



Access to Higher Education: Diploma Courses and Students 2016-17

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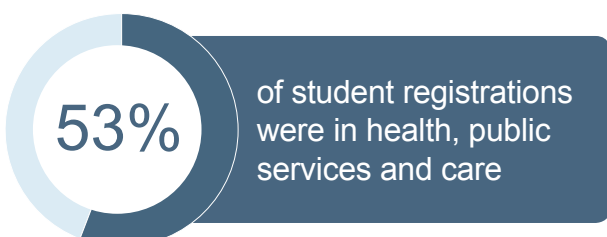
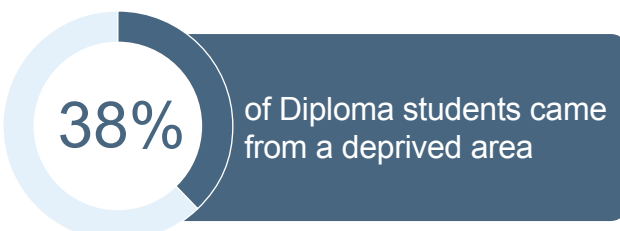
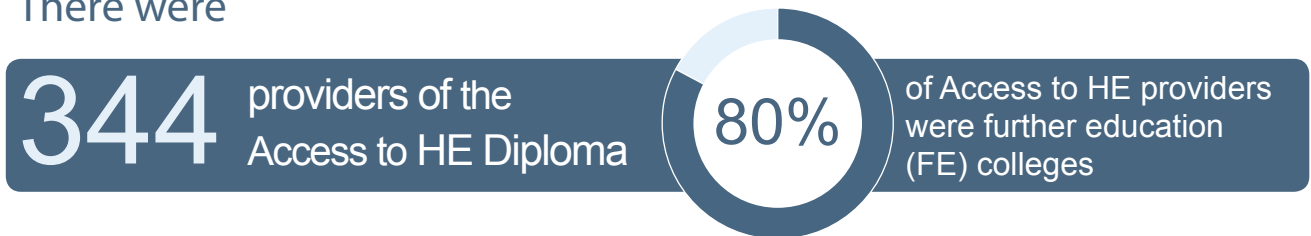
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Executive summary

There were 344 providers of the Access to HE Diploma. Key findings from the year's report concerning Diploma courses and students are as follows.

There were





Access to HE statistics summary (2015-16)

Ann-Marie Karadia, Access Officer

Introduction

This report by QAA summarises data about Access to Higher Education (Access to HE) Diploma courses and students who were registered on those courses in the academic year 2016-17.

- Statistics about Access to HE providers and courses are derived from data received by QAA from the 11 Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) in England and Wales. QAA licenses AVAs to approve providers to offer Access to HE courses.
- Statistics about Access to HE students in England are collected by the course providers. Providers submit data about publicly and privately funded students to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), which then provides this data to QAA.
- Statistics about Access to HE students in Wales are collected by course providers, who submit data to Agored Cymru, the one AVA in Wales. Agored Cymru then submits data to QAA.

Data about students is provided for all years between 2016-17 and 2012-13. Data about students registered on Access to HE qualifications before 2012-13 can be accessed from previous years' reports. Changes to the way in which data in England was collected and reported to QAA from 2010-11 onwards mean that comparisons with previous years' totals may be misleading.

Data collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and UCAS concerning Access to HE students in higher education and those applying to universities and colleges is published in separate reports.

The data presented in this report provides an overview of Access to HE courses and students in 2016-17. It is not intended for use by organisations in setting internal targets or for benchmarking purposes.

All figures relating to students have been rounded to the nearest five. Due to rounding, totals within and between tables may not equal 100%.

1 Providers offering Access to HE Diploma courses

In 2016-17:

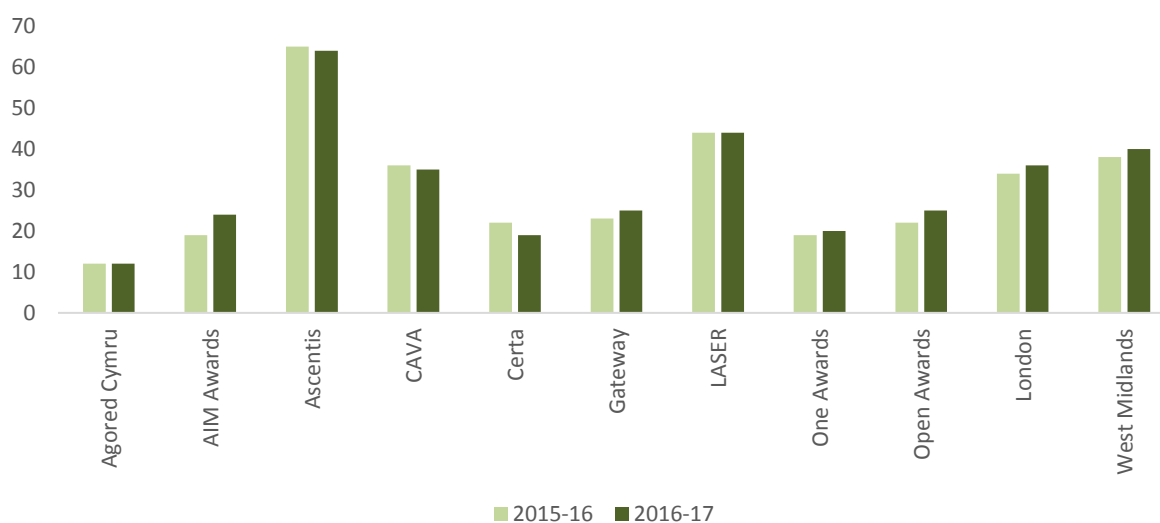
- There were 344 providers of Access to HE Diploma courses (331 in England, 12 in Wales, and one in Northern Ireland).
- 80% of Access to HE providers were further education (FE) colleges.

