

Access to HE Diploma awarded 2020

**Information for students
- sitting assessments
autumn 2020**

Introduction

1 On 3 April 2020, QAA announced that students who planned to complete their Access to HE course **by 31 July 2020** would receive estimated grades for all remaining assessments with submission dates after 20 March 2020.

2 We are all focused on making sure students are not disadvantaged by these unprecedented circumstances including to allow for an appeal where appropriate. Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) produced [guidance](#) on the appeals process.

3 If a student did not feel their estimated grades reflect their expected performance, there was an opportunity to appeal **or** they may choose to sit their assessments at the earliest reasonable opportunity (when all providers are operating normally). Students should be made aware that taking their assessments later may impact their progression to university in September.

4 The following information on sitting assessments is relevant to all students who received calculated grades from 20 March 2020 and were awarded a QAA-recognised Access to HE Diploma in July 2020 by the following AVAs¹:

- Agored Cymru
- AIM Qualifications and Assessment Group
- Ascentis
- The Cambridge Access Validating Agency
- Certa
- Gateway Qualifications
- LASER Learning Awards
- One Awards
- Open Awards
- OCN London
- Open College Network West Midlands.

5 As far as was practical in the current circumstances, AVAs have consulted with course tutors and senior course managers across the sector as the guidance was developed.

6 The following information is provided in the context of the most up-to-date advice for educational settings provided by the Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England. If that advice changes, this guidance will be updated.

Conditions for sitting assessments

7 Students will be allowed to sit only assessments that received estimated grades in the 2019-20 academic year. This information does not apply to assessments that received actual grades prior to 20 March 2020.

8 Sitting assessments will be allowed where a student can improve the grade shown on their transcript. Therefore, a student with an estimated Achieved on an ungraded unit and/or an estimated Distinction on a graded unit will not be allowed to sit assessments within those units.

¹ AVAs are awarding bodies licensed by QAA to award Access to HE Diplomas.

9 Students have the opportunity to sit any or all of the assessments that received estimated grades.

10 Providers may refuse a request for sitting assessments where the outcome will have no material effect. For example, if a student received a pass for a unit comprised of three assessments, with actual grade indicators PPP for assessment 1, actual grade indicators PPP for assessment 2, and estimated PPP for assessment 3. Sitting assessment 3 will not result in an improved overall unit grade, regardless of improved assessment grade indicators.

11 Students should contact their provider to register to sit assessments. AVAs will not permit requests from students unless there is no other way for the student to sit assessments (ie their provider has ceased trading).

Timeline for sitting assessments

12 By **2 October 2020**, students must register with their provider to sit assessments and confirm which assessments will be undertaken.

13 By **2 October 2020**, providers must inform their AVA of:

- 13.1. names of students due to sit assessments
- 13.2. Access to HE Diploma title and specific assessments of the sits
- 13.3. assessment schedules for the sits.

14 Sitting assessments will take place between **5 October 2020 and 23 November 2020**. It will be the responsibility of the providers to manage the sits and internal moderation process during this time. Providers must provide their AVA with the updated results and evidence for quality assurance processes within this timeline.

15 AVAs will undertake external moderation processes by **7 December 2020**. This will be in line with QAA's extraordinary regulatory framework.

16 AVAs will hold Awards Boards by **15 December 2020** to finalise grades.

17 AVAs will confirm finalised grades with providers by **16 December 2020**.

18 Grades will be published by providers to students on **17 December 2020**.

19 Certificates and transcripts will be issued to providers in **January 2021** in accordance with usual AVA practices.

Managing sitting assessments

20 Students must not be charged for sitting assessments. AVAs will not charge providers for students registered to sit assessments.

21 Students should be aware that no additional teaching will take place alongside sitting assessments.

22 Where a provider cannot provide the opportunity for students to sit assessments during the aforementioned time period, they must inform their AVA immediately. The AVA will arrange an alternative provider to manage the assessments sits in their place. Students will be notified if sit assessments will take place at an alternative provider.

23 For each assessment, students should be given the timeframe set within the Access to HE Diploma's original assessment plan. Where units are usually delivered and assessed in a long and thin format, providers should consider adapting the assessments so that they can fit within the timeframe.

24 Providers can set their original assessments only where this assessment has not previously been set for the 2019-20 cohort. Where original assessments have been presented to a cohort as a formative assessment, regardless of whether the student completed it or not, it must not be used as an assessment during this process.

25 Where an original assessment is no longer possible due to COVID-19 related safety concerns, providers should set adapted assessments.

