

Access to HE Diploma (Humanities) Diploma Specification

Valid from: August 2026
Learning Aim Code: 40016249

Website: skillsandeducationgroupaccess.co.uk
Telephone: 0115 854 1620

Table of Contents

Access to HE Diploma Background and Aims	3
Diploma Development.....	3
Diploma Specification	3
About this qualification.....	4
Intended Progression Routes	6
Access to HE Diploma provider assessment strategy advice:	7
Rules of Combination	8
Appendix 1 - Units of Assessment – Access to HE Diploma (Humanities).....	9
Grading Standards (Applied to all graded units).....	9
Inclusion and Exclusion rules of combination	13

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 (Humanities). 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 Providers 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 (Humanities)	12 – Languages, Literature and Culture	12.2 – Other Languages, Literature and Culture

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

Diploma revalidation date: 31/07/2031

Purpose of this Diploma:

The Access to HE Diploma (Humanities) provides students with a broad introduction to humanities disciplines and academic study at Level 3. It is designed to prepare students for progression to higher education by developing subject knowledge, critical thinking, research skills, written communication and independent study.

The Diploma includes units in history, literature, language, politics and law, enabling students to explore a range of humanities themes while building the academic confidence and study skills needed for further study.

A. Key Knowledge:

1. History and Society:

- knowledge of British, American, African and European history
- understanding of Black history, the transatlantic slave trade, European colonialism, industrialisation in Britain and social and economic change in nineteenth-century Britain
- exploration of how historical events, movements and ideas have shaped societies and identities

2. Literature and Language:

- analysis of poetry, prose fiction, dramatic texts, Shakespeare, short stories and the nineteenth-century novel
- understanding of language change, textual analysis, original writing and the relationship between language, identity and society
- exploration of texts in their cultural, historical and critical contexts

3. Politics and Law:

- knowledge of political ideologies, political theories and concepts, human rights, law and morality, and sources of English law
- understanding of key legal topics including negligence, non-fatal offences and homicide
- exploration of the relationship between law, power, justice and society

4. Media and Representation:

- understanding of stereotyping and representation in the media
- exploration of gendered speech, social media and changes in language use
- consideration of how media and discourse shape meaning and public perception

B. Subject-Specific Skills:

1. Critical Analysis and Interpretation:

- analyse and interpret literary, historical, political and legal material
- compare perspectives, arguments and sources
- evaluate themes, evidence and interpretations within humanities subjects

2. Research Skills:

- locate, select and use relevant sources
- develop arguments supported by appropriate evidence
- conduct independent research in preparation for essays, assignments and presentations

3. Written Communication:

- produce structured academic writing
- apply appropriate subject terminology and conventions
- communicate ideas clearly, coherently and appropriately for different humanities tasks

4. Contextual Understanding:

- place texts, events, ideas and issues within their wider historical, cultural, social and political contexts
- recognise how meaning and interpretation are shaped by context

C. Transferable Skills:

1. Academic Skills:

- develop academic writing, reading, note-making and referencing skills
- improve information literacy, research skills and independent study
- build confidence in preparing for higher education study

2. Communication Skills:

- communicate ideas clearly in written and spoken forms
- present arguments and findings effectively
- adapt communication to different audiences and purposes

3. Organisation and Reflection:

- manage time, organise study effectively and meet deadlines
- reflect on progress and identify areas for improvement
- develop confidence and independence as a student

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

Anthropology	English	Philosophy
Archaeology	Geography	Policing
Architectural History	Health Social Care	Politics
Business	History	Politics and International Studies
Creative Writing	History and Politics	Social Anthropology
Criminology	Intercultural Communication and Linguistics	Social History
Cultural Studies	International Studies	Teaching and Education
Early Childhood Studies	Law	TESOL and Linguistics
Economics	Media and Journalism	Working with Children and Young Families
Education Studies	Peace Studies	Youth and Community

Providers delivering this Diploma should consult receiving HEIs to confirm that progression opportunities are appropriate and current. Evidence of HEI consultation and progression opportunities 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).

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 (Humanities)	
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, students must achieve a minimum of ten 3 credit units and at least one unit of 6 or 9 credits. No more than 30 credits may be taken from units of 6 or 9 credits. These units may be graded or ungraded.	
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 (Humanities)

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

Students must achieve a minimum of 6 credits from at least **two** of the following subject areas. This ensures that the diploma reflects the breadth of the humanities and is not achieved through a single subject area:

- English – minimum 6 credits
- History – minimum 6 credits
- Law – minimum 6 credits

Units may also be selected from Other Humanities Units. Students may include units from all subject areas within their programme of study.

