









Diploma Guide

Valid From August 2025 Learning Aim Code: 40012876







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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 (Health Science 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 a 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 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
(Health Science Professions)	1: Health Public Services and Care	1.2: Nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine

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

Diploma revalidation date: 31/07/2026

The Access to HE Diploma (Health Sciences Professions) aims to equip students with a comprehensive understanding of health, biology, psychology and sociology, health professional practices and related fields. This course is designed to prepare students for Higher Education looking at entering careers in health, health sciences and related sectors. Students will acquire key knowledge, subject-specific skills, and transferable skills essential for success in these areas. The precise knowledge and skills will be dependent upon the choice of units taken.

A. Key Knowledge:

1. Health Sciences:

- Understanding the basic structure and functions of the human body, including major organ systems.
- Knowledge of pathogens and their impact on human health.
- Understanding of genetic principles and evolutionary biology.

2. Psychology and Sociology:

- Understanding mental health issues and strategies for coping.
- Knowledge of human development from infancy to adulthood.
- Insight into the importance of diversity, equality, and human rights in healthcare settings.

3. Health Practices:

• Understanding effective communication strategies in healthcare.



- Knowledge of professional standards and practices in health and social care.
- Insight into the principles of nutrition and the human digestive system.

B. Subject-Specific Skills:

1. Clinical and Laboratory Skills:

- Competence in biological experimentation and laboratory techniques.
- Skills in culturing and identifying microorganisms.
- Understanding and applying imaging techniques in medical practice.

2. Research and Analytical Skills:

- Ability to design and conduct research projects related to health and social care.
- Competence in collecting, analysing, and interpreting data.
- Skills in understanding and analysing biochemical processes.

3. Psychological and Social Care Skills:

- Competence in providing counselling and support.
- Understanding psychological theories and their application to health.
- Knowledge of early childhood development and attachment theories.

C. Transferable Skills:

1. Research and Academic Skills:

- Development of strong research capabilities, including study organisation and evaluation.
- Proficiency in academic writing, reading, and note-making.
- Understanding of opportunities and tools for success in higher education.

2. Communication and Professional Skills:

- Improved ability to present information clearly and effectively.
- Competence in locating, evaluating, and using information effectively.
- Developing the ability to reflect on and improve personal and professional practices.

3. Health and Ethical Skills:

- Knowledge of ethical issues and safe practices, including the use of generative artificial intelligence.
- Know how to work effectively in diverse and inclusive environments.
- Understanding of professionalism in nursing and health professions.



D1.1 (45) Subject Descriptor Compliance

The Access to HE Diploma (Health Science Professions) complies with the subject descriptor requirements as mandated by QAA in the **Subject Descriptor for Nursing and Health Professions** document. Please note that the table below shows the minimal credit requirements as set out by QAA, Skills Education Group Access may have increased the minimum credit requirements in Skills Education Group Access in subjects in the Rules of Combination.

Content of the descriptor

Summary of essential requirements for this descriptor

Essential subject content	Minimum credit requirement at Level 3		Minimum credit requirement at Level 2
	Graded	Ungraded	Ungraded
Biology	15		
Numeracy in Health Context			3
Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions		3	

	Level 3	Level 2 or 3	Total
Total minimum credits for essential subject content	18	3	21
Credits remaining for recommended or other subject content	27	12	39

Essential requirements

Subject: Biology Level: 3 Minimum credit value: 15

About this subject

A firm grounding in the key principles and processes of biology is essential for pursuing a career in nursing and health professions. While undergraduate courses will also include the study of biology, the inclusion of the minimum content defined here will ensure that Access to HE students are well prepared to gain maximum benefit from their degree studies.



Required content:

- cell structure
- cell function
- transport for example, osmosis
- homeostasis
- human anatomy and physiology to include a minimum of **THREE** systems from the following: cardiovascular; respiratory; digestion and nutrition; muscular-skeletal; excretion; endocrine; nervous system; genetics.
- additional content may include immunity/defence against disease, reproduction, thermoregulation.

In addition, to the essential biology content, students will also need to cover the essential elements for **numeracy at Level 2** and **Professional Behaviours at Level 3**. Further specific information can be found in the subject descriptor document via the QAA website, which also contains guidance on the use of recommended, not mandatory, subject content which could be used to deliver the Diploma to students.

