

## Super Size my CV

### Level

B2 / C1 (Upper-intermediate to Advanced)

### Warmer

(10 minutes)

Write the following on the board:

- A levels (or their equivalent)
- BA
- Hamburger University
- Vocational training

Ask students to discuss the individual terms. Try to ensure the following points are made:

- A levels are the qualifications students in the UK work towards generally at ages 16 – 18. A levels are usually pre-requisites for entering a UK university.
- BA – Bachelor of Arts degree. BA and BSc are the main first degrees in the UK and are generally academically-oriented (rather than vocational).
- Hamburger University is McDonald's 'Center of Training Excellence'. Although it calls itself University it does not award degrees. Instead it is a training centre for its management. However, someone who successfully completes a Hamburger University training course can gain credits to use at a regular US university, up to the equivalent of roughly one semester (for more information see [http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/career/hamburger\\_university.html](http://www.mcdonalds.com/corp/career/hamburger_university.html)).
- Vocational training is not academic education but instead focuses on the skills needed for a particular job.

### 1 Vocabulary activity

(5 minutes)

Answers:

1b 2e 3a 4d 5c 6f

### 2 Pre-reading activity

(10 minutes)

Ask students to look at the questions and then read the article to check their answers.

Answers:

1T 2F 3F

### 3 Reading activity

(15 minutes)

Ask the students to read the article again and decide if the statements are true or false.

Answers:

1. F (there will be three organisations).
2. T.
3. T.
4. F ('it's debatable whether these qualifications really will be recognised by other employers.')
5. F ('Oxford and Cambridge aren't likely to see a slump in applications because everyone's off applying to Flybe instead.')
6. T.

### 4 Writing activity

(20 minutes)

Ask students to write a letter to the editor of the magazine in which this article was published. They should either write a letter in defence of the news or against it. They can pick up on one or more points raised in the article and develop it, or introduce new arguments, perhaps any developments they are aware of in their own country. Students then exchange their letters with a partner for correction and comment.

### 5 Role-play

(20 minutes)

As an alternative to the writing activity divide students into groups of 3. Tell them they are representatives of McDonalds. They are to hold a press conference announcing the new qualifications. Ask them to spend 15 minutes preparing their announcement.

They should take into consideration possible negative attitudes on the part of the listener and address them. They then nominate one member of the group to make the announcement. Follow this up with group feedback and comments.

## Super Size my CV

### Aims

- Read and then answer questions on an article on the differences between academic and vocational qualifications
- Understand key vocabulary taken from the article

### Tasks

- Match words taken from the article with their correct definitions.
- Write a formal letter to a magazine.
- Optional activity – Prepare a press conference to announce a new corporate initiative.

### 1. Match the word on the left with the correct meaning on the right.

1. dumbing-down (adj)	a. (informal) attempt; scheme; trick.
2. scope (n)	b. The process of making things easier and less challenging
3. wheeze (n)	c. Replace
4. aggrieved (adj)	d. Angry; upset
5. supplant (v)	e. Range; number of options
6. slump (n)	f. Decrease; fall

### 2. With a partner discuss the following questions.

1. McDonalds will be able to give qualifications of the same level as A-levels.
2. The McDonalds courses cover academic subjects like literature and science.
3. Most people with university degrees will agree that this is a good development.

### 3. Now read the text again and answer the following questions.

1. There are four commercial organisations in the UK that can award A-level equivalent qualifications.
2. Network Rail will be able to offer the equivalent of a PhD.
3. According to a representative of the CBI, this is a good development because it will encourage employers to give their employees training.
4. It is likely that most employers will accept these qualifications since they are vocational.
5. With more commercial organisations offering qualifications there is a danger that universities will lose students.
6. According to the article, there is a difference between academic and vocational qualifications, and it is good that companies offer qualifications.

## Super Size my CV

McDonalds will soon be able to award A-level equivalent qualifications. Food for thought in the dumbing-down debate...

The fast food giant is one of three companies – along with Network Rail and Flybe – who will be given ‘awarding body’ status under a new government scheme announced today, which will allow them to award academic qualifications.

The McDonalds training course will teach its staff how to run one of its restaurants, with modules in finance, hygiene and HR. Those who pass will receive a Level 3 certificate in basic shift management – equivalent to an A-level. The other two have even more scope – Flybe will be able to award degree-style Level 4 diplomas, and Network Rail can go all the way up to Level 8, which is PhD equivalent (presumably that one will be about getting trains to run on time).

It’s the latest government wheeze to try and improve the skills of the British workforce (and hence the UK’s competitiveness), one of Gordon Brown’s current favourite topics. And the Confederation of Business Industry (CBI) certainly approves: deputy director-general John Cridland said it was ‘a significant milestone on the road to reforming qualifications so that they better reflect the skills and competencies employers and employees need.’ His

view is that more formal recognition of in-house training will encourage businesses to invest more in skills – which is good for all concerned.

Of course, it’s unlikely to go down well with those who think our education system is getting dumber and dumber. If you’ve spent two years sweating through Shakespeare and Chaucer, you might well feel slightly aggrieved to learn that your mate down at the local McDonalds has got an equivalent qualification for learning how to make a mean Big Mac. And as some cynics have pointed out, it’s debatable whether these qualifications really will be recognised by other employers.

The problem, it seems to us, is not with the new qualifications per se. Encouraging employers to invest in training has to be a good thing, and it’s not as though they’re going to supplant academic qualifications – Oxford and Cambridge aren’t likely to see a slump in applications because everyone’s off applying to Flybe instead. For us the problem is comparing work-based training to an academic qualification, and attempting to do so is just asking for trouble.

### Link

<http://www.managementtoday.co.uk/rss/article/779673/>

**4. Write a letter to the editor of Management Today either supporting or opposing these new initiatives.**