



Access to HE  
Provider Handbook  
2023-24

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## About this handbook

Thank you for taking the time to read this Access to HE Provider Handbook.

Gateway Qualifications is a not-for-profit awarding organisation recognised by Ofqual and The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) with a clear focus on customer service.

This Access to HE Provider Handbook acts as a reference tool to help recognised Gateway Qualifications providers deliver the Access to HE Diploma and provides new providers with an insight into how best to work with us.

This handbook is intended to be used by tutors, assessors, internal quality assurers, quality managers and other staff of recognised Gateway Qualifications providers and prospective providers. Therefore, everyone involved in the planning, delivering and assessing of Access to HE Diploma courses should become familiar with the contents of this handbook.

### We are here to help

This handbook is intended to answer all provider questions about running Gateway Qualifications and Access to HE Diplomas. However, if there are any additional questions, please contact us for support and guidance.

It covers the Access to HE awarding cycle from registration, planning and tracking learner achievement to claiming learner certificates. It also provides an overview of the key activities in the Access to HE academic year.

Full supporting documentation relating to policies and procedures can be found on the [Gateway Qualifications website](#).

All members of providers' Access to HE teaching teams must be familiar with these policies and procedures and the associated guidance.

The available resources include our QAA-commended Quick Guides, which provide handy and clear information on all aspects of delivering Access to HE Diplomas, from registration to the Final Awards Board.

If you require any help in locating resources or have any queries about documentation, don't hesitate to get in touch with [access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk)

## Gateway Qualifications' Commitment

We aim to offer providers the best possible service to cater to all learners' needs. We will do this by ensuring our service is:

- prompt and efficient
- responsive and supportive
- professional.

### General support

We will endeavour, at all times to:

- ensure a respectful, friendly and supportive attitude to everyone visiting and associated with the company, in whatever capacity
- acknowledge a complaint within two working days
- listen to, and respond positively to all feedback and suggestions
- ensure that the staff and associates of the company are appropriately qualified.

### Contact us

Telephone: 01206 911211

Email: [enquiries@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@gatewayqualifications.org.uk)

Web: [www.gatewayqualifications.org.uk](http://www.gatewayqualifications.org.uk)

Customer Services: [registrations@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:registrations@gatewayqualifications.org.uk)

Post: Gateway Qualifications, Gateway House, 6 Tollgate Business Park,  
Colchester, CO3 8AB

Voicemail: Available outside of regular office hours

### Online support

Support, guidance and registration facilities are available online at [www.gatewayqualifications.org.uk](http://www.gatewayqualifications.org.uk)

## 1. About the Access to HE Diploma

The Access to HE Diploma is a nationally recognised qualification with a common structure. It is a credit-based, graded qualification and requirements relate to both the award of credit and the award of grades.

Details of the credit framework and requirements relating to the award of credit, along with the general qualification specifications, can be found in the [Access to Higher Education Diploma and Credit Specifications](#).

Access to HE Diplomas are validated by Access Validating Agencies (AVAs). Each Diploma has its own approved set of units of assessment, governed by the rules of combination appropriate to the subject it covers.

### Aims

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The Access to HE Diploma aims to provide a recognised qualification that prepares people without standard qualifications to study at university. Access to HE courses usually aims to:

- reintroduce learners to education, recognising prior skills and experience and the particular needs of those returning to learning
- offer learners a responsive, supportive and user-friendly return to the learning experience at a level appropriate for entry to HE
- develop the study and interpersonal skills necessary to enable learners to succeed in their HE career
- address widening participation and social inclusion
- provide appropriate support and guidance according to individual needs
- raise learner awareness of the opportunities that returning to study and lifelong learning can bring
- to study for a higher level qualification.

### Objectives

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The purpose of the Access to HE Diploma is to enable learners to:

- satisfy the general academic requirements for entry to HE and provide evidence to admissions tutors that they can succeed at HE level
- prepare learners for HE level study generally and in subject areas appropriate to an intended HE course destination
- demonstrate appropriate levels of competence in subject-specific skills and knowledge
- demonstrate academic, employability and professional skills
- develop their confidence and ability to cope with a return to education at an advanced level
- enhance personal and career opportunities
- develop as independent and lifelong learners.

## Progression Opportunities

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Whilst the primary purpose of Access to HE courses is to provide 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 HE programmes.

## The role of the AVA

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The QAA regulates Access to HE courses through the QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The scheme was set up by QAA for the assurance of quality and to ensure adequate standards for learner achievements on all courses.

However, QAA does not directly recognise individual courses and does not award certificates to learners. Instead, it licenses Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) to do this and regulates how AVAs undertake their responsibilities. The QAA sets out requirements for the governance and management of AVAs, the procedures and mechanisms to be operated by AVAs for maintaining the quality of Access to HE courses, and the standards achieved by learners awarded the Access to HE Diploma. These requirements are presented as a set of standard conditions and specific criteria for awarding an AVA licence. QAA uses these conditions and criteria in making decisions about the award and renewal of AVA licences.

Gateway Qualifications is an AVA licensed by the QAA, offering a wide range of validated courses which an approved provider can run. Bespoke Access to HE courses can be developed with providers to meet local needs.

The role of an AVA is to ensure the quality and validity of each Access to HE Diploma awarded to successful learners.

## Format of the Access to HE Diploma

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Gateway Qualifications offers the Access to HE Diploma in the following ways to approved providers:

**Gateway Qualifications Access to HE Diploma** – this is a validated Diploma with an agreed structure and unit content and, therefore, can be delivered by any approved Gateway Qualifications Access to HE provider. To facilitate the delivery of each Access to HE Diploma, Gateway Qualifications will provide materials to approved providers, which may include:

- subject-specific Access to HE Diploma guides
- exemplar assignment briefs
- exemplar delivery plans
- subject-specific assessment guidance.

An up-to-date [list of Diplomas available for delivery](#) is maintained on the Gateway Qualifications website. The advantage to the provider in choosing a Gateway Qualifications Diploma is that they are ready for delivery and do not require separate validation.

**Bespoke Access to HE Diplomas** – this is an Access to HE Diploma developed by providers to meet local needs and priorities and approved (validated) by Gateway Qualifications. The development and validation process is supported by Gateway Qualifications – for more information on bespoke Access to HE diplomas, contact: [enquiries@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@gatewayqualifications.org.uk)

**Transfer from other AVAs** – Gateway Qualifications can transfer Access to HE Diplomas from other AVAs. The transfer process and associated administration are provided at no cost to an approved provider and can be completed quickly.

## Access to HE Diploma structure

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The Access to HE Diploma structure is set out by the regulator (QAA) in the document 'Access to HE Higher Education Diploma specification (2020)'. The Access to HE [Diploma specification](#) and supporting documentation for [guidance on Access grading](#) can be found on the QAA website, and the Gateway Qualifications Access to HE grading webpages.

All Access to HE Diplomas are 60-credit, level 3, credit-based, graded qualifications.

## Rules of combination for Access courses

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The QAA document '[Access to HE Higher Education Diploma specification \(2020\)](#)' sets out the specification for the achievement of the Access to HE Diploma, in particular, that:

- the total achievement is 60 credits
- of these 60 credits, 45 must be at level 3 from graded units containing academic subject content
- the remaining 15 credits may be achieved at level 2 or 3 from ungraded units.

Access to HE Diploma guides are available for Gateway Qualifications Access to HE Diplomas and provide a detailed description, including the rules of combination, assessment and quality assurance requirements for that Diploma.

All learners must be registered on a specific Diploma course, with the correct combination of graded, ungraded, mandatory and optional units selected for each individual registration. It is not possible to register learners for more than 60 credits.

The rules of combination for each Diploma course are set out within the Access to HE Diploma Guide, which confirms details of the required mandatory units and the optional units from which learners can select, to gain a full Access to HE Diploma. Learners cannot choose units not within the rules of combination for their registered course.

## Credit-based units of assessment

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Access to HE Diplomas are qualifications based on units of assessment which are structured in accordance with the Access to HE unit specification set out by the QAA.



