

Access to HE Diploma (Education Professions) Diploma Specification

Valid from: August 2026
Learning Aim Code: 40012840

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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 (Education Professions). 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 subject knowledge and develop academic skills which are relevant to the intended progression route(s).

C1 (34.1): 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.

C1 (34.2): Only students with a UK address (including BFPO) 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.

This Diploma Specification should be read in conjunction with the QAA Access to HE Diploma Specification, the QAA Access to HE Grading Scheme and associated AVA policies and procedures.

About this qualification

AVA Diploma Title	Main Classification (Sector Subject Area)	Sub- Classification
Access to HE Diploma (Education Professions)	13 - Education and Training	13.1 - Teaching and Lecturing

This Diploma specification is valid from: 01/08/2026
Diploma revalidation date: 31/07/2031

Purpose of the Diploma:

The Access to HE Diploma (Education Professions) provides students with a comprehensive understanding of educational theories, practices, and the broader societal and scientific contexts in which education operates. This course prepares students for Higher Education leading to careers in teaching, educational administration, and related fields. Students will acquire essential knowledge, specific skills, and transferable skills necessary for success in these areas.

A. Key Knowledge and Understanding:

1. Educational Theory and Practice:

- Understanding of current developments in education, perspectives on education, and teaching and learning strategies.
- Knowledge of safeguarding, equality, diversity, and inclusion in educational settings.
- Insights into child development, early socialisation, and working with children with additional needs.

2. Literature and Language:

- Exploration of language change, original writing, and textual analysis.
- Understanding of various literary forms including poetry, the nineteenth-century novel, modern dramatic texts, and Shakespeare.

3. History and Sociology:

- Knowledge of British and European history, political ideologies, and the welfare state.
- Exploration of sociological approaches to contemporary issues, race and ethnicity in modern societies, and health and illness.

4. Biology and Psychology:

- Understanding of human physiology, communicable diseases, and human reproduction.
- Insights into key aspects of psychology, cognitive psychology, personality theories, and social interaction.

B. Subject-Specific Skills:

1. Teaching and Educational Practices:

- Skills in conducting teaching practice and applying educational theories in real-world settings.
- Competence in developing and reflecting on professional identity.
- Knowledge of how to use play in the curriculum and practical strategies for engaging students.

2. Scientific and Analytical Skills:

- Proficiency in practical biology skills, data handling, and statistics.
- Understanding of human physiology and nutrition, and their implications for child development.

3. Literary and Historical Analysis:

- Skills in analysing literary texts and understanding historical contexts.
- Competence in exploring literature, poetry analysis, and examining modern dramatic texts.

C. Transferable Skills:

1. Academic and Research Skills:

- Enhanced academic writing, research skills, and information literacy.
- Development of reading, note-making, and planning and writing assignments.
- Experience in conducting research projects and understanding opportunities in Higher Education.

2. Communication and Organisational Skills:

- Improved communication skills for teaching and presenting ideas.
- Skills in using IT for study, including word processing and other software tools.
- Development of numeracy skills for primary education.

3. Professional and Reflective Skills:

- Understanding of principles of reflection and the ability to apply reflective practice.
- Awareness of safe and ethical use of generative artificial intelligence.
- Skills in managing work experience and applying equal opportunities in educational contexts.

Intended Progression Routes

D2.1 (52.2): 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 (Education Professions), subject to the course entry requirements and application process.

- Early Childhood Studies
- Primary Education/Early Years with QTS
- Social Work
- Secondary Teaching
- Working with Children and Young Families
- Education Studies
- Learning and Teaching Degrees

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.

Accuracy of Information and Diploma Titles

Providers are responsible for ensuring that students receive accurate, clear and timely information relating to the Diploma structure, assessment, grading and progression opportunities. Students must be made aware of the exact validated Diploma title against which they are registered and providers must ensure that published or promotional information does not misrepresent the approved qualification.

Providers must ensure that all information provided to prospective and current students is accurate, clear and not misleading, including information relating to programme content, assessment, grading, progression opportunities and any additional costs associated with study.

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 contemporary methods, tailored to prepare students studying at Level 3 for study at Higher Education. Assessment design should be holistic, ensuring students can demonstrate acquired knowledge, understanding and skills 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 assessment practice. Providers are responsible for ensuring that assessment strategies remain planned, balanced and coherent across the Diploma and that assessment demand remains proportionate and manageable for students. Effective assessment design begins at the planning stage and should be informed by the Provider Handbook, the QAA Access to HE Grading Scheme and associated AVA guidance.

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. Providers should ensure that students are given opportunities to demonstrate the selected Grading Standards and their components through assessment activities and that grading decisions are appropriately contextualised to the assessment tasks, evidence produced and unit content being assessed. Further, assessment methods should reflect, where appropriate, the forms of assessment commonly encountered within Higher Education and should support the development of independent study, research, analytical and reflective skills.

Assessment design should comply with the requirements of the most current QAA Grading Scheme and also be aligned to the principles of assessment: Validity, Authenticity, Reliability, Currency and Sufficiency (VARCS). Providers are encouraged to consider integrated assessment approaches where

appropriate. Integrated assessment should be planned and documented through the Diploma Assessment Planner (AP1), Unit Planner (AP2) and Assessment Brief (AP3) and must ensure that Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and Grading Standards remain clearly mapped and assessable. Integrated assessment should reduce unnecessary duplication whilst maintaining the validity, reliability and transparency of assessment decisions.

Within the delivery of the Diploma, tutors and assessors should ensure that students' work remains current, relevant and authentic including where generative artificial intelligence tools are used. Students should be supported to acknowledge and reference the use of such tools appropriately to ensure transparency.

