

Policy for Dealing with On-Course Referrals on behalf of Access to HE Diploma Students

1. Introduction

This policy relates to the application for on-course referrals in line with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) regulation and Grading Scheme Handbook.

The Difference between Resubmission and Referral Resubmission [the student's first attempt to 're-take' an assignment]

The process for resubmission applies when an assignment has been submitted which does not meet the Learning Outcome specified for that assignment, in which case it cannot contribute towards the award of credit or be eligible for grading.

The student is given **one** opportunity to re-submit further work to meet the Learning Outcome, usually of a limited nature, having been given feedback from the assessor that identifies where particular criterion/a have not been met. This process is then designated the first resubmission and must be time-limited.

The time limit for a student to re-submit should be proportionate to the amount of assessment criteria that the student failed to achieve. The principle to be used is that the student should re-attempt the assessment criteria as soon as possible after feedback by the tutor. The time allowed should be proportionate to the amount of work involved and the student's circumstances.

Referral [further attempt, after the first, to 're-take' an assignment]

When a student has not achieved the Learning Outcome through an assessment on **first resubmission**, or when work has been **submitted late** without an agreed extension, the student may seek permission to make a **referral (second re-submission)**.

When this occurs within the duration of the course, the process described below must be used. Where this occurs at the end of the course (for example, in final assessments) the process described in Appendix 1 must be followed.

2. Intended Audience

- AVA Staff
- External Moderators
- Provider staff responsible for Quality Assurance
- Assessors
- Internal Moderators
- Key stakeholders involved in qualification development
- QAA

3. Principles

The principles that inform the regulations that relate to reassessment are:

- The number and type of opportunities for reassessment are limited and clearly defined
- The opportunity to be reassessed does not confer an undue advantage on those who achieve only after reassessment or diminish the achievements of those who achieve at the first attempt
- Reassessment opportunities do not undermine confidence in the standard of the Access to HE Diploma
- Account is taken of any extenuating circumstances affecting the student
- Course tutors play a central role in making decisions about reassessment and tutor decisions about reassessment are confirmed through moderation
- Opportunities for reassessment do not place unreasonable or unmanageable burdens on tutors or moderators
- Assessment regulations are consistent with the broader principles and procedures for the award of credits and grades on the Access to HE Diploma.

4. Interpretation by the AVA

4.1 It is the policy of the AVA that any student will not be disadvantaged by any action that is out of their control, action either by the AVA or the provider, so this process must be transparent and should be executed in a timely fashion so as not to impose stress on the student. The process for on-course referrals will be followed in principle.

The tutor team must make it clear to students during the induction process and through written guidance related to assessment, that the opportunities for referral are limited, clearly defined and not to be used as a strategy for gaining an advantage over other students.

Students must also be informed that any opportunity for a referral will be set against a new assessment activity.

The AVA will record requests for referrals by:

- Student
- Diploma
- Provider
- Unit

Where trends are identified that cause concern, the AVA will investigate in conjunction with the external moderator.

4.2 Referrals should be submitted to the AVA throughout the academic year. The Awards Board will only consider those referrals for which the date of the assessment decision is near the end of the course (see 5.2 below).

- 4.3 Any one student will have the opportunity to submit referrals for a second resubmission up to a **maximum credit value of 15**. In cases of extenuating circumstances beyond this (and where appropriate evidence is presented in support), the AVA's Responsible Officer or Lead Moderator may agree that additional referrals can be considered.
- 4.4 An external moderator, on behalf of the AVA, will make the required decisions for on-course referrals.

5. Circumstances Relevant to Referral Requests

- 5.1 QAA states that normally, a student is permitted only one opportunity to resubmit work, which fails to meet all the requirements of the associated learning outcomes. The referral process allows the course team to recommend that a student should be permitted a second resubmission opportunity. Referral may also be requested for students who have submitted work after a deadline without an agreed extension, and this work fails to meet all the requirements of the associated learning outcomes.
- 5.2 If the need for referral occurs at the end of the course (for example, as the consequence of assessments that have taken place in the last **four weeks** of a course), the recommendation is taken to the Final Awards Board, as referrals at this stage have implications for staffing, resources and results that need to be fully considered and carefully managed.

The Final Awards Board **will not** receive student requests for referral that should have been presented to the AVA before the last four weeks of the course. However, in cases of traumatic extenuating circumstances, the AVA may agree that additional referrals can be considered, (see section 4.3). The AVA may impose sanctions where there is clear evidence of maladministration having taken place.

Extreme mitigating circumstances may be considered outside of this rule by agreement by the Chair of the Final Awards Board and the external moderator. The AVA will offer a final decision where agreement cannot be made.

- 5.3 The AVA expects the external moderator to take into consideration the best interests of the student when making a decision on the application for referral. The evidence submitted should indicate the ability and potential of the student to succeed on the Access to HE Diploma course and in HE. Thus, there should already be sufficient evidence of achievement by the student on the course, e.g. a number of achieved credits of at least 15.

6. Progressing of On-course Referrals by the Provider

Before Referral

Details of the referral process must have been communicated to student/s in writing, either in hard copy or on-line, and covered at the induction stage of the course.

