

Access to HE Handbook for Providers

2019/20

**This handbook has been developed for use by tutors,
course leaders, quality managers and examination staff**

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Section 1: Introduction

Welcome

Thank you for using Certa for your Access to HE provision. This handbook has been created to help ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities in running Access to HE courses, and to help you run a high-quality programme as easily as possible. It describes the processes which must be followed by providers/centres who are delivering a Certa approved and QAA recognised Access to HE Diploma, including:

- Delivery of the Access to HE Diploma according to specified rules of combination
- Registration of students
- Internal and external moderation of student work
- Consideration of student achievement by the Awards Boards
- The issuing of Access to HE Diploma Certificates and transcripts to students.

Certa and Access to HE

Certa (formerly Open College Network Yorkshire & Humber) is an Access Validating Agency (AVA) licensed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), to develop and quality assure Access to HE Diplomas. The QAA provides an integrated quality assurance service for Higher Education in the UK and is also responsible for assuring the quality of approved Access to HE Diplomas.

Access to HE Diplomas are specifically designed to prepare adult students for progression to study in Higher Education (HE) in the UK. HE specialists work closely with Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) during the development of all new Access to HE Diplomas to ensure that they provide a suitable preparation for higher education in specific subjects or progression routes.

The Generic Requirements for the Access to HE Diploma are that:

- The total credit achievement is 60 credits
- Of these 60 credits, 45 credits must be achieved at Level Three from graded units concerned with academic content
- The remaining 15 credits must be achieved at Level Two or Level Three from units which are ungraded and can be generated from either study skills or academic units
- All units have a value of 3, 6 or 9 credits
- Study skills units are not graded.

The particular requirements for a named Diploma, including the full set of units that are to be available to students, and information about how these must or may be combined, are contained within the Rules of Combination. These Rules of Combination for each named Diploma have been approved during the Diploma validation process and are included in the Learning Programme Plan (LPP), a document which summarises the requirements for each diploma.

Access to HE Diplomas have generic titles approved through the AVA's validation process. The following Certa Access to HE Diplomas are currently available to providers:

- Access to HE Diploma (Art and Design)
- Access to HE Diploma (Business)
- Access to HE Diploma (Business and Enterprise)
- Access to HE Diploma (Business and IT)
- Access to HE Diploma (Business and Law)
- Access to HE Diploma (Business and Management)
- Access to HE Diploma (Business Studies)
- Access to HE Diploma (Computing)
- Access to HE Diploma (Contemporary Dance)
- Access to HE Diploma (Counselling)
- Access to HE Diploma (Creative Arts)
- Access to HE Diploma (Digital and Creative Media)
- Access to HE Diploma (Education Professions)
- Access to HE Diploma (Engineering)
- Access to HE Diploma (Forensics and Criminology)
- Access to HE Diploma (Health and Social Care)
- Access to HE Diploma (Health and Wellbeing)
- Access to HE Diploma (Health Professions)
- Access to HE Diploma (Health Science Professions)
- Access to HE Diploma (Humanities and Social Sciences)
- Access to HE Diploma (Land Based Industries)
- Access to HE Diploma (Law)
- Access to HE Diploma (Midwifery)
- Access to HE Diploma (Nursing)
- Access to HE Diploma (Nutrition and Dietetics)
- Access to HE Diploma (Paramedic Studies)
- Access to HE Diploma (Physiotherapy)
- Access to HE Diploma (Radiography)
- Access to HE Diploma (Science)
- Access to HE Diploma (Sport and Physical Activity)
- Access to HE Diploma (Sustainable Construction and the Built Environment)

Providers/centres may be approved to use different marketing titles to the above (eg Access to Social Work) but the Access to HE Diploma title will appear on each student's certificate as agreed at validation panels in this case Access to HE Diploma (Humanities and Social Sciences).

This handbook provides the information required by providers to gain approval to run, deliver and quality assure Access to HE Diplomas. Information is also included about how to register and gain certification for students and how to make any requests for changes to units or Diplomas.

As well as providing an overview of the requirements of Certa and QAA, this handbook signposts providers to other supporting guidance documentation and website resources.

Who should use this Handbook?

The following Centre staff should have access to and be familiar with the content of this handbook:

- Tutors and Assessors
- Course Coordinators
- Internal Moderators
- Administration Contacts
- Quality Assurance Contacts
- Examination and MIS Contacts.

This handbook is an essential reference for anyone undertaking any of the above roles as it explains the policies, protocols and processes that are needed to ensure that students are able to achieve the Access to HE Diploma.

All external moderators will also have access to this document.

This handbook will be updated periodically. The latest version will always be available to download from the AVA section of the Certa website.

Contacts

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Section 2: Setting up an Access Course with Certa

Becoming an Approved Access to HE Provider

Certa recognised centres seeking approval to run an Access to HE Diploma should first complete and return a [Request to Run an Access to HE Diploma Application Form](#).

We will arrange for you to meet a member of the Access to HE team, who will discuss the planned course.

These applications will be scrutinised as part of the approval to run process, which can take place either following an Access to HE validation panel (in the case of a brand new Diploma) or by arrangement with individual centres/providers in the case of an existing Diploma. It is only on the successful completion of this process that a centre/provider becomes approved to deliver one or more Access to HE Diplomas.

Centres who are not a recognised centre will need to be guided through the Centre Recognition Process.

[This approval process complies with QAA regulations and ensures that all Diplomas meet QAA specifications and are fit for purpose in preparing students for study in higher education.]

Diploma Development, Validation and Approval

Any Certa recognised organisation wishing to initiate the development of a new AVA Access to HE Diploma should contact the Access to HE team by emailing acesstohe@certa.org.uk. A member of our team will then discuss the process and the fees involved.

Once initial approval for the development work is given by Certa, a member of our Access to HE team will work with you (and other representatives from Further and Higher Education organisations) to agree the units and rules of combination which will form the basis of the Learning Programme Plan (LPP) for the proposed new AVA Access to HE Diploma.

All Access to HE Diplomas accredited by Certa are subject to a validation process that leads to a recommendation for formal approval of the Diploma. The document produced for the validation process, describing all aspects of the programme, is known as the “Learning Programme Plan” (LPP). The LPP lists the units that form the specific Diploma, together with its associated Rules of Combination (RoC). The LPP will also indicate the conditions under which Recognition of Prior Learning, including credit transfer (see Chapter 2, How to Register Students and Award Credit) can be used in each Diploma.

The Learning Programme Plan

Access to HE Diplomas are designed to facilitate progression from further education to higher education, usually for anyone who has not benefitted from more traditional forms of education and to prepare them for that progression. Consultation with the higher education sector ensures that the Access to HE curriculum is not only appropriate to the needs of adult students but also appropriate to the requirements of higher education.

In preparing the LPP for each Diploma, Certa works with curriculum specialists from both HE and FE to give careful consideration to the type and volume of content needed to prepare students for studying at a higher level. The unit combinations and the set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria contained within the units must be seen to form a coherent programme of study appropriate to the proposed progression route.

The Unit Validation Panel

This is a collaborative meeting convened by Certa to look at the design and delivery aspects of new or revised units. Unit Validation Panels take place in advance of Diploma Validation Panels and are attended by an independent Chair, curriculum specialists from HE and FE, external moderators, specialists from other external organisations and Certa representatives. It is a peer process, which allows constructive discussion and encourages everyone to have an equal voice, though Certa representatives, observers and providers who are proposing new units or unit modifications are not permitted to take part in final decision making in the interests of impartiality.

Invited panel members receive copies of the units under consideration two weeks in advance of the panel. If panel members have substantial concerns about the units, they are asked to let Certa know in writing at least three days before the panel date to allow for a considered response to the issues raised. See [Guidance for Panel Members](#) which is available from the Access to HE Team.

Panel Outcomes

The Validation Panel will make a recommendation to the Access to HE Committee based on one of the following outcomes for a unit:

- **Approval without conditions:** i.e. no conditions attached although the Panel may make recommendations for the AVA to consider
- **Approval with conditions:** i.e. conditions set with an agreed timescale for meeting them - the Panel may also make recommendations for the AVA to consider
- **Deferred:** where changes are such that a resubmission is required.

Most units will be approved for the lifetime of the Access to HE Diploma that they are attached to, normally five years, with recommendations and/or conditions: a unit may be approved for one year if the Panel has substantial unresolved concerns about them.

Occasionally a unit may be considered inappropriate for approval in its current form in which case it is deferred. The aim is to reach a consensus rather than a voted decision.

Post Panel Activity

The AVA will meet any conditions relating to the units within the timescale set by the Panel, and a panel report will be produced within ten days after it has met. The panel report will be checked for accuracy by the Chair and presented for approval by the Access to HE Committee.

The Diploma Validation Panel

The responsibilities of the Diploma Validation Panel are to scrutinise the proposed LPP to assure the overall quality and coherence of the Diploma; to see that there is a clear HE progression route from the programme; and to approve the level and credit value of the individual units of assessment. Panel members will also focus on issues of equality and diversity in the organisation, delivery and content of the curriculum. Invited panel members receive a full copy of the Diploma submission documents two weeks before the panel. If panel members have any concerns about the Diploma, they are asked to send comments in writing to the AVA one week before the panel date to allow for a considered response to issues raised.

The Diploma Validation Panel will consider the LPP and may make some suggestions for improvement. It is attended by an independent chair, curriculum specialists from HE and FE, external moderators, specialists from other appropriate organisations and Certa representatives who act as officers to the panel and sit outside the decision making process. The panel process allows constructive discussion and encourages all members to have an equal voice. Suggestions and panel recommendations concerning improvements in course design/content are welcomed. Resourcing issues are referred back to Certa where the Panel feels that insufficient consideration has been given to the equality and diversity aspects of the Diploma.

The panel will also identify any minor textual additions or amendments. These will be noted and attached as a standard condition in a panel report, which is the formal record of the panel's decisions about the appropriateness of the LPP. If a submission is deferred and reconsidered at a later panel, every attempt will be made to include at least three of the same members from the original panel.

Student representatives may be invited to the panel in an observer role. A decision on whether to recommend the approval of the LPP will be made at the end of the panel meeting. The aim is to reach a consensus rather than a voted decision. Certa representatives, observers and providers who are proposing to seek approval to run the Diploma are not permitted to take part in final decision making in the interests of impartiality.

Panel Outcomes

The Validation Panel will make a recommendation to the Access to HE Committee based on one of the following outcomes for a Diploma:

- **Approval without conditions:** i.e. no conditions attached although the panel may make recommendations for the AVA to consider
- **Approval with conditions:** i.e. conditions are set with an agreed timescale for meeting them - the panel may also make recommendations for the AVA to consider
- **Deferred:** where changes are such that a resubmission is required.

Most Diplomas will be approved for five years, with recommendations and/or conditions: a Diploma may be approved for one year if the panel has substantial unresolved concerns about it.

Occasionally a Diploma may be considered inappropriate for approval in its current form in which case it is deferred for further consideration by the AVA. The aim is to reach a consensus rather than a voted decision.

Suggestions and panel recommendations concerning improvements in Diploma validation are to be welcomed.

Post Panel Activity

The AVA will meet any conditions relating to the LPP within the timescale set by the panel, and a panel report will be produced within ten days after it has met. The panel report will be checked for accuracy by the Chair and presented for approval by the Access to HE Committee.

Diploma Approval

This is achieved when the panel report has been approved by the Access to HE Committee and it is at this point that we will confirm, in writing, that the Diploma has met all requirements, and that it may be offered by an organisation subject to satisfactory completion of the Request to Run an AVA Diploma process.

Course Recognition

Once a provider has been approved to deliver an approved Diploma, the details of the provider and the course are included on the QAA's Access to HE database as a recognised Access to HE course. A funding code will be assigned at this point and providers can begin to deliver the Access to HE Diploma/s which they have been approved to run.

Major and Minor Modifications

No changes can be made to an approved LPP for an approved Diploma or its units, except through consultation with our Access to HE team.

If you wish to propose any changes to an approved LPP or to units, please complete and return a [Request for Modification to an Access to HE Diploma Form](#) to us.

Requests for minor modifications, such as the amendment of typographical errors in an LPP or the clarification of Learning Outcomes in a unit in a way which makes no difference to its content may be considered by us without reference to a panel.

Requests for major modifications such as the addition or removal of units from an approved LPP or any amendments which affect the title, learning outcomes, objectives, level of study, grade descriptors or credit weighting of a unit must be referred to a Validation Panel.

All requests for major modifications to an approved LPP or units will be subject to a process of consultation with all centres whose current provision might be affected by any proposed changes before being taken to panel.

Once the deadline for submitting requests for amendments to Diplomas or units has passed, we will continue the consultation process to involve all relevant providers. A [Request for Modification to an Access to HE Diploma Form](#) containing details of all proposed changes to a Diploma or unit and the rationale for the proposal, will be sent electronically to all centres who are running that Diploma in that academic year. These centres will be asked to consider whether they agree or disagree with any proposed amendments and to add their feedback before returning the form to us by a specified date.

All feedback from providers submitting and considering requests for amendments will be collated and presented for consideration at a Diploma or Unit Review Panel. These panels will be convened annually and dates will be published in the Access to HE Bulletin. They will operate in the same way as other validation panels and will be attended by an independent chair, curriculum specialists from HE and FE, external moderators, and Certa representatives.

Following the Validation Panel and subject to the approval of the panel report by the Access to HE Committee, the approved modifications to LPPs or units will be made. All updated LPPs and units will be stored in the relevant Diploma folders in our online storage facility (Dropbox) and in our unit bank. Modified versions of units will be allocated a new code and date. The quality managers of all providers approved to run the affected Diplomas or units will be informed of the outcome of the validation process, including any modifications made and of the dates from which modifications to LPPs or units will take effect. Information will also be included within the monthly bulletin.

Marketing the Diploma

It is a QAA requirement that we check your marketing and website material on an annual basis.

