



AVA licensing criteria

**Criteria for the licensing and relicensing
of Access Validating Agencies**

May 2011

QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education

Contents

Preface	1
Key terms	1
Criteria for the licensing and relicensing of AVAs	2
Precept 1: Governance	2
Precept 2: Strategic planning	5
Precept 3: Management	7
Precept 4: Course recognition	11
Precept 5: Moderation, monitoring and certification	21

Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is responsible for arrangements for the formal approval and quality assurance of Access to Higher Education (HE) courses. The *QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education* (the *Recognition Scheme*) provides the framework of structures, mechanisms and regulations through which QAA exercises this responsibility. Within this framework, QAA authorises organisations to approve Access to HE Diplomas, recognise Access to HE courses and award Access to HE Diplomas to students. An organisation which has been authorised by QAA for these purposes is known as an Access Validating Agency (AVA).

This section of the *Recognition Scheme* sets out QAA's requirements for the governance and management of AVAs, and the procedures and mechanisms to be operated by AVAs for maintaining the quality of Access to HE courses and the standards achieved by students awarded the Access to HE Diploma. These requirements are presented as a set of standard conditions and specific criteria for the award of an AVA licence. QAA uses these conditions and criteria in making decisions about the award and renewal of AVA licences.

The description of the processes of AVA licensing and relicensing and other parts of the *Recognition Scheme* are available at www.accesstohe.ac.uk.

Key terms

An **Access to HE Diploma** is a full level 3 qualification, designed to provide a preparation for study in higher education (HE). Individual Diplomas are separately defined: they are titled according to their subject focus, and the required learning for each Diploma is indicated through the units of assessment specified in its rules of combination. The term is used both to refer to the qualification itself and to the learning requirements which lead to its award. (Further details are provided in *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications*). A Diploma may be delivered by one, or more than one, provider/centre.

An **Access to HE course** is a named Access to HE Diploma which has been approved for delivery by a particular provider/centre and is listed on QAA's Access Courses Database. A course is therefore unique to a particular provider/centre, even where the Diploma requirements are the same as those on one or more other courses.

A **programme** is the defined route an individual student may take to achieve an Access to HE Diploma on a particular course. A programme will be shaped by the rules of combination of the Diploma and defined in its detail by the selection of options which are available. (The term 'programme' is also sometimes used to refer to the totality of a provider's/centre's Access to HE provision, which is sometimes structured as a framework of options through which a number of Access to HE Diplomas are offered.)

A **provider** or **centre** is an organisation which is responsible for delivering and assessing courses leading to one or more Access to HE Diplomas.

Criteria for the licensing and relicensing of AVAs

Precept 1: Governance

The organisation has constitutional and governance arrangements which enable it to meet its legal and public obligations, to render it appropriately accountable, and to allow it to discharge its AVA responsibilities securely.

These criteria are concerned with the security and proper exercise of responsibilities relating to Access to HE within the licensed organisation. They require the licensed organisation to be properly constituted and for its constitutional arrangements to reflect the partnership of further education (FE) and higher education (HE) that is at the heart of the *Recognition Scheme*. But an AVA must also be independent: it must be protected from inappropriate or undue influence in its decision-making and avoid being unduly restricted by any other body in its operations.

Criteria

The organisation can demonstrate that it meets the following criteria. (All parts and sub-parts of the criteria apply, unless otherwise indicated.)

Legal and constitutional arrangements

- 1.1 Its constitutional basis is clear and readily identifiable, and its formal documentation specifies its legal identity, function(s), aim(s), and principal governance structures.
- 1.2 Its formal aims (or company objects) are congruent with the overall Principles and Aims of the *Recognition Scheme*.¹
- 1.3 Its constitutional structure requires the involvement of member or partner organisations (or other definition of participating stakeholder organisations).
- 1.4 It is not itself a provider of Access to HE courses or a receiver of Access to HE students.
- 1.5 Member or partner organisations include, but are not limited to, a) organisations providing Access to HE courses and b) HE institutions which receive Access to HE students and are subscribers to QAA.
- 1.6 It operates formal and transparent processes for approving organisations as members or partners, and for agreeing any other formal organisational relationships.
- 1.7 Its legal identity, constitutional and governance arrangements jointly ensure:
 - a an appropriate level of formal accountability to member or partner organisations
 - b protection from the undue influence of any one of, or a minority group of, its member or partner organisations, or their representatives
 - c its independent decision-making and operation as an AVA, as required by these criteria and other requirements of the *Recognition Scheme*

¹ See Overview document, at: www.accesstohe.ac.uk.

d there is a clearly identified basis on which it is able to enter into legally binding agreements.