- 6.1 The student completed the (first) resubmission of work and still failed to achieve all the assessment criteria for the assignment.
- 6.2 The resubmitted work is then internally moderated.
- 6.3 If the internal moderator agrees with the assessor's decision of non-achievement the assessor will then discuss the best way for the student to progress. (If the internal moderator disagrees with the assessor's decision of non-achievement, the usual internal processes will be implemented).
- 6.4 The tutor concerned raises the possibility of a referral with the internal moderator. The internal moderator ensures that the following requirements are complied with:
 - Tutors have discussed with the student the best way for the student to progress
 - The student has been informed that referral does not automatically result in approval for a second resubmission
 - The student has been informed that the decision to allow a further opportunity to submit one or more assignments during the course is made by the AVA on the basis of evidence presented
 - The student will be reminded that grading indicators for any work presented through the referral process that leads to achievement of assessment criteria will be capped at 'Pass'
 - The student, assessor and internal moderator must all formally agree to implement the referral process.
- 6.5 If the student still wishes to instigate the referral process, the assessor, the internal moderator or the course co-ordinator will inform the AVA immediately via the application for a referral form (the appropriate form can be downloaded from the AVA's website).

The Referral Application Process

- 6.6 If a student is assessed as not meeting all the requirements of the associated learning outcomes (not achieved) through resubmission and the student then requires that the referral process be implemented then the internal moderator must be informed.

6.7 The provider must submit completed Applications for On-Course Referrals to the AVA as soon as possible during the academic year and no later than four weeks before the end of the course.

6.8 The tutor team will then prepare and send evidence to support the referral, by email or post to the Access to HE Team at:
accesstohe@skillsedugroup.co.uk.

Evidence **must** include:

- Brief outline of special extenuating circumstances
- A copy of the assignment involved in the referral
- Copies of the mapping sheets and feedback from the assessor on both the original and resubmitted work
- Any other responses to assignments that also contribute to the achievement of the unit involving the assignment to be considered for referral; including mapping and feedback evidence on assignments
- The student's profile of achievement up to the point of referral, which must indicate any achievements resulting from a resubmission, late submissions or extensions to the set deadline.

6.9 Any new evidence presented after referral i.e. the second resubmission has been granted, must be subjected to provider internal moderation processes to ensure fairness and consistency.

6.10 All work submitted by the student in respect of the assignment involved in the referral process and the evidence submitted for the referral decisions must be kept and presented at the final moderation event.

Reminder: Requests for referrals will not normally be considered where the total credit value of the units that have already been achieved through referral, or might be achieved as an outcome of a further referral, is more than **15**.

7. Decisions

The AVA has the responsibility for accepting all referral requests and for reporting decisions on referrals to providers, which will usually be made by the external moderator appointed to the Diploma.

Grading indicators for any work presented through the referral process that leads to achievement of assessment criteria will be capped at 'Pass'.

Required Action by the AVA

- The AVA will check that all the appropriate documentation has been received
- The AVA will acknowledge that they have received the appropriate documentation from the provider

- The AVA will aim to forward completed documentation to the external moderator **within three working days**; incomplete documentation will be returned to the provider for action and will incur an additional administration fee
- The AVA will ask the external moderator to review the documentation and will aim to provide feedback **within five working days** from receipt
- The AVA will communicate the external moderator's decision on the referral opportunity to the provider via the internal moderator and/or course co-ordinator **within three working days** following receipt from the external moderator
- The AVA will instruct the external moderator allocated to the Diploma affected by the referral request to check assessments used during the referral process at the next planned visit.

Required Action by the External Moderator

The external moderator will consider all the evidence in order to form a professional judgement as to whether the opportunity for a referral should be granted, which must be in the best interests of the student. Should there be any difficulty with the decision the external moderator should discuss the issue of 'best interests' with the AVA as appropriate. Decisions about referrals made by the external moderator must include:

- Whether a second resubmission opportunity should be offered
- The nature and extent of the requirements for resubmission, this must comply with the relevant requirements for first resubmissions
- The deadline for the second resubmission. For referrals during the year, the deadline will take into account:
 - the need to inform the student of the decisions, which should be at the earliest opportunity following the request for referral being sent to the external moderator
 - the need to allow a limited but reasonable time for the student to complete the resubmission
 - the need to assess the resubmitted assignment(s)

The external moderator will complete the decision-making documentation and forward to the AVA. The decision will then be communicated to the student by the provider.

Required Action by the Provider

If the member of the provider staff does not receive confirmation that the external moderator has received the request then the member of staff should contact the AVA team.

The provider must have alternative pre-issue verified assessments available to present to any student that has been granted the opportunity for a referral. Each alternative assessment must be equal to the original assessment in terms of the demand and timescales that it places on the student.

8. Referrals beyond the 15 Credit Limit

For referrals for a student beyond the 15 credit limit situation, the AVA will go through the same process that the external moderator is required to follow and in addition, will take advice from the provider's quality manager to ensure all provider policies have been followed, e.g. reasonable adjustments, internal moderation, student support as per the Learning Programme Plan.

9. Appeals Against the External Moderator's Decision

9.1 If a student wishes to appeal against the AVA's decision, an appeals form should be made available to them via the provider. This completed appeals form will be sent to the AVA for consideration with supporting statements from the tutor/internal moderator.

9.2 The AVA will take advice from the provider's quality manager to ensure all provider policies have been robustly followed, e.g. reasonable adjustments, internal moderation, appropriate student support as per the Learning Programme Plan etc and will communicate the decision to the provider within **five working days**.

10. Fees and Charges

The AVA will invoice the provider for each Request for Referral submitted. This will be in accordance with the AVA's charging policy.

11. Policy Responsibility and Review

The AVA will review this policy periodically and revise when necessary in response to customer and stakeholder feedback, changes in practice, requirements of the QAA or external agencies, or changes in legislation. The review will ensure that procedures continue to be consistent with the regulatory criteria and are applied properly and fairly.

References:

QAA Access to HE Diploma Specification
QAA Grading Scheme Handbook

Appendix 1: QAA Grading Scheme – Section E p9