The total number of Access to HE providers increased from 334 in 2015-16 to 344 in 2016-17. There was an increase in all categories of provider, except HEIs, where the number of HEIs delivering the Diploma fell by one. The number of 'other' providers rose to 25, an increase of four providers compared to 2015-16. The number of other providers, which includes private and distance learning provider, has increased by 60% since 2012-13.

Table 1a: Providers offering Access to HE Diploma courses by provider type, 2012-17

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
FE colleges	271 (83%)	275 (83%)	273 (81%)	270 (81%)	274 (80%)
HEIs	12 (4%)	11 (3%)	14 (4%)	10 (3%)	9 (3%)
Sixth form colleges	12 (4%)	18 (5%)	16 (5%)	17 (5%)	18 (5%)
Adult/ community education	19 (6%)	18 (5%)	15 (4%)	16 (5%)	18 (5%)
Other	10 (3%)	8 (2%)	18 (5%)	21 (6%)	25 (7%)
Total	327	330	336	334	344

Figure 1a: Number of providers by AVA, 2015-16 and 2016-17



2 Access to HE Diploma courses available and running

In 2016-17:

- There were 1,259 Access to HE Diploma courses running (1,208 in England, 50 in Wales, and one in Northern Ireland), a decrease of six courses from 2015-16.
- There were Access to HE Diploma courses running in 13 different subject sector areas, with 409 courses running in health, public services and care.
- The number of new courses recognised in the year was similar to 2015-16 at 124 compared with 125 in 2015-16.

Table 2a: Access to HE Diploma courses, 2012-17

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Courses available	1,499	1,594	1,449	1,398	1,432
Courses running	1,124	1,119	1,275	1,265	1,259
New courses recognised	131	162	1,018	125	124

There are differences between AVAs in terms of the total number of courses running, from 49 courses to 235. As with the number of providers, the differences between individual AVAs in part reflect differences in area of coverage and density of population.

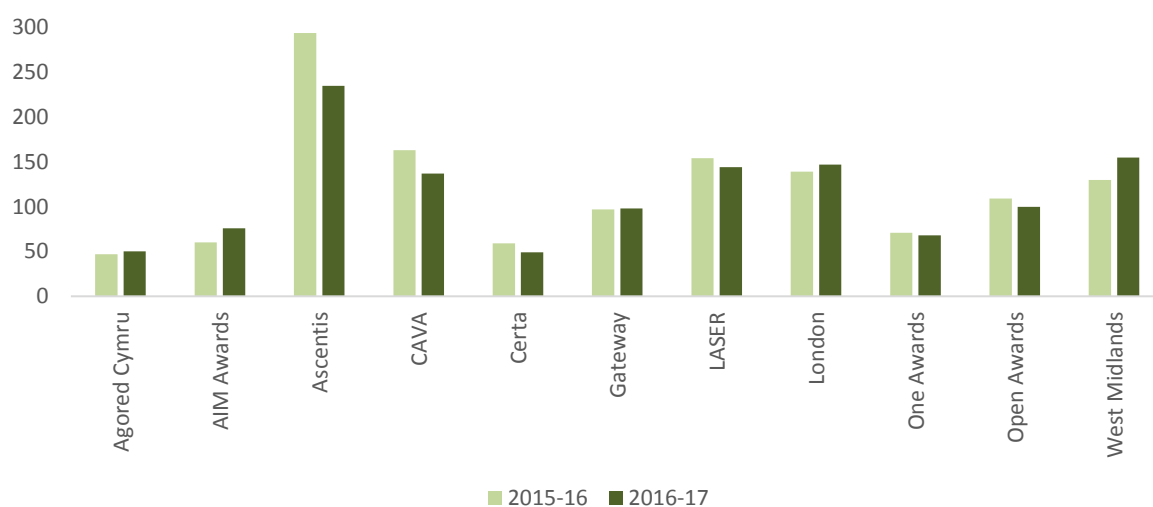
In 2016-17 five AVAs recorded an increase in the number of programmes running; the remaining six registered a decrease. The greatest increase in the number of courses was 25 (16% of courses running at the AVA) and the sharpest decrease was 59 (25% of the courses running at the AVA).

The new specification has paved the way for many AVAs to introduce AVA-devised Diplomas in a limited range of named subjects, with more than one provider offering the same Diploma. This means that, although each course offered by a provider is listed on our database separately, there is greater consistency in the programmes of study delivered across the providers approved by the AVA, as many offer the same AVA-devised Diploma.

