

Purpose of the guide:

All One Awards recognised Access to HE providers must devise a clear assessment strategy for each diploma and unit they deliver. The purpose of this document is to give guidance on how provider assessment strategies can be developed to meet:-

- the criteria for assessment design set down by QAA and One Awards and
- the needs of the diverse range of students studying on Access to HE Diploma courses.

It is essential that provider strategies for the assessment of diplomas enable students to fully demonstrate the skills and knowledge they have acquired on the course and are well prepared for study at Higher Education. In turn unit assessment strategies must ensure that the diploma strategy is fulfilled; they must link and flow. In this guide you will find a definition, suggested techniques for strategy development and examples of diploma and unit assessment strategies, which are intended to help you to write your own.

It is also intended as a document which will promote discussion and lead to improvements in the design of diploma and unit assessment strategies. All those involved in assessment in Access to HE Diploma courses are invited to contribute to the on-going development of these guidelines.

Benefits:

It is intended to:-

- provide guidance on devising and developing diploma and unit assessment strategies, which will be a point of reference for all those involved in planning the assessment of Access to HE diplomas
- develop a common understanding of the requirements to encourage good practice
- support a standardised approach to devising assessment strategies, within and between providers
- provide the information and guidance which assessors need to produce assessment strategies which ensure students have a positive assessment experience and are prepared well for Higher Education
- encourage assessment planning which adheres to QAA and One Awards requirements

Intended audience:

This document offers guidance and support for all assessors, internal and external moderators and those responsible for the management of staff and curriculum awards.

Mapping to QAA and other One Awards documents:

- QAA Grading Scheme Handbook, Section C
- One Awards Access to HE Provider Handbook, Section Four
- One Awards Guide to the Assessment and Grading of the Access to HE Diploma.
- One Awards Guide to the Internal Moderation and Standardisation of the Access to HE Diploma
- Examples of completed Diploma Assessment Plans (AP1) on the One Awards website
- Examples of completed Unit Assessment Plans (AP2) on the One Awards website

Version 1.0		Page 1 of 13
<i>Original created:</i> January 2016	<i>Last edited:</i> August 2020	<i>Due for review:</i> August 2022
Guide to writing Access to HE Diploma and Unit Assessment Strategies		

Definitions of a strategy:

A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim

What are the key components of a good strategy?

1. **What** is the aim of the plan?
2. **How** will it be achieved?
3. **Why** has this strategy been chosen?

What is the aim of the Access to HE Diploma?

QAA state that the Access to HE Diploma provides '*HE progression opportunities for adults who, because of social, educational or individual circumstances may have achieved few, if any, prior qualifications*'. So it is clear who the audience or target group is.

They also state that, '*Students who are awarded the Diploma will have completed a planned, balanced and coherent programme of study, through which they have been able to acquire subject knowledge and develop academic skills which are relevant to the intended progression route(s)*'.

Therefore provider assessment strategies need to demonstrate what assessment activities the students will undertake, how they will be used and why they have been chosen in order to achieve the learning aim.

What do I need before I start the assessment planning process?

Firstly it is very important to ensure that you have the current definitive version of the Access to HE Diploma Programme Submission Documents, Rules of Combination and unit specifications. These are permanently available on Sharepoint, the One Awards intranet site where all key documents are held. Each summer they are updated with any approved changes and the main Access Contact notified. The units are also available on the One Awards unit bank.¹

You also need to familiarise yourself with the One Awards assessment planning documents, which are required for the Desktop Review by your moderation team in the autumn. These are also available on the One Awards website along with the One Awards Guide to the Assessment and Grading of the Access to HE Diploma. This is essential reading for all those involved in assessment and moderation. Follow this link to the document:

<http://www.oneawards.org.uk/access-to-he/ahe-info-providers/ahe-guidance-resources/ahe-assessment-im/>

For a quick guide to the assessment planning process, watch the One Awards Access to HE Diploma Induction Training video on [One Awards TV](#)

¹ For guidance on how to access Sharepoint and the Access to HE unit bank please contact One Awards.

How is a Diploma Assessment Strategy produced and who needs to be involved?

