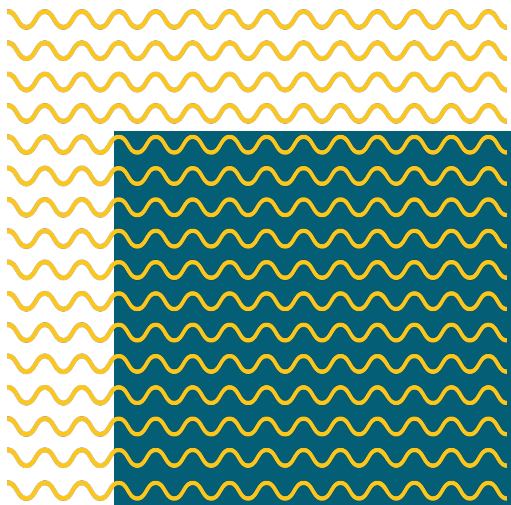


Provider Monitoring and Sanctions Policy



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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the policy

This policy explains the Access Validating Agency (AVA) risk-based approach to the monitoring of all Skills and Education Group Access recognised providers, and the process used for those who fail to meet the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and/or AVA requirements. It also sets out the sanctions Skills and Education Group Access may impose on providers in such situations.

1.2 Intended benefits

The policy provides clear information about the risk assessment and sanctions process for all stakeholders, in order to safeguard standards on the Access to HE Diploma, and ensure fairness in the management of the process.

1.3 Intended audience

All those involved in the management, quality assurance, assessment and delivery of Access to HE Diplomas, AVA moderators and AVA staff.

1.4 Mapping to other documents

- The Skills and Education Group Access Centre Recognition Agreement
- The Skills and Education Group Access to HE Provider Handbook
- The QAA Grading Scheme Handbook.

2. Responsibilities

2.1 Provider Responsibilities

All staff involved in the management, internal quality assurance, assessment and delivery of Access to HE Diplomas and units must be made aware of the contents of this policy. Staff must understand the implications should there be a failure to comply with QAA and/or AVA requirements.

2.2 Ensure Standards in Access

Skills and Education Group Access has a responsibility to all students registered on its Access to HE Diplomas to ensure that providers deliver and assess the Access to HE Diplomas and units in accordance with AVA and QAA requirements.

Each provider is monitored by a team of experienced moderators, which is led by a Centre Moderator (CM). The role of the CM, supported by a team of Diploma Moderators, is to assess the extent to which providers are successfully meeting requirements. They do this by providing support, information and guidance throughout the duration of the course and undertaking sampling and audit activities, the outcomes of which are reported to the AVA Quality Manager and the provider Head of Quality.

3. Reporting

The Centre Moderator produces a report at the start of the academic year as a review and planning activity, and following each moderation activity. Reports detail:

- the date of the visit and members of staff who attended
- details of the monitoring activities undertaken
- feedback to the provider on the quality and consistency of its assessment process and the effectiveness of internal moderation arrangements
- areas of good practice
- recommendations about areas of practice which could be improved
- conditions which must be addressed because the provider's performance does not meet QAA and/or AVA requirements. Details of when conditions must be completed by and who is responsible are also stated
- Provider Risk Rating

At the end of the visit the Centre Moderator will verbally outline any conditions which are likely to be set so that the provider is aware of the required action. The details will be provided in the Centre Moderator's Report, which will be available for the provider Head of Quality within approximately 4 weeks of the visit. If the condition is considered high risk and requires urgent attention, the details of the required action will be agreed on the day of the visit.

4. Risk-Based Approach to Provider Monitoring and the Application of Sanctions

A risk-based approach is applied by Skills and Education Group via provider monitoring and the subsequent application of sanctions. This is set out in Appendix 1.

Skills and Education Group Access has a range of sanctions which can be imposed on a provider depending on:

- the risk to the interests of students
- the risk to the integrity of the QAA Access to HE Diploma
- the risk to the AVA license to QAA
- any previous non-compliance and how it was addressed
- any increased likelihood of an adverse effect occurring, which may affect the public confidence in AVA accreditation.

5. Process for the Application of Sanctions within Provider Monitoring

Skills and Education Group aims to ensure that the application of sanctions is applied only as a last resort. Through our approach to provider support and the provision of appropriate action plans, we work with providers to ensure that every reasonable effort is being made to prevent situations arising which warrant a sanction being imposed.

The implementation of any sanction by the AVA will be managed by the Access to HE Quality Manager Quality, who is responsible for overseeing the work of the moderators and for ensuring a consistency of approach.

The Access to HE Quality Manager will ensure there is clear evidence of non-compliance by the provider and a sufficient rationale for the sanction which is to be imposed.

The nature of the sanction and the rationale for its application will be communicated in a letter to the provider from the Access to HE Quality Manager, which will be supported by the relevant Centre Moderator Report and other supporting evidence as required.