Table 2b: Number of Access to HE Diploma courses running by AVA, 2012-17

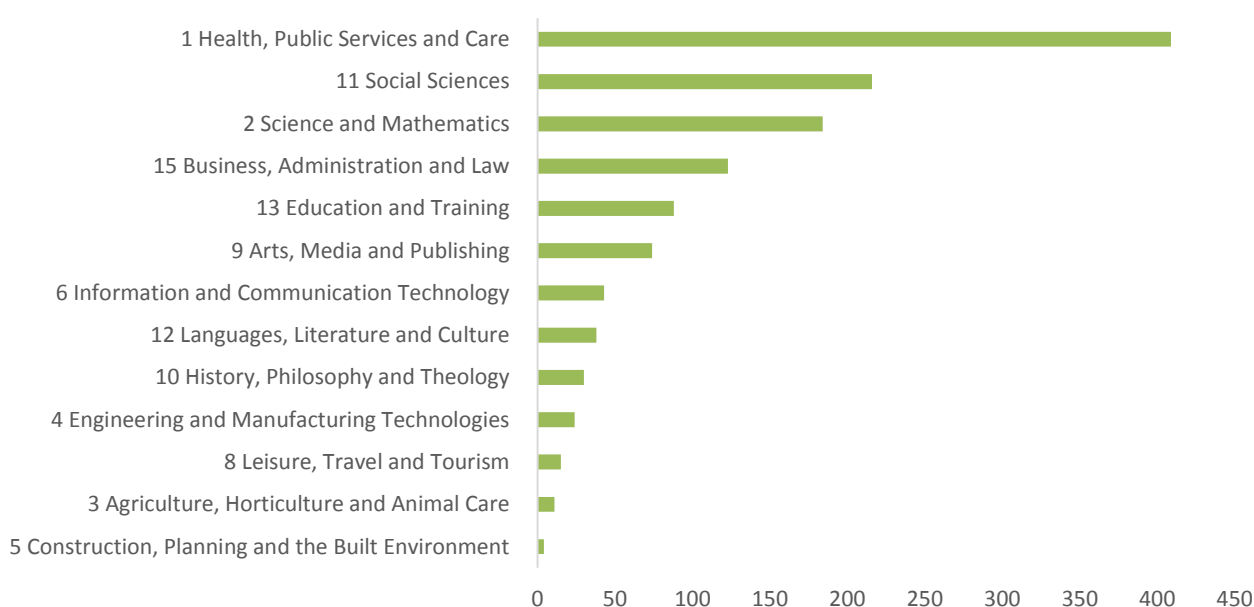
AVA	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Agored Cymru	78	81	78	47	50
AIM Awards	42	47	47	60	76
Ascentis	113	114	166	294	235
CAVA	65	74	117	163	137
CERTA	64	67	62	59	49
Gateway	87	75	89	97	98
LASER	121	115	132	154	144
London	171	163	146	139	147
One Awards	37	60	60	71	68
OPEN Awards	101	96	112	109	100
West Midlands	117	93	97	130	155
Total	1,124	1,119	1,275	1,265	1,259

Figure 2a: Number of Access to HE Diploma courses running by AVA, 2015-17



In 2016-17, the subject category with the highest number of Access to HE Diploma courses was health, public services and care, 409 (32%) of all courses running; of these courses, 201 were in nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine, and 182 were in health and social care. The subject area with the second highest number of Access to HE Diploma courses was social sciences, 216 (17%) of all courses running. This includes 215 courses in sociology and social policy. No courses were categorised to Retail or Preparation for life and work.

Figure 2b: Number of Access to HE Diploma courses running by subject category, 2016-17



Courses are classified using the subject sector area codes used in the FE sector. From 2014-15, AVAs were required to categorise all their Access to HE Diploma courses under a single subject sector area code. This means that it was no longer possible to have courses categorised under various combined studies codes, although Access to HE courses that combine one or more subject areas are still available and running at some providers. The distribution of Access to HE courses across subject areas remains similar to previous years.

Table 2b: Access to HE Diploma courses running by subject, 2012-17

Subject	Courses running									
	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17	
Health, public services and care	348	31%	355	32%	397	31%	396	31%	409	32%
Social sciences	105	9%	107	10%	220	17%	213	17%	216	17%
Science and mathematics	75	7%	73	7%	171	13%	175	14%	184	15%
Business, admin and law	85	8%	89	8%	120	9%	124	10%	123	10%
Education and training	97	9%	93	8%	99	8%	97	8%	88	7%
Arts, media and publishing	66	6%	74	7%	85	7%	82	6%	74	6%
Languages, literature, culture	4	0%	4	0%	44	3%	49	4%	38	3%
ICT	34	3%	31	3%	35	3%	41	3%	43	3%
History, philosophy and theology	4	0%	3	0%	38	3%	35	3%	30	2%
Engineering and manufacturing tech	12	1%	9	1%	25	2%	24	2%	24	2%
Leisure, travel and tourism	12	1%	13	1%	21	2%	20	2%	15	1%
Agriculture, horticulture, animal care	3	0%	5	0%	15	1%	6	1%	11	1%
Construction, planning built environment	1	0%	1	0%	2	0%	3	0%	4	0%
Preparation for life and work	1	0%	1	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Combined studies (various codes)	277	25%	262	23%	0	0%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	1,124		1,120		1,272		1,265		1,259	

3 Student registrations on Access to HE Diploma courses

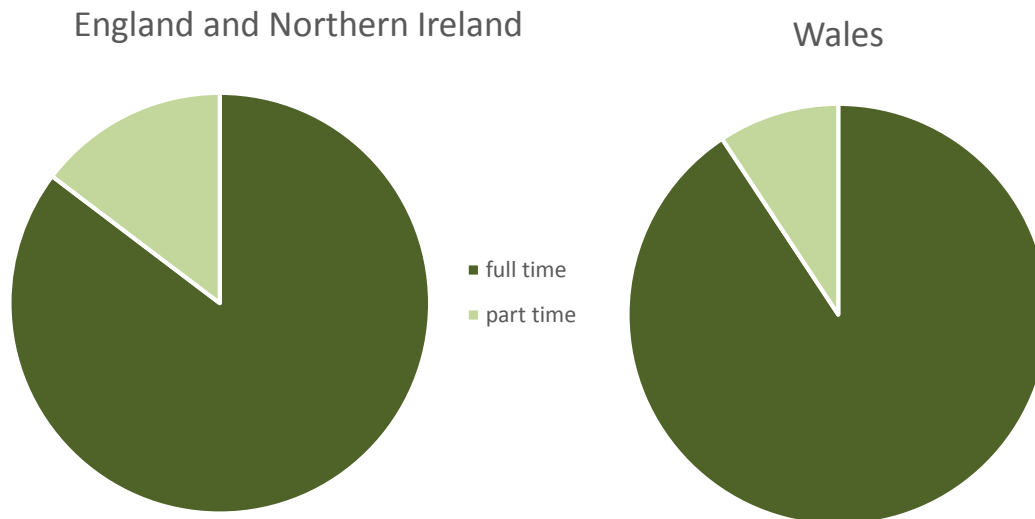
In 2016-17:

