

Guide to Access to HE Diploma Validation Panels 2020



Introduction

Since July 1996 One Awards, formally OCN North East Region, has been licensed as an Access Validating Agency (AVA) by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to award the Access to HE Diploma.

One Awards (the AVA) supplies an annual list of the Access to HE Diplomas it accredits to QAA who arrange for their inclusion in the Access to HE Courses Database. This is the definitive list of QAA Access to HE Diplomas and is used by admissions tutors in Higher Education Institutions, Access Providers, AVAs and students throughout the country. All valid Access Diplomas included in the definitive list are allocated an AIM Code for funding purposes by QAA.

Access to HE Validation Panels must consider each submission against the QAA requirements with regard to the number and level of credits required and in particular its 'fitness for purpose' in preparing students for progression to the intended Higher Education courses.

All Access to HE Programmes, Diplomas and Major Modifications must be approved prior to delivery. The authority to approve QAA Recognised Access to HE Programmes and Diplomas lies with the Access to HE Committee, which is responsible for monitoring compliance with the AVA licensing criteria.

The Panel Report will be considered by members of the Access to HE Committee who will make the approval decision and agree any conditions and recommendations attached to that approval.

Please note the following QAA requirements

AVA licence criteria 61:

- a) The design of Diplomas should be appropriate to the primary purpose of Access to HE courses, which is to provide HE progression opportunities for adults who, because of social, educational or individual circumstances may have achieved few, if any, prior qualifications.
- b) the award of a Diploma does not provide guaranteed entry to UK HE programmes.

AVA licence criteria 76:

There is a standard validation period for diplomas (no more than five years from the date of the initial approval) and a forward schedule of revalidation for diplomas. Where exceptional circumstances require an extension to the standard period, the validation period will be endorsed/approved by the designated body (the Access to HE Committee) and will not normally be extended by more than one year.

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One Awards award **credits** for **units** of Learning. One credit represents 10 notional hours of learning.

| One Awards Credit Levels | Skills Level | Broadly equivalent to the level of study required for the following examples |
|--------------------------|--|--|
| Level One | The consolidation of existing skills, and the introduction of new skills, competencies and areas of learning | GCSE Grade D – G Foundation GNVQ Level 1 NVQ/SVQ |
| Level Two | The extension and application of skills and competencies and the introduction of independent learning techniques | GCSE Grade A* - C Intermediate GNVQ/VCE Level 2 NVQ/SVQ First Diploma |
| Level Three | The development and independent application of a range of critical, reflective, creative and problem solving skills and competencies | AS/A Level Advanced GNVQ/VCE Level 3 NVQ/SVQ National Diploma |
| Entry Level | Has been developed to support learning at a level below Level One. It is appropriate for those with learning difficulties or disabilities, those who have only a limited knowledge of English and some who have been away from education for many years. | |

A **learning programme** defines the objectives, content, resources and quality assurance processes of a coherent learning package made up of one or more units.

The AVA's quality assurance procedures require all new units, learning programmes and amendments to programmes or units to be approved through the agreed processes before programmes can be delivered and credit awarded.

Validation Panels

A Validation Panel is convened by the AVA, and is a peer group review of programmes and units by a panel of people comprising AVA staff, sector and subject representatives.

| Access to HE Diploma Validation Panel Membership |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair will be a member of the Access to HE Committee • An AVA representative, usually the Access to HE Manager • Scribe – an AVA member of staff • A Higher Education representative for each diploma subject area • At least one Provider representative with experience of delivering Access Programmes, other than the submitting team • An Access to HE Subject Moderator for each diploma • An Access to HE Lead Moderator (unless represented as a Subject Moderator) • Other specialist representatives as appropriate <p>NB: Only one member of the Access to HE Committee, which makes the final approval decision, will have also acted as a member of the Validation Panel.</p> |

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Role at Panel

Panel Chair

All Access to HE Validation Panels must be chaired by a member of the AVA Access to Higher Education Committee.