Certa expects the following logos be included in the design of any marketing material:

- Certa Logo
- QAA Access to HE Logo is used when promoting Access to HE Diplomas.

Please see our website for guidance on the current use of the logos, both for general use, and as a recognised centre.

You should:

- State clearly within your marketing material the minimum entry requirements for enrolment to the Diploma
- Take into account the requirements of Higher Education Institutions where the students may eventually study - entry requirements may include GCSE Maths, English or Science (A* to C) where these may be required to continue into higher education
- Be clear about the age restriction of any application for the Diploma course and make sure it complies with the Equality Act 2010.

Please refer to the Equality Act 2010, Part 6, Chapter 2:

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf

The following additional information is strongly recommended:

- Fees and remission conditions
- Support for students with specific needs
- Programme links with HE
- Progression routes possible for successful students.

The Diploma title used in any marketing material should be exactly as described in the Learning Programme Plan for that Diploma. However, a marketing title may be used if this has been approved within the Request to Run Application e.g.:

AVA Access to HE Diploma Title	Provider Marketing Title
Access to HE Diploma (Business)	Access to Business with Law
Access to HE Diploma (Humanities and Social Sciences)	Access to Social Work

We will make regular checks of your websites and will contact the provider's quality manager should any changes be required.

More detailed information is available on our website.

Access to HE Team Meetings

The success of any Access to HE Diploma course depends on the ability of the tutors to work closely as a team. It is recommended that tutor teams will meet formally at least once a month and more frequently if the situation demands. Meetings of course teams may be part of an organisation's scheduling of quality assurance activities and may have standard agendas. In this case it is necessary to allow time or schedule additional meetings to cover Certa and Access to HE items. Minutes from such meetings should include rolling action plans, held by the course co-ordinator and informed by the recommendations of external and internal moderators and staff and student suggestions for development/attention.

First Meeting of the Diploma Team

The following agenda items should be addressed as early in the Diploma course as possible:

- CPD requirements for each team member
- Any CPD events that we *require* you to attend (such as standardisation)
- Quality assurance calendar
- Appointment of internal moderators for each unit
- External moderator annual report
- Action plans for the year – to include action points from external moderators, internal moderation reports and student feedback mechanisms
- Student requirements for RPL/credit transfer
- Any requests for changes to the units intended to be delivered to be identified and communicated to Certa
- Communications that Certa will send, including items for action or information within bulletins.

Subsequent Team Meetings

It is expected that each provider will have some standing internal agenda items to include as well as those that deal specifically with our requirements. Agenda items that should be included are:

- Student progress in assessment
- Identification of those students at risk and action required
- Progress against action plans and new additions
- Recording of assessment and grading on the Recommendation for Award of Credit
- Cascade of feedback from Certa events; check on attendance at these and standardisation events
- Issues arising from the use of the current units
- Planning of a pre-Awards Board prior to the final moderation and Awards Board
- Completion of the annual electronic course team report (deadline end of July).

Providers' Annual Course Reports

Certa is required to report to QAA each year relating to the previous academic year's activity. Providers' annual reports are an essential tool in helping Certa understand the data trends, on which we must report to QAA.

Whilst it is accepted that providers may not finalise their own self-evaluation reports until later in the year, it is vital that providers submit information to Certa to enable us to comply with our Licence requirements.

We will collect this information at the end of the academic year (the deadline being end of July) through electronic surveys which will include questions relating to QAA licensing criteria such as:

- Student recruitment, retention, achievement and success
- Student progression and destinations
- Standards of student performance
- Student feedback received about the course and the quality of their learning experience, and the provider's/centre's response to issues raised
- Examples of innovation and good practice.

The electronic survey link will be sent to providers by Certa and must be completed on-line by the end of July.

Course evaluations are a vital way in which we fulfil our requirements to QAA (taking feedback from providers). Failure to return the survey within the specified timeframe will be recorded as a quality issue and may affect the risk rating of your Diploma.

The Student Handbook

Students on an approved Access to HE Diploma course *must* be supported through a Student Handbook.

Apart from details of the curriculum, assessment requirements specific to the particular Diploma, and support mechanisms specific to the provider, the following areas of information *should* be available:

- Contact details for the provider, the tutors, learning resources and guidance facilities
- Attendance requirements and procedure for notification of absence
- Your procedure for submitting mitigating circumstances and when it is appropriate to do so
- Plagiarism, appeals and complaints and how your policies are implemented
- The credits/levels involved in the achievement of the Diploma (e.g. that although only 45 credits are graded, all 60 must be achieved)
- Information about grading
- A statement that all credits and grades are provisional until ratified by the external moderation process on inspection of the completed portfolio to allow recommendations to be made to the Awards Board
- Clear guidance on the preparation of a portfolio and its role in the decision-making process leading to successful achievement of the Diploma
- Student responsibilities for making their completed portfolio available for moderation
- Details of the on course referral process
- Application of deadlines
- Acceptable use of 'drafts'
- The work of the Awards Board in relation to the student

- How and when to apply for HE courses
- The post-Awards Board process towards receiving the Access to HE Diploma certificate
- The referral process.

A skeleton student handbook is available to download from the Access section of the Certa website, this can be used as a basis for the provider's handbook.

Student Representatives

It is a *requirement* for each provider to supply the name and email contact details for a student representative for each Access to HE Diploma delivered by the provider.

We will send a form to collect this information, to your quality manager at the beginning of the academic year and this must be returned before October half-term.

Student representatives are likely to represent a wide variety of issues on behalf of their student cohorts including, but not limited to:

- Learning and teaching methods
- Assessment methods
- Support provided by personal tutors
- Learning and teaching resource
- Facilities
- Academic events
- Academic issues affecting student progression to HE.

The key tasks of student representatives are to:

- Make themselves and their role known to the students that they represent
- Receive, promote and disseminate our student surveys for completion by fellow students
- Proactively seek academic related views, questions and experiences of their fellow students
- Represent the academic related views, questions and experiences obtained from their fellow students
- Work with provider staff to resolve any issues or questions that have been raised by their fellow students
- Disseminate updates and outcomes on issues discussed at joint meetings of staff and student representatives
- Attend student representative meetings each academic year at Certa.

Student representatives should not take on the personal complaints or grievances of fellow students.

We will contact student representatives during the year to:

- Advise of student competitions being organised
- Invite to student representative meetings
- Request completion of questionnaires and surveys for feedback on current topics.

Student representatives may also be invited to attend Access to HE Unit and Diploma Validation Panels.

To comply with Data Protection, by becoming a student representative, students are agreeing that their name, address and e-mail address will be held on a database compiled

by Certa which contains the name and email address of each student representative in that academic year.

Section 3: How to Register Students and Award Credit

Student Registration

It is a QAA requirement that Access to HE students must be:

- Registered within 42 days of commencement of their course (6 weeks)
- Registered to 60 credits by week 12 – taking into account the units (including barred combinations) referred to in the Learning Programme Plan

Credit Accumulation, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Credit Transfer

Students accumulate credit towards the Diploma by achieving units of a particular credit value (3, 6 or 9 credits) through the process of assessment on an Access to HE course, but they may also do this through the processes of credit transfer and through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) where a particular Access to HE Diploma allows.

The principle underpinning RPL is that students who have already achieved relevant learning, either through experience or through previously certificated achievement, should not have to repeat that learning unnecessarily. Good practice in RPL requires that the potential for any individual student to claim credit through any form of RPL should be identified within an initial assessment process. If a judgement is made at this time that there is evidence of appropriate prior learning, requests for such RPL should be forwarded to the Access to HE team at Certa, using the [Application for the Award of RPL in Access to HE Form](#) at the point of registration of the student. The external moderator will expect to see evidence of this at the first moderation visit.

Up to a maximum of 50% of the credits for a Diploma can be gained through RPL and/or credit transfer on Diplomas that the Approval Panel agreed as such. The RPL status of a Diploma is shown under the Rules of Combination in the Learning Programme Plan for that Diploma.

The process of RPL does not allow grades to be awarded but the process of credit transfer does.

Credit transfer allows students to count credits awarded on other Access to HE courses (including grades awarded) towards their credit achievements on a new course.

The student must be made aware of the potential advantages and disadvantages of pursuing a claim for RPL. In particular, it is essential to ensure that a student does not opt out of the teaching and assessments for a unit which is part of their Diploma because they hope to gain credits through any form of RPL, only then to discover that the RPL claim has not been successful.

RPL must not be used:

- Where a student does not yet have evidence of the achievement of learning (for example, for a qualification being taken concurrently with the Access to HE Diploma)
- As a mechanism applied late in a course as a remedy for a student not achieving sufficient credits to be awarded a Diploma.

Selecting Units (Course Leaders)

Providers will select the units by accessing the AVA's portal. It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that the correct rules of combination are identified – although there is a check made automatically within the portal.

Once your students have been registered and valid unit selections for each student have been input you will be able to generate the Recommendation for the Award of Credit form (RAC) from the portal. This identifies the units each student is registered to and allows you to input the grades they receive for each unit as they progress through the course. It is this document which must be made available to the external moderator at both their visits and at the final Awards Board which signs off all student achievements.

Changing a Student's List of Registered Units

We recognise that in **exceptional circumstances**, students may wish to make changes to the list of units they registered within the first 12 weeks of the start of their Diploma course. Therefore we have put in place a protocol for amending the registered list of units.

In all cases it is expected that some action by the student and/or provider to substantiate the request to make a change to the registered list will have taken place prior to the request being received by Certa. The two circumstances where requests for amendment may be considered are:

Student changing choice of HE course during the Diploma course:

In this case, it is expected that the student will have contacted the higher education institutions (HEIs) to which they have applied, to indicate their change of course and if relevant will also have contacted any other HEIs that could offer the course they now wish to take. There should be reasonable grounds to indicate that the student will be offered a conditional place on the higher education course they now wish to take. Documentary evidence to this effect may be requested by Certa.

In some situations the student may have been guided by the provider to consider a different HEI either through lack of potential in receiving successful offers for their first choice or through unexpected extenuating circumstances. The request for change must indicate that such guidance has taken place.

It is expected that ALL students will have fully researched their potential higher education courses before starting their Diploma and therefore should not normally need to change their unit choice.

Provider unable to offer a registered unit through unexpected absence of delivery staff, where replacement staff were not available:

The provider must try to ensure that as far as possible any new unit brought into the student's course will be in the same curriculum area as has become unavailable. Many HEIs place conditional offers on the number of grades from certain curriculum strands.

The QAA Access to HE Diploma Specification 2013 states that:

'Good practice in course delivery should ensure that students are given early information about any choices of optional units available to them on their chosen Diploma, and they should make their choices to reflect their interests and progression ambitions. However, it is recognised that there may be exceptional circumstances outside of a student's control that mean that an amendment to a registration needs to be made.'

We will accept applications from students, via their course team leader, by completion of a [Request to Change Student's List of Registered Units Form](#) available to download from the Certa website up to a maximum of 9 credits. The policy and protocol for a request to change a student unit outlines this application process and is available to download from the Certa website.

There is an admin fee payable by the provider in respect of each request form submitted.

Responsibilities with Regard to Changing a Student's Units

We will implement our procedure for determining the exceptional circumstances under which an amendment to a student's unit registration will be permitted.

We will consider whether the amendment does not give the student making the request an advantage in relation to other students on their course. In particular, it ensures that an amendment is not allowed if it fails to meet any of the following criteria:

- Must not create a situation where a student is at any time registered for, or may be able to achieve, more than 60 credits
- Must be consistent with the rules of combination for the named Diploma for which the student is registered
- Must not be allowed if the unit to which the amendment relates is one that has already been delivered on the student's course and for which other students have already been assessed
- Must not be used in any way that allows a student to improve their grade profile through substitution of a new unit for one already achieved
- Must not exceed a total credit value of 9 credits
- Must be completed no later than 26 weeks after the planned start date of the course for which the student is registered.

Where the amendment is agreed, we will issue an official record of the amendment to the provider, in the form of a statement of the changes made, identifying the unit/s for which the student is no longer registered and the unit/s for which they are now registered.

Certa will:

- Consider, and inform the student, via your organisation of their decision within five working days of receipt of the correctly completed form
- Keep records of all requests for amendments to a registration and the outcome of those requests
- Consider the exceptional circumstances that have given rise to the request
- Monitor the pattern of such requests and take action if it identifies providers that make more than exceptional use of the procedure to amend registrations
- Present records of requests for such amendments to Certa's Access to HE Committee for approval
- Report on the use of this procedure to QAA on an annual basis, if required
- Inform providers that students who amend the details of their registration after the student has applied to higher education should be advised to notify the higher education courses to which they have applied of this change. Failure to do this could lead to the withdrawal of the offer of a place when the higher education institute receives the transcript of student achievement after the student has completed their Diploma.
- Inform the Awards Team of the agreed change in order that a refreshed Recommendation for the Award of Credit (RAC) can be generated for the student(s)

- Request that the Access to HE Committee considers a request to change a unit beyond the 26 week limit for a student with extreme exceptional circumstances - this may be presented to the Committee Chair between scheduled meetings. It will be made clear to the student (through the provider's Student Handbook, and from the guidance given from Certa) that it will be the Access to HE Committee, not the AVA that will consider late requests.
- Issue an invoice in accordance with our current charging policy for each student's request.

Your organisation will:

- Ensure that changed unit(s) must sit within the same curriculum as the unit(s) that were originally offered
- Contact all HEIs to which students have applied advising them of the change of unit(s) delivery now being offered
- Advise any student that makes a request for a change to unit(s) beyond the 26 week deadline, that this will be considered by the Access to HE Committee and not the AVA
- Advise the students to notify HEIs to which they have applied of the change in unit(s).

The student will:

- Ensure that they receive early information and guidance from the provider about any choices of optional units available to them within their chosen diploma, and they should make their choices to reflect their interest and progression ambitions
- Be prompt in informing the course tutor for a request to a change of unit(s)
- Inform the HEI of the change to unit/s as failure to do so could lead to the withdrawal of an offer of a place.