- There were 38,025 students registered on Access to HE Diploma courses, of whom 36,260 were in England and Northern Ireland, and 1,765 were in Wales.
- 32,675 (86%) of students registered in 2016-17 were intending to complete their courses within the same year (31,075 in England and Northern Ireland, and 1,600 in Wales).
This figure is used as an approximation for the number of full-time students.
- The other 14% (5,350) were students studying over a longer period, who usually studied fewer hours per week than other registered students (5,200 in England and Northern Ireland, 165 in Wales). This figure is used as an approximation for the number of part-time students.

Table 3a: Student registrations on Access to HE Diploma courses by end date

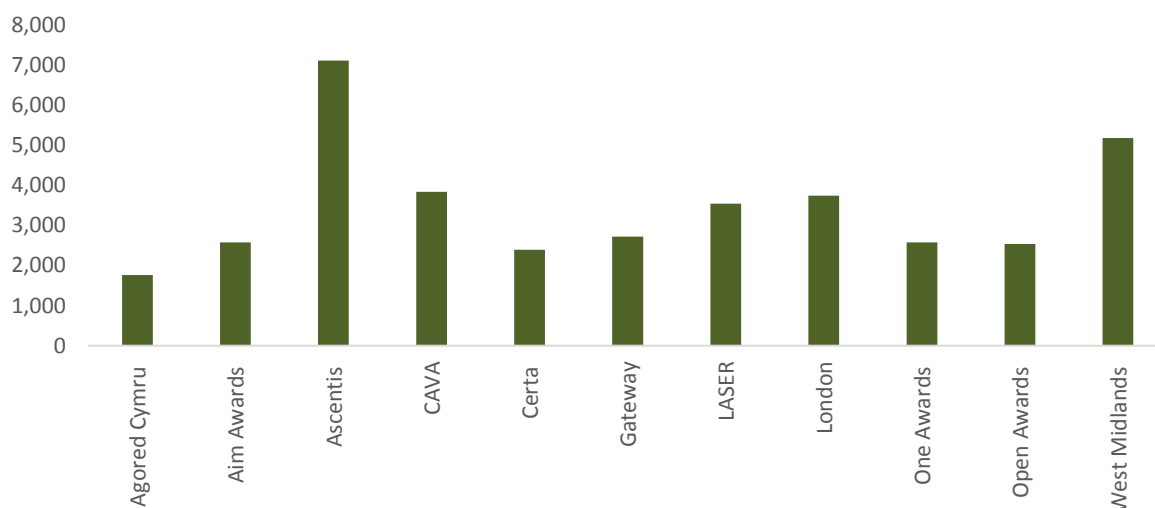
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
New students (full-time) with expected end date before 1 August	37,110 (87%)	42,500 (95%)	39,000 (91%)	37,220 (88%)	32,675 (86%)
All other students	5,620 (13%)	2,185 (5%)	3,760 (9%)	5,180 (12%)	5,350 (14%)
Total student registrations	42,730	44,690	42,760	42,405	38,025

Figure 3a: Student registrations by end date to show proportion of full-time study



Across all registrations decreased by 12 percentage points since 2015-16; eight AVAs saw a fall in the number of student registrations, three AVAs reported rises in registrations. The largest rise was 24% for AIM Awards; this AVA also saw the greatest increase in new providers, up by 21%. The greatest drop in registrations was for Open Awards. This may be explained by the transfer of a distance learning provider to another AVA at the beginning of the academic year.

Figure 3b: Student registrations by AVA in 2016-17



Most AVAs continue to see most registrations for learners intending to complete in one academic year; seven AVAs had over 90% of learners registered to complete in one academic year. In 2016-17 two AVAs registered less than 80% of learners for completion in one year (77% and 55%); these AVAs also saw increases in their total registration numbers and number of Diplomas running.

Table 3b: Student registrations by AVA, 2015-17

	2015-16	2016-17	% change
Agored Cymru	1,870	1,765	-6%
Aim Awards	1,960	2,580	24%
Ascentis	8,880	7,120	-25%
CAVA	3,550	3,840	8%
CERTA	2,720	2,395	-13%
Gateway	2,840	2,725	-4%
LASER	4,020	3,550	-13%
London	4,310	3,750	-15%
One Awards	2,760	2,580	-7%
Open Awards	5,180	2,540	-104%
West Midlands	4,290	5,185	17%
Total	42,405	38,025	-12%

4 Student profile (gender and age)

In 2016-17:

- 73% of Access to HE students were women.
- 27% of Access to HE students were men.

