

Information Sheet

Provider Flexibilities for Supporting Access to HE Diploma Students in 2021-22

The arrangements for the award of the Access to HE Diploma in 2021-22 will:

- ensure that students have the opportunity to achieve their Diploma by being taught and assessed so that they are prepared for the transition to higher education
- continue to safeguard against any potential future disruption as a result of the pandemic, building upon the arrangements implemented in the 2020-21 academic year.

We know that the current environment continues to pose challenges for many students, and that Access to HE students often balance significant additional responsibilities alongside their studies. The arrangements in place will provide flexibility so that providers can work with their Access Validating Agency (AVA) to put in place arrangements that fit local needs, and that meet the individual needs of their learners. By doing so, QAA aims to ensure equity for all students.

KEY FACT: Support



Support is available to students from their course provider if they are finding it difficult to learn or be assessed this academic year. In addition, further adaptations may be available.

Providers will:

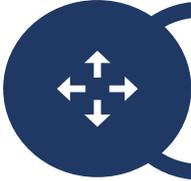
- ensure that all students have information on and access to support available to them.
- review regularly with students the application of the arrangements to provide additional information and support where needed.

This information sheet has been developed by Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) for **providers**. It presents an outline of possible flexibilities that providers can apply to support Access to HE Diploma students in 2021-22.



Adaptation of assessment task, method of delivery and/or units delivered

KEY FACT: Adapt



Assessments, delivery (for example, moving from classroom teaching to online or remote teaching) and/or units can be adapted, where necessary and appropriate, to support students to continue learning.

Providers may adapt assessment tasks, method of delivery and/or units delivered (including amendments to existing units) to accommodate groups or individual students. New adaptations must be approved by the AVA prior to applying the adaptation, to ensure:

- they are necessary and appropriate
- they do not undermine the validity and reliability of the qualification
- they consider and address risks around malpractice.

Providers should consider how making adaptations early in the course could make their Diplomas more resilient to any further disruption as a result of a changing public health situation, so that assessments can continue as planned as far as possible.

Providers will:

- review existing adaptations that they wish to apply in 2021-22 with their AVAs to ensure adaptations continue to be necessary and appropriate.
- actively engage with AVAs to review and adapt provision as necessary throughout the year.
- inform students at the beginning of their studies of any adaptations to support the award of their Diploma.
- notify students throughout the year of additional adaptations to their Diploma.
- notify their AVA immediately if there are any difficulties in the adaptation of a Diploma.

QAA information for providers: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/access-to-he/covid-19-support-and-information-Access www.qaa.ac.uk/access-to-he/covid-19-support-and-information-for-providers-access

QAA will work with AVAs to facilitate the sharing of a suite of materials with providers to support the application of the ERF.

All providers have been emailed an AIM qualifications adaptations spreadsheets for new submissions for 2021-22 however they can also be found on our website [Access to HE - AIM \(aim-group.org.uk\)](http://Access to HE - AIM (aim-group.org.uk))



Extensions to assignment deadlines

Providers can approve extensions to assignment deadlines in line with QAA requirements and provider and AVA policies. This can be agreed for a whole group or individual students;

for single or multiple assignments depending on the circumstances. All agreed extensions should be formally recorded and subject to review during External Moderation.

Providers should be mindful of the potential implications for students when offering multiple extensions across their Diploma, to avoid placing unnecessary pressure on students at the end of their course. Providers may also wish to consider the impact of managing extensions on staff workloads – for example, related to marking and quality assurance. It may be possible to offer alternative solutions in these cases and providers should speak to their AVA to discuss what options may be available.



Additional study support where there are extenuating circumstances

Providers may provide specific additional study support and other forms of additional support where the need is evident.

Additional study support must be recorded and will be subject to review during External Moderation to ensure:

- it is necessary and appropriate
- it does not undermine the validity and reliability of the qualification
- it considers and addresses risks around malpractice.

In addition, any issues identified by students and/or providers that impact the learner's academic performance (or ability to complete the Diploma) should be recorded on the adaptations spreadsheet and made available for review at moderation.

If you wish to apply for extenuating circumstances, please complete your own internal documentation and email acesstohe@aim-group.org.uk. This will then be reviewed by the moderation manager and you will be contacted with regards what's next, within 5 working days.



Counselling support

Many providers will be able to provide counselling support and other forms of additional support for students with mental health issues in the current circumstances, where the need is identified. This may support the student to manage the challenges rather than withdraw or defer a year.



Breaks in learning or extensions to learning

Providers can agree breaks in learning for students, which allow for a gap of up to six months without affecting funding or loan restrictions. This can enable a student to have a break or study for a longer period than planned, with an extended end date. Breaks in learning and extensions should be recorded and confirmed to the AVA.

Students in England

Follow this link to the ESFA guidance: <https://esfahelp.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/360013863540-Adult-Education-Budget-AEB-breaks-in-learning>

Information about breaks in learning in relation to advanced learner loans: <https://esfahelp.education.gov.uk/hc/en-gb/articles/360015264319-Breaks-in-learning-information-for-Advanced-learner-loans>

Students in Wales

Follow this link to guidance on breaks (suspension) in learning www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

Non-publicly funded courses

For non-publicly funded courses, providers can agree breaks with students in accordance with their own policies. Please speak to your AVA regarding any such breaks in learning.



Continuing into the next academic year

Providers may offer students the option of continuing into the next academic year. Students have up to five years to complete their Diploma. This should be discussed with the AVA and any agreed continuing students will be recorded at the Final Awards Board.

Students registered on AIM Qualifications Access to HE Diplomas can take up to three years before they need to be re-registered.



Award Through Extenuation

KEY FACT: Award



If students can be assessed, they should be assessed and awarded, based on planned assessments. In those exceptional cases where they cannot be assessed, a student may still be awarded unit(s) that make up the Diploma, through extenuation.

In those exceptional cases where a student **cannot** be assessed, the student **may** still be awarded unit(s) that make up the Diploma, through extenuation. The tutor/provider will draw upon either further adaptations to assessments or alternate lines of evidence to determine whether the unit can be awarded.

Providers will:

- effectively apply AVA award processes to ensure that awards can be made where the requirements for the:
 - award are met
 - award through extenuation are met (exceptional cases).
- inform students at the beginning of their studies of the arrangements for the award of the Diploma, including the award through extenuation.

Please follow this link to the AIM Qualifications COVID-19 supporting information webpage [Access to HE - AIM \(aim-group.org.uk\)](https://aim-group.org.uk)

QAA COVID-19 supporting information webpage:

www.qaa.ac.uk/access-to-he/covid-19-support-and-information-for-providers-access

QAA information for providers:

[Arrangements for the Award and Assessment of the Access to HE Diploma 2021-22](#)

QAA manages the national framework for the recognition and regulation of Access to HE Diplomas. www.qaa.ac.uk