1.8 Any arrangements between the organisation and suppliers of goods or services which are integral to the operation of the AVA, including where the supplier is otherwise involved in the operation of the AVA, are defined in formal agreements which define the separation of the responsibilities, liabilities and authority of each party.

Governance

1.9 It establishes and maintains clear and effective governance and deliberative structures, which are clearly described in its formal documentation.

1.10 Its governance structures provide appropriate experience and expertise at every level, which is sufficient to ensure sound governance and informed and considered decision-making in relation to all AVA matters, and:

- a formal committees are constituted according to clear membership specifications which detail the number of members; categories and/or balance of representation; and quoracy requirements consistent with good governance
- b the AVA's FE and HE member or partner organisations are represented on the organisation's most senior governance body
- c the AVA's FE and HE member or partner organisations are represented on all governance and advisory bodies with responsibilities for the development and quality assurance of Access to HE
- d the process and criteria for the appointment or election of representatives to decision-making bodies, and the period for which they are appointed, is clear and transparent
- e attendance at formal committees is monitored, and the AVA takes action to address non-attendance and to ensure vacant places on committees are filled.

1.11 Formal committees operate according to terms of reference which detail a clear remit, appropriate responsibilities and reporting relationships through which their accountability to the organisation is defined.

1.12 The organisation's board of directors (or equivalent most senior body within the governance structure) is the ultimate authority for the AVA licence and is responsible for ensuring that the organisation meets its responsibilities as an AVA. This body has direct responsibility, which may not be delegated, for the formal approval of:

- a the annual AVA self-evaluation report to QAA
- b the AVA's written submission to QAA, as required for the process of AVA relicensing
- c the AVA's response to QAA about AVA relicensing reports
- d formal statements to QAA about how the AVA has addressed requirements for the renewal of the AVA licence.

1.13 The governing body has ultimate responsibility for:

- a legal responsibilities
- b oversight and control of financial operations
- c policy development
- d strategic direction
- e the approval of Access to HE courses

- f quality assurance and enhancement for the AVA's recognised Access to HE courses
- g monitoring and approval of the academic standards achieved by students
- h the process for the award of Access to HE Diplomas to students.

- 1.14 The location of specific governance responsibilities is clearly specified and appropriately located within the governance structure.
- 1.15 Where activities associated with governance responsibilities have been delegated, there are monitoring and reporting procedures in place through which the responsible body can ensure that the activities are properly undertaken.
- 1.16 The extent and limits of authority of bodies or individuals holding delegated responsibilities are clearly defined.
- 1.17 The separation and links between its governance and management structures are clear, and the separation is demonstrated in the AVA's operation.
- 1.18 The AVA maintains full and accurate records of committees' decision-making which are appropriate for purposes of a) public accountability b) internal reference and direction in the development of the AVA's policy and operation, and c) administrative effectiveness.
- 1.19 Minutes of the governing body are retained for the lifetime of the organisation and, in the event of merger or other arrangement for transfer of AVA responsibilities to a new organisation, these records are made available to the successor organisation(s).

Precept 2: Strategic planning

The organisation plans its work in Access to HE systematically and strategically and acts as a focus for the development and promotion of Access to HE courses.

These criteria emphasise the need for an AVA to develop and make use of a formal strategy for Access to HE. They are concerned with both the effectiveness of the AVA's planning and monitoring processes and the AVA's role in developing and promoting Access to HE.

Criteria

The organisation can demonstrate that it meets the following criteria. (All parts and sub-parts of the criteria apply, unless otherwise indicated.)

