

Access to HE Diploma (Medicine) Diploma Specification

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Learning Aim Code: 40013017

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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 (Medicine). 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 (Medicine)	2- Science and Mathematics	2.1- Science

This Diploma specification is valid from: 01/08/2026

Diploma revalidation date: 31/07/2031

The Purpose of the Diploma:

The Access to HE Diploma (Medicine) provides students with a comprehensive foundation in medical sciences, preparing them for Higher Education leading careers in medicine, biomedical science, and healthcare. This course covers essential subjects in biology, chemistry, physics, and mathematics, equipping students with the knowledge, specific skills, and transferable skills necessary for success in the medical field.

A. Key Knowledge:

1. Biological Sciences:

- Understanding of cellular structure and activity, genetics, and systems physiology.
- Knowledge of control and coordination mechanisms in the body.
- Understanding of microbiology, infection and immunity, and defence against disease.

2. Chemical Sciences:

- Understanding atoms, bonds, and structure, and organic concepts and hydrocarbons.
- Understanding of enthalpy, rates, and equilibria, and acid-base equilibria.
- Knowledge of organic compound analysis and redox and periodicity.

3. Mathematical Sciences:

- Skills in mathematics for medicine, including algebra, calculus, and numerical methods.
- Understanding of further statistical techniques and data handling.
- Knowledge of vectors, matrices, and continuous probability distributions.

4. Physics and Medical Applications:

- Understanding of medical physics, including radiology, medical imaging, and radioactivity.
- Knowledge of waves, optics, ECGs, and radiography.
- Insights into the application of physics principles in medical contexts.

B. Subject-Specific Skills:

1. Medical and Biological Skills:

- Skills in analysing cellular activities, genetic patterns, and physiological systems.
- Ability to apply principles of infection, immunity, and disease defence to scenarios.
- Ability to conduct and evaluate microbiological experiments.

2. Chemical Analysis Skills:

- Competence in conducting chemical experiments related to organic compounds and redox reactions.
- Skills in analysing chemical equilibria, reaction kinetics, and energy changes.
- Proficiency in applying chemical knowledge to medical and biological contexts.

3. Mathematical and Analytical Skills:

- Skills in applying algebra, calculus, and numerical methods to solve medical problems.
- Proficiency in data analysis, statistical methods, and mathematical modelling.
- Ability to use mathematical principles to understand complex biological and chemical processes.

C. Transferable Skills:

1. Academic and Research Skills:

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

2. Communication and Organisational Skills:

- Improved communication skills for presenting medical and scientific concepts.

- Skills in organising and evaluating scientific data and research findings.
- Development of numeracy skills and their application in medical and scientific contexts.

3. Professional and Ethical Skills:

- Understanding of professional behaviours required for medical practitioners.
- Awareness of ethical considerations in medical practice and research.
- Skills in applying medical principles in real-world scenarios.

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 (Medicine), subject to the course entry requirements and application process:

- Medicine
- Biomedical Science
- Clinical Science
- Biochemistry
- Biology
- Chemistry
- Medical Science
- Nursing
- Midwifery
- Paramedic Science
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Dietetics
- Medical Physiology
- Sport and Exercise Science
- Pharmacology
- Pharmacy
- Veterinary Sciences

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).

Assessment guidance specific to this diploma:

Evidence of design, performance and interpretation of laboratory experiments is a requirement of the Diploma. Therefore, the Access to HE Diploma (Medicine) is likely to require significant access to laboratories and associated resources related to the subjects within this Diploma. Any provider wishing to adopt the Diploma will be required to demonstrate that they have the appropriate resources and equipment to enable students to undertake the assessments required of the units.

This subject descriptor does not require Access to HE Diploma (Medicine) students to sit end of year examinations. However, Access to HE students should have the opportunity to experience and demonstrate achievement in assessments to fully support their transition into higher education which is varied and inclusive.

This should include the following forms of assessment:

- a substantial number of time constrained, unseen assessments or examinations, ideally to include at least one instance of single, best answer, multiple choice questions
- at least one each of the following:
 - essay prepared using relevant academic conventions
 - report using practical, research, mathematical, statistical and writing skills, as appropriate
 - oral presentation to include visual aids and appropriate resources
 - reflective accounts.

Access to HE providers should identify the units or clusters of units within the course that present the most appropriate opportunities to use these forms as a vehicle for assessment and decide how best to sequence them to create an effective assessment strategy for the Diploma.

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 (Medicine)	
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.	

D1.1 (45) Subject Descriptor Compliance

The Access to HE Diploma (Medicine) has been constructed from a set of units that have been developed and approved by Skills Education Group Access for use in this Diploma. In line with regulations, all units have a specific credit value and level. There are no Level Two units within this Diploma.

The Access to HE Diploma (Medicine) complies with the subject descriptor requirements as mandated by QAA in the Subject Descriptor for Medicine document. Please note that the table below shows the minimum credit

requirements set by QAA. Skills and Education Group Access may require additional credits in some subject areas through the Diploma Rules of Combination.

Mandatory subjects	Minimum credit requirement at graded Level 3	Minimum credit requirement at ungraded Level 3	
Chemistry	15		
Biology/human biology	15		
Other science/mathematics	9		
Use and comprehension of numerical data		3	
Study skills		3	
Professional behaviours		3	
Total credit values	39	9	
Credits remaining	6³	6⁴	
Diploma credit total	45	15	60 credits

³ The remaining credits may be used within any of the graded mandatory subjects identified in the framework.

⁴ The remaining credits may be used within any of the mandatory subjects identified in the framework as graded or ungraded.

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.

Students who express an interest in undertaking the Access to HE Diploma (Medicine) must be provided with pre-course guidance on the medical school entry criteria, application process and timescales. These may differ across medical schools; it is expected that students will be provided with support to meet them.