Table 4a: Student profile by gender, 2012-17

	2012-13 all students (% of total)	2013-14 all students (% of total)	2014-15 all students (% of total)	2015-16 all students (% of total)	2016-17 all students (% of total)
Women	32,970 (74%)	31,275 (73%)	30,810 (72%)	31,340 (74%)	27,760 73%
Men	11,715 (26%)	11,450 (27%)	11,950 (28%)	11,070 (26%)	10,265 27%
Total	42,725	44,690	42,760	42,405	38,025

Figure 4a: Student profile by gender, 2016-17

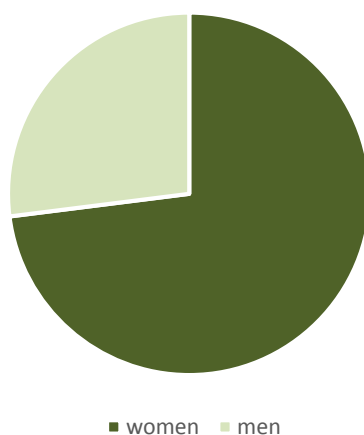


Table 4b: Student profile by age and gender, 2016-17

Age band	Women (% of female students)		Men (% of male students)		Total (% of all students)	
19 and under	4,570	16%	2,230	22%	6,800	18%
20-24	8,830	32%	4,125	40%	12,960	34%
Total under 25	13,405	48%	6,355	62%	19,760	52%
25-29	5,450	20%	1,620	16%	7,070	19%
30-34	3,590	13%	850	8%	4,440	12%
35-39	2,440	9%	550	5%	2,990	8%
40-44	1,400	5%	370	4%	1,770	5%
45-49	700	3%	250	2%	950	2%
50+	440	2%	140	1%	580	2%
Total over 25	14,020	51%	3,775	37%	17,790	47%
Unknown	340	1%	130	1%	470	1%
Grand Total	27,760	100%	10,260	100%	38,025	100%

In 2016-17:

- 52% of all Access to HE students were under 25 years old (62% of all male students and 48% of all female students)
- 71% of all Access to HE students were under 30
- female students aged between 20 and 24 accounted for 23% of all Access to HE students.

Figure 4b: Student profile by age, 2016-17

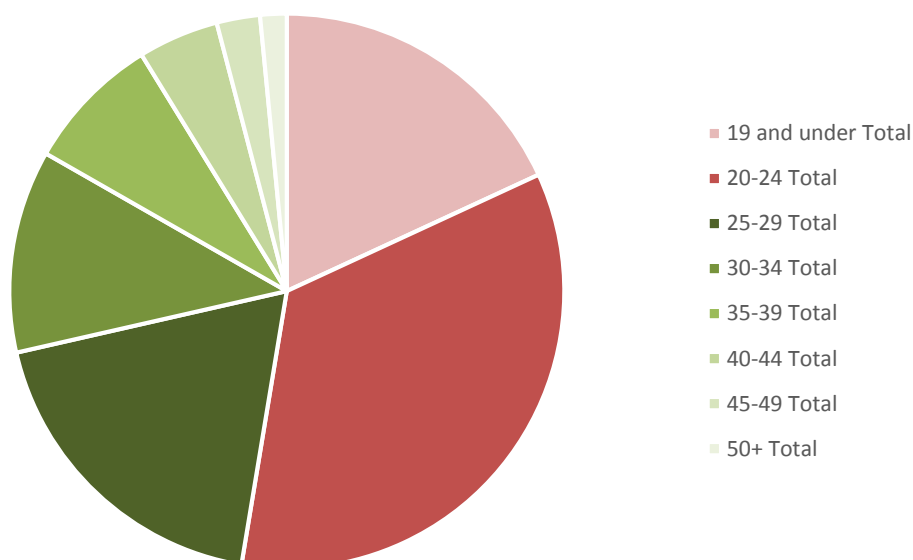


Table 4c: Student profile by age, 2012-17

Age Band	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016-17	
Under 19	5,540	(13%)	5,901	(13%)	5,866	(14%)	6,005	(14%)	6,801	18%
20-24	16,065	(38%)	16,317	(37%)	15,531	(36%)	14,032	(33%)	12,958	34%
Total u25	21,605	(51%)	22,218	(50%)	21,397	(50%)	20,037	(47%)	19,759	52%
25-29	8,090	(19%)	8,852	(20%)	8,726	(20%)	8,083	(19%)	7,068	19%
30-34	5,520	(13%)	5,737	(13%)	5,345	(13%)	5,064	(12%)	4,439	12%
35-39	3,540	(8%)	3,790	(8%)	3,477	(8%)	3,373	(8%)	2,993	8%
40-44	2,305	(5%)	2,358	(5%)	2,120	(5%)	2,134	(5%)	1,766	5%
45-49	1,105	(3%)	1,126	(3%)	1,107	(3%)	1,067	(3%)	948	2%
50+	535	(1%)	605	(1%)	584	(1%)	641	(2%)	580	2%
Unknown	25	(<1%)	0		0		2,006	(5%)	470	1%
Total	42,725		44,686		42,756		42,405		38,023	