The first document you will need is the Diploma Assessment Plan (AP1). This is the 'students' view' of their learning programme, it outlines the whole assessment process in one document providing details about the way in which each unit will be assessed, how grade descriptors will be used and any other useful information which helps to explain the plan. In order to ensure that the AP1 leads to the achievement of the learning aim it is important to provide an explanation of the planned diploma assessment strategy, which is the first main section of the AP1 form.

Writing a diploma assessment strategy from scratch will require a considerable amount of thought and discussion with others involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the Diploma. It will also need the involvement and support of managers who are responsible for staffing and resources.

In order that the strategy is successfully implemented and the learning aim achieved, all the other assessment planning documents produced later in the process will need to be written in-line with the diploma assessment strategy and clearly show how they are linked together.

The following steps are recommended for the development of a diploma assessment strategy:

1. Identify everyone who needs to be involved in the development of the AP1 and schedule a planning meeting.
2. Have all the required programme documentation ready and, if possible, ensure that those attending have read it before they come to the meeting and know the role they will be undertaking e.g. unit assessor, internal moderator etc.
3. During the meeting:
 - Ensure everyone understands the purpose and importance of writing a diploma assessment strategy
 - Discuss and develop the key components of the assessment strategy for the Diploma (What? How? and Why?)
 - Consider any other aspects of assessment which need to be included e.g. policy on drafts, additional activities which will add value to the assessment process, key aspects of the subject area or academic study which will be a particular focus, key features of your organisation's approach which will enhance the student experience etc.
 - Consider the type of assessment methods to be used and how the ungraded units will support and inform the graded units
 - Consider ways in which the grade descriptors will be used
 - Consider the timing of assessment for each unit and how the units will link together
4. Once these aspects have been discussed and agreed it will probably be necessary for one person to produce a draft strategy and circulate it for comment and possibly further discussion.

See pages 6 - 8 of this guide for examples of diploma assessment strategies.

Version 1.0		Page 3 of 13
<i>Original created:</i> January 2016	<i>Last edited:</i> August 2020	<i>Due for review:</i> August 2022
Guide to writing Access to HE Diploma and Unit Assessment Strategies		

How is a Unit Assessment Strategy produced and who needs to be involved?

5. Once the diploma assessment strategy has been completed the unit assessment strategies will need to be agreed, using the Unit Assessment Plan (AP2). This document outlines the assessment strategy, assessment methods and tasks and chosen grade descriptor components for an individual unit. It is therefore very important that it links with the diploma assessment strategy, ensuring that the overall learning aim is achieved.
6. To produce the unit assessment strategies the key components (What, How and Why?) must again be considered. Ensure that important aspects of preparing students for HE study in the specific subject are included, along with any features of assessment which will add value and enhance the learning experience, including the order and timing of assignments. It is therefore important that this process involves all relevant assessors and the managers responsible for staffing and resources.
7. Through this process each unit assessment strategy must be considered in the context of those proposed for other units and the overall diploma assessment strategy. If there are any aspects which could impede the achievement of the learning aim it should be changed. This may require some negotiation between assessors and needs to be carefully managed.

See pages 9 and 12 of this guide for examples of Unit Assessment Plans (AP2s) which include unit assessment strategies.

What happens next?

8. When the diploma and unit assessment strategies have been agreed, the remaining sections of the AP1 and AP2 forms can be completed. This is where you need to record the way in which the strategies will be implemented.
9. Once the AP1 and AP2 forms have been completed they need to be internally moderated using the form IM1* for the AP1 and form IM2** for the AP2.

*It is often an advantage if the internal moderator completing the IM1 has not been involved in the planning process, as they can give objective feedback on the plan and whether or not it is likely to achieve the stated Diploma strategy. The IM could also use the What, How, Why? model for reviewing the AP1.

**The IM2 could be completed by someone central to the assessment planning process e.g. a Course Leader or Access Coordinator, or another assessor. Whoever completes the internal moderation should be as objective as possible, refer to the AP1 to ensure there is a clear link between the two strategies and provide constructive feedback to the assessor; again the What, How and Why? model could be used. IMs should also refer to the One Awards Guide to the Internal Moderation and Standardisation of the Access to HE Diploma for further guidance.

