting point.” \*7*

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The Duke Of Edinburgh Award is an example of how such an award is potentially inclusive for all which may be adapted for recognising and recording young peoples achievements.

### ***Integrity***

Heather Lovering thinks that children are ready and want to rise to personal challenges.

*“DoE relies on the child having integrity. It believes in the child. The DoE award believes that a child will take a challenge if it is offered. DoE is nit actually teaching you anything other than about you, whether you are able to do what you want and how to enable you to do what you want...It’s an enabling process.”*

When young people want to complete the award for themselves rather than to gain a grade then they are less likely to cheat and be more motivated to rise to the challenge.

*“To do GCSEs it is a requirement of the school. All young people are pushed through the same sausage machine; you either accept or reject. You come on the DoE, you self-assess yourself. I think in the spirit of accreditation whether they are willing of offering themselves up for it.” Says Sue Welling.*

The integrity and thoroughness of any assessment is reliant on the honesty of the assessors and the participants. This is true both for traditional examinations and other awards.

*“2100 people taking part (20%) of the cadets participating in the award. When you think 8,000 activities are taking place, there is no way that you can do any form of check other than relying on the individual doing it, and what you make sure is that any of the instructors or the assessor is properly qualified. So if you are doing expedition training that they are mountain leader qualified. For swimming that they have a ASA instructor qualification.” Says Martin Pickering (Sea Cadets DoE Award Officer).*

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The Examination Board can not monitor the marking of every single student's examination script. Similar to the DoE award, examination boards will employ qualified teachers with the subject expertise, so Geography teachers would be marking GCSE / A Level Geography examination papers.

*"I like to say as I have done the DoE award myself and have been through the processes myself so I know what the award is about. I know you need to work together. I try to install those goals I have personally, you do have to do the DoE award yourself before you can instill in others,"* say Domain Moore DoE organiser and Assessor.

*"I think we as representatives of the award scheme have a duty to maintain the standards not only for the people who are doing it at the moment but for those who have done it in the past and they should be doing it to the same standard as those in the past."* Say Brain Gorden, DoE Expedition Assessor.

DoE Award assessors are concerned that the high standards they maintain and the integrity of the award will be threatened, if there is pressure put upon the Award Units to ensure a minimum number of participants gained their awards as a criteria of receiving funding or Duke Of Edinburgh Award League Tables were introduced.

*"We are getting internal pressure to justify our existence by the number of participants participating and the number who are achieving and yes we need to be aware of not so much the participants but the people who are working with them. We have this danger of having to justify our existence to the powers that be (Local Authorities) as we will lose our funding. If figures are mentioned we get this attitude that we have x numbers who are participating but only a certain number have achieved. My attitude is that we should be encouraging them to participate and achieve their awards not focusing or dropping the standards so that they can achieve – they need to do it for themselves rather than us."* Says Brain Gorden.

## ***Selection***

Unlike the existing vocational and academic qualifications where it's the subject teachers and course tutors who make the course enrolment decisions, for the DoE it is the young people themselves who choose if they want to participate in the award, or the assessment process.

*“What we have found is that there is natural selection through either the students who self-select and found it was not what they wanted or the demands of the course work which we do not feel is too much but even so they do not want to apply themselves to it and might drop out from that.”*  
Says Joe Rose Pentdragon School DoE Award Coordinator)

*“In theory everyone could pass the DoE – They do not – They can't for whatever reason, there could be a billion reasons why they do not have the determination, stickability which is the biggest reason. The fact it is too much effort, too much else in their lives to deal with the DoE Award Scheme.”* Says Brain Gorden

## ***Courses***

Direct DoE Award entrants must participate in the scheme for a minimum of 6, 12 and 18 months in order to gain the Bronze, Silver or Gold award. During this time, participants must complete four sections, Skills, Service, Physical Activity and Expedition or Exploration and for the Gold Award complete a 5-day residential project.

The DoE award can start at any time and participants can take breaks in between completing the different sections. However when participants embark on a DoE award sections such as service or skills, they need to show regular commitment for a minimum amount of time specified within the Award book. Similarly students enrolling on a traditional examined course would be expected to attend classes on a regular basis if they are going to complete the course successfully.

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Both for DoE and the traditional examination system young people will follow a curriculum either outlined in the DoE award book, the physical or skills instructor or through an individual plan. Whatever curriculum is used it would be very easy to identify what knowledge and skills the young person has gained throughout their participation within the Award sections.

### ***Expedition***

For the Duke of Edinburgh Award the core curriculum is the Expedition Section. Participants must demonstrate competence in map reading and compass skills, and camp craft, basic First Aid, Emergency Procedures, team building, purposeful work and recording before completing the practice and qualifying venture.

All ventures require teams of participants to plan an outdoors-purposeful venture within rural, open or wild country. The journey must be undertaken by the participants' own physical efforts such as walking, cycling, horseback and sailing. Each travel mode will either require a minimum number of miles or hours covered. For example participants choosing to do the foot expedition would be required to complete 15, 30 and 50 miles over 2 \* 6 hour, 3 \* 7 hour or 4 \* 8 hour days for the Bronze, Silver and Gold Awards with overnight camping. This is the minimum number of hours and includes journeying, purposeful work and striking the camp and cooking and eating meals.

However for horseback journeys, there is no minimum number of miles that need to be covered. However to complete the qualifying venture participants must involve travelling for at least 4, 5 or 6 hours plus time for other planned activities over 2, 3 or 4 days plus camping for the Bronze, Silver or Gold Award qualifying venture.