## Unit specification

All units with Access to HE Diplomas are presented in a common unit specification framework covering the following elements:

- title
- level
- credit value
- unit code
- learning outcomes
- assessment criteria
- grade descriptors
- type of unit (academic subject content or not)
- assessment methodology.

## Academic subject content

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A unit is classified as having academic subject content if the unit's knowledge and skills are related directly to the subject of the Access to HE Diploma. Units will not meet the academic subject content requirement if they are principally concerned with personal development, generic English or Mathematics, or Study Skills.

## Graded and ungraded units

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Grading operates at unit level and only applies to units Gateway Qualifications have approved within a named Access to HE Diploma. Learner achievement for graded units is recorded as pass, merit or distinction, as set out in the QAA '[Recognition Scheme for Access to HE Grading scheme handbook](#)'. Graded units will also satisfy the criteria of academic subject content.

There are seven common generic grade descriptors (often referred to as GDs, i.e. GD1 to GD7) which are used as the basis for all grading judgements on all courses:

- understanding the subject
- application of knowledge
- application of skills
- use of knowledge
- communication and presentation
- autonomy / independence
- quality.

Not all grade descriptors are used with every unit. A selection of grade descriptors is assigned when the unit is validated on the basis of relevance to the assessment of learner performance in that specific unit. The grade descriptors are a formal part of the specification of that unit, and changes can only be made through the formal Gateway Qualifications process for amendments to units.

Full guidance and a [Quick Guide to Access to HE grading](#) are available on the Gateway Qualifications website.

Further guidance on grading is available in the QAA '[Recognition Scheme for Access to HE Grading scheme handbook](#)'.

## 2. Access to HE Provider Approval

The process to become an approved provider for Access to HE is as follows:

### **Step 1: Express an interest**

New and existing providers should start by contacting our Business Development Team, who will happily support new and existing providers through the initial process.

### **Step 2: Complete the application forms**

All prospective providers must complete the Centre Recognition Process, which incorporates the Access to HE Diploma requirements. Providers must submit evidence during the Centre Recognition Process to confirm that they meet the approval requirements. This evidence will include staff qualifications and subject competence, organisational policies and procedures and any other relevant documentation.

Again, the Customer Excellence, Business Development, and Access to HE Quality Teams are on hand to provide support.

### **Step 3: Gateway Qualifications approval review**

Gateway Qualifications will review the application and decide whether a visit is required. If Access to HE has not been delivered before, or a new provider of Gateway Qualifications is seeking approval, a supportive visit will be arranged to review resources, delivery plans and quality assurance arrangements.

### **Step 4: Approval confirmation**

Once everything is in place and approval is granted, the Customer Excellence Team will inform the provider.

If approval is not confirmed, formal notification will be provided in writing.

### **Step 5: Access to HE Diploma induction**

The Access to HE Diploma induction will usually involve contact with the Access to HE Quality Team, which will provide training and a support package to ensure the smooth running of the qualification.

### **Step 6: Deliver the qualification with the continuing support of the Quality Team**

The Customer Excellence and Access Quality Teams are on hand to provide ongoing support when delivering the Access to HE Diplomas.

## 3. Provider Staffing

### Provider management

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Providers need to identify a senior manager with overall responsibility for Access to HE provision, including strategic management of Access to HE provision.

### The role of the Access to HE Coordinator

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The Access to HE Coordinator's role is key in delivering and developing Access courses. When a provider applies to deliver the Access to HE Diploma, it commits itself to establishing the Access to HE Coordinator role and supporting a named coordinator.

The Access to HE Coordinator should be allowed an appropriate amount of time and support to ensure that the following duties relating to the Access to HE Diploma are carried out:

- publicity and promotion of the Access to HE Diploma
- providing information, advice and guidance for learners in relation to QAA-recognised Access to HE Diplomas
- ensuring that procedures for reasonable adjustments for learners are in place
- supplying relevant, timely information to Gateway Qualifications
- ensuring effective communication with, and support and development for, tutors
- enabling liaison between tutors and Gateway Qualifications
- appointing and training internal tutors and verification staff
- attending development and standardisation events
- ensuring learners are aware of the Gateway Qualifications malpractice policy and procedure
- ensuring that procedures for recognition of prior learning are in place
- overseeing quality monitoring or moderation activities carried out by Gateway Qualifications
- organise the Final Awards Board.

The Access to HE Coordinator need not personally carry out all these duties but must take responsibility for ensuring that all these duties are fulfilled.

### Tutors

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Teaching staff must have the professional competence and skills to teach and assess the Access to HE programme, particularly in relation to the delivery models being used. They must also have expertise in the subject matter of the Access to HE Diploma being delivered. Teaching staff must also have expertise in providing pre- and post-course guidance, including the criteria and selection process for progression to HE.

Gateway Qualifications will review a provider's staffing ability to deliver the Access to HE Diploma through the Provider Approval and Course Recognition processes.

## Resources

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Gateway Qualifications require that providers have sufficient financial, administrative and human resources to deliver the Access to HE provision.

Gateway Qualifications expect well-equipped classroom areas with adequate ICT facilities. If science pathways are being delivered, learners must have access to laboratories for practical work. Likewise, all courses with a defined vocational pathway should have industrial-standard workshop areas.

Learners must have access to high-quality learning resources, including online facilities. Gateway Qualifications will review the resources available for delivering the Access to HE Diploma through the Provider Approval and Course Recognition processes.

Specific Access to HE Diploma resource requirements are set out in the respective Access to HE Diploma Guide.

## Learner progression

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The Access to HE Diploma is generally run as a one-year course with the aim of providing a learner with the appropriate level 3 qualification that enables them to gain entry onto a higher education course. However, Gateway Qualifications acknowledges that the delivery format may be varied to meet changing HEI needs.

Access course providers are encouraged to develop a relationship with local HEIs; this will support curriculum content development to meet the entry requirements of the likely destination courses. This may include an additional check on the requirements for GCSE or functional skills qualifications in Maths and English. Learners may be required to provide separate qualifications in these subjects to gain acceptance onto HE courses.

It is helpful to regularly review the grade profile that local HEIs expect of applicants with an Access to HE Diploma so that information about the required performance and the competition for available places can be passed on to the learners to help inform their UCAS applications.

Since 2017 Access to HE Diplomas are eligible for UCAS tariff points as set out on [the UCAS website](#).

## 4. Learner Registration

### QAA requirements

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To claim the award of an Access to HE Diploma, learners must be registered with Gateway Qualifications within 42 days of starting their Access to HE Diploma. Units must be selected within 12 weeks of the start of the course. This is a QAA requirement and cannot be altered.

Each learner must be registered on only one Access to HE course. Learners must be advised that their registration is not flexible, and they will not be able to change course or units once they have registered with Gateway Qualifications.

Registration details **must be** checked carefully to ensure all information is accurate, as UCAS will reject any uploaded data which does not match the information supplied on the learner application. Therefore, details such as incorrect dates of birth and wrong or misspelt names will result in incorrect certificates being issued and delay the UCAS transmission of learner achievement to the chosen HEI.

The [Advice and Guidance](#) section on our website provides guidance on registering learners. Don't hesitate to contact the Customer Excellence Team for help with any specific queries.

A robust system must be put in place to ensure that every learner is registered by the 42-day deadline and 12-week unit selection, as late registrations are not permitted. It is recommended that all Access registrations be checked at least ten days before the final registration deadline to confirm that no learners have been omitted and that all learner information is correct.

Part-time learners must be registered onto a cohort specific to them, showing the correct start and end dates. They must not be included in the same cohort as the full-time learner registrations. When selecting units, providers must choose all units that will be studied throughout the course. A top-up selection in the second year is not permitted.

Providers must have a robust process in place to ensure that learners are registered on the correct Access to HE course and that selected units will be suited to the chosen HEI destination. It is recommended that this check is completed at an interview, where prospective learners can be given clear guidance on the exact content of the course before they commence their studies, and common HEI destinations for that Access to HE Diploma are discussed.