10. Once the AP1 and AP2s have been approved the assignment briefs (AP3s) can be prepared.

Version 1.0		Page 4 of 13
<i>Original created:</i> January 2016	<i>Last edited:</i> August 2020	<i>Due for review:</i> August 2022
Guide to writing Access to HE Diploma and Unit Assessment Strategies		

When should diploma and unit assessment strategies be reviewed?

- **On-going throughout the course** – if aspects of the strategy don't work as planned or developments are discussed during the year, particularly at the end of each unit, it is useful to make a record of this in the form of a cumulative list.
- **Before the end of the academic year** – ensure that you plan time to review the strategies at the end of each academic year to capture the development points and agree the strategy for the subsequent year. It is really important to do this before the assessors and internal moderators who have been involved in the course go on their summer break, especially if staff changes are planned. It is very difficult for new staff to undertake this work, which requires a thorough understanding of the Access to HE Diploma and grading model, on top of all the other September priorities.

Why are the strategies useful?

- They are an essential resource for all those involved in the Access to HE Diploma and ensure that everyone is clear about the plan (What, How and Why?)
- They are a driver for the design of the assessment activities devised for the Diploma as a whole and for each of the units
- They inform on-going planning and decision making about aspects of the course to ensure that new developments and changes are not contrary to the learning aim
- They are essential for new staff who can use them without having to take on the responsibility of producing their own strategy in isolation and often without the required knowledge and experience of Access and grading. This is particularly useful if there is staff absence or changes during the year
- They are a key focus for External Moderators and enable them to quickly assess the effectiveness of the assessment planning process and fitness for purpose of the resulting plan
- They are useful for others, such as One Awards staff who manage student registration, Diploma development and amendment etc.
- And last, but certainly not least, they can be given to students in a suitable format, which would be a useful way of providing an overview of the assessment process they are about to embark on

Version 1.0		Page 5 of 13
<i>Original created:</i> January 2016	<i>Last edited:</i> August 2020	<i>Due for review:</i> August 2022
Guide to writing Access to HE Diploma and Unit Assessment Strategies		

Examples and in-house activities

The following pages contain examples of diploma and unit assessment strategies. They are designed to give an indication of the different styles and approaches which can be adopted whilst meeting One Awards requirements. **They are not designed to be used by providers without development and amendment.**

Providers may wish to use the examples to run in-house sessions for staff. The following activities could be undertaken:

Activity 1 - Diploma Assessment Strategies (AP1)

- Read each of the strategies and, using the 'What, How and Why model', underline the most important words or phrases
- Agree which aspect of each strategy works well and whether they could be improved
- Agree the aspects which the team could use in their own strategy

Activity 2 - Unit Assessment Plans, including the strategy for each (AP2)

- Read each of the strategies and, using the 'What, How and Why model', underline the most important words or phrases
- Agree which aspect of each strategy works well and whether they could be improved
- Agree the aspects which assessors could use in their own strategy

Version 1.0		Page 6 of 13
<i>Original created:</i> January 2016	<i>Last edited:</i> August 2020	<i>Due for review:</i> August 2022
Guide to writing Access to HE Diploma and Unit Assessment Strategies		

Examples of Diploma Assessment Strategies

(Form AP1)



Diploma title	Access to HE Diploma (Sport)
Date	25 th July 2021
Diploma Assessment Strategy	<p>The purpose of the Access to HE Diploma (Sport) is to prepare students aged 19 and above, many of whom have been out of education for a number of years, for a range of related progression routes to Higher Education. The diploma assessment strategy is designed to include a diverse and inclusive range of assessment methods which mirror those students will experience at HE. For example presentations, practical demonstrations, academic posters and research/project work will be used. Study skills will be embedded throughout the teaching and assessment of the Diploma, for example a number of assessments will contain written work so that students gain academic writing and referencing skills. The ungraded maths and English units will be taught alongside the graded units and wherever possible assessments will enable students to apply their knowledge and skills to scenarios related to sport. This is also essential as there is a focus within HE on vocationally facing issues. All of these assessments will be suitably spaced and staggered throughout the year and students will be encouraged to explore ways to manage their time and plan their work. Formative assessment will be used wherever possible to develop the skills and knowledge required for the summative assessments, but a no drafts policy will be applied.</p> <p>The course will enable students to become fully developed, independent scholars with a confident outlook and ready for Higher Education.</p>