Planning and monitoring

- 2.1 It operates a regular and systematic process for strategic planning relating to its Access to HE activity, through which it takes account of:
 - a the AVA's overarching policy aims for Access to HE
 - b the outcomes of consultation with FE and HE member or partner organisations
 - c the outcomes of its processes for monitoring and reviewing its recognised Access to HE provision, including feedback provided by Access to HE students
 - d the outcomes of QAA's monitoring and relicensing processes and feedback provided
 - e the outcomes of the AVA's self-assessment processes
 - f statistical and other information about those groups in the area(s) or region(s) of the AVA's operation which have most need of HE progression opportunities
 - g prevailing national and regional policies, strategies and circumstances
 - h QAA requirements and developments relating to the Access to HE qualification.
- 2.2 The documentation in which the AVA's strategic plans for Access to HE are stated ('the strategic plan') specifies strategic objectives, with linked operational targets, and with resources and responsibilities assigned and deadlines set for meeting the targets.
- 2.3 The strategic objectives include objectives relating to the development, promotion and enhancement of Access to HE in the geographical area(s) or government region(s) in which the AVA operates.
- 2.4 The strategic plan is formally approved within the AVA's governance structures.
- 2.5 The strategic plan is regularly and systematically monitored; the AVA's achievement of its strategic objectives is assessed; and action is taken in light of the outcomes of the monitoring process.
- 2.6 The strategic planning process is considered through the AVA's self-assessment processes.

Development, promotion and enhancement

- 2.7 It provides a focus for the development, promotion and enhancement of Access to HE provision within the area(s) or region(s) of the AVA's operation, and it:
- a organises and/or supports initiatives or events which focus on innovation and development of new Access to HE provision
 - b creates opportunities to work with other organisations that have common interests in developments relating to Access to HE within the area(s) or region(s) of its operation
 - c seeks involvement in regional or national projects with which it has shared aims or objectives relating to Access to HE.
- 2.8 It gathers and analyses information relevant to the development, promotion and enhancement of Access to HE, and communicates its analyses to its providers and other stakeholders on a regular basis.
- 2.9 It provides expert advice on the delivery of the Access to HE Diploma to ensure that providers meet the AVA's expectations and the requirements of *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications*; and it arranges events or opportunities for practitioners to support and develop good practice in areas such as:
- a approaches to curriculum and curriculum development
 - b course planning and structures
 - c delivery and assessment methods and practices
 - d student support and monitoring
 - e achievement and progression
 - f internal moderation and quality assurance
 - g adequacy and consistency of academic standards
 - h appropriateness and quality of the student experience.
- 2.10 It promotes Access to HE through its activities and publications.

Precept 3: Management

The organisation is able to manage its AVA responsibilities effectively, and to maintain an appropriate structure to support them.

These criteria are concerned with the organisation's capacity to operate the AVA licence properly, and to sustain its management of the licence successfully into the future. They emphasise the establishment and development of a culture of self-assessment, and the use of systematic procedures for key operations to ensure that the work of the organisation is well-established and sustainable.

Criteria

The organisation can demonstrate that it meets the following criteria. (All parts and sub-parts of the criteria apply, unless otherwise indicated.)

Resources and financial management

- 3.1 It has sufficient financial resources to exercise its AVA responsibilities in full.
- 3.2 Its facilities, administrative systems and allocation of funds are sufficient to manage its AVA responsibilities including, in particular, responsibilities relating to assuring the quality and standards of its recognised Access to HE provision.
- 3.3 It operates a responsible, systematic and rigorous approach to the management of its financial affairs and:
 - a its forward financial planning takes account of the AVA's strategic objectives and specific targets for Access to HE
 - b its budgeting mechanisms allow it to plan and monitor income and expenditure relating to Access to HE
 - c there are clear processes and systems through which it records, controls, and monitors financial decision-making and transactions
 - d it operates standard and transparent accounting procedures and produces annual accounts that are appropriate to meet the requirements of the annual report to QAA
 - e reports on its financial health are routinely examined within its governance and management structures
 - f its financial affairs are subject to external audit (or are scrutinised by an independent and appropriately qualified agency or individual), on an annual basis
 - g the outcomes of external audit or scrutiny are considered by the body within its governance structures which has nominated responsibility for oversight and control of its financial operations.

Staffing

- 3.4 The level and structure of staffing can deliver the requirements involved in the holding of an AVA licence, and:
 - a responsibility for the effective leadership and day-to-day management of the organisation is clearly and appropriately located
 - b the roles and responsibilities of executive officers are clearly specified

- c staff are fully accountable to the AVA through clear management lines
- d there is appropriate expertise among staff to carry out the requirements of the AVA licence, including expertise to advise providers on the development, delivery, assessment and quality assurance of Access to HE provision
- e staff with responsibilities for Access to HE are appropriately supported within the structures and systems of the AVA
- f training and development opportunities are made available to staff, including opportunities to enhance the quality of leadership and organisational management, to ensure that staff remain competent for the demands of their roles.