QAA guidelines restrict learner registrations; therefore, Access to HE teams must bear the following points in mind:

- learners may not change courses or amend course units to gain a 'second chance' at an improved grade profile
- learners may not exchange registered units for those which have already been delivered and in which other learners have been assessed
- learners must not be registered for more than 60 credits
- learners cannot be registered for units which do not feature in the rules of combination for the selected Access to HE Diploma
- any amendments to registration details must be made within 42 days of the learner starting their Access to HE Diploma. Amendments to unit selection must be made within 12 weeks of the start of the course.

## Learner transfers

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Learners who join Access to HE courses from other providers must be given clear advice as to whether any previously gained Access to HE units meet the requirements of the rules of combination for their chosen Diploma.

Learners may not join courses where the assessment has already been completed unless they have appropriate Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) evidence to cover this.

## Recognition of prior learning (RPL)

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### When to assess for RPL

Access to HE learners may begin the course having already achieved qualifications which could address all of the criteria within individual units of a Diploma. It is strongly recommended that learners claiming RPL have their claim considered and evidence approved by the Access to HE team at the beginning of the course and meet Gateway Qualifications requirements for RPL. This will ensure that learners can complete the appropriate Access to HE units if it is found that the evidence does not cover all of the assessment criteria within the units in question.

### Evidence required for RPL

Original certificates must be used to provide evidence that the learner has been successful in a certificated qualification or unit. There must also be evidence of how the qualification or unit covers the Access to HE unit(s) in question. Photocopies or verbal assurances of prior achievements are not admissible as evidence of certificated achievement.

### Limitations in the use of RPL

There are some restrictions which govern RPL:

- RPL can only be used for up to 50% of the units to be studied
- Where certificated qualifications are accepted as proof of prior learning, learners will be awarded the relevant unit(s) as exempt and not as a pass, a merit or a distinction. This is because it is not permitted to award a grade for an already assessed and graded qualification. Guidance should be given to the learner who will need to draw the attention of the receiving HEI to the related qualification used to provide the exemption.
- Evidence of non-certificated learning can be mapped for use in claiming RPL. This will result in a pass if all the criteria have been addressed in that unit at the appropriate level. This could include workplace learning, non-accredited training courses and other experiential learning. It is not possible to award a merit or distinction grade in these circumstances. Again, this should be discussed with the learner, who may need to provide an Access to HE grade higher than a pass for HEI offers.
- Learners may not be considered for RPL if the assessment and achievement of learning to be mapped against an Access to HE unit is incomplete or is ongoing. Some learners may find that RPL will not result in the grade profile required for HEI offers and may need to complete the full Access course to achieve these grades.

## Credit (Unit) Transfer

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If a learner has completed an Access to HE unit with another provider or on a previous Access course (for example, where the learner left a Diploma course with only a few units complete), it may be possible to use credit transfer. In this situation, any grades awarded on the learner's prior achievement will be retained (cannot be changed) as long as the unit can be mapped wholly and accurately against a corresponding unit included in the rules of combination for the learner's new Diploma.

Providers must check with all new Access learners whether they have previously completed Access to HE units on any Diploma so that Gateway Qualifications can determine whether these can/will be transferred to the learner's new Diploma. These checks need to be made by/at the start of the course so that tutors and learners alike are aware of the situation and avoid unnecessary duplicate study and assessment.

It should be noted that learners with credit transfer will receive the award of a full 60-credit Diploma, but transcripts will be in more than one part – the previous transcript or transcripts, plus the transcript for all the units achieved on their new Diploma.

For all credit transfer queries, please contact the Customer Excellence Team at [registrations@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:registrations@gatewayqualifications.org.uk)

## Returning and Transferring Learners

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The Access to HE Diploma regulations allow learners to return to a course from which they withdrew to complete their studies.

However, they must do so within the specified time (Access to HE Diplomas must typically be completed within five years of the start date), and individual provider policies may apply to regulations about returning learners.

If a learner returns to complete the course (and if the course has not changed significantly since they left), it may be possible to complete the course without having to re-do the assignments for units on which they have already achieved credits.

If a learner transfers between courses at the same college, and if those courses share some of the same units, then it should be possible to transfer the credit already achieved to the new course. However, the rules on registration outlined in this handbook still apply, and the learner would require a new registration at the appropriate time (i.e. within 42 days of starting the course).

For all queries concerning returning and/or transferring learners, please contact the Customer Excellence Team at [registrations@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:registrations@gatewayqualifications.org.uk)



## Reasonable Adjustments

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For Access to HE, Recognised Centres must follow their own internal processes to determine what access arrangements and reasonable adjustments are required for their students.

All Access to HE Diploma students are required to complete the selected assessment method, as outlined in the Rules of Combination and/or assessment grid. Where a reasonable adjustment may be needed to support an individual student's needs an alternative assessment may be used for that student, applying the equivalence set out in Gateway Qualifications' guidance on assessment methods, to ensure that the same standard is adhered to.

Recognised Centres must keep a record of where students have been provided with an alternative method of assessment and these must be advised to the Access to HE moderator during their subsequent moderation activities. This ensures that students are not given an unfair advantage or disadvantage in the assessment method issued.



## 5. Quality Assurance

Access to HE Diplomas are assessed through a portfolio of evidence.

Gateway Qualifications applies a quality assurance model to the Access to HE Diploma of:

- internal assessment and internal verification by the provider
- external moderation and sampling by Gateway Qualifications.

These processes are set out within this section of the Access to HE Provider Handbook. Access Diplomas cannot be awarded through Direct Claims, and a cycle of external moderation is required each year.

### Assessment

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Assessment evidence used within the final Access portfolio can take many forms, for example, essays, examination responses to questions, experiment reports, along with a range of other documents or artefacts which are the result of a summative assessment as set out within the assessment strategy of The Access to HE Diploma Guide. Evidence included in an Access to HE portfolio must always be the result of summative assessment, demonstrating the learner's final skill, knowledge or understanding in each unit within the Diploma.

Providers are free to design their own assessment assignments to address the assessment criteria while at the same time aiming to:

- ensure the learner has acquired the range of knowledge, skills and understanding required by the assessment criteria covered by the final, summative assessment
- support the learner via appropriate feedback throughout the Access to HE programme of study
- provide robust evidence for assessment decisions about the learner's progress and achievement
- identify any learner who may be struggling to achieve, so that appropriate support and guidance may be offered.

Assessments must:

- be reliable, robust, valid and appropriate to the vocational pathway, enabling the learner to produce evidence sufficient to demonstrate the level of performance identified for each unit
- be scheduled and timed to take place throughout the delivery of the Access to HE Diploma. It is not permitted to set assessments to all be completed at the end of the Diploma.
- cover all of the learning outcomes of the unit
- meet all of the requirements of the unit's assessment criteria
- be inclusive and equitable, and not advantage or disadvantage any learner or group of learners
- support academic integrity.

Gateway Qualifications can provide examples of good practice in developing assessments and also has a bank of over 100 assignment briefs for providers to use.

## Internal verification

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Internal verification is a process by which the provider systematically samples and evaluates its assessment practices and decisions and acts on the findings to ensure consistency and fairness. It involves two key elements – moderation and standardisation - and is carried out by one or more internal verifiers across the Access to HE provision. Internal verification is expected to cover both assessment briefs and learner work. Any actions required from the internal verification should be documented, including evidence that this has been acted upon.

Full guidance and a range of useful materials and exemplar documentation are also available on the Access to HE section of the Gateway Qualifications website or by emailing [access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk)

For Access to HE Diplomas, there is no expectation that there are named verifiers or that they have additional verification training, although it would be seen as good practice. However, a level of assessment and quality assurance experience is expected, and Gateway Qualifications' moderators review this through the moderation process.

## Standardisation

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Standardisation is how providers ensure that standards are being maintained across assessors and courses and over time. Standardisation meetings should involve all tutors and assessors, and the internal verifier. At standardisation meetings, assessment evidence and evidence of assessment marking and feedback are scrutinised for consistency and coherence. Agreement should be sought on what is acceptable evidence for a unit of assessment, and this should be informed by the moderation reports where necessary.

The outcomes of standardisation should be recorded in writing and made available to moderators. Samples of work should be kept for a period of time and should be available for standardisation activities. It is important to guard against inflation of standards to ensure that consistency is maintained over time.