The [Request to Change Student's List of Registered Units Form](#) can be found on the Certa website and after completion should be forwarded together with documentary evidence to our Access to HE Team.

Final Moderation Process

The final moderation visit should take place between mid-June and mid-July to complete the sampling and external moderation of all units, and to confirm the achievement of the Diploma and/or credits. Students' work is sampled, and the quality assurance documentation is closely monitored.

The purpose of the visit is to:

- Sample from formally assessed work to confirm that the student has achieved against specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria and to assist the AVA to mitigate against malpractice
- To assure that assessment decisions are appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent across the sample
- To assure the correct implementation of grading requirements
- To assure that grade indicator and grade decisions are appropriate, consistent and fair across the sample
- To assure that grading processes are correctly applied to result in a grade for the unit, and that any grade information is clearly shown at all stages of the process
- To check the quality file to ensure that all activities planned in the calendar for quality assurance have been completed

- To ensure that the internal quality assurance system has been effectively applied to the provision throughout the year.

Final moderation of all Access to HE Diplomas will be in accordance with Certa's Moderation Protocol. Providers must ensure that all relevant personnel are familiar with this protocol prior to the event.

Re-convened Final Moderation

A final moderation may only be re-convened when:

- The external moderator is not satisfied that due process and preparation has taken place at the point of final moderation
- A provider makes a special request to the AVA no later than one month before the date set for the final moderation. Circumstances leading to this request are expected to be supported with detailed, mitigating evidence to allow the AVA to make a decision on the request.

Re-convened final moderation will be subject to external moderator availability and a quality fee.

The Awards Board Process

All Access to HE Diploma courses are required to hold a formal Awards Board. It is the responsibility of the provider's quality contact to arrange the Awards Board. It is chaired by a member of senior management from the provider. The final Awards Board is normally held in late June or early July and will usually take place immediately following the final moderation visit. This is to ensure that:

- (i) results can be processed and uploaded to UCAS well before A-level results day in mid-August
- (ii) certificates can be printed and forwarded to providers for onward transmission to students.

There are some exceptions to these dates (for example: courses which commence in January).

If more than one Awards Board is taking place on the same day, external moderators are required to act as the AVA representative.

Certification for students can only be progressed when all documentation is accurately completed and forwarded to Certa. This includes:

- Accurate minutes of the Awards Board which are fully completed and signed by the chair and external moderator
- Fully completed RAC which is submitted electronically
- A signed copy of the front sheet of the RAC.

Whilst Certa's Access to HE team will have contacted the quality contact of the provider to finalise the date and to advise who should be in attendance at the Awards Board, it is the provider's responsibility to ensure that the Awards Board business is completed on the day.

All Access to HE Awards Boards will be conducted in accordance with our [Final Moderation and Awards Board Policy and Protocol](#) which is available to download from the Certa website. Providers must ensure that all relevant personnel are familiar with this document prior to the event.

Providers are responsible for completing the Awards Board minutes. The Awards Board minutes template and agenda will be forwarded to providers in May and will also be available to download from the website.

Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards

While unforeseen serious and traumatic events are generally infrequent, they may nonetheless be inevitable. QAA allows Certa to consider the award of aegrotat certificates or the making of posthumous awards - including where achievement was incomplete, where this is supported by a recommendation from the provider and the external moderator. The making of this **exceptional** award is formally notified through appropriate channels to the Access to HE Committee which holds responsibility for the award of Access to HE certificates. Before submitting a request for an aegrotat award, the student must be confident that they can perform successfully in HE and will have demonstrated that they have contacted their receiving HEI(s) for confirmation that they will accept an aegrotat award as an appropriate award for progression. The provider must be able to support the student request for an aegrotat.

The external moderator must be notified of any potential aegrotat prior to the final moderation in order that the associated evidence is scrutinised.

An [Application for an Aegrotat Award](#) form, available on the Certa website, must be completed and submitted to the AVA at least two weeks before the Awards Board.

Conditions under which an Aegrotat or Posthumous Award may be made

The external moderators may include the name of any candidate in the pass list under the heading 'aegrotat' if all the following conditions have been fulfilled:

- The candidate was prevented by serious illness or other sufficient cause from completing the assessment of no less than 30 credits
- The candidate's work during the course has been satisfactory
- The candidate has otherwise satisfied all existing requirements of the Access to HE Diploma
- The external moderators do not consider that they have sufficient evidence to enable them to confirm the achievement of the Access to HE Diploma
- The candidate has not applied for his or her candidature to be postponed
- The candidate has made a written application to Certa requesting award of an aegrotat
- The provider must be able to support the student application for an aegrotat award.

OR, in the case of a posthumous award:

- The providing institution makes a written application to Certa on behalf of the student in the case of death.

Aegrotat and posthumous awards are both agenda items for the Awards Board.

The Awards Board will consider the following criteria before awarding an aegrotat:

- There are **exceptional** certified medical or similar traumatic circumstances that have resulted in the student being unable to complete the course requirements. We expect that such circumstances will not exist at the time of enrolment, when students can be offered appropriate support for ongoing conditions or situations that affect their ability to access learning.

- The student has achieved at least 30 credits required for the aegrotat. In practice, the AVA would need to receive robust evidence that the student is fully prepared for study in HE and a testimonial to this effect from tutors is required.

Certa will submit the Awards Board's recommendations for the award of aegrotat Diplomas to Certa's Access to HE Committee for approval. The Access to HE Diploma is awarded without full credits; the unit and grade profile will be incomplete. The Diploma awarded will state that it is an aegrotat award.

Posthumous Award of the Access to HE Diploma

A posthumous award may be awarded at the discretion of the Awards Board. This award will be minuted and presented to Certa's Access to HE Committee for approval.

Re-convened Awards Board

A change in an Awards Board date may arise within the immediate preceding 28 days through situations beyond the control of any of the stakeholders, e.g. floods, fire, health or safety considerations. In such cases the provider and the AVA will work together to agree the optimum way of addressing QAA requirements for the Awards Board.

The AVA may also request to postpone the Awards Board if it decides that the award of credit at the time of the Awards Board is insecure. Such a situation may arise if the external moderator, through the sampling process, finds several cases of erroneous achievement data or assessment documents missing and contacts the AVA to request a reconvened Awards Board.

Should the provider postpone the Awards Board for any reason other than those of a traumatic nature, then financial sanctions will be imposed.

For any situation that results in a re-convened Awards Board, the needs of the students will be considered as a priority. The postponement should not delay the official award of the Diploma and thus have consequences in the process of accepting university offers.

Certification and the Sharing of Results

Once the results have been verified, Certa's awards team is notified that they are ready for certification. The certificates are printed, checked and sent securely to providers to be sent on to students. Certificates are usually sent within 3-4 days of verification, although this may take longer at busy times of the academic year.

Students should be informed that their results will be shared but that this does not replace the need for students to contact the university personally to confirm their results.

Retaking the Access to HE Diploma

Once a student has achieved a full Access to HE Diploma, they cannot be registered on individual units of the programme with a view to gaining a different grade. If a student wishes to retake units they must be registered on the whole Access to HE Diploma again. If a student makes the decision to retake the Diploma, the provider must take into account funding, assessment and quality issues before offering the student a place. If the student is offered a place, the provider must ensure that new assessments are provided and that none of the set assessments replicate those previously undertaken by the student. The external moderator must be made aware, and given the opportunity to scrutinise the relevant work to ensure that this is the case.

Section 4: Assessing and Grading Student Work Assessment

The Importance of Assessment in Certa Accreditation

The accreditation of learning depends on the ability to assess it accurately and effectively.

Tutors/assessors play a vital role in the whole process of students achieving credit as they have the most direct impact on the delivery and assessment of the Access to HE Diploma. Tutors/assessors *must*:

- Deliver the Diploma according to the approved Learning programme Plan (LPP) and any subsequent approved documentation
- Assess students' work in accordance with Certa requirements and QAA Licence Criteria
- Ensure students' work is presented as a portfolio of achievement with units, assessment briefs, student evidence and tutor feedback (evidence of learning activities and tutor handouts should be kept in a separate file as evidence of the learning journey)
- Participate in internal quality assurance processes, external moderation and standardisation activity, and awards boards as appropriate.

It should be noted that a final moderation event is likely to be reconvened if student portfolios are not presented appropriately.

Considerable attention is given to the process of assessment at all stages from Diploma LPP approval to final moderation which leads to the confirmation of achievement. The standing of Certa credits, grades and Diplomas depends on the integrity of the assessment procedures.

Definitions of Assessment

QAA expects Certa to ensure that:

- The conduct of assessment and application of assessment regulations by providers is thorough, rigorous and fair
- Minimum standards required for threshold achievement and performance are consistent with the requirements for achievement of the relevant learning outcomes
- Consistent standards are applied in assessment, so that equivalent student achievement and performance is reflected in recommendations for credits and grades.

Assignment: refers to the output of student work, both as described in terms of the expectations and requirements given in the assignment brief and the major pieces of assessed work students produce in response to the brief.

Tasks: refers to individual items or stages of work within assignments.

Assessment: refers to the whole process leading to the tutor awarding grading and/or credit for a unit, i.e. the assignment (brief and student work) and the feedback with achievement/grading decisions where appropriate from the tutor. Assessment is also:

- The way of finding out what a student has learned
- A source of evidence of the progress and achievement for both tutors and students.

Assessors

Assessors must be either experienced in teacher-assessed credit-based assessment, or qualified, i.e. hold an appropriate assessment or teaching qualification. Tutors with little experience in devising assessment tasks must attend appropriate training.

Assessment Strategy

When making an Application for Approval to Run a Diploma, we expect that providers will have developed an appropriate assessment strategy in line with your own organisation's policy.

The assessment strategy for each Diploma must enable students to develop all the personal and academic skills required in higher education. The assessment strategy should include the types and methods of assessment used in HE, such as essays, projects and timed constrained assignments such as exams, as appropriate.

An assessment strategy created and shared by the team will ensure that:

- No one method is over-used
- There are sufficient opportunities to develop oral presentation and communication skills
- The student gains adequate practice in taking time-constrained assignments
- There are sufficient assignments to ensure authenticity, reliability and fairness and that these are scheduled appropriately through the Diploma programme
- There are alternative assignments to accommodate on-course referral opportunities.

Personal development must be considered in the design of an assessment strategy. Students should be given opportunities to:

- Plan study time appropriately
- Identify own skills and potential
- Research opportunities for future employment and subsequent appropriate HE courses
- Be proactive in searching out advice and guidance
- Deal with stress in assessment i.e. through unseen tests, oral presentations
- Work to deadlines in time constrained assignments and through responses to assignment brief
- Work in a group
- Reflect on own and others' performances sensitively and constructively.

The process of development of a course will include identifying the details of the provider's proposed overall assessment strategy. This proposal must meet the requirements of the approved LPP of a named Diploma. It will take account of the level, context, content and delivery of the Diploma. It must address the questions "What is assessment for?" and "Why are we doing it this way?"

Refer to the specific unit descriptor, which will contain the assessment methods that are required, or optional, in most cases. Some unit information provides guidance on appropriate assessment methods in the assessment grid. Any method identified as 'Prescribed' (P) must be used. Any method identified as 'Optional' (O) may be used.

Assessment Tasks

Within the assessment strategy, providers must ensure that student work for each task is assessed against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and judged to be either achieved or not achieved. All learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be met.

Assessors should ensure that:

- Assessment is planned, appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent and does not unintentionally discriminate against any student
- Students clearly understand assessment requirements
- Students' work is authentic, i.e. completed by the named student
- Work is sufficient, i.e. provides enough evidence from each student to enable robust judgements about achievement
- Student achievement is clearly mapped to the assessment criteria.

Assessment tasks must:

- Map to the learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Be developed as written documents in their own right
- Be internally verified before they are used with students
- Be fit for purpose, i.e. valid, reliable, sufficient and accessible
- Cover a range of assessment methods wherever possible
- Be designed in such a way as to minimise bias
- Be the same for each group that is following the course
- Match the standard exemplified in any benchmark assessment tasks
- Enable evidence of authenticity
- Be different when used in response to approval of a referral opportunity
- Be stored in a secure place that ensures confidentiality where required.

Certa can offer training in devising and developing assessment tasks, by arrangement. Please contact our Access to HE team. Development fees will apply.

Making Assessment Assignments User-Friendly

The best way to make assessments user-friendly, clear, transparent and transferable is to set the assignment out clearly in a briefing paper. The use of a common briefing format across all curriculum strands in the Diploma is recommended.

The briefing sheet should contain the following:

- Diploma title
- Unit prefix and title
- Assessment criteria to be covered by the assignment
- The grading descriptors to be used where appropriate and how the evidence for the assignments link to components of the grading descriptors
- An indication of the number of assignments used to complete the unit
- The assignment tasks
- The date the assignment was given to the student
- The deadline for the submission of the assignment – word processed into the briefing sheet
- An indication of word count if appropriate
- Whether drafts are acceptable and if so, the associated deadline for any drafts
- Some indication of the range and type of references to be used, if appropriate.

Making Achievement Transparent through Assessment

For a student to be awarded the Diploma there must be a transparent process of recording evidence of achievement against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit/s.

An assessment feedback sheet is essential, which must include:

- Student name
- Diploma title
- Unit prefix and title
- Deadline date
- Date of submission by the student (an agreed late deadline date must appear on this sheet and have auditable links to the mitigating circumstances submitted by the student) (Non-agreed late submissions are capped at a 'Pass' for graded units, although there may be circumstances where an application for on-course referral is appropriate. Refer to the [Policy for Dealing with On-Course Referrals for Access to HE Students](#).)
- Clear mapping of evidence to the unit assessment criteria
- Achievement or non-achievement clearly identified with a field for a new submission date for non-achievement of a first submission
- Achievement or non-achievement that is clearly identified in a resubmission, with indication of the student instigating the on-course referral process where appropriate
- Grading indicators awarded for each descriptor assigned to the assignment where appropriate; if there is only one assignment used for the achievement of a graded unit, the final grade awarded for the unit must be shown
- Written feedback to the student from the assessor to cover constructive developmental comments, including where a Distinction indicator is given, identification of good practice and justification for the award of particular grade indicators as appropriate.