Self-assessment and risk management

- 3.5 It has procedures for regularly monitoring and assessing the quality, effectiveness and security of its management and operations, and it:
- a makes use of statistical and other relevant data in reviewing its performance
 - b makes regular and formal assessment of potential risks to its activities, and takes appropriate action to manage risks identified
 - c monitors its continuing compliance with the AVA licensing criteria
 - d takes appropriate action in response to the outcomes of its assessments
 - e ensures that its self-assessment and evaluation processes allow it to provide a considered report to QAA, according to QAA's requirements for AVA's annual self-evaluation reports
 - f takes account of any feedback provided by QAA in response to its annual self-evaluation report or following the AVA relicensing process.

Operations

- 3.6 Minutes of committees' proceedings and other formal records are produced to a professional standard, are retrievable, and are held for an agreed period.
- 3.7 It develops, maintains and documents procedures, including indications of specific actions for AVA staff, in relation to key aspects of AVA operations for Access to HE (see paragraph 3.9), to ensure that the work of the AVA is not unduly reliant on the knowledge, practices or efforts of individual staff.
- 3.8 Its documented operational procedures for Access to HE are clear and readily available, and include procedures relating to:
- a approval of providers/centres to deliver Access to HE courses (if separate from course approval)
 - b the development, validation and approval of Access to HE courses
 - c registration of students with the AVA
 - d moderator appointments and moderation processes
 - e the award of credits, grades and Access to HE Diplomas
 - f the issue to students of Access to HE Diplomas and achievement transcripts in keeping with the requirements of *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications* and grading requirements.

Data management and transfer

- 3.9 It has adequate and effective structures and systems for collecting, recording and holding data about Access to HE providers, courses, students and awards, and:
- a its information systems are appropriate for its role as an awarding body and the particular requirements for the award of the Access to HE Diploma
 - b it has systems which enable the organisation to track learner achievement and award and transfer credit, in keeping with the requirements of *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications*
 - c it maintains a current record of all units, in a standard format, which have been approved for use within the AVA's Access to HE courses
 - d it collects and provides to QAA accurate and timely statistical and other information to satisfy QAA's reporting requirements
 - e it retains evidence of its award of grades, credits and Diplomas that will allow it to monitor provision across the AVA and over time
 - f all Diplomas and achievement transcripts issued to students are numbered, and records of awards made are retained and are archived securely, in a retrievable format
 - g records of awards made are held for the lifetime of the organisation and, in the event of merger or other arrangement for transfer of AVA responsibilities to a new organisation, records are transferred to and held by the successor organisation(s)
 - h replacement Diplomas and transcripts of achievement can be provided to former students for a minimum agreed period.

Communications

- 3.10 It has a range of appropriate and effective mechanisms through which it communicates to, and gathers feedback from, member or partner organisations and other stakeholders, about matters relating to Access to HE and:
- a information about current AVA policies, procedures, activities, and the AVA's strategy for Access to HE, is made widely available
 - b it informs providers directly and promptly of regulatory matters relating to the Access to HE Diploma and the design, delivery and management of Access to HE courses
 - c it maintains communications about its Access to HE work with HE providers within its area or region of operation and encourages their further engagement in the AVA's work
 - d the outcomes of its monitoring, evaluation and data analysis are made available.
- 3.11 It monitors providers' published information about Access to HE to verify its accuracy and currency, and consistency with QAA requirements, including:
- a promotional material related to Access to HE provision
 - b information about the admission of students to Access to HE courses
 - c information and guidance issued to students about their Access to HE course and the achievement of the Access to HE Diploma
 - d any information that may be issued to HE providers about Access to HE.
- 3.12 It makes appropriate use of the Access to HE logo in its own publications and ensures that its use of the logo is consistent with QAA's published guidance.

Complaints and appeals

- 3.13 It has transparent and accessible procedures to enable complaints and appeals to be received, considered and resolved fairly, including procedures for complaints and appeals made to the AVA by students and providers which relate to its role as an awarding body. (Refer to paragraph 4.30 m for information about complaints relating to the delivery of provision.)

Precept 4: Course recognition

The organisation ensures that Access to HE courses are fit for purpose in providing an appropriate preparation for study in higher education for adults from defined target groups, at the point at which they are formally recognised.

These criteria are concerned with the requirements that are made, and how an AVA confirms that they have been met, for Access to HE courses to achieve 'recognised' status.