## External Moderation – overview

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External moderation is undertaken by Gateway Qualifications and is carried out by a moderator who is typically allocated to a provider for a period of no more than four years. The moderator will review provider procedures such as registrations, induction, internal verification and standardisation, tracking, learner support and other aspects of Access to HE administration. The moderator remains in touch with the provider throughout the year as they also formally grant permission for referrals of learner work and authorise extensions to the learner's study period at the end of the course in the case of exceptional circumstances.

During moderation activities, the moderator may sample learner work to establish how the learners are progressing, review assessment and internal verification activity, and speak to learners to find out how well the Access to HE course matches their expectations and destination requirements over the course of the year.

The moderator can also provide invaluable support in helping to develop the necessary Access to HE processes. Moderation meetings are opportunities to ask for guidance and suggestions to deal with any issues.

Where possible, a moderator will be allocated a maximum of three diplomas per provider close to their subject specialisms. The number and type of meetings with providers will depend on the size of the cohorts and the potential risk of the provider. Below are the main activities moderators will complete throughout the delivery of an Access to HE Diploma.



Sampling activities are timed so that feedback can inform provider standardisation, final moderation and raise any issues to be addressed to ensure successful end-of-year preparations.

## Centre Risk Management

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Gateway Qualifications takes a risk-based approach to the management of Access to HE provider performance. Risk assessment begins at centre level with a review of a centre's capability and capacity to deliver the Diploma(s) to the AVA's and QAA's requirements.

This is done initially through the recognition and approval process and then through an annual compliance review of policies, expertise, and delivery arrangements for each Diploma to ensure compliance with the Centre Agreement and Access to HE Conditions of Approval. Moderators risk rate centres against the Access to HE Conditions of Approval, during the year through their monitoring activities.

The Access to HE Quality Team will review findings from the annual compliance review and monitoring activities to assess the level of risk a centre or diploma presents. The Access to HE Quality Manager will monitor risk ratings and escalate where there are concerns to mitigate and resolve as applicable.

## Initial moderation

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Initial moderation activities take place approximately 12 weeks from the start of the course, no matter the start/end dates or mode delivery, and once learners have been registered and units have been selected. For a 2-year course, initial moderation will take place both in year 1 and in year 2.

Initial moderation will involve a desktop review of documentation as well as an initial moderation meeting either onsite or remotely.

Desktop review:

- An assessment plan/schedule including dates for each Diploma
- Assignment briefs for at least eight graded units being delivered for each Diploma
- Internal verification records for each assignment brief
- Internal verification plan of learners' work for each Diploma

Assessment review:

- On an agreed date, but no later than end of January or end of month 5 for non-traditional delivery, centres will make available one graded assessment for one unit

Moderators must engage with assessment, and grading decisions in the early stages of a course so a timely review of documentation is essential.

Initial moderation meeting:

- discuss findings following a review of the documentation presented
- discuss and agree on sampling activities with the Access to HE Coordinator
- review the promotion of the course
- meet learners to discuss their experiences of the course so far
- meet team members to discuss the administration of the course and how any points raised in the previous year's reports have been addressed
- supply any advice and guidance that the Access to HE team may request.

Where a centre is not subject to external review (e.g. Ofsted) an observation of learning and teaching must also take place, this includes centre delivering online.

Following the initial moderation desktop review and meeting, the moderator will complete a report, which the Access to HE Coordinator and Head of Quality will receive. This will summarise their findings, outline any actions and recommendations relevant to the courses, highlighting good practice and share the agreed plan for sampling.

### Action planning following initial moderation

It is helpful for the Access to HE Coordinator to review the feedback points raised in the initial moderation report and prepare an action plan addressing any urgent and outstanding issues or recommendations.

These action plans should include the action required, the personnel involved and the deadline for completion. The moderator will review the progress of these plans at their next meeting. Alternatively, the required action may be reviewed through the sampling process or additional moderation activities.

## Sampling

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The external scrutiny of Access to HE Diplomas is a regulatory requirement and forms part of the Gateway Qualifications' Access to HE quality standards to which all approved providers must comply. The purpose of sampling is to ensure that:

- assessment judgements at different levels of learner performance are appropriate and consistent
- assessment judgements relating to grades are appropriate and consistent
- the grading model for the Access to HE Diploma is consistently applied across subject areas and providers
- methods of assessment are valid, comparable and applied effectively
- there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the learning outcomes and assessment criteria have been met
- there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate that the appropriate grade has been achieved for the unit
- evidence is valid, authentic, current, sufficient and inclusive
- robust internal verification procedures are in place
- consistency and standardisation are maintained across subjects and providers.

During the initial moderation meeting, moderators will discuss and agree on the samples required for each Diploma. Sampling will typically occur in April for courses that follow the academic year. However, for non-traditional delivery sampling should be scheduled at the half-way point e.g. at the 6-month point of a 12-month course, or at the 6-month point and 18-month point of a 2-year course.

Moderators will take a risk-based approach when approaching sampling. This will consider new providers, a new Diploma being delivered, new units being assessed or new tutors. Moderators will also wish to consider their findings from their documentation review during initial moderation.

The sample should include all graded units available at the point of sampling, every assessor, a range of achievement grades and, where appropriate, any resubmissions, late submissions and referrals. Due to the time of sampling, some units may not be available; these should be checked at final moderation.

The moderator will complete a report following sampling, which the Access to HE Coordinator and Head of Quality will receive. This will summarise their findings, outline any actions and recommendations relevant to the courses, and highlight good practice.

## Additional monitoring activities

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Additional monitoring activities may be requested by Gateway Qualifications, the provider or the moderator and agreed upon by Gateway Qualifications.

Following additional monitoring activities, the moderator will complete the appropriate documentation, which the Access to HE Coordinator and Head of Quality will receive.

It is helpful for the Access to HE Coordinator to review the feedback points raised in the report and prepare an action plan addressing any urgent and outstanding issues or recommendations.

These action plans should include the action required, the personnel involved and the deadline for action. The moderator will review the progress of these plans at their next meeting.

## Internal Exams Board

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The Internal Exams Board is an internal meeting held by the Access to HE provider. It is a detailed discussion involving the whole Access to HE team of all assessment decisions concerning the achievement of individual learners. It is not attended by the moderator.

It should take place sufficiently far ahead of Final Moderation so that all learner results can be produced and entered into the RAC, giving the moderator time to select final samples for moderation and the opportunity to make an informed decision on notification of extension requests, where required, at the Final Awards Board.

The Internal Exams Board will result in a finalised RAC for all learners who are claiming completed Access to HE Diplomas or certificates of completion for units achieved. Documentation must include formal minutes, final results for every learner, any borderline decisions, referrals, extenuating circumstances, aegrotat or posthumous awards, and incidences of academic misconduct. These will need to be presented to the Final Awards Board for a final decision.

Please contact [access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk) for further guidance and support on how to run a successful internal exams board.

## Final moderation

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Final moderation will take place at the end of the course, once all teaching and assessments have been completed, and one to two weeks before the agreed date of the Final Awards Board. Any units not already sampled will be reviewed at this point.

It is important to note that Final Moderation can only take place when the moderator has received a number of key documentation, including the minutes of the provider's Internal Exams Board and RACs for all cohorts being claimed.

Final moderation will involve a desktop review of documentation as well as a final moderation meeting either onsite or remotely, and will focus on the following areas:

- checking the provider's response to Gateway Qualifications' quality procedures
- scrutinising course management, delivery and assessment, learner achievement and progression, learner feedback on the programme(s), internal quality assurance including internal moderation and subject moderation outcomes and actions
- sampling learners' work
- recording actions, recommendations and examples of good practice to be reported to the Final Awards Board
- reviewing previous action plans
- meeting the course team
- viewing tracking systems and records
- discussing planned amendments to courses
- identifying learners who will not claim the full Diploma (those with an incomplete portfolio) and will be claimed as partial achievers
- reviewing requests for extension or mitigation
- reviewing representations
- reviewing referrals
- confirming the accuracy of credit checking to ensure that the grades entered match those marked on the learners' portfolios
- approval to upload RACs to Quartzweb before the Final Awards Board
- supplying feedback to ensure the provider is adequately prepared for the Final Awards Board.

