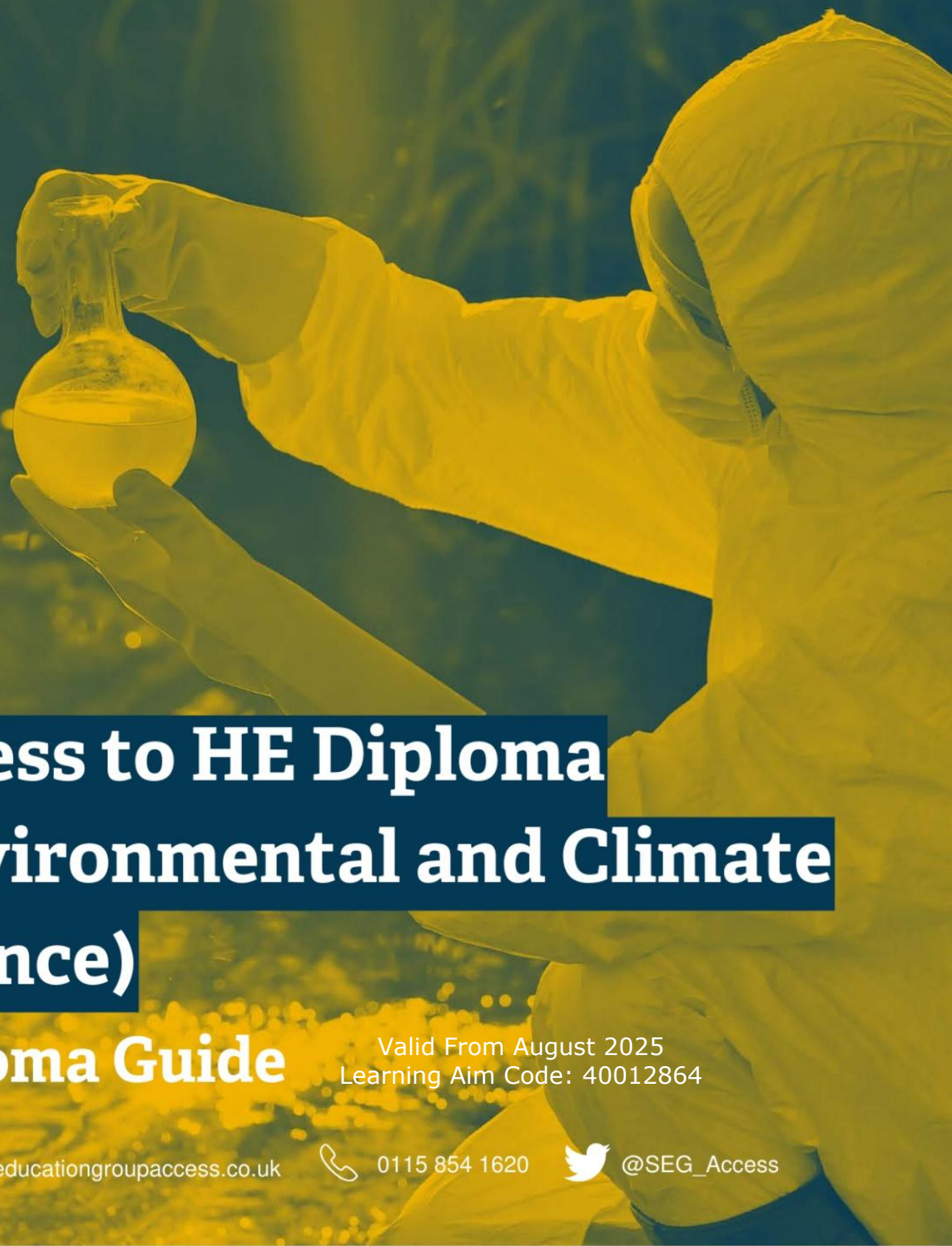




**Skills &
Education
Group Access**



Access to HE Diploma (Environmental and Climate Science)

Diploma Guide

Valid From August 2025
Learning Aim Code: 40012864



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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 (Environmental and Climate Science). 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
(Environmental and Climate Science)	2 - Science and Mathematics	2.1 - Science

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

Diploma revalidation date: 31/07/2026

The Access to HE Diploma (Environmental and Climate Science) provides students with an in-depth understanding of the principles and practices related to environmental science and climate studies. This course is designed to prepare students for Higher Education leading to careers in environmental science, conservation, and related fields. Students will acquire key knowledge, subject-specific skills, and transferable skills essential for success in these areas.