The assessment of competence and journeying time or miles completed will be adjusted to the abilities of the individual participants as showed below :-

*“People in wheelchairs may be able to do the expedition but can not physically camp. I then can accept they can go into huts. There must be a very good reason why they want to stay at a Youth*

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*Hostel. I would ask the experts if the young person were capable of 15 miles and if not what are they capable of? Should we be looking at an exploration rather than an expedition? Exploration is where there is less walking (journeying) but more studying.” .says Brain Gorden,*

*“Andrew tires easily and although he was unable to cover the full 50 mile distance of a Gold Foot Expedition, he still managed to cover 10 miles a day in the Lake District for four days and made up the rest by devoting more time and energy to a study of trees and an examination of possible routes for wheelchairs.” \*35*

*“Regardless of whether the young people have learning difficulties all instructors are working from one work-book for Expedition. The difference would be the quality of their work and the way they produce the work....I would go to their (students) teachers. The teachers know their student’s quality and standards and what I am looking for is that they work to the best of their ability. I do not want special needs children to be the same or doing the same work as children in mainstream schools. If the students are not putting in the effort then we will have a word with them. Quite honestly I have never come across anyone who has not put the effort into it.” \*35*

### ***Assessment***

*“The form in which the report is presented should.....reflect individual contributions to the project and contain as much illustrative material as possible (maps, sketches, photographs etc.) and provide clear conclusions. It could be enlived by anecdotes and personal reactions to the experience of the Exploration. The report can take many forms, including a written and illustrated log; a portfolio of individual reports, maps, sketches, photographs etc., which could also be used to mount an exhibition; a slide presentation with verbal reports, music and/or poetry, a collection of colleges, a piece of drama or dance, sculpture or music. As in choice of purpose, the options are limited only by the creativity of the group.” \*34*

The Expedition is not there just to present a physical challenge but also a personal one as well and the report should reflect this.

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*“To reduce that experience to merely completing a number of prescribed tasks over a set number of miles, within a given time, would deny the participants the opportunity to capitalize on the great potential for both personal and social development.” \*34*

*“Reports should be based on first-hand observations and recordings and not be concerned with mundane details such as food lists and menus. It is much more important to include feelings, relationships, and reactions to the environment, each other and the venture.” \*34*

Young people are encouraged to consider how best to present their reports either individually or part of the group as directed in the DoE handbook.

Independent assessors must carry out all Expedition Assessments. The assessors must not have been involved with the expedition area instructions and supervision of the young people. With the Gold Award Expedition challenge, assessors must be selected from the DoE’s approved Wild Country Panels. These assessors will be independent from both the young peoples group and their award unit. In addition the assessors must have experience and be suitably qualified in supervising groups of walkers or mountain climbers.

With a common curriculum in place which can be adapted or modified so that both disabled and non disabled young people are able to learn without being graded after assessment means that achievements within other sections, Physical Recreation, Service and Skills can be equally valued even though attainment is likely to vary between one young person and another.

### ***Skills Section***

A young person takes up a skill for a minimum amount of time. There are approx. 200 skills, which can be studied. A young person taking up a skill, which has not been included in the Skills Handbook, is encouraged to do so and a copy of the programme is sent to the DoE head office. Skills are not categorized as vocational / academic, or practical / academic. Such categorizing of skills creates the belief that one category is more important than another. Unlike “A” Levels and GCSEs where work-related courses will have the “Vocational” category, DoE

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Skills section does not seek to differentiate between the two. All skills are skills regardless of whether they are vocational/academic or recreational.

Within each skill, the DoE will provide a suggested curriculum for Beginners, for those with some knowledge and for the more advanced. Again the skills within the curriculum can be differentiated to meet the needs of disabled young people with learning difficulties. What skills level category the young person considers is right will be matter of self-assessment.

If during the programme the young person appears to have mastered the skills very quickly either through learning ability or because of prior knowledge then the Assessor would expect him/her to complete more of the curriculum. To pass the section does not require the young person to complete the whole curriculum for their level of skill knowledge.

### *Assessment*

Assessment will be made on progress and sustained effort over the period, rather than on fixed standards of attainment. The assessment for this section is completed by the instructor and by an independent assessor for the Gold Award participants. The assessors must be suitably qualified and experienced enough to complete the assessment.

### *Service*

There are many different ways that service is offered to people. There are three types of service, voluntary service requiring general training such as working with children, elderly people, working with the environment and fund-raising. The second type is service requiring formal training like First Aid, Life Saving, Fire Fighter or the Police. The third category is leadership training. Within this range disabled young people have spent time picking up and collecting paper for recycling, serving food and drink in a school café, being a general adult helper with a Brownie Pack, visiting isolated elderly people in an residential home to learning first aid and completing Youth Leadership Awards. There is no distinction between what type of service the

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young person wants to offer and what skills are required. All service is equally valued and recognised within the award scheme.

### *Assessment*

Participants will be assessed on their diary, which will contain a record of the service which has been undertaken including the service delivery briefing and training sessions. During the service delivery period, participants are required to produce an account in the form of a report, which should be reflective of the service offered which should include their achievements and reasons for the service being needed and the benefits to the organisation and the wider community.

In addition Gold Award participants must complete a project illustrating a broad knowledge of some related social, environmental or cultural aspect of their service being offered over a 12-month period.

The assessment process must cover the practical service undertaken, with attention to reliability, competence, relationships and attitudes alongside the participant's diary, account of the service and the study topic at Gold Award level.

Bronze Service Assessment is carried out by an authorized person either supervising the service training or the voluntary work. In addition, for Silver and Gold awards the assessment is carried out by an independent accredited person who has no previous direct involvement with the young person's training or voluntary work. The assessor will be suitably qualified or knowledgeable about the service.

