

Access to HE Centre Handbook

2023/24

September 2023

**This handbook has been developed for use by tutors,
course leaders, quality managers, MIS and examination
staff**

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Section 1: Introduction

Welcome

Thank you for using Skills and Education Group Access for your Access to HE Diplomas. This handbook has been created as a reference document to ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of Access to HE courses, and to help Skills and Education Group Access Centre staff, run high-quality provision, as smoothly as possible.

The following sections describe the processes which must be followed when delivering a Skills and Education Group Access approved and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) recognised Access to HE Diplomas (Diploma), including:

- Delivery against specified rules of combination
- Registration of students
- Internal and external moderation, and standardisation of student work
- Consideration of student achievement by the Final Award Boards (FAB)
- The issuing of Diploma certificates and transcripts to students.

This handbook provides the information required by Centres to gain approval to run, deliver and quality assure Diplomas. Information is also included about how to register and claim certification for students, and how to make any requests for changes to units or Diplomas.

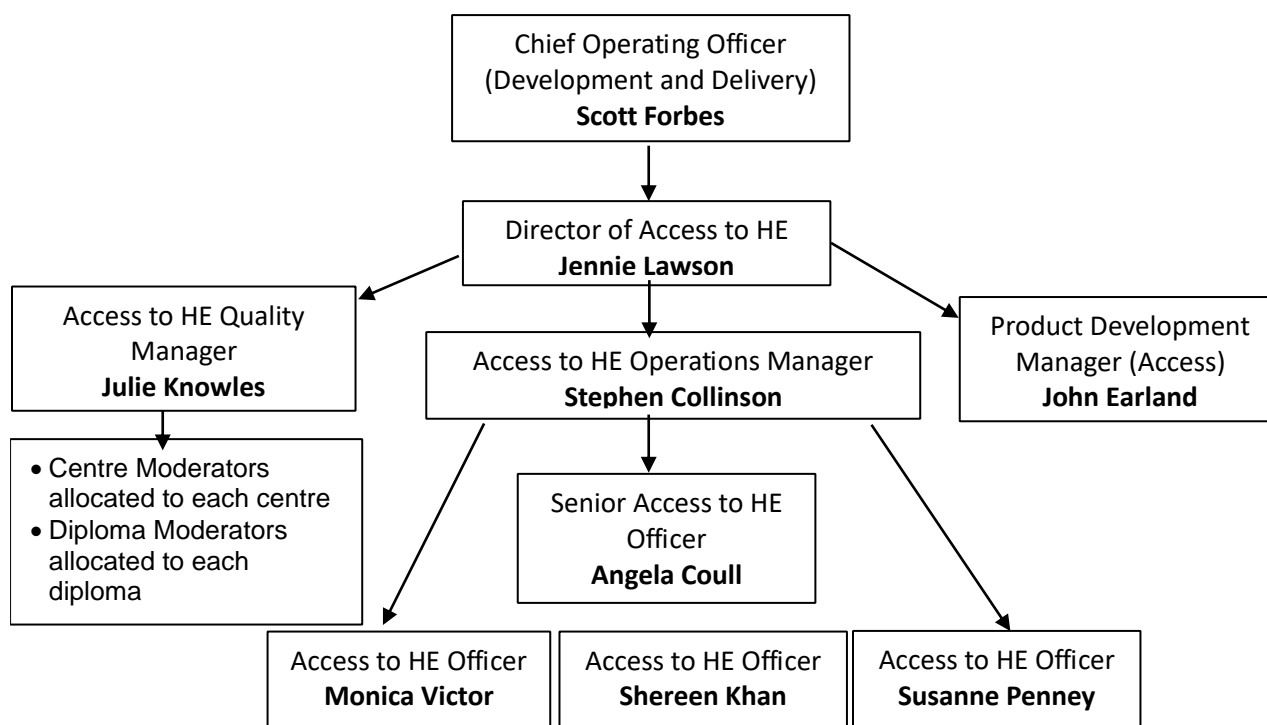
As well as providing an overview of the requirements of Skills and Education Group Access and QAA, this handbook signposts Centres to other supporting guidance documentation and website resources.

Please familiarise yourselves with this document and make it available to your relevant colleagues who are involved in Access to HE within your Centre.

Skills and Education Group Access and Access to HE

Skills and Education Group Access is a not-for-profit Charity and Access Validating Agency (AVA) licensed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), to develop, approve and quality assure Access to HE Diplomas. The QAA provides an integrated quality assurance service for Higher Education in the UK and is also responsible for assuring the quality and integrity of Access to HE Diplomas.

The Access to HE Team



We hope that you will find all the information you need to run your Diploma courses well, but if you require particular support, resources or training that are not featured in this handbook, please get in touch:

Access to HE Team contact details	Website: www.skillsandeducationgroupaccess.co.uk Email: accesstohe@skillsedugroup.co.uk Tel: 0115 8541620 and select Option 3 – Access to HE.
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The Generic Requirements for the Access to HE Diploma:

- The total credit achievement is 60 credits
- 60 credits is equivalent to 600 hours Total Qualification Time (TQT): 10 hours per credit
- Of the 60 credits, 45 credits must be achieved at Level Three from graded units concerned with academic content
- The remaining 15 credits must be achieved at Level Two¹ or Level Three from units which are ungraded and can be generated from either study skills or academic units
- All units have a value of 3 (30 hours), 6 (60 hours) or 9 (90 hours) credits
- Study skills units are not graded
- As a Level Three qualification it is expected that there will be a minimum of 50% direct contact time with students. This may be in the form of teaching, one-to-one sessions, tutorials or seminars.

¹ Not all Diploma's will include level 2 units, further details can be found in the Diploma specification.

The requirements for a named Diploma, including the full set of units, should be made available to students. Information about how these must, or may be combined, are contained within the Rules of Combination within the Diploma Specification ('Diploma Spec'); a document which summarises the regulatory requirements for each Diploma which has been approved at a Diploma validation panel. Diplomas have generic titles approved through the AVA's validation process. The following Skills and Education Group Access Diplomas are currently available to Centres:

- Access to HE Diploma (Art and Design)
- Access to HE Diploma (Business)
- Access to HE Diploma (Computing)
- Access to HE Diploma (Clothing and Textiles Manufacturing)
- Access to HE Diploma (Creative Entrepreneurship in Music)
- Access to HE Diploma (Criminal Justice)
- Access to HE Diploma (Digital and Creative Media)
- Access to HE Diploma (Early Years)
- Access to HE Diploma (Education Professions)
- Access to HE Diploma (Engineering)
- Access to HE Diploma (Health Science Professions)
- Access to HE Diploma (Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Access to HE Diploma (Law)
- Access to HE Diploma (Medicine)
- Access to HE Diploma (Midwifery)
- Access to HE Diploma (Nursing)
- Access to HE Diploma (Paramedic Science)
- Access to HE Diploma (Policing)
- Access to HE Diploma (Psychology)
- Access to HE Diploma (Science)
- Access to HE Diploma (Social Work)
- Access to HE Diploma (Sport and Physical Activity)

Centres may be approved to use different marketing titles to the above Diploma titles (e.g. Access to Social Work rather than Access to HE Diploma (Social Work)). Please make a request to the AVA to offer a marketing title before using it in the public domain (see Section 2 – Marketing the Diploma). Only the approved Diploma title will appear on your student's certificate.

Who should use this Handbook?

The following Centre staff should have access to and be familiar with the content of this handbook:

- Tutors and Assessors
- Course Co-ordinators and Managers
- Internal Moderators
- Administration Contacts
- MIS and Examinations Officers and Managers
- Quality Assurance Contacts.
- External moderators

Section 2: Setting up an Access to HE Course with Skills and Education Group Access

Becoming an Approved Access to HE Centre

Anyone using this handbook as a reference tool will already hold approved Centre Recognition status with Skills and Education Group Access.

Once approved, Skills and Education Group Access recognised Centres can seek approval to run Access to HE Diplomas. Centres wishing to develop a new Diploma will be provided with an expression of interest form. Please contact John Earland to discuss further at johne@skillsedugroup.co.uk

This approval process complies with QAA regulations and ensures that all Diplomas meet QAA specifications and are fit for purpose in preparing students for study in higher education.

Course Recognition

Once a Centre has been approved to deliver a Diploma, the details of the Centre and the course(s) are included on the QAA's Access to HE database as a recognised Access to HE course. A funding code will be assigned, and Centres can begin to deliver the Diploma(s). Until such times as Approval to Run has been confirmed by the AVA, Centres must include 'subject to approval' in all marketing and public information related to the Diploma (s) in question.

Closure of an Access to HE Diploma or Withdrawal of an Approved Centre

The closure of an Access to HE course may result from either action on the part of the AVA or an action taken on behalf of the management of the Centre.

Skills and Education Group Access has a Closure of a Diploma Policy, which is available in SharePoint. The Key principles of this policy states that in consideration of withdrawal of approval, and in the interests of students, Centres will:

- a) co-operate fully with Skills and Education Group Access in cases where either the Centre or Skills and Education Group Access decides it needs to withdraw the Centre from its role in delivering an Access to HE Diploma. This co-operation will be provided whether the withdrawal is voluntary or not from the Centre's perspective.
- b) take all reasonable steps to protect the interests of students in the case of such a withdrawal as referred to in point 'a' above. This will apply whether the withdrawal is voluntary or not from the Centre's perspective.
- c) adhere to the process specified by Skills and Education Group Access for the withdrawal of the Centre from the delivery of (the Access to HE Diploma), as set out in the Centre Handbook.

Diploma Development, Validation and Approval

Each Access to HE Diploma has an associated Diploma Specification (Diploma Spec'). This document lists the units that form the specific Diploma, together with its associated Rules of Combination (RoC). The Diploma Spec' will also indicate the conditions under which Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), including credit transfer (see Section 3, How to Register Students and Award Credit) can be used in each Diploma.

The Diploma Specification (Spec)

Consultation with the higher education sector ensures that the Access to HE curriculum is not only appropriate to the needs of adult students but also appropriate to the requirements of higher education.

In preparing each Diploma Spec', Skills and Education Group Access works with curriculum specialists from both HE and FE to consider the type and volume of content needed to prepare students for studying at a higher level. The unit combinations and the set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria contained within the units will be made available to you through SharePoint. The most current versions must always be used and older versions disposed of.

If you would like to make a request to change the content of a unit or create a new one, please contact the Access to HE team who will advise you of the process and timescales involved.

Marketing the Diploma

QAA expects AVAs to monitor Centre websites and marketing materials, and to alert a Centre if Access to HE Diplomas are not correctly marketed.

It is a QAA requirement that we check your marketing and website material on an annual basis.

Skills and Education Group Access expects the following logos be included in the design of any marketing material:

- Skills and Education Group Access Logo
- QAA Access to HE Logo is used when promoting Access to HE Diplomas.

You should:

- State clearly within your marketing material the minimum entry requirements for enrolment to the Diploma
- Consider the requirements of Higher Education Institutions where the students may eventually study - entry requirements may include GCSE Maths, English or Science (A* to C) where these may be required to continue into higher education
- Be clear about the age restriction of any application for the Diploma course and make sure it complies with the Equality Act 2010. Please refer to the Equality Act 2010, Part 6, Chapter 2.

The following additional information is strongly recommended:

- Fees and remission conditions (including the Student Load Write-off if applicable)
- Support for students with specific needs
- Programme links with HE
- Progression routes possible for successful students.

The Diploma title used in any marketing material should be exactly as described in the Diploma Spec' for that Diploma. However, a marketing title may be used if this has been approved within the Request to Run Application e.g.:

AVA Access to HE Diploma Title	Centre Marketing Title
Access to HE Diploma (Business)	Access to Business with Law
Access to HE Diploma (Humanities and Social Sciences)	Access to Social Work

We will make regular checks of your websites and will contact the Centre Quality Manager should any changes be required. The Access to HE Committee has a responsibility to make periodic checks of Centre marketing material. More information is available in the document folder of your Centre's Skills and Education Group SharePoint site.

Funding Access to HE Diplomas

Access to HE courses delivered by colleges in England and approved for public funding are co-funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Students aged 19 or over will be expected to pay full fees, but in England students can apply for a loan under the Government's Advanced Learning Loans Scheme to cover the cost of these fees. You may be able to draw down funding for students who are under 19 years of age if they are entitled to Level 3 funding. Students who take out a loan, progress to and achieve their HE course will have their loan written off. You can find more information [here](#) to guide your students.

Preparing to Deliver Access to HE Diplomas

Access to HE Team Meetings

The success of any Access to HE course depends on the ability of the tutors to work closely as a team. It is recommended that tutor teams meet formally at least once a month and more frequently if the situation demands.

Meetings of course teams may be part of an organisation's scheduling of quality assurance activities and may have standard agendas. In this case it is necessary to allow time or schedule additional meetings to cover Skills and Education Group Access and internal Access to HE items. Minutes from such meetings should include rolling action plans, held by the course coordinator, and informed by the recommendations of external and internal

moderators and staff and student suggestions for development and /or attention. Your Centre Moderator (CM) will want to have access to team meeting minutes at visits.

First Meeting of the Diploma Team

The following agenda items should be addressed as early in the Diploma course as possible:

- CPD requirements for each team member
- Any CPD events that the AVA requires you to attend (such as standardisation)
- Quality assurance calendar
- Appointment of internal moderators for each unit
- Centre Moderator review and planning findings
- Action plans for the year – to include action points from external moderators, internal moderation reports and student feedback mechanisms
- Student requirements for RPL/credit transfer
- Any requests for changes to the units intended to be delivered should be identified and communicated to Skills and Education Group Access
- Communications that Skills and Education Group Access will send, including items for action or information within bulletins.

Subsequent Team Meetings

It is expected that each Centre will have some standing internal agenda items to include as well as those that deal specifically with AVA requirements. Agenda items that should be included are:

- Student progress in assessment
- Identification of those students at risk and action required
- Progress against action plans and new additions
- Recording of assessment and grading on the Recommendation for Award of Credit
- Cascade of feedback from Skills and Education Group Access events; checking on attendance at these and standardisation events
- Issues arising from the use of the current units
- Planning of a pre-Final Awards Boards (FABs) prior to the final moderation and FAB
- Completion of the annual electronic course team report (usual deadline end of July).

Centre's Annual Course Reports

Skills and Education Group Access is required to report to QAA each year relating to the previous academic year's activity. Centre annual reports are an essential tool in helping Skills and Education Group Access understand the data trends, on which we must report to QAA.

Whilst it is accepted that Centres may not finalise their own self-evaluation reports until later in the year, it is vital that Centres submit information to Skills and Education Group Access to enable us to comply with our QAA Licensing requirements.

We will usually collect this information at the start of the new academic year through electronic surveys which will include questions relating to QAA licensing criteria such as:

- Student recruitment, retention, achievement, and success
- Student progression and destinations
- Standards of student performance including grading data analysis
- Student feedback received about the course and the quality of their learning experience, and the Centre's response to issues raised
- Examples of innovation and good practice.

Course evaluations are a vital way in which we fulfil our requirements to QAA (taking feedback from Centres). Failure to return the survey within the specified timeframe will be recorded as a quality issue and may affect the risk rating of your Diploma or overall Centre.

The Student Handbook

Students on an approved Diploma course *must* be supported through a Student Handbook.

Apart from details of the curriculum, assessment requirements specific to the particular Diploma, and support mechanisms specific to the Centre, the following areas of information *should* be available:

- Contact details for the Centre, the tutors, learning resources and guidance facilities
- Attendance requirements and procedure for notification of absence
- Arrangements for the Award and Assessment of Access to HE Diplomas
- Your procedure for submitting mitigating and extenuating circumstances and when it is appropriate to do so
- Plagiarism, appeals and complaints and how your policies are implemented
- The credits/levels involved in the achievement of the Diploma (e.g. that although only 45 credits are graded, all 60 must be achieved)
- Information about grading, including how a unit grade is agreed by using the 'mid-point'
- A statement that all credits and grades are provisional until ratified

- by the external moderation process on inspection of the completed portfolio to allow recommendations to be made to the FAB
- Clear guidance on the preparation of a portfolio and its role in the decision-making process leading to successful achievement of the Diploma
 - Student responsibilities for making their completed portfolio available for moderation
 - Details of the on-course referral process
 - Application of deadlines, including the process for the application for extensions
 - Acceptable use of 'drafts'
 - Details of, and process for Extenuations
 - The work of the FAB in relation to the student
 - How and when to apply for HE courses
 - The post-FAB process towards receiving the Diploma certificate and unit transcript.

A student handbook template is available for all Centres in their Skills and Education Group SharePoint document folder.

