

Access to HE (Land-based Science)

Diploma Guide

1. Diploma Background and Aims

The aims of the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) are to:

- prepare students who are returning to education for progression to Higher Education, further training in Land based Science 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 their future progression routes
- develop specific Land Based Science skills and knowledge to enhance employment prospects
- help students to understand the role of Land Based Science in the world at large.

2. Course Recognition

The Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) meets the AVA's policies and priorities for new provision. Skills and Education Group's approach to developing the new Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) is transparent, systematic and as consistently applied as to all other named Access to HE Diplomas. Skills and Education Group ensures that all Access to HE Diplomas are fit for purpose in providing an appropriate preparation for study in higher education for adults from defined target groups.

Skills and Education Group has worked with curriculum specialists and business development managers to co-ordinate and oversee the development of the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science). This has involved meetings to agree curriculum content, level, grading descriptors and general rules of combination. A pre-determined timetable of events was drawn up where providers were invited to meetings, or to contribute electronically if unable to attend these events, in order to meet the agreed deadlines.

3. Diploma and Credit Specification

The QAA Diploma and Credit 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.

www.accesstohe.ac.uk/AboutUs/Publications/Pages/Default.aspx

Skills and Education Group has ensured that the proposals within this document meet the requirements of The Access to Higher Education Diploma and Credit Specification and any other regulatory information about the Access to HE Diploma, and that students who are awarded the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) will have completed 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).

4. Target Groups

Skills and Education Group has developed the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) specifically for students who wish to develop their academic, study and vocationally related skills and aptitudes to prepare for the application and progression into HE programmes related to Land Based Science. This Diploma is aimed at a range of target groups, including people who are returning to education after being employed in similar sectors; people seeking qualifications to enable them to change their career path and students seeking a foundation in a number of subjects related to Land Based Science before moving on to higher level study in the UK.

5. Intended Progression Routes

Skills and Education Group has worked with FE and HE experts, employers and specialised recruitment agencies during the development process to agree the units and any Rules of Combination (RoC) so that the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) provides a suitable preparation for higher education and future employment. Providers and others wishing to adopt or utilise the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) have suggested the following possible progression routes for students:

Conservation	Agricultural Management
Environmental Science	Agriculture

Agri-Business	Ecology
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The design of Diplomas must be appropriate to the primary purpose of Access to HE courses, which is to provide higher education progression opportunities for adults who, because of social, educational or individual circumstances, may have achieved few, if any, prior qualifications.

The award of a Diploma does not provide guaranteed entry to UK higher education programmes.

6. Rules of Combination

6.1 Required achievements for the Access to HE Diploma

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 (Land Based 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.	
Students can achieve up to a maximum of 9 credits at Level 2 and 21 from 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: <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. 	

6.2 Differentiated Performance

Consideration has been given to the allocation of Grading Descriptors 'to ensure that they provide opportunities for differentiation of performance consistent with the requirements of the grade descriptors'.

6.3 Curriculum, Delivery and Assessment

It is expected that 'information provided about unit content, delivery and assessment methods is sufficient to ensure consistency in the required standards of achievement, whenever and wherever the Diploma is delivered'.

6.4 Credit Transfer and Recognition of Prior Learning

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) provides a means by which students who have already achieved some of the requirements for the award of the Access to HE Diploma, through some means other than study on an Access to HE course, can be awarded the Access to HE Diploma without necessarily being required to undertake units for which equivalent achievement has already been demonstrated.

No more than 30 credits required for the award of the Access to HE Diploma may be awarded through RPL.

Students registering onto the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) may have undertaken a Level Two 'pre-Access' course. It is expected that providers will have offered students written guidance on Skills and Education Group's application process for RPL of these credits or other credit or work achievement that may allow exemption from some units within the Access to HE Diploma. Students must be advised that RPL cannot be graded.

6.5 Successful Completion Criteria

Skills and Education Group expects that any successful completion criteria that is in addition to the Diploma's rules of combination do not make demands which impacts on achievement.

6.6 Special Requirements

There are no special requirements needed for this Diploma although laboratory facilities, computing environments equipped with PCs and specialist software appropriate to the course may be recommended.

6.7 Supporting Students

Skills and Education Group expects all students will be offered appropriate support during their course of study until they have completed the qualification. Students will be encouraged to use a range of resources to support their progress and to engage with appropriate staff in their organisation for further information and advice. The assessment methodology must be appropriate and rigorous for an individual or groups of students.