### *Physical Recreation*

Each young person participates in a physical activity for a minimum amount of time. In the past participants could receive exemption from participating in the activity if they have received a recognizable standard set by the Sports Governing Body. However this no longer applies, so all

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young people from this year are expected to participate in their chosen physical activity for a minimum amount of time.

### *Assessment*

To qualify participants must show continued improvement of overall performance in the chosen activity, show effort during the period of participation and make progress based upon their initial knowledge and ability. Continuous assessment must include the following areas, Application, Technique, Skill, Tactics, Fitness, Knowledge of the rules and safety. However this has been changed so that all young people must participate in their chosen physical activity for a minimum amount of time regardless what standard they reach.

The assessors will have suitable qualifications awarded by their sporting or leisure-time governing body.

### *Residential Project*

The type of residential experience is to be the young person's own choice, freely made and without any financial gain. Such residential projects include Conservation and Environment work, Service To Others, Activity-Based and Personal Training.

### *Assessment*

The assessment process of Gold Award participants undertaking a 5-day residential project will be similar to the service section where the young person will be expected to demonstrate their personal standards, relationships with others, responsibility, initiative and general progress during their stay.

All evaluation of assessment of the young person's achievements is usually undertaken by a suitably qualified person who has completed professional / trade or Governing Body courses or has had significant experience of the area being assessed. Such assessors are very likely to be

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members of Professional and Trade Associations which usually require their members to sign up to a Code of Practice and failing to comply with it may result in disciplinary action and having their membership terminated. Similarly that traditional examination and course-work is assessed and marked by people qualified and knowledgeable in their subject area. Examination boards will employ college lecturers and schoolteachers for marking of student's exam scripts.

Like with the traditional examination system the DoE stresses the requirement for independent assessment of the young person's progress and achievement in all DoE Silver and Gold Award sections. The independent assessor must have expertise and be suitably qualified to assess the young person's achievements and progress within their chosen skill, service delivery, physical activity or expedition venture. The same approach is also adopted with traditional examination marking and course work. Examination Boards have independent assessors randomly checking the accuracy and quality of the examination markers. In addition teachers and lecturers are required to submit course work that has been graded for independent moderation. The GCSE and A Level and DoE assessment models use the same quality control approach to maintain parity of esteem even though the DoE has a more flexible assessment approach.

The major difference between the DoE and traditional examination models is the restrictive range of methods for assessing and recording students' or course participants' actual attainment. For DoE, young people can choose their courses, which would have a known curriculum with different assessment arrangements. For example young people may choose to complete the Institute Of Personal Management course include sitting a number of examinations for their assessment. However, on the other hand students may choose to enroll on a personal management course which has no end of course examinations and is solely based on course completion.

The DoE award does not distinguish between the course assessment models so for example the art work produced for the skills section will be considered of equal value whether it was being submitted part of a GCSE or a recreational (non examined) Art class. Another example may be where some students can choose to enroll on a GCSE or A Level French language course whilst others may decide to opt for a Beginners, Intermediate or Advance French Language course

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which would have no examinations. Both sets of students would be assessed differently and the employer is likely to be equally impressed by students who both have enrolled on an “A” level examined and the advanced (non-examined) French courses as part of the DoE skill section.

In addition none will be prohibited from displaying any extraordinary achievements. Someone like Hero Joy who is Disabled and labeled as extremely gifted, could have been assessed writing and composing classical pieces at a standard expected from non disabled Post Graduate Music Students if she decided to participate in the DoE Award Bronze Skills section at 14 years of age. Another young person during the same three months may have just composed his/her first classical piece of music. A Disabled young person with learning difficulties may have just learnt the musical notes and scales. Whatever, the DoE encourages excellence at a personal level and such achievements would be recorded both for the gifted musician, the average young musician and the young musician with learning difficulties labels. However if Hero completed GCSE Music, she would not be able to demonstrate her full ability, even if she gained a Grade A. Examiners do not give additional marks for students who may have studied beyond what the syllabus requires so therefore gives no recognition for their outstanding ability. However the DoE would recognize such achievements for young people who are very gifted, as they will be assessed on an individual basis

One of the perceived ways of maintaining quality is to ensure that everyone who participates does not achieve the award or a pass grades or mark. In other words there needs to be included provision of failure. Without such provision the award is unlikely to be highly regarded by participants and recruiters. The traditional examination system and DoE both have provision for failure. If students do not fulfill the criteria for the GCSE and A Level examinations then they receive an “ungraded” grade. Students would either have to re-take the whole course or in the majority of cases all the examination papers again.

The DoE states *“The record Book represents the experiences and achievements of a young person and remarks should therefore be personalised, positive and encouraging....In the event of the assessor not being satisfied that the participant has fulfilled the assessment criteria... the*

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*young person should be informed of the reason and no entry should be made in the Record Book. “ \*18, \*19, \*20, \*21*

In addition the DoE assessor must try and encourage the participant to either find a new activity or project to complete or alternatively allow extra time or be offered additional coaching to enable the participant to fulfil the criteria. Participants do not fail, they just have not satisfactorily fulfilled the criteria so therefore they just continue persevering to do so with the uncompleted sections.

Employers do not necessarily care how “failure” is managed when considering the certificates and the awards that young people have gained. It is unlikely that employers care how many attempts that the young person has made with completing any of the DoE sections and similarly to a lesser extent the number of attempts to pass vocational and academic examination courses.

Employers have demonstrated their willingness to allow young people to demonstrate their knowledge and skills through a range of assessment methods which will have its own in-built quality control and reporting of failure.