Student Representatives

It is a requirement for each Centre to supply the name and email contact details for a student representative for each Diploma delivered by the Centre. Student representatives are likely to represent a wide variety of issues on behalf of their student cohorts including, but not limited to:

- Learning and teaching methods
- Assessment methods
- Support provided by personal tutors
- Learning and teaching resource
- Facilities
- Academic events
- Academic issues affecting student progression to HE.

The key tasks of student representatives are to:

- Make themselves and their role known to the students that they represent
- Receive, promote and disseminate our student surveys for completion by fellow students
- Proactively seek academic related views, questions and experiences of their fellow students
- Represent the academic related views, questions and experiences obtained from their fellow students
- Work with Centre staff to resolve any issues or questions that have been raised by their fellow students
- Disseminate updates and outcomes on issues discussed at joint meetings of staff and student representatives
- Attend student representative meetings each academic year with the AVA as invited.

Student representatives should not take on the personal complaints or grievances of fellow students.

We will contact student representatives during the year to:

- Advise of student guidance from QAA
- Invite to student representative meetings
- Request completion of questionnaires and surveys for feedback on current topics.

Student representatives may also be invited to attend Access to HE Unit and Diploma Validation Panels.

To comply with Data Protection, by becoming a student representative, students are agreeing that their name, address and e-mail address will be held on a database compiled by Skills and Education Group Access which contains the name and email address of each student representative in that academic year.

Section 3: How to Register Students

Student Registration

It is a QAA requirement that Access to HE students must be:

- Registered within **42** days of commencement of their course (6 weeks)
- Registered to 60 credits by **84** days – considering the units (including barred combinations) referred to in the Diploma Spec’.

If there is likely to be an issue in registering students and units by these deadlines, you must contact the Access to HE team so that we can work out a solution for you. Any late registrations without AVA permission will incur a ‘late registration’ fee per student (please see Skills and Education Group Access charging fees in in SharePoint).

A student registration is valid for a period of no longer than three years, after which, a student will need to be re-registered should they need longer to complete the Diploma or have returned to complete, either at the same college or a different college. This is most likely to be relevant for Centres that run roll-on, roll-off courses, or online provision where a student may take longer than the usual one or two years to complete the course.

Any student that has commenced study but has been unable to complete within this three-year period, must be advised on their return, of the opportunity to request Transfer of Credit (ToC) if the Rules of Combination for the chosen Diploma allows.

If a student enrolls for a one-year course at a college but is unable to complete within that time but plans to return the next year, the end date of the course for this student must be extended before the end of the current year. If this has not happened, the registration will expire, and the student will need to be re-registered when they return the following year.

Credit Accumulation, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Transfer of Credit

Students accumulate credit towards the Diploma by achieving units of a particular credit value (3, 6 or 9 credits) through the process of assessment on an Access to HE course. Students may also do this through the processes of credit transfer and through RPL where a particular Diploma allows. Please check the relevant Diploma Spec’ for details as some Diplomas do not allow the facility of RPL.

The principle underpinning RPL is that students who have already achieved relevant learning, either through experience or through previously certificated achievement, should not have to repeat that learning unnecessarily. Good practice in RPL requires that the potential for any individual student to claim credit through any form of RPL should be identified within an initial assessment process. If a judgement is made at this time that there is evidence of

appropriate prior learning, requests for such RPL should be forwarded to the Access to HE team at Skills and Education Group Access, using the Application for the Award of RPL 2023-24 form (see SharePoint) **at the point of registration** of the student. The external moderator will expect to see evidence of this at the first moderation visit.

A maximum of 50% of the credits for a Diploma can be gained through RPL and/or credit transfer. The RPL status of a Diploma is shown under the Rules of Combination in the Diploma Spec' for that Diploma.

The process of RPL does not allow grades to be awarded but the process of credit transfer does. Credit transfer allows students to count credits awarded on other Access to HE courses (including grades awarded) towards their credit achievements on a new course. If a student wishes to proceed with a credit transfer you must complete the application for the Award of RPL/Credit transfer **at the point of registration**. Please speak to the Access to HE team if you would like further advice on this.

Applications for the award of credits via credit transfer or RPL are made on a case by case basis and are time-consuming. Failure to apply for this at the point of registration may result in a refusal of award or is likely to incur additional administration fees.

The student must be made aware of the potential advantages and disadvantages of pursuing a claim for RPL and credit transfer. It is essential to ensure that a student does not opt out of the teaching and assessments for a unit which is part of their Diploma because they hope to gain credits through any form of RPL or credit transfer, only then to discover that the claim has not been successful. It is also advisable that students are encouraged to make contact with their chosen HE Institute so that they are clear whether their HE place will be made on a basis of RPL.

RPL/credit transfer must not be used:

- Where a student does not yet have evidence of the achievement of learning (for example, for a qualification being taken concurrently with the Diploma)
- As a mechanism applied late in a course as a remedy for a student not achieving sufficient credits to be awarded a Diploma.

Tutors are encouraged to enquire as to any potential RPL/credit transfer at the point of interview or at the very latest, induction to the course so that an application to the AVA can be made.

Selecting Units

Centres will select the units for a cohort of students by accessing the AVA's online system before the **84 day** deadline of student enrolment. It is likely that a tutor team will provide an exam's department with their choice of units and these will then be selected on Quartzweb by the exams department.

It is the responsibility of the Centre to ensure that the correct rules of combination are identified – although there is a check made automatically within the Quartz system. Your External Moderator will also check that the correct units and codes are being used during their sampling activity.

Once your students have been registered and valid unit selections for each student have been made, the system will lock and you will be able to generate the electronic Recommendation for the Award of Credit (eRAC) from Quartzweb.

The eRac identifies the units each student is registered to and allows you to input the grades they receive for each unit as they progress through the course. It is this document which must be made available to the Centre Moderator prior to the FAB which validates all student achievements. Please note that once the system is locked, you must contact the Access to HE team if you need to make any changes to student or unit information. There is likely to be a fee for any changes made.

Changing a Student's List of Registered Units²

We recognise that in **exceptional circumstances**, students may need to make changes to the list of units they were registered for within the early weeks of their Diploma course. Therefore, we have put in place a form for amending the registered list of units, (see SharePoint). A request to change a list of registered units can only be made up to **9 credits** and within the first 26 weeks of a course. Any beyond 26 weeks are presented to the Access to HE Committee for formal approval.

Requests to change the list of student's units will only be considered when made by a member of the Centre tutor or Quality teams.

Teaching or assessment of the replacement units must not commence without formal AVA approval. For any requests beyond **26 weeks**, these would be due to extreme student or Centre circumstances and are considered on a case-by-case by the Access to HE Committee.

QAA expects that in all cases, some action by the student and/or tutor to substantiate the request to make a change to a registered list will have taken place prior to the request being received by Skills and Education Group Access.

Good practice in course delivery should ensure that students are given early information about any choices of optional units available to them on their chosen Diploma. Students should make their choices to reflect their interests and progression ambitions. However, it is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances outside of a student's control that mean that an amendment to a registration needs to be made.

Definitions of exceptional circumstance where requests for changes to a list of units are acceptable:

1. Student changing choice of HE course during the Diploma course:

In this case, it is expected that the student will have contacted the higher education institutions (HEIs) to which they have applied, to indicate their change of course and, if relevant, will also have contacted any other HEIs that could offer the course they now wish to take. There should be reasonable grounds to indicate that the student will be offered a conditional place on the higher education course they now wish to take. Documentary evidence to this effect may be requested by Skills and Education Group Access.

In some situations, the student may have been guided by subject tutors or guidance personnel to consider a different HEI either through lack of potential in receiving successful offers for their first choice, or through unexpected extenuating circumstances. The request for change must indicate that such guidance has taken place.

It is expected that ALL students will have fully researched their potential higher education courses before starting their Diploma and therefore should not normally need to change their unit choice.

2. Where a HE Institution makes an offer to a student that includes units that are not on their registered list:

Skills and Education Group Access encourages a student or supporting tutor to contact the HE Institution to discuss the offer so that an amendment to the offer can be made. It may be due to a lack of understanding of the unit or course content that can be resolved during a conversation with a department admissions' tutor. Where this step does not secure an updated offer, Skills and Education Group Access will intervene on the student's behalf. If this does not prove successful, a request to change a list of units will then be considered for that student.

3. Centre is unable to offer a registered unit through unexpected absence of delivery staff, where replacement staff were not available:

The tutor must try to ensure that as far as possible, any new unit brought into the student's course will be in the same curriculum area as has become unavailable. Many HEIs place conditional offers on the number of credits or grades from Skills and Education Group Accessing curriculum strands.

'Good practice in course delivery should ensure that students are given early information about any choices of optional units available to them on their chosen Diploma, and they should make their choices to reflect their interests and progression ambitions. However, it is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances outside of a student's control that means an amendment to a registration needs to be made.'

We will accept applications from students, via their course team leader, by completion of a Request to Change Student's List of Registered Units Form, (see SharePoint), up to a maximum of **9 credits**. The policy for a request to change a student unit outlines this application process and is available in SharePoint.

There is an admin' fee payable by the Centre in respect of each request form submitted. Please consult Skills and Education Group Access current Charging and Fees document (in SharePoint).

Responsibilities Regarding Changing a Student's Units

The AVA will implement our procedure for determining the exceptional circumstances under which an amendment to a student's unit registration will be permitted.

We will consider whether the amendment **does not** give the student making the request an advantage in relation to other students on their course. It ensures that an amendment is **not allowed** if it fails to meet any of the following criteria:

- Must not create a situation where a student is at any time registered for, or may be able to achieve, more than 60 credits
- Must be consistent with the rules of combination for the named Diploma for which the student is registered
- Must not be allowed if the unit to which the amendment relates is one that has already been delivered on the student's course and for which other students have already been assessed
- Must not be used in any way that allows a student to improve their grade profile through substitution of a new unit for one already achieved
- Must not exceed a total credit value of **9 credits**
- Must be completed no later than **26 weeks** after the planned start date of the course for which the student is registered.

Any requests beyond 26 weeks from enrolment will be presented to Skills and Education Group Access Access to HE Committee for approval. Tutors must not begin delivering or assessing an alternative unit until they have received formal acknowledgment from the AVA of formal approval.

Where the amendment is agreed, we will issue an official record of the amendment to the Centre, in the form of a statement of the changes made, identifying the unit(s) for which the student is no longer registered and the unit(s) for which they are now registered. Quartzweb will also be updated with the changes.

Skills and Education Group Access will:

- Consider, and inform the student, via your organisation of their decision within **five working days** of receipt of the correctly completed form
- Keep records of all requests for amendments to a registration and

- the outcome of those requests
- Consider the exceptional circumstances that have given rise to the request
 - Monitor the pattern of such requests and take action if it identifies Centres or course teams that make more than exceptional use of the procedure to amend registrations
 - Present records of requests for such amendments to Skills and Education Group Access Access to HE Committee for approval
 - Report on the use of this procedure to QAA where required
 - Inform Centres that students who amend the details of their registration after they have applied to higher education should be advised to notify the higher education courses to which they have applied of this change. Failure to do this could lead to the withdrawal of the offer of a place when the higher education institute receives the results of student achievement after the student has completed their Diploma.
 - Refresh the Recommendation for the Award of Credit (RAC) for the student(s) so that it can be downloaded by the Centre
 - Request that the Access to HE Committee considers a request to change a unit beyond the 26-week limit for a student with extreme exceptional circumstances - this may be presented to the Committee Chair between scheduled meetings. It will be made clear to the student (through the Centre's Student Handbook, and from the guidance given from Skills and Education Group Access) that it will be the Access to HE Committee, not the AVA that will consider late requests.
 - Issue an invoice in accordance with our current charging policy for each student's request.

Your organisation will:

- Ensure that changed unit(s) sit within the same curriculum as the unit(s) that were originally offered
- Contact all HEIs to which students have applied advising them of the change of unit(s) delivery now being offered
- Advise any student that makes a request for a change to unit(s) beyond the **26-week** deadline, that this will be considered by the Access to HE Committee and not the Access to HE team. **Approval is not guaranteed.**
- Advise the students to notify HEIs to which they have applied of the change in unit(s).

The student will:

- Ensure that they receive early information and guidance from the Centre about any choices of optional units available to them within their chosen diploma, and they should make their choices to reflect their interest and progression ambitions
- Be prompt in informing the course tutor for a request to a change of unit(s)
- Inform the HEI of the change to unit(s) as failure to do so could lead to the withdrawal of an offer of a place.

The Request to Change Student's List of Registered Units Form can be found in SharePoint. After completion, the request form should be forwarded together with documentary evidence to our Access to HE Team.

Section 4: Assessing and Grading Student Work

Assessment

The Importance of Assessment in Skills and Education Group Access Accreditation

The accreditation of learning depends on the ability to assess it accurately and effectively.

Tutors/assessors play a vital role in the whole process of students achieving credit as they have the most direct impact on the delivery and assessment of the Diploma. Tutors/assessors will:

- Deliver the Diploma according to the approved Diploma Spec' and any subsequent approved documentation
- Assess students' work in accordance with Skills and Education Group Access requirements and QAA Licensing Criteria
- Ensure students' work is presented clearly with units, assessment briefs, student evidence, tutor feedback and internal moderator reports. Evidence of learning activities and tutor handouts should be kept separately as evidence of the learning journey
- Participate in internal quality assurance processes, external moderation and standardisation activity, and Centre FABs as appropriate.

Note: the body of student work is likely to be electronic (Creative Art subjects more likely to be physical).

Considerable attention is given to the process of assessment at all stages from Diploma Spec' approval to final moderation which leads to the confirmation of achievement. The standing of Skills and Education Group Access credits, grades and Diplomas depends on the integrity of the assessment procedures.

Definitions of Assessment

QAA expects Skills and Education Group Access to ensure that:

- The conduct of assessment and application of assessment regulations by Centres is thorough, rigorous and fair
- Minimum standards required for threshold achievement and performance are consistent with the requirements for achievement of the relevant learning outcomes
- Consistent standards are applied in assessment, so that equivalent student achievement and performance is reflected in recommendations for the award of credits and grades.

The following terms may be useful to you in delivering and assessing on Access to HE Diplomas:

Assignment: refers to the output of student work, both as described in terms of the expectations and requirements given in the assignment brief, and the major pieces of assessed work students produce in response to the brief.

Tasks: refers to individual items or stages of work within assignments.

Assessment: refers to the whole process leading to the tutor awarding grading and/or credit for a unit, i.e. the assignment (brief and student work) and the feedback with achievement/grading decisions where appropriate from the tutor. Assessment is also:

- The way of finding out what a student has learned
- A source of evidence of the progress and achievement for both tutors and students.

Assessors

Assessors must be either experienced in teacher-assessed, credit-based assessment, or qualified, i.e. hold an appropriate assessment or teaching qualification. It is expected that all Access to HE tutors are qualified to at least one level (Level 4) above the Diploma level (Level 3). Tutors with little experience in devising assessment tasks must attend appropriate training. Your CM will expect to review new tutor Curriculum Vitae (CV).

Assessment Strategy

When making an Application for Approval to Run a Diploma, Skills and Education Group Access expect that Centres will have developed an appropriate assessment strategy in line with your own organisation's policy.

The assessment strategy for each Diploma must enable students to develop all the personal, study and academic skills required in higher education. Your assessment strategy should include the types, and methods of assessment used in HE, such as essays, projects and timed constrained assignments such as exams, as appropriate.

An assessment strategy created and shared by the team will ensure that:

- No one method is over-used
- There are sufficient opportunities to develop oral presentation and communication skills
- The student gains adequate practice in taking time-constrained assignments
- There are sufficient assignments to ensure authenticity, reliability and fairness and that these are scheduled appropriately throughout the Diploma course
- There are alternative assignments to accommodate on-course referral opportunities.

Personal development must be considered in the design of an assessment strategy. Students should be given opportunities to:

- Plan study time appropriately
- Identify own skills and potential
- Research opportunities for future employment and subsequent appropriate HE courses
- Be proactive in searching out advice and guidance
- Deal with stress in assessment i.e. through unseen tests, oral presentations
- Work to deadlines in time constrained assignments and through responses to assignment brief
- Work in a group
- Reflect on own and others' performances sensitively and constructively.

The process of development of a course will include identifying the details of a Centre's proposed assessment strategy. This proposal must meet the requirements of the approved Diploma Spec' of a named Diploma. It will take account of the level, context, content, and delivery of the Diploma. It must address the questions "What is assessment for?" and "Why are we doing it this way?"

Assessment Tasks

Within the assessment strategy, Centres must ensure that student work for each task is assessed against the learning outcomes by using the assessment criteria, and judged to be either achieved or not achieved. All learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be met.