English Graded Units

(Please select a minimum of 6 credits from this list)

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Literature: Poetry	FC3/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Literature: Prose Fiction	FC3/3/AA/10G	Three	3
Literature: Shakespeare	FC4/3/AA/03G	Three	3
Film Adaptations	FN1/3/AA/06G	Three	3
Male and Female Speech	FN1/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Language: Change	FN2/3/AA/07G	Three	3
Language: Original Writing	FN2/3/AA/08G	Three	3
Language: Textual Analysis	FN2/3/AA/09G	Three	3
Social Media and the Use and Change in Language	FN2/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Modern Dramatic Text	FN2/3/AA/10G	Three	3
Analysing Short Stories	FC3/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Literature: Dramatic Text	FC3/3/AA/08G	Three	6
Literature: Poetry Analysis	FC3/3/AA/09G	Three	6
Literature: The Novel	FC3/3/AA/11G	Three	6
Literature: The Nineteenth Century Novel	FC4/3/AA/04G	Three	6
Writing an English Studies Essay	FM3/3/AA/02G	Three	6

History Graded Units

(Please select a minimum of 6 credits from this list)

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Black History	DB1/3/AA/03G	Three	3
The Transatlantic Slave Trade	DB1/3/AA/04G	Three	3
African History	DB6/3/AA/05G	Three	3
Industrialisation in Britain	DB7/3/AA/04G	Three	3
Social and Economic Change in 19th Century Britain	DB7/3/AA/05G	Three	3
British History	DB5/3/AA/02G	Three	6
American History	DB6/3/AA/06G	Three	6
European History	DB6/3/AA/07G	Three	6
The Impact of European Colonialism	DB6/3/AA/08G	Three	6
Victorian Values	DB7/3/AA/06G	Three	6

Law Graded Units

Please select a minimum of 6 credits from this list)

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Law and Morality	EC1/3/AA/10G	Three	3
Sources of English Law	EC1/3/AA/11G	Three	3
The Law of Negligence	EC1/3/AA/05G	Three	6
The Law of Non-Fatal Offences	EC1/3/AA/09G	Three	6
The Law of Homicide	EC6/3/AA/02G	Three	6
Human Rights	EC7/3/AA/02G	Three	3
The Court System and Legal Personnel	EC8/3/AA/01G	Three	6

Other Humanities Graded Units

(Students may select any remaining credits from this group as required to meet the 45 graded credit requirement)

Unit Title	National Code	Level	CV
Political Ideologies	EA2/3/AA/03G	Three	3
Stereotyping and the Media	KA2/3/AA/05G	Three	3
Politics: Theories and Concepts	EA2/3/AA/04G	Three	6
Research Project	EE2/3/AA/25G	Three	9

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
Fascism and Communism	DB2/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Industrialisation in Britain	DB7/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Elements of a Crime	EC1/3/AA/02U	Three	3
Texts and Genres	FC4/3/AA/02U	Three	3
The Influence of Community, History and Culture on Text	FN2/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Principles of Reflection	HB1/3/AA/03U	Three	3
Academic Writing Skills	HC7/3/AA/01U	Three	3
Researching and Understanding Opportunities in Higher Education	HC7/3/AA/04U	Three	3
Information Literacy Skills	HC7/3/AA/06U	Three	3
Organisation and Evaluation of Study	HC7/3/AA/07U	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
Higher Education Toolkit	HC7/3/AA/19U	Three	6
Academic English	HC7/3/AA/21U	Three	6

Inclusion and Exclusion rules of combination

Barred Unit 1	National Code	CV	Barred Unit 2	National Code	CV
Language: Textual Analysis	FN2/3/AA/09G	3	Texts and Genres	FC4/3/AA/02U	3
Literature: Poetry	FC3/3/AA/07G	3	Literature: Poetry Analysis	FC3/3/AA/09G	6
Industrialisation in Britain	DB7/3/AA/04G	3	Industrialisation in Britain	DB7/3/AA/02U	3
Political Ideologies	EA2/3/AA/03G	3	Politics: Theories and Concepts	EA2/3/AA/04G	6
Higher Education Toolkit	HC7/3/AA/19U	6	Presentation Skills	HC7/3/AA/18U	3
Academic Writing Skills	HC7/3/AA/01U	3	Academic English	HC7/3/AA/21U	6
Research Project	EE2/3/AA/25G	9	Research Skills	HC7/3/AA/17U	3