Paul, who participated in the DoE whilst living in a Homeless Hostel where he developed and learnt about leadership skills through the Sail Training. Other young people of the similar age may have learnt and demonstrated their leadership skills during a project or piece of course work as part of an examined course such as A Level or GNVQ Business Studies or Tourism.

*“Paul was 16 and living in supportive accommodation for homeless people in East Dorset. Three months earlier he had been sleeping rough. A DoE’s bronze was running at the hostel and Paul decided to take part. Paul took up tennis for his physical recreation, life-saving for his service, undertook a substantial amount of expedition training and a residential project with the Sail Training Association which he showed outstanding leadership and received a glowing report. Paul applied for a job as a Trainee Travel Agent. At the interview Paul talked about his achievements and experiences through the DoE’s Award, was offered the job and so impressed*

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*his employer at interview that he was sponsored on a college course for Management In Travel Business. \*16, \*17*

Tracy applied for a job working as a Publicity Assistant in Arts Marketing for a Local theatre. Like one may expect Tracy would have been competing against other young people who may have had previous work experience or have just graduated with their Academic or Vocational Business and Marketing qualifications. Tracy completed her DoE award whilst being a Girl Guide. During the DoE programme Tracy has become a volunteer Girl Guide leader and has done some Public Relations work for them. Through Tracy's experience with the Guiding movement and DoE Award, she was successful with securing the job with the local theatre. \*16, \*17

It is not just the local employers who appreciate the quality of experience which young people have gained from the DoE Award scheme. Such major national companies such as Marks and Spensor, KingFisher and Whitbread are interested in knowing if applicants have completed the DoE awards. As no two DoE participants would have completed identical activities to complete the award it is unlikely that employers can compare DoE award participants against each other during the application stage.

Similarly when work references are taken up no two employers are likely to have the same expectations and standards. This is also true for examination markers or DoE award assessors. Employers will have their own criteria to assess and accredit their own employees. For example different retailers will have there own ideas on what is meant by customer care, what level of knowledge is required and what tasks are involved. This would be even more apparent when asking employees for character references. Each of us will have our own ideas of what personal qualities are needed for a person of good character and such assessment of these qualities will vary from person to person.

Such subjectivity is very inherent of any assessment process where the only feedback the student receives is a grade, mark or being informed of either passing or failing. The DoE award requires assessors not only to confirm the participant has completed the section but also to provide

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additional information on what has been achieved. There is no reason why the assessors cannot provide further information in form of a profile if necessary.

The DoE has therefore successfully combined the different assessment methods which young people can use to demonstrate their skills and abilities. Employers accept such methods because the DoE is held in high esteem. A participant can go through the whole programme without sitting one examination whilst at the same time both participant, instructor and independent assessor would know what has been achieved.

### ***Criticisms of DOE Scheme Assessment Model***

The DoE award scheme as a whole is probably the most inclusive assessment system, which has been held in high esteem. However, there are still some inherent barriers, which may prevent disabled young people because of the nature of their impairments from being able to achieve the whole award.

### ***What is meant by achievement and progress?***

Even though the DoE clearly states that individual targets are set with the young person. Ultimately, it will still be the adults (mainly non-disabled) who would be completing the assessment. This may cause one of two problems, either the targets may be set too low or too high. Also there is likely to be a cut off point where a young person's progress or achievement is so marginal despite the amount of effort made that the assessor may not be satisfied that the criteria has been fulfilled.

### ***Who defines what is acceptable?***

Even though there aren't intellectual or physical standards being imposed upon DoE Award scheme participants, there are other values, which are imposed. Would young people be able to participate in voluntary activity, such as Direct Action or other similar demonstrations? Such ideas of legitimate service will be defined by what is acceptable by society as whole.

## ***Age Limit***

Young people must complete the awards successfully by their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday. For whatever reason Disabled people may need longer or have found out much later on that the DoE award exists. The upper age limit for participating in their DoE award scheme was one reason why the Gateway Award was set up for Disabled People with learning difficulties. The Gateway Awards can be completed anytime after the young person's 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. Such an award should be inclusive of all people regardless of their age. This is the one benefit of the traditional examination system where in particular for GCSEs and A Levels there is no upper age limit for students to enrol onto the course and take the examinations. In theory young people can have more goes at say resitting the subject examinations than for example taking part in practice and qualifying ventures. Even though young people may have more time to complete the different sections, this is only true up to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.

There is no convincing reason why the award scheme should only be on offer to young people under 25 years of age. This may have allowed Mencap the opportunity to set up a separate award scheme for disabled people with learning difficulties so that they can complete the awards without an upper age limit.

## ***Potentially Excludes a small minority of disabled young people with severe / profound intellectual / emotional or physical impairments***

The DoE makes it clear that the scheme is fully inclusive. The voluntary scheme welcomes all young people, regardless of their ability. The scheme is open to everyone, including young people who will be unable to fulfill the criteria to gain the award. Such young people will gain from the experience of participating in a challenging programme. The handbook does not include the participation of young disabled people with severe learning difficulties. Such relevant case studies, which are available, are on disabled young people with moderate learning difficulty labels have been included. This may be because the case studies have not been available or because young disabled people have not been diagnosed as having severe learning

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difficulties. Through research I was informed that a small number of young disabled people with severe learning difficulties label have participated and subsequently gained the full DoE award.