Types of Assessment

Initial diagnostic	
Form:	Usually takes place before or at the start of a Diploma.
Purpose:	To identify current learning style and strengths in order to determine the potential needs and areas for development of individuals and/or the group.

Formative	
Form:	Developmental and continuous throughout the course.
Purpose:	To give feedback and support to the student about progress towards learning outcomes and to inform the tutor of possible action to take. It should be used to empower students to take responsibility for their own learning and assessment.

Summative	
Form:	Takes place during or towards the end of a unit of learning within the Diploma and counts towards final assessment. It is criterion-referenced and uses the assessment criteria in the units.
Purpose:	To measure the learning and achievement that has taken place by the end of a learning experience.

Assessment Methods

Assessment methods refer to the activity defined by the assignments that the student undertakes and the ways in which assessors can mark and record the responses to these assignments. Any assessment strategy should include a variety of assessment methods, adapted as necessary to the needs of the target group and the curriculum.

The merits of using examinations, both unseen and seen, have been discussed with HE contacts in terms of current practice within HE.

Assessment methods include:

- Observation of activities in the learning environment, such as role-play, group work, simulations, practical activities, discussion, performance
- Questioning, oral or written, informal or formally structured sometimes referred to as vivas
- Structured assignments undertaken in the student's own time, such as:
 - A project
 - A practical exercise
 - An essay
 - A case study or assignment
 - Production of an artefact; either physically or electronically, exhibition, show, display
 - Preparation of a report, (written or oral)
 - Structured assignments or tests undertaken in timed conditions, such as written, oral or practical examinations.

The assessment process should empower students by including:

- Open, unambiguous and transparent briefing
- Developmental feedback on the process and results of assessment
- Opportunities to demonstrate learning by every student
- Relevance to and integration into the learning process
- The opportunity for students to reflect on their own learning
- The opportunity for students to appeal against assessment and grading decisions.

Characteristics of Assessment

All assessment methods should be valid, reliable, fit for purpose and inclusive.

Valid

Assessment should measure what it claims to measure and what is important to measure; in other words, there should be a close fit between the assessment method(s) and the learning outcome(s).

Reliable

The assessment result should be replicable and consistent either under different circumstances, or with a different assessor. For example, the conditions provided for an assessed presentation for one student group (lectern, PowerPoint etc.) should be made available for all.

Fit for Purpose

Assessment methods should be appropriate for the form of assessment. For example, an initial assessment should build confidence and not deter a student from appropriate progression. Tasks must generate sufficient evidence from each student to enable assessors to make robust judgements.

Word Count

Assessment should be appropriate to credit value. Writing a 3000 word essay would not be appropriate for a 3-credit unit; a word count of between 1000 and 1500 would be more appropriate depending on the type of assessment. Assessment must be appropriate to the credit level. Essays, formal reports and presentations are some of the assignment types that are appropriate at Level Three.

Inclusive

Assessment methods should not raise unnecessary barriers to demonstration of achievement. Tasks should be designed to minimise bias and to permit reasonable adjustments to be made, while minimising the need for them.

Evidence should be tailored to the needs of individuals or groups, and evidence should always be flexible, varied and appropriate. Therefore, a student with physical difficulties may provide visual or oral evidence such as photographs or DVDs rather than the notes and reports produced by the rest of the group, a student with dyslexia should not be asked to produce a timed assignment without support. Tutors must ensure that the evidence provided is genuinely appropriate to the level of the unit. New tutors must be supported in this area, and internally moderated to ensure these principles are adhered to.

The tutor needs to ensure that students are given opportunity to provide the required evidence, but care must be taken not to give the student so much support that the work becomes essentially that of the tutor.

Authentic

Assignments that lead to student evidence that is the result of the student's own performance activity are an essential part of any assessment strategy in an Access to HE Diploma course. Appropriate mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that the student has done the work that is presented.

In Diplomas where word-processed submissions of evidence are used, it is necessary for tutors or assessors to require pieces of handwritten evidence such as drafts, plans and notes as part of the assessment strategy in the majority of units. The use of a signature from the student to agree that the work is his/her own is required. Providers are increasingly likely to make use of electronic plagiarism checking software. Please use your provider's policy on plagiarism and academic malpractice where this is suspected, and ensure that the external moderator is made aware of the process followed in each case.

Management of Assessment

Record-keeping is essential. Anyone engaged in the assessment of students' work should log and maintain records of student achievement. There should be some facility for the coordination of assessment decisions for every student and every unit. We ask you to use the electronic Recommendation for the Award of Credit (RAC) as the core tracking document for assessment decisions for each completed unit.

Assessment by the Tutor

The tutor is responsible for planning, devising and managing the assessment strategy for the units of learning they deliver and ensuring that it matches the information on the unit assessment grid and as listed in the LPP. The tutor is also responsible for sharing the learning outcomes and assessment criteria with students, recording assessment, giving ongoing feedback and ensuring that all students have equal opportunities for their learning to be assessed. A tutor should provide guidance to students where there are choices regarding assessment, and is responsible for communication and liaison with any other assessor, informally as well as through regular team meetings.

Assessment by People other than the Delivery Tutor

Peer/Self-Assessment

Peer and self-assessment are usual forms of any learning process for both the student and the peer assessor. Many group activities will lend themselves to this form of assessment, particularly where the skills include communication or personal development. It is important that the tutor retains overall responsibility, perhaps by countersigning to indicate agreement or adding further comment.

Key Points to Remember when Using Self/Peer Assessment:

- The criteria for making judgements must come from the unit being assessed
- All students must be clear about which criteria are being assessed
- All students must understand that they are assessing only against those criteria and that personal judgements are not appropriate
- There are many situations where peer and self-assessment will not be appropriate, for instance where students or tutors lack confidence
- Students must have the knowledge and skills in the particular curriculum area and level to effectively self and peer assess
- All students must understand the level at which they are assessing/being assessed
- All students must be supported to feel safe in making these assessment decisions
- Assessment evidence should be captured using appropriate observation sheets
- Tutors must provide training to students to develop their understanding and competence in making these assessment decisions
- Peer and self-assessment must take place in a safe, supportive and transparent manner
- Tutors must consider the need to provide for a de-briefing session.

No more than one third of a student's portfolio should consist of this kind of evidence. We recommend that you consider inviting the internal moderator to a self/peer assessment activity where there is an opportunity to moderate a tutor's verbal feedback to students.

Assessment by Others within and External to the Learning Environment

Support workers, care assistants, mentors, witnesses, line managers in work placement situations, and others who contribute to the learning process, may be involved in assessment. It is essential that these additional sources have full access to the unit specifications, i.e. title, credit value, learning outcomes and assessment criteria. They must work in liaison with the student and the tutor.

Section 5: Grading

Definition of Terms and Processes used when Applying Grades

There are terms within the QAA grading document that have specific meaning and associated processes:

Drafts

The assessor may wish to give students the opportunity to submit a draft of their response to an assignment. The following key points must be addressed in this case:

- The opportunity to submit a draft must be indicated in the assignment brief
- There must be a deadline for the presentation of drafts to the assessor well before the actual submission deadline - this delay allows the assessor to review the draft so that the student can address any action points
- Draft opportunities are not appropriate for time-constrained assessments or normally recommended in the final term/semester of a Diploma course
- Draft work must be retained for scrutiny by external moderators.

Submissions

This word is used to describe the act of presenting the response to an assignment to the assessor; it should be used only for the initial presentation of completed work and not to draft work. Submissions must meet the deadlines set, or be presented with an application (and evidence) for mitigating circumstances.

Extensions

Extensions are allowed as long as the following criteria are adhered to:

- The tutor has received formal request with mitigating circumstances before the deadline
- The decision to grant an extension request should sit outside of the subject tutor responsibility and may rest with the course leader or another tutor
- A clear and documented extension deadline is given
- Marking and feedback must not have been given to other students as to provide unfair advantage for students who are granted any extension request
- Evidence of all extensions agreed and rejected are available for the external moderator for scrutiny
- The tutor team must monitor the occurrences of extension requests, for the emergence of patterns.

Resubmissions

If a student's work does not meet the assessment criteria for the assignment at Level Three, then the student should be given appropriate feedback and an opportunity for resubmission of the work with a further deadline. If the work is submitted to the agreed deadline and meets the assessment criteria for the assignment, i.e. the student has achieved, the grading process is implemented where appropriate to a graded unit and the student can be awarded any of the range of grading indicators as appropriate.

If the resubmitted work does not meet the agreed deadline for submission but meets the assessment criteria, all grade indicators for the assignment are capped at 'Pass'.

Referrals

If the resubmitted work does not meet the assessment criteria, the student must be advised about the opportunity for an application for on-course referral (or second resubmission opportunity) in line with Certa's Policy. A student may only make such an application up to 15 credits. Certa will monitor the extent to which the use of referrals is recorded by Diploma and provider, and Certa will offer training and support where there is evidence of an over-reliance on this facility. It is important that reference is made to the [Policy for Dealing with On-Course Referrals for Access to HE Students](#).

Representations

Where a student believes the administrative process for the awarding of a grade for a unit has not been correctly followed and has made representation to the tutor, the tutor then follows Certa's guidelines to deal with the representation. If after this process the student still feels an error has been made in the grading decision, then an Appeal, with evidence, should be submitted to the Awards Board.

If an administrative or human error is made in determining the final grade for a unit, then the student may make a representation to the assessor. The assessor must then ask the internal moderator or an experienced tutor for the Diploma course to check the process for awarding the grade. Any change to the overall grade must be recorded for auditing purposes.

Assignment Submission by Students (Guidance)

A student must make a robust attempt in any assignment by the deadline supplied. If the assessor considers that the student has not attempted to address all or most of the assessment criteria in an assignment, then any evidence presented by the student does not represent a submission made in good faith. Therefore, the student will be deemed to have missed the deadline and the grading process applied to any further attempt will result in capping the grade or grade indicators at a Pass.

Key Features of the Access to HE Grading Scheme

The Access to HE Diploma requires the grading of only 45 credits at Level Three. A further 15 ungraded Level Three or Level Two credits are also awarded to enable a student to achieve the Access to HE Diploma of 60 credits. A detailed description of the operation of grading can be found on the Certa website.

- A grade is awarded for every graded Level 3 unit that a student completes successfully as part of an Access to HE Diploma.
- There is no overall or composite grade for the Access to HE Diploma.
- The number of grades awarded to a student depends on the number of graded Level 3 units required for the particular Access to HE Diploma. This number can vary because, although all Diplomas contain 45 credits from graded level 3 units, these units can have a value of 3, 6 or 9 credits. So, for example, some Diplomas have a small number of 9 credit units, while others have a larger number of 3 credit units. The number of separate grades awarded to a student is therefore a consequence of the structure of the particular Diploma and not a reflection of the student's standard of performance.
- The grade awarded for each unit is shown on the achievement transcript that is issued with Access to HE Diplomas. (The transcript also shows how many credits were awarded for each successfully completed graded or ungraded unit). Further references in this document to 'units' means graded Level 3 units unless otherwise specified.
- A grade of pass, merit or distinction is awarded for each graded unit.

- The standard of performance required for a pass grade is the minimum required to meet the specified assessment criteria for the learning outcomes of the unit. (There is no separate definition of a pass grade). Merit and distinction grades indicate higher levels of performance within level.
- Students who do not achieve the specified learning outcomes for a unit cannot be awarded credit for that unit - the unit is therefore not eligible for grading.
- The unit grades have no numerical equivalents. They are not derived from or converted into numerical marks. The regulations permit a restricted use of numerical marks, in relation to the assessment of certain types of performance on specific assignments.
- If used in these restricted circumstances, numerical marks contribute to the final grade for the unit, using a method prescribed by the regulations. No other use of numerical marks is permitted.

Grade Descriptors

There are seven 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

Appropriate combinations of grade descriptors are assigned to all graded Level Three units when they are validated by Certa, and are independent of the assessment method chosen. Each graded Level Three unit must have at least two grading descriptors assigned to it. Grade Descriptor 7 (Quality) is used for all graded units and also in the assessment of each assignment for a unit. Certa is responsible for implementing the process for assigning grading descriptors to units and communicating those decisions to providers. The descriptors assigned to any unit **may not** be changed except through the processes as described in the [Request for Modification to An Access to HE Diploma form](#).

The grade descriptors contain components that describe the standard of performance at Merit and Distinction. There are no grade descriptors for Pass: the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the unit define the standard for Pass. A student's work must reach the standard needed to Pass (that is, all the learning outcomes must be achieved) before it can be considered for grading.

Grade Components

Each grade descriptor is made up of a set of related 'components'. These components describe different aspects of the performance associated with a descriptor for both Merit and Distinction. They also reflect the different aspects of performance valued by different subjects. Tutors decide which components to use from the descriptors assigned to a unit. Assessor choice of appropriate words or phrases from these components must be used in the assignment brief to signal to the student how the assessor will make any grading decisions. You are advised to use the appropriate words and phrases with care; a student may appeal an assessment decision because a tutor used words such as 'excellent' 'consistent' 'extensive' in feedback when the grade indicator that is awarded is a pass.

Grade Indicators

The grading process generates a grade indicator (Pass, Merit or Distinction) for each of the grade descriptors used in each assignment. The final unit grade reflects the overall standard of work for the unit, based on a review of the grade indicators for the unit (the unit grade

profile) and any other relevant information. When all the assignments for a unit have been completed then the awarded indicators are used to define the overall grade. The final grade for each unit is established by identifying the mid-point of the grade indicators for the unit.

