

# Supporting documents for estimating grades

## Introduction

1. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has worked closely with the Department for Education (DfE), Ofqual and other organisations to produce a **clear, fair and consistent** approach to assessment for the award of the Access to HE Diploma and other level 3 qualifications with the same intent – supporting students to transition into higher education. The extraordinary grading scheme, to be applied to all remaining assessments with a planned submission date after 20 March 2020 for students who are due to complete their Access to HE course **by 31 July 2020**, was announced on 3 April 2020.
2. The following supporting documentation may be relevant to Access to HE Diploma providers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland offering the QAA recognised Access to HE Diplomas that fall under the extraordinary grading scheme. It does not represent regulatory advice or guidance. Its focus is on sharing ideas and signposting to further information. The supporting documentation reflects current information, as at the date of publication, in a rapidly evolving situation.
3. It is provided in the context of the most up-to-date [advice for educational settings](#) provided by the DfE and Public Health England<sup>1</sup>. If that advice changes, senior course managers and course tutors should consider this information in the light of any updated guidance from Government.
4. Supporting documentation:
  - 4.1. [Supporting document A: making grade estimations: supporting evidence](#)
  - 4.2. [Supporting document B: examples of other records of student performance](#)
  - 4.3. [Supporting document C: EXAMPLE evidence sheet for estimated grades](#)
  - 4.4. [Supporting document D: Tutor reference: information for Access to HE course tutors](#)

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<sup>1</sup> [www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19/guidance-to-educational-settings-about-covid-19)

# Supporting Document A

## Making grade estimations: Supporting evidence

### About this document:

This document **does not in any way supersede the provisions of the QAA Extraordinary Grade Scheme<sup>2</sup>** and only acts to provide further information in relation to making grade estimations. **It is important to note that estimated grades must always be based upon the professional judgement of course tutors** and no discussion within this document should be taken to indicate a model for how estimation might be undertaken. It simply offers information to potential lines of evidence which *may* (or may not) be considered in framing 'professional judgements'.

Tutors must use their judgement to select the most appropriate evidence for each student and decide how to use it to estimate grades. All estimated grades will be subject to internal and external quality assurance to ensure reliability and fairness. **Under no circumstances should estimated grades be shared with students as they may change as a result of internal and external quality assurance and standardisation activities.**

### Estimation:

The QAA Extraordinary Grade Scheme identifies three lines of evidence to support grade estimations, where available:

- 12.2.1 prior attainment on course
- 12.2.2 formative assessments (assessment **for** learning); and
- 12.2.3 any other records of student performance over the course of study

*(See point 12.2 of the Information for Access to HE course tutors and senior managers booklet).*

Grade estimation will be undertaken on the basis of the 'professional judgement' of course tutors based upon a balance of the lines of evidence noted above.

At 12.6 the Extraordinary Grade Scheme states that:

'The estimated assessment grades submitted to AVAs must reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of the most **likely** grades a student would have achieved if they had completed their assessments. Senior course managers should emphasise the need for judgements to be objective and fair'

**The process of making grade estimations relies upon the professional judgement of the tutor, based on their consideration of the available evidence.**

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<sup>2</sup> It makes specific reference to the document titled: *Information for Access to HE course tutors and senior managers*.

**i) Prior attainment on course:**

Prior attainment is any work submitted up to and including the 20 March 2020. This evidence **could** be used to support a tutor's judgement on making grade estimations in a variety of ways. Tutors may consider:

- the student's performance against individual **grade descriptors** (GDs)
- instances where assessments have been completed which demonstrate certain **skills**, although these may not have necessarily been explicitly graded (eg GD6 Autonomy and Independence)
- the student's performance in a **type of assessment** (eg presentation, exam, essay)
- evidence from previous work that has been completed in a **subject area** (eg biology, sociology, mathematics) to estimate grades within that subject area
- prior attainment **chronologically** to establish whether the student's performance showed improvement over time.

**ii) Formative Assessment:**

The QAA Extraordinary Grade Scheme makes it absolutely clear that there can be **no requirements** for providers to set assessments for the purposes of determining estimated assessment grades after 20 March 2020<sup>3</sup>. No student can be disadvantaged as a result of being unable to complete assessments after the 20 March 2020.

However, where students have chosen to continue and submit **formative assessments** after 20 March 2020, these may be used as evidence to support the tutor's professional judgement. For the avoidance of doubt, formative assessments are **not** graded.