To increase the participation of young people on the DoE award they have permitted the rewarding of certificates for sections, which have been completed successfully. Such attempts of partial accreditation has never been successful with ensuring achievement is equally valued even though some of the award criteria has been met. Similarly if students are awarded with GCSE or A Level or even NVQ module certificates then such achievements within the course would not have the same status as passing the whole course. The AS and A2 levels can easily demonstrate this. Universities have been reported not to consider AS Level Grades even though the course content and marking is of the same standard of A2 level. Similarly universities want to see 2 / 3 A2 Levels rather than between 4-6 AS Levels. This is because universities and possibly employers would see AS levels as partial accreditation of the A2 level. Consequently such partial accreditation is unlikely to be of any value when going onto further / higher education or as a route into a job.

Even with this partial accreditation system in place, the DoE award appears to leave out disabled young people with profound learning difficulties or those with multiple impairments.

Firstly the core curriculum, the Expedition course work requires a minimum amount of both intellectual and physical ability even though this is likely to be less than what is expected when completing public examinations. Such skills like map reading, camping craft and cooking do require some intellectual ability.

Secondarily, there is a requirement for all young people to write a reflective report on their expedition experiences. For a minority of young people, this will be completely out of their reach, especially if their only means of communication is through body language. These young people may receive pleasure out of being on the venture but can't express it in any other way than what can be witnessed at the time.

Thirdly, the DoE award highlights one of the outcomes of the Expedition Section is for the young people to work together to plan and carry out an journey. Each participant is required to

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demonstrate competence in a range of associated skills. This would assume that each individual must demonstrate that they can be self-sufficient without any assistance, which may actually go against the spirit of the outcomes, to work together as a team.

Also in reality, everyone depends on each other for a whole range of skills so therefore none would be expected in practice to live on their own without any support. The group is unlikely to give a “bad” cook the job of cooking during a four-day venture. Similarly someone who is hopeless at map reading will not be leading the 50-mile journey, across wild country. In practice no one single person will be completely responsible for one area of the venture and this is just as likely to be true for either a non-disabled or disabled young person.

Also what does contributing to the team mean? A disabled participant may not be able to cook, but can hold the plates, serve the food or do the washing up. Alternatively a disabled young person may not and will never be able to read a map but can take responsibility of looking after the map or encouraging the tired walkers to continue walking. Such small but significant responsibilities which can be performed by disabled young people with more severe / complex needs may be overlooked when the DoE award instructors insist on competence in all expedition skills areas before undertaking the qualifying venture.

### *Young people with emotional, behaviour difficulties*

Some disabled young people, those who may have been labelled as having autistic tendencies may find it impossible to complete the awards. Many people who are labelled with autistic tendencies do not “enjoy” living with other people. Such young people like their own company and thrive in the security of their routines. The Residential Project and Expedition Section criteria is likely to be a barrier for disabled young people with autistic labels where the social qualities are likely to be assessed by appropriate cultural behaviour expectations like the ability to get on with others and to cooperate without causing a stressful environment.

One of the questions being proposed by the Going For It Guidelines asks

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*“In this category it is a case of does the Award meet the needs of the individual, or will the Award cause more stress to someone already having problems with life?”* (The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award and Special Needs Young People).

### ***Young People with severe mental health issues***

One of the main criteria is for the participant to demonstrate regular commitment to their chosen activities and service. This criteria assumes that young people are not trying to survive the mental health system at the same time as completing the awards. Some young people may go through severe bouts of emotional distress, which will have an impact on their ability to perform activities and improve on a regular basis or their motivation levels.

### ***Expedition Section***

Even though the miles covered for the venture can be adjusted, there is still a minimum of miles which disabled participants are required to do on their own. There is no clear policy on whether young people are able to participate in the venture whilst for example being wheeled by their Personal Assistant. However, it is clear that BSL interpreters and sighted adults are able to accompany disabled DoE award participants as long as they do not become involved with the decision making process. Similarly this requirement is likely to affect young disabled people with fluttering “medical” conditions are unlikely to be able to participate in the outdoor ventures.

Some of the barriers have been overcome by allowing groups of young people to undertake a exploration rather than expedition where the emphasis will be more on study and project work rather than journeying time or the number of miles covered. However disabled young people may still want to make a positive contribution and participate in a venture because they like the area, want to join in the planned activities or simply to be with their friends.

The requirement of young people to organise an outdoor venture is another reason why a separate Gateway award scheme was set up for disabled people with learning difficulties. Mencap have adapted the expedition criteria. Within the Gateway Hand book it states that “*Over*

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*the 1,2 or 3 days participants should try to cover a distance that is relevant to the ability of the group.”* This automatically removes the minimum time or miles covered during the Gateway Award expedition section.

The ultimate aim of the expedition section is to encourage a spirit of adventure and discovery. The venture demands self-reliance, enterprise and imagination in concept, forethought, careful attention to detail and organizational ability in preparation, preparatory training, team effort and determination. All such skills and qualities that can be assessed without having to endure an outside venture. Other projects can equally provide the same challenge for a team to plan and execute project whilst relying on their own resources without sticking the rigidity of an expedition or exploration. In addition the DoE states very clearly that the expedition is a team effort so why is it compulsory for each individual member to have acquired a minimum range of skills? The alternative would be for the team members being able to demonstrate between them that they have the relevant skills and competencies to complete the venture safely. In reality teams of people bring different skills, strengths and weaknesses to any given activity or project so why isn't this approach adapted to this section.

### ***Physical Recreation***

Assessment is based on the participation, attaining a standard (where appropriate) and showing improvement, effort and progress in the following areas, Application, Technique, Skill, Tactics, Fitness, Rules and Safety.

Young disabled people may have reached their full potential when undertaking a physical activity because of the inherent limitations of their impairments. However the DoE have replaced continued improvement with commitment as the criteria for successful completion of the Physical recreation section. This should no longer be a barrier for a disabled young person who has reached their full intellectual or physical ability for either understanding or grasping the rules or physical participation in the activity.