Assessors should ensure that:

- Assessment is planned, appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent and does not unintentionally discriminate against any student
- Students clearly understand assessment requirements
- Students' work is authentic, i.e. completed by the named student
- Work is sufficient, i.e. provides enough evidence from each student to enable robust judgements about achievement
- Student achievement is clearly mapped to the learning outcome.

Assessment tasks must:

- Map to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Be developed as written documents in their own right
- Be pre-issued internally verified before they are made available to students
- Be fit for purpose, i.e. valid, reliable, sufficient and accessible
- Cover a range of assessment methods wherever possible
- Be designed in such a way as to minimise bias
- Be the same for each group that is following the course
- Match the standard exemplified in any benchmark assessment tasks
- Enable evidence of authenticity
- Be different when used in response to approval of a referral opportunity
- Be stored in a secure place that ensures confidentiality where required.

Skills and Education Group Access offers training in devising and developing assessment tasks, by arrangement. Please contact our Access to HE team. Development fees will apply unless by agreement with a Centre that is new to Skills and Education Group Access.

Making Assessment Assignments User-Friendly

The best way to make assessments user-friendly, clear, transparent and transferable is to set the assignment out clearly in a briefing paper. The use of a common briefing format across all curriculum strands in the Diploma is recommended.

The briefing sheet should contain the following:

- Diploma title
- Unit title
- Learning Outcome and Assessment Criterion/a to be covered by the assignment
- The grading descriptors to be used where appropriate and how the evidence for the assignments link to components of the grading descriptors
- Suggested wording for contextualizing the task to the appropriate grading descriptors can be found in SharePoint
- An indication of the number of assignments used to complete the unit
- The assignment tasks
- The date the assignment was given to the student
- The deadline for the submission of the assignment – word processed into the briefing sheet
- An indication of word count if appropriate (1,000 -1,500 for three credits)
- Whether drafts are acceptable and if so, the associated deadline for any drafts. QAA expects that where drafts are allowable, they are used in the early part of a course to help students to become more academically able as they proceed through the course
- Some indication of the range and type of references to be used, if appropriate.

Making Achievement Transparent through Assessment

For a student to be awarded the Diploma there must be a transparent process of recording evidence of achievement against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit(s).

An assessment feedback sheet is essential, which must include:

- Student name
- Diploma title
- Unit title
- Deadline date
- Date of submission by the student (an agreed late deadline date must appear on this sheet and have auditable links to the

mitigating circumstances submitted by the student) (Non-agreed late submissions are capped at a 'Pass' for graded units, although there may be circumstances where an application for on-course referral is appropriate. Refer to the Policy for Dealing with On-Course Referrals, (see SharePoint).

- Clear mapping of evidence to the unit assessment criteria
- Achievement or non-achievement clearly identified with a field for a new submission date for non-achievement of a first submission
- Achievement or non-achievement that is clearly identified in a resubmission, with indication of the student instigating the on-course referral process where appropriate
- Late submissions clearly indicated with outcomes capped at a Pass
- Grading indicators awarded for each descriptor assigned to the assignment where appropriate; if there is only one assignment used for the achievement of a graded unit, the final grade awarded for the unit must be shown
- Written feedback to the student from the assessor to cover constructive developmental comments, including where a Distinction indicator is given, identification of good practice and justification for the award of particular grade indicators as appropriate.

Guidance on Assignments covering ACs from more than one Unit

The QAA Diploma specification of 2020 states:

Assessed work for the unit must be undertaken solely for the achievement of that unit or set of units (that is not 'cross-referenced' to or from the work submitted for assessment for another unit). Annex B: Units, B5 e page 9.

It is, therefore, acceptable to write an assignment that covers every assessment criterion from two (or more) graded units.

AVA and External Moderators have agreed:

- Definition of QAA Cross reference refers to missing Assessment Criterion/a (AC) found in another assignment that did not indicate that the AC could be met in that assignment.
- OR use of an assignment to meet ACs for a second unit, without the tasks allowing for the increase in number of credits involved for the two units with the brief lacking any reference linking both units
- Definition of mapping – identification of where in brief tasks ACs are to be met &/or where ACs are met in brief response.
- 'Set of units' – QAA meaning more than one unit
- An assignment **should not** be assessed twice for two units, unless the assignment clearly states that ACs from two (or more) units are covered by the tasks

- Brief document for assignment to cover two units should have:
 - Both units' titles with codes at top of brief
 - ACs to be achieved for each unit should be given in separate sections
 - ACs to be achieved from both units must be mapped to the tasks in the brief
 - Any information on grading descriptors, e.g. components and the related contextualisation, assigned to each unit should be shown separately
 - Briefing for every unit must be separately pre-issued verified – so where there are two units involved in an assignment, then there should be two pre-issue verification reports, one for the complete assessment activity for each unit.
- Feedback must be given for each unit as a separate entity, either against the ACs for ungraded or against the grading descriptors for a graded unit
- Grade indicators must be agreed for each unit as a separate entity
- It is possible to achieve one unit and not achieve the other unit.

The AVA would not expect that Assessment Criteria are split across assessments related to a Learning Outcome.

The use of Academic Writing (AW) with a curriculum unit in one assignment.

- Suggestion: to include in a brief that covers some ACs from AW and also from a curriculum unit should be a statement that the grading process can only be applied to the evidence for the curriculum unit when a robust attempt has been made to cover all the ACs included in the assignment, i.e. ACs from both units that have been selected to use in the assignment – to try to mitigate against late submission of the ungraded unit.
- If tutor offers opportunity for AW ACs to be met from student choice of one/two units from a given list, an AW brief should make it clear how student records choice of the curriculum unit/s, with the brief for the optional units showing AW ACs in brief.

Types of Assessment

Initial diagnostic	
Form:	Usually takes place before or at the start of a Diploma.
Purpose:	To identify current learning style and strengths to determine the potential needs and areas for development of individuals and/or the group.
Formative	
Form:	Developmental and continuous throughout the course.
Purpose:	To give feedback and support to the student about progress towards learning outcomes and to inform the tutor of possible action to take. It should be used to empower students to take responsibility for their own learning and assessment.
Summative	
Form:	Takes place during or towards the end of a unit of learning within the Diploma and counts towards final assessment. It is criterion-referenced and uses the assessment criteria in the units.
Purpose:	To measure the learning and achievement that has taken place by the end of a learning experience.

Assessment Methods

Assessment methods refer to the activity defined by the assignments that a student undertakes, and the ways in which assessors can mark and record the responses to these assignments. Any assessment strategy should include a variety of assessment methods, adapted as necessary to the needs of the target group and the curriculum.

The merits of using examinations, both unseen and seen, have been discussed with HE contacts in terms of current practice within HE, and are considered essential preparation for higher education studies.

Assessment methods include:

- Observation of activities in the learning environment, such as role-play, group work, simulations, practical activities, discussion, performance
- Questioning, oral or written, informal or formally structured sometimes referred to as vivas or Professional Discussion (see SharePoint for template)
- Structured assignments undertaken in the student's own time, such as:
 - A project
 - A practical exercise
 - An essay
 - A case study or assignment
 - Production of an artefact; either physically or electronically,

- exhibition, show, display
- Preparation of a report, (written or oral)
- Structured assignments or tests undertaken in timed conditions, such as written, oral or practical examinations.

The assessment process should empower students by including:

- Open, unambiguous and transparent briefing
- Developmental feedback on the process and results of assessment
- Opportunities to demonstrate learning by every student
- Relevance to and integration into the learning process
- The opportunity for students to reflect on their own learning
- The opportunity for students to appeal against assessment and grading decisions.

Characteristics of Assessment

All assessment methods should be valid, reliable, fit for purpose and inclusive.

Valid

Assessment should measure what it claims to measure and what is important to measure; in other words, there should be a close fit between the assessment method(s) and the learning outcome(s).

Reliable

The assessment result should be replicable and consistent either under different circumstances, or with a different assessor. For example, the conditions provided for an assessed presentation for one student group (lectern, PowerPoint etc.) should be made available for all.

Fit for Purpose

Assessment methods should be appropriate for the form of assessment. For example, an initial assessment should build confidence and not deter a student from appropriate progression. Tasks must generate sufficient evidence from each student to enable assessors to make robust judgements.

Word Count

Assessment should be appropriate to credit value. Writing a 3000-word essay would not be appropriate for a 3-credit unit; a word count of between 1000 and 1500 would be more appropriate depending on the type of assessment. Assessment must be appropriate to the credit level. Essays, formal reports, and presentations are some of the assignment types that are appropriate at Level Three.

Inclusive

Assessment methods should not raise unnecessary barriers to demonstration of achievement. Tasks should be designed to minimise bias and to permit reasonable adjustments to be made, while minimising the need for them.

Evidence should be tailored to the needs of individuals or groups, and evidence should always be flexible, varied and appropriate. Therefore, a student with physical difficulties may provide visual or oral evidence such as photographs or Videos rather than the notes and reports produced by the rest of the group. A student with dyslexia should not be asked to produce a timed assignment without support. Tutors must ensure that the evidence provided is genuinely appropriate to the level of the unit. New tutors must be supported in this area, and internally moderated to ensure these principles are adhered to.

The tutor team needs to ensure that students are given opportunity to provide the required evidence, but care must be taken not to give the student so much support that the work becomes essentially that of the tutor.

Authentic

Assignments that lead to student evidence that is the result of the student's own performance activity are an essential part of any assessment strategy in a Diploma course. Appropriate mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that the student has done the work that is presented.

In courses where word-processed submissions of evidence are mainly used, it is necessary for tutors or assessors to require pieces of handwritten evidence such as drafts (where permissible), plans and notes as part of the assessment strategy in the majority of units. **The use of a signature from the student to agree that the work is his/her own is required.**

Centres are increasingly likely to make use of electronic plagiarism checking software. Please use your internal policy on plagiarism and academic malpractice where this is suspected and ensure that the external moderator is made aware of the process followed, and outcomes recorded in each case.

Management of Assessment

Record-keeping is essential. Anyone engaged in the assessment of students' work should log and maintain records of student achievement. There should be some facility for the co-ordination of assessment decisions for every student and every unit. We ask you to use the electronic eRAC as the core tracking document for assessment decisions for each completed unit.

Assessment by the Tutor

Tutors are responsible for planning, devising and managing the assessment strategy for the units of learning they deliver and ensuring that it matches the information on the unit assessment grid and as listed in the Diploma Spec'. Tutors are also responsible for sharing the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of units with students, recording assessment, giving ongoing feedback (formative and summative), and ensuring that all students have equal opportunities for their learning to be assessed.

Tutors will provide guidance to students where there are choices regarding assessment and are responsible for communication and liaison with any _____

other assessor, informally as well as through regular team meetings. It is expected that a tutor of Access to HE is qualified to at least one level above that of the Diploma. Any tutor working towards a Level 4 qualification will need to be mentored and should not be the sole assessor of the unit/s they are teaching on. The external moderator will check college policy on Human Resources (HR) and Recruitment and will expect this requirement to be explicit within such policy.

Assessment by People other than the Delivery Tutor:

Peer/Self-Assessment

Peer and self-assessment are usual forms of any learning process for both the student and the peer assessor. Many group activities will lend themselves to this form of assessment, particularly where the skills include communication or personal development. It is important that the tutor retains overall responsibility, perhaps by countersigning to indicate agreement or adding further comment.

Key Points to Remember when Using Self/Peer Assessment:

- The criteria for making judgements must come from the unit being assessed
- Students must be clear about which criteria are being assessed
- Students must understand that they are assessing only against those criteria and that personal judgements are not appropriate
- There are many situations where peer and self-assessment will not be appropriate, for instance where students or tutors lack confidence, particularly in the early parts of the course
- Students must have the knowledge and skills in the particular curriculum area and level to effectively self and peer assess
- Students must understand the level at which they are assessing/being assessed
- Students must be supported to feel safe in making these assessment decisions
- Assessment evidence should be captured using appropriate observation sheets
- Tutors must provide training to students to develop their understanding and competence in making these assessment decisions
- Peer and self-assessment must take place in a safe, supportive and transparent manner
- Tutors must consider the need to provide for a de-briefing session.
- No more than **one third** of a student's portfolio should consist of this kind of evidence. The AVA recommends that tutors consider inviting the internal moderator to a self/peer assessment activity where there is an opportunity to moderate a tutor's verbal feedback to students.

Assessment by Others within and External to the Learning Environment

Support workers, care assistants, mentors, witnesses, line managers in work placement situations, and others who contribute to the learning process, may be involved in assessment. It is essential that these additional sources have full access to the unit specifications, i.e. title, credit value, learning outcomes and assessment criteria. They must work in liaison with the student and tutor.

Time Constrained Assignments

What are they?

A Time Constrained Assignment (TCA) is a form of assessment that requires students to complete assessed work in a clearly time-limited period but not necessarily under strict examination conditions. Where TCAs are employed, the conditions under which they will be delivered should be made clear to students in an assignment brief, which can be given well in advance. This form of a TCA brief should, of course, not include the actual tasks. Time Constrained Assignments may be in the form of:

1. Unseen Exam

An unseen exam is a TCA assessment task, presented to students for the first time. Unseen exams are usually hand-written and last at least one hour.

2. Seen Exam

A seen exam occurs where the TCA assessment tasks are presented to students in advance of the planned assessment time. The actual TCA is still taken under strict conditions with no external material allowed into the TCA room and with a time limit for completing the answers. This type of assessment may be useful for essay tasks.

3. Open Book Exam

An open book TCA is when students can bring in books or folders or a specific number of sheets of notes.

4. Stimulated TCA

For this type of TCA, students could be given a journal article, a case study, a video to watch, a newspaper article etc, with the TCA to follow after some time to assimilate the information or even time to discuss the material with colleagues.

Advantages

- Robust assessment – largely removes issues of plagiarism
- Opportunities for developing time management and personal management skills
- Preparation for examinations at University – raises issues of stress, opportunities for looking at examination and revision techniques
- Clearly defined assessment schemes for assessors

Disadvantages

- Students struggle with them
- Potential for some students to receive lower grades than they would get through other methods of assessment – increases pressure on the need to meet HEI offers

Considerations

- Look at the advantages and disadvantages of TCAs from the students' point of view
- Try to develop strategies that increases confidence of students in this method.

Section 5: Grading

Key Features of the Access to HE Grading Scheme.

The Diploma requires the grading of only 45 credits at Level Three. A further 15 ungraded Level Three or Level Two credits are also awarded to enable a student to achieve the Diploma of 60 credits. A detailed description of the operation of grading can be found on the QAA Access to HE [website](#), and within SharePoint.

- A grade is awarded for every graded Level 3 unit that a student completes successfully as part of a Diploma
- There is no overall or composite grade for the Access to HE Diploma
- The number of grades awarded to a student depends on the number of graded Level 3 units required for the Diploma. This number can vary because, although all Diplomas contain 45 credits from graded Level 3 units, these units can have a value of 3, 6 or 9 credits. So, for example, some Diplomas have a small number of 9 credit units, while others have a larger number of 3 credit units. The number of separate grades awarded to a student is therefore a consequence of the structure of the Diploma and not a reflection of the student's standard of performance.
- The grade awarded for each unit is shown on the achievement transcript that is issued with Diplomas. (The transcript also shows how many credits were awarded for each successfully completed graded or ungraded unit). Further references in this document to 'units' means graded Level 3 units unless otherwise specified.
- Ungraded units will be awarded an 'achieved'; a grade of pass, merit or distinction is awarded for each graded unit.
- The standard of performance required for a pass grade is the minimum required to meet the specified assessment criteria for the learning outcomes of the unit. (There is no separate definition of a pass grade). Merit and distinction grades indicate higher levels of performance within level.
- Students who **do not** achieve the specified learning outcomes for a unit cannot be awarded credit for that unit - the unit is therefore not eligible for grading.

- The unit grades have no numerical equivalents. They are not derived from or converted into numerical marks. The regulations permit a restricted use of numerical marks, in relation to the assessment of Skills and Education Group Access in types of performance on specific assignments.
- If used in these restricted circumstances, numerical marks contribute to the final grade for the unit, using a method prescribed by the regulations. No other use of numerical marks is permitted.

Grade Descriptors

There are seven grade descriptors:

- Understanding of the subject
- Application of knowledge
- Application of skills
- Use of information
- Communication and presentation
- Autonomy/Independence
- Quality.

Appropriate combinations of grade descriptors are assigned to all graded Level Three units when they are validated by Skills and Education Group Access and are independent of the assessment method chosen. Each graded, Level Three unit must have at least two grading descriptors assigned to it.

Grade Descriptor 7 (Quality) is used for all graded units and in the assessment of each assignment for a unit. Skills and Education Group Access is responsible for implementing the process for assigning grading descriptors to units and communicating those decisions to Centres. The descriptors assigned to any unit may not be changed except through the processes as described in the Request for a Modification to an Access to HE Diploma form (see Appendix 1).