Main steps to course recognition

- 1 **Validation** is 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.
- 2 **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(s)/centre(s) which have been approved to deliver it.
- 3 **Provider/centre approval** is the successful outcome of the process through which an AVA approves a provider/centre to deliver one or more Access to HE Diplomas.
- 4 **Course recognition** is 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.

Alternative routes to recognition

The ways in which the steps leading to course recognition may be combined or operated separately vary according to AVAs' individual processes and different models of provision: the main variations are outlined at the start of the relevant sub-sections.

Criteria

The organisation can demonstrate that it meets the following criteria. (All parts and sub-parts of the criteria apply, unless otherwise indicated.)

Diploma development (and transfer)

- 4.1 Its approach to developing new Access to HE Diplomas (and considering requests for course transfer) is transparent, systematic and consistently applied.
- 4.2 It considers key information at an early stage in the development of new Diplomas (or consideration of transfer requests), and confirms, in particular, that:

- a the proposed Diploma is consistent with the AVA's policies and priorities for new Access to HE provision
 - b there is one, or more than one, provider/centre that wishes to deliver the Diploma
 - c the AVA will be able to operate robust quality assurance arrangements for the proposed Diploma
 - d intended progression routes to HE from the proposed Diploma have been identified.
- 4.3 During the development phase for a new Diploma, individuals currently delivering HE provision in a subject relevant to the progression route(s) are involved in advising on the expectations and requirements for entry to the progression route(s) and the appropriateness of the Diploma proposals in meeting those expectations/requirements.
- 4.4 In considering a request by a provider/centre for the transfer of responsibility for course recognition from another AVA, the AVA formally confirms, before the transfer is agreed, that:
- a the Diploma meets QAA's qualification requirements
 - b the provider/centre meets the AVA's provider/centre approval requirements
 - c the AVA is able to provide adequate and appropriate quality assurance arrangements, staff development and support (see paragraphs 2.7 - 2.9) for the transferred course
 - d the transferring course has been made aware of the AVA's specific validation criteria and process
 - e the AVA is able to validate and approve the course through its usual processes before the transferred course reaches the end of its period of validation²
 - f implications for students registered on the course at the point of transfer have been considered and appropriate arrangements made relating to any records of assessment and achievement.
- 4.5 It publishes clear guidance for those involved in the development (and transfer) of Access to HE Diplomas. The guidance includes information about:
- a processes and requirements for each stage leading to course recognition
 - b the form and content of documentation to be submitted for Diploma validation
 - c the AVA's guidance on Diploma titles
 - d the AVA's continuing quality assurance arrangements for Access to HE Diplomas
 - e the requirements of *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications* and any other regulatory information about the qualification published by QAA. QAA's requirements may be supplemented, but not replaced, by additional AVA requirements, and the AVA's guidance may include further advice about:
 - developing and/or identifying units
 - unit content
 - unit titles
 - building rules of combination
 - credit transfer
 - incorporating curriculum and assessment information into proposals, while providing for a reasonable degree of flexibility in the delivery of Diplomas.

² For the purposes of QAA course recognition, a Diploma that is transferred from one AVA to another is considered a new course at the point of transfer. (The AVA from which the course is being transferred discontinues old course records and the receiving AVA creates new course records on the Access courses database.)

- 4.6 The AVA's guidance will also include explicit statements that:
- a the design of Diplomas should be appropriate to the primary purpose of Access to HE courses, which is to provide HE progression opportunities for adults who, because of social, educational or individual circumstances may have achieved few, if any, prior qualifications
 - b Access to HE Diplomas are intended to provide a preparation for study in UK HE but, while partnership arrangements and progression agreements may exist between particular Access to HE courses and particular HE programmes, the award of a Diploma does not provide guaranteed entry to UK HE programmes.

Validation processes

Unit and Diploma validation may be conducted:

- i **simultaneously** (where units are all unique to the individual Diploma)
- ii **sequentially** (where, for example, Diplomas comprise units, or groups of units, which are held in a central unit databank and are used on more than one Diploma)
- iii through a **combination** of simultaneous and sequential validation, with some units, or groups of units, being scrutinised at the main Diploma validation event and others being validated through a separate process conducted prior to the Diploma validation event.

In all cases, the Diploma validation process includes consideration of the appropriateness for the Diploma being validated of all units identified in its rules of combination, including any units which have been separately validated.