### Documentation and supporting guidance for final moderation

Following the final moderation meeting, the moderator will complete a report, which the Access to HE Coordinator and Head of Quality will receive. If any urgent actions arise which require completion before the Final Awards Board, the provider will be notified of this within two working days of the final moderation meeting so that the provider has an opportunity to resolve the issues identified.

Moderators approve the Report of Achievement or Completion (RAC) when the results are formally ratified at the Final Awards Board (see 6. Awarding – Certification).

### Action planning and self-evaluation report following receipt of the final moderation report

It is helpful for the Access to HE Coordinator to review the feedback points raised in the final moderation report and to prepare an action plan addressing any urgent and outstanding issues or recommendations outlined in the report.



These action plans should include the action required, the personnel involved and the deadline for completion. The moderator will review the progress of these plans at initial moderation in the next run of the course.

Following the moderation cycle, providers will be asked to complete a provider self-assessment report which Gateway Qualifications will use as a basis for its annual reporting cycle to the QAA.

## Reassessment (resubmissions, representations and referrals)

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Providers will need to have in place processes and procedures to manage the reassessment of learner work.

### Resubmissions

This is when a learner submits an assessment in a second attempt following the first submission. Completed **resubmissions** can be awarded a grade if handed in by the set resubmission deadline on the assignment brief.

### Representations

This is the process by which a learner asks that unconfirmed grade indicators be reconsidered after work has been graded before moderation.

### Referrals

A referral is a formal request made to the moderator in two specific circumstances. A referral may be requested when a learner has failed to meet one or more criteria for resubmitting work or when a first submission is late and incomplete. There is a QAA limit of 15 credits of referred work permitted in a learner's portfolio.

A Quick Guide to the [Submission, Resubmission and Referral Process](#) is available on our website.

### Limits on Resubmission and Referral

It is an expectation that there should be no more than 25% resubmissions for any single unit for any cohort at any provider. Where the assessment of a unit requires more, the provider must IV all original submissions for the unit to identify the issue/cause and report this to the moderator.

It is expected that individual learners would not normally require more than 25% resubmission opportunities across their Access to HE diploma. However, for resubmissions, this is a guideline limit only, and it is important that learners who have exceptional circumstances are not disadvantaged by this guideline.

## Sanctions

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Sanctions may be imposed on a provider where, for example, a non-compliance is detected that compromises the integrity or validity of our regulated qualifications and/or as a result of a malpractice/maladministration incident.

Please refer to the Gateway Qualifications [Sanctions Policy](#).



## 6. Awarding

### Preparing for a Final Awards Board

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Gateway Qualifications recommends that Final Awards Boards (often referred to as the FAB) take place one to two weeks after the Final Moderation meeting. All Final Awards Boards for Access to HE courses should typically take place at the start of July for September cohorts and mid-February for January cohorts.

The date of a Final Awards Board should be agreed upon in advance with the moderator and Gateway Qualifications notified so that an AVA representative can attend.

Any final assessments should be before an internal exams board to allow time to complete the assessment and collate results.

Final Awards Boards which need to be rearranged because they cannot be completed as scheduled, may incur a charge from Gateway Qualifications.

Please email [access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk) if you require further support or advice on running your Final Awards Board.

### Submitting learners' results to Gateway Qualifications

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Full guidance on submitting learners' results is provided in the [online support](#) for providers on the Gateway Qualifications website.

RACs must be completed and checked at the provider's Internal Exam Board. The RACs must be made available to the moderator at final moderation. RACs must be uploaded to Quartzweb at least 24 hours before the final awards board, once the moderator grants approval at the final moderation meeting.

Any amendments required to the RACs must be agreed upon by the moderator and confirmed at the Final Awards Board. The Access to HE Quality team must be informed immediately after the Final Awards Board if a grade change is required following the upload of results to Quartzweb. Once the moderator verifies the results, the Access to HE Quality team can proceed with the grade change.

## Certification

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### Claiming for certificates

Certificates are generated from the Access to HE RACs, which are electronic reports completed by the provider teams and uploaded to the Gateway Qualifications Quartzweb portal.

The moderator will approve the RAC at the Final Awards Board after the results have been verified at final moderation. Once the moderator has verified the results, certificates will be generated. Unlike other Level 3 qualifications there is no embargo on releasing grades to students, therefore, results and certificates should be released to students as soon as they have been agreed at the Final Awards Board and verified by the moderator.

The units and grades which appear on the certificate are those which are entered into the RAC, so the following steps should be followed to ensure learners get the correct certificates:

1. check that learners' names are spelt correctly
2. check that the learners have their correct name, name order and full name and not a nickname
3. check the RAC against each learner's achievement at the Internal Exam Board (see section 5 on the Internal Exams Board).

It is important to recognise that errors on the certificates can cause problems for learners going through the UCAS process.

Gateway Qualifications uses registration information to identify learners to UCAS. If the registration forms contain misspelt names or incorrect dates of birth, the uploaded information will not match any information the learner has entered as part of the UCAS application. This results in learner grades failing to appear on UCAS databases until this is rectified.

### **Process for handling certificates at providers and onward delivery to learners**

E-certificates are now available for providers to download from the Quartzweb system. Full guidance on generating certificates is provided in the [online support](#) for providers on the Gateway Qualifications website.

Printed certificates are delivered to providers via recorded delivery. The provider should complete the [receipt of certificate form](#) (included with the certificates) to Gateway Qualifications. Providers' staff (often exams teams) should check that all certificates have been received and inform our Customer Excellence Team if any certificates are missing. Certificate distribution must be monitored. Learners should sign a receipt if they are on site. Certificates should not be given to a third party. Certificates may be sent out to learners by post as long as recorded delivery is used.

### **Process for returning certificates which feature errors**

If the Exam Board and Final Awards Board processes have been followed, there should be no certificate errors. However, human error does occur occasionally, so the following steps must be taken to handle any certificates which contain mistakes:

1. Confirm with the learner the nature of the error on the certificate
2. Complete a replacement certificate form for the Access to HE Diploma, indicating in the appropriate section where the error is
3. Return the incorrect certificate to Gateway Qualifications with the completed form via recorded delivery
4. Advise the learner to contact the HEI if there is a chance that the incorrect information may adversely affect any decision on being allocated a place on the course.

## Appeals

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The published [Appeals Policy and Procedure](#) sets out Gateway Qualifications' approach to submitting and considering appeals. Learners who wish to appeal their Access to HE assessment results or decisions affecting their learning should refer to the [Access to HE Diploma Learner Appeals Policy](#).

Extenuating circumstances are defined as any events, usually personal or health related (but not limited to these) that are outside a student's control, but can have a negative impact on performance. This might be performing less well than expected, the ability to sit an exam assessment or hand in an assessment on deadline.

### Appeals that can be taken to the Final Awards Board

The grounds for appeal about the award of credits or grades on the Access to HE Diploma are restricted to:

- evidence of administrative or procedural error in the assessment process
- extenuating circumstances that, for good reason, could not be notified prior to the Final Awards Board.

The Final Awards Board cannot receive new representations about academic judgements. If a learner has concerns about assessment decisions relating to the achievement of credits or grades, they should discuss these with the relevant member of the course team when the assessed work is first returned to them. They may subsequently make a representation through the formal representation procedure described above. A learner may appeal the grading decision resulting from a representation, but only on the abovementioned grounds.

Where judgements made by the Final Awards Board lead to a learner being allowed additional time for the submission of work, the final assessment decisions about that work and the resulting learner record must be signed off by a representative from Gateway Qualifications with appropriate authority such as the lead moderator, or Chair of the Final Awards Board.

### Appeals as a consequence of decisions made by the Final Awards Board

In these circumstances, the grounds for appeal are still restricted to:

- evidence of administrative or procedural error in the assessment process
- extenuating circumstances that, for good reason, could not be notified prior to the Final Awards Board.

## Special Considerations

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Where ever possible, if a student can be assessed they should be assessed. Approved centres have a range of options to support students with extenuating circumstances to enable them to complete their Access to HE Diploma.