Appendix 1 - Units of Assessment – Access to HE Diploma (Medicine)

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 Ungraded Units

Unit title	National Code	Level	CV
Academic Writing Skills	HC7/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Professional Behaviours for Medical Practitioners	PB3/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Mathematics for Medicine	RB1/3/AA/06U	Three	3

Mandatory graded units

Biology (21 graded credits)			
Cellular Structure and Activity	RH3/3/AA/31G	Three	3
Genetics	RH3/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Control and Coordination	RH4/3/AA/16G	Three	6
Systems Physiology	RH4/3/AA/18G	Three	6
Chemistry (15 graded credits)			
Moles, Equations and Acids	RD1/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Enthalpy, Rates and Equilibria*	RD1/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Kinetics, Energetics and Acid-Base Equilibria*	RD1/3/AA/08G	Three	3
Atoms, Bonds and Structure	RD3/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Organic Concepts and Hydrocarbons	RD4/3/AA/08G	Three	3
Kinetics, Energetics, Equilibria and Acid-Base Equilibria*	RD1/3/AA/09G	Three	6

***Please note: Either the two 3 credit units or the one 6 credit unit must be used.**

Optional Graded Units

Maths/Other Sciences (Please select 9 graded credits from this list)

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Further Integration	RB1/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Vectors and Matrices	RB1/3/AA/02G	Three	3

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Algebra, Logarithms, Statistics and Calculus	RB1/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Exponentials, Logarithms, Trigonometry and Series	RB1/3/AA/05G	Three	3
Vectors and Numerical Methods	RB1/3/AA/08G	Three	3
Numerical Methods and Complex Numbers	RB1/3/AA/13G	Three	3
Algebra and Functions	RB3/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Further Trigonometry	RB4/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Calculus	RB5/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Further Differentiation	RB5/3/AA/05G	Three	3
Numerical Analysis of Statistical Data	RB7/3/AA/01G	Three	3
Data Handling	RB7/3/AA/12G	Three	3
Continuous Probability Distributions	RB7/3/AA/13G	Three	3
Waves and Optics	RC1/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Medical Physics: Radiology and Medical Imaging	RC8/3/AA/02G	Three	3
Radioactivity in Medicine	RC8/3/AA/03G	Three	3
Calculus and Pure Maths	RB1/3/AA/12G	Three	6
Algebra	RB3/3/AA/03G	Three	6
Further Calculus	RB5/3/AA/06G	Three	6
Further Statistics	RB7/3/AA/14G	Three	6
Medical Physics: Waves ECGs and Radiography	RC8/3/AA/01G	Three	6

**Optional Ungraded Units
(Please select 6 credits from this list)**

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Further Techniques for Algebra and Differentiation	RB1/3/AA/05U	Three	3
Algebra and Functions	RB3/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Numerical Analysis of Statistical Data	RB7/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Medical Physics: Radiology and Medical Imaging	RC8/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Chemistry and Society	RD1/3/AA/04U	Three	3
Redox and Periodicity	RD1/3/AA/05U	Three	3
Organic Compound Analysis	RD4/3/AA/04U	Three	3
Organic Compounds Containing Oxygen or Nitrogen	RD4/3/AA/05U	Three	3
Defence Against Disease	RH4/3/AA/01U	Three	3
The Urinary System	RH4/3/AA/03U	Three	3
Conducting a Science Project	RA1/3/AA/02U	Three	6
Calculus and Pure Maths	RB1/3/AA/07U	Three	6
Microbiology	RH3/3/AA/11U	Three	6

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Infection and Immunity	RH4/3/AA/04U	Three	6

Inclusion and Exclusion Rules of Combination

Barred Unit 1	National Code	CV	Barred Unit 2	National Code	CV
Algebra	RB3/3/AA/03G	6	Algebra and Functions	RB3/3/AA/01G	3
Algebra	RB3/3/AA/03G	6	Algebra and Functions	RB3/3/AA/01U	3
Algebra and Functions	RB3/3/AA/01G	3	Algebra and Functions	RB3/3/AA/01U	3
Calculus	RB5/3/AA/01G	3	Calculus and Pure Maths	RB1/3/AA/12G	6
Calculus and Pure Maths	RB1/3/AA/12G	6	Algebra	RB3/3/AA/03G	6
Calculus and Pure Maths	RB1/3/AA/12G	6	Exponentials, Logarithms, Trigonometry and Series	RB1/3/AA/05G	3
Calculus and Pure Maths	RB1/3/AA/12G	6	Calculus and Pure Maths	RB1/3/AA/07U	6
Continuous Probability Distributions	RB7/3/AA/13G	3	Further Statistics	RB7/3/AA/14G	6
Exponentials, Logarithms, Trigonometry and Series	RB1/3/AA/05G	3	Algebra	RB3/3/AA/03G	6
Exponentials, Logarithms, Trigonometry and Series	RB1/3/AA/05G	3	Calculus and Pure Maths	RB1/3/AA/07U	6
Further Differentiation	RB5/3/AA/05G	3	Further Calculus	RB5/3/AA/06G	6
Further Integration	RB1/3/AA/01G	3	Further Calculus	RB5/3/AA/06G	6
Kinetics, Energetics, Equilibria and Acid-Base Equilibria	RD1/3/AA/09G	6	Enthalpy, Rates and Equilibria	RD1/3/AA/07G	3

Barred Unit 1	National Code	CV	Barred Unit 2	National Code	CV
Kinetics, Energetics, Equilibria and Acid-Base Equilibria	RD1/3/AA/09G	6	Kinetics, Energetics and Acid-Base Equilibria	RD1/3/AA/08G	3