Intended Progression Routes

D1 (C52.2) b: 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 (Health Science Professions), subject to the course entry requirements and application process.

- Any nursing pathway (adult, paediatric, mental health etc)
- Midwifery courses
- Paramedic science
- Biology, chemistry or health science
- Psychology, child development
- Other careers allied to health (e.g. podiatry)
- General health qualifications (e.g. Health and Social Care, Health Science).

Admission to these progression routes is dependent upon the choice of units from those available.

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).

Assessment guidance specific to this diploma:

Further to the above, some potential assessment methods which are suggested for this diploma include:

- Case Studies
- Debate
- Essays
- Examinations (open or closed book)
- Experimental Reports
- Practical/Demonstrations
- Presentations
- Reflective log
- Blogs/Vlogs students like to engage with technology
- Infographics



- Reports
- Research Reports
- Roleplays/Simulations
- Viva examinations
- Fact sheets
- Self-recorded presentations (e.g. YouTube with PowerPoint and face on screen)
- Interviews based on reports/essays to confirm understanding (report not marked but interview is)
- Policy documents/papers
- Clinical skills evaluations
- Communication skills assessment e.g. listening to a conversation then provider verbal feedback

The list above is not exhaustive, and not all methods must be used however, a range is expected.

C1.1 (34.4), C2 (38-42), E2 (75,76), E4.1 (80.1, 80.2, 80.3): 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 (Health Science Professions)

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 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 (Health Science 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	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 Graded Units

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Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Cellular Structure and Activity*	RH3/3/AA/16G	Three	3
The Structure and Function of Cells*	RH3/3/AA/26G	Three	6
Endocrine System	RH4/3/AA/26G	Three	3

^{*}These may not be taken together only one OR the other is permitted.

Mandatory Ungraded Units

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Numeracy in a Health Context	HD4/2/AA/01U	Two	3
Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions	PH1/3/AA/01U	Three	3

Choose a minimum of 9 Credits from:

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Human Musculoskeletal System	RH4/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Human Urinary System	RH4/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Nervous System	RH4/3/AA/14G	Three	3
Systems Physiology	RH4/3/AA/18G	Three	6

Recommended (NOT mandatory) Optional Graded Units

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Human Sex and Reproduction	RH4/3/AA/28G	Three	3
Genetics	RH3/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Infection and Immunity	RH4/3/AA/29G	Three	6



Optional Graded Units. Choose from:

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Research Methods	EE2/3/AA/08G	Three	3
Family	EE9/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Healthcare Settings	PA1/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Stress and Eating Disorders	PA1/3/AA/06G	Three	3
Alternative/Complementary Health Therapies	PA1/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Concepts and Determinants of Health	PA1/3/AA/08G	Three	3
Definitions of Health	PA1/3/AA/09G	Three	3
Health and Disease	PA1/3/AA/10G	Three	3
Healthcare Communication	PA1/3/AA/12G	Three	3
Professional Health and Social Care Practice	PA1/3/AA/13G	Three	3
Research Skills	PA1/3/AA/15G	Three	3
Professionalism and Multidisciplinary Teams	PA1/3/AA/16G	Three	3
Health and the Environment	PA1/3/AA/17G	Three	3
Legal and Ethical Issues in Health and Welfare Practice	PA8/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Health Promotion	PA9/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Pharmacology	PE6/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Mental Health	PH4/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Managing Challenging Behaviour	PH4/3/AA/05G	Three	3
Health Psychology Perspectives	PK1/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Psychological Disorders and Therapeutic Strategies	PK1/3/AA/09G	Three	3
Perspectives in Psychology	PK1/3/AA/21G	Three	3
Biopsychology: Behaviour and the Brain	PK1/3/AA/22G	Three	3
Aggression	PK1/3/AA/23G	Three	3
Biopsychology: Behaviour and Drugs	PK1/3/AA/24G	Three	3
Introduction to Self-Concept	PK1/3/AA/25G	Three	3
Social Interaction	PK1/3/AA/26G	Three	3
Early Attachment and Development	PK3/3/AA/05G	Three	3
Child Development	PK3/3/AA/06G	Three	3
Child Development Early Socialisation	PK3/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Social Work and Social Care	PR1/3/AA/05G	Three	3
Safeguarding	PR2/3/AA/07G	Three	3
The Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/10G	Three	3
Counselling Theory	PS1/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Numerical Analysis of Statistical Data	RB7/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Data Collection and Analysis	RB7/3/AA/09G	Three	3



Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Medical Physics: Radiology and Medical Imaging	RC8/3/AA/02G	Three	3
Radioactivity in Medicine	RC8/3/AA/03G	Three	3
Moles, Equations and Acids	RD1/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Chemistry and Society	RD1/3/AA/14G	Three	3
Redox and Periodicity	RD1/3/AA/15G	Three	3
Atoms, Bonds and Structure	RD3/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Cell Differentiation and Tissues	RH3/3/AA/06G	Three	3
DNA and Protein Synthesis	RH3/3/AA/08G	Three	3
Genetic Inheritance	RH3/3/AA/09G	Three	3
Practical Biology Skills	RH3/3/AA/10G	Three	3
The Cause and Control of Disease	RH4/3/AA/10G	Three	3
Defence Against Disease	RH4/3/AA/21G	Three	3
Human Reproduction, Growth and Development	RH4/3/AA/27G	Three	3
Communicable Diseases	RH4/3/AA/34G	Three	3
Non-Infectious Disease	RH4/3/AA/37G	Three	3
Biochemical Molecules	RH5/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Enzymes	RH5/3/AA/02G	Three	3
Health and Inequality	EE2/3/AA/21G	Three	6
Principles of Care	PA1/3/AA/04G	Three	6
Health and Illness	PA1/3/AA/05G	Three	6
Research Skills: Project	PA1/3/AA/14G	Three	6
Health Education and Society	PA9/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Cardiovascular Emergencies	PD5/3/AA/01G	Three	6
Respiratory Emergencies	PD5/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Mental Health and Coping Strategies	PH4/3/AA/06G	Three	6
Introduction to Psychological Disorders	PH4/3/AA/07G	Three	6
Health Psychology	PK1/3/AA/03G	Three	6
Key Aspects of Psychology	PK1/3/AA/04G	Three	6
Developmental Psychology	PK3/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Social Policy and the British Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Understanding the Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/03G	Three	6
Poverty in Contemporary Britain	PR2/3/AA/08G	Three	6
Values, Diversity and Rights	PR2/3/AA/09G	Three	6
Practical Counselling and Helping Skills	PS1/3/AA/03G	Three	6
Medical Physics: Waves ECGs and Radiography	RC8/3/AA/01G	Three	6
Chemistry for Biologists	RD1/3/AA/01G	Three	6
Energy, Equilibria and pH	RD1/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Organic Chemistry	RD4/3/AA/01G	Three	6
Chemistry of Drugs and Medicines	RD6/3/AA/01G	Three	6
Microbiology	RH3/3/AA/22G	Three	6



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Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Molecules of Life	RH3/3/AA/23G	Three	6
Human Growth and Development	RH4/3/AA/31G	Three	6
Research Project	EE2/3/AA/25G	Three	9
Diagnosis and Management of Physiological Disorders	PA1/3/AA/03G	Three	9
Genetics and Evolution	RH3/3/AA/21G	Three	9
Pathogens and Disease	RH4/3/AA/32G	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
Use of Information and Communication Technology	CN1/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Sociological Approaches to Contemporary Issues	EE2/3/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
Presentation Skills	HC7/3/AA/18U	Three	3
Numeracy	HD4/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Healthcare Communication	PA1/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Alternative/Complementary Health Therapies	PA1/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Concepts and Determinants of Health	PA1/3/AA/03U	Three	3
Health and Disease	PA1/3/AA/04U	Three	3
Professional Health and Social Care Practice	PA1/3/AA/05U	Three	3
Perspectives in Psychology	PK1/3/AA/02U	Three	3
The Role of the Carer	PT1/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Laboratory Skills and Experimental Design	RA3/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Number and Graphical Representation	RB1/2/AA/01U	Two	3
Cell Differentiation and Tissues	RH3/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Practical Biology Skills	RH3/3/AA/06U	Three	3
Biochemical Molecules	RH5/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Higher Education Toolkit	HC7/3/AA/19U	Three	6
Research Skills: Project	HC7/3/AA/20U	Three	6