Version 1.0		Page 7 of 13
<i>Original created: January 2016</i>	<i>Last edited: August 2021</i>	<i>Due for review: August 2022</i>
Guide to writing Access to HE Diploma and Unit Assessment Strategies		

Examples of Diploma Assessment Strategies

(Form AP1)

Diploma title	Access to Higher Education Diploma (Health)
Date	13 th August 2021
Diploma Assessment Strategy	<p>The Access to HE Diploma (Health) aims to prepare students for progression to a range of Higher Education courses related to Health by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing students' academic skills, knowledge base and understanding of the vocational areas they could progress to. • Developing students' confidence and ability to work independently to produce academic work within a clear set of standards and regulations, for example setting clear tasks with contextualised grading guidance, appropriate word counts, and hand out and hand in dates. There will be a 'no drafts' policy. • Employing a wide range of assessment methods which prepare them well for Higher Education, for example essays, reports, presentations, research/project work, debates, case studies and academic posters. • Delivering the graded units in semesters, requiring increasing application of knowledge, academic skills and autonomy through the careful choice of grade descriptors and components. • Developing English, Maths and Study Skills which will underpin the graded units of the Diploma through an application of the skills in context. This is to ensure that students develop an appreciation of the need for these transferrable skills when studying key subjects and when undertaking a vocational role. • Ensuring students have a reliable and consistent assessment experience which enables them to develop an understanding of the standard of their own attainment and the standard expected at Higher Education.

Examples of Diploma Assessment Strategies

(Form AP1)

Diploma title	Access to HE (Art and Design)
Date	10 th September 2021
Diploma Assessment Strategy will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare students for a range of Higher Education courses in Art and Design • Reflect Art and Design Assessment Strategies at HE • Reflect the Design Cycle which is a developmental process • Use assessment methods which are valid and appropriate for teaching creative subjects and the learning outcomes • Ensure that each unit will have one assignment which is assessed at the end. This is to ensure that students have sufficient time and opportunity for formative assessment and the development of creative skills. Art History will be broken down into 3 assignments to allow for a range of assessment activities and the development of academic writing skills. • Allow students the best opportunities to achieve each assignment and grade independently

Examples of Unit Assessment Strategies

(Form AP2)



Provider name	Sunshine College			
Diploma title	Access to HE Diploma (Humanities and Social Science)			
Assessor name(s)	Harry Smith			
Date	2 nd September 2021			
Unit title and code	History - Social and Cultural Development (DB7/3/AA/03G)			
Unit assessment strategy	<p>This is a 9 credit unit delivered in the second semester by a single tutor. There are three assignments designed to develop students' understanding of historical and socio-cultural development and the ways in which culture, social attitudes and philosophic perspectives can reflect and drive change. The literature review will give students experience of handling source material and extracting key information. The presentation will provide experience of planning and delivering key information to a group. The production of an essay will challenge students to develop research, planning and analytical techniques as well as academic writing skills which are all necessary for success on Higher Education courses with a historical focus.</p> <p>One draft will be accepted of the literature review as it is the first graded assignment of the course, but no drafts will be permitted for the other assignments.</p>			
Assessment criteria e.g. 1.1	Assessment method and activity <i>(Provide brief description)</i>	Evidence of assessment <i>(Provide brief description)</i>	Grade descriptors and components <i>(indicate choice)</i>	Cross referencing to other units
Learning outcomes: 1 - 1.1 2 - 2.1	A literature review: Students will utilise 3 given texts to research the historical, social and cultural developments of a given time period	A written literature review following a given structure. (Approx 1500 words)	Grade descriptors will be used to assess students' emerging skills as follows: 2 – facts and ideas, breadth and depth 5 – format, structure, spelling, punctuation 7 – a) structure is a logical and fluent	

Examples of Unit Assessment Strategies

(Form AP2)