The grade descriptors contain components that describe the standard of performance at Merit and Distinction. There are no grade descriptors for Pass: the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit define the standard for Pass. A student's work must reach the standard needed to Pass (that is, all the learning outcomes must be achieved) before it can be considered for grading.

Grade Components

Each grade descriptor is made up of a set of related 'components'. These components describe different aspects of the performance associated with a descriptor for both Merit and Distinction. They also reflect the different aspects of performance valued by different subjects. Tutors decide which components to use from the descriptors assigned to a unit. Assessor choice of appropriate words or phrases from these components must be used in the assignment brief to signal to the student how the assessor will make any grading decisions. You are advised to use the appropriate words and phrases with care; a student may appeal an assessment decision because a tutor used words such as 'excellent' 'consistent' 'extensive' in feedback when the grade indicator that is awarded is a pass.

Grade Indicators

The grading process generates a grade indicator (Pass, Merit or Distinction) for each of the grade descriptors used in each assignment. The final unit grade reflects the overall standard of work for the unit, based on a review of the grade indicators for the unit (the unit grade profile) and any other relevant information. When all the assignments for a unit have been completed then the awarded indicators are used to define the overall grade. The final grade for each unit is established by identifying the **mid-point** of the grade indicators for the unit.

An example of mid-point is where a unit has three grade descriptors (1, 4, 7) attached to it, and a tutor has created two assignments for that unit. The tutor may use Grade Indicator 1 and 7 for one assignment, and 4 and 7 for the second assignment. Grade indicators are recorded against those Grade descriptors and are ranked in order. The mid-point dictates the unit grade:

P, M, P, M = P, P, M, M

In this instance, where there is an equal number of Grade Indicators, the overall grade would normally be what Grade Indicator 7 has been given = **M**.

Each unit is given an overall grade in this way: **assignments are not given overall grades.**

Full details about the grade descriptors and how they are used for grading units can be found in **Sections B and C** of the QAA Grading Scheme Handbook, which are available on the QAA Access to HE [website](#), and within the Centre SharePoint folder.

Recording of the Grading Process

There are five steps in the grading process before an assessor can award a grade to a unit.

Step 1

Check the Diploma Spec' to confirm the grade descriptors that have been assigned to the unit. Not all Level Three units are graded.

Step 2

Examine the assignment(s) that have been devised for the achievement of the unit and decide where the best evidence will be generated to match the components of those grade descriptors where appropriate. You may wish to assign all grade descriptors to every assignment used for the unit, or assign one of the descriptors to just one assignment. **It is important to remember that Grade Descriptor 7 (Quality) must be used with every assignment.** The exception to this rule is where tests/time constrained assignments are used, where the answer is right or wrong; the Quality Descriptor 7 should not be assigned to that assignment; therefore, in this situation, there must be another assignment to provide evidence of achievement to which the quality descriptor can be assigned.

Step 3

Build into the brief for each assignment used for the unit, components of the descriptors that have been chosen for those assignments so that students are clear how they must respond to the assignment to gain a particular grade indicator.

Step 4

Assess the submitted work for achievement. If the work meets the assessment criteria for the assignment, then apply the descriptor achievement to the work as indicated in the assignment brief; record the grading indicators on the feedback sheet.

Step 5

Record all the indicators awarded for the completed unit and assign the overall grade by choosing the median grade, which is the middle letter placed in a line, i.e. for indicators of P P P M M M D then M is the overall grade. For an even number of grade indicators where there is no clear middle letter, then the assessor is asked to use professional judgment taking due consideration of the quality indicators awarded eg P P P M M M - overall grade decided through the assessor's judgment; in the case of M M D D D D, the overall grade is clearly D.

For a situation where an assessor's judgement results in P P P D D D for example, the unit grade would not be an M; it must only be either a P or a D.

The overall grade for any unit must be communicated to the student in a written form immediately on the completion of the assessment for the whole unit. The QAA is very interested in grade profiles by student; diploma; Centre and AVA. The AVA is expected to evaluate the distribution of grades over time and offer rationale to QAA for profiles outside of normal distributions, and QAA's own standards and benchmarks.

Definition of Terms and Processes used when Applying Grades

There are terms within the QAA grading document that have specific meaning and associated processes:

Drafts

QAA expect that where drafts are offered, that there is clear guidance around the use of drafts and that they are usually considered to be a support tool in the early part of the course to build a student's confidence in academic writing.

The assessor may wish to give students the opportunity to submit a draft of their response to an assignment. The following key points must be addressed in this case:

- The opportunity to submit a draft must be indicated in the assignment

brief

- There must be a deadline for the presentation of drafts to the assessor well before the actual submission deadline - this delay allows the assessor to review the draft so that the student can address any action points
- Draft opportunities are not appropriate for time-constrained assessments or normally recommended in the final term/semester of a Diploma course
- Draft work must be retained for scrutiny by external moderators.

Submissions

This word is used to describe the act of presenting the response to an assignment to the assessor; it should be used only for the initial presentation of completed work and not to draft work. Submissions must meet the deadlines set or be presented with an application (and evidence) for mitigating circumstances. If a student does not meet the submission date without mitigating circumstances, this may result in the student not meeting the learning outcomes for that unit, or a grade being capped at a 'pass'.

It is important that tutors set assessment deadlines as part of your assessment strategy to avoid bottlenecks from occurring at key times in the year. A deadline is set and must be met unless a student presents with a request for an extension with mitigating circumstances.

Any student who does not meet an assessment deadline has automatically given up the opportunity for a resubmission deadline and must be guided to the process of Referral.

Where a student fails to meet a resubmission deadline, there are two courses of possible action:

1. The student has not achieved the assessment and cannot achieve the unit
2. The student is guided to a possible request to the AVA for consideration of an on-course referral or end of course referral to the FAB.

This is a QAA regulatory requirement and will help to avoid any tutor 'chasing' students towards the end of the academic year as this not only puts additional burden onto a tutor's busy schedule, but disadvantages students who did meet the original deadlines.

Students will not be granted the award of an assessment if an External Moderator notes that they did not meet the deadlines set. An External Moderator has the authority to change grades awarded and will do so under these circumstances.

Submission



Assignment Submission by Students (Guidance)

A student must make a robust attempt in any assignment by the deadline supplied. If the assessor considers that the student has not attempted to address all, or most of the assessment criteria in an assignment, then any evidence presented by the student does not represent a submission made in good faith. Therefore, the student will be deemed to have missed the deadline and the grading process applied to any further attempt will result in capping the grade or grade indicators at a Pass. Where a tutor suspects a student is taking advantage of the assessment submission process, the tutor should have a documented conversation with the student, making it clear that further 'chances' will not be treated as leniently and assessments grade indicators are likely to be capped at a Pass in the future.

Mapping of Evidence

If a tutor is mapping assessment across two units then steps 1 – 5 above must be followed for the response to each assessment task linked to each unit individually. A student may have produced an excellent response to one unit and a good response to the other unit. Each unit should generate separate grade indicators. The external moderator will expect to see clear evidence that mapping was because of a response to tasks linked to each unit.

Extensions

Extensions are allowed if the following criteria are adhered to³:

- The tutor has received a formal request with mitigating circumstances before the deadline
- The decision to grant an extension request should sit outside of the subject tutor responsibility and may rest with the course leader or another tutor
- A clear and documented extension deadline is given
- Marking and feedback must not have been given to other students as to provide unfair advantage for students who are granted any extension request
- Evidence of all extensions agreed and rejected are available for the external moderator for scrutiny
- The tutor team must monitor the occurrences of extension requests, for the emergence of patterns.

A student who misses a deadline without an extension may not meet the assessment criteria and therefore may not achieve the unit. Students and tutors must be clear that a deadline that is set must be adhered to unless mitigating/ extenuating circumstances are evidenced.

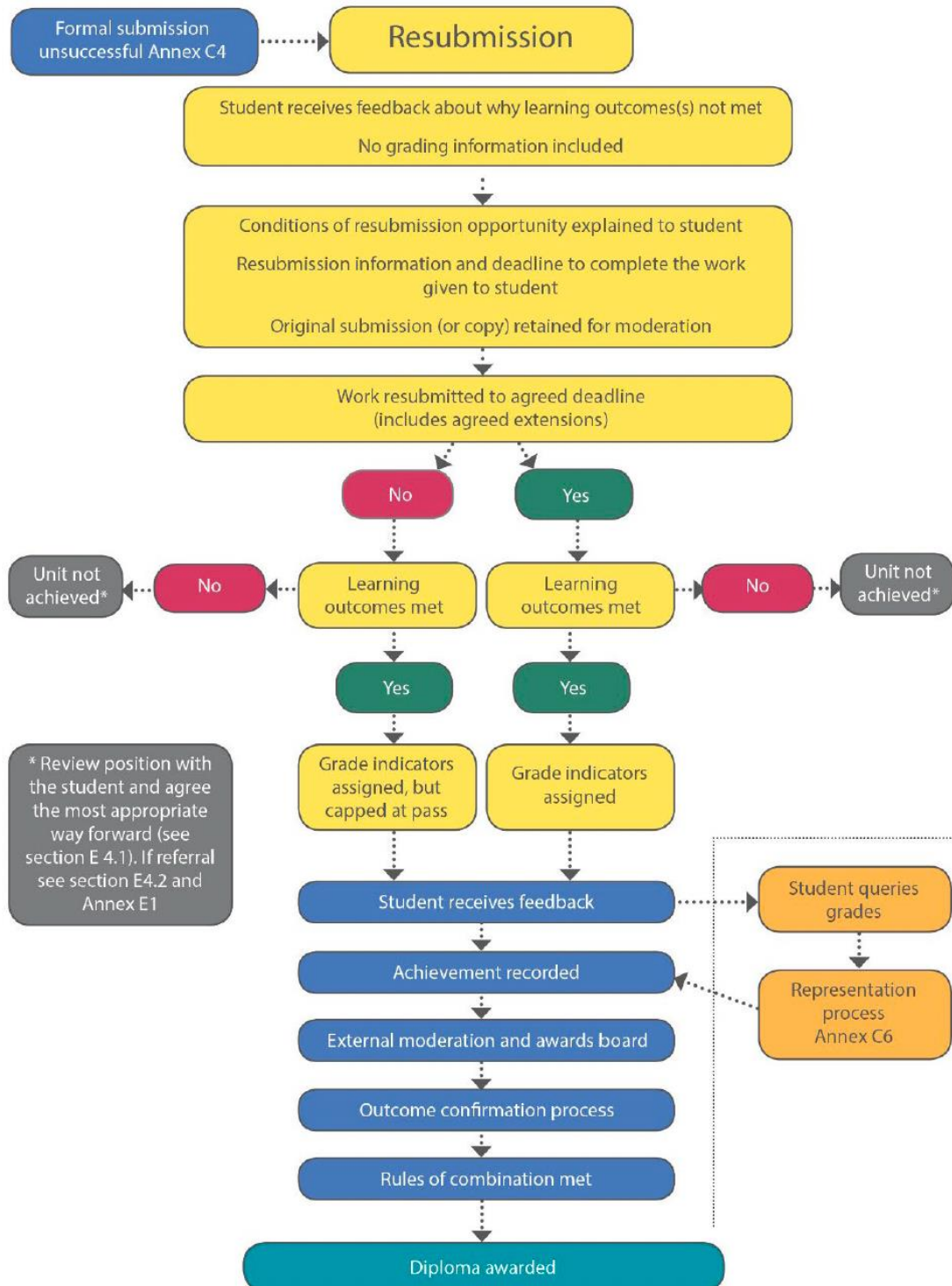
Resubmissions

³ See explanation of students submitting to deadlines above

If a student's work does not meet the assessment criteria for the assignment at Level Three, then the student should be given appropriate feedback and an opportunity for resubmission of the work with a further deadline.

If the work is submitted to the agreed deadline and meets the assessment criteria for the assignment, i.e. the student has Achieved, the grading process is implemented where appropriate to a graded unit, and the student can be awarded any of the range of grading indicators as appropriate.

If the resubmitted work does not meet the agreed deadline for submission but meets the assessment criteria, all grade indicators for the assignment are capped at 'Pass'.



Referrals

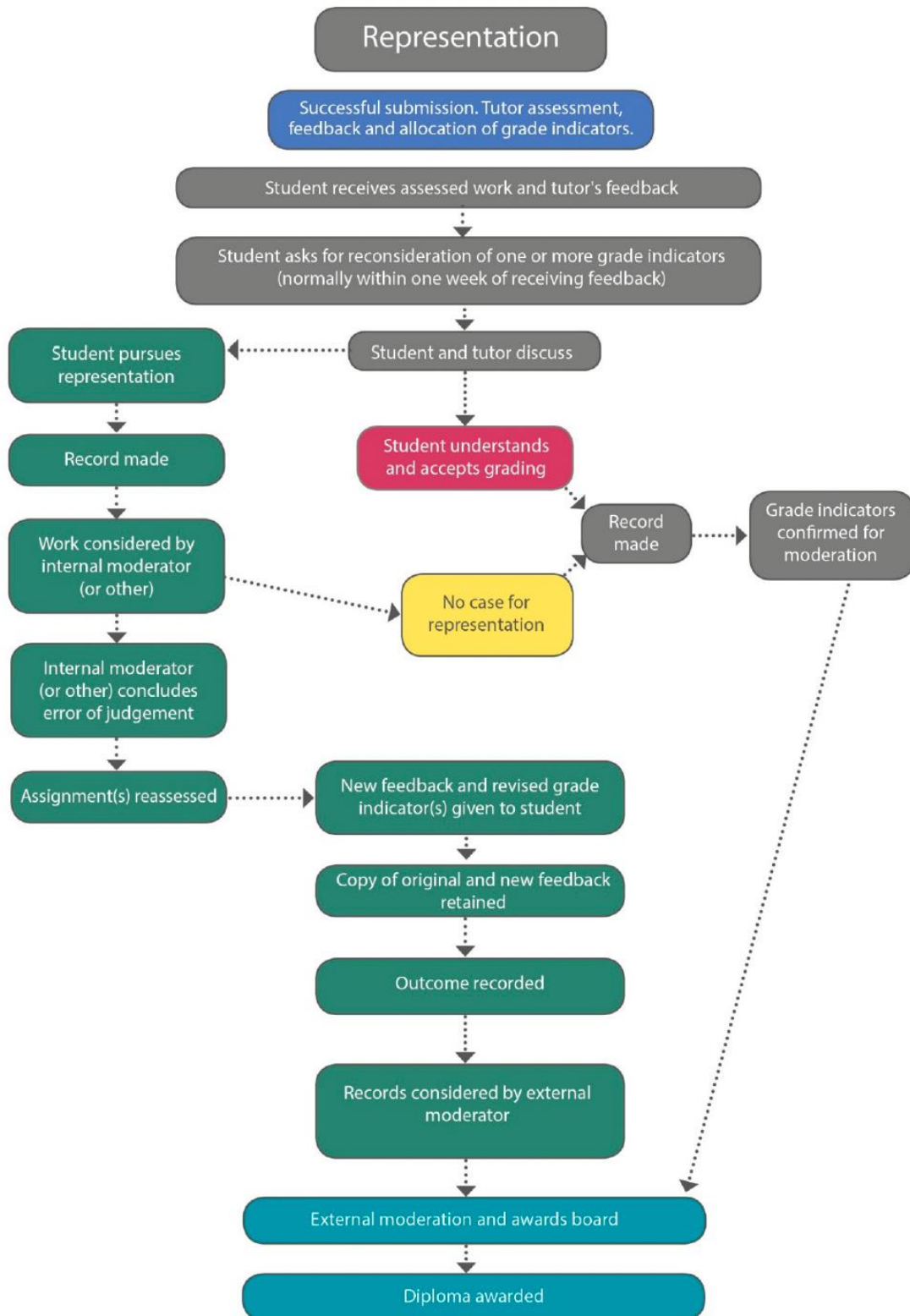
If the **resubmitted** work does not meet the assessment criteria, the student must be advised about the opportunity for an application for on-course referral (or second resubmission opportunity) in line with Skills and Education Group Access Policy. A student may only make such an application for up to **15 credits**. Any application must be supported by a tutor. Where a tutor believes that a student may be taking advantage of the referral process to gain extra time or opportunity, the AVA expects that the tutor team will counsel the student in ways to avoid this.

Skills and Education Group Access will monitor the extent to which the use of referrals is recorded by Diploma and Centre. Training and support will be made available to tutor teams where there is evidence of an over-reliance on this facility. It is important that reference is made to the Policy for Dealing with On-Course Referrals for Access to HE Students.

Representations

Where a student believes the administrative process for the awarding of a grade for a unit has not been correctly followed and has made representation to the tutor, the tutor then follows Skills and Education Group Access guidelines to deal with the representation. If, after this process the student still feels an error has been made in the grading decision, then an Appeal, with evidence, should be submitted to the FAB.