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The barriers may occur if a young disabled person for whatever reason is unable to participate in a structured physical activity programme, which may include sports, or physical activity that has been either created or adapted for disabled people. Will it be acceptable for the disabled person to design his or her own exercise plan, which is not part of any mainstream physical activity? For example a young woman who ran a Jewish Telephone Counseling and Help Line for Disabled people and was carrying out her WIZO committee duties whilst in bed. This woman was unable to get out of bed and did her stretching exercises whilst in her bed. This young woman because of her impairment would not be able to either take part in formal physical activities or complete the outdoor venture.

### *Skills*

This requirement appears to have the least barriers for disabled people participation. It is because young people can choose skills, which limit the negative impact upon one's physical, emotional or intellectual capacity. Skills can be learnt either through personal study or by enrolling onto a course. In affect the skill chosen can be learnt anywhere, at anytime or anywhere so therefore limiting the barriers that disabled people may face with completing this section.

However a sustained effort and progress over a fixed time may not be possible if the young person is surviving the mental health system.

## ***Conclusion***

The traditional Public Academic (e.g. GCSE, A Level and Degree) and Vocational (e.g. BTEC, City and Guilds, RSA) accredited courses, which rely on measuring and grading young people's educational/vocational attainments against what is supposed to be expected of young people of "average" ability is a barrier for both Disabled young people with Learning Difficulties and young people who are labelled gifted. For the latter, no **CREDIT** of additional marks or higher grade will be given for gifted young people who study or undertake projects which are of greater challenge for their intellect which are outside the prescribed examined curriculum content. However, for Disabled Young People with Learning Difficulties accreditation often means either being awarded with a low grade on a public academic or vocational certificate or an alternative certificate which acknowledges attainment below GCSE / NVQ Level 1, of both which are both perceived as having no value.

Throughout history Governments have tried to ensure both young people who are labelled gifted and those who are labelled as having learning difficulties are able to receive credit for their attainments. The Government have introduced World-Class Tests and A Level Extension papers for the most gifted young people whilst a range of Certificate of Achievements and an increased number of GCSE lower grades are being offered to Disabled Young People with Learning Difficulties. Such attempts to offer both groups of young people appropriate accreditation have failed in the past. "S" Level papers which (are / will?) be replaced by "A" Level Extension papers and Certificate of Achievements or NVQ Level 1 which are likely to replace the range of City and Guilds, BTEC and RSA certificates over time are unlikely to gain ground because they are targeted at specific groups of young people.

What's needed is accreditation which allows everyone's attainment to be recognised, and this must include young people who are labelled as gifted, having learning difficulties or of average intelligence and ability. However, it is not enough for everyone to participate in similar courses such as GCSEs. In addition there also needs to be a core curriculum or activities which everyone is required to take part in with appropriate adjustments made for both Disabled Young People or Young Gifted People. This may include allowing the young people greater flexibility of

### *One Award for All*

participating in different activities, which demonstrate their ability to fulfill the learning outcome. For example showing teamwork does not have to be demonstrated by only participating in a challenging outdoor venture. The core curriculum only has to be part of the requirement to fulfil the criteria to gain the whole certificate, as this should allow plenty of flexibility for young people to demonstrate their ability in different ways.

The most common assessment method used is via examinations where young people will be required to memorize the same range of facts and be able to answer the same range of questions within a set amount of time. This allows examiners to compare students' answers with each other and then offer marks and grades accordingly. Both gifted and young disabled people with learning difficulties labels attainment can not be accurately reflected. The gifted young person would be prevented from giving more complex answers to questions or problems whilst someone with learning difficulties may find it harder to memorise the facts and to write in essay format. For other young people, they may only display knowledge and skills within a concrete situation such as in the area of food hygiene. Practical assessments are now increasingly being featured as part of the overall examination system but they only represent a small percentage of the overall marks, which can be gained. Some Universities have now gone further by introducing 100% continued assessed Degree courses. There are now growing consensus within the educational establishment that examinations are no longer the only form of legitimate assessment tool. And even if they were marking is still as subjective for both awarding examinations and course-work grades. However, it isn't enough just to provide a range of assessment methods for recording young people's achievements, especially if as individuals, they have no say which method will allow them to demonstrate their highest level of educational attainment.

Whatever assessment model is used, end of year examinations, individual module tests, practical assignments or course work, each of them requires assessors, that are knowledgeable, fair and have a high level of integrity. To maintain objectivity assessors are also assessed or an independent assessor will examine students work. This is already common place with University, GCSE and A Level courses both for examined and continuous assessed Degree courses. Evidence shows there are more disputes over examination rather than course-work grades.

### *One Award for All*

In addition the certificate should not have any classification of different study areas such as the vocational and academic root. Even though the French Baccalaureate is an over-arching certificate, the academic pathway is perceived to be more worthwhile than the vocational pathway. It is therefore detrimental to separate such areas of study under the academic and vocational headings. Even if such vocational subjects are offered alongside their academic counterpart at the traditional GCSE and A Level it will do little to improve equality of esteem as demonstrated by the French experience. Such subject classification will need to be done differently or possibly not at all if the aim is to ensure all areas of study is equally valued. Similarly, young people's actual attainment must not be classified because it creates a belief that some people's attainment is better than others. Assessing and completing a record of what the young person has ACTUALLY attained is of greater benefit for both Disabled young people and gifted young people alike. Such assessment should only be used to differentiate between rather than hierarchically grade young people's attainments.