Each unit is given an overall grade in this way: **assignments are not given overall grades.**

Full details about the grade descriptors and how they are used for grading units can be found in Sections B and C of the QAA Grading Scheme Handbook, which are available on the Certa website.

Recording of the Grading Process

There are five steps in the grading process before an assessor can award a grade to a unit.

Step 1

Check the LPP to confirm the grade descriptors that have been assigned to the unit. Not all Level Three units are graded.

Step 2

Examine the assignment(s) that have been devised for the achievement of the unit and decide where the best evidence will be generated to match the components of those grade descriptors where appropriate. You may wish to assign all grade descriptors to every assignment used for the unit, or assign one of the descriptors to just one assignment. It is important to remember that Grade Descriptor 7 (Quality) must be used with every assignment. The QAA guidelines indicate that for tests/time constrained assignments where the answer is right or wrong then the Quality Descriptor 7 should not be assigned to that assignment; therefore, in this situation, there must be another assignment to provide evidence of achievement to which the quality descriptor can be assigned.

Step 3

Build into the brief for each assignment used for the unit, components of the descriptors that have been chosen for those assignments so that students are clear how they must respond to the assignment to gain a particular grade indicator.

Step 4

Assess the submitted work for achievement. If the work meets the assessment criteria for the assignment, then apply the descriptor achievement to the work as indicated in the assignment brief; record the grading indicators on the feedback sheet.

Step 5

Record all the indicators awarded for the completed unit and assign the overall grade by choosing the median grade, which is the middle letter placed in a line, i.e. for indicators of P P P M M M D then M is the overall grade. For an even number of grade indicators where there is no clear middle letter, then the assessor is asked to use professional judgment taking due consideration of the quality indicators awarded eg P P P M M M - overall grade decided through the assessor's judgment; in the case of M M D D D D, the overall grade is clearly D.

The overall grade for any unit must be communicated to the student in a written form immediately on the completion of the assessment for the whole unit. The QAA is very interested in grade profiles by: student; diploma; provider and AVA. The AVA is expected to evaluate the distribution of grades over time and offer rationale to QAA for profiles outside of normal distributions, and QAA's own standards and benchmarks.

Student Appeals against Assessment Decisions

Certa has an enquiries and appeals policy, which can be downloaded from our website. Certa will not consider an appeal until the student has first exhausted the appeals process at their provider.

Mapping of Evidence

If a tutor is mapping assessment across two units then steps 1 – 5 must be followed for the response to each assessment task linked to each unit individually. A student may have produced an excellent, response to one unit and a good response to the other unit. Each unit should generate separate grade indicators. The external moderator will expect to see clear evidence that mapping was as a result of a response to tasks linked to each unit.

Completion of the Diploma

Achievement of the Diploma is manifested by the submission of appropriate evidence to the assessor by the student. Tutors must ensure that students are informed that all evidence for the potential award of their Diploma must be assessed, quality assured and available for the date agreed for final moderation.

Evidence of Teaching: Responsibility of the Tutor

This type of evidence includes un-annotated material from the internet, tutor prepared notes, leaflets/material available to the general public that has not been annotated or used for comprehension or critical evaluation. This type of evidence should never be presented as evidence of achievement.

Evidence of Learning: Overviewed by the Provider

Throughout the learning process the student will amass a wide range of information and create examples of work when trying to use a particular piece of learning and develop ownership of it. This ongoing development is part of the learning process, and is information shared between the tutor and the student. Until evidence of student work is assessed against the assessment criteria, it remains evidence of learning and not evidence of achievement.

An external moderator will ask to see students' files at the first visit to monitor 'evidence of learning'; this type of evidence does not have to be presented at the final moderation event but the external moderator may ask to see such work in certain special circumstances i.e. when considering recommendation for an aegrotat award of a Diploma or checking for plagiarism.

Evidence of Achievement: Assessed by tutor, and sampled by both the Internal Moderator and External Moderator

Evidence of achievement is sampled in both the internal and external moderation processes. Assessment methods must ensure that all learning outcomes and assessment criteria are evidenced – if a student does not provide evidence of achievement for a particular learning outcome or assessment criteria because they have not completed an assessment assignment in full, they must be offered one more opportunity to complete within a given deadline. The tutor will ensure that students are given sufficient opportunity to provide appropriate evidence; care must be taken not to give the student so much support that the work becomes essentially that of the tutor. Also, care must be taken to ensure that the student is not being given an unfair advantage over other students by the additional opportunity.

If a student does not submit work to the new, agreed deadline, any work submitted after that that meets the assessment criteria, only 'Pass' grade indicators can be awarded.

If a student submits work to the deadline and it still does not meet the assessment criteria, then the student must be advised of the opportunity to apply for on-course referral.

Achievement Requirements

MANDATORY portfolio of evidence guidance to cover 60 credits of learning. The portfolio of evidence of achievement will have:

Student proforma or similar document:

- Name
- Diploma Title
- Course Tutor
- List of units including grades and Recommendations for the Award of Credit; any agreed Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) decisions for award of credits or details related to any application for an aegrotat award must be clearly identified on this sheet for consideration by the awards board
- Student and tutor signatures confirming checking of assessed units and grades, to be recommended for award of credit at the Awards Board.

Index of Units:

Showing the pages or sections where the evidence can be found relating to each unit the student has achieved.

Evidence of achievement for each unit containing:

- The unit
- The set of briefs for the assignment/s
- Student evidence for the assignment/s, including academic integrity signature
- Any draft work or extra work required to complete the assignment/s
- An assessment feedback sheet for each assignment that clearly shows:
 - the mapping to assessment criteria
 - grading and achievement decisions
 - any agreed new deadlines with links to written mitigating circumstances
 - assessor feedback, including that for submitted drafts
 - late submission of work, when there was no agreement of mitigating circumstances.

All class notes, practice and handouts should be kept in a separate file.

Any portfolio that does not meet these requirements may not be considered for moderation and a reconvened moderation will be arranged.

Recording Achievement

It is essential that students are aware of their progress towards achievement of the Diploma throughout the course. Each tutor must keep accurate records. The coordinator should ensure that these records are transferred regularly into the working electronic RAC (the AVA's form for recording achievement), at least once a month or at each assessment event; the student must keep records of their individual progress. This should be signed by the student as a true record of units and grades achieved at the end of the programme.

Only work that has been fully assessed and been subjected to the provider's quality processes will be considered by the Awards Board, where the decisions for the award of the Diploma is final. Tutors must ensure that any deadlines agreed with students enable evidence from students to be assessed and quality assured **in plenty of time** before the agreed date of the final moderation. Evidence cannot be submitted at a later stage for the award of the Diploma in that academic year, unless the Awards Board has agreed a process through student appeals or end of course referrals agenda items.

It is the student's and tutor's responsibility to sign a form, listing those units and associated grades, to verify the accuracy of the recommendations for the award of credit for that student.

The course coordinator should ensure that these recommendations are accurately reflected in the final electronic form of the RAC, which **must** be sent to the external moderator two weeks prior to the final external moderation event. An external moderator may postpone a final moderation visit if they have not received a complete RAC in plenty of time.

No other format of recording achievement will be acceptable.

All grades are subject to confirmation through external moderation. The external moderator may re-assign an awarded grade for a student or cohort depending on circumstances.

Any changes to the RAC after the convening of the Awards Board will become a quality intervention, will attract an administration fee and may impact on the Diploma risk rating.

Certa recommends that providers hold internal pre-Awards Boards. This process would allow providers to be fully prepared for final moderation and Awards Boards in line with HE requirements. Providers will be reminded via the monthly bulletin.

If a student is claiming credit so that they can progress to Higher Education then they must have achieved all elements of the Rules of Combination for the Diploma as stated within the LPP; the combined credits for Mandatory and Optional Units at the correct level stipulated; only units that are highlighted within the Rules of Inclusion and/or Exclusion and any additional criteria identified within the rules of combination. When checking the RAC before the final moderation event, it is essential that only those students who have met these criteria be recommended for the award of the Diploma. The final copy of the working RAC is used by the external moderator to choose a sample for moderation purposes and is presented to the awards board for any amendment and subsequent agreement.

Prior Learning and Transfer of Credit used for Achievement

If students have requested that any Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or transfer of credits from other courses either within the existing college, or from another college are to be used for the recommendation of the Award of the Diploma, then the agreement of the AVA must be sought. Refer to appropriate section within this handbook and the [Application for the Award of RPL in Access to HE](#) form which can be downloaded from the Certa website.

All requests for RPL must be formally approved by Certa before 30 April each year for the preceding September intake.

Section 6: Quality Assurance – How to Run a High Quality Course

Certa's Quality Assurance Strategy

Certa holds quality assurance policies and procedures that are compliant with QAA licensing requirements. All providers will have appropriate policies in place and Certa appoints quality reviewers (QRs) to check the implementation of such policies on an annual basis. Indications that such policies are not being implemented correctly will be investigated, normally through a quality intervention visit.

All Access to HE courses will be monitored by internal moderators, external moderators and internal and AVA standardisation activity. Each course must be evaluated by students, the delivery team and by the external moderator. The course must be reviewed by the tutor teams using the information and evidence available within Certa policies and guidance documents. Where providers are moving towards more paperless systems, details of how the quality assurance activity is recorded and monitored will be offered at quality assurance events.

All initial contact between Certa and a provider must go through the provider's quality manager or designated Access to HE co-ordinator. Where a quality manager then agrees for another member of staff to be the primary course contact, they are to formally advise us via email of this decision.

Where the quality manager continues to be the only conduit, it is essential that they keep regular contact with those implementing the organisation's quality procedures in relation to Access to HE Diplomas.

Certa's Responsibility for Quality Assurance

Certa is responsible for giving clear information about:

- The structural organisation of moderation processes
- Moderators' roles and responsibilities
- The basis, extent and limits of moderators' authority
- The purpose and frequency of visits and meetings undertaken by moderators
- Requirements for monitoring and verifying student achievement
- Moderation outcomes relating to student achievement
- Requirements for moderator reports
- How, and to whom, any concerns or problems identified should be referred
- The submission of reports to Certa and associated follow-up activity.

The ultimate responsibility within Certa for the quality of approved Access to HE Diplomas rests with the Board of Trustees. The Access to HE Committee, as a Sub-Committee, has been given devolved responsibility for a range of activities including:

- The approval of Access to HE Diplomas
- Advising on issues affecting the quality and the validity of the award of the Access to HE Diploma
- The appointment of all external moderators
- The award of the Access to HE Diploma to students
- Approval of aegrotat and posthumous awards
- Making recommendations to the Board of Trustees for all QAA submissions

- Approving Certa's policies and protocols
- Ensuring that Certa's quality assurance is implemented effectively
- Liaising with relevant HEIs and employers to promote Access to HE
- Ensuring that the process of confirming the award of the Diploma, which is delegated to the Awards Board, is robust.

Certa routinely reviews and updates its guidance to ensure its continuing currency. Moderation guidance updates are generated from external moderator visits and final moderation reports, external moderator mandatory training events and Certa standardisation events.

External Moderation

Rigorous external moderation is vital to our quality assurance strategy; all Access to HE Diplomas are subject to external moderation. We operate standard procedures, using clear and transparent criteria, for the selection and appointment of moderators, which ensure that moderators have relevant experience in adult, further or higher education and have relevant and current subject knowledge for their area/s of moderating responsibility.

External moderators are normally allocated to a Diploma for no more than four years. We will consider extenuating circumstances such as provider staff changes, QAA changes to the Diploma or the risk rating of a Diploma when re-allocating external moderators. Additional external moderators are allocated to provision with high numbers of students. Subject moderators evaluate specific units across different providers in order to make a more detailed analysis of student achievement. Providers will be informed of this arrangement within the annual "start of year" letter to quality managers.

The External Moderator Role

All Certa appointed external moderators are curriculum specialists and are appointed to appropriate Diploma titles. Where additional curriculum expertise is required, or where cohort sizes are larger than one external moderator might reasonably manage, more external moderators are appointed. The role of the external moderator is to ensure that:

- The Diploma operates according to the approved LPP
- All processes leading to the award of credit pay due regard to fairness and equality
- The evidence of achievement is appropriate and sufficient
- On-course requests for referrals are considered
- The assessment judgements are valid and consistent
- Grading implementation has been applied correctly across the curriculum and grade decisions are consistent
- Confirmation that the award of the Diploma is secure
- They work directly with the quality contact unless otherwise advised.

The Role of the Lead Moderator

Certa has a Lead Moderator for Access to HE whose role includes:

- Acting in a supporting and advisory role to the Certa management team
- Attending meetings with QAA
- Chairing regional standardisation events
- Accompanying new external moderators as part of their induction process; other experienced external moderators with an appropriate curriculum may also cover this role
- Contributing to the planning and delivery of Access to HE CPD events
- Supporting external moderators to carry out their roles and responsibilities in a professional manner and to the highest possible standard

- Developing a communications network for external moderators and practitioners
- Submitting an annual evaluative report to the Access to HE Committee following the annual AVA standardisation events
- Submitting an annual evaluative report to the Access to HE Committee based on the external moderator reports including recommendations for Certa and providers
- Working with our Access to HE team to address any quality issues either within or across providers
- Bespoke projects as appropriate based on recommendations from the Access to HE Committee, QAA or our Access to HE strategy.

External Moderation Activities in Respect of the Diploma Provision

External moderators will normally visit each of their allocated Diplomas twice a year. It is essential that individual tutors and any other centre staff involved know when the external moderator is visiting and are fully prepared. If the external moderator is not given access to all documentation needed to complete the planned task, they may be advised by the AVA to postpone the event. An additional visit must be arranged, for which the centre will pay a fee in line with Certa's current charging policy.

The First Moderation Visit

The external moderator will contact the quality contact for each provider to arrange dates for the first visit and advise Certa accordingly.

The first visit from the external moderator will be early in the Diploma run (usually no earlier than December and no later than the end of February, for a September programme start) and is expected to last no longer than three hours. Please contact the AVA for advice regarding the visit schedule.