If an administrative or human error is made in determining the final grade for a unit, then the student may make a representation to the assessor. The assessor must then ask the internal moderator or an experienced tutor for the Diploma course to check the process for awarding the grade. Any change to the overall grade must be recorded for auditing purposes.



Student Appeals against Assessment Decisions

Skills and Education Group Access has an enquiries and appeals policy, which can be accessed in SharePoint. Skills and Education Group Access will not consider an appeal until the student has first exhausted the appeals process at their Centre.

Completion of the Diploma

Achievement of the Diploma is manifested by the submission of appropriate evidence to the assessor by the student. Tutors must ensure that students are informed that all evidence for the potential award of their Diploma must be assessed, quality assured and available for the date agreed for final moderation.

Evidence of Teaching: Responsibility of the Tutor

This type of evidence includes unannotated material from the internet, tutor prepared notes, leaflets/material available to the general public that has not been annotated or used for comprehension or critical evaluation. This type of evidence should never be presented as evidence of achievement.

Evidence of Learning: Overviewed by the Centre

Throughout the learning process the student will amass a wide range of information and create examples of work when trying to use a particular piece of learning and develop ownership of it. This ongoing development is part of the learning process, and is information shared between the tutor and the student. Until evidence of student work is assessed against the assessment criteria, it remains evidence of learning and not evidence of achievement.

Evidence of Achievement: Assessed by tutor, and sampled by both the Internal Moderator and External Moderator

Evidence of achievement is sampled in both the internal and external moderation processes. Assessment methods must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria are evidenced – if a student does not provide evidence of achievement for a particular learning outcome or assessment criteria because they have not completed an assessment assignment in full, they must be offered one more opportunity to complete within a given deadline. The tutor will ensure that students are given sufficient opportunity to provide appropriate evidence; care must be taken not to give the student so much support that the work becomes essentially that of the tutor. Also, care must be taken to ensure that the student is not being given an unfair advantage over other students by the additional opportunity.

If a student does not submit work to the new, agreed deadline, any work submitted after that that meets the assessment criteria, only 'Pass' grade indicators can be awarded.

If a student submits work to the deadline and it still does not meet the assessment criteria, then the student must be advised of the opportunity to apply for on-course referral.

Achievement Requirements

A mandatory body of evidence to cover 60 credits of learning. An online portfolio of evidence will be uploaded to SharePoint for sampling activity and should be presented in a way that is as easy to navigate as a paper-based portfolio of evidence. r has chosen to present student evidence in an online format, the external moderator requires streamlined navigation of online folders so that they can easily sample across all students in the cohort and units on the course.

Creative subject areas may be more likely to present some evidence as physical artefacts.

The following evidence of achievements will provide ease of navigation during sampling:

Student proforma or similar document:

- Name
- Diploma Title
- Course Tutor
- List of units including grades and Recommendations for the Award of Credit; any agreed Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) decisions for award of credits or details related to any application for an Aegrotat or Extenuation award must be clearly identified on this sheet for consideration by the FAB
- Student and tutor signatures confirming checking of assessed units and grades, to be recommended for award of credit at the FAB.

Evidence of achievement for each unit containing:

- The unit
- The set of briefs for the assignment(s)
- Student evidence for the assignment(s), including academic integrity signature
- Any draft work or extra work required to complete the assignment(s)
- An assessment feedback sheet for each assignment that clearly shows:
 - the mapping to assessment criteria
 - grading and achievement decisions
 - any agreed new deadlines with links to written mitigating circumstances
 - assessor feedback, including that for submitted drafts
 - late submission of work when there was no agreement of mitigating circumstances.

All class notes, student activity, formative responses and handouts should not be presented unless requested by the moderator.

Any evidence that is presented but does not meet these requirements may not be considered for moderation and a reconvened moderation will be arranged.

Recording Achievement

It is essential that students are aware of their progress towards achievement of the Diploma throughout the course. Each tutor must keep accurate records. The course leader should ensure that these records are transferred regularly into the working electronic RAC (the AVA's form for recording achievement), at least once a month or at each assessment event; the student must keep records of their individual progress and includes the Skills and Education Group Access spreadsheet that records Grading Indicators for each unit for all students. This should be signed by the student as a true record of units and grades achieved at the end of their course.

Only work that has been fully assessed and been subjected to the Centre's quality processes will be considered by the FAB, where the decisions for the award of the Diploma is final. Tutors must ensure that any deadlines agreed with students enable evidence from students to be assessed and quality assured **in plenty of time** before the agreed date of the final moderation. Evidence cannot be submitted at a later stage for the award of the Diploma in that academic year, unless the FAB has agreed a process through student appeals, end of course referrals or extensions beyond the FAB agenda items.

It is the student's and tutor's responsibility to sign a form, listing those units and associated grades, to verify the accuracy of the recommendations for the award of credit for that student.

The course leader should ensure that these recommendations are accurately reflected in the final electronic form of the RAC, which **must** be sent to the Centre Moderator **two weeks** prior to the final external moderation event. A Centre Moderator may postpone a final moderation visit if they have not received a complete RAC in plenty of time.

No other format of recording achievement will be acceptable.

All grades are subject to confirmation through external moderation. The external moderator may re-assign an awarded grade for a student or cohort depending on circumstances.

Any changes to the eRAC after the convening of the FAB will become a quality intervention, will attract an administration fee, and may impact the Diploma risk rating.

Skills and Education Group Access strongly recommends that Centres hold internal pre-FABs. This process would allow Centres to be fully prepared for final moderation and FABs in line with HE requirements. Centres will be reminded via AVA communications.

If a student is claiming credit so that they can progress to Higher Education, then they must have achieved all elements of the Rules of Combination for the Diploma as stated within the Diploma Spec'; the combined credits for Mandatory and Optional Units at the correct level stipulated; only units that are highlighted

within the Rules of Inclusion and/or Exclusion and any additional criteria identified within the rules of combination.

When checking the eRAC before the final moderation event, it is essential that only those students who have met these criteria be recommended for the award of the Diploma and/or units within it. The final copy of a working eRAC is used by the external moderator to choose a sample for moderation purposes and is presented to the FAB for any amendment and subsequent agreement.

Extenuation, Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards

While unforeseen serious and traumatic events are generally infrequent, they may nonetheless be inevitable. QAA allows Skills and Education Group Access to consider the award of Aegrotat certificates or the making of posthumous awards - including where achievement was incomplete, when this is supported by a recommendation from the Centre and the Centre Moderator by agreement with the External Moderator. The making of these **exceptional** awards is formally notified through appropriate channels to the Access to HE Committee which holds responsibility for the award of Access to HE Diplomas.

Award through Extenuation

The QAA has retained the facility for Award through Extenuation following its introduction during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

'In those exceptional cases where a student cannot be assessed, due to no fault of their own, the student may still be awarded unit(s) that make up the Diploma, through an Award through Extenuation. In addition to an Award through Extenuation, other support arrangements are available to students from their course provider if they are finding it difficult to learn or be assessed during their course of study. AVAs must work with their providers to ensure a suitable awarding arrangement is put in place to fit local needs and meet the individual needs of students⁴.'

Tutor teams will be guided in this potential award and must make an application to the AVA for consideration in extreme mitigating circumstances of a student's situation. Awards are present to FAB for approval and recording.

Aegrotat Awards

Before submitting a request for an Aegrotat award, the student must be confident that they can perform successfully in HE and will have demonstrated that they have contacted their receiving HEI(s) for confirmation that they will accept an Aegrotat award as an appropriate award for progression. The tutor team must be able to support the student request for an Aegrotat.

The external moderator must be notified of any potential Aegrotat prior to the final moderation in order that the associated evidence is scrutinised.

An Application for an Aegrotat Award form, available on SharePoint, must be

⁴ QAA Award and Assessment of the Access to HE Diploma from 01 August 2023

completed and submitted to the AVA at least two weeks before the FAB, where it will appear as an agenda item.

Conditions under which an Aegrotat may apply

The external moderators may include the name of any candidate in the pass list under the heading 'Aegrotat' if all the following conditions have been fulfilled:

- The candidate was prevented by serious illness or other sufficient cause from completing the assessment of no less than 30 credits
- The candidate's work during the course has been satisfactory
- The candidate has otherwise satisfied all existing requirements of the Diploma
- The external moderators do not consider that they have sufficient evidence to enable them to confirm the achievement of the Diploma
- The candidate has not applied for his or her candidature to be postponed
- The candidate has made a written application to Skills and Education Group Access requesting award of an Aegrotat
- The Centre must be able to support the student application for an Aegrotat award.

The FAB will consider the following criteria before awarding an Aegrotat:

- There are **exceptional**, certified medical or similar traumatic circumstances that have resulted in the student being unable to complete the course requirements. We expect that such circumstances will not exist at the time of enrolment when students can be offered appropriate support for ongoing conditions or situations that affect their ability to access learning.
- The student has achieved at least 30 credits required for the Aegrotat. In practice, the AVA would need to receive robust evidence that the student is fully prepared for study in HE and a testimonial to this effect from tutors is required.

Skills and Education Group Access will submit the FAB's recommendations for the award of Aegrotat Diplomas to Skills and Education Group Access Access to HE Committee for approval. The Diploma is awarded without full credits; the unit and grade profile will be incomplete. The Diploma awarded will state that it is an Aegrotat award.

Posthumous Award of the Access to HE Diploma

In the case of a posthumous award, as the providing institution, you should make a written application to Skills and Education Group Access on behalf of the student in the case of death. This application, AVA recommendation and decision will be minuted at the FAB and approved by the Access to HE Committee. The AVA will formally write to the family of the deceased via the Centre, acknowledging a posthumous Award.

Section 6: Quality Assurance – How to Run a High-Quality Course

Skills and Education Group Access Quality Assurance Strategy

Skills and Education Group Access holds quality assurance policies and procedures that are compliant with QAA licensing requirements. All Centres will have appropriate policies in place and Centre Moderators will check the implementation of such policies on an annual basis. Indications that such policies are not being implemented correctly will be investigated, normally through a quality intervention meeting. Outcomes of such meetings may impact on Diploma or Centre Risk Ratings.

All Access to HE courses will be monitored by internal moderators, external and Centre Moderators and internal and AVA standardisation activity. Each course must be evaluated by students, the delivery team and by the Centre Moderator. The course must be reviewed by the tutor teams using the information and evidence available within Skills and Education Group Access policies and guidance documents. Details of how a Centre's quality assurance activity is recorded and monitored will be made available to the Centre Moderator on request. All initial contact between Skills and Education Group Access and yourselves will be through your quality manager or designated Access to HE Course Manager. Where a quality manager then agrees for another member of staff to be the primary course contact, they are to formally advise us via email of this decision.

Where the quality manager continues to be the only conduit, it is essential that they keep regular contact with those implementing the organisation's quality procedures in relation to Diplomas.

Centre Responsibility for Quality Assurance

It is expected that all Centres will have a clear internal quality assurance policy with associated procedures for implementation and robust monitoring processes.

Each Centre will organise its own management of the quality assurance roles and responsibilities related to Access to HE. We expect that any new tutor will be inducted into the organisation to ensure that they can:

- Access the relevant Skills and Education Group Access documentation
- Understand Skills and Education Group Access processes involved in delivering and assessing an Diploma to AVA requirements
- Provide accurate registration of students against units and reconcile student results and data
- Have a copy of the Diploma Spec' and units within the Diploma

- Have full understanding of the application of grading, including how to arrive at the mid-point for each unit grade
- Have access to assignment briefs
- Deal effectively with student referrals using Skills and Education Group Access guidelines
- Receive guidance in the production of new assignment briefs
- Have access to course proforma for providing feedback to students
- Have copies of tracking proforma used by the team for recording student progress
- Understand the purpose of the quality assurance procedures to be applied
- Attend mandatory standardisation events
- Attend recommended and required internal and Skills and Education Group Access CPD as appropriate
- Make arrangements to convene and manage FABs for the award of Access to HE Diplomas and credit for students.

Access to Fair Assessment

Skills and Education Group Access and Centres have a duty to ensure that the rights of individual students to access diplomas, units and assessment in a way most appropriate for their individual needs are upheld. A copy of the Access to Fair Assessment (Reasonable Adjustment and Special Considerations) Policy and Procedure can be found on SharePoint.

The Role of the Named Centre Quality Assurance Contact

The quality assurance contact has a key role, which is to ensure that the centre can carry out all aspects of its relationship with Skills and Education Group Access properly, to a high standard and within the required timescales. When this happens, processes will run smoothly and all stakeholders – including most importantly students – will enjoy a positive experience. The quality assurance contact is the named person within the Centre responsible for:

- Ensuring that quality systems and policies are compliant with Skills and Education Group Access requirements
- Ensuring that the delivery team can implement all aspects of the approved Diploma Spec'
- Agreeing visit dates with the external moderator and ensuring that details are passed to the appropriate curriculum contact
- Ensuring that the Centre can contribute to the redevelopment and revalidation of Diplomas before the five-year expiry date
- Ensuring that the specifications and regulations for the Diplomas are followed
- Developing, managing and monitoring internal quality assurance structures and systems, including internal moderation and standardisation activity
- Supporting the course managers and ensuring that all Skills and Education Group Access communications are quickly circulated to the relevant internal colleagues
- Monitoring the administrative process to ensure that all forms are completed and sent to Skills and Education Group Access within the required timescale

- Working with the course manager to ensure that all required information is available for the Centre and External Moderators
- Providing real-time support to carry out internal moderation effectively
- Ensuring that all tutors/assessors are able to participate in internal and external moderation as appropriate
- Facilitating the Centre's participation in Skills and Education Group Access standardisation events where appropriate
- Co-ordinating and supporting initial and ongoing training and development for staff involved in the delivery of a Diploma and maintaining the Centre's commitment to CPD
- Ensuring that internal and external moderation can take place in conditions appropriate to a rigorous process
- Meeting the Centre Moderator at the start of the academic year and appointed external moderators at the first visit and thereafter as appropriate
- Ensuring that student requests for extensions to agreed deadlines are considered outside of the immediate tutor team to provide support and protection to the subject tutor
- Ensuring that all quality assurance documentation and records are available to the external moderator as required
- Reading and disseminating external moderation reports, including recording and monitoring actions from within them
- Promoting action points from external moderator's reports and subsequent auditing of response from the organisation
- Supporting tutor teams to enable final moderation and FAB events run smoothly
- Attending final moderation meeting with the external moderator to discuss all issues arising from the moderation process
- Attendance at the Pre-FABs (where possible) and FABs
- Ensuring the facility for retention of assessment records for all students
- Supporting Exams and MIS teams to address any issues arising from the award of the Access to HE Diploma or credits so that student's progression to HE is confirmed in a timely way.

The quality assurance contact must advise Skills and Education Group Access about any potential changes of administration or quality assurance contact details promptly and in writing.

Skills and Education Group Access quality team welcomes any requests from quality assurance contacts for clarification, guidance or support at any time. The AVA expects that the quality contact will have an overview of, or make arrangements for:

Pre-Issue Verification

The responsibility for this process may rest with the whole team of tutors and/or with individuals in the team. It is expected that any new or substantially amended assessment brief will go through a process of internal verification for which a report will be generated. Exemplar Pre-delivery Verification of Units - Graded and Ungraded) forms are available in the Centre SharePoint folder.

- The wording is appropriate for the target group
- Assignments are appropriate for the level
- Tasks do not unintentionally discriminate against students with protected characteristics
- Assignments meet any prescribed method of assessment for the unit
- Students are given opportunities to achieve against the assessment criteria of units
- Correct grading descriptors are appropriately applied in the brief
- Appropriate grading components have been chosen for the brief
- Deadlines for submission are shown on the briefing sheet
- Information regarding drafting, resubmission dates for non-achievement, late submissions - date of submission, is available or can be entered
- Word count is appropriate for the assignment and unit as a whole.

If the assessment brief is to be used again without an amendment, within an accepted timeframe, there should be an audit trail, e.g. minutes of a meeting, to indicate that the assessment brief has been reviewed and found to be acceptable. It is, however, accepted that some Centre quality processes insist on a pre-issue verification report to be generated for every run of the course.

All pre-issue verification reports and any other documents showing evidence of review of the briefs must be available to the external moderator. To avoid any confusion all verified briefs must be subjected to a robust process of version control.

Internal Moderator Visits to Tutors and Students

This activity is usually the responsibility of your named quality contact. The external moderator will expect to see auditable evidence that such a visit has taken place well before the end of course delivery, and in the case of new tutors, at a time to provide early support, i.e. in the first term.

Any Internal Moderator is acting on behalf of Skills and Education Group Access quality assurance processes and should be able to demonstrate impartiality as well as being a 'critical friend' to the tutor team.