The Chair must ensure that the panel conducts a supportive but rigorous review of all aspects of the Programme, Diploma and units and that the approval process meets QAA requirements.

AVA representative

The AVA representative will usually be the Access to HE Manager. Their role is to support the Chair in ensuring the correct process is followed at the panel and that all QAA requirements are met. They can also provide advice and guidance to Panel Members throughout the process with regard to rules of combination, quality, assessment and other aspects of accrediting an Access to HE Diploma.

Scribe

An AVA member of staff acts as scribe, and:

- Records details of all changes required in the text of the documents
- Logs any conditions and/or recommendations agreed at Panel
- Records all issues discussed at Panel
- Produces a Panel Report to be submitted for approval by the Access to HE Committee

Panel Members

Panel Members provide an independent, external review of the Programme, Diploma(s) and units to ensure that the resulting Access to HE Diploma will be fit for purpose in preparing students for the intended progression route. Panel Members are invited for their knowledge of the curriculum or occupational area, the target group of learners, the mode of delivery or the AVA accreditation process.

Panel Members are expected to:

- Read all documentation prior to the Panel
- Inform the AVA of any **major concerns** about the Programme, units or assessment strategy prior to the Panel
- Contribute to the discussions at Panel in a constructive and supportive manner

External Moderators

The role of External Moderators at Panel is similar to that of a Panel Member, but their comments are particularly useful in relation to the assessment strategy and quality assurance of the Programme, Diploma and units.

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Submitting Team

Following the introductions and outline of the Panel process, the Submitting Team is asked to present an overview of the Programme and Diplomas; this usually takes about 10 minutes and should be delivered verbally. A short Powerpoint presentation may be used but is not essential. This is an opportunity to explain the following:

- Programme background, aims and rationale,
- Programme structure and reasons for the choice of Diplomas and units
- The intended progression routes and involvement of HE representatives in the development.

NB. If the panel has been convened to consider a major amendment to an existing diploma, a summary of the reasons for the changes and nature of the amendments is sufficient.

Panel Members will discuss these points and seek clarification where needed.

During the panel

The Chair will guide Panel Members through the agenda and provide opportunity for open discussion throughout the meeting.

The Scribe will record changes required to the documents, but it is also very useful for the Submitting Team to keep an additional record of these changes.

The Submitting Team will also participate in the detailed discussions about the Programme, Diplomas and units, providing clarification on any issues raised. If amendments are suggested, they will also be asked for their agreement before a final decision is made.

Approval recommendations

When full consideration of the full Programme Submission has taken place, the Submitting Team will be asked to leave the meeting so that the Panel Members can agree their recommendations for approval. Possible outcomes are as follows:

1. Approval subject to standard conditions
2. Approval subject to standard, plus additional conditions and/or recommendations
3. Referred back to the AVA.

Programme Approval

The recommendation for Programme and Diploma Approval, including any conditions and recommendations, will be confirmed by the Chair at the end of the Panel proceedings. The date of the next Access to HE Committee will also be confirmed.

The resulting Panel Report will be submitted to the next Access to HE Committee by the Panel Chair or the AVA Representative so that the Committee may consider the Programme Submission. Once an approval decision has been made, the Submitting Team will be informed in writing, along with a copy of the Panel Report and all updated Programme documents.

Amendments to Programme documentation will be made by the AVA and the QAA Access Courses Database will be updated to include the new diploma title, as appropriate.

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A timescale for completion will be given for each condition agreed at approval. The External Moderator appointed to moderate the Diploma is responsible for checking on the completion of the condition on behalf of the AVA. The status of conditions will be reported to the AVA through the usual moderation reporting process.

If you have any queries or questions prior to Panel, please do not hesitate to contact John Earland, Access to HE Manager, at john.earland@oneawards.org.uk or on Tel: **0191 5186550**

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