Only in exceptional cases of serious non-compliance or the persistent failure of the provider to address outstanding actions, and/or the failure of previous sanctions to address the issue, will Skills and Education Group Access impose the highest sanctions: level 4 - **removal of approval** in relation to Access to HE Diploma(s) level 5 - **withdrawal of centre approval**.

Notification of the implementation of these sanctions will be sent to the Head of Centre in writing, by the AVA Director of Access to HE.

Skills and Education Group Access will not impose the immediate withdrawal of approval of Access to HE Diploma(s) without:

- the provider being given an opportunity to address the area(s) of non-compliance
- first of all imposing one of the previous sets of sanctions
- there being evidence that the non-compliance poses a serious threat to the interests of students, the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma or reputational damage to the AVA and/or QAA

Should a provider have its approval for an Access to HE Diploma removed, all reasonable steps will be taken to protect the interests of any students currently registered, in line with the AVA Policy for the Withdrawal of Approval to Deliver the Access to HE Diploma.

Providers will be required to demonstrate that they are able to provide appropriate support, advice and guidance for students throughout the process.

6. Appeals

A provider may appeal against a Level 4 or 5 sanction by writing to the Chair of the Access to HE Board. Appeals must be made within 5 working days of receiving the sanction and must be based upon reasonable grounds. The following will be accepted as reasonable grounds:

- the sanction was not applied in accordance with this policy
- the decision to apply a sanction was unreasonable in light of evidence presented by the provider
- the sanction applied is disproportionate to the issues cited

The appeal should be sent to the Skills and Education Group Deputy Chief Executive via acesstohe@skillsedugroup.co.uk fully outlining the reason for the appeal and the evidence to support it. The appeal will be acknowledged within 2 working days and a timescale for the decision given. Appeals will usually be considered and an outcome provided to the appellant within 10 working days, however, if additional information is required, the timescale may be revised.

This decision will be final.

7. Contact Us

Please contact Julie Knowles, Access to HE Quality Manager, if you have any questions about this policy or associated processes.

8. Review Arrangement

This policy will be reviewed biennially as part of the AVA's self-evaluation processes.

Appendix 1

Risk Based Approach to AVA Provider Monitoring

Monitoring of all Skills and Education Group providers is undertaken against five indicators detailed in the table below:

| | The five indicators | Required standard for each indicator |
|----------|--|--|
| 1 | Assessment and grading | Provider meets QAA and AVA requirements in relation to the assessment and grading of the Access to HE Diploma |
| 2 | Internal quality assurance | Provider meets QAA and AVA requirements in relation to the internal moderation and standardisation of the Access to HE Diploma |
| 3 | Response to actions given to a provider | Provider responds appropriately and promptly to actions set by the AVA. |
| 4 | Compliance with AVA Provider Recognition Agreement and Diploma Specification | Provider is compliant with the AVA Centre Recognition Agreement, and Diploma Specification |
| 5 | The student experience | Provider ensures a positive student experience which prepares them well for their intended progression route |

The outcome of the monitoring activity, using the five indicators, is a risk rating for each provider based on the banding system below. This is reviewed on a monthly basis, or more frequently if any serious issues arise.

| Risk Bands | Band | General Descriptor |
|----------------------|-------------|---|
| Low Risk | 1 | On the basis of the available evidence the provider's performance is good and there is little or no risk to the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Recognition Agreement, the reputation of AVA or its AVA licence to QAA. Students will be well prepared for their intended progression route and have a positive assessment experience. |
| Moderate Risk | 2 | On the basis of the available evidence there are minor concerns about a specific risk indicator, or indicators, and a condition or conditions have been set. Students will be sufficiently prepared for their intended progression route and have an adequate assessment experience. Sanctions may be imposed if conditions are not met. |
| Medium Risk | 3 | On the basis of the available evidence there are significant concerns about a specific risk indicator, or indicators, and a condition or conditions have been set. Students will be |

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| | | sufficiently prepared for their intended progression route and have an adequate assessment experience. Sanctions will be imposed if conditions are not met. |
| High Risk | 4 | On the basis of the available evidence there are serious concerns about one or more risk indicator(s) which threaten the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Centre Recognition Agreement, and/or the reputation of the AVA and its licence to QAA. The student experience and preparation for their intended progression route are at risk. Urgent action is required. Sanctions will be imposed if conditions are not met. |

Sanctions

The Access to HE Quality Manager will decide which, if any, sanction should be set where the risk rating of Medium or High has been assigned to a provider. Sanctions will be chosen from the table of sanctions below which increase in severity. Providers will be fully informed of the sanctions and the actions required to address the issues, and this will also be confirmed with the Centre Moderator.

