

The facts...about the Diploma in Engineering

About 2,500 students completed the first year of a Diploma in Engineering in July 2009. Approximately 4,5000 started the first year of a Diploma in Engineering in September 2009, meaning that there are about 7,000 students currently studying across all three levels.

The majority of students of the Diploma in Engineering are at Higher Level, and Engineering has the largest number of students at Advanced Level of all the Diplomas.

The Advanced Level Engineering Diploma is suitable for entry to most higher education, as long as the right Additional and Specialist Learning is included. Over 80% of engineering courses at Russell Group universities have stated that they will consider applications from Engineering Diploma 'graduates'.

Engineering Diplomas are suitable for students at all levels of ability – from those wanting an introduction to basic engineering principles and practice, to those looking to become professional engineers at the highest level.

The Engineering Diploma is the first time Higher Education and universities have really been able to get involved in developing a national mainstream qualification in secondary schools.

Students will get 350 UCAS points for the A* Grade in the Advanced Diploma, plus Additional and Specialist Learning will attract UCAS points. This compares with 360 UCAS points for the top marks in a BTEC National Diploma, and 140 UCAS points for each A* at A level. Therefore, if students achieve an A* in the Engineering Diploma, and achieve an A level at A* as their Additional and Specialist Learning, they will accumulate 490 UCAS points, compared to 420 for three A levels at A*, and 360 for BTEC. The Diploma takes up the same curriculum time as 3 A levels, but could give an extra 60 UCAS points.

The Engineering Diploma at Higher Level is particularly good for those thinking of becoming skilled technicians and taking an Advanced Apprenticeship in Engineering.

The Diploma in Engineering can be studied post-16 in one year at both Foundation or Higher Level. This route is really demanding, but is proving effective at reengaging young people who have not done well in academic learning pre-16.

The Diploma in Engineering has been endorsed and supported by a whole range of professional engineering institutions (see the endorsement document here) and the Engineering Council has also expressed its support, saying "EC^{UK} and its Licensed Members look forward to applications for registration from those achieving a (14-19) Diploma. For example, whilst evidence of competence achieved through working in an appropriate job role will always be required, relevant level 3 Diploma achievements can provide evidence towards meeting some of the requirements for EngTech registration."

The facts...about Engineering

Engineering employers are still facing shortages in key occupations, despite the current economic situation. These shortages are expected to worsen as the economic situation improves, so the skills and attitudes in the Engineering Diploma give students a key advantage in the workplace.

Who is going to solve the world's biggest problems? It can only be engineers, working with people on all kinds of projects, who will come up with the solutions to global warming, food shortages, growing international communication, and disease control.

Who is going to open the next frontier of exploration? It will be engineers, delving beneath the sea, and helping humankind move through the solar system, who will find whole new worlds and resources to explore.

The myths

Diplomas are just for people who can't pass academic qualifications

Diplomas are a *different* way of learning, not an *easier* way. Some people are happy in a classroom, others prefer a more hands-on approach.

Universities won't accept Diplomas

Over 80% of Russell Group engineering courses have stated their intention to consider applications from Engineering Diploma 'graduates' in the same way as A level and BTEC students, provided the right Additional and Specialist Learning is included.

Diplomas are just for people who are at risk of dropping out

Diplomas provide an alternative to academic study, and have been developed to be exciting and engaging. They are already proving effective at tackling some areas of 'disengagement' in that they provide students who are not interested in classroom learning with another option. However, they are not easy, and they certainly require the same commitment and effort as GCSEs and A levels.

You have to do A levels as well as a Diploma in order to get into university

Students can do A levels as part of the Diploma in Additional and Specialist Learning, they do not have to be *extra*.

Diplomas are untried and untested

While Diplomas in their current format are certainly new, schools and colleges are increasingly experienced in delivering a whole range of qualifications. Many elements of the Diploma (such as Functional Skills and Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills) are already taught in schools.

The Conservatives are just going to abolish them if they win the election

The Conservative Party has no reason to abolish a successful programme which enables students to achieve their goals, as well as providing further education, higher education, and employers with the applicants they want.

If you do a Diploma in Engineering, you have to become an engineer

Diplomas are designed to be flexible, just like GCSEs and A levels. Students can move between Diplomas and academic qualifications at various stages – completing a Higher Diploma, then doing A levels, or doing GCSEs then an Advanced Diploma then going to university. Students might do a Foundation Diploma in IT, then a Higher Diploma in Engineering. Engineering Diploma 'graduates' might become an engineer, or an accountant, a builder, or a History professor! Students should talk to their school or careers advisor about how the Diploma can open doors, and keep their options open.

The Diploma in Engineering is just for boys

Engineering is a subject which appeals to all kinds of people. Whether someone want to save the planet, design a new mobile phone, help solve world hunger, or make the next generation of speedboat, engineering is for them. Engineers help people find solutions to the big questions, as well as improving all our lives every day. Just think how intensive care beds rely on electronics, how people can now travel the world thanks to transport engineering, and how search and rescue

team rely on life saving equipment created by engineers. There are several all girls schools offering the Diploma in Engineering to their students, with great success.

The Diploma in Engineering just teaches engineering

Because employers and higher education have been involved in the development of the qualification, you can be sure that the Diploma in Engineering provides a lot more than just the engineering content. In order to pass the Diploma, students have to pass qualifications in Functional Skills in English, maths and IT, as well as Additional and Specialist Learning, which can be drawn from a whole range of subjects.

If you do the Diploma in Engineering, you can't do GCSEs and A levels

Taught over two years, the Diploma at Foundation and Higher Level does not take up the whole curriculum for students under the age of 16. There is space in the Diploma curriculum to study GCSEs as Additional and Specialist Learning, and also time outside the Diploma to study academic subjects. At Advanced Level, the Diploma in Engineering has enough curriculum time within the Additional and Specialist Learning to study a full A level. The Advanced Diploma in Engineering overall takes up the curriculum time of 3 full A levels, so there is time for an extra AS or even a full A level outside the Diploma (many students study 4 A levels at the moment). Post-16, students can take the Foundation or Higher Level in one year

If independent schools aren't interested in delivering the Diploma, it can't be very good

Independent schools have particular teaching models which often do not really fit with Diploma delivery. Their lack of participation should not be taken as an indication that the Diploma is not a high quality programme, but just that it may not suit the way in which they run their education.