For students with particular requirements, Providers should refer to the Access to Fair Assessment Policy and Procedure which can be found in the Provider Handbook.

The Access to Fair Assessment Policy and Procedure section in the Skills and Education Group handbook gives clear guidance on the Reasonable Adjustment and Special Consideration arrangements that can be made to take account of particular needs or learning difficulty, without compromising the achievement of the assessment criteria.

6.8 Credit Accumulation and Recognition of Student Achievement

Students accumulate credit towards the award of the Diploma. In general they do this by achieving units of a particular credit value (3, 6 or 9 credits) through the process of assessment on the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science), but may also do this through the processes of credit transfer and through RPL.

Student achievement is recognised both through the award of level, credit and grades (as identified on an achievement transcript) and the award of the Diploma (as identified on a certificate), subsequent to the student having satisfied the requirements of the rules of combination of the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science). The award of the Diploma will, therefore, indicate that a student has successfully met the generic requirements for achievement of an Access to HE Diploma, as well as the particular requirements of the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science).

Skills and Education Group expects that where the Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) is intended to lead to further study for a professional qualification, students must be made aware of any additional entry requirements that are needed to study at a Higher Education Institution.

7. Quality Assurance

Skills and Education Group operates robust quality assurance arrangements for the proposed Diploma and maintains the quality and standards of this recognised Access to HE Diploma. Skills and Education Group makes Access to HE awards to students who have met the specified requirements for achievement and

performance. Please visit the Skills and Education Group website for the Access to HE Provider Handbook.

7.1 Operation of moderation processes

Skills and Education Group maintains a system of regular external moderation, conducted by appointed external moderators. External moderator training is scheduled during the year in preparation for their visits to allow Skills and Education Group to update external moderators. Where a provider is new to Access to HE, or is running a new Diploma for the first time, or has transferred from another AVA, a 'support visit' is also scheduled.

Skills and Education Group may arrange for support or supplementary visits in the following situations:

Support Visits

- The first run of a new Diploma as a support to the provider. A member of Skills and Education Group's Access to HE team may also accompany the external moderator
- When a provider has transferred from another AVA.

Supplementary Visits

- When a Diploma has undergone substantial quality assurance or curriculum development or is in fragile circumstances. This additional visit usually incurs a chargeable Quality Intervention fee.

Where a provider offers various start points, an external moderator will arrange a first visit and the final moderation and Awards Board at the most appropriate time within the academic year.

7.2 Review of moderation guidance to ensure continued currency

Skills and Education Group 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 standardisation events. The requirements of the Access to HE Diploma Specification have been incorporated within moderation guidance.

7.3 Moderation Reports

External moderators report regularly to Skills and Education Group on all aspects of course organisation, including registration, content, assessment design and practice (including internal moderation, assessment and grading decisions) - for which they are responsible.

Skills and Education Group operates standard procedures for responding to external moderators' reports, including receiving and responding promptly to individual external moderation reports, providing copies of external moderators' reports to appropriate provider/centre staff, and ensuring that matters raised in reports that require specific action by providers are brought to providers' attention, a clear timescale for action is given, and implementation of actions is confirmed.

Skills and Education Group uses a risk rating approach; the outcomes of external moderator visits contribute to risk ratings for individual Diplomas. Higher level risk rates are likely to instigate sanctions and provider quality assurance teams are required to address all resulting conditions with some urgency.

Skills and Education Group will introduce a Centre Moderation Report that summarises the findings and outcomes for all Diplomas delivered by a Centre.

7.4 Course Monitoring and Review

Skills and Education Group monitors and reviews Access to HE Diplomas delivered by providers on a regular (normally annual) basis. Two visit reports with associated risk rates and supplementary visit reports as appropriate are used to review provision. Skills and Education Group collects and analyses statistical data about Access to HE Diplomas, students and their individual achievement.

7.5 Standardisation

Skills and Education Group takes steps to ensure that equivalent standards and requirements for achievement apply on different Access to HE Diplomas, within Skills and Education Group and across different student cohorts, with reference to QAA's Access to HE Diploma qualification and credit specifications and grading requirements.