| Table of Sanctions | | |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Sanction | | Rationale |
| 1 | Escalation to provider Head of Quality | Limited confidence in the provider's ability to address specific risks |
| 2 | Additional moderation visit * | Non-compliance with AVA or QAA requirements and provider not responding to conditions |
| 3 | (a) Postponement of the Final Award Board*/suspension of certification for one or more diplomas (b) Suspension of registration on one or more diplomas for the following year | (a) Serious threat to the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma (b) Serious threat to the interests of students |
| 4 | Withdrawal of provider approval for a specific Access to HE Diploma or Diplomas | Irretrievable breakdown in the management and quality assurance of the Access to HE Diploma or Diplomas |
| 5 | Withdrawal of Centre approval for all Access to HE Diplomas | The provider no longer has the capacity to successfully deliver the Access to HE Diploma to students and is in breach of its AVA Centre Recognition Agreement. |

*A charge of £425 will be made to the provider for additional and postponed visits. The provider will be notified of this in writing when the visit is arranged.

Appendix 2

Risk Monitoring and Sanctions Policy Timeline

| Event | Outcome | Timescale |
|--|---|---|
| Centre Moderator sets condition(s) in response to an area of non-compliance with AVA/QAA requirements or other serious concern | Report sent to provider clearly stating the requirements of the condition(s) and the deadline by which they must be addressed Monitored by the Access Quality Manager and reported to the Direct of Access to HE and the Access to HE Committee periodically. | Confirmed verbally on the day and report sent to course team and provider Head of Quality within 15 working days of the visit |
| Condition(s) tracked by AVA | Condition(s)/actions and agreed deadline(s) logged on Quartz database and reminder sent to Centre Moderator Monitored by the Access Quality Manager and reported to the Director of Access and Access to HE Committee periodically. | Condition(s) logged on Quartz as soon as report received. Reminder sent when deadline is due. |
| Centre Moderator confirms that condition(s) have not been met by the deadline | Centre Moderator informs AVA and discusses appropriate course of action with AVA Access Quality Manager. Centre Moderator communicates requirements and deadline to provider and requests a formal response and commitment to comply. Monitored by the Access Quality Manager and reported to the Director of Access and Access to HE Committee periodically. | Within 3 working days of the original deadline Subsequent deadline will be shorter e.g. 5 working days |
| Centre Moderator confirms that second deadline has not been met | Centre Moderator informs AVA Access Quality Manager. Level 1 Sanction imposed – AVA Director of Access writes to the provider Head of Quality outlining the outstanding condition, deadline dates and urgent requirement to address the issue. Monitored by the Access Quality Manager and reported to the Director of Access and Access to HE Committee periodically. | Within 3 working days of the second deadline date Response required from Head of Quality within 2 working days and condition to be addressed immediately |
| Provider Head of Quality unresponsive | Level 2 Sanction imposed – AVA Access Quality Manager and Centre Moderator arrange to meet the Head of Quality to | Meeting to take place within 5 |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| within a reasonable timescale and/or condition not met | <p>discuss the requirements and consequences of non-compliance OR Centre Moderator and Diploma Moderator, if appropriate, to undertake a visit to the provider to check condition has been met.</p> <p>Monitored by the Access Quality Manager and reported to the Director of Access and Access to HE Committee periodically</p> | working days of the second deadline |
| Meeting with provider Head of Quality/ additional visit unsuccessful in addressing the condition(s) | <p>Level 3 Sanction imposed – AVA Access Quality Manager writes to provider Head of Quality confirming postponement of Final Award Board and suspension of certification on relevant diploma(s).</p> <p>Monitored by the Access Quality Manager and reported to the Director of Access and Access to HE Committee periodically</p> | With immediate effect following the meeting/visit. Provider will be supported to enable the students to achieve, or students will be offered alternative support |
| Irretrievable breakdown in the management of the diploma(s) - integrity of the qualification and/or student interests at serious risk | <p>Level 4 Sanction imposed – AVA Director of Quality writes to provider Head of Quality and copies in Head of Centre to confirm that approval to deliver the diploma(s) will be withdrawn.</p> <p>Reported directly to the Access to HE Board of Trustees</p> | From the end of the academic year. Students offered alternative support if required. |
| Provider no longer has the capacity to deliver diplomas and is in breach of its AVA Centre Recognition agreement | <p>Level 5 Sanction imposed – AVA Director of Access to HE writes to the Head of Organisation to confirm that approval to deliver Access to HE Diplomas through AVA has been withdrawn.</p> <p>Reported directly to the Access to HE Board of Trustees</p> | From the end of the academic year. Students offered alternative support if required. |

Change History Record

| Version | Description of change | Approval | Date of Issue |
|---------|-------------------------------|------------|---------------|
| 2 | Major review and modification | 15.08.2024 | 01.09.2024 |
| 1 | Original | 10.10.2022 | 11.10.2022 |