This provision will still assist with selecting young people who will become our future doctors and surgeons. A medical school, training young people to become doctors will still have information provided on what knowledge and skill students have attained in relevant subjects such as Human Biology and Chemistry. It would unlikely be that students who did not have appropriate amount of Human Biology knowledge will be allowed to train as medics. Similarly this will apply for job seekers who are applying for any kind of job where they are expected to explain what knowledge and skills they have acquired and of which can usefully transferred to the job.

In addition listing educational attainments rather than measuring and grading young peoples attainments against their peer group will remove the subjective and elitist value put upon their achievements. Such subjective judgments include the worth given to young people who have gained GCSE low grades or their Vocational Qualification equivalents or the attainment of particular knowledge or skills within a course. Without any external "imposed" value of a grade or particular course certificate it will be left up to the individual young person to self define his/her achievement based on his/her actual educational attainments.

### *One Award for All*

Such accreditation does exist which will remove many (not all) of the barriers that both Disabled young people and young gifted people have faced when wanting their individual attainments to be recognised by themselves, their peers, educationalists and employers.

The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme provides the same learning outcomes for everyone with a common curriculum, the team venture. Within skills, service and physical activity sections young disabled people with learning difficulties can demonstrate their attainments which may be lower than their non disabled peers via their chosen activities, whilst the most gifted young people will be able to demonstrate their attainment way beyond what would be expected from their peers of average ability. In addition young people will be able to not only choose the skills they want to learn under a broad and balanced curriculum, but also the assessment mode with the relevant in-built quality and integrity controls. Young people can choose to demonstrate their skills and knowledge either during the end of course examinations or through continued assessments or end of course completion. Also such course options will allow young people to carry out challenging projects and pieces of work which will develop their critical thinking skills. Such a requirement is provided for when Gold DoE Award participants must produce a project report on the cultural and social aspects of the service they have chosen to give.

Both groups of young people will not be prevented from demonstrating their true ability and their highest educational attainment or their chosen areas of interest being recognised and recorded. Such up dating of attainment could be done when the young person wants it recorded, without a minimum or maximum time of participation in an area of interest. This would allow young people to update their knowledge and skill profile on whatever course she or he chooses to do. Such an update may occur before a young person leaves a course before the end. As DoE award model does not provide grades, it will be the responsibility of young people themselves to give value upon their own achievements in whatever way they choose and this is likely to change as they mature

The DoE award model I think could be adapted for a truly respected certificate which can rewarded to all young people regardless of their intellectual, emotional or physical ability or attainment and of which underpins the spirit of inclusive education principles.

### ***One Award for All***

*“I see inclusive education as creating opportunities where ALL learners can work together with each other. Where they would have their contributions valued by the educational system to the benefit of all. We have to recognize that learning is enhanced when learners of different abilities, different skills, different aspirations can work together in a joint enterprise. The educational system has a responsibility to create learning environments and provide teachers who are skilled at creating ways in which all contributions are recognised as being of equal value. Where the efforts of each learner is recognized as being of an equal challenge regardless of the particular area of the curriculum in which they are working.”* Aspis (1998).

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## ***Graduation Certificate which the Government were looking at***

### **GC**

**Inclusive** : by creating maximum opportunities and incentives for young people to continue learning after 16. There should be common components that are achievable through the widest possible variety of learning routes. People over the age of 19 should be able to achieve graduation (where their earlier learning has been interrupted or ineffective). There should be alternative ways of recording partial achievement that falls short of full graduation (without undermining incentives to work towards the full certificate).

### **DoE**

**Available for all** : There is one award which is available to young people who wish to take up its challenge, with no discrimination on grounds of gender, cultural background, religion or political affiliation. An award is gained through individual improvement and achievement, which means that young people are able to benefit from involvement in the Programme whatever their starting point.

### **GC**

**Differentiated**: the certificate might also be differentiated to recognize achievement at different levels.

### **DoE**

The scheme offers such a wide choice of activities that many, even severely disabled young people should be able to qualify in its four sections without any such variations. However, for participants with a physical disability, there may be provision for variation to some of the conditions associated with the physical challenge, within prescribed limits.

### **GC**

**Motivating** : the contents should reflect young people's aspirations and be relevant to their future employability citizenship, personal and social fulfillment; and interests which engage them, such as sport, multi-media and the arts.

## *One Award for All*

### **DoE**

**Simple in design** : there should be no more than four main components (preferably fewer) which are easy to understand and communicate clearly what is required of learners.

**DoE** : there are four components (Skills, Physical Recreation, Service and Expedition) and additional component (Residential Project) at Gold Level.

### **GC**

**Flexible** : within each component there should be sufficient scope for choice and tailoring to meet different needs, without compromising the “universal” nature of graduation. It should avoid a lengthily list of compulsory activities and should enable young people to undertake opportunities that suit their needs and interests, drawn from a wide list of qualifying activities.

### **DoE**

#### **Flexible**

There is no list of compulsory activities. However all participants are required to undertake specific courses related to their Expedition/Exploration component. There are at least 300 plus skills listed in the DoE handbook. However if the skill is not listed then the DoE award officers are encouraged to support the young person to develop his/her own plan.

### **GC**

**Mode-and-location-free** learners should be able to work towards and achieve graduation in a range of different contexts (school, college, the work place, the community, or a mixture of such locations), and through a variety of modes of learning (full-time, part-time, intermittent etc.) depending on the learners circumstances. There should be parity between different routes to graduation, with strong support for vocational and individually negotiated routes alongside the more traditional school and college contexts.

## *One Award for All*

### **DoE**

#### **Flexible**

The award is based on personal choice, can be geared to local facilities; and should be designed for the individual taking party. Providing the basic age requirements are met, young people may take as long as they wish to complete an Award. Award participants may decide to complete the award in the minimum. Alternatively participants may choose to take longer with only completing one or several components at a time for the minimum required time before completing the other components.