Learning outcome 4: 4.1	Individual presentation: For one of the literary texts used for the first assignment, students will produce a 10 minute presentation on how the text reflects society at a given time.	Presentation slides Student's notes. Assessor observation record for each student.	Grade descriptors will be used to assess students' developing skills as follows: 2 – perspectives, concepts, breadth and depth and analysis 7 – b) puts forward ideas which are unambiguous and fluent	
Learning outcomes: 3 - 3.1 and 3.2 5 – 5.1 6 – 6.1	Essay: An historical essay based on social and cultural changes during a given time period. This will build on previous knowledge, whilst challenging students to connect and contextualise this period to contemporary UK society.	A well-structured essay (Approx 2000 words)	Grade descriptors to be used to assess students' developed skills as follows: 2 – perspectives, concepts, breadth and depth and analysis 5 – format, structure, spelling, punctuation, referencing 7 – c) taken as a whole demonstrates a very good/excellent response to the demands of the assignment	

Examples of Unit Assessment Strategies

(Form AP2)



Provider name	Sunshine College
Diploma title	Access to HE Diploma (Science)
Assessor name(s)	Jane Jenkins
Date	6 September 2021
Unit title and code	Chemistry RD2/3/AA/07G
Unit assessment strategy	<p>The content for this unit will be delivered through teaching and learning activities in class and through directed independent research in order to ensure students develop a sound knowledge of Chemistry and the academic skills required to progress to HE.</p> <p>Assignment 1 – Scientific Report The first assignment requires students to demonstrate the basic knowledge and calculations which underpin this unit and link to content within the Core Science and Biochemistry units. The production of a scientific report is an important skill for students to acquire in preparation for Higher Education.</p> <p>Assignment 2 – Presentation Students will work more independently for this assignment which requires them to organise their time to research, plan and prepare well in order to achieve a high standard. Presentations are widely used in HE and it is important that students understand how to prepare and deliver well.</p> <p>Assignment 3 – Essay These skills are further built upon in assignment three where students are required to write a 2000 word essay, another important form of assessment they will encounter in HE. The increased word count allows and encourages additional research.</p> <p>The unit will be taught by one tutor in the first semester, after the Core Science unit and prior to the Biochemistry unit which will be taught in the second semester. There is a no drafts policy for this unit and numerical marking will not be used for grading.</p>

Version 1.0		Page 12 of 13
<i>Original created:</i> January 2016	<i>Last edited:</i> August 2021	<i>Due for review:</i> August 2022
Guide to writing Access to HE Diploma and Unit Assessment Strategies		

Examples of Unit Assessment Strategies

(Form AP2)

Assessment criteria e.g. 1.1	Assessment method and activity <i>(Provide brief description)</i>	Evidence of assessment <i>(Provide brief description)</i>	Grade descriptors and components <i>(indicate choice)</i>	Cross referencing to other units
<p>Learning outcome 1: 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5</p> <p>Learning outcome 2: 2.1, 2.2, 2.3</p>	A scientific report. Students will be required to apply the teaching and learning relating to the mole, to a practical situation (the titration of HCl against NaOH).	<p>A scientific report in the correct given format, including relevant calculations.</p> <p>(Approx. 1000 words)</p>	<p>GD3: b) applies appropriate techniques with c) accuracy</p> <p>GD7: a) structured in a logical and fluent way</p>	No formal cross referencing has been undertaken in relation to assessment, but links will be made during teaching and learning activities to other relevant units within the Science Diploma, particularly Core Science and Biochemistry
<p>Learning outcome 3: 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5</p> <p>Learning outcome 4: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5</p>	A presentation. Students will be required to produce a 10 minute presentation on the structure of atoms and bonding in crystals supported by their notes and a written reflection on what they have learnt.	<p>Presentation slides using chosen software</p> <p>Presentation notes</p> <p>Reflection on key learning points related to content (Approx. 400 words)</p>	<p>GD3: a) selects appropriate skills b) applies appropriate skills</p> <p>GD7: b) puts forward arguments or ideas</p>	
<p>Learning outcome 5: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4</p> <p>Learning outcome 6: 6.1, 6.2, 6.3</p>	Students will chose from two given titles relating to intermolecular forces and rate controlling factors	Structured essay (Approx. 2000 words)	<p>GD3: b) applies appropriate methods with c) consistency</p> <p>GD7: c) taken as a whole demonstrates a very good/excellent response to the demands of the brief</p>	