### Extensions for learners with extenuating circumstances

For extensions to the deadlines for specific units within the duration of the course, it is best to use the Provider's own system. Any extensions for good reason should be granted before the unit deadline, otherwise, the work/submission is late.

For extensions past the end of the course deadline, it is necessary to submit these to the moderator for approval during Final Moderation. These will be agreed upon, where appropriate, at the Final Awards Board. Each such learner must have an NR (Notice of Referral) form completed by a Provider's Access team member, listing which units are outstanding and the proposed new deadline for all the work to be complete. The reason for the extenuating circumstances should be given, along with any appropriate evidence available (or copies of it).

Download the appropriate form from our website on the [Forms and Templates](#) page or contact [access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk) for any help or support with this process.

It is essential that all claims for any work the learner has completed so far are included on the RAC for the cohort and the assessed work presented during Sampling and Final Moderation. Learners with extensions should be advised to keep their certificates and transcripts showing partial achievement carefully, as these will form part of their final certification.

The Gateway Qualifications Quality Team will monitor the progress of learners who have been granted extensions. It is essential that those with extensions complete all work to be claimed by the new deadline. All such work must be assessed within two weeks of the new deadline.

The Quality team will then randomly select units from those being claimed and ask the provider to supply copies of those assessed units for external moderation.

The provider should await confirmation from the Quality Team that the work meets requirements and has been assessed correctly in accordance with the new claim before uploading RACs to claim Diplomas or credits.

### Awarding through Extenuation

In some exceptional circumstances, not all assessments can take place, and in such cases, the award through extenuation can support the award of unit(s) that make up the Diploma. The award through extenuation is evidence-based and will be agreed upon at the Final Awards Board. Each such student must have an Extenuation Form completed by a member of the Provider's Access team, listing which units are affected and sufficient evidence relating to the learning outcomes and grade descriptors (where applicable) of each unit to be awarded.

Download the appropriate form from our website on the [Forms and Templates](#) page or contact [access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:access@gatewayqualifications.org.uk) for any help or support with this process.

## 7. Development and Validation

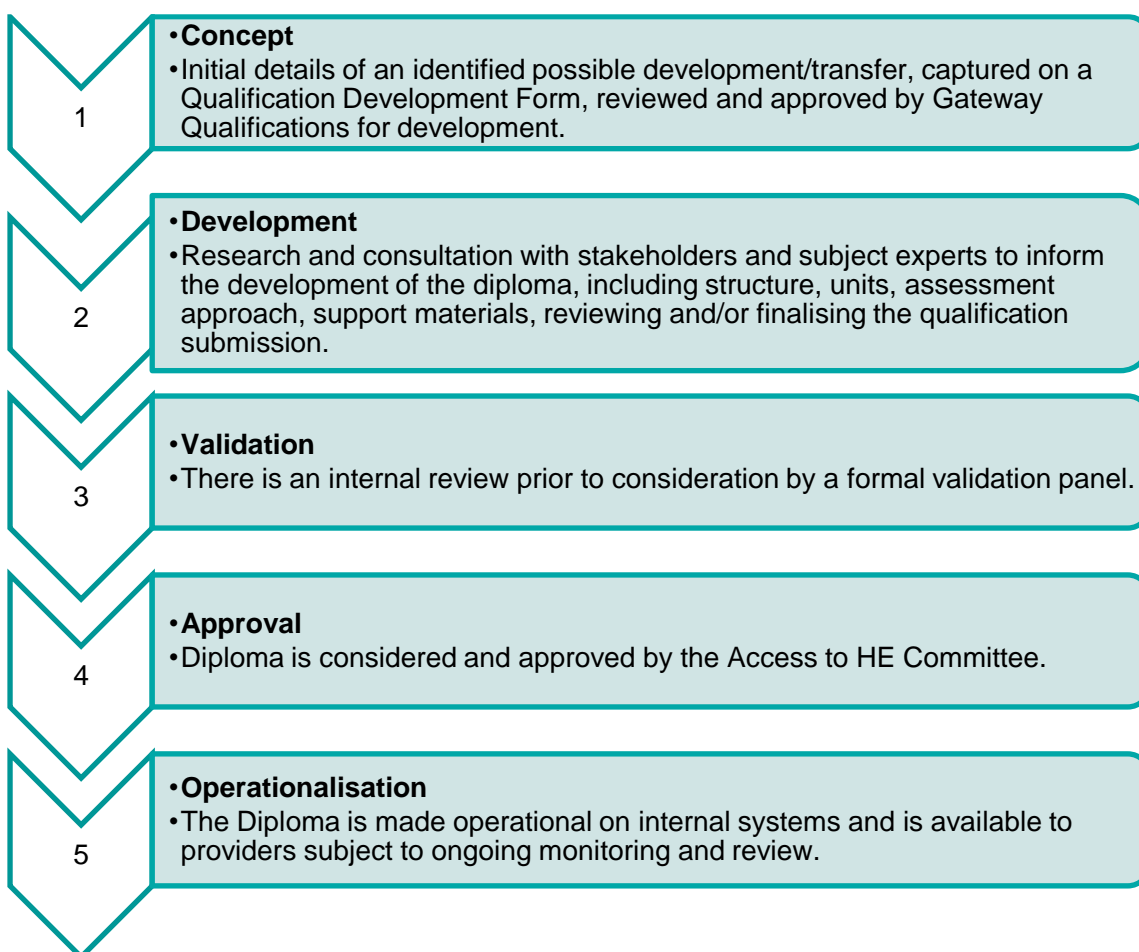
### Overview

Gateway Qualifications applies a development and validation process to all new Diploma developments and to all Diplomas subject to revalidation, to both Gateway Qualifications and bespoke (approved provider-initiated) developments.

The Qualification Development process has been mapped against regulatory requirements and plays a vital role in:

- ensuring that the qualification is valid and fit for purpose
- giving due consideration to ensuring equality for all learners by creating an environment that:
  - respects and celebrates difference
  - provides equality of opportunity
  - strives to ensure all feel valued and empowered.

Access to HE Diplomas are only available to providers approved to offer Access to HE courses, and only once the Diploma has been validated and approved by Gateway Qualifications.



Checks are conducted throughout the development stage to ensure the content of each Diploma meets the relevant regulatory and process requirements.

## Development - Bespoke Diplomas

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Where a provider has enquired about developing or revalidating a bespoke Diploma, Gateway Qualifications will arrange a meeting to discuss the development. The meeting will consider the need to develop or revalidate a Diploma.

The development and (re)validation of bespoke Diplomas are subject to consideration and approval for development by Gateway Qualifications. Subject to the approval to proceed with the development of a bespoke diploma, Gateway Qualifications will prepare a proposal outlining a development plan and costs. The proposal must be agreed upon and accepted before development commences as this ensures that:

- key actions, deadlines and responsibilities are clear so that the diploma submission is prepared in full
- the roles and responsibilities of both Gateway Qualifications and provider staff are clear in the development and validation process. The provider's named Access Coordinator will be the single point of contact responsible for overseeing and contributing to the production of the required documentation
- stakeholder engagement and support is undertaken and secured.

Gateway Qualifications will advise and provide necessary support and guidance to work with providers to complete and prepare the diploma submission for the validation panel and ensure that the proposed diploma complies with regulatory requirements and specifically the QAA Access to Higher Education Diploma and Credit specifications, including requirements related to credit, unit specifications, rules of combination, grading and assessment regulations.

All providers can gain access to the unit databank with a unique username and password, which can be obtained from Gateway Qualifications.

The provider will be expected to submit draft and final documents in accordance with the development plan. Failure to meet deadlines may result in a proposed diploma not being approved on a timely basis.

Final documentation must be submitted to Gateway Qualifications at least one month before the planned validation panel date.

### Progression routes to Higher Education

All Access Diploma submissions must include:

- evidence of HE contribution to the development of the Access Diploma for validation
- evidence of HE approval for any changes to the Diploma, including units
- any agreed or confirmed progression routes
- an indication of the latest entry requirements of specified HE courses, which are intended progression routes from the Access Diploma(s).