Such a visit should offer support to a tutor on the basis of professional trust and should enable:

- The students to meet with someone who is not their tutor and to comment on their course and resources
- Opportunities for the visitor to experience the setting, the range of students and their learning
- Students to experience quality assurance in practice
- A check on progress on assessment processes and completion of required documentation
- Discussion of possible CPD needs of the tutor.

The visiting internal moderator should remind the tutor of internal moderation dates and the process for sampling.

Recording and Tracking Achievement

Accurate record keeping is essential, and all staff involved in the assessment of students should log and maintain records of student achievement. 'Assessment, Grading and Achievement Guidance' is available in each Centre's SharePoint folder.

The eRAC must be updated on an ongoing basis to monitor and record student achievement.

eRACs, with a summary of student achievement so far should be made available to external moderators in advance of each moderation visit. Each eRAC is a working document over the academic year, includes student information, and should be maintained securely.

At the final moderation visit, every student's body of work should be summarised in a document showing all units and credits achieved, and in the case of graded Level Three units, the grades assigned. This summary should be agreed and signed by both the tutor and the student and should appear at the front of the student's portfolio. The Example of Student Record of Final Credit Achievement form is available in the Centre's SharePoint folder.

Internal Moderation Requirements

The process of internal moderation through sampling of assessed student work is the main internal quality assurance activity on which the Centre's standard of the award of their Diploma relies.

Internal moderation may be carried out at times within the Centre's cross-organisational quality assurance calendar of activities. If not, dates must be agreed by the team before the start of delivery. The process must ensure that:

- Student achievement is mapped to the assessment criteria
- Assessment decisions are appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent across the sample
- Grade indicator decisions are appropriate, consistent and fair across the sample
- Grading processes are correctly applied to give a grade for the unit, and that any grade information is clearly shown at all stages of the process
- Feedback to students is appropriate and will assure further development of skills and/or knowledge
- The student's work is presented appropriately
- The eRAC is being updated on a regular basis with achievement and grading decisions and can be used by internal and external moderators to choose samples of evidence
- There is provision of appropriate developmental advice and support to tutors to ensure continuous improvement in standards of assessment processes and feedback.

Any model of internal moderation should rest on peer support and allow all tutors to be involved in discussions about levels, grading and credit. Internal moderators may be tutors on the Diploma.

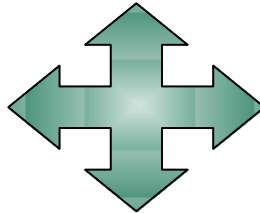
In some situations, all tutors will be internal moderators.

Tutors who are also internal moderators are **not** permitted to countersign their own assessment decisions i.e. **cannot act as the internal moderator for samples of evidence from units that they have delivered.**

Internal Moderation Models

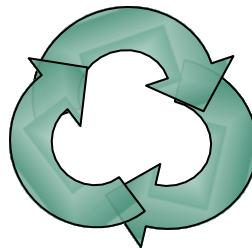
Centralised

One or more tutors are appointed by the course coordinator to moderate several other tutors.



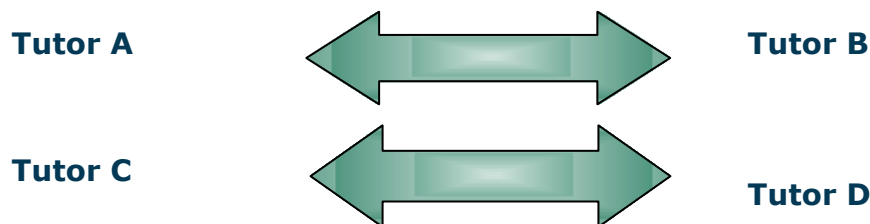
Round Robin

Each tutor visits and moderates one other tutor, who then visits and moderates another - and so on.



Peer Partners

Tutors are paired and offer each other moderation as mutual feedback; this model must still have a coordinator to ensure that everything is completed.



For each of these models it is essential that a meeting reviews the issues and findings after the process is completed. It is important that tutors be involved in this meeting and that collectively, the team develops an action plan to resolve issues or concerns that have arisen. It is also important that examples of good practice be shared and discussed within the team and, where possible, be part of the action plan for wider implementation across the team.

Sampling for Internal Moderation of Assessment

- The internal moderator (IM), not the tutor, specifies the sample of assessed work that they will see, or will be brought to the internal moderation meeting
- Sufficient evidence must be sampled for the internal moderator to feel confident about consistent and valid award of credit and in the grading decisions; more samples may be requested if necessary
- All new Tutors must be **100%** sampled in the first unit; may be reduced in subsequent units as the IM becomes satisfied by the Tutor's performance
- All new units must be **100%** sampled in the first run
- The general principal in sample size for all Diplomas is that all students, all tutors, all units are sampled. Alongside that, evidence of resubmissions, lates, capped at a Pass, graded and ungraded, on-course Referral and any other element involved in the Diploma course that enables the IM to be satisfied that the award of credit is secure. An Internal Moderator should seek guidance from the Centre Quality Contact and the AVA for further guidance or training. The AVA provides training throughout the year.

At least one piece of assessment activity from every student is included in the total internal moderation sample. This practice allows for greater Skills and Education Group Access into about the validity, consistency and fairness of the entire cohort achievement and about the consistency of grading decisions.

Sampling of Assessments from New Assessors by Internal Moderators

Where possible the internal moderator should sample work before returning it to students. The schedule of resubmission for some students will delay the return of work to students. The requirement for 100% sample of assessed work must be followed for the first unit delivered, with feedback from internal moderation that clearly identifies good practice and areas for development, as well as any action points that must be addressed before returning the assessed work to students. Your external moderator may agree that less than 100% is acceptable: please contact them for guidance.

If the assessment practice of the new assessor is deemed to meet Centre standards for the first unit, then for subsequent units the level of sampling can be reduced by degrees, e.g. 50%, 25% 10%. However, the support mechanisms that sampling by the internal moderator provides, must be recognised and sampling level **should not** reduce automatically after sampling of the first unit.

Sampling of Assessments for New Units by Internal Moderators

Our requirement is that a 100% internal moderation sample should be made for all newly approved units. This level is clearly unsustainable in a year when ALL the units are new. It is suggested in this case that the sample choice should be more strategic. Centres often create a sampling matrix through a random strategy, but which covers all assessors and eventually all students. For graded units on each Diploma, internal moderators should choose a sample of two assessments leading to each of the three grades (Pass, Merit and Distinction), i.e. six sets of work from each unit from each group of students. This practice is a good way of ensuring that all elements of a Diploma are covered during internal moderation during the year.

A matrix, student v unit, with some identification of assessor, of these choices should be kept so that some work from every student and every assessor of a unit goes through moderation. If it is not possible for two lots of evidence at every grade, then the internal moderator should make appropriate choices to balance the matrix. For ungraded units, choices should be informed by the matrix described above, six samples taken for every unit for each group of students, with no work from the same student sampled twice for ungraded units unless there are academic reasons for doing so.

Reminder: Internal Moderation is not second marking. It is a quality assurance activity that is checking the validity of the tutor marking and developing tutor practice.

Reminder: Each unit, student and tutor must be included in sampling in the year. Remember to include Pass, Merit, Distinction awards within samples, as well as resubmissions, lates, borderline, referral etc to ensure that all areas have been covered.

Reminder: New tutors must be 100% sampled in first unit, reducing over following units; this principle also applies to new units.

Reminder: as an internal moderator, you must be satisfied that student results are reliable based on previous years' results for the same unit. Grade data analysis must be a consistent throughout the course.

Recording of Internal Moderation

There will be:

- A grid to show the sample taken across the whole cohort of students that includes all units on the course, all tutors teaching on the course and all units delivered

- A report from each internal moderator of their findings, showing their sample, see exemplar Internal Moderation of Achievement (IM2) form available within the SharePoint folder
- Agreement decisions with assessor's achievement and grading decisions
- Identified areas of good practice and areas for improvement with an action plan if appropriate
- A tutor meeting to consider general issues and good practice from the internal moderation activity and to contribute to the action plan for quality improvement.

Internal Standardisation

Internal standardisation involves ensuring that if there is more than one tutor/ assessor delivering Access to HE provision or more than one site, internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment are consistent across the range of courses. Both assessment, including the standardisation of assessment tasks, and the operation of internal moderation, should be standardised. It is the Centre's responsibility to run an internal standardisation event for Diplomas each year.

Internal standardisation meetings must ensure that all tutors and internal moderators concerned are involved, and that action plans are produced and followed up. Centres will be required to provide evidence of internal standardisation activity and how the Centre identifies and disseminates good practice.

Arrangements for internal standardisation that are regarded as good practice by the AVA are:

- A cross-organisational activity that involves other sectors eg 'A' level work, facilitated by a member of the quality assurance team
- An event for all Access to HE provision delivered across the organisation, facilitated by a member the quality assurance team
- There should be at least one internal standardisation event during the year to effect:
 - Tutor team ownership of all assessment processes
 - Good practice in assessment, feedback and reporting
 - Consistency in assessment decisions across the curriculum
 - Consistency in any grading decisions across the curriculum
 - A standard approach to recording and mapping of assessment
 - A standard approach to the implementation of any grading processes
 - Genuine rigor in assessment leading to improvement and increased quality.

Running an Internal Standardisation Event

There should be clear ground rules on the responsibility and engagement of participants. All tutors and internal moderators should participate. The event should be properly planned, with the date notified to all participants at the start of the delivery year. Details of the sample should be circulated at least two weeks before the event. A report should be produced and available for the external moderator to see.

Please contact the Access to HE team if you would like support or training in preparing for internal standardisation events.

Choosing the Samples

The sample must represent all Diplomas and all student groups taking the Diploma. The sample should represent evidence from across the range of achievement and grades. The quality manager or the member of staff responsible for coordinating the standardisation event will decide the type/number of samples. The sample will not include more than one unit from a particular student, unless there are specific issues. Each unit chosen as part of the sample must have:

- Unit details including grading descriptors to be applied
- Assignment briefs
- Evidence of assessed learning
- Tutor's feedback sheet with mapping to the assessment criteria
- Achievement and grading decisions shown
- Drafts or non-achieved work with final submitted work.

Recording of the Internal Standardisation Process and Action Plans

Participants will have identified areas of good practice and areas for improvement. A record of the actual sample used at the event will be made e.g. student and assignment/unit. A formal record of the event will be made with clear action points for development created.

An action plan for quality improvement will be:

- Developed with agreed responsibilities and dates for completion
- Circulated to all teaching and quality assurance staff
- Monitored through team meetings or through any organisation audit process
- Completed within an agreed time span.

The record of the standardisation event and the completed action plan will be made available to the external moderator.

Skills and Education Group Access Responsibility for Quality Assurance

Skills and Education Group Access is responsible for giving clear information about:

- The structural organisation of moderation processes
- Moderators' roles and responsibilities
- The basis, extent and limits of moderators' authority
- The purpose and frequency of visits and meetings undertaken by moderators
- Requirements for monitoring and verifying student achievement
- Moderation outcomes relating to student achievement
- Requirements for moderator reports
- How, and to whom, any concerns or problems identified should be referred
- The submission of reports to Skills and Education Group Access and associated follow-up activity.

The ultimate responsibility within Skills and Education Group Access for the quality of approved Diplomas rests with the Board of Trustees.

The Access to HE Committee, as a Sub-Committee, has devolved responsibility for a range of activities including:

- The approval of Diplomas
- Advising on issues affecting the quality and the validity of the award of the Diploma
- The appointment of all external moderators
- The award of the Diploma to students
- Approval of aegrotat and posthumous awards
- Making recommendations to the Board of Trustees for all QAA submissions
- Approving Skills and Education Group Access policies and protocols
- Ensuring that Skills and Education Group Access quality assurance is implemented effectively
- Liaising with relevant HEIs and employers to promote Access to HE
- Ensuring that the process of confirming the award of the Diploma, which is delegated to the FAB, is robust.

Skills and Education Group Access routinely reviews and updates its guidance to ensure its continuing currency. Moderation guidance updates are generated from external moderator visits and final moderation reports, external moderator mandatory training events and Skills and Education Group Access standardisation events.

External Standardisation

Each year, we hold a series of **mandatory** standardisation events, which are key processes in our quality assurance policy. Dates of these will be agreed at the start of the academic year and included in AVA communications. Skills and Education Group Access must demonstrate to QAA that Centres take part in its standardisation activity.

The focus for standardisation events will vary according to guidance from the Access to HE Committee, or Centres' quality needs. The information related to the event is sent out to all Centres before the end of the current academic year.

It is the Centre's responsibility to ensure that each Diploma that they run is represented at external standardisation as stipulated by Skills and Education Group Access.

Centres who do not send a representative to the appropriate event or attend without the appropriate samples will be invoiced in accordance with the Skills and Education Group Access Charging fees which is available in SharePoint. This may also affect the Diploma and Centre risk rating.

Section 7: External Moderation

Rigorous external moderation is vital to our quality assurance strategy; all Diplomas are subject to external moderation. We operate standard procedures, using clear and transparent criteria, for the selection and appointment of moderators, which ensure that moderators have relevant experience in adult, further or higher education and have relevant and current subject knowledge for their area(s) of moderating responsibility. Centre quality managers will be informed of external moderator allocation and arrangements at the start of each academic year.

Our Moderation Cycle for 2023-24

- ❖ **End August to mid-September** – Access to HE Diploma Centre Annual Reviews completed
- ❖ **Mid-end September** - Centre Moderator Annual Review meeting with Centre Quality Contact and planning for year ahead (Moderator sampling/FAB etc)
- ❖ **Mid-October to late December** - Initial sampling takes place, including moderation of assessment planning documents and early student work (risk-based approach) – New Centres or existing Centres running a new Diploma will likely receive an earlier visit
- ❖ **Late April to late May** - Second and substantive sample of student work takes place, sample from every unit available
- ❖ **May to June** - additional sampling takes place, as required
- ❖ **Mid-June to early July** - Final Awards Boards

The Centre Moderator Role

Each Centre is allocated a Centre Moderator who is responsible for monitoring compliance with QAA requirements, academic standards and on-going quality improvement within and across the Access Courses for which they are responsible. This role operates in line with QAA regulatory requirements.

Centre Moderator Job Purpose

- Monitor compliance with QAA requirements, academic standards and on-going quality improvement within and across Access to HE Centres for which they are responsible.
- Key contact for Centres and moderators
- Coordinate and supervise all Centre moderation activities.

The Diploma Moderator Role

All Skills and Education Group Access appointed Diploma Moderators are curriculum specialists and are appointed to appropriate Diplomas for sampling activity. External moderators are normally allocated to a Diploma for no more than four years.

Diploma Moderator Job Purpose

Ensure the quality of the Access to HE Diplomas by checking:

- whether all learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been met at the correct level
- whether assessment practice is fair and equitable across units of the Diploma
- whether QAA requirements for the Access to HE Diploma are being met, including the implementation of the QAA grading scheme the quality of the Access to HE Diploma for which they are responsible by checking:
- whether all learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been met at the correct level
- whether assessment practice is fair and equitable across units of the Diploma
- whether QAA requirements for the Access to HE Diploma are being met, including the implementation of the QAA grading scheme

Moderators may also be asked to undertake project work, chair validation panels or other duties that represent the external moderator team.

External Moderation Activities in Respect of the Diploma Provision

An allocated Centre Moderator will arrange a review and planning meeting with Quality (usually September) to discuss the outcomes of the previous year's compliance activity via moderator reports and AVA findings and make plans for compliance and sampling activity for the current year.

A report will be compiled and shared with Diploma Moderators allocated to sample Diplomas. Moderators will then make arrangements based on Centre Moderator recommendations, to sample student work and report back to the Centre Moderator.

Supplementary or Additional Visits

We will offer additional visits where:

- A Centre offers a variation on the normal once-a-year intake of students, external moderators may be asked to make a different number or pattern of visits
- A Centre has undergone substantial management or curriculum team change, or is in fragile circumstances
- Has received a risk rating that causes concern to the AVA
- A Centre makes a particular request to the AVA for additional support.

A fee may apply. A moderation visit may need to be postponed for a number of reasons and both the Centre and the AVA will give at least 48 hours' notice to reschedule a visit. Where a Centre cancels or postpones a planned meeting without evidenced circumstances, this is likely to impact on a diploma or Centre risk rate. A fee may be charged for re-scheduling the event.

The Final or Substantive Sampling Visit

The final moderation visit will normally take place between late April and late May to complete the main sampling of the majority of units, and for the external moderator to be able to make recommendations to the Centre Moderator who will represent the moderator team at the Centre's FAB. These timescales will also enable the AVA to process results and deal with any post final moderation and FAB issues before UCAS upload towards the end of July.