Where formative assessments have been completed after 20 March 2020, course tutors will need to be aware that such evidence may suggest a change in a student's performance. In many cases this is likely to reflect the circumstances and context in which the work was done. Therefore, there can be no '**adverse inference**' drawn from formative assessment(s). Any formative assessment submitted after the 20 March 2020 can only be used to **support** the professional judgements made when estimating assessment grades.

Feedback on formative assessments undertaken after the 20 March 2020 must give **no indication** of graded performance or allude to any potential grade or language of relevant grade descriptors but should present a general commentary on the student's achievement and how they might improve future work. In drafting your feedback, you may wish to consider the provisions of the QAA *Grading Scheme Handbook Section C (Using the Grade Descriptors in Assessment)* Section 4(b) which states at bullet point three:

Tutors may provide written feedback on drafts and engage in dialogue of a general kind which allows students to see how they might develop their response to the assignment brief. In responding to draft submissions, they **are not** permitted to:

- Make detailed corrections to a draft submission
- Provide detailed information about predicted grade indicators, or other information about predicted grade judgements.

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<sup>3</sup> Information for Access to HE Course Tutors and Senior Managers p.8

### **iii) Any Other Records of Student Performance:**

The QAA Extraordinary Grade Scheme makes provision for '*other records of student performance*' to be referred to in supporting grade estimation(s). Examples of 'other records of student performance' which may be used by tutors in the estimation of grades has been provided (see supporting document B).

#### **Threshold:**

QAA has stated that it is the expectation that students will have completed a minimum of 50% of planned assessed work by 20 March 2020 (*See point 10 of the Information for Access to HE course tutors and senior managers booklet*).

Contact your AVA where:

- individual students may not have achieved the threshold
- tutors judge that there is insufficient evidence with which to make grade estimations
- an entire Diploma cohort has not yet reached the threshold.

Your AVA will discuss with you the evidence available in terms of making grade estimations, and the options available to you and your student(s), where a minimum of 50% of planned assessed work was not met by 20 March 2020.

For the avoidance of doubt this does not mean 50% in the sense of 30 credits. It is a threshold based on the **total** number of summative assessments completed by the student at or before the 20 March 2020 as a percentage of **all** planned summative assessments for the Diploma across the entire academic year.

For example, if a student was expected to complete 22 summative assessments across the academic year and had completed 11 of them, they would have met the threshold to qualify for estimated grades.

## **Supporting Document B: Examples of ‘other records of student performance’**

### **About this document:**

This document offers some examples of ‘other records of student performance’ which, in addition to prior attainment and formative assessment evidence, may be used by tutors when making professional judgements about estimated grades under the Extraordinary Grading Model. Please refer to the QAA guidance for providers, ‘Calculating Grades for the award of the Access to HE Diploma’ issued on 9 April 2020. Section 12 outlines the process and key considerations when estimating grades. In addition, supporting document A provides further suggestions as to how tutors may select and use evidence for framing judgements.

The examples below are not exhaustive, nor do they infer that all or any of the evidence would be appropriate for use when estimating grades for all students. Tutors should carefully consider and make use of the evidence which is most appropriate for estimating and explaining grades for each student. Consideration must also be given to the choice of evidence in relation to affording undue advantage or disadvantage to individual or groups of students. The process must ensure a fair, reasonable and carefully considered professional judgment by the tutor of the most likely grades a student would have achieved should they have completed their assessments.

If you would like to discuss the suitability and appropriate use of any form of evidence in the estimation of grades, please contact your AVA.

### **Examples:**

- Tutor witness statements or other evidence of student ability demonstrated in class, which does not form part of prior attainment or formative evidence
- Notes from class-based activities (student and/or tutor) which does not form part of prior attainment or formative evidence
- Research notes which do not form part of prior attainment or formative evidence
- Reflective practice journal/learning log, which does not form part of prior attainment or formative evidence
- Blogs, wiki's, chat groups between learners for taught sessions, if this provides evidence of student performance which does not form part of prior attainment or formative evidence. If evidence of this nature is used, ensure Data Protection legislation is adhered to
- Number of resubmissions required and extent of the resubmission (how much work was required?)
- Records of referrals required
- Student learning reviews and action plans with additional notes from the tutor if required for context
- Records of extenuating circumstances and late submission approvals – if evidence of this nature is used tutors should ensure that Data Protection legislation is adhered to
- Relevant employment and developing skills and knowledge in the workplace – witness testimonies as evidence of student performance

## Supporting Document C: EXAMPLE evidence sheet for estimated grades

### Section A: General Information

Provider Name	Fairfields College
Access to HE Diploma Title	Access to HE Diploma (Science)
Student Name ( <i>as it appears on the results spreadsheet</i> )	Mary Hamilton
Number of Planned Diploma Assessments	20
Number of Planned Diploma Assessments Completed by 20 March 2020	9

