

The QAA Access to HE Diploma Information for Students 2009 – 2010



National Strength North East Service



What is an Access to HE Programme?

These Programmes are designed locally, usually by Further Education Colleges in conjunction with local universities. Access Programmes are an exciting alternative to 'A' and A/S Levels for people who want to go on to study at a higher level such as a degree or Higher National Diploma ...

Through studying on an Access Programme you can achieve the nationally recognised **Access to HE Diploma**, one of the main routes for adult students into Higher Education. From most Access Programmes, students will be able to apply directly to a University using the UCAS application process.

Each year around 30,000 students enroll on an Access to HE Programme and the majority gain places at University.

To achieve an Access to HE Diploma, you need to complete a programme that includes units in relevant subject areas which will prepare you for study at Higher Education.

For each unit you achieve, you will earn credits that gradually build towards the 60 credits that are required for the Access to HE Diploma (1 credit = 10 hours of learning). Your unit options will be explained to you at the start of the course.

Organisations involved in Access to HE

The College

The college you attend is where you are taught and assessed. The college is known as the "Provider" of the Access to HE Programme.

OCN North East Region (Open College Network – North East Region)

OCN North East Region is the validating body who you are registered with and who provides the external quality checks, including the external moderation. They will issue the college with your final graded certificate after the exam board at the beginning of July, so that it can be sent to you. OCN North East Region is also known as the Access Validating Authority or AVA for short.

QAA (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education)

QAA approves OCN North East Region to Award the **Access to HE Diploma**. QAA is a national body, set up in 1997 to monitor universities' quality and standards.

Process of Assessment

All the teaching and assessment for the Access to HE Diploma will be done by the teaching staff on the course. You will be told who will be assessing your work at the start of the programme.

A range of different types of assessment task will be used, for example, written assignments, practical demonstrations, exams and case studies.

The Tutor will set a series of assignments to explain the tasks throughout the programme which are designed to help you demonstrate the skills and knowledge you have learnt. They will also tell you when the assignment should be handed in and if any draft versions of your work can be submitted.

Your work is then assessed and you will be given written feedback. The assessment judgements of Tutors are checked by the Internal Moderator to ensure that the judgements of all Tutors are fair and consistent.

Grading

For all level 3 units in the Access to HE Diploma, you can achieve a Grade - Pass, Merit or Distinction. Grade descriptors are used to measure which grade a student has achieved for each assignment.

Level 2 units are not graded.

There are 7 QAA approved grade descriptors:

1. Understanding of the subject
2. Application of knowledge
3. Application of skills
4. Use of information
5. Communication and presentation
6. Autonomy/Independence
7. Quality

There will be guidance with each assignment on how the grades are to be achieved. Every assessment will be assessed for quality but other grade descriptors may also be used.

Working out your unit grade

Once each assignment has been successfully achieved for a unit, the assignments are given a grade, or set of grades, The Tutor will then give **one overall grade for the unit** which will appear on your certificate.

The overall grade for the unit will be worked out on the basis of the middle value of all the grades for all

the assessments for the unit. So for example if there are 3 assessments, two with two grades and one with three grades, and the results are:

Assessment 1: Graded: P, M
Assessment 2: Graded: M, P
Assessment 3: Graded: P, M, D

The grades will be reordered: PPPMMMD, so the middle grade is an M and therefore the overall grade for the unit is a **Merit**. If the last assessment had only been PMP then the overall grade would have been P. All of the assignments carry the same weight for the grading – it doesn't matter whether you do a lot more work for one particular assignment, it will still count the same as the others.

If you are successful in achieving all the units you will get a **Qualification Certificate** for the Access to HE Diploma and a transcript which will list all the units, with the grade identified for level 3 units.

Terms used in this Guide

FE – Further Education

Further Education Colleges offer students an opportunity to continue with, or come back into, Education after the age of 16. They offer a wide range of opportunities to study through the F.E route, including courses such as A Levels, National Certificates and Access to HE Courses, but can also include trade qualifications for a range of vocational subjects such as electricians, hairdressers, plumbers etc. Generally FE courses are certificated by National Awarding Bodies or Award Boards.

HE – Higher Education

This includes all degree level courses, which currently must all be accredited by a university. HNCs (Higher National Certificates) and HNDs (Higher National Diplomas) are also classed as higher education qualifications.

Unit

A unit defines key areas that students will study and be assessed against in a specific subject area (such as Maths for HE or Design Project). Each unit has a credit value and level. Each unit will be given an overall grade at the end of the course.

Credit

The credit value of a unit indicates how much work is involved. A credit is equivalent to a "notional" 10 hours of learning, which includes time spent in class and private study. Access to HE and Higher Education

If you do not achieve all the units for the Access to HE Diploma, you will still receive a transcript listing all the units you have achieved, with the grade identified for level 3 units.

There will be no overall grade for the course.

More details on how the grading system works will be found in other supporting documents, for example, your college's Student Handbook. The college will also have policies relating to: Appeals, Resubmissions, Representations, and Referrals

If you would like to know more about these, or any other aspect of the programme, **please ask your Tutor. You can also visit the OCN North East Region and QAA Access to HE websites.**

www.ocnner.org.uk
www.acesstohe.ac.uk

courses are specified in terms of the total number of credits.

Levels

Level describes the level of difficulty of a unit. All Access units are either level 2 or level 3. Level 2 is classed as broadly the same as GCSE grade C to A, level 3 units are classed as broadly equivalent to A-level work. The level 2 units are all "introductory" units and are designed prepare students for study at level 3. All level 3 Units are graded; level 2 units are not graded.

Learning Outcome

Each Unit is split into a number of learning outcomes. The learning outcomes describe what a Student will know, understand or be able to do after they have completed the unit.

Assessment criteria

Each learning outcome has a set of assessment criteria; these describe how students can demonstrate what they have learnt.

Assessment

Assessment is the way in which a Tutor/Assessor can measure what a student has achieved. Assessment is done through a range of activities, or assessment tasks, such as a written assignment, practical work or exams. Each activity is designed to cover specific learning outcome(s).



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