



**Skills &
Education
Group Access**



Access
Recognised by QAA

Access to HE Diploma (Digital and Creative Media)

Diploma Guide

Valid From August 2025
Learning Aim Code: 40012839



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Access to HE Diploma Background and Aims

The Access to Higher Education Diploma is a full Level 3 UK qualification. It is regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) which licenses Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) to accredit and award the Access to Higher Education Diploma in the UK.

Access to Higher Education Diplomas enable students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to progress to higher education. They are key to widening participation from groups traditionally underrepresented at higher education institutions and are therefore aimed particularly, though not exclusively, at adults without traditional qualifications.

The aims of the Access to HE Diploma are to:

- prepare students who are returning to education for progression to Higher Education, further training in a related vocational or occupational area
- help students develop the skills and knowledge they need to achieve on their chosen HE course or career pathway
- familiarise students with the teaching and learning methodologies and assessment strategies found in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
- help students to gain confidence in their abilities, to review and monitor their own progress and to become independent students
- develop students' research, planning, analytical and evaluation skills
- enable students to make informed choices about future progression routes.

Diploma development

Skills and Education Group Access has worked with curriculum specialists and higher education colleagues to develop the Access to HE Diploma (Digital and Creative Media). Every Diploma is validated by the AVA through a robust and rigorous peer panel process which then recommends approval to the AVA's Access to HE Committee. By taking into consideration the views of Further and Higher Education practitioners, the AVA ensures that the Diploma meets all QAA requirements and that it enables students to complete a planned, balanced and coherent programme of study, through which they have been able to acquire a subject knowledge and develop academic skills which are relevant to the intended progression route(s).

LC 50a: This QAA recognised Access to HE Diploma is validated for delivery within the UK by a provider with a main base in the UK (including the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man) only.

LC 50c: Only students with a UK address (including BFO) can be registered for an Access to HE Diploma.

Diploma Specification

The QAA Diploma Specification states that the Access to HE Diploma is a:

- unitised qualification, based on units of assessment which are structured in accordance with the Access to HE unit specification
- credit-based qualification, operated in accordance with the terms of the Access to HE credit specification
- graded qualification, as determined by the Access to HE Grading Scheme.

About this qualification

AVA Diploma Access to HE Diploma	Main Classification (Sector Subject Area)	Sub- Classification
(Digital and Creative Media)	6 – Information and Communication Technology	6.2 – ICT for Users

This Diploma specification is valid from: 01/08/2025

Diploma revalidation date: 31/07/2026

The Access to HE Diploma (Digital and Creative Media) provides students with a comprehensive understanding of digital and creative media practices and theories. This course prepares students for Higher Education leading to careers in digital media, photography, film, and related fields. Students will acquire essential knowledge, specific skills, and transferable skills necessary for success in these areas.

A. Key Knowledge:

1. Digital Media and Photography:

- Understanding the principles of digital editing for moving images and sound.
- Knowledge of digital image manipulation and output techniques.
- Understanding of various photographic practices, including fashion, studio portraiture, location portraiture, and reportage.

2. Media Theory and Context:

- Exploration of media and popular culture and its impact on society.
- Understanding the principles of documentary making.
- Contextual studies in digital and creative media.

3. Project Development:

- Skills in developing and presenting major and personal projects.
- Experience in visual research and final major project practice, presentation, and exhibition.

B. Subject-Specific Skills:**1. Creative and Technical Skills:**

- Proficiency in digital sound and image capture.
- Skills in multimedia authoring and using digital cameras.
- Competence in studio and location photography techniques.

2. Project Management:

- Ability to conduct and manage personal and diagnostic projects.
- Skills in process and realisation of creative ideas.
- Experience in organising and participating in exhibitions.

3. Technical Proficiency:

- Use of databases, spreadsheet software, and word processing tools.
- Understanding of safe and ethical practices in using generative artificial intelligence.

C. Transferable Skills:**1. Academic and Professional Skills:**

- Enhanced academic writing and research skills.
- Development of information literacy and reflective practice.
- Skills in reading, note-making, and exam techniques.

2. Communication and Organisational Skills:

- Improved communication skills for presenting projects and findings.
- Organisation and evaluation of study techniques.
- Experience in conducting work experience and understanding opportunities in Higher Education.

3. Numeracy and Technological Skills:

- Proficiency in numeracy and its application in media projects.
- Use of spreadsheet software for data organisation and analysis.

Intended Progression Routes

LC 61a and 61b: Access to HE Diplomas are intended to provide a preparation for study in UK higher education, but the award of a Diploma does not provide guaranteed entry to UK higher education programmes.

The following progression routes were agreed at the point of validation as being appropriate choices for students who achieve the Access to HE Diploma (Digital and Creative Media), subject to the course entry requirements and application process.

- Digital Media Production
- Digital Media and Society
- Digital Media
- Computer Games Development
- Photography.

It is essential that providers delivering this Diploma consult receiving HEIs themselves to ensure that suitable and relevant progression opportunities are sound. Evidence of HEI consultation and progression possibilities will be identified in the provider's Programme Submission Document.

Access to HE Diploma provider assessment strategy advice

QAA states that the Access to HE Diploma provides '*HE progression opportunities for adults who, because of social, educational or individual circumstances may have achieved few, if any, prior qualifications*'. They also state that, '*Students who are awarded the Diploma will have completed a planned, balanced and coherent programme of study, through which they have been able to acquire subject knowledge and develop academic skills which are relevant to the intended progression route(s)*'. Therefore all approved providers need to develop diploma assessment strategies which outline what assessment activities the students will undertake, how they will be used and why they have been chosen in order to achieve the learning aims:

1. **What** is the aim of the diploma assessment strategy?
2. **How** will it be achieved?
3. **Why** has this approach been chosen?