Inclusion and Exclusion Rules of Combination

Barred Unit 1	National Code	CV	Barred Unit 2	National Code	CV
Biochemical Molecules	RH5/3/AA/01G	3	Biochemical Molecules	RH5/3/AA/01U	3
Cell Differentiation and Tissues	RH3/3/AA/06G	3	Cell Differentiation and Tissues	RH3/3/AA/02U	3
Communicable Diseases	RH4/3/AA/34G	3	Infection and Immunity	RH4/3/AA/29G	6
The Cause and Control of Disease	RH4/3/AA/10G	3	Pathogens and Disease	RH4/3/AA/32G	9
Defence against Disease	RH4/3/AA/21G	3	Infection and Immunity	RH4/3/AA/29G	6
DNA and Protein Synthesis	RH3/3/AA/08G	3	Genetics	RH3/3/AA/02G	6
Practical Biology Skills	RH3/3/AA/06U	3	Laboratory Skills and Experimental Design	RA3/3/AA/01U	3
Practical Biology Skills	RH3/3/AA/10G	3	Practical Biology Skills	RH3/3/AA/06U	3
Practical Biology Skills	RH3/3/AA/10G	3	Laboratory Skills and Experimental Design	RA3/3/AA/01U	3
Atoms, Bonds and Structure	RD3/3/AA/01G	3	Chemistry for Biologists	RD1/3/AA/01G	6
Alternative/ Complementary Health Therapies	PA1/3/AA/07G	3	Alternative/ Complementary Health Therapies	PA1/3/AA/02U	3
Concepts and Determinants of Health	PA1/3/AA/08G	3	Concepts and Determinants of Health	PA1/3/AA/03U	3
Health and Disease	PA1/3/AA/10G	3	Health and Disease	PA1/3/AA/04U	3
Professional Health and Social Care Practice	PA1/3/AA/13G	3	Professional Health and Social Care Practice	PA1/3/AA/05U	3
Research Skills	PA1/3/AA/15G	3	Research Skills: Project	PA1/3/AA/14G	6
Research Skills: Project	PA1/3/AA/14G	6	Research Skills: Project	HC7/3/AA/20U	6
Research Skills	PA1/3/AA/15G	3	Research Skills: Project	HC7/3/AA/20U	6
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Healthcare Settings	PA1/3/AA/01G	3	Values, Diversity and Rights	PR2/3/AA/09G	6
Mental Health and Coping Strategies	PH4/3/AA/06G	6	Mental Health	PH4/3/AA/04G	3



Barred Unit 1	National Code	CV	Barred Unit 2	National Code	CV
Professionalism and Multidisciplinary Teams	PA1/3/AA/16G	3	The Role of The Carer	PT1/3/AA/01U	3
Developmental Psychology	PK3/3/AA/02G	6	Child Development	PK3/3/AA/06G	3
Developmental Psychology	PK3/3/AA/02G	6	Child Development Early Socialisation	PK3/3/AA/07G	3
Perspectives in Psychology	PK1/3/AA/02U	3	Key Aspects of Psychology	PK1/3/AA/04G	6
Health Psychology	PK1/3/AA/03G	6	Health Psychology Perspectives	PK1/3/AA/07G	3
Key Aspects of Psychology	PK1/3/AA/04G	6	Perspectives in Psychology	PK1/3/AA/21G	3
Perspectives in Psychology	PK1/3/AA/02U	3	Perspectives in Psychology	PK1/3/AA/21G	3
Introduction to Psychological Disorders	PH4/3/AA/07G	6	Psychological Disorders and Therapeutic Strategies	PK1/3/AA/09G	3
Social Policy and the British Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/02G	6	The Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/10G	3
Social Policy and the British Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/02G	6	Understanding the Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/03G	6
The Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/10G	3	Understanding the Welfare State	PR2/3/AA/03G	6
Health and Illness	PA1/3/AA/05G	6	Health and Inequality	EE2/3/AA/21G	6
Higher Education Toolkit	HC7/3/AA/19U	6	Presentation Skills	HC7/3/AA/18U	3