The purpose of this visit is for the external moderator to:

- Meet the quality contact, course coordinator, internal moderator and tutor team members
- Ensure that any issues that may prevent the confirmation of award of credit are resolved early in the delivery of the course
- Check that the conditions made from the previous external moderation report have been addressed – completion of the quality circle
- Check that all students have been registered for the Access to HE Diploma within 12 weeks of the course
- Meet with students to find out if they have been given sufficient information about the Diploma's assessment and grading requirements and to consider legitimate concerns about the provision they are offered
- Gain a better understanding of the background of students who are taking the Diploma course
- Check what advice students are being given about the variety of progression routes available in addition to HE, and support for UCAS applications
- Ensure that the RAC is being completed as assessment decisions are made
- Use the RAC to choose a sample of assessed student work and if possible externally moderate completed units by signing off those units, ensuring in this case that a copy of the RAC is retained by the external moderator
- Ensure that all quality assurance activities are progressing satisfactorily and enabling the course coordinator to maintain a quality file in which the following documents should be found:

- calendar of quality assurance activities set at the start of the course, including all QA activities required by the quality manager of the organisation
- list of tutors/assessors
- table of internal moderators and curriculum responsibility for that process
- pre-issue verification of assessment tasks reports and resultant incorporation into a rolling action plan (this is likely to be part of a supplementary visit where appropriate – see below)
- sampling frame or other evidence for internal moderation samples
- completed quality assurance reports of visits to students and tutors
- completed internal verification reports for all assessed units and resultant incorporation into a rolling action plan
- minutes of meetings which clearly identify internal moderation and quality assurance items with the current rolling action plan with responses
- reports from internal standardisation activities and resultant incorporation into a rolling action plan
- reports from external standardisation activity and resultant incorporation into a rolling action plan
- a rolling action plan indicating responses to external moderator's recommendations or conditions, internal moderation reports, and any internal quality assurance activity.

A fully completed visit report will be sent by the external moderator to Certa within ten working days of the visit. After checking and approval, the report will then be forwarded to your quality contact for onward transmission to the Access to HE tutor team. Where there are serious concerns with a Diploma, external moderators are required to send the report *immediately to us* so that prompt action or support can be initiated.

Supplementary Visits

A supplementary visit that normally takes place in September will be arranged where:

- The provider is new to Certa either through transfer from another AVA or by running Access to HE for the first time
- The Diploma is new
- The Diploma is new to a provider
- A new or additional element has been added to the Diploma Specification by QAA for the AVA to implement.

Support Visits

A support visit will take place during the early months of a first run of a new Diploma to ensure that the provider has been able to implement all of the requirements of the Diploma so that the first visit goes as smoothly as possible.

Additional Visits

We will offer additional visits where:

- A provider offers a variation on the normal once-a-year intake of students, moderators may be asked to make a different number or pattern of visits
- A provider has undergone substantial management or curriculum team change, or is in fragile circumstances.

A fee may apply if extra visits are required over and above the reasons given.

The Final Moderation Visit

The final moderation visit will take place between mid-June and mid-July to complete the sampling and external moderation of all units, and to confirm the achievement of the Diploma and/or credits. External moderators will:

- Send a visit plan to the quality contact or nominated contact as appropriate
- Sample the rest of the students' work that was not sampled at visit one
- Provide oral feedback to the quality contact and the course team
- Write a report after each visit, which will be sent directly to Certa; we will forward the report to the quality contact, who is responsible for cascading the report internally
- Monitor the quality assurance documentation.

Sampling of Assessments by External Moderators

All work from every student *must* be available at the final moderation event. However, external moderators may choose their sample prior to the day of moderation to be put on one side to promote efficiency and good use of time. Where requested portfolios are not available, an external moderator is likely to reconvene a moderation event.

The Awards Board

QAA requires a formal process to agree the award of credit, in line with similar HEI requirements.

The AVA's [Policy and Protocol for Awards Boards of the Access to HE Diploma](#) provides details of the requirements and pre-planning for the Awards Board and the list of documents required for the Awards Board. There is also an [Awards Board minutes template](#) for minuting the deliberations of the Awards Board. These documents will be available to download from the Certa website.

The Awards Board will usually take place immediately after the sampling of the evidence by the external moderator. The external moderator will attend the Awards Board and sign the Recommendation of the Award of Credit (RAC). For some large centres with multiple Diplomas, the Awards Board may be arranged for a different date to the final moderation – we will agree this in advance with your quality contact.

It should be emphasised that the Awards Board is a provider activity in terms of organisation and responsibility – with Certa officers in attendance.

Evaluation of External Moderation

As part of the Access to HE Committee's processes (and to fulfil a requirement from QAA), Certa welcomes feedback on the conduct and standard of the external moderation process. You can contribute to this feedback by completing the on-line evaluation at the end of each moderation visit. We will forward the link to this to you. Our Access to HE Committee receives reports on these responses and defines any necessary action that may be required. The Access to HE Lead Moderator also evaluates the external moderation process as part of the annual reporting cycle.

We have a cycle of observations of external moderators in practice, either by a member of Certa staff or by another external moderator. Providers will be informed when their allocated external moderator is going to be observed. Feedback from the observation contributes to the annual evaluation of moderation activity.

Appeals against the Results of External Moderation

QAA requires us to ensure that students and/or centres can appeal against assessment decisions and/or outcomes.

The Certa [Appeals Procedure Section 7.2 Appeals against the Outcome of the AVA's External Moderation Process](#) may be used by providers to appeal against:

- The contents of external moderator reports
- Decisions made by Certa arising from quality assurance visits or Centre monitoring, including the application of sanctions and/or the amendment of assessment decisions following external moderation.

If you wish to appeal against the results of external moderation, in the first instance concerns should be raised directly with the external moderator. If agreement cannot be reached with the external moderator, the procedure described in the Certa [Appeals Policy](#) will come into effect.

Access to Fair Assessment

Certa and providers have a duty to ensure that the rights of individual students to access qualifications, units and assessment in a way most appropriate for their individual needs are upheld. Please refer to the Certa website for details of our [Access to Fair Assessment \(Reasonable Adjustment and Special Considerations\) Policy and Procedure](#).

Provider Responsibility for Quality Assurance

It is expected that all providers will have a clear internal quality assurance policy with associated procedures for implementation and robust monitoring processes.

It is vital that the recommendation for the award of credit is robust, valid, reliable and consistent. The AVA has a protocol for quality assurance interventions when we are aware of indications that a provider's quality activities and/or processes are not robust.

Each provider will organise its own management of the quality assurance roles and responsibilities related to Access to HE. We expect that any new tutor will be inducted into the organisation to ensure that they can:

- Access the relevant Certa documentation
- Understand Certa processes involved in delivering and assessing an access to HE Diploma to AVA requirements
- Have a copy of the LPP and the grading descriptor distribution across the Diploma
- Have full understanding of the application of grading
- Have copies of all Diploma units and AVA paperwork as appropriate
- Have access to assignment briefs
- Deal effectively with student referrals using Certa's guidelines
- Receive guidance in the production of new assignment briefs
- Have access to course proforma for providing feedback to students
- Have copies of tracking proforma used by the team for recording student progress
- Understand the purpose of the quality assurance procedures to be applied
- Attend mandatory standardisation events
- Attend recommended and required internal and Certa CPD as appropriate.

The Role of the Named Quality Assurance Contact

The quality assurance contact has a key role, which is to ensure that the provider is able to carry out all aspects of its relationship with Certa properly, to a high standard and within the required timescales. When this happens, processes will run smoothly and all stakeholders – including most importantly students – will enjoy a positive experience. The quality assurance contact is the named person within the provider responsible for:

- Ensuring that quality systems and policies are compliant with Certa requirements
- Ensuring that the delivery team is able to implement all aspects of the approved LPP
- Agreeing visit dates with the external moderator and ensuring that details are passed to the appropriate curriculum contact
- Ensuring that the provider is able to contribute to the redevelopment and revalidation of Access to HE Diplomas before the five-year expiry date
- Ensuring that the specifications and regulations for the Access to HE Diplomas are followed
- Developing, managing and monitoring internal quality assurance structures and systems, including internal moderation and standardisation activity
- Supporting the course coordinator and ensuring that all Certa communications are quickly circulated to the coordinator and the team of tutors
- Monitoring the administrative process to ensure that all forms are completed and sent to Certa within the required timescale
- Working with the course coordinator to ensure that all required information is available for Certa's quality reviewer
- Providing real-time support to carry out internal moderation effectively
- Ensuring that all tutors/assessors are able to participate in internal and external moderation as appropriate
- Facilitating the provider's participation in Certa and national standardisation events where appropriate
- Coordinating and supporting initial and ongoing training and development for staff involved in the delivery of a Diploma and maintaining the provider's commitment to CPD
- Ensuring that internal and external moderation can take place in conditions appropriate to a rigorous process
- Meeting the appointed external moderator at the first visit and thereafter as appropriate
- Ensuring that student requests for extensions to agreed deadlines are considered outside of the immediate tutor team to provide support and protection to the subject tutor
- Ensuring that all quality assurance documentation and records are available to the external moderator as required
- Reading external moderation reports
- Disseminating external moderation and quality reviewer reports to all appropriate staff
- Promoting action points from external moderator's reports and subsequent auditing of response from the organisation
- Attending final moderation meeting with the external moderator to discuss all issues arising from the moderation process
- Attendance at the Awards Board
- Ensuring the facility for retention of assessment records for all students.

The quality assurance contact must advise Certa about any potential changes of administration or quality assurance contact details promptly and in writing.

Certa's quality team welcomes any requests from quality assurance contacts for clarification, guidance or support at any time. The AVA expects that the quality contact will have an overview of or make arrangements for:

Pre-Issue Verification

The responsibility for this process may rest with the whole team of tutors and/or with individuals in the team. It is expected that any new or substantially amended assessment brief will go through a process of internal verification for which a report will be generated. Exemplar [Pre-delivery Verification of Units - Graded and Ungraded \(IM1a or IM1b\)](#) forms are available on the Certa website.

Pre-issue verification reports must ensure:

- The wording is appropriate for the target group
- Assignments are appropriate for the level
- Tasks do not unintentionally discriminate against students with protected characteristics
- Assignments meet any prescribed method of assessment for the unit
- Students are given opportunities to achieve against the assessment criteria of units
- Correct grading descriptors are appropriately applied in the brief
- Appropriate grading components have been chosen for the brief
- Deadlines for submission are shown on the briefing sheet
- Information regarding drafting, resubmission dates for non-achievement, late submissions - date of submission, is available or can be entered
- Word count is appropriate for the assignment and unit as a whole.

If the assessment brief is to be used again without an amendment within an accepted timeframe, there should be an audit trail, e.g. minutes of a meeting, to indicate that the assessment brief has been reviewed and found to be acceptable. It is, however, accepted that some provider quality processes insist on a pre-issue verification report to be generated for every run of the course.

All pre-issue verification reports and any other documents showing evidence of review of the briefs must be available to the external moderator. To avoid any confusion all verified briefs must be subjected to a robust process of version control.

Internal Moderator Visits to Tutors and Students

This activity is usually the responsibility of a member of your quality team. The external moderator will expect to see auditable evidence that such a visit has taken place well before the end of course delivery, and in the case of new tutors, at a time to provide early support, ie in the first term.

Such a visit should offer support to a tutor on the basis of professional trust and should enable:

- The students to meet with someone who is not their tutor and to comment on their course and resources
- Opportunities for the visitor to experience the setting, the range of students and their learning
- Students to experience quality assurance in practice
- A check on progress on assessment processes and completion of required documentation
- Discussion of possible CPD needs of the tutor.

The visiting internal moderator should remind the tutor of internal moderation dates and the process for sampling.

Recording and Tracking Achievement

Accurate record keeping is essential and all staff involved in the assessment of students should log and maintain records of student achievement. [‘Assessment, Grading and Achievement Guidance’](#) is available to download from the Certa website.

The RAC document must be updated on an ongoing basis to monitor and record student achievement.

RAC documents with a summary of student achievement so far should be made available to external moderators in advance of each moderation visit. Each RAC is a working document over the academic year, and should be kept up date.

At the final moderation visit, every student’s portfolio should contain a summary of all units and credits achieved, and in the case of graded Level Three units, the grades assigned. This summary should be agreed and signed by both the tutor and the student and should appear at the front of the student’s portfolio. The [Example of Student Record of Final Credit Achievement form](#) is available to download from the Certa website.

Internal Moderation Requirements

The process of internal moderation through sampling of assessed student work is the main internal quality assurance activity on which the provider’s standard of the award of their Diploma relies.

Internal moderation may be carried out at times within the provider’s cross-organisational quality assurance calendar of activities. If not, dates must be agreed by the team before the start of delivery. The process must ensure that:

- Student achievement is mapped to the assessment criteria
- Assessment decisions are appropriate, consistent, fair and transparent across the sample
- Grade indicator decisions are appropriate, consistent and fair across the sample
- Grading processes are correctly applied to give a grade for the unit, and that any grade information is clearly shown at all stages of the process
- Feedback to students is appropriate and will assure further development of skills and/or knowledge
- The student’s work is presented appropriately
- The RAC is being updated on a regular basis with achievement and grading decisions and can be used by internal and external moderators to choose samples of evidence
- There is provision of appropriate developmental advice and support to tutors to ensure continuous improvement in standards of assessment processes and feedback.

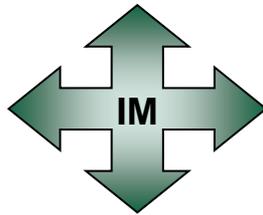
Any model of internal moderation should rest on peer support and allow all tutors to be involved in discussions about levels, grading and credit. Internal moderators may be tutors on the Diploma. In some situations, all tutors will be internal moderators.

