The purpose of this pack is to provide you with all of the information you need to make an informed choice about whether a course is suitable for you and if you will be able to commit to the work involved.

In this pack you will find:

1) **General information** about qualification courses with Skills&Learning, Bournemouth, Dorset & Poole.
2) **Specific information** about the type of course you are interested in to supplement the overview provided in the Course Information Sheet (CIS) which you should review on our website [www.skillsandlearningbp.co.uk](http://www.skillsandlearningbp.co.uk)
3) **Financial Information** to help you work out how to fund your learning
4) A **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)** sheet
5) **Links** to further information to help you explore your options
6) Information about **Additional Learning Support (ALS)** that may be available

You will need to:

- Carefully read all of the information in this pack
- Review the Course Information Sheet (CIS) and the awarding body/qualification website referred to in the CIS.
- Be able to provide copies of English, maths or any other qualifications at the appropriate level described in the CIS if requested.

Please consider:

- your literacy and or numeracy ability as necessary for the course
- previous learning & qualifications.
- your commitment and enthusiasm for the subject
- any possible barriers to learning and additional support requirements you may have that you would like to advise us about
- the time involvement and level of study required
- the requirement for regular attendance at class and completion of all necessary assignments, course work, portfolios, assessments or exams.

If you feel, after reading this pack and the course information sheet, that the particular course is not suitable for you, we may be able to signpost you to other more suitable vocational skills, functional skills or non-accredited courses.
Skills & Learning Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole is the adult and community learning service offering accredited and non-accredited courses at various locations across the county of Dorset. Skills & Learning is subsidised by Government funding and by enrolling on the course, you are accepting that you must complete the course and submit all required work for the accreditation. If you do not complete all of the necessary assessments you may be charged the full non-subsidised fee for the course and may not be able to enrol for the same course again in the future.

**General Introduction to the Subject:**

Please read the Course Information Sheet (CIS) for the qualification(s) you are interested in. You should also visit the awarding body website detailed in this CIS.

**How Qualifications are Assessed:**

By enrolling on a course you are agreeing to take the necessary assessments to achieve the full qualification. **Courses are assessed in a variety of ways and the Course Information Sheet will tell you how your preferred course is assessed.** Some types of assessment are given below and will be explained further during a course induction. If you have a particular learning need which means you may require additional support when being assessed e.g. extra time in an exam, communication support for hearing or visual impairments, this will be arranged in advance of the assessment. Please speak to your tutor at the start of your course so that this can be arranged.

- **Exams**
  Some courses have a final exam taken under exam conditions. The CIS will indicate if this applies to your chosen course. You will be notified of the dates and format of the exam once you have started on the course. Some practical courses have both theory exams and practical exams. Exam dates sit outside of the scheduled class dates, days & times so please do not book holidays until all this has been confirmed! Formal exams may be held at a centre that is in a different location to your regular classes and you will need to be prepared to make your own travel arrangements.

- **Assignments**
  Some courses require you to complete assignments either in home study time or under controlled conditions in the classroom. These are often marked by your tutor according to a set of outcomes laid out by the awarding body. Some assignments may be sent off and marked externally.

- **Portfolio of Work**
  Some courses require you to put together a portfolio that includes examples of your work throughout the course. This may include worksheets, projects, photographs, video footage, examples of ideas and experimentation as well as final pieces developed to a required specification. Your tutor will mark the work in your portfolios as you go through the course, an internal verifier will review the marking and a representative from the awarding organisation will visit the centre to sample a selection of portfolios before awarding the qualification. During your induction and throughout your course the tutor will guide you on what is required to put together a portfolio and he/she may be able to show you an example of a completed folio.
Additional Costs Involved and Where/how to Source Materials

The CIS will give you an idea of the additional costs involved in the course. **Please do not purchase any materials for courses prior to your induction as the tutor will guide you on what you may need.**

For some subjects, it is often possible to obtain some of the necessary materials without great expense – your tutor may be able to advise about good sources of cheap or free resources.