5 Student profile (ethnicity, disadvantage and disability)

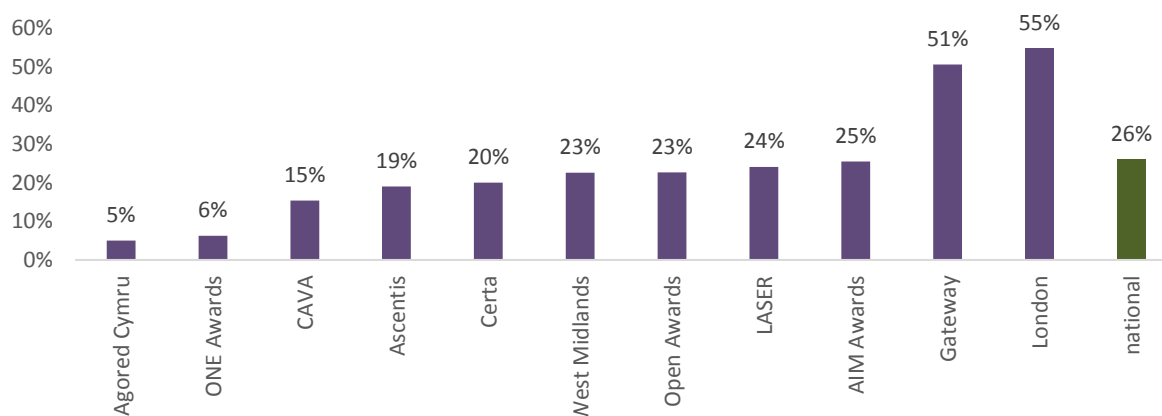
In 2016-17:

- 26% of Access to HE students were from minority ethnic groups.
- 67% were white; 14% were African, Caribbean, or any other black background. 8% were Asian; 5% were of mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds.

Table 5a: Student profile by ethnicity and gender, 2016-17

Ethnicity	Female (% of female students)		Male (% of male students)		Total (% of total)	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
African	3,260	(12%)	1,390	(14%)	4,645	(12%)
Any other Asian background	580	(2%)	320	(3%)	905	(2%)
Any other Black background	440	(2%)	180	(2%)	620	(2%)
Any other ethnic group	335	(1%)	210	(2%)	550	(1%)
Any other mixed background	355	(1%)	150	(1%)	500	(1%)
Any other White background	1,075	(4%)	460	(4%)	1,535	(4%)
Arab	140	(>1%)	100	(1%)	240	(1%)
Bangladeshi	215	(1%)	180	(2%)	390	(1%)
Caribbean	30	(>1%)	...	(>1%)	30	(>1%)
Chinese	120	(>1%)	80	(1%)	200	(1%)
British ¹	17,905	(64%)	5,640	(55%)	23,540	(62%)
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	5	(>1%)	...	(>1%)	...	(>1%)
Indian	315	(1%)	160	(2%)	480	(1%)
Irish	110	(>1%)	50	(1%)	160	(>1%)
Not Provided	1,330	(5%)	470	(5%)	1,800	(5%)
Pakistani	620	(2%)	510	(5%)	1,130	(3%)
White and Asian	160	(1%)	85	(1%)	250	(1%)
White and Black African	210	(1%)	100	(1%)	310	(1%)
White and Black Caribbean	510	(2%)	145	(1%)	660	(2%)
Total	27,760		10,260		38,025	

Figure 5a: Proportion of BME students by AVA, 2016-17

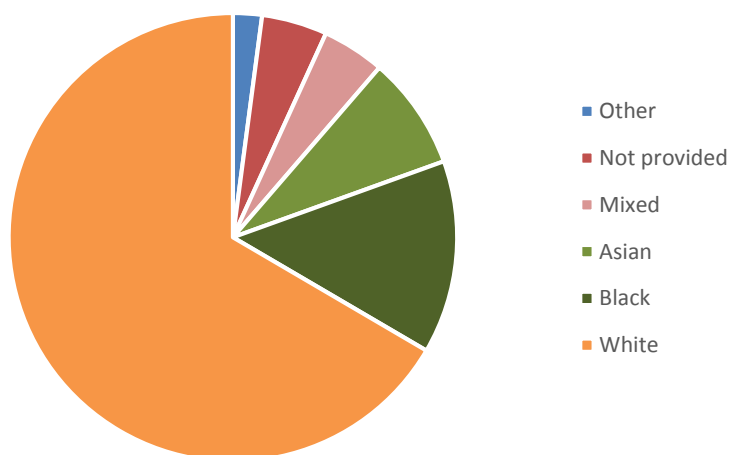


¹ Includes learners identifying as English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish.

Table 5b: Student profile by ethnicity, 2012-17

Ethnicity	2012-13		2013-14		2014-16		2015-16		2016-17	
	Students	(%)	Students	(%)	Students	(%)	Students	(%)	Students	(%)
White	29,015	(68%)	30,140	(67%)	27,880	(65%)	26,960	(64%)	25,310	67%
Black	6,820	(16%)	6,420	(14%)	5,830	(14%)	6,070	(14%)	5,300	14%
Asian	3,115	(7%)	2,970	(7%)	3,040	(7%)	3,000	(7%)	3,100	8%
Mixed/ multiple ethnic groups	1,865	(4%)	1,890	(4%)	1,830	(4%)	1,820	(4%)	1,720	4%
Other	800	(2%)	820	(2%)	830	(2%)	590	(1%)	795	2%
Not provided	1,110	(3%)	2,450	(5%)	3,340	(8%)	3,340	(8%)	1,800	5%
Total	42,725		44,690		42,760		42,405		38,025	

Figure 5b: Student profile by ethnicity, 2016-17



In 2016-17:

- 38% of Access to HE students came from a deprived area.