- 4.7 The AVA operates a thorough, transparent and consistent approach to the validation of Access to HE Diplomas.
- 4.8 The AVA's validation process involves the scrutiny of Diploma proposals by an appointed panel (see paragraphs 4.12 - 4.19), which assesses the proposals against a set of clear, standard criteria, including those listed in paragraph 4.10).
- 4.9 Both the individual units and the totality of each named Access to HE Diploma are considered: a Diploma cannot be approved unless the appropriateness of the units for that particular named Diploma has been confirmed as part of the Diploma validation process (see above).

Validation criteria

- 4.10 The AVA's validation process and criteria ensure that, for a Diploma to be recommended for approval:
- a the specified **target groups** are appropriate to the purpose of Access to HE courses, and the proposals address the target group(s)' learning needs

- b the proposals meet the detailed requirements of *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications* and any other regulatory information about the qualification published by QAA (including requirements relating to credit, unit specifications, rules of combination, grading and assessment regulations)
- c intended **progression route(s)** in HE are clearly stated, and the areas of learning included in the Diploma (as demonstrated by the units available, the rules of combination and any other requirements for successful completion) are appropriate as a preparation for that/those route(s)
- d students who are awarded the Diploma will have completed a planned, balanced and coherent **programme of study**, through which they have been able to acquire subject knowledge and develop academic skills which are relevant to the intended progression route(s)
- e students who are awarded the Diploma will have **demonstrated achievement** in areas and at a level which are appropriate (and which may be required) for entry to the intended progression route(s)³
- f where **options** are available within a single set of rules of combination, which allow alternative requirements for the achievement of a named Diploma, the alternatives permitted by the options are consistent, in terms of academic challenge and demand, and will require equivalent standards for achievement, whenever and wherever it is delivered
- g the range of grade descriptors assigned to units across the Diploma will ensure that grade profiles reflect **differentiated performance** in areas that are significant for successful achievement in HE in the intended progression route(s)
- h sufficient information is provided about **curriculum, delivery and assessment methods** for the Diploma to continue to provide an appropriate preparation for the intended progression route and remain consistent in the required standards of achievement, whenever and wherever the Diploma is delivered
- i the formal **Diploma title** and designated subject classification code for the Diploma is appropriate (and is consistent with QAA's guidance), in relation to the subject(s) of study and the intended progression route
- j any **requirements for successful completion** that are unrelated to Access to HE credit and qualification specification and that are additional to the Diploma's rules of combination do not make demands which affect the threshold standards of achievement required by any student for the award of the Access to HE Diploma
- k any **special requirements** that apply to provider/centre approval for the delivery of the Diploma (for example, laboratory or workshop resources) are clearly stated.

4.11 The outcomes of the validation process for each Diploma, including recommended conditions of approval and textual amendments to documentation, are recorded.

³ Where an Access to HE Diploma is intended to lead to further study for a professional qualification, the entry requirements of the professional body have either been accommodated within the Diploma, or the definitive Diploma documentation makes clear that, as a condition of course recognition, whenever the Diploma is delivered, students must be made aware of additional entry requirements, and have the opportunity to meet these requirements separately.

Validation panels

An AVA may:

- i set up **individual panels**, identifying validation panel members for the consideration of each Access to HE Diploma, or a group of Diplomas
or
- ii maintain a **standing panel of experts**, supplemented by individuals with relevant expertise for the scrutiny of particular Diploma or unit submissions.

- 4.12 An expert, external panel is appointed by the AVA to scrutinise proposals for new, transferred or major modifications (see paragraphs 4.35 - 4.39) to Access to HE Diplomas.
- 4.13 The composition of panels (see above) ensures that panel members jointly provide current, relevant experience and expertise in:
 - a the delivery and assessment of Access to HE courses
 - b curriculum knowledge relevant to the Diploma(s) and all the units being considered
 - c the delivery of HE programmes, in areas indicated as intended progression routes for the Diploma(s) being considered
 - d QAA's current requirements about the Access to HE Diploma.
- 4.14 The number of members and composition of validation panels for Access to HE Diplomas, and the criteria for selecting panel members, are clearly specified and consistently applied.
- 4.15 The chair and members of the validation panel have no conflicts of interest in respect of the outcome of the validation event. (If individuals from providers/centres intending to deliver the Diploma are invited to attend the validation event, they do not attend as full panel members and are not involved in making validation decisions.)
- 4.16 No more than one member of the validation panel is also represented on the body which has been designated as responsible for the approval of Diplomas within the AVA (see paragraph 4.19).
- 4.17 AVA officers attend validation events to ensure consistency of conduct, and advise the panel on the AVA's validation process and requirements, including requirements that relate to the proper application of QAA's requirements for Access to HE Diplomas.
- 4.18 Before the panel event, panel members are informed about:
 - a their roles and responsibilities
 - b the purpose and conduct of validation panel events
 - c QAA's current requirements about the Access to HE Diploma
 - d the criteria for successful validation
 - e the possible outcomes of the validation process, including advice about how to differentiate between conditions of approval, other recommended amendments to