Tutors who are also internal moderators are ***not*** permitted to countersign their own assessment decisions i.e. **cannot act as the internal moderator for samples of evidence from units that they have delivered.**

Internal Moderation Models

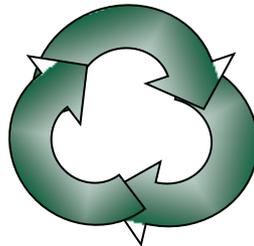
Centralised

One or more tutors are appointed by the course coordinator to moderate several other tutors.



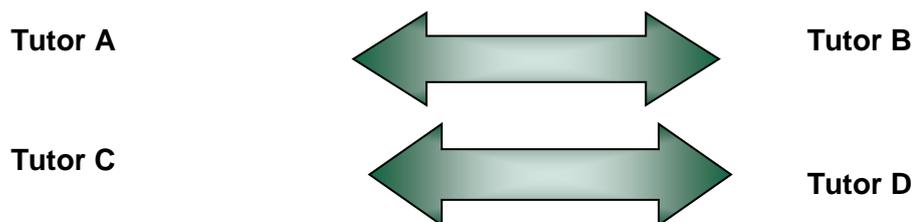
Round Robin

Each tutor visits and moderates one other tutor, who then visits and moderates another - and so on.



Peer Partners

Tutors are paired and offer each other moderation as mutual feedback; this model must still have a coordinator to ensure that everything is completed.



For each of these models it is essential that a meeting then reviews the issues and findings after the process is completed. It is important that tutors be involved in this meeting and that collectively, the team develops an action plan to resolve issues or concerns that have arisen. It is also important that examples of good practice be shared and discussed within the team and where possible, be part of the action plan for wider implementation across the team.

Sampling for Internal Moderation of Assessment

- The internal moderator, not the tutor, specifies the sample of assessed work that s/he will see, or will be brought to the internal moderation meeting
- Sufficient evidence must be sampled for the internal moderator to feel confident about consistent and valid award of credit and in the grading decisions; more samples may be requested if necessary
- The minimum sample size for all Diplomas is 10% or five portfolios, whichever is greater
- At least one piece of assessment activity from every student is included in the total internal moderation sample. This practice allows for greater certainty about the validity, consistency and fairness of the entire cohort achievement and about the consistency of grading decisions. The sample must include:
 - Both mandatory and optional, graded and ungraded units
 - All borderline and non-achievement evidence.

Sampling of Assessments from New Assessors by Internal Moderators

Where possible the internal moderator should sample work before returning it to students. The requirement for 100% sample of assessed work must be followed for the first unit delivered, with feedback from internal moderation that clearly identifies good practice and areas for development, as well as any action points that must be addressed before returning the assessed work to students. Your external moderator may agree that less than 100% is acceptable: please contact them for guidance.

If the assessment practice of the new assessor is deemed to meet provider standards for the first unit, then for subsequent units the level of sampling can be reduced by degrees, e.g. 50%, 25% 10%. However, the support mechanisms that sampling by the internal moderator provides must be recognised and sampling level should not reduce automatically after sampling of the first unit.

Sampling of Assessments for New Units by Internal Moderators

Our requirement is that 100% internal moderation sample should be made for all new units. This level is clearly unsustainable in a year when ALL the units are new. It is suggested in this case that the sample choice should be more strategic. Providers often create a sampling matrix through a random strategy, but which covers all assessors and eventually all students. For graded units on each Diploma, internal moderators should choose a sample of two assessments leading to each of the three grades (Pass, Merit and Distinction), i.e. six sets of work from each unit from each group of students.

A matrix, student v unit, with some identification of assessor, of these choices should be kept so that some work from every student and every assessor of a unit goes through moderation. If it is not possible for two lots of evidence at every grade then the internal moderator should make appropriate choices to balance the matrix. For ungraded units, choices should be informed by the matrix described above, six samples taken for every unit for each group of students, with no work from the same student sampled twice for ungraded units unless there are academic reasons for doing so.

Recording of Internal Moderation

There will be:

- A grid to show the sample taken across the whole cohort of students
- A report from each internal moderator of their findings, showing their sample, see exemplar [Internal Moderation of Achievement \(IM2\)](#) form available to download from the Certa website
- Agreement decisions with assessor's achievement and grading decisions
- Identified areas of good practice and areas for improvement with an action plan if appropriate
- A tutor meeting to consider general issues and good practice from the internal moderation activity and to contribute to the action plan for quality improvement.

Internal Standardisation

Internal standardisation involves ensuring that if there is more than one tutor/assessor delivering Access to HE provision or more than one site, internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment are consistent across the range of courses. Both assessment, including the standardisation of assessment tasks, and the operation of internal moderation, should be standardised. It is the provider's responsibility to run an internal standardisation event for Access to HE Diplomas each year.

Internal standardisation meetings must ensure that all tutors and internal moderators concerned are involved, and that action plans are produced and followed up. Providers will be required to provide evidence of internal standardisation activity and how the centre identifies and disseminates good practice.

Arrangements for internal standardisation that are regarded as good practice by the AVA are:

- A cross-organisational activity that involves other sectors eg 'A' level work, foundation year work facilitated by a member of the quality assurance team
- An event for all Access to HE provision delivered across the organisation, facilitated by a member the quality assurance team
- An event that is purely cross-curricular for a limited number of Diplomas e.g. typically one or two, and would work effectively for small providers; such an event may be facilitated by the named quality contact or a named internal moderator
- There should be at least one internal standardisation event during the year to effect:
 - Tutor team ownership of all assessment processes
 - Good practice in assessment, feedback and reporting
 - Consistency in assessment decisions across the curriculum
 - Consistency in any grading decisions across the curriculum
 - A standard approach to recording and mapping of assessment
 - A standard approach to the implementation of any grading processes
 - Genuine rigour in assessment leading to improvement and increased quality.

Running an Internal Standardisation Event

There should be clear ground rules on the responsibility and engagement of participants. All tutors and internal moderators should participate. The event should be properly planned, with the date notified to all participants at the start of the delivery year. Details of the sample should be circulated at least two weeks before the event. A report should be produced and available for the external moderator to see.

Choosing the Samples

The sample must represent all Diplomas and all student groups taking the Diploma. The sample should represent evidence from across the range of achievement and grades. The quality manager or the member of staff responsible for coordinating the standardisation event will decide the type/number of samples. The sample will not include more than one unit from a particular student, unless there are specific issues. Each unit chosen as part of the sample must have:

- Unit details including grading descriptors to be applied
- Assignment briefs
- Evidence of assessed learning
- Tutor's feedback sheet with mapping to the assessment criteria
- Achievement and grading decisions shown
- Drafts or non-achieved work with final submitted work.

Recording of the Internal Standardisation Process and Action Plans

Participants will have identified areas of good practice and areas for improvement. A record of the actual sample used at the event will be made e.g. student and assignment/unit. A formal record of the event will be made with clear action points for development created.

An action plan for quality improvement will be:

- Developed with agreed responsibilities and dates for completion
- Circulated to all teaching and quality assurance staff
- Monitored through team meetings or through any organisation audit process
- Completed within an agreed time span.

The record of the standardisation event and the completed action plan will be available to the external moderator.

External Standardisation

Each year, we hold a series of **mandatory** standardisation events, which are key processes in our quality assurance policy. Dates of these will be agreed at the start of the academic year and included in the monthly bulletin.

The focus for standardisation events will vary according to guidance from the Access to HE Committee or Certa's or providers' quality needs. The information related to the event is sent out to all providers before the end of the current academic year.

It is the provider's responsibility to ensure that each Diploma that they run is represented at external standardisation as stipulated by Certa. The requirements of the standardisation will be included within the monthly bulletins and it is important that reference is made to these throughout the year.

Providers who do not send a representative to the appropriate event, or attend without the appropriate samples will be invoiced in accordance with the Certa Guide to Charging and Services which is available on the Certa website. This may also affect the risk rating.

The Awards Board

QAA requires a formal process to agree the award of credit, in line with similar HEI requirements. An extract from the QAA document, '[Grading the Access to HE Diploma](#)' [Section J](#).'

“Formal authority for the award of the Access to HE Diploma is located with an appropriate body within an Access Validating Agency’s (AVA’s) governance structure. For operational purposes, this authority is delegated to an Awards Board (or Awards Boards, where this function is undertaken at provider level).”

And [Section J, 2f](#):

“The Awards Board is convened, constituted to meet the AVA’s specification.....”

All Access to HE Awards Boards will be conducted in accordance with our [Final Moderation and Awards Board Policy and Protocol](#) which is available to download from the Certa website. Providers must ensure that all relevant personnel are familiar with this document prior to the event.

Providers are responsible for completing the [Awards Board minutes template](#) which is available to download from the Certa website.

The Awards Boards are considered to be instruments of the provider’s quality assurance processes and as such both the scribe and chair of the Awards Board are to be appointed by the provider. It is expected that those appointed to these roles will have appropriate experience and training.

An Awards Board will normally take place immediately after the sampling of the evidence by the external moderator. If a provider offers more than one Diploma then there may be a single Awards Board when the recommendations for all Diplomas will be considered. Either the external moderator or our representative must sign the minutes to signify agreement.

Providers will have considered a provisional date for the final moderation visit and Awards Board at the previous year’s Awards Board. We encourage providers to hold one Awards Board for all Access to HE Diplomas. A fee for additional Awards Boards will be charged in line with our charging policy.

Risk-based Centre Monitoring

Certa is responsible for ensuring that the curriculum delivered, the course organisation, the terms of approval of providers who adopt an Access to HE Diploma, the student experience, assessment practices including conduct of assessment, and details of assignment requirements are monitored and reviewed.

QAA requires that there is a requirement for a risk-based approach to quality assurance.

The rationale for each Diploma risk band is based on information provided in the current external moderator visit and annual reports, and the provider’s overall record of compliance, quality assurance and/or the completion of actions; evidenced through the Awards Board minutes and Access to HE quality interventions log.

Quality managers receive full information of each Diploma’s risk rating.

There are four levels of risk:

Green (Low Risk)	On the basis of the available evidence there is little or no risk to the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Centre approval criteria, regulatory conditions and/or the reputation of Certa and Centre performance is good.
Yellow (Marginal Risk)	On the basis of the available evidence any risk to the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Centre approval criteria, regulatory conditions and/or the reputation of Certa is marginal and Centre performance is satisfactory.
Amber (Moderate Risk)	On the basis of the available evidence there are concerns about a specific risk indicator or indicators and customised or specific action is required to ensure the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Centre approval criteria, regulatory conditions and/or the reputation of Certa. Sanctions may be imposed.
Red (High Risk)	On the basis of the available evidence there are major concerns about one or more risk indicators which threaten the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma, Centre approval criteria, regulatory conditions and/or the reputation of Certa. Urgent action is required. Sanctions may be imposed.

Sanctions Tariff

Please see Certa's Sanctions Policy, which can be downloaded from our website.

Quality Interventions

We have a set of policies and procedures to protect the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma which will be applied to any provider which jeopardises the validity of the Access to HE Diploma, including award of credit and grades.

There will be a charge applied for any quality intervention including, but not limited to:

- Amendments to the RAC after the registration deadline
- Changes to the RAC post-Awards Board
- Late submission of RPL requests
- Late submission of requests to change a student's list of registered units.

Closure of an Access to HE Diploma or Withdrawal of an Approved Provider

The closure of an Access to HE course may result from either action on the part of the AVA or an action taken on behalf of the management of the provider.

Certa has a Closure of a Diploma Policy, which is available from our website.

Retention of Work by Provider

Providers have an obligation under the Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation to ensure that student data should not be retained for longer than is necessary – we suggest that a period of least 12 months after the award of certificates would be necessary to cover the appeals process and any risk of after-the-fact malpractice. Beyond that, you, as the provider should be making the decision, according to your Data Protection Policy.

Conclusion

This Access to HE Handbook is accurate at the time of upload to the Certa website. The AVA reserves the right to amend and up-date as required in line with QAA Licensing Criteria, Access to HE Diploma Specification and Certa policies and procedures.

If you would like to contribute to the improved clarity of this document please contact the Access to HE Team at accesstohe@certa.org.uk.

Checklist and Timeline for Access to HE Diploma Courses

Quick Reference Document for planning, delivering and quality assuring the Access to HE Diploma to the QAA 2013 Specification.

This form is available to download from the Certa website.

This timetable is only to be used as a guide and may be amended by the Provider but taking into account the deadlines required by the AVA.

IMPORTANT: All students must be registered for their units within 12 weeks of the commencement of their course.