**Home Study Requirements**

With all qualification courses there is a requirement to plan quality time outside of class time for home study and completion of assignments, case studies or projects. It is not possible to achieve qualification requirements without home study. Home study is a valuable way of learning to support your qualification.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

There may be units of a qualification that you believe you have already studied as part of another qualification. If so, we may be able to request that the awarding organisation recognises your prior learning so that you do not study the same content again. You will need to provide original copies of your certificates for us to process an RPL request if you think this applies.

**Key Dates**

The CIS available on the website at [www.skillsandlearningbdbp.co.uk](http://www.skillsandlearningbdbp.co.uk) will show the planned dates of your chosen course. You should make sure that you are available to attend all of the sessions. If we need to make any alterations to the course dates, we will advise you. We traditionally break for the main school holidays although some courses may require attendance and you will be advised if this is the case.

Some courses may require attendance twice a week and this will be shown on your CIS.

Your tutor will advise you of the dates you need to submit work for assessment and extensions may be considered in exceptional circumstances on an individual basis. We require all forms of assessment to be completed and submitted by the end of July (of the current academic year) at the very latest.

**Attendance Requirements**

It is expected that you attend every scheduled session. We recognise that occasionally ill health or another emergency may prevent you attending a class and we ask you to contact us in advance to advise if you are unable to attend.

It is vital for your progress and achievement that you attend regularly, are on time and stay for the whole session. Please do not book holidays or appointments on days you are due to attend your course. Your attendance will be monitored throughout your course and unknown absence will be followed up by phone call, text, email or letter.

If your attendance level is affecting your progress and we do not feel that you will be able to achieve the qualification you may be withdrawn from the course.
Your Role in your Learning Experience

You will be expected to take an active role in your own learning by engaging in sessions and participating in class activities, completing homework, researching between classes and submitting any required assignment/portfolio work.

Career and Progression Opportunities

Our qualification courses are designed to help you develop the skills you require in a particular subject for employment purposes or to allow you to progress to further study. If you are pursuing a particular career route, you should check that the qualification you are applying for is suitable to help you progress. We recommend that you check The National Careers Service website for further advice or book an appointment with one of their advisors. You can do this by visiting www.direct.gov.uk/nationalcareersservice or by phoning 0800 100 900. You can also book an appointment in our Oakdale centre by phoning 01202 262300.

Additional Learning Support (ALS)

You may have particular learning needs that require supporting during your course. Our Learning Support Officer will be able to advise on the type of support that is available and how it can be accessed. If you have a particular support need that we should be aware of in order for you to access your preferred course, please advise us on the application form.

Literacy/Numeracy Assessment (Skills Check)

The course information sheet states the required English and/or maths skill level required for successful completion of the course. It is important that you meet the required standards before being accepted for enrolment on a course as we want to give all of our learners the very best opportunity to succeed. Even practical courses require English speaking, listening, reading and writing skills and some non-maths course require numerical ability in order to meet the necessary learning outcomes. Without those skills, you would find it more difficult to complete the required assignments, assessments and examinations. On the application form please indicate the highest level of English & maths qualification you hold.

To ensure your English Skills are currently at the right level for your course you will need to complete an online English assessment before submitting your application. For some courses you will also need to complete a maths assessment. This will be stated on the Course Information Sheet if it applies to your course. If you do not have internet access at home you may visit your local library to complete these assessments.

If your English and maths skills are not at the level required for your course, we will contact you to discuss further and may signpost you to other courses and/or English or maths courses.
Course Fees and Financial Support

Please see the finance section for details about any financial assistance that may be available. Any queries regarding the cost of courses, eligibility for concessionary fees, financial support towards other costs e.g. materials, travelling and childcare or additional learning support will need to be referred to the Customer Service team on 01202 262300.

Cancellation Policy for 16/17

Please see details below of our cancellation policy. You really do need to be sure that the course is right for you and that you can commit to the time and work involved.

To cancel the enrolment you need to complete a cancellation form available on our website www.skillsandlearningbdp.co.uk or contact Customer Services on 01202 262300.