- the Diploma itself, and required textual amendments to the Diploma documentation
- f the post-panel process, and the relationship of the validation process to approval and course recognition. (The panel is made aware that course delivery may not start until the panel's recommendations have been formally approved by the AVA and course recognition has been confirmed.)
- 4.19 The panel makes a recommendation for approval, including any recommended conditions of approval, and the panel's recommendations are referred to the designated body within the organisation's governance structure (for example, an Access to HE Committee or other body which includes representation from HE) for formal approval.

Diploma approval

- 4.20 The designated body considers the validation panel report and the panel's recommendations and confirms that the AVA's validation processes and criteria have been properly and consistently applied.
- 4.21 The designated body grants or withholds approval (with or without conditions) and, with regard to any conditions on the approval of a Diploma, it confirms:
- a that conditions make requirements to ensure that the Diploma meets the AVA's validation criteria in full
 - b that there are clear timescales for meeting conditions (and for providing any required evidence to the AVA to demonstrate that conditions have been met)
 - c the date by which any conditions must be met (which will be before the start date for the first planned delivery of the Diploma by any provider/centre)
 - d the process for confirming that conditions have been met. (The process may vary according to the nature of the conditions and, where major conditions have been set, the designated body may require that the response to conditions from the provider/centre is reported to the designated body itself.)
- 4.22 The AVA monitors whether and when conditions have been met, ensuring that the process for confirming conditions have been met is followed.
- 4.23 When the AVA is satisfied that the conditions have been met, the approval of an Access to HE Diploma is formally recorded, and provider(s)/centre(s) wishing to deliver the Diploma are informed that it is available for delivery.
- 4.24 The withdrawal of approval from a Diploma before the end of its validation period is considered by the designated body, with reference to standard criteria; procedures for withdrawal are applied consistently and transparently; and any necessary amendments to the Access courses database are made promptly.
- 4.25 The AVA holds full records of all validation and approval decisions, and it maintains definitive Diploma documentation (making amendments, as necessary, to reflect approved modifications, see paragraphs 4.35 - 4.39).
- 4.26 The designated body maintains oversight of the validation and approval process and criteria and is responsible for ensuring the robustness of processes and consistency of their operation.

Provider/centre approval

Provider/centre approval may be:

- i **integrated** with the Diploma validation and approval process, in which case the AVA's criteria for provider/centre approval are considered at the same time as the proposals for a particular Diploma and with reference to the requirements of that Diploma. In this approach, Diploma and provider/centre approval are interdependent and the delivery of the Diploma is unique to a particular provider/centre. Course recognition follows as an automatic consequence of approval.
- ii **separated** from the Diploma validation and approval process, and operated sequentially. This approach allows a Diploma to be independently approved (and available for use by a number of providers/centres). The provider/centre approval criteria are applied with reference to the delivery of a specific Access to HE Diploma or set of named Diplomas. Course recognition occurs when the AVA has granted both Diploma approval and provider/centre approval for the delivery of the named Diploma/set of Diplomas which have been identified.
- iii a **free-standing** process, separated from the Diploma validation and approval process and not connected to the approval of specific Diplomas. This approach allows the provider/centre to be approved to deliver Access to HE provision in general. In this case, the AVA's criteria for provider/centre approval will be generic and sufficiently comprehensive to ensure that arrangements are adequate for any Diploma. However, when a provider/centre makes a request to deliver a new Diploma, the AVA will need to confirm that the Diploma does not place additional demands on providers/centres, in which case the provider/centre may need to be assessed with regard to those additional requirements before course recognition can be confirmed.

