

# One Awards Provider Guidance to New Access to Access to HE Diploma Development



All QAA recognised Access to HE Diplomas must comply with QAA requirements (see Licence Criterion 61 below). Our diplomas are developed in partnership with our providers and are constructed as flexibly as possible within the regulatory framework. Throughout the development phase the needs of students are paramount and are a key aspect of the approval process. Developing a new diploma is not complicated but it does require a real commitment to produce a diploma which is fully fit for purpose. Providers have flexibility when it comes to diploma design but this must operate within the parameters set by QAA, and the principles of good practice.

Licence Criterion 61:

- (a) the design of diplomas must be appropriate to the primary purpose of Access to HE courses, which is to provide higher education 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 higher education programmes.

*Please note: only students with a UK address (including BFO) can be registered for an Access to HE Diploma.*

There are **two** stages to gaining diploma approval with One Awards:

1. Centre Recognition process (applies only to providers new to One Awards AVA provision)
2. Diploma development and approval process

## Some general QAA requirements:

1. All diplomas must contain units totalling 60 credits exactly.
2. All diplomas must be composed of 45 credits of Level 3 graded units and 15 credits of ungraded Level 2 and/or Level 3 units.
3. All graded units must have learning outcomes that are concerned with the academic subject content related to the title of the Diploma.
4. All Diploma proposals should be discussed with as many Higher Education Institutions as possible to establish their acceptance of the proposed qualification for entry to their courses, but a minimum of two in any case. This is in addition to any HE progression routes offered by the provider themselves.

**TOP TIP:** Point 4 is the one that prompts a lot of questions at the validation panel and will always result in a condition if the panel is not satisfied that adequate HE endorsement exists. This can be easily avoided by contacting HE Tutors early in the development process and keeping records of the outcomes of any discussions.

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## The Diploma development process

Whether you are an existing provider of Access to HE Diplomas with us or not, the same process applies:

1. The provider completes a 'New Diploma Application Form'. This is considered in detail by One Awards and a decision made as to whether to take the proposal further. There must be a clear and compelling rationale for any new diploma to be developed
2. The Product Manager, Access to HE works with the provider to ensure all diploma development documentation is completed and panel ready and advises on unitselection
3. All the required documents and guidance are available in the Diploma Development and Modification area of the One Awards Access to HE website. There are three documents to complete: a Programme Submission Document, a Rules of Combination (unit selection) form and a Diploma Assessment Strategy document (AP1) which gives the provider's overview of how each unit might be assessed. In addition, you may need to develop new units and this will require extra work and can increase the time required to complete all documentation. Please refer to our 'Unit Development Guidance' document for more information
4. An external peer review validation panel is convened which includes provider, HE and other specialist representatives. This panel forwards recommendations to the Access to HE Committee which makes the final approval decision
5. Subject to meeting any agreed conditions within a timescale, once approved, the Diploma is uploaded to the QAA Access Courses Database, enabling it to be eligible for funding

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## Top questions for successful diploma development.

KEY QUESTIONS	YES	NO
Does your Diploma include graded units which reflect the title of the Diploma?		
Do you provide the right balance within the mix of your chosen units to provide students with the correct entry requirements for progression?		
Does your Diploma include English and maths, and at the correct level, if applicable, for the intended progression routes?		
Have you established that there is support from HEIs for the structure, content and assessment strategies of your Diploma?		
Have you kept written evidence of any discussions with HEIs about your Diploma?		
Have you identified the progression routes for any learner completing your Diploma?		
Do you have a sufficient number of assessors and experienced internal moderators?		
Do you have in place clear and coherent internal moderation and standardisation systems?		
Do you have assessment policies in place, for example, plagiarism, re-submissions, extensions etc.?		

### More top tips!

- Make sure that all relevant staff within your organisation are aware that you are proposing to run an Access to HE Diploma and that you have the necessary permissions and finance to proceed.
- If your institution has a cross organisation Access to HE Diploma Co-ordinator, involve them at the earliest stage because they will help you complete the required documents and processes.
- You will need to complete a Programme Submission Document, or update an existing one if you are already approved with us, as soon as possible. The document has been prepared to meet QAA's requirements and so most of it will be completed for you with that in mind. It is your responsibility though to ensure that it is aligned to your institutional practices and processes and that all the information contained in the document is accurate. External Moderators will use this document

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for compliance purposes so accuracy is paramount. A speedy completion helps immeasurably with the entire process. If you require new units to be developed then you will need to involve subject specialists as well as the staff at One Awards. Please refer to our 'Unit Development Guidance' document published by One Awards.

- Seek HE endorsement as soon as possible. HE staff are incredibly busy and so a quick response to your requests for meetings or advice may not be possible. HE endorsement is essential for approval so make sure this is achieved at the earliest possible opportunity. Also ensure that you have endorsement from at least **two** HEIs.
- If you are considering a dual titled Diploma such as 'Humanities and Social Sciences' or 'Business and ICT' for example, then you must ensure that you choose a balanced set of graded units to reflect this. For example, it is good practice to choose 18 credits of 'Humanities' units and 18 credits of 'Social Sciences' units and make them mandatory, i.e. all students would study these units. The remaining 9 credits could be offered as two 'optional' units; one 'Humanities' and one 'Social Sciences' unit. Students could then choose which one they want to study depending upon their needs for progression. Similarly for 'Business and ICT' etc.
- For 'Health' Diplomas, we recommend that at least 9 credits of 'Psychology' and at least 18 credits of science are selected, mainly 'Biology' and possibly more. You may need to consider other sciences, like 'Physics' and/or 'Chemistry', and offer them as 'Optional' for progression onto some courses such as 'Radiography' and 'Dietetics' for example. It is also worth noting that units which cater for values based care should also be considered. As with all diploma development the exact requirements should form part of your discussions with HEIs.
- Think carefully about the assessment methodologies when completing the AP1. It is not expected that the one presented at the panel is the one that will be used without amendment. However, a thoughtful approach to the AP1 gives the panel confidence in your intended delivery strategy and application to diploma management.
- Prepare a 10 minute presentation to the panel providing background to the Diploma approval application to include rationale, HE engagement and quality assurance processes.

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- The Validation Panel is a supportive and constructive process designed to ensure the Diploma is fit for purpose. However, be prepared for questions from the panel. These are likely to be ones which seek clarification of any ambiguous aspects of the application about the Programme Submission Document, Rules of Combination, AP1, internal moderation and standardisation provision etc. The more detail given in your documents the less likely there is of a question arising!

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