Assessment design:

Access to HE Diplomas should be assessed using innovative and contemporaneous methods, tailored to prepare students studying at Level 3 for study at Higher Education. Assessment design should be holistic, ensuring students can demonstrate attained knowledge, skills and behaviours in and across units and assessments should reflect those likely to be encountered on Higher Education courses in the same field of study. Specific assessment guidance should be provided for each unit to ensure consistency and fairness across all student achievements.

In addition, providers must ensure that assessment methods are chosen which afford students opportunities to demonstrate the requirements of the three Grading Standards; Knowledge and Understanding, Subject Specific Skills and Transferable Skills.

Assessment design should comply with the requirements of the QAA Grading Scheme (2024) and also be aligned to the principles of assessment: Validity, Authenticity, Reliability, Currency and Sufficiency (VARCS).

LC 50g: Tutor/Assessor qualifications and experience specifically required for delivery and assessment of this diploma:

Generally, and as a minimum, it is expected that provider staff teaching on the Diploma have the required professional competence and skills necessary for the mode(s) of delivery to be used, and the level of subject expertise necessary to teach and assess the units available on the Diploma.

Rules of Combination

Where options are available within a single set of rules of combination, which allow alternative requirements for the achievement of a named Diploma, the alternatives permitted by the options are consistent, in terms of academic challenge and demand, and will require equivalent standards for achievement, whenever and wherever it is delivered.

Access to HE Diploma (Digital and Creative Media)	
Credit Value of the Diploma:	60
Students must achieve all the units within the Diploma.	
<p>All Diplomas are 60 credits, irrespective of the place, subject or mode of study. Of the 60 credits 45 must be from graded units concerned with academic subject content, with the remaining 15 credits to be achieved from ungraded units.</p> <p>In addition, all students must study a minimum of ten 3 credit units and at least one 9 or 6 credit unit up to a maximum of 30 credits, which may or may not be graded.</p>	
Students can achieve up to a maximum of 30 credits at Level 3 through credit transfer and the award of credit through the recognition of prior learning.	
<p>Students undertaking any Access to HE Diploma, whatever their mode of study, must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) registered and certificated for units to a maximum value of 60 credits b) registered for units to the value of 60 credits no later than 84 days from the start date of their Access to HE course, or before the student makes a formal application to a higher education course through UCAS or any other application process, whichever date occurs first. 	

Appendix 1 - Units of Assessment – Access to HE Diploma (Digital and Creative Media)

For every unit included in the table, further information is included in the Unit Specifications, including learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

Grading Standards (Applied to all graded units)

1	Knowledge and Understanding of the Subject	KU
2	Subject Specific Skills	SS
3	Transferable Skills	TS

There are no mandatory units. Students must study a minimum of TEN, 3 credit units and at least ONE 6 or 9 credit unit up to a maximum of 30 credits.

Optional Units

Graded Units. Choose 45 credits from:

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Final Major Project: Visual Studies	JA1/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Final Major Project: Presentation and Exhibition	JA2/3/AA/15G	Three	3
Exhibition	KA2/3/AA/03G	Three	3
Media and Popular Culture	KA2/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Multimedia Authoring	KA4/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Fashion Photography	KJ1/3/AA/02G	Three	3
Location Portraiture	KJ1/3/AA/03G	Three	3
Principles of Documentary Making	KJ1/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Reportage Photography Practice	KJ1/3/AA/05G	Three	3
Studio Portraiture Photography	KJ1/3/AA/06G	Three	3
Understanding Camera Controls	KJ1/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Using a Digital Camera	KJ1/3/AA/08G	Three	3
Digital Images - Manipulation and Output	KJ2/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Final Major Project: Practice	JA2/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Contextual Studies in Art and Design	JA2/3/AA/11G	Three	6
Digital Editing for Moving Image	KJ2/3/AA/03G	Three	6
Digital Sound and Image Capture	KJ2/3/AA/05G	Three	6
Visual Research	KJ3/3/AA/01G	Three	6
Diagnostic Project	JA2/3/AA/01G	Three	9
Major Project	JA2/3/AA/04G	Three	9
Personal Project in Art and Design	JA2/3/AA/13G	Three	9
Process and Realisation	JA2/3/AA/21G	Three	9
Individual Project - Process and Realisation	JA2/3/AA/22G	Three	9

Ungraded Units. Choose 15 credits from:

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
The Safe and Ethical Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence	CK5/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Databases	CN1/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Spreadsheet Software	CP3/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Word Processing	CQ1/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Academic Writing Skills	HC7/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Reading and Note Making	HC7/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Researching and Understanding Opportunities in Higher Education	HC7/3/AA/04U	Three	3
Exam Techniques and Practice	HC7/3/AA/05U	Three	3
Information Literacy Skills	HC7/3/AA/06U	Three	3
Organisation and Evaluation of Study	HC7/3/AA/07U	Three	3
Reflective Practice	HC7/3/AA/16U	Three	3
Research Skills	HC7/3/AA/17U	Three	3
Communications	HD2/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Numeracy	HD4/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Work Experience	HB1/3/AA/04U	Three	6
Higher Education Toolkit	HC7/3/AA/19U	Three	6
Research Skills: Project	HC7/3/AA/20U	Three	6
Conducting a Personal Project	JA2/3/AA/06U	Three	9
Diagnostic Project	JA2/3/AA/07U	Three	9

Inclusion and Exclusion Rules of Combination

Barred Unit 1	National Code	CV	Barred Unit 2	National Code	CV
Diagnostic Project	JA2/3/AA/01G	9	Diagnostic Project	JA2/3/AA/07U	9