Final moderation of all Diplomas will be in accordance with Skills and Education Group Access Quality Model and policies. Centres must ensure that all relevant staff are familiar with related documents prior to the events.

The purpose of sampling activity is to:

- Sample from formally assessed work to confirm that the student has achieved against specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria and to assist the AVA to mitigate against malpractice
- To assure that assessment decisions are appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent across the sample
- To assure the correct implementation of grading requirements
- To assure that grade indicator and grade decisions are appropriate, consistent and fair across the sample
- To assure that grading processes are correctly applied to result in a grade for the unit, and that any grade information is clearly shown at all stages of the process
- To check the quality file to ensure that all activities planned in the calendar for quality assurance have been completed
- To ensure that the internal quality assurance system has been effectively applied to the provision throughout the year.

Centre Moderators will:

- Send a visit plan to the quality contact or nominated contact as appropriate
- Liaise with the nominated contact to agree the arrangements and timescales
- Coordinate the diploma moderation activity and production of reports
- Produce a Centre Moderator Report overview of the sampling process and set any actions required

Diplomas Moderators will:

- Sample the student work, assessment and internal quality processes
- Provide a feedback report to the Centre Moderator

Evaluation of External Moderation

As part of the Access to HE Committee's processes (and to fulfil a requirement from QAA), Skills and Education Group Access welcomes feedback on the conduct and standard of the external moderation process. You can contribute to this feedback by completing the on-line evaluation at the end of each moderation visit. We will forward the link to this to you after each event. Our Access to HE Committee receives reports on these responses and defines any necessary action that may be required. Centre moderators also evaluate the external moderation process as part of the annual reporting cycle.

The AVA has a cycle of observations of moderators in practice, either by a member of Skills and Education Group Access staff or by another moderator. Feedback from the observation contributes to the annual evaluation of moderation activity.

Appeals against the Results of External Moderation

QAA requires all AVAs to ensure that students and/or Centres can appeal against assessment decisions and/or outcomes.

The Skills and Education Group Access Appeals Policy includes information about Appeals against the Outcome of the AVA's External Moderation Process. Centres may appeal against:

- The contents of external moderator reports
- Decisions made by Skills and Education Group Access arising from quality assurance visits or Centre monitoring, including the application of sanctions and/or the amendment of assessment decisions following external moderation.

If you wish to appeal against the results of external moderation, in the first instance concerns should be raised directly with the Centre Moderator, who will be guided by the AVA in their course of action.

The Final Awards Board

QAA requires a formal process to agree the award of credit, in line with similar Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) requirements.

An extract from the QAA document, 'Grading Scheme Handbook' Section E.'

"Formal authority for the award of the Access to HE Diploma is located with an appropriate body within an Access Validating Agency's (AVA's) governance structure. For operational purposes, this authority is delegated to an Awards Board (or Awards Boards, where this function is undertaken at centre level)."

And Section 2:

"The constitution of Final Awards Board is specified by the AVA".

All Access to HE FABs will be conducted in accordance with and the AVA's Final Awards Board Policy which is available in SharePoint. Centres must ensure that all relevant personnel are familiar with this document prior to the event.

Centres are responsible for completing the FAB minute's template which is available in SharePoint.

The FABs are instruments of the Centre's quality assurance processes and as such both the scribe and chair of the FAB are to be appointed by the Centre.

It is expected that those appointed to these roles will have appropriate experience and training. FABs that are not quorate will be re-convened at the Centre's expense.

The FAB will usually take place between mid-June and early July.

Centres will have agreed a date for the FABs at the Centre Moderator Annual Review Meeting in September. We encourage Centres to hold one FAB event for all Diplomas. A fee for additional FABs will be charged in line with our charging policy.

The Centre Moderator will attend the FAB and verify the Recommendation of the Award of Credit (RAC).

It is the responsibility of the Centre quality contact to arrange the FAB. FABs are Chaired by a member of senior management from the Centre. The timings of FABs is to ensure that:

- (i) results can be processed and uploaded in advance of the UCAS deadline
- (ii) certificates can be printed and forwarded to Centres for onward transmission to students
- (iii) The AVA can respond to QAA data requirement activity

There are some exceptions to these dates (for example: courses which commence in January or are known as 'roll-on roll-off courses).

Certification for students can only be progressed when all documentation is accurately completed and submitted to Skills and Education Group Access.

This includes:

- Accurate minutes of the FAB which are fully completed and signed by the chair and Centre Moderator
- Fully completed eRAC which is submitted electronically
- Appropriate signatures of key FAB members to confirm award and processes.

It should be emphasised that the FAB is a Centre activity in terms of organisation and responsibility – with Skills and Education Group Access officers in attendance.

Re-convened Final Awards Board

A change in a FAB date may arise within the immediately preceding 28 days through situations beyond the control of any of the stakeholders, e.g. floods, fire, health or safety considerations. In such cases the Centre and the AVA will work together to agree the optimum way of addressing QAA requirements for the FAB.

The AVA may also request to postpone the FAB if it decides that the award of credit at the time of the FAB is insecure. Such a situation may arise if the Diploma or Centre Moderato finds several cases of erroneous achievement data or assessment documents missing and contacts the AVA to request a reconvened FAB.

Should the Centre postpone the FAB for any reason other than those of a traumatic nature, then financial sanctions will be imposed, and Risk Rating impacted.

For any situation that results in a re-convened FAB, the needs of the students will be considered as a priority. The postponement should not delay the official award of the Diploma and credits, where there may be consequences in the process of students accepting university offers.

Certification and the Sharing of Results

Once student results have been verified at the FAB and uploaded to Quartzweb for checking and processing, the AVA team will make preparations for release of results via its Digital Certification Website (DC Web) and certification. Centres will submit completed and verified results in addition to checked and signed FAB minutes.

Where results and/or FAB minutes have not been submitted by the deadlines, this will be noted as a quality issued to be discussed with your Quality Manager. Risk Ratings may be impacted.

E-Results

Once results are uploaded to Quartz Web, and matched to FAB documentation, they will be transferred into an electronic platform, DC Web. Centres will be provided with guidance to issue to students to create an individual login and access their Access to HE Diploma results securely.

Paper Certificates

Once certificates are printed and checked, they will be packaged and sent securely to Centres for onward transmission to students. Certificates are usually sent within 3-4 days of verification, although this may take longer when there are issues with documentation or results, or at busy times of the academic year.

Students should be informed that their results will be shared with UCAS but that this does not replace the need for students to contact the university personally to confirm their results.

UCAS Upload

AVAs are required to upload completed student data in mid-July so that HE institutions are able to confirm a student's undergraduate place. Any inaccuracies in student results are likely to delay this upload and may create an issue with a student being able to accept their place.

Section 9: Risk-based Centre Monitoring

Skills and Education Group Access is responsible for ensuring that that the curriculum delivered, the course organisation, the terms of approval of Centres who adopt a Diploma, the student experience, assessment practices including conduct of assessment, and details of assignment requirements are monitored and reviewed.

QAA requires that AVAs demonstrate their response to a risk-based approach to quality assurance.

The rationale for each Diploma risk band is based on information provided in the current external moderator visit and annual reports, and the Centre's overall record of compliance, quality assurance and/or the completion of actions; evidenced through the FAB minutes and Access to HE quality interventions log. A Centre Moderator or the AVA may review and change a Diploma or Centre risk rating based on additional reported information.

Quality managers receive full information of each Diploma's risk rating.

There are four levels of risk:

Green (Low Risk)	Based on the available evidence there is little or no risk to the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Centre approval criteria, regulatory conditions and/or the reputation of Skills and Education Group Access and Centre performance is good.
Yellow (Marginal Risk)	Based on the available evidence any risk to the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Centre approval criteria, regulatory conditions and/or the reputation of Skills and Education Group Access is marginal and Centre performance is satisfactory.
Amber (Moderate Risk)	Based on the available evidence there are concerns about a specific risk indicator or indicators and customised or specific action is required to ensure the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Centre approval criteria, regulatory conditions and/or the reputation of Skills and Education Group Access. Sanctions may be imposed.
Red (High Risk)	Based on the available evidence there are major concerns about one or more risk indicators which threaten the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Centre approval criteria, regulatory conditions and/or the reputation of Skills and Education Group Access. Urgent action is required. Sanctions may be imposed.

Sanctions Tariff

Please see Skills and Education Group Access Sanctions Policy, which can be found in SharePoint.

Quality Interventions

The AVA is required to hold a set of policies and procedures to protect the integrity of the Diploma which will be applied to any Centre which jeopardises the validity of the HE Diploma, including award of credit and grades.

There will be a charge applied for any quality intervention including, but not limited to:

- Amendments to the eRAC after the registration deadline
- Changes to the eRAC post-FAB
- Late submission of RPL/Credit Transfer requests
- Late submission of requests to change a student's list of registered units.

Quality Interventions are considered to pose potential risk to the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, and as such will incur an administration fee, and may impact on a Centre's risk rating. External moderators will be alerted to any quality interventions so that they may discuss support measures or offer advice on reducing risk in the future.

Retention of Work by a Centre

Centres have an obligation under the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation to ensure that student data should not be retained for longer than is necessary – we suggest that a period of least 12 months after the award of certificates would be necessary to cover the appeals process and any risk of after-the-fact malpractice. Beyond that, you, as the Centre should be making the decision, according to your General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Policy.

Retaking the Access to HE Diploma

Once a student has achieved a full Diploma, they cannot be registered on individual units of the course with a view to gaining a different grade. If a student wishes to retake units, they must be registered on the whole Diploma again. If a student makes the decision to retake the Diploma, the Centre must take into account funding, assessment and quality issues before offering the student a place. If the student is offered a place, the Centre must ensure that new assessments are provided and that none of the set assessments replicate those previously undertaken by the student. The Centre Moderator must be made aware, and given the opportunity to scrutinise the relevant work to ensure that this is the case. An application for Credit Transfer may be appropriate to ensure that previously achieved Access units and grades count towards the achievement of the new diploma. See the RPL/Credit Transfer Policy and Guidance available in SharePoint.

Conclusion

This Access to HE Handbook is accurate at the time of upload to the Skills and Education Group Access SharePoint folders. The AVA reserves the right to amend, and up-date as required in line with QAA Licensing Criteria, Access to HE Diploma Specification and Skills and Education Group Access policies and procedures. An updated version with highlighted changes will replace the existing version. Please ensure that all relevant staff are working to the most current version.

If you would like to contribute to the improved clarity of this document please contact the Access to HE Team at acesstohe@skillsedugroup.co.uk

Checklist and Timeline for Access to HE Diploma Courses

This is an indicative, quick reference document for planning, delivering and quality assuring the Access to HE Diploma to the QAA Specification. Further, more detailed, guidance will be issued to Centres prior to key quality assurance activity throughout the year. This form is available SharePoint folder.

This timetable is only to be used as a guide and may be amended by the Centre but considering the deadlines required by the AVA.

IMPORTANT: All students must be registered within 42 days and to their units within 84 days of the commencement of their course.

Pre-Course	
If new to Skills and Education Group Access or new to running a Diploma, liaise with your quality contact to arrange for a support visit from our Access to HE team for induction into Access to HE practices and processes	
Check any current documents are available including the external moderator annual report which will have been sent to the named quality contact the previous year	
Check that all new tutors have been inducted into Access to HE regulations and your organisation's policies and practices	
Ensure that all your tutors are fully aware of the regulations relating to the Access to HE Diploma Specification	
Ensure that all your tutors have access to and understand, <i>The QAA Grading Scheme Handbook</i> that defines the regulations for grading the Diploma	
Ensure that all your tutors have access to, and understand our Policy for Dealing with On-Course Referrals on behalf of Diploma Students	
Ensure that all your tutors have access to, and understand the AVA Policy and Protocol for Accepting changes to a Student's list of Registered Units	
Ensure that all your tutors have access to, and understand the rules around Credit Accumulation and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) both in this handbook and the Diploma spec'	
Ensure that all your tutors are familiar with the Skills and Education Group Access SharePoint which has all relevant documents and request forms for the above	
Select the units you will be delivering, ensuring that they meet the Rules of Combination (RoC) and that they are the most current versions (units are subject to an annual review process and may be modified.) - current versions will be available in your Skills and Education Group Access SharePoint	
Agree your Diploma and Unit assessment strategies	
Agree your internal moderation and standardisation strategy	
Ensure that pre-issue verification process of all assignment briefs has been completed and recorded, with all actions recommended by your lead internal moderator implemented	
Create a calendar of events and team meetings and ensure that all colleagues are aware of their obligations to attend	

Check that you have agreed the date for the FAB – see CM Annual Review and Planning Report. If a date needs to be changed contact your Centre Moderator. Late changes will be considered and a charge made accordingly	
Check and book relevant staff on to the mandatory and optional CPD events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training	
Set up course files (see Section 7 'First Moderation Visit' of this handbook for what should be included in your course file)	
Check with your quality contact for details of any cross-Centre quality assurance events that include Access to HE	
Ensure that a comprehensive Student Handbook is available for students (Skills and Education Group Access has made available a proforma to assist, in SharePoint)	
Agree a process of recording/tracking of student achievement by individual tutors to present to the external moderator at the first visit	

September

Check with students any Applications for RPL or Credit Transfer'- take copies for student/course file and forward request to Skills and Education Group Access (deadline end of December)	
Ensure that students have enrolled with the name which will appear on their Diploma certificate	
Return completed Curriculum plans to the AVA with details of all diplomas running and student numbers on each	
Check and book relevant staff on to our mandatory and optional CPD events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training.	
Update Skills and Education Group Access regarding any changes to course tutor contact details	
Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	
Respond to the Centre Moderator with regard to arrangements for the Centre Moderator Annual Review and Planning Meeting	

October

Check your Centre Moderator and Diploma Moderator allocations and details with your quality manager	
Plan for the initial moderation process, in response to the Centre Moderator Visit Plan	
Start to register students via the Portal (deadline is 42 days) from enrolment to the course	
Begin process of assessment, grading and internal moderation sampling	
Send Skills and Education Group Access details of your student representative(s) – one per Diploma	
Check and book relevant staff on to our mandatory and optional CPD events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training	
Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from your previous external moderator's reports	
Forward any Application for the Award of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Credit Transfer forms to Skills and Education Group Access	

November

Check and book relevant staff on to mandatory and optional CPD events and mandatory Standardisation events, and contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training where required	
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Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderation reports	
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Continue to register students via the Portal (deadline is 42 days) from enrolment to the course	
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December

Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	
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Ensure that the student representatives have acknowledged the invitation to attend the student representative meeting	
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January

Check progress of assessment and internal moderation activity	
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Prepare up to date assessment records and include on your eRAC all grading decisions to date	
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Check and book relevant staff on to mandatory and optional CPD and Standardisation events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training	
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Attend Skills and Education Group Access mandatory standardisation events (a fee will be charged for non-attendance or failure to bring/supply the required documentation). Disseminate outcomes to team.	
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February

Check progress of assessment and internal moderation activity	
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Liaise with tutors for assessment records and complete eRAC with grading decisions	
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Continue to forward student requests for referral to us	
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Check and book relevant staff on to Skills and Education Group Access mandatory and optional CPD events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training	
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Organise your internal standardisation event	
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Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	
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Attend Skills and Education Group Access mandatory standardisation events (a fee will be charged for non-attendance or failure to bring the required documentation). Disseminate outcomes to team.	
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March

Check progress of internal moderation activity	
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Liaise with tutors for assessment records and complete RAC with grading decisions	
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Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external	
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moderator's reports	
Liaise with marketing department to support the promotion of provision for the following academic year	
Plan for the sampling moderation process, in response to the Centre Moderator Visit Plan	

April

Continue with preparation for the external moderation sampling process	
Liaise with tutors for assessment records and complete RAC with grading decisions	
Check progress of internal moderation activity	
Continue with your team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	

May

Respond to Diploma and Centre Moderator Reports from the sampling process, including any requests for additional sampling	
Examine Final Moderation and Final Awards Board Policy and agree internal attendees for FAB with your quality contact	
Liaise with your quality contact to agree arrangements for final moderation	
Compile any mitigating circumstances in preparation for final moderation and FABs	
Liaise with your quality contact to agree arrangements for FAB to ensure with all appropriate colleagues including head of department, tutors, quality contact, and scribe are in attendance	
Receive from your quality contact and circulate to appropriate colleagues, Skills and Education Group Access Final Awards Board agenda and minutes template – available to download from SharePoint	
Nominate FAB scribe and chair	
Ensure all requests for RPL and/or credit transfer have been responded to by Skills and Education Group Access	
Liaise with tutors for assessment records and complete RAC with grading decisions	
Compile any mitigating circumstances in preparation for final moderation and FABs	
Further check with your marketing department for promotion for next academic year	

June/July

Respond to Diploma and Centre Moderator Reports from the sampling process, including any requests for additional sampling	
Liaise with individual students to check and confirm information on RAC (a quality intervention fee will be charged together with an additional fee for re-issue of a certificate if amendments are required at a later date – risk rating may be affected)	

Finalise assessment activity – tutor to sign summary sheet of RAC/s at the FAB	
Finalise internal moderation activity – internal moderator to sign summary sheet of RAC/s at the FAB	
Ensure that each student has checked and signed the summary sheet in front of their portfolio in preparation for FAB	
Prepare required documentation for final student requests for referrals to be presented to FAB for consideration	
Update the electronic form of eRAC(s) with final grading decisions (it is recommended that this should be a two person activity)	
Ensure that a completed eRAC(s) is made available to your Centre Moderator in line with the stated timescale	
Complete summary sheet with destinations (these will be returned by Skills and Education Group Access if incomplete and a quality intervention fee charged)	
Prepare for the FAB	
Liaise with your quality contact to ensure signed RACs and minutes of the FAB are sent to Skills and Education Group Access in accordance with timescales to avoid delay in the onward transmission of students' certificates	
Complete final electronic Course Review Survey and submit to Skills and Education Group Access by the end of July (a link to this will have been forwarded with the May and June bulletins)	
Receive students' certificates from Skills and Education Group Access, store securely and progress checking before onward transmission to students. Return any certificates that have been 'returned to sender' or have not been collected to Skills and Education Group Access. Note: certificates issued to students in error is a QAA notifiable event.	