Pre-Course	
If new to Certa or new to running an Access to HE Diploma, liaise with your quality contact to arrange for a supplementary visit from our Access to HE team for induction into their Access to HE practices and processes	
Check any current documents are available including the external moderator annual report which will have been sent to the named quality contact the previous year	
Check that all new tutors have been inducted into Access to HE regulations and your organisation's policies and practices	
Ensure that all your tutors are fully aware of the regulations relating to the new Access to HE Diploma Specification (2013)	
Ensure that all your tutors have access to and understand, <i>The QAA Grading Scheme Handbook</i> that defines the regulations for grading the Access to HE Diploma	
Ensure that all your tutors have access to, and understand our Policy for Dealing with On-Course Referrals on behalf of Access to HE Diploma Students	
Ensure that all your tutors have access to, and understand the AVA Policy and Protocol for Accepting changes to a Student's list of Registered Units	
Ensure that all your tutors have access to, and understand the rules around Credit Accumulation and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) both in this handbook and the Diploma Learning Programme Plan (available on the Dropbox link sent by us to your main contacts)	
Ensure that all your tutors are familiar with the AVA section of the Certa website which has links to all relevant documents and request forms for the above	
Select the units you will be delivering, ensuring that they meet the rules of combination and that they are the most current versions (units are subject to an annual review process and may be modified.) - current versions will be available on your existing Certa Dropbox link (new tutors can request this link by contacting the Access Team at Certa)	
Agree your overall assessment strategy for the Diploma	
Agree your internal moderators for each unit	
Ensure that pre-issue verification process of all assignment briefs has been completed and recorded, with all actions recommended by your lead internal moderator implemented	
Create a calendar of events and team meetings and ensure that all colleagues are aware of their obligations to attend	
Check that you have agreed the date for the Awards Board – see previous academic year's Awards Board minutes (notify us if the Awards Board date has not been agreed or needs to be changed) - late changes will be considered and a charge made accordingly	
Check and book relevant staff on to the mandatory and optional CPD events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training	
Set up course files (see Chapter 4 'First Moderation Visit' of this handbook for what should be included in your course file)	
Check with your quality contact for details of any cross-provider quality assurance events that include Access to HE	
Ensure that a comprehensive Student Handbook is available for students (Certa has made available a proforma to assist)	
Agree a process of recording/tracking of student achievement by individual tutors to present to the external moderator at the first visit	

September

Check with students any Applications for Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Credit Transfer - take copies for student/course file and forward request to Certa (deadline 30 November)	
Ensure that students have enrolled with the name which will appear on their Access to HE Diploma certificate	
Check and book relevant staff on to our mandatory and optional CPD events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training.	
Update Certa regarding any changes to course tutor contact details	
Check your external moderator allocations and details with your quality manager	
Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	
Start to register students via the Portal (deadline is 42 days – 6 weeks) from commencement of the course	

October

Begin process of assessment, grading and internal moderation sampling	
Send Certa details of your student representative/s – one per Diploma	
Check and book relevant staff on to our mandatory and optional CPD events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training	
Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from your previous external moderator's reports	
Forward any Application for the Award of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Access to HE forms to Certa	
Continue to register students via the Portal (deadline is 42 days – 6 weeks) from commencement of the course	

November

Check and book relevant staff on to mandatory and optional CPD events and mandatory Standardisation events, and contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training where required	
Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	
Continue to enrol students via the Portal (deadline is 42 days – 6 weeks) from commencement of the course	

December

Liaise with quality contact to agree with external moderator first visit date and receive visit plan	
Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	
Ensure that the student representatives have acknowledged the invitation to attend the student representative meeting at Certa's Wakefield office	

January

Check progress of assessment and internal moderation activity	
Receive and check any RPL and credit transfer requests with your quality contact	
Prepare up to date assessment records and include on your RAC all grading decisions to date	
Plan external moderator's visit with students (external moderator will want to speak with students at the first visit)	
First external moderator's visit - ensure that all documents requested on the external moderator's visit planner are made available	
Check and book relevant staff on to mandatory and optional CPD and Standardisation events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training	
Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	
Complete and return external moderator visit survey to us	

February

Check progress of assessment and internal moderation activity	
Liaise with tutors for assessment records and complete RAC with grading decisions	
Collate any documentation required for Certa's standardisation events (if not made available to the external moderator at the end of the previous academic year)	
Continue to forward student requests for referral to us	
Receive external moderator report from your quality contact	
Check and book relevant staff on to Certa's mandatory and optional CPD events and/or contact the Access to HE Team to book bespoke training	
Organise your internal standardisation event	
Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	
Attend Certa's mandatory standardisation events (a fee will be charged for non-attendance or failure to bring the required documentation)	

March

Attend Certa's standardisation events (a fee will be charged for non-attendance or failure to bring/supply the required documentation)	
Disseminate peer feedback to tutor team from Certa's standardisation events	
Check progress of internal moderation activity	
Liaise with tutors for assessment records and complete RAC with grading decisions	
Continue with team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	
Liaise with marketing department to support the promotion of provision for the following academic year	

April

Liaise with tutors for assessment records and complete RAC with grading decisions	
Check progress of internal moderation activity	
Examine Final Moderation and Awards Board Policy and Protocol and agree internal attendees for Awards Board with your quality contact	
Liaise with your quality contact to agree location and arrangements for final moderation	
Liaise with your quality contact to agree arrangements for Awards Board to ensure with all appropriate colleagues including: head of department, tutors, quality contact, and scribe are in attendance	
Receive from your quality contact and circulate to appropriate colleagues, Certa's Awards Board agenda and minutes template – available to download from the website	
Nominate Awards Board scribe and chair	
Ensure all requests for RPL and/or credit transfer have been responded to by us	
Continue with your team meetings and internal moderation to include addressing conditions and recommendations from previous external moderator's reports	

May

Review your student handbook for next academic year (a sample template is made available by Certa)	
Liaise with tutors for assessment records and complete RAC with grading decisions	
Liaise with quality contact to arrange external moderator to agree sampling strategy for final moderation	
Receive and disseminate to appropriate colleagues the external moderator visit planner	
Further check with your marketing department for promotion for next academic year	

June/July

Liaise with individual students to check and confirm information on RAC (a quality intervention fee will be charged together with an additional fee for re-issue of a certificate if amendments are required at a later date – risk rating may be affected)	
Finalise assessment activity – tutor to sign summary sheet of RAC/s at the Awards Board	
Finalise internal moderation activity – internal moderator to sign summary sheet of RAC/s at the Awards Board	
Prepare for final moderation ensuring that all student portfolios are presented in the required format of the AVA	
Ensure that each student has checked and signed the summary sheet in front of their portfolio in preparation for presenting to the external moderator –a final moderation is likely to be postponed if all aspects of preparation have not been carried out	

June/July

Compile any mitigating circumstances in preparation for final moderation and Awards Boards	
Prepare required documentation for final student requests for referrals to be presented to Awards Board for consideration	
Update the electronic form of RAC/s with final grading decisions (it is recommended that this should be a two person activity)	
Send completed electronic form of RAC/s to external moderator two weeks in advance of advance of final moderation	
Complete summary sheet with destinations (these will be returned by Certa if incomplete and a quality intervention fee charged)	
Prepare for the Awards Board (ensure documentation, room, catering and personnel including AVA representative are in place)	
Liaise with your quality contact to ensure signed RACs and minutes of the Awards Board are sent to Certa in accordance with timescales to avoid delay in the onward transmission of students' certificates	
Complete external moderator visit survey	
Complete final electronic Course Review Survey and submit to Certa by the end of July (a link to this will have been forwarded with the May and June bulletins)	
Receive students' certificates from Certa	

Glossary – Guide to Key Terms

Access to Higher Education Diploma

A nationally recognised Level 3 qualification for adults that is credit-based and graded in accordance with a standard grading scheme. Each Access to HE Diploma has its own approved set of units of assessment, governed by rules of combination.

Aegrotat Awards

May be awarded in cases where students have been prevented from completing all 60 credits of the Diploma by exceptional, extenuating, certificated, medical circumstances, but where they have achieved at least 30 credits and are deemed capable of achieving at undergraduate level.

Approval to Run Process

Once a provider/centre has successfully completed the Centre Recognition process, they are eligible to apply for approval to run an Access to HE Diploma by completing a formal application process whereby they demonstrate that they have the resources and subject expertise to deliver an Access to HE Diploma.

Assessment

The process through which a tutor can measure a student's achievement. Assessment is done through a range of activities and provides a framework for feedback and the recognition of student achievement.

Assessment Strategy

The overall plan for the assessment of student work which provides the framework for students to achieve the Access to HE Diploma, including consideration of equality and diversity, resources and timescales.

Assessment Criteria

These describe how students can demonstrate that they have achieved the learning outlined in a learning outcome.

Assessor

The person, usually the tutor, with responsibility for the assessment of student work.

Assignment Brief

The information used to describe what the student has to do to achieve specified learning outcomes, including assessment tasks, deadlines for completion and guidance on the achievement of grades.

AVA

Abbreviation of Access Validating Agency, an organisation licensed by QAA to undertake the development, validation, monitoring and review of individual Access to HE Diploma courses and, accordingly, to award the Diploma (or where appropriate, credit towards the Diploma).

Awards Board

A formal process required by QAA to agree the award of credit, in line with similar HEI requirements.

Certification

The provision to students of a formal certificate testifying that they have been awarded the Access to HE Diploma, together with details of the units they have achieved (achievement transcript).

Course Recognition

Granted when a particular provider/centre has been approved to deliver an approved Diploma. For course recognition to be completed, the AVA provides certain required course details to QAA. The course is then included on the Access courses database as a QAA-recognised Access to HE course.

Credits

Credits, along with levels, are a key aspect of the accreditation framework. The number of credits reflects the volume of learning. A credit is awarded for those outcomes which, on average, a student might reasonably be expected to achieve in a notional 10 hours of learning. Notional learning time is the average time needed to achieve a particular identified outcome, not necessarily the actual time a student takes.

Credit Transfer

The process through which Credits achieved on a different Access to HE Programme (through the same or a different AVA) can be transferred to a new Access programme and be counted towards the achievement of the full Access to HE Diploma.

Diploma Approval

Is achieved when the recommendations of a validation panel have been considered and an AVA formally confirms that a Diploma has met all requirements (including requirements made in conditions), and that it may be offered by the provider approved to deliver it.

External Moderation

External moderator visits take place twice a year for each programme to ensure that it operates in line with AVA and QAA requirements.

Grade Descriptor

There are seven grade descriptors which are used to make judgements about achievement. These are specified on each unit and cannot be changed, though elements contained within each grade descriptor (grade descriptor components) can be selected by tutors at the assessment task design stage. Grade descriptor 7 (Quality) appears on all units.

Grade Indicator

This is the grade a tutor/assessor gives for each grade descriptor that is used to assess a student's assignment.

Grade Profile

The summary of grades a student has achieved; one grade for each unit successfully completed. This is the list that university offers tend to be based on (e.g. 30 Distinctions and 15 Merits may be the basis of an offer).

Grading Scheme Handbook (Sections A-E)

QAA's definitive guide to the regulations and requirements for the implementation of grading.

HEI

A Higher Education Institution such as a university, which offers degree level courses.

Internal Moderation

The process undertaken by an internal moderator in which assessment practices, such as the design of assignment briefs, the quality of tutor decisions and feedback to students are regularly sampled, evaluated so that their findings can be acted upon to ensure consistency and fairness.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria

A learning outcome is a clear statement about what a student will be able to know, do or understand for the award of credit for any given unit.

The assessment criteria define more precisely what the student needs to do to demonstrate the achievement of each learning outcome.

Learning Programme Plan

The approved document agreed through the approval process which contains definitive details of conditions which must be satisfied for the successful achievement of the Diploma – eg, rules of combination, rules of unit inclusion and exclusion, complete unit lists.

Level

The assigned Level of approved units reflects the student's ability to select and use relevant knowledge, ideas, skills and procedures to complete well defined tasks and address straightforward problems. Access to HE units are either Level Two (the same level as GCSE) or Level 3, (the same level as A-Level) but the overall level of the qualification is Level 3.

Moderation

A process intended to check that assessment outcomes are fair, reliable and valid and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently. This is done by both the provider (internal moderation) and by Certa (external moderation).

Posthumous Award

An award which may be made in recognition of a student's achievement should they die before they have completed their programme.

Programme (of study)

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to the award of the Access to HE qualification.

Provider/Centre

An organisation that delivers recognised courses leading to the award of the Access to HE Diploma.

Provider/Centre Approval

The successful outcome of the process through which an AVA approves a Certa recognised provider/centre to deliver one or more Access to HE Diploma.

QAA

Quality Assurance Agency the independent body which monitors and advises on standards and quality in UK higher education and Access to HE.

RAC

Recommendation for the Award of Credit form which, once completed, verified by the Tutor, Internal Moderator and External Moderator and submitted to Certa, triggers the sending of students' certificates.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The process by which students can achieve the Diploma without having to complete all the units, if they have previously achieved another qualification which fulfils some of the requirements.

Referral

If a student's first resubmission has been unsuccessful, a case may be made by the tutor that the student should be allowed a second resubmission. An application for a referral can be made to us either during or at the end of a course.

Resubmission

The process whereby a student can resubmit work in order to achieve all the learning outcomes for a unit.

Rules of Combination

Rules defining the required achievement for individual Access to HE awards; these normally identify a particular set of approved named units that a student must complete to accumulate the required credits for the Diploma. Each Diploma has its own rules of combination, which can be found in the Learning Programme Plan for that Diploma. In addition, these rules will apply to units that cannot be delivered together in the same Diploma.

Standardisation

Specific measures taken by a provider (internal standardisation) and by an awarding organisation or organisations (external standardisation) to ensure consistency in the standards and grading of student achievement in relation to a qualification. Each provider should hold an internal standardisation meeting and each Diploma run by every provider must be represented at Certa's annual standardisation meetings.

Submission

A finished piece of student work which is given to a tutor to be formally assessed.

Transcript

A formal written statement of a student's achievement, including, where applicable, the grades that have been awarded.

QAA

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, responsible for the national recognition and regulation of Access to HE courses.

Unit

A self-contained, structured course of study, consisting of a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria and defined by:

- Subject Prefix
- Title
- Unit code
- Level
- Credit Value
- Grade Descriptors (graded Level 3 units only).

Unit Assessment Plan

A plan for the assessment of a unit, including assessment methods, allocation of grade descriptors and learning outcomes to assessment tasks and evidence of achievement.

Unit Credit Value

The number of credits that may be awarded to a student for the successful achievement of all the learning outcomes of a unit. One credit is equivalent to 10 hours of learning including both time spent in class and private study. Individual Units can be worth 3, 6 or 9 credits.

Unit Grade Profile

The list of grade indicators awarded for a unit which are then used to arrive at the overall unit grade (e.g. grade indicators PPMDD would result in an overall unit grade of Merit, PPPMM a Pass).

Validation

The process of detailed scrutiny applied to a submission for a new Access to HE Diploma. It includes consideration of the individual units and the rules of combination which specify the required learning for the award of the Diploma. The process leads to a recommendation for formal approval of the Diploma by the AVA.

Validation Panel

A team of experts appointed by an AVA to scrutinise proposals for new Access to HE Diplomas or units or modifications to existing diplomas or units.