CANCELLATION POLICY
You may cancel your place on a course within 14 days of your enrolment and receive a full refund, unless:
• Full delivery of the course has taken place within this period
• Part of the course has been delivered within this period, in which case you will pay reasonable costs for this proportion of the course

Advanced Learner Loan Cancellation only
The Student Loans Company (SLC) will only pay the fees based on the duration of your attendance. If you decide to withdraw from the course, the SLC will stop payments to Skills & Learning and you will be liable for the remaining balance of the course fee. If you have applied for an Advanced Learner Loan you will also be liable for the full course fee if the loan application remains incomplete or is later declined by the SLC.

Cancellations outside of this policy, for exceptional circumstances, are entirely at our discretion.
To request a refund please complete a cancellation form which you can find at www.skillsandlearningbdp.co.uk/terms-and-conditions/
Nothing contained within these terms & conditions affects your statutory rights.

An appropriate proportion of fees may be refunded in the following circumstances:
• A class is closed due to low attendance and/or where the number of learners does not justify continuation of the class
• A learner is unable to continue for medical reasons; a medical certificate or letter from a doctor must be supplied within 3 weeks of the last class attended to support the request for a refund
• A full refund of fees, with no administration charge will be made if a course is cancelled due to a Service failure.

Please note: Examination fees are non-refundable.

Learners should not turn up for any session without enrolling.
Please retain this information for reference purposes.
Please be aware that by enrolling on a course, learners are accepting all of these Terms & Conditions.
All information is correct at time of printing April 2016.
Following Receipt of your Application Form

We will review your online assessment and application form and aim to give you a response within 10 working days. Applications are processed in order of receipt.

Where places on courses are low, it may not be possible to offer places immediately to everyone who applies and you may be placed on a priority queue. If this is the case, you will be advised and contacted again in the future if a place becomes available before the course starts or if we are able to set up an additional course to meet demand.

If we need to verify information about previous qualification or literacy/numeracy skills, we may place you on a priority queue for the course.
Will I be eligible for any financial assistance?

Vocational Courses leading to a qualification

Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 courses
Financial assistance towards course fees may be available depending on your personal circumstances.
- If you are receiving JSA, ESA (WRAG, Income Support (WRAG)) or Universal Credit (mandated to undertake skills training), you will be eligible for a free course.
- If you are unemployed, actively looking for work and are in receipt of any other state benefit, you may be eligible for a concession.

Level 3 and 4 Awards
There are no subsidies or concessions available for this course. You will need to:
- pay the course fee in full OR
- complete a form to pay by instalments

Level 3 and 4 Certificates and Diplomas
There are no subsidies or concessions available for this course. You will need to:
- OR complete a form to request payment by instalments
- OR apply for an Advanced Learner Loan – visit www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan or phone 0300 100 0619 for further information on loans and how to apply for them. You can apply for a loan as soon as you have received an email/letter from us offering you a place on the course.

Additional financial support
If your household income is below £25,000, you may be eligible for financial assistance with childcare, travel costs or exam fees.

Payment by instalments
If your course fee is over £100, you may apply to pay by instalments. 50% of the total course fee must be paid before the agreement is valid. You will then pay 2 consecutive monthly instalments of 25% each.

For higher cost courses (£650+) you can apply for a higher cost instalment plan. Please phone 01202 262300 for further information

Please see examples of the forms you will need to complete if you are applying for Additional Support or an Instalment Plan.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Why is there so much information and why do I have to complete an English or maths assessment and an application form? I want to take this course and would just like to enrol.

A: Skills&Learning is publicly funded by The Skills Funding Agency. Public money must be spent carefully and we are required to provide good value for money. One of the ways our service is judged for quality is by our learners achieving good success rates. This means that we expect every learner who starts on a course will complete the course and achieve the qualification – this is success! We therefore need to make sure that your English skills (and maths skills if your course requires this) are at the right level for you to achieve your qualification. The information we have provided and our careful application process is designed to ensure that all learners know exactly what they are going to be required to do when they sign up for a course so they are more likely to stick with it and achieve the qualification.

Q: I like the look of a course but don’t want to take a qualification in it- why can’t I just come along to classes to enjoy the subject?

A: Although the Government recognises that it is good for adults to learn new skills for enjoyment, socialisation and to keep themselves active, in this current economic climate, they cannot fund places on qualifications taken for hobby or leisure pursuits. The course you are applying for leads to a qualification as it is important that we improve the skills of the nation to help people gain employment and improve skills in the workplace which will help grow the economy. The qualifications we offer are subsidised by Government funding because they have been developed to provide learning to address some of the skills gaps identified in particular sectors.