### **GC**

**Underpinned by common procedures** that ensure individual guidance and support for young people from their youth support service personal adviser or another suitable source, together with the recording of personal development.

### **DoE**

#### **Voluntary**

The award is run by volunteers. Every young person makes a free choice to enter the Scheme and must commit personal time to complete the activities, with support of a huge network of volunteers. At the end of each component an appropriate adult (e.g. skill trainer, Expedition Assessor) will write a report recording the personal development of the young person.

#### **Achieved Focused**

The Record Book notes positive achievement and improvement, and profiles achievement across a broad range of activities. If a participant does not complete the conditions at the first attempt, the opportunity exists to try again.

### **GC**

**Support national standards and targets:** graduates should require achievement to at least level 2 standard, with appropriate quality assurance arrangements for all components. Progress towards graduation at 19 should be based on established whole national qualifications.

## *One Award for All*

### **DoE**

#### **Non-Competitive**

The award scheme is not an attempt to preach or impose standards of discipline. The award is a personal challenge and not a competition against other individuals. The only set standards are those that are necessary to ensure a consistent challenge and the safety of participants. The Award Programme should reflect the abilities and interests of individual participants and therefore, no two Programmes should be identical.

### **GC**

**Effectively integrated with other relevant initiatives:** such as Millennium Volunteers, Citizenship, Summer Camps and the Progress File pilots

### **DoE**

Effectively integrated with other relevant initiatives: Head-office will offer licenses for appropriate youth organizations to run their own DoE award schemes. Such organizations include Girl Guides, Scouts, Sea Cops and the alike. In addition young people who are working in their DoE in a youth club or after as a extra school curriculum activity can complete sections of the Award with other allied organizations and initiatives such as Red Cross, Life Boat Service, Community and Junior Sports Leadership Awards.

### **QC**

#### **Recognition of partial achievement**

Either a pre graduation certificate or the opportunity to complete the graduation certificate whilst undertaking paid or unpaid work opportunities.

### **DoE**

#### **Recognition of partial achievement**

Bronze, Silver and Gold individual section certificates are awarded if a young person is unable to complete the whole award.

## **QC**

### **Different Levels of Award**

Possibly three levels for different levels of achievement, equivalent to NVQ level 1, 2 and 3.

## **DoE**

### **Different Levels of Award**

Three levels, Bronze, Silver and Gold which are awarded on the length of commitment and perseverance with completing the required sections.

## **Contents**

### **GC**

Literacy and numeracy. Key skills (Communication; application of number; information technology; working with others; improving own learning and performance; and problem solving). Other life and social skills, especially those related to effective interpersonal skills. Work-place-related skills, such as customer orientation and being able to work with others. Personal qualities, such as reliability and punctuality. Personal interests and use of leisure time.

## **DoE**

### **Offering Practical Service**

Assessors will consider the practical service given, paying attention to reliability, competence, relationships and attitudes.

### **Completing Specialist Training**

Assessment will be based on the participant's involvement in the whole course of training, the achievement of the appropriate qualification and practical service given.

### **Community Service Assessment**

Assessment should review and discuss :- the practical service undertaken, paying attention to reliability, competence, relationships and attitudes; the diary, the account and, at Gold, the study topic.

**Service Requiring Courses Of Specialist Training and  
Service Requiring Specific Qualifications**

Compilation of the course or training with the practical service given together with a statement saying the participant showed reliability and competence and an understanding of the need for the service needed.

**Participant's account**

A verbal, written, pictorial or taped account should be prepared for assessment. The account should indicate an understanding of the need for giving this service.

**Expedition**

It is vital that that the Assessor regards the venture as a team effort, and. Providing all the members are sufficiently competent to be allowed to participate in the expedition and fulfill the conditions, then, on completion, all should be deemed successful. The role of the Assessor is that a person who verifies or confirms that the conditions of the Expeditions Section have been fulfilled or completed rather than one whom "tests" or "examines". There is no pass, fail, no testing, no marking – either the conditions have been fulfilled or they have not.

The group will be on the successful completion of their venture and the report. The performance of each group during the venture will be monitored by an Assessor independent of those who have instructed during preliminary training. Before the start of the venture each participant should decide on the most appropriate person to assess it.

Reports can be either submitted individually or on behalf of the group. It is the responsibility of the group to decide on the form and nature of the report. It may be written, oral, photographic, audio or video, tape / slide. Other ideas in the handbook include paintings, collages, embroideries and drama.

Reports should be based on first hand observations, and recordings. It should include feelings, relationships, and reactions to the environment, each other and the venture.

## *One Award for All*

### **Skills**

Assessment will be made on progress and sustained effort over the period, rather than on fixed standards of attainment.

A young person qualifies in this section if the assessor, after consultation with the instructor where applicable, is satisfied that: - a) there has been a substantial commitment of genuine leisure time, b) the Skill has been consistently followed for the required time and c) genuine effort and individual progress have been made within the young person's capability.

### **Physical Recreation**

Assessment is based on participation, attaining a standard (where appropriate) and showing improvement, effort and progress in the following areas: Application, Technique, Skill, Tactics, Fitness, Rules, and Safety.

Assessment should be made at both the initial and final stages to confirm that there has been improvement. For the final assessment, the Assessor must be satisfied that, after consultation with the Instructor, the young person has :shown effort, made progress and shown improvement.

### **Residential Project**

Young people should be assessed on their personal standards. Relationships with others, responsibility, initiative and general progress during the residential period.