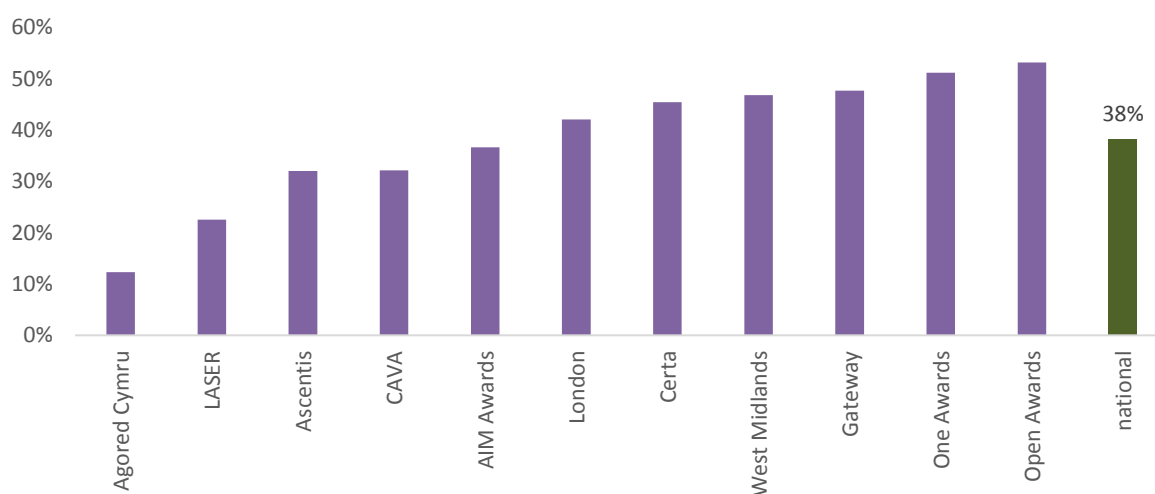
The ESFA provides uplift funding for learners living in the most disadvantaged areas of the country. It is based on the *English indices of deprivation 2010* and relates to the learner's postcode. Further information on uplift factors can be found on the [Education and Skills Funding Agency website](#).²

Table 5c: Student profile by disadvantage, 2012-17

	2012-13 total students in category (% of total)		2013-14 total students in category (% of total)		2014-15 total students in category (% of total)		2015-16 total students in category (% of total)		2016-17 total students in category (% of total)	
From a deprived area	16,195	(38%)	16,960	(38%)	15,370	(36%)	15,265	(36%)	14,540	(38%)
Not from a deprived area	26,530	(62%)	27,725	(62%)	27,390	(64%)	27,140	(64%)	23,485	(62%)
Total	42,725		44,690		42,760		42,405		38,025	

² Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/uplift-factors-and-postcode-files.

Figure 5c: Proportion of students from disadvantaged area by AVA, 2016-17



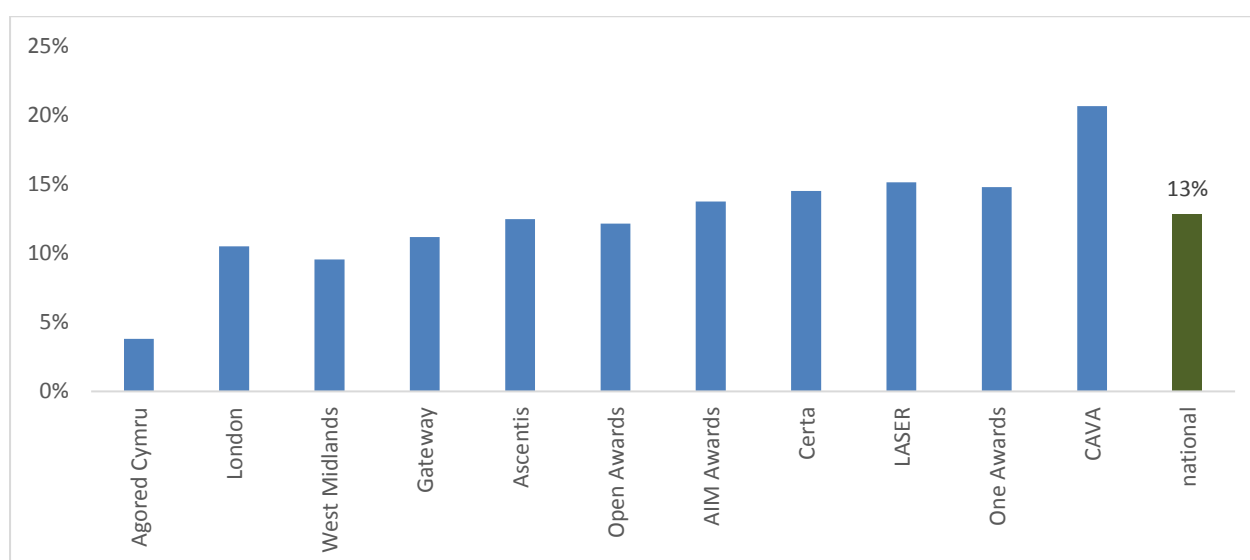
In 2016-17:

- 13% of Access to HE students had a disability and/ or learning difficulty.

Table 5d: Student profile by disability/ies and learning difficulty/ies, 2012-17

	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15		2015-16		2016=-17	
Disability/ies	2,045	(5%)	2,210	(5%)	2,210	(5%)	2,870	(7%)	2,930	(8%)
Learning difficulty/ies	2,190	(5%)	2,305	(5%)	1,860	(4%)	1,960	(5%)	1,875	(5%)
Disability/ies and learning difficulty/ies	850	(2%)	840	(2%)	840	(2%)	...	(>1%)	60	(>1%)
No disability/ies or learning difficulty/ies	33,730	(79%)	35,435	(79%)	32,500	(76%)	30,540	(72%)	29,070	(76%)
No information provided	3,910	(9%)	3,900	(100%)	5,350	(13%)	7,040	(17%)	4,090	(11%)
Total	42,725		44,690		42,760		42,405		38,025	

Figure 5d: Proportion of students with disability/ies and or learning difficulty/ies by AVA, 2016-17



6 Student completion and achievement

In 2016-17:

- Of the 348,025 students registered in 2016-17 (new and continuing students), 68% completed.
25% of all Access to HE students transferred or withdrew from their course.