Skills and Education Group holds annual standardisation events that are mandatory for all Access to HE providers. Fines are incurred where an Access to HE Diploma has not been represented at an appropriate event. The agenda for each event is based on recommendations from the Lead Moderator Standardisation Report of the previous year. Study Skills is often a focus, with an emphasis on a different element each year. Grading is also a key feature of all events.

Skills and Education Group also expects that providers hold internal standardisation events. The external moderator is tasked to discuss this activity and outcomes during visits.

7.6 Award of the Access to HE Diploma

Skills and Education Group operates standard specified procedures for the award of Access to HE Diplomas to students that are consistent with the Access to HE Diploma and credit specifications, grading requirements and assessment regulations. The external moderation process ensures that all external moderator decisions to recommend the award of the Access to HE Diploma are made with confidence that all regulations and specification requirements have been met. The formal Awards Board is made up of appropriate personnel in line with Skills and Education Group guidelines and formal decisions to award credit and the Access to HE Diploma are agreed before the Recommendation for the Award of Credit (RAC) is signed by the tutor, the internal moderator and the external moderator for each Diploma. Award Board minutes and copies of the signed RACs are received by Skills and Education Group within one working day of the Awards Board.

The AVA takes immediate action to record and remedy any errors relating to the award or certification of the Access to HE Diploma. Skills and Education Group advises QAA immediately of any major errors in the issuing of Diploma certificates, including providing information on how errors were remedied and how such errors will be avoided in the future.

7.7 Data Systems

Skills and Education Group has a dedicated and secure data system for Access to HE. All current Diploma, provider and student information is maintained and all student certification is generated from this system.

7.8 Issue and Dispatch of Access to HE Diplomas and Achievement Transcripts

All students who have been awarded the Access to HE Diploma are issued the AVA's Access to HE Diploma certificate which has a standard format. Skills and Education Group operates a service standard that ensures that all unit transcripts and Diploma certificates are forwarded on to providers within 15 working days of the Awards Board. Providers commit to return any unclaimed certificates to the AVA. All certificates are numbered and kept secure.

8. Person authorising development of the Diploma Specification

I confirm that the Diploma meets QAA's qualification requirements and will be quality assured in accordance with this Diploma Specification. All providers delivering this Diploma and external moderators responsible for quality assuring it will have a copy of this Diploma Specification.

Name: (please print)	Jennie Lawson
Signature:	
Date:	2 nd October 2023
Post held:	Director of Access to HE

This agreement will be reviewed by the AVA regularly.

Appendix 1 - Units of Assessment

Grading Descriptors

1	Understanding of the Subject	US	5	Communication and Presentation	CP
2	Application of Knowledge	AK	6	Autonomy / Independence	AI
3	Application of Skills	AS	7	Quality (Mandatory)	QU
4	Use of Information	UI			

Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Science) Units

For every unit included in the table, further information, is included in the Unit Specification, including learning outcomes and assessment criteria. All units must be set out using the AVA standard format. All units are mandatory.

Graded Units

Unit Title	Unit ID	Level	CV
Animal Science: Animal Cells, Locomotion and Senses	YHS546	Three	3
Biology: Ecology and Environmental Science	YHS585	Three	3
Biology: Introduction to Plant Biology	YHS581	Three	3
Biology: Cellular Structure and Activity	YHS576	Three	6
Chemistry: Arrangement and Trends in the Periodic Table	YHS552	Three	3
Chemistry: Atomic Structure, Electronic Structures and Bonds	YHS553	Three	3
Chemistry: Hydrocarbons, Alkenes and Alkanes	YHS596	Three	3
Chemistry: Molarity and Chemical Change	YHS555	Three	3
Mathematics: Calculus for Scientists	YHS676	Three	3
Mathematics: Trigonometric Functions and Ratios	YHS678	Three	3
Mathematics: Applied Statistical Research	YHS791	Three	6
Land Based: Land Based Project	YHS790	Three	6

Ungraded Units

Unit Title	Unit ID	Level	CV
Computing: Exploring Using Spreadsheets	YHS726	Three	3

Unit Title	Unit ID	Level	CV
Mathematics: Exploring Using Algebra	YHS786	Three	3
Study Skills: Learning and Study Skills	YHS725	Three	3
Study Skills: Writing and Studying Academic Texts	YHS561	Three	3
Study Skills: Planning and Writing an Assignment	YHS560	Three	3