**Section B: Table of Evidence**

		Evidence Considered to Inform Estimated Assessment Grades			Rationale for estimation of grades (where necessary)	Non- Achievement
Unit Title & Code	Assessment for Estimation	Prior Attainment on course (Y / N)	Formative Assessment (Y / N)	Other Records of Student Performance (Y / N)	Provide a rationale with reference to supporting of evidence	Provide a rationale with reference to supporting of evidence
QU01567 Cells and Tissues	Assessment 2	Y	N	N	Assessments from unit QU7854 Anatomy and Physiology. This is a similar subject and prior achievement of GDs used to support estimates.	
QU8752 Blood	Assessments 2 and 3	Y	Y	N	Work completed by Mary following the college shut down provides confidence that she has the necessary skills and understanding to meet the requirements of these assessments and grades estimated reflect this understanding. She has submitted diagrams and a research presentation that support the GDs estimated. Attainment on QU7854 Anatomy and Physiology. This is a similar subject and prior achievement of GDs used to support estimates.	
QU8924 Report Writing	Assessments 1 and 2	Y	N	N	Similar subject previously studied and prior achievement of GDs used to support estimates.	
QU06792 Organic Chemistry	Assessments 1, 2 and 3	N	N	N	See other information. C2	
QU8734 Fundamental Physics	Assessments 1 and 2	Y	N	N	Similar subject previously studied and prior achievement of GDs used to support estimates.	
QU08123	Scientific Maths (Ungraded unit)	N	N	Y		A similar unit to this was delivered prior to the college shut down which Mary did not achieve in. Mary did not engage in class summative assessments in the previous unit and therefore the likely outcome for this unit would be not achieved.



## Section C

### C1 Completion of LESS than 50% of planned assessment by 20 March 2020

Provide a rationale with reference to supporting evidence

There were two assessments within the curriculum plan that were due the week after the college shut down, so 50% has not been achieved due to the timing of the shutdown. However, all the teaching had been completed and there is sufficient formative assessment available with which to reliably estimate grades.

### C2 Other Information

Mary has also attained credit transfer for unit QU06792 Organic Chemistry, from award achieved in a previous year.

## **Supporting Document D: Tutor reference: information for Access to HE course tutors**

On 3 April 2020, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) announced that students who are due to complete their Access to HE Diploma by 31 July 2020 would now receive calculated grades for all remaining assessments with submission dates after 20 March 2020.

QAA has worked closely with AVAs, DfE, Welsh Government, Ofqual, Qualification Wales and other organisations to implement a clear, fair and consistent approach to the assessment and quality assurance of the award of the Access to HE Diploma this year.

In addition to calculating grades, course tutors have been asked to produce a reference for each student to further support applications to higher study or other progression routes.

**Tutor references will not be included in the range of evidence to inform estimated assessment grades.**

### **Why complete a tutor reference?**

The COVID-19 outbreak is the most significant challenge we have all faced in at least a generation and our priority is to ensure that we continue to support our students during this time of uncertainty, now and in the future. The tutor reference will play an important role for students in providing information on the award of the Access to HE Diploma this year. The student will be able to use the reference, alongside their Access to HE Diploma, to support their progression.

As the referee, you are aiming to give the student your informed and academic assessment of their suitability for further study, training or employment. Your reference should reflect a fair, reasonable and carefully considered judgement of their most likely performance if they had been able to complete their assessments under normal conditions.

The tutor reference should be sent to students after their grades have been finalised and no later than 27 July 2020, to align with the upload of results to UCAS.

### **What to include in the reference?**

While there is no prescribed format for the tutor reference, it is recommended to be between 250-300 words. You may wish to cover the following points:

- Information on how the Access to HE Diploma was awarded this year for students due to complete by 31 July 2020
- Confirmation of your relationship with the student
- Confirmation of the student's dates of study
- Confirmation of the Access to HE Diploma undertaken
- Comments on the student's key skills and attributes, such as time management, teamworking ability, academic writing
- Personal qualities you have observed over the academic year, such as confidence in the classroom, commitment to studies, interpersonal skills with peers
- Extracurricular activities that the student has been involved in
- Any prizes or awards given to the student

Tutors may include in their reference any statement from the introduction of this document to support how the Access to HE Diploma will be awarded this year. If you have any specific questions regarding the tutor reference, please contact your Access Validating Agency.