Table 6a: Student completion (all registrations), 2016-17

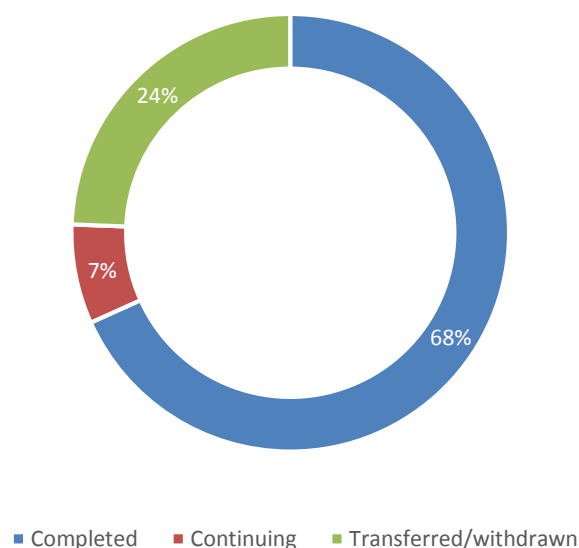
	Access to HE Diploma awarded	Continuing	No achievement	Partial achievement	Total students (% all students)
Completed	23,680		1,260	730	25,670 (68%)
Continuing		2,760	0	0	2,760 (7%)
Transferred/ withdrawn	...		8,990	590	9,590 (25%)
Total	23,700	2,760	10,250	1,320	38,025

Table 6b: Student withdrawals by AVA, 2016-17

AVA	Total withdrawn	% withdrawn
Agored Cymru	30	18%
Aim Awards	500	19%
Ascentis	1,980	28%
CAVA	890	23%
Certa	495	21%
Gateway	660	24%
LASER	740	21%
London	970	26%
One Awards	680	26%
Open Awards	620	25%
West Midlands	1,180	23%
Total	9,040	24%

Although the average withdrawal rate is 24%, the percentage of students transferring or withdrawing varies across AVAs from 18% (Agored Cymru) to 28% (Ascentis).

Figure 6a: Student completion (all registrations)



In 2016-17:

- 23,700 Access to HE Diplomas were awarded. Access to HE Diplomas were awarded to 22,465 students in England and Northern Ireland, and 1,235 students in Wales.
- Of the 25,670 students who completed the course, 92% were awarded the Access to HE Diploma.
- The grade profile of 11% of successful students was all Distinction.
- Of the 34,020 students registered to complete the course within 2016-17, 70% were awarded the Access to HE Diploma.

Table 6c: Access to HE Diplomas awarded

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Access to HE Diplomas awarded	27,220	28,750	27,190	26,725	23,700
Access to HE Diplomas awarded as a proportion of those who completed the course	92%	93%	91%	92%	92%
Access to HE Diplomas awarded as a proportion of those registered and expected to complete within the academic year (new and continuing)	69%	65%	70%	67%	70%

In 2016-17:

- Access to HE students were registered on courses in 13 broad subject areas.
- There were seven subject areas in which more than 1,000 students were registered.
- There were four subject areas in which between 100 and 1,000 students were registered.
- There were two subject areas in which fewer than 100 students were registered.
- Registrations on health, public services and care were 21% lower than 2015-16
- Registrations on agriculture, horticulture and animal care were 38% higher than 2015-16

Table 6d: Student registrations and awards by subject

	All student registrations (% of all student registrations)		% change ³	Access to HE Diplomas awarded (% of all Diplomas awarded)	
Health, Public Services and Care	20,050	53%	-18%	12,330	52%
Social Sciences	5,100	13%	-4%	3,120	13%
Science and Mathematics	4,920	13%	0%	3,370	14%
Business, Administration and Law	2,630	7%	4%	1,530	6%
Arts, Media and Publishing	1,265	3%	8%	850	4%
Education and Training	1,250	3%	10%	750	3%
History, Philosophy and Theology	1,030	3%	-7%	690	3%
Information and Communication Technology	810	2%	19%	460	2%
Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies	550	1%	1%	350	1%
Leisure, Travel and Tourism	210	1%	-35%	120	1%
Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care	145	0%	61%	90	0%
Construction, Planning and the Built Environment	60	0%	40%	35	0%
Languages, Literature and Culture	...	0%		...	0%
Retail and Commercial Enterprise	...	0%		...	0%
Preparation for Life and Work	...	0%		...	0%
Grand Total	38,020		-10%	23,700	

³ Percentage change of registrations compared with subject registration data for 2015-16

Appendix

Access Validating Agencies (AVAs)

In 2016-17, QAA licensed 11 Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) to offer the Access to HE Diploma in England and Wales.

Table A: AVA abbreviated and full names

Abbreviated AVA name	Full AVA name
Agored Cymru	Agored Cymru
AIM Awards	AIM Awards
Ascentis	Ascentis
CAVA	Cambridge Access Validating Agency
Certa	Certa
Gateway	Gateway Qualifications
LASER	LASER Learning Awards
London	OCN London
One Awards	One Awards
Open Awards	Open Awards
West Midlands	Open College Network West Midlands

Access to HE providers

Details of Access to HE providers are available through the [Diploma search](#)⁴ facility on the Access to HE website.

⁴ Available at: <https://ava.accesstohe.ac.uk/SubSites/PublicSearch/search.aspx>.

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*QAA manages the national framework for the recognition and regulation of
Access to HE Diplomas. www.qaa.ac.uk*