There are other non-accredited courses that are offered by Skills&Learning or other providers which do not lead to qualifications – please see our website or talk to one of our customer service advisers if you would like to study a particular subject without taking a qualification.

Q: I’m an adult with a very busy life and have work and family commitments so I can’t always come to classes every week. Can I just come along when I’ve got time?

A: It is vital that you have good attendance on your course as you will miss valuable information, tuition and skills development by not attending. The awarding organisations expect that you have received all of the required teaching to enable you to become qualified. You and your fellow learners will benefit from everyone attending regularly as it helps with group-work and activities and means the tutor can get on with the subject without having to spend time with individual learners getting them up to speed following absence. Our tutors are well qualified in their field and can offer a wealth of valuable knowledge and guidance and if you miss sessions, you may find you have important gaps in your knowledge which prevent you from succeeding.
Q: I haven’t studied for a long time and am worried I’ll find it really difficult. What help will I get to develop my study skills?

A: Although there is not time within your course to offer dedicated sessions on individual study skills, your tutor will support you throughout your qualification and will provide you with guidance on the best way to structure your time and complete any necessary assignments. You will benefit from doing some internet research into effective study skills before you start your course.

If you have particular learning needs e.g. dyslexia, you may be able to request additional support throughout your course. The types of support available can be found in more detail on our website and in the Learner Handbook.

Q: The course I’d like to apply for is a Level 2 course but I see there’s also a Level 3 in the same subject—what do these levels mean?

A: Qualifications are given a level that indicates the depth of knowledge, understanding and skills required in regard to the subject, including:

- theoretical and practical knowledge and understanding,
- cognitive skill such as critical thinking and analysis,
- IT, numeracy and communication skills
- autonomy and the ability to work with others

Qualifications range from Entry Levels through to Level 8. An Entry Level 3 or Level 1 qualification is usually at an introductory level and helps you develop basic knowledge and skills required for the subject.

A Level 2 qualification as a guide is equivalent to a GCSE Level course and some vocational Level 2 qualifications are considered to be “Full Level 2” equivalent to having achieved 5 x GCSEs Grades A*-C.

Level 3 vocational qualifications are pitched at a similar level to ‘A’ levels and Level 4 and above apply to Higher Education courses. For more information please see; [https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean](https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean)

Q: A friend of mine studied on a Level 3 course a couple of years ago and I’m sure she didn’t pay any courses fees. Why do I have to pay for course fees this year?

A: As you will see from the regular reporting in the media, the Government is having to ensure that any public money is spent wisely and offers to best longer term outcomes for the country and financial recovery. As a result, the funds available to support adult learning are now being focussed on helping adults achieve new skills up to Level 2, including functional skills in English & maths, to improve their employment opportunities.

For many higher level Further Education learning at Level 3 and above, Advanced Learner Loans have been introduced to help learners pay for course fees. For more information on Advanced Learning Loans please visit [https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan](https://www.gov.uk/advanced-learner-loan)
Q: Lots of the qualification courses I'm looking at require English and maths qualifications and I don't think I have any. What can I do?

A: When you have completed your English online assessment (and maths if this is required) we will have an indication of your current level of Skills and can judge whether these are appropriate for your course. Your tutor will support you to develop your English and maths skills alongside your subject.

Q: I'd like to get qualified in my chosen subject in order to get a new job but how do I know if this is the right route for me?

A: The National Careers Service is a free service for all young people and adults to help you identify your next career steps. There is lots of information on their website and you may qualify for a free appointment with one of their advisers. Visit the website https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/Pages/Home.aspx or phone on 0800 100 900. You can also book an appointment in our Oakdale centre by phoning 01202 262300.

Having read all of the information in this pack, if you would like to apply to be considered for a place on your chosen course, please complete our online assessment in English (and maths if applicable) now.

To Request login details and instructions for the assessments, please click here .................

Once you have completed your assessment(s), please complete the Application Form, entering your result in the appropriate box, and submit the form.