A. Key Knowledge:

1. Environmental Science and Ecology:

- Understanding of atmospheric pollution and sunlight effects.
- Knowledge of ecological field techniques and exploring conservation management.
- Insight into water pollution and water resources management.

2. Biological and Chemical Principles:

- Understanding genetics, evolution, and fundamentals of biological systems.
- Knowledge of human physiology, infection and immunity, and systems physiology.
- Insight into organic chemistry, enthalpy, rates, and redox reactions.

3. Energy and Resource Management:

- Understanding energy resources and their environmental impacts.
- Knowledge of data collection and analysis techniques in environmental contexts.
- Insight into conducting design projects related to energy and resource management.

B. Subject-Specific Skills:**1. Environmental Science Practices:**

- Skills in conducting ecological field techniques and conservation management projects.
- Skills in analysing atmospheric and water pollution data.
- Ability to apply principles of genetics, evolution, and physiology to environmental contexts.

2. Scientific and Analytical Skills:

- Understanding and applying organic chemistry and redox reactions to environmental studies.
- Skills in algebra, logarithms, statistics, and calculus relevant to environmental data analysis.
- Competence in conducting and analysing data from environmental research projects.

3. Project and Resource Management:

- Knowledge of conducting design projects in environmental science.
- Skills in how to manage energy resources and understanding their environmental impacts.
- Competence in applying data collection and analysis techniques to environmental research.

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

- Development of strong research skills, including planning and conducting environmental research projects.
- Proficiency in academic writing, reading, and note-making.
- Understanding opportunities and tools for success in higher education, including the higher education toolkit.

2. Communication and Professional Skills:

- Improved presentation skills, information literacy skills, and reflective practice.
- Development of organisational and evaluative skills for study.
- Experience in effectively communicating complex scientific concepts in environmental contexts.

3. Critical Thinking and Analytical Proficiency:

- Enhanced ability to critically analyse environmental and climate data.
- Skills in using statistical data for research and analysis in environmental science.
- Understanding the safe and ethical use of generative artificial intelligence in environmental science contexts.

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 (Environmental and Climate Science), subject to the course entry requirements and application process.

- Climate Change
- Environmental Science
- Geology
- Ecology
- Environmental Management
- Marine Biology.

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 (Environmental and Climate Science)	
Credit Value of the Diploma:	60
Students must achieve all the units within 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 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 (Environmental and Climate Science)

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

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.

Mandatory Units.

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Atmospheric Pollution and Sunlight	QA3/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Ecological Field Techniques	QA3/3/AA/02G	Three	3
Energy Resources	QB1/3/AA/01G	Three	3

Optional Units

Graded Units. Choose 36 credits from:

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Water Resources	QA1/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Water Pollution	QC5/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Algebra, Logarithms, Statistics and Calculus	RB1/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Data Collection and Analysis	RB7/3/AA/09G	Three	3
The Cellular Factory	RH3/3/AA/25G	Three	3
Enthalpy, Rates and Redox	RD1/3/AA/13G	Three	6
Organic Chemistry	RD4/3/AA/01G	Three	6
Systems Physiology	RH4/3/AA/18G	Three	6
Infection and Immunity	RH4/3/AA/29G	Three	6
Human Physiology	RH4/3/AA/33G	Three	6
Genetics and Evolution	RH3/3/AA/21G	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
Academic Writing Skills	HC7/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Information Literacy Skills	HC7/3/AA/06U	Three	3
Presentation Skills	HC7/3/AA/18U	Three	3
Conservation Management	QA2/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Fundamentals of Biological Systems	RH3/3/AA/10U	Three	3
Conducting a Design Project	VF3/3/AA/01U	Three	3

There are no barred units in this Diploma.