

## Access to HE Diploma: a new qualification



Guidelines for HE admissions staff - January 2007

### 1 What is it?

The Access to HE Diploma (the Diploma) is the new qualification that will replace the QAA-recognised Access to HE certificate.

### 2 When is it being introduced?

The Diploma is being phased in between 2007 and 2009.

- Summer **2007**: a very small number of applicants from Access to HE courses will be offering the Access to HE Diploma. Most Access to HE applicants will still be offering Access to HE certificates.
- Summer **2008**: many applicants from Access to HE courses will be offering the Access to HE Diploma.
- Summer **2009**: all applicants from Access to HE courses will be offering the Access to HE Diploma.

**Note:** applicants who complete an Access to HE course before summer 2009, but delay their application, may continue to apply with the Access to HE certificate: the achievement of the certificate is not invalidated by the introduction of the Diploma. It is important that offers should not exclude or disadvantage certificate students.

### 3 How will it affect HE admissions?

#### Applications received

All students from QAA-recognised Access to HE courses will, by 2008-09, be offering a qualification with a title which has a standard, easily recognisable format. In addition, standard course information will be provided by all Access to HE applicants about the names (and level) of all the units studied on the particular course.

#### Seeking additional information

Further information about the particular programme followed by any Access to HE student will continue to be available from the course provider. It will also be available from the relevant Access validating agency (AVA). (AVAs are the awarding bodies for the Access to HE Diploma.) AVA contact details are available on the Access to HE website [www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk).

#### Making offers

Student achievement will be described in the same way for all Access to HE courses in England and Wales, so it will be easier to make appropriate offers to Access to HE applicants without having to be familiar with the particular course they're on. If you make an offer based on the achievement of the Access to HE Diploma, you can be confident that it means the same thing – readiness to study in HE in the subject(s) or area(s) indicated - irrespective of the Access to HE course followed by the student or the AVA making the award.

#### 4 How does the Diploma differ from the Access to HE certificate?

##### **There's a new title**

The generic title for the qualification is the **Access to HE Diploma**. Individual award names will have a common format which defines the subject or general area of study: **Access to HE Diploma (subject/area)**, eg Access to HE Diploma (Business Studies); Access to HE Diploma (Art and Design); or Access to HE Diploma (Combined Sciences). There is no restricted set of award titles: the title of a particular course is determined when it's validated, according to the intended progression route(s) and the course content. Some courses may be very broadly defined, eg Access to HE Diploma (Combined Studies) when the programme is designed for progression to a range of curriculum or vocational areas.

##### **It's a credit-based qualification**

All Access to HE diplomas will be credit-based, with common definitions being used for key concepts such as 'credit', 'levels', 'learning outcomes', 'assessment criteria', 'rules of combination'. (Full details of the definitions, and the specifications for the Diploma as a whole, are available on the Access to HE website: [www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk))

##### **There is commonality in the way courses leading to the Diploma are structured**

- Students follow a planned, coherent programme of study.
- The individual elements of any programme are a set of specific units, which are defined in the programme's rules of combination.
- The rules of combination – which identify which units are mandatory and which are optional for any programme - are approved at programme validation.

##### **There are common requirements for the achievement of the qualification**

Successful completion of the planned programme of study will require students to achieve **60 credits**, including **at least 45 at Level 3**, (with the remainder at Level 2).

#### 5 How will I recognise that a student has an Access to HE Diploma?

Students on Access to HE courses will use the new format for the title on UCAS forms and any correspondence relating to admissions. All Diplomas will carry the specific title of the award and the certification version of QAA's Access to HE logo.

#### 6 What about grading?

QAA is working on a common grading system for the Access to HE Diploma. There will be a consultation about this in spring 2007. Further information will follow.

#### 7 Where can I find out more?

More information about the Access to HE Diploma and other developments is available on the Access to HE website ([www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk)). Individual enquiries should be sent by email to [access@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:access@qaa.ac.uk)