## Validation

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Diploma validation is the process of detailed scrutiny applied to a submission for a new Access to HE Diploma or revalidation of an existing Diploma. The individual units and the rules of combination are scrutinised and considered by an expert external validation panel appointed by Gateway Qualifications according to validation panel guidelines.

The validation panel comprises a Chair, Gateway Qualifications staff (to ensure consistency in the conduct of the panel) and external panel members drawn from other Access to HE providers and HE institutions that receive Access learners.

The composition of panels will ensure that panel members jointly provide current, relevant experience and expertise in:

- the delivery and assessment of Access to HE courses
- curriculum knowledge relevant to the Diploma(s) and all the units being considered
- the delivery of HE programmes in areas indicated as intended progression routes for the Diploma(s) being considered
- QAA's current requirements for the Access to HE Diploma.

For bespoke diplomas, it is the responsibility of the developing provider to secure HEI representatives at the validation panel. HEI panel members must have relevant experience and expertise in:

- the delivery of higher education programmes in areas indicated as intended progression routes for the Diploma(s) being considered
- the admissions requirements for the intended higher education progression routes.

Gateway Qualifications staff contribute to validation events in an advisory capacity only to ensure consistency of conduct and advise the panel on the AVA's validation process and requirements, including requirements that relate to the proper application of QAA's requirements for Access to HE Diplomas.

An Access to HE provider can be represented by provider staff, for example, member(s) of the course team, a member of senior management with responsibility for Access to HE courses or the Access to HE Coordinator.

Provider representatives involved in the development of a Diploma or who have an immediate or potential conflict of interest in the decision about a proposed Diploma cannot be involved in the validation process or in monitoring and confirming whether conditions for approval have been met.



## Validation Panel outcomes

The possible outcomes of a validation panel are:

- a recommendation to Gateway Qualifications that a named Diploma is approved
- a recommendation to Gateway Qualifications that a named Diploma is approved with some or all of the following:
  - requirements which must be met before Diploma approval is granted
  - recommendations for consideration before Diploma approval is granted
  - required textual amendments to the Access to HE Diploma Approval Application document
- a recommendation that the Access Diploma is not approved.

For a Diploma to be recommended for approval, the panel must ensure that the submission:

- complies with QAA requirements
- intended progression route(s) in higher education are clearly stated
- the subject and coverage, level and structure of the content, and choice of options, where they are available, are appropriate as preparation for the intended progression route
- information presented about the unit content, delivery and assessment methods is sufficient to ensure consistency in the required standards of achievement whenever and wherever the Diploma is delivered.

## Validation Panel Report

Following the panel, Gateway Qualifications will provide a report of the validation panel meeting to the Chair of the panel and provider (where applicable). This will fully record the outcomes from the panel, including recommended conditions of approval and textual amendments to documentation.

## Approval

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The panel report, including recommendations of the validation panel, will be submitted to the Gateway Qualifications Access to HE Committee for formal consideration and approval.

Access to HE Diplomas are usually approved by Gateway Qualifications for a fixed term period, normally no more than five years, but other approval periods are possible and would be agreed upon by the validation panel.

The Access to HE Committee will either grant or withhold approval. Once the approval has been granted, the Diploma will be operationalised and made available to approved providers for delivery.



## Revalidation

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Diploma revalidation is required every five years to ensure that a Diploma continues to be valid and fit for purpose.

The development and validation process applies for revalidations.

Where a diploma is being revalidated, it must be informed by a recent review of the success of the Access Diploma since the last validation. This review, conducted by the provider, should take account of internal and external factors, including the success or otherwise of progression of learners to HE courses.

## 8. Diploma Modifications

Gateway Qualifications recognises that modifications to approved Access to HE Diplomas may be required.

All requests for modifications must be considered and approved by Gateway Qualifications before implementing any changes. Modifications will not be automatically granted. This is to ensure that the proposed modification does not contradict decisions made by the validation panel and that QAA regulatory requirements relating to modifications and the Access to HE Diploma specification are met.

The achievement of learners undertaking an Access to HE Diploma may be at risk if changes are made to a programme without approval from Gateway Qualifications.

Modifications will not be considered within the first 12 months from validation for any Access to HE Diploma.

### Minor modifications

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A minor modification is a change to the Access to HE Diploma that does not impact the validated rules of combination or alter the coherence or integrity of the Diploma. Minor modifications include:

Changes to units offered on the programme, such as:

- addition of units within optional unit groups that reflect the diploma subject. Additional units cannot be added to the mandatory group as this would impact the rules of combination. Units must be selected from the Gateway Qualifications Access to HE unit databank
- removing and replacing units of the same or similar content within any unit group. Units must be selected from the Gateway Qualifications Access to HE unit databank
- no more than one request may be made within a 12-month period for a Bespoke Access to HE Diploma.

Changes to:

- the mode of delivery
- facilities and resources.

The modification will not be granted if changes are required to all categories above or if the changes will significantly alter, or be deemed to alter significantly, the coherence and integrity of the Access to HE Diploma. For example, amending the required number of credits for a unit group, not replacing units with the same or similar content or suggesting an inappropriate mode of delivery. In these instances, the modification would be considered **major**, and a recommendation by Gateway Qualifications would be made to review the Access to HE Diploma and revalidate.

Modification requests are no longer required for a change in the assessment method. Read the Access to HE [Assessment and Equivalence guidance](#) for the process required to change an assessment method for units within Access to HE Diplomas.

## Application process (minor amendments)

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Gateway Qualifications will consider requests to modify an Access to HE Diploma through an application process with deadlines at two points in the year: **30<sup>th</sup> April and 15<sup>th</sup> September**.

To apply for **minor** modifications, providers need to:

1. Complete an Access to HE Diploma modification request form (available from Gateway Qualifications on request).
2. Seek support from a receiving HEI. The request form will need to provide evidence of this support, such as a written statement.
3. The completed form should be sent to [qualdev@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:qualdev@gatewayqualifications.org.uk) so that it can be tracked and sent to the moderator for comment and a supporting statement if applicable. Gateway Qualifications will manage the process from this point.

Gateway Qualifications will:

1. Acknowledge receipt of the form
2. Check the form and supporting evidence to ensure all necessary information has been provided
3. Decide whether the modification is **minor** or **major**.

Where the amendment is deemed **minor**, Gateway Qualifications will:

1. Seek feedback from moderators and other providers who may be using the Diploma.
2. Review the modification by checking that it does not contradict decisions made at the validation stage and any subsequent modifications. Ensure that the modifications will not significantly alter the coherence and integrity of the Access to HE Diploma. Recommendations will be confirmed by the Director of Quality or a designated person.
3. Review all feedback to inform our decision.
4. Communicate the outcome to the provider, which could be:
  - approved so that changes can be made to the Diploma
  - not approved
  - to revalidate the Diploma.
5. Where changes are made to units, these changes will be made by Gateway Qualifications to the assessment grid for the Diploma concerned.

## Major modifications

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Any other modifications that significantly alter the coherence and integrity of the validated Diploma will be deemed major, and an Access to HE Diploma validation panel will be required. Examples include:

- amending the title
- amending the qualification structure or rules of combination
- adding or replacing units distinctly different in content to those within the validated rules of combination.

This list is not exhaustive.

## Application process (major amendments)

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Gateway Qualifications will consider requests to make major modifications to an Access to HE Diploma through an application process with deadlines at two points in the year, **30<sup>th</sup> April and 15<sup>th</sup> September**.

To apply for **major** modifications, providers need to:

1. Complete an Access to HE Diploma modification request form (available from Gateway Qualifications on request).
2. Seek support from a receiving HEI. The request form will need to provide evidence of this support, such as a written statement.
3. Once the provider has completed the form and gathered HEI support, it should be sent to [qualdev@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:qualdev@gatewayqualifications.org.uk) so that it can be tracked and sent for moderator comment where applicable. Gateway Qualifications will manage the process from this point.

Gateway Qualifications will:

1. Acknowledge receipt of the form
2. Check the form and supporting evidence to ensure all necessary information has been provided
3. Decide whether the modification is **major** or **minor**.

