

# **Access to HE Diploma (Sport and Physical Activity) Diploma Specification**

Valid from: August 2026  
Learning Aim Code: 4001292X

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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 (Sport and Physical Activity). 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<br>(Sector Subject Area) | Sub-<br>Classification             |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Access to HE Diploma<br>(Sport and Physical Activity) | 8- Leisure, Travel and Tourism               | 8.1- Sport, Leisure and Recreation |

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

**Diploma revalidation date: 31/07/2031**

### Purpose of this Diploma:

The Access to HE Diploma (Sport and Physical Activity) provides students with a comprehensive understanding of sport sciences and their applications. This course is designed to prepare students for Higher Education leading to careers in sport, physical education, coaching, and related fields. Students will acquire key knowledge, subject-specific skills, and transferable skills essential for success in these areas.

### A. Key Knowledge:

#### 1. Sport Science and Physiology:

- Understanding exercise physiology, including the cardiovascular and respiratory systems.
- Knowledge of nutrition in sports, hydration, and its impact on performance.
- Insight into the mechanics of motion, fitness testing, and sports conditioning.

#### 2. Psychology and Sociology in Sport:

- Understanding aggression, social learning theory, and motivation in sport.
- Knowledge of arousal, stress, anxiety, group dynamics, and social cohesion in sport.

- Insight into the psychology of sport and exercise, and the acquisition of skill in sport.

### **3. Contemporary Issues and Development:**

- Understanding contemporary and cultural issues in sport.
- Knowledge of sports values, ethics, and technological developments in sport.
- Insight into sports development, health-related fitness, and planning effective training programmes.

## **B. Subject-Specific Skills:**

### **1. Coaching and Training:**

- Skills in planning, delivering, and reviewing coaching sessions.
- Techniques for improvement and addressing specific exercise needs in clients.
- Ability to plan and execute effective fitness training programmes and know how to handle sports injuries.

### **2. Sports Science Applications:**

- Understanding and applying the principles of exercise physiology in sports settings.
- Skills in fitness testing, sports conditioning, and mechanics of motion.
- Competence in addressing nutrition, hydration, and performance in sports contexts.

### **3. Professional Practices:**

- Knowledge of sports values, ethics, and dealing with contemporary issues in sport.
- Skills in understanding and using technological advancements in sport.
- Competence in practical application in sports settings.

## **C. Transferable Skills:**

### **1. Research and Academic Skills:**

- Development of strong research skills, including planning and conducting 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.
- Develop skills in planning and delivering exercise sessions and working effectively in diverse environments.

### 3. Critical Thinking and Technological Proficiency:

- Enhanced ability to critically analyse issues in sport and develop reasoned arguments.
- Skills in using information and communication technology for research and practice.
- Understanding the safe and ethical use of generative artificial intelligence in sport and physical activity 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 (Sport and Physical Activity), subject to the course entry requirements and application process.

- Sport and Exercise Science
- Physical Activity, Sport and Health
- Sport Coaching
- Physical Education and School Sport
- Sport Development
- Sport Business and Event Management
- Sport Psychology
- Sports Performance
- Sports Studies
- Sport Therapy

**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:**

Further to the guidance above, tutors could consider the merits of the following assessment methods:

- Presentations
- Screencast
- Gallery walks
- Top table
- Viva Voce approaches
- Verbal question-and-answer session
- Observations
- Posters
- Written work but then students asked to give salient points verbally

### **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 (Sport and Physical Activity)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |           |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Credit Value of the Diploma:                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>60</b> |
| Students must achieve 60 credits in total in accordance with the rules of combination for the Diploma.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |           |
| <p>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.</p> <p>In addition, all students must study a minimum of <b>ten 3 credit units</b> and at least <b>one 9 or 6 credit unit up to a maximum of 30 credits</b>, which may or may not be graded.</p>                                                                                      |           |
| 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |           |
| <p>Students undertaking any Access to HE Diploma, whatever their mode of study, must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a)</b> registered and certificated for units to a maximum value of 60 credits</li> <li><b>b)</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.</li> </ul> |           |

## Appendix 1 - Units of Assessment – Access to HE Diploma (Sport and Physical Activity)

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)

|          |                                                   |
|----------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b>Knowledge and Understanding of the Subject</b> |
| <b>2</b> | <b>Subject Specific Skills</b>                    |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Transferable Skills</b>                        |

