



Access to HE Provider Handbook
2024-2025
Assessment Design

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1. Assessment Design

1. Access to HE Diplomas must follow the validated rules of combination and be delivered and assessed in accordance with the method and schedule for which a provider has been approved. Providers should work with their Access Validating Agency (AVA) to ensure that activities undertaken for the development, quality assurance and award of Access to HE Diplomas continue in accordance with the requirements of the QAA recognition scheme for Access to Higher Education (the Recognition Scheme).

2. Key Principles

2. The AVA expect all elements of assessment practice such as activities and their timing, evidence, or feedback meet the following key principles of assessment as outlined below:
 - Authenticity
 - Fitness for Purpose
 - Inclusivity
 - Sufficiency, reliability, and consistency
 - Validity

3. Planning Assessments

- 3.1 Providers are encouraged to consider using a variety of assessment methods to support students' preparation for higher education. Providers are to keep all elements of their assessment practice under constant review to ensure that the key principles are met.
- 3.2 Providers are required to produce their assessment plan prior to the commencement of the course and submit to the AVA by **16th September 2024**. In developing a unit assessment plan, tutors should plan an assessment programme that meets the development needs of students and the demands of the unit in as few assignments as possible.
- 3.3 When planning assessment for a unit providers need to be aware of the:
 - level and credit value of the unit
 - status of the unit – graded or ungraded
 - learning outcomes (LO) and assessment criteria (AC)
 - all three grading standards must be used to assess the unit when the unit is graded
 - the most appropriate sub-components for the tasks should be selected
 - resources required for the delivery of a unit and those available
 - time frames for the delivery and assessment of the unit

- where the unit is scheduled in the programme
- impact of artificial intelligence

3.3 All assignments must include a clearly explained task matched to the relevant learning outcomes and assessment criteria. All assignment briefs must clearly state:

- issue and submission dates
- method(s) of submission eg via Turnitin or in class
- time of submission
- learning outcomes and assessment criteria to be assessed
- grading standards and grading components where a graded unit is being assessed
- advisory word count or equivalent
- student declaration (where submission of assessments is electronic, it is possible with some platforms to capture the student declaration as part of the submission process)
- providers must ensure that each of the learning outcomes for each unit is formally assessed only **once** in that unit. For graded units, all set tasks must be included in the overall grading of the unit.
- learning outcomes to be assessed

3.4 Any assessment requiring students to present or verbally participate **must** be recorded and made available for the internal moderator and the moderator. The students must be made aware of how the recording will be made on the assessment brief eg audio or video. It should be clear, to both internal moderator and diploma moderator, who the students are in the recording.

3.5 The expectation of word counts or equivalent on assignment briefs are to be **advisory** for learners, supporting them to give an appropriate response. The AVA recommend 1500-2000 words for a three-credit unit and advise wording such as 'advisory word count 1000'. It is important to ensure that submissions of achievement are not rejected and achievement of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and the grades awarded are not impeded by a word count not being adhered to.

4. Assessing a unit using more than one assignment

4.1 If more than one assignment is used to assess the unit, the unit assessment plan will map the learning outcomes and grading standards to the assignments. It is important to note that:

- The learning outcomes for a unit should only be assessed once, so the different assignments will be used to assess different learning outcomes or groups of learning outcomes.
- A unit assessment plan should be used to map how the learning outcomes, assessment criteria, components and sub-components of the grading standards are allocated across the assignments.

5. Grading Standards, Grade Components, and sub-components.

5.1 Each grading standard contains several components which reflect different types of performance and should be selected as appropriate for the subject and the demands of each assignment. The components available for use are documented in the [Grading Scheme Handbook 2023, Section B: The Grading Standards \(qaa.ac.uk\)](#)

5.2 Each grading standard has a specific rule governing the selection of sub-components. Some key points regarding the use of components and sub-components include:

- Each grading standard specifies a minimum and maximum number of sub-components that can be used dependant on the credit value of the unit.
- A minimum of two components of 'Grading Standard 3' must be selected for each unit.
- All three components for 'Grading Standard 3' must be used at least once across the assessment of the diploma.
- The selected components must ensure that students can be rewarded for performance which exceeds the standard for pass (in graded units).
- The sub-components used at merit and distinction must be the same set.
- There can be no deviation from the wording provided in the handbook for each grading standard, components, and sub-components.
- Contextualisation of grading standard components is permitted and can be useful to help inform the students about how the components are expected to be evident within their assignment. It can also enhance the students understanding of the expected levels of performance for a merit or distinction.

6. Assessing More than One Unit in One Assessment

6.1 Where more than one unit is integrated into one assessment the students should be advised to submit a fresh copy of the assessment for each unit / assessor. This will allow for the achievement of assessment criteria for each unit to be clearly identifiable to student, internal moderator, and moderator.

7. Internal Moderation of Assessment Briefs

7.1 All assessment briefs must be internally verified before being made available to students. Evidence of this must be made available to moderators on request.

8. AVA Templates

8.1 Providers may choose to use the AVA's templates for assessment brief and feedback forms but may use their own providing that they meet with AIM Assessment and Qualification Group requirements approval. Templates will be available via the [Access to HE Provider Support](#) page on the website.

9. Reasonable Adjustments

9.1 A reasonable adjustment is any action that helps to reduce the effect of a disability or difficulty that places a learner at a substantial disadvantage in an assessment situation. Reasonable adjustments are made to an assessment for a qualification to enable a disabled learner to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding of the levels of attainment required by the specification for that qualification.

9.2 For further information regarding how to apply, acceptable evidence and what centres may be able permit themselves can be found AIM's Reasonable Adjustment Policy accessed on www.aimgroup.org.uk/qualifications/centres/policies-and-procedures/

10. Further Information

10.1 Further information about the grading standards and how to use them in assessments can be found in the following documents accessible here:

- Grading Scheme Handbook 2023, Section B: The Grading Standards (qaa.ac.uk)
- Grading Scheme Handbook 2023, Section C: Using the Grading Standards in Assessment (qaa.ac.uk)
- Access to HE Grading Scheme Toolkit 2023: Integrated Assessments: A Brief Guide (qaa.ac.uk)
- Access to HE Grading Scheme Toolkit: Converting Assignment Briefs to Meet the Requirements of the Revised Grading Scheme (qaa.ac.uk)
- Access to HE Grading Scheme Toolkit: Understanding Assessment and Grading for the Access to HE Diploma: A Brief Guide (qaa.ac.uk)