Where the amendment is deemed **major**, a validation panel will be required. Gateway Qualifications will provide support to complete the development and validation process as outlined in the previous section.

We will update systems and supporting documentation to reflect the modifications.

Summary outcomes of all Access to HE Diploma modifications are reported to the Access to HE Committee.

All providers approved to offer or that are delivering the Diploma will be notified of the changes.

We will seek to respond and communicate outcomes within 25 working days of receiving a correctly completed form and supporting information.

## Consultation

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As part of the modifications procedure, delivery staff within all providers offering the Access to HE Diploma, moderators and receiving Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) will be consulted by Gateway Qualifications. Gateway Qualifications must consider any feedback to inform our decision on the modification requested.

## Modifications to Access Diploma units

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Gateway Qualifications welcomes feedback on unit content. We will undertake a desk-based review where feedback is received to ascertain whether a formal unit review is required. Where deemed necessary, the outcome of a review may be that the unit is withdrawn and replaced or that no changes are made.

Where it is decided that a formal review is not necessary, but the provider wishes to develop a new unit, that provider should make a request via email to the Product Development Manager. We will consider a request to develop a new unit or to modify an existing unit that does not require a formal review as a request to develop a new Access to HE unit; however, a development charge may apply. If a provider wishes to develop a new Access to HE unit, a request must be submitted via email to [qualdev@gatewayqualifications.org.uk](mailto:qualdev@gatewayqualifications.org.uk).

## 9. Diploma Withdrawal

If a Diploma is to be withdrawn at or before the end of its validation period, providers will be informed of the final date on which new starters may be enrolled, allowing a reasonable time for registered learners to complete the course or transfer to another appropriate course, and arrangements are made for the transfer of credit, if appropriate.

## 10. Support from Gateway Qualifications

### Training for Access to HE teams

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We offer bespoke training to providers, including sessions for staff new to Access to HE. We also hold regular training sessions in grading, assessment and standardisation for all Gateway Qualifications providers, giving Access to HE staff the opportunity to meet colleagues from around the country and to share good practice.

All onsite provider training from Gateway Qualifications to support Access to HE teams is delivered at no charge.

### Guidance

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There is a wealth of guidance on the Gateway Qualifications website about [Access to HE delivery](#) and [registering and claiming certificates](#) via the online portal – Quartzweb – for all learners.

## 11. Centre Recognition Withdrawal

If a provider wishes to, or Gateway Qualifications decides to withdraw recognition, the [Centre Recognition Withdrawal Policy and Procedure](#) will apply. We will work with the provider to develop and implement a Withdrawal Plan that includes the following:

- the rationale for the withdrawal
- number of current registered learners
- details of plans to support existing learners yet to complete to ensure that their interests are protected
- last date for registrations
- late date for certifications.

If a provider wishes to withdraw their Centre Recognition, they must notify Gateway Qualifications in writing.

## Appendix 1: Glossary of Terms

Term	Description
Access to HE Coordinator	A provider's point of contact for delivering and developing Access to HE courses.
Access to HE Course - Course Recognition	The formal approval of a specified Access to HE Diploma course, which a particular provider may deliver. For course recognition to be completed, the AVA confirms the course in QAA's Access courses database as a QAA-recognised Access to HE course.
Access to HE Diploma - Diploma Approval	The point when, having considered the recommendations of a validation panel, an AVA formally confirms that a Diploma has met all requirements (including requirements made in conditions) and that it may be offered by the provider(s) that have been approved to deliver it.
Access to HE Diploma Assessment Grid	It is a plan which identifies the assessment method, type and volume for all units within an Access to HE Diploma.
Access to HE Diploma Guide	A document produced by Gateway Qualifications which sets out the rules of combination, units of assessment and specific delivery requirements for a named Access to HE Diploma.
Access to HE Diploma Modification	The mechanism operated by Gateway Qualifications by which relevant parties (such as providers and moderators) can suggest modifications to units or Diplomas and for those suggestions to be systematically considered.
Access Validating Agency (AVA)	An organisation authorised by the QAA to approve Access to HE Diplomas, recognise Access to HE courses and award Access to HE Diplomas to learners. Gateway Qualifications is an Access Validating Agency (AVA).
Assessment	The method/s by which a tutor establishes the learner's performance level and standard against a defined set of criteria.
Assessor	The person with responsibility for assessing learner work.
Internal Exams Board	An internal provider meeting involving the detailed discussion of all assessment decisions concerning the final achievement of individual learners.
Final Awards Board (FAB)	A formal AVA process that ratifies confirmed decisions on Access to HE courses in awarding credits and achieved grades for individual learners.
Grade	The indication of performance for each graded unit successfully achieved at level 3. A pass is automatically awarded for successful completion of all the assessment criteria. Grades can be Merit or Distinction. A <a href="#">Quick Guide to Grading</a> is available on the website.
Grade Descriptor	QAA statements which define the performance at Merit and Distinction within seven separate elements used in grading.
Diploma Grade Profile	List of grades a learner has achieved for the Access to HE course; one overall grade for each unit successfully completed at level 3. A grade profile will contain 45 graded credits at level 3. The remaining 15 credits will be made up of either ungraded level 3 units and/or level 2 units, which are not graded.

Term	Description
Internal Verifier (IV)	Provider staff who undertake the internal verification process.
Internal Verification	The process by which the provider systematically samples and evaluates its assessment practices and decisions and acts on the findings to ensure consistency and fairness. The two key elements are moderation and standardisation.
Moderator	Undertakes on behalf of Gateway Qualifications the external moderation of the Access to HE Diploma and course and is allocated to a specific Access to HE provider.
Moderation	The process through which those with appropriate authority, expertise and competence to make such judgements check the comparability and consistency of assessment decisions and the quality of the assessment infrastructure. The process also allows for feedback and advice to those involved in the assessment to improve their practice and to the AVA about areas of consistently good practice or incidents of poor practice that need to be addressed.
Provider	The organisation responsible for the delivery, assessment and internal verification of the Access to HE Diploma.
Provider Approval	The process undertaken by Gateway Qualifications to approve an organisation to deliver an Access to HE Diploma and course.
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)	The regulatory body responsible for arrangements for the formal approval and quality assurance of Access to HE courses.
Report of Achievement or Completion (RAC)	The Gateway Qualifications process by which providers indicate the achievement of their learners.
Rules of Combination (RoC)	Details of the required mandatory and optional units from which learners can select to gain a full Access to HE Diploma.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	A method of assessment that considers whether a learner can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills they already possess and do not need to develop through a course of learning.
Referral	The formal process where an Access tutor can request an additional opportunity for a learner to resubmit work to achieve credit for a unit if the resubmission of work has failed to address all of the assessment criteria or if the first submission was late and failed to address all of the assessment criteria.
Representation	The formal process by which an individual grade for an assignment (grade indicator or informal grade) may be contested by a learner. This is primarily dealt with using providers' internal processes but will be monitored by the moderator and reported at the FAB.
Resubmission	The process by which the learner is given a second, time-bound opportunity to address the assessment criteria which were not met at the first attempt. A resubmission may not be permitted to improve a grade (grade polishing).



Term	Description
Self-assessment Report (SAR)	The SAR should analyse the performance of the course/s run within each institution and the success rates of each cohort.
Standardisation	The process through which tutors develop a shared understanding of the standard of learner achievement that will be assessed as meeting the requirements of the assessment outcomes available (in the context of Access to HE pass, merit or distinction grades). Such assessment decisions cannot be made in a way that is reliable and valid unless the underpinning assessment structures (unit design, assessment design and so on) are of the highest quality, so standardisation of these aspects of the assessment infrastructure to ensure their quality is also a key component to be addressed.
Unit	A coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes, which are evidenced by assessment criteria relating to specific subject areas for study and assessment. Units can have a credit value of 3, 6 or 9 credits. Each unit has a title, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, credit value and credit level. Level 3 graded units will also have grade descriptors.
Validation of Access to HE Diploma	A procedure undertaken by Gateway Qualifications to approve Access to HE Diplomas and ensure they meet QAA requirements.