**As this is a dual title Diploma, mandatory graded units are required to ensure all students complete a planned and coherent programme of study that reflects both sport and physical activity in line with QAA requirements.**

### Mandatory Graded Units

| Unit Title                                                       | National Code | Level | CV |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------|----|
| Contemporary Issues in Sport                                     | MA1/3/AA/06G  | 3     | 3  |
| The Body in Sport                                                | MA1/3/AA/14G  | 3     | 3  |
| Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Physical Activity and Sport | MA1/3/AA/27G  | 3     | 3  |
| Psychology of Sport and Exercise                                 | MA1/3/AA/16G  | 3     | 6  |
| Physical Activity Across the Life Course                         | MA1/3/AA/28G  | 3     | 6  |

### Optional Graded Units

**(Please select the remaining 24 credits from this list)**

| Unit Title                                     | National Code | Level | CV |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------|----|
| Aggression and Social Learning Theory in Sport | MA1/3/AA/01G  | Three | 3  |
| Arousal, Stress and Anxiety in Sport           | MA1/3/AA/02G  | Three | 3  |
| Motivation in Sports                           | MA1/3/AA/04G  | Three | 3  |
| The Acquisition of Skill in Sport              | MA1/3/AA/05G  | Three | 3  |
| Fitness Testing                                | MA1/3/AA/07G  | Three | 3  |
| Health Related Fitness                         | MA1/3/AA/08G  | Three | 3  |
| Mechanics of Motion                            | MA1/3/AA/09G  | Three | 3  |
| Nutrition: Hydration and Performance           | MA1/3/AA/21G  | Three | 3  |
| Sports Conditioning                            | MA1/3/AA/11G  | Three | 3  |
| Sports Injuries                                | MA1/3/AA/22G  | Three | 3  |
| Technological Development in Sport             | MA1/3/AA/23G  | Three | 3  |

| Unit Title                                                                         | National Code | Level | CV |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-------|----|
| Coaching in Sport: Plan, Deliver and Review                                        | MA4/3/AA/01G  | Three | 3  |
| Coaching in Sport: Techniques for Improvement                                      | MA4/3/AA/02G  | Three | 3  |
| Plan an Effective Fitness Training Programme                                       | MA4/3/AA/05G  | Three | 3  |
| Planning and Delivering Exercise Sessions for Clients with Specific Exercise Needs | MA4/3/AA/04G  | Three | 3  |
| Exercise Physiology: Cardiovascular System                                         | PB4/3/AA/01G  | Three | 3  |
| Exercise Physiology: The Respiratory System                                        | PB6/3/AA/01G  | Three | 3  |
| Group Dynamics and Social Cohesion in Sport                                        | MA1/3/AA/20G  | Three | 6  |
| Work Based Learning in Sport                                                       | MA1/3/AA/24G  | Three | 6  |
| Nutrition in Sports                                                                | MA1/3/AA/25G  | Three | 6  |
| Sport, Values and Ethics                                                           | MA1/3/AA/26G  | Three | 6  |
| Contemporary and Cultural Issues in Sport                                          | MA1/3/AA/19G  | Three | 6  |

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

| 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  |
| Reading and Note Making                                         | HC7/3/AA/02U  | Three | 3  |
| Researching and Understanding Opportunities in Higher Education | HC7/3/AA/04U  | 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  |
| Sports Development                                              | MA1/3/AA/01U  | Three | 3  |
| Health Related Fitness                                          | MA1/3/AA/02U  | Three | 3  |
| 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 |
|------------------------|---------------|----|------------------------|---------------|----|
| Health Related Fitness | MA1/3/AA/08G  | 3  | Health Related Fitness | MA1/3/AA/02U  | 3  |

| <b>Barred Unit 1</b>             | <b>National Code</b> | <b>CV</b> | <b>Barred Unit 2</b>                        | <b>National Code</b> | <b>CV</b> |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| Psychology of Sport and Exercise | MA1/3/AA/16G         | 6         | Arousal, Stress and Anxiety in Sport        | MA1/3/AA/02G         | 3         |
| Motivation in Sports             | MA1/3/AA/04G         | 3         | Group Dynamics and Social Cohesion in Sport | MA1/3/AA/20G         | 6         |