Glossary – Guide to Key Terms

<p>Aegrotat Awards</p>	<p>May be awarded in cases where students have been prevented from completing all 60 credits of the Diploma by exceptional, extenuating, certificated, medical circumstances, but where they have achieved at least 30 credits and are deemed capable of achieving at undergraduate level.</p>
<p>Centre Moderator Annual Quality Review and Planning Meeting:</p>	<p>This activity enables the Centre to demonstrate continued compliance to QAA and AVA regulations.</p> <p>The AVA must be able to demonstrate that all Centres that are 'Approved to Run' AHE Diplomas, remain compliant.</p> <p>The Centre Moderator (CM), will convene the Annual Quality Review and be the overarching contact with the Centre Quality Manager.</p> <p>The aim of this activity is to: Discuss the outcomes of the previous year's compliance activity via moderator reports and AVA findings and make plans for compliance and sampling activity for the current year.</p>
<p>Appeal</p>	<p>Student appeals that can be taken to the awards board: The grounds for appeal about the award of credits or grades on the Access to HE Diploma are restricted to: -Evidence of administrative or procedural error -Extenuating circumstances that, for good reason, could not be notified prior to the awards board.</p>
<p>Approval to Run Process</p>	<p>Once a Centre has successfully completed the Centre Recognition process, they are eligible to apply for approval to run a Diploma by completing a formal application process whereby they demonstrate that they have the resources and subject expertise to deliver a Diploma. This approval to run request is reviewed annually at Final Awards Boards, presented for formal Approval by the Access to HE Committee and is confirmed to Centres in the Start of Year Letter. Approval to Run an Access to HE Diploma may be suspended as a result of significant non-compliant issues</p>
<p>Arrangements for the Award and Assessment of the Access to</p>	<p>From 1 August 2023, the arrangements relating to the principles of quality assurance under the Extraordinary Regulatory Framework will no longer apply to continuing students on an Access to HE Diploma</p>

HE Diploma 2023-24	
Assessment	<p>The process through which a tutor can measure a student's achievement.</p> <p>Assessment is undertaken through a range of activities and provides a framework for feedback and the recognition of student achievement.</p>
Assessment Strategy	<p>The plan for the assessment of student work which provides the framework for students to achieve the Diploma, including consideration of equality and diversity, resources and timescales. Centres are expected to submit an Assessment Strategy for each Diploma being delivered.</p>
Assessment Criteria	<p>These describe how students can demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outlined in a learning outcome.</p>
Assessor	<p>The person, usually the tutor, with responsibility for the assessment of student work.</p>
Assignment Brief	<p>The information used to describe what the student has to do to achieve specified learning outcomes, including assessment tasks, deadlines for completion and guidance on the achievement of grades. Where units are mapped across a Diploma course, any mapping must be demonstrated by clear assignment briefing.</p>
AVA	<p>Abbreviation of Access Validating Agency, an organisation licensed by QAA to undertake the development, validation, monitoring and review of individual Diploma courses and, accordingly, to award the Diploma (or where appropriate, credit towards the Diploma).</p>
Centre	<p>The organisation that is named on the Centre recognition application and Centre agreement: A Centre may run a range of courses, across a range of sites, and use several Awarding Bodies. Increasing numbers of Centres are coming together to form 'Groups' and will have informed the AVA whether they will expect to be considered as one Centre, or whether there are circumstances that means that a Site within the Centre will need to be dealt with separately.</p>
Certification	<p>The provision to students of a formal certificate testifying that they have been awarded the Diploma, together with details of the units they have achieved (achievement transcript).</p>

Cohort	A group of students that is registered with the AVA against a particular course. A Centre may register several cohorts for the same Diploma, depending on start and end dates, or full, or part-time provision for example. Each cohort will be allocated a different 'Run ID'.
Course	A defined offer of mandatory and optional units, within a set 'Rules of Combination' (RoC) that a Centre or Site decides on; this does depend on the level of devolved management and may differ from Centre to Centre. A Centre may run slightly different courses within the same Diploma, across its different sites. This will enable the Centre to support differing cohorts and/or progression route(s) for students. A course will have students registered to it within 42 days of the start date and units registered to those students within 84 days of the start of the course.
Course Recognition	Granted when a particular provider/Centre has been approved to deliver an approved Diploma. For course recognition to be completed, the AVA provides certain required course details to QAA. The course is then included on the Access courses database as a QAA-recognised Access to HE course.
Credits	<p>Credits, along with levels, are a key aspect of the accreditation framework. The number of credits reflects the volume of learning. A credit is awarded for those outcomes which, on average, a student might reasonably be expected to achieve in a notional 10 hours of learning.</p> <p>Notional learning time is the average time needed to achieve a particular identified outcome, not necessarily the actual time a student takes.</p>
Credit Transfer	The process through which Credits achieved on a different Access to HE Course (through the same or a different AVA) can be transferred to a new Access to HE Course and be counted towards the achievement of the full Access to HE Diploma. Credit Transfer units can carry grades across.
Diploma	A QAA licensed AHE Level Three qualification that Centres request the AVA for the approval to run. This is granted on an annual basis on the condition that a Centre meets all of the AVA and QAA's criteria. Access to HE Diplomas are credit-based and graded in accordance with a standard grading scheme. Each Diploma has its own approved set of units of assessment, governed by rules of combination.

<p>Diploma Approval</p>	<p>Is achieved when the recommendations of a validation panel have been considered by the Access to HE Committee and the AVA formally confirms that a Diploma has met all requirements (including requirements made in conditions), and that it may be offered by a Centre which has made a request for approval to run the Diploma.</p>
<p>Diploma Specification (Diploma Spec)</p>	<p>The Diploma Spec is the approved document agreed through the validation process which contains definitive details of conditions which must be satisfied for the successful achievement of the Diploma – eg, rules of combination, rules of unit inclusion and exclusion, complete unit lists.</p> <p>Each Centre with Approval to run a Diploma will hold a copy of a Diploma spec</p>
<p>Equitable</p>	<p>All students who study an Access to HE should receive an equitable experience and subsequent outcomes as any other student on all other Diplomas regardless of topic, course, college, region or time. QAA and the AVA regulation ensure equity and fairness is at the heart of Access to HE and that student results are robust.</p>
<p>Extenuation</p>	<p>Circumstances where a student, through no fault of their own, is not able to complete the assessment of LO/s for a unit/s and the tutor team requests an extenuation on their behalf to map work already completed to arrive at a unit grade for outstanding units. Presented to FAB for approval</p>
<p>External Moderation</p>	<p>External moderator sampling usually take place twice a year for each Course to ensure that it operates in line with AVA and QAA requirements.</p>
<p>External Moderators</p>	<p>Collective term used for Skills and Education Group moderators (Centre Moderators and Diploma Moderators)</p>
<p>Final Awards Board (FAB)</p>	<p>A formal process required by QAA to agree the award of credit, in line with similar HEI requirements. This event is the responsibility of the Centre to organise and run to an AVA set agenda.</p>
<p>Grade Descriptor</p>	<p>There are seven grade descriptors which are used to make judgements about achievement. These are specified on each unit and cannot be changed, though elements contained within each grade descriptor (grade descriptor components) can be selected by tutors at the assessment task design stage. Grade descriptor 7 (Quality) appears on all units and must be included in all assignment briefs.</p>

Grade Indicator	This is the grade a tutor/assessor gives for each grade descriptor that is used to assess a student's response to an assignment brief.
Grade Profile	The summary of grades a student has achieved; one grade for each unit successfully completed. This is the list that university offers tend to be based on (e.g. 30 Distinctions and 15 Merits may be the basis of an offer). This grade profile will inform Centre's grading data analysis throughout the year as preparation for presenting it to the FAB for consideration
Grading Scheme Handbook (Sections A-E)	QAA's definitive guide to the regulations and requirements for the implementation of grading.
Group	A collection of formerly independent Centres/colleges that will be known under a new legal identity. The AVA has, in the main, continued to quality assure Centres within a Group separately, but will now implement the AVA quality model in the way quality assurance is undertaken, for the majority of Centres within a Group arrangement.
HEI	A Higher Education Institution such as a university, which offers degree level courses.
Hub and Spoke	When a collection of colleges merge to become a 'Group', and where the AVA has been informed that the Group would like to be treated as one Centre, the AVA will work with key people at one of those Centres. This will be classed as the 'Hub'. The other sites within that Centre, will be classed as the 'Spokes' and communications between the AVA and the Hub will be expected to be disseminated to those sites.
Internal Moderation	The process undertaken by an internal moderator in which assessment practices, such as the design of assignment briefs, the quality of tutor decisions and feedback to students are regularly sampled, evaluated so that their findings can be acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness.
Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria	<p>A learning outcome is a clear statement about what a student will be able to know, do or understand for the award of credit for any given unit.</p> <p>The assessment criteria define more precisely what the student needs to do to demonstrate the achievement of each learning outcome.</p>

<p>Level</p>	<p>The assigned Level of approved units reflects the student’s ability to select and use relevant knowledge, ideas, skills and procedures to complete well defined tasks and address straightforward problems. Access to HE units are either Level Two (the same level as GCSE) or Level 3, (the same level as A-Level) but the overall level of the Diploma is Level 3.</p>
<p>Light-Touch</p>	<p>Applied to those Centres that have demonstrated consistently high levels of quality assurance in the delivery, assessment and internal moderation of its AHE provision. Where EMs have applied Green/Low Risk status as an outcome of a moderation visit, and these ratings have remained stable over three moderation visits, the AVA will review the types of evidence it expects to be available at a visit, and may request a reduced sample to be made available to the EM at the next moderation event.</p> <p>The AVA does not make a light-touch decision easily, and may withdraw this approach at any time, should the moderation activity at the Centre indicate that more support or scrutiny is required. This may be as a result of staff changes, organisational restructuring, outcomes of EM visit reports, Centre Moderation reports, or reported issues outside of moderation activity.</p>
<p>Moderation</p>	<p>A process intended to check that assessment outcomes are fair, reliable and valid and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently. This is done by both the provider (internal moderation) and by the AVA (external moderation).</p>
<p>Posthumous Award</p>	<p>An award which may be made in recognition of a student’s achievement should they die before they have completed their programme. The Diploma certificate will be forwarded to the college with an accompanying letter for onward transmission to the deceased’s family contact.</p>
<p>Programme</p>	<p>A collection of units (programme of study/learning) that is unique to one or more students within the course, and that are selected within Quartz (the AVA Portal) within 84 days of the start of the course. These selected units will make up the 60 credits within the RoC of the Diploma. The programme may be the same as some, or all other students within a cohort; it may be different, and will be dependent on curriculum staff availability, college resources, student numbers, or progression opportunities for example.</p>

Provider/Centre	An organisation that delivers recognised courses leading to the award of the Diploma.
Provider/Centre Approval	The successful outcome of the process through which an AVA approves a Centre to deliver one or more Diploma(s).
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency; the independent body which monitors and advises on standards and quality in UK higher education and Access to HE.
Quality Assurance	The work of the AVA to ensure that that through effective quality assurance arrangements, unit outcomes and grades awarded are fair, equitable and robust
RAC (e-RAC)	The electronic Recommendation for the Award of Credit form which, once completed, verified by the Tutor, Internal Moderator and Centre Moderator and confirmed within the AVA portal that then triggers the sending of students' certificates.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	The process by which students can achieve the Diploma without having to complete all the units, if they have previously achieved another qualification or units within that fulfils some of the requirements of the Diploma they are registered to; this can be through RPCL (Certificated) or RPEL (Experiential)
Referral	If a student's first resubmission has been unsuccessful, a case may be made by the tutor that the student should be allowed a second resubmission. An application for a referral can be made to us either during or at the end of a course but must be processed and approved in time for the FAB. Referral is not an automatic right.
Representation	<p>Students may sometimes ask for grades to be reviewed. This situation should be managed through the formal representations process, as set out in Annex C2 on page 13 of the QAA Access to HE Grading Scheme Handbook Section C.</p> <p>Under no circumstances may a tutor make any changes to grade indicators or unit grades which have been notified to a student, without the involvement of the internal moderator and without a formal record being made, the record of which will be presented to the EM for review and to the FAB for recording</p>

Resubmission	The process whereby a student can resubmit work in order to achieve all the learning outcomes for a unit. There is only one attempt at a resubmission allowed before the Referral process can then be introduced for a student.
Rules of Combination	<p>Rules defining the required achievement for individual Access to HE awards; these normally identify a particular set of approved named units that a student must complete to accumulate the required credits for the Diploma.</p> <p>Each Diploma has its own rules of combination, which can be found in the diploma specification for that Diploma. In addition, these rules will apply to units that cannot be delivered together in the same Diploma.</p>
Run	A Run is a cohort of students registered to the AVA's Portal, that are studying the same programme (possibly different combinations of units; different sites, same start and end dates). A Centre may have a number of runs for a Diploma within the same year. Each Run will be assigned an ID which is a key identifier for student registration and achievement and must be completed within 84 days of enrolment to the start date of the course.
Site	One of the colleges or institutions that sits under the Centre's name. A site may run a range of qualifications including AHE Diplomas. A Centre may run a Diploma at one or all of its sites. A Centre must apply to run an existing Diploma at another site through the AVA's Approval to run Addendum form.
Standardisation	Specific measures taken by a Centre (internal standardisation) and by an AVA (external standardisation) to ensure consistency in the standards and grading of student achievement in relation to a qualification. Each provider should hold internal standardisation meetings. As part of Centre standardisation, grading judgements must be included within this activity. Each Diploma run by every Centre must be represented at the AVA's annual standardisation meetings (mandatory event).
Submission	A finished piece of student work which is submitted to a tutor to be formally assessed.
Transcript	A formal written statement of a student's achievement, including, where applicable, the grades that have been awarded.

<p>Unit</p>	<p>A self-contained, structured course of study, consisting of a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria and defined by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject Prefix • Title • Unit code • Level • Credit Value • Grade Descriptors (graded Level 3 units only).
<p>Unit Assessment Plan</p>	<p>A plan for the assessment of a unit, including assessment methods, allocation of grade descriptors and learning outcomes to assessment tasks and evidence of achievement.</p>
<p>Unit Credit Value</p>	<p>The number of credits that may be awarded to a student for the successful achievement of all the learning outcomes of a unit. One credit is equivalent to 10 hours of learning including both time spent in class and private study. Individual Units can be worth 3, 6 or 9 credits.</p>
<p>Unit Grade Profile</p>	<p>The list of grade indicators awarded for a unit which are then used to arrive at the overall unit grade (e.g. grade indicators PPMDD would result in an overall unit grade of Merit, PPPMM a Pass).</p>
<p>Validation</p>	<p>The process of detailed scrutiny applied to a submission for a new Diploma. It includes consideration of the individual units and the rules of combination which specify the required learning for the award of the Diploma. The process leads to a recommendation for formal approval of the Diploma by the AVA's Access to HE Committee which has devolved responsibility from the Board of Trustees for oversight of the Access to HE Diploma.</p>
<p>Validation Panel</p>	<p>A team of experts (FE, HE, employers, other experts) appointed by an AVA to scrutinise proposals for new Diplomas or units or modifications to existing diplomas or units.</p>