Providers must ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the authentication of student work and for the management of academic misconduct, maladministration and inappropriate use of artificial intelligence in accordance with AVA policies and procedures.

Providers may recognise valid evidence generated through other assessment activities where that evidence demonstrably meets the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria of a unit. Such decisions must be supported by explicit mapping, appropriate records and adherence to the principles of assessment (VARCS).

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.

Providers must also ensure that appropriate learning resources, student support and delivery infrastructure are available to support the effective delivery and assessment of 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 (Education Professions)	
Credit Value of the Diploma:	60
Students must achieve 60 credits in total in accordance with the rules of combination for the Diploma.	
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. 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.	
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.	
Students undertaking any Access to HE Diploma, whatever their mode of study, must be: 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 (Education Professions)

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
2	Subject Specific Skills
3	Transferable Skills

Mandatory Graded Units (Please select 18 credits)

Students must take a maximum of 6 credits from:

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Teaching and Learning *	GB1/3/AA/03G	Three	6
Teaching Practice *	GB1/3/AA/04G	Three	6

Followed by the remaining mandatory units:

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Working with Children with Additional Needs	GA1/3/AA/06G	Three	6
Safeguarding	PR2/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Perspectives on Education	GA1/3/AA/07G	Three	3

*These may not be taken together.

Optional Graded Units (Please select 27 credits from this list)

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Political Ideologies	EA2/3/AA/03G	Three	3
Human Rights	EC7/3/AA/02G	Three	3
Family Law	EC7/3/AA/06G	Three	3
Application of Sociological Approaches to Contemporary Issues	EE2/3/AA/27G	Three	3
Race and Ethnicity in Modern Societies	EE2/3/AA/30G	Three	3
Literature: Poetry	FC3/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Literature: Shakespeare	FC4/3/AA/03G	Three	3

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Language: Change	FN2/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Language: Original Writing	FN2/3/AA/08G	Three	3
Language: Textual Analysis	FN2/3/AA/09G	Three	3
Modern Dramatic Text	FN2/3/AA/10G	Three	3
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	GA1/3/AA/02G	Three	3
Perspectives in Psychology	PK1/3/AA/21G	Three	3
Social Interaction	PK1/3/AA/26G	Three	3
Intelligence	PK1/3/AA/28G	Three	3
Personality Theories	PK1/3/AA/29G	Three	3
Child Development	PK3/3/AA/06G	Three	3
Child Development Early Socialisation	PK3/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Cognitive Psychology	PK8/3/AA/02G	Three	3
The Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/10G	Three	3
Counselling Theory	PS1/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Data Handling	RB7/3/AA/12G	Three	3
Practical Biology Skills	RH3/3/AA/10G	Three	3
Cells	RH3/3/AA/24G	Three	3
Human Reproduction, Growth and Development	RH4/3/AA/27G	Three	3
Nutrition and Digestion	RH4/3/AA/30G	Three	3
Communicable Diseases	RH4/3/AA/34G	Three	3
British History	DB5/3/AA/02G	Three	6
European History	DB6/3/AA/07G	Three	6
Globalisation and Development	EE2/3/AA/29G	Three	6
Sociology: Concepts and Perspectives	EE2/3/AA/26G	Three	6
Literature: Poetry Analysis	FC3/3/AA/09G	Three	6
Literature: The Novel	FC3/3/AA/11G	Three	6
Literature: The Nineteenth Century Novel	FC4/3/AA/04G	Three	6
Current Developments in Education	GA1/3/AA/01G	Three	6
Play in the Curriculum	GA1/3/AA/04G	Three	6
Reflection and Professional Identity	GA1/3/AA/05G	Three	6
Health and Illness	PA1/3/AA/05G	Three	6
Key Aspects of Psychology	PK1/3/AA/04G	Three	6
Statistics	RB7/3/AA/11G	Three	6
Human Physiology	RH4/3/AA/33G	Three	6
Research Project	EE2/3/AA/25G	Three	9

Optional Ungraded Units (Please select 15 credits from this list)

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Numeracy Skills for Primary Education	HD4/2/AA/02U	Two	3
Principles of Reflection	HB1/3/AA/03U	Three	3
Fascism and Communism	DB2/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Literature: Poetry	FC3/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Literacy Skills	HD3/3/AA/03U	Three	3
Communication	KB3/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Texts and Genres	FC4/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Numeracy	HD4/3/AA/01U	Three	3
The Safe and Ethical Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence	CK5/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Equal Opportunities	GA7/3/AA/02U	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
Information Literacy Skills	HC7/3/AA/06U	Three	3
Presentation Skills	HC7/3/AA/18U	Three	3
Family	EE9/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Work Experience	HB1/3/AA/04U	Three	6
Higher Education Toolkit	HC7/3/AA/19U	Three	6

Inclusion and Exclusion Rules of Combination

Barred Unit 1	National Code	CV	Barred Unit 2	National Code	CV
Language: Textual Analysis	FN2/3/AA/09G	3	Texts and Genres	FC4/3/AA/02U	3
Key Aspects of Psychology	PK1/3/AA/04G	6	Perspectives in Psychology	PK1/3/AA/21G	3
Higher Education Toolkit	HC7/3/AA/19U	6	Presentation Skills	HC7/3/AA/18U	3
Literature: Poetry	FC3/3/AA/07G	3	Literature: Poetry Analysis	FC3/3/AA/09G	6
Literature: Poetry	FC3/3/AA/07G	3	Literature: Poetry	FC3/3/AA/02U	3
Literature: Poetry	FC3/3/AA/02U	3	Literature: Poetry Analysis	FC3/3/AA/09G	6
Teaching and Learning	GB1/3/AA/03G	6	Teaching Practice	GB1/3/AA/04G	6