26 Providers will mark and internally moderate each assessment. Each assessment will be submitted to their AVA for external moderation and quality assurance. Where the external moderation process results in a grade adjustment, this will be presented to the provider at the Awards Board, which will approve the credits, grades and Diplomas.

Actual grades

27 Where a student has chosen to sit an assessment, the actual grade will stand and will take precedence over any estimated grade. Please note that an actual assessment grade may be lower, the same, or higher than the estimated assessment grade. It should be noted that there is an element of risk involved in requesting to sit assessments.

28 Only one attempt will be permitted per assessment. Students may not sit assessments multiple times in the hope of eventually getting their desired grade.

29 Resubmissions for assessments will not be permitted. Where a student has not achieved all learning outcomes, their estimated grade will stand.

30 Students will have the opportunity to appeal their new actual grades in January 2021. Appeals will be permitted on grounds of administrative error or procedural error. Students should submit their appeal to their provider in the first instance, who will investigate if any administrative error or procedural error was present. The appeal will then be submitted to the AVA for consideration.

FAQs

Which Access to HE Diplomas are included?

This guidance relates to all QAA-recognised Access to HE Diplomas and students that were due to complete by 31 July 2020. For a list of all Diplomas, please go to the course search² on our [website](#).

Are Access to HE distance-learning Diplomas included?

Yes. This guidance related to all QAA-recognised Access to HE Diplomas and students that were due to complete by 31 July 2020. The type of the course, for example online, fast track, day release, full-time and part-time will be included. For a list of all Diplomas, please go to the course search² on our [website](#).

² The course search is updated regularly and it is possible that some Diplomas awarded in 2020 are no longer included.

Do I need to apply to sit my assessments?

Yes. You need to contact your provider by 2 October 2020 to register to sit assessments. You will need to confirm with your provider which assessments you would like to sit by this date.

Can I choose to sit any assessment?

You can only sit assessments that received estimated grades and where there is a possibility for an overall unit grade to be improved. You can choose to sit as many of these assessments as you like. You can only sit each assessment once.

Examples where you could sit an assessment:

- Unit grade of Pass (P), with one assessment that received estimated grade indicators of PPP. You could sit the assessment as you could improve your unit grade to Merit or Distinction.
- Unit grade of Merit (M), with two assessments that received estimated grade indicators of MMMM and MDDD. You could choose to sit one or both assessments to try to improve your unit grade to Distinction.

Examples where you could not sit an assessment:

- Unit grade of Distinction (D), with three assessments that received estimated grade indicators of MMMM, DDD, and DDDDD. You cannot receive a higher grade than a Distinction.
- Unit grade of Pass (P), with one assessment that received actual grade indicators PPPPP. These grades were achieved prior to 20 March 2020 and so cannot undergo a resit.
- Unit grade of Merit (M), with two assessments of which one had actual grade indicators MMM and one which had estimated grade indicators PP. Sitting the second assessment would not change the overall unit grade. Even if you received DD, the overall unit grade indicators would be MMMDD and so your grade would remain a Merit overall.

I submitted assessments as formative work after 20 March 2020. Can these now receive actual marks?

You cannot sit an assessment that you have already seen and/or submitted. Where you completed formative assessments after 20 March 2020 for a unit and you now wish to receive an actual assessment grade, you will be set a new assessment to complete. This is to ensure that no Access to HE students are unfairly advantaged or disadvantaged based on their ability to complete work between 20 March and 31 July 2020.

What if I have an agreed reasonable adjustment or access arrangement?

Please contact your provider as soon as possible to discuss your specific circumstances.

Can I submit drafts for my assessments?

Draft submissions of assessments prior to formal submission are not allowed.

Can I get an extension for my assessments?

Extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances. The extension date must fall within the submission timeframe.

What happens if I register to sit assessments and later decide I want to withdraw?

Please contact your provider as soon as possible if you would like to withdraw from sitting assessments. You can withdraw at any time until you submit your assessments and your estimated grade will stand. Once you have submitted your work, it will be marked and quality assured. The actual grade will then supersede your estimated grade.

Will I get feedback and provisional grades before final grades are confirmed?

In line with usual practice for Access to HE Diplomas, you will receive developmental feedback and provisional grades once your assessments have been marked. Please be aware that these grades will undergo quality assurance processes and may be adjusted. Final grades will be released on 17 December 2020.

How will this impact my admission to university?

Universities have been informed about the plans for sitting assessments. You should speak to your preferred university about your plans to sit your assessments to understand how this may impact your admission.