- 4.27 The AVA operates a transparent, systematic and consistent approach to the approval of providers/centres for the delivery of Access to HE courses (see above), through which it confirms that the provider/centre meets its criteria for provider/centre approval.
- 4.28 It formally confirms provider/centre approval for the delivery of named Access to HE Diplomas (or Access to HE provision) before a provider/centre is permitted to deliver any part of any individual Access to HE Diploma.
- 4.29 It reconsiders (and may withdraw) approval if the provider/centre fails to continue to meet the terms of its approval. The designated body within the AVA's governance structure considers any recommendations for the withdrawal of provider/centre approval, with reference to standard criteria. Procedures for withdrawal are applied consistently and transparently, and any necessary amendments to the Access courses database are made promptly.

Criteria for provider/centre approval

- 4.30 The AVA's process and criteria for provider/centre approval ensure that a provider/centre which is approved to deliver an Access to HE courses is located in the UK⁴ and has:
- a a permanent and main base which is **in the UK**
 - b a single named **point of accountability** for the quality assurance and strategic decision-making for Access to HE provision
 - c clear arrangements for the day-to-day **operational management** and coordination of Access to HE courses
 - d **facilities and resources** at each site that is to be used for the delivery of Access to HE courses, which are appropriate for the planned learning and assessment requirements for the Diplomas that it intends to deliver, including learning support resources and facilities for Access to HE students
 - e **staff** to teach on the Access to HE course who have the professional competence and level of subject expertise necessary to deliver and assess the units available on the Diploma(s) it is approved to offer
 - f effective ways of recruiting from the **target groups** for the Diploma(s) that it is approved to offer
 - g arrangements for providing pre-course guidance to applicants and criteria for **selection and admission** to Access to HE courses, which are consistent with QAA's *Guidance for the admission of students to QAA-recognised Access to HE programmes*
 - h resources to provide **information, advice and guidance** on HE applications and progression opportunities
 - i systems for maintaining **secure records** of individual students' achievement
 - j **internal moderation/verification** arrangements which meet the AVA's requirements
 - k robust arrangements for internal course monitoring and self-evaluation, including methods for eliciting and responding to **student evaluation and feedback**
 - l procedures and criteria for the **accreditation of prior learning** which meet the AVA's requirements
 - m **quality assurance** procedures relating to the delivery of provision, including transparent processes for handling **complaints**. (These quality assurance procedures should be either subject to external inspection by the body with responsibility for the inspection of public provision, or should be otherwise approved separately by the AVA.)
- 4.31 The AVA's process and criteria for provider/centre approval ensure that a provider/centre makes an explicit commitment that it will cooperate with the AVA's moderation, monitoring and standardisation procedures, and that it will, in particular:
- a deliver recognised Access to HE courses in accordance with the requirements of the definitive Diploma documentation
 - b ensure that, where courses are designed to be delivered by distance or online learning (or may otherwise be accessible by students not based in the UK), that students are required to confirm in writing, at or before registration, that they understand that the award of an Access to HE Diploma does not provide guaranteed entry to UK HE programmes

⁴ Also including the Channel Islands and Isle of Man.

- c make arrangements for moderator visits and final awards boards as requested by the AVA
- d provide information and access to records about assessment and internal moderation as requested by the AVA
- e provide information about student achievement as requested by the AVA (see paragraphs 5.19 - 5.23)
- f make arrangements to allow staff to participate in AVA events and activities that are essential for maintaining the quality and academic standards of Access to HE courses
- g ensure that its public information about Access to HE is accurate and reliable and that any use it makes of the Access to HE logo is consistent with QAA's guidance
- h urgently address any issue which poses a threat to the quality or academic standards of the AVA's Access to HE courses, or the integrity or reputation of the Access to HE Diploma, or of QAA, as may be notified to it by the AVA.

Course recognition

- 4.32 The AVA operates a standard process to confirm that Diploma approval and provider/centre approval has been satisfactorily completed before course recognition is confirmed.
- 4.33 Provider(s)/centre(s) which have applied to deliver a new Diploma and have been approved to do so are notified when Diploma approval has been confirmed and informed of the date of course recognition, when delivery may start.
- 4.34 When the AVA has confirmed recognition of a new course, it uploads the required course information to the Access courses database; and it revises course records, as necessary, to maintain the currency of information available on database.

Modifications and amendments

- 4.35 It provides mechanisms through which providers/centres, moderators and partner HE institutions can suggest modifications to units or Diplomas and for those suggestions to be systematically considered.
- 4.36 It operates standard procedures for regulating modifications to units and Diplomas, and ensures that any feedback about the unit/Diploma received from providers/centres, moderators or receiving HE institutions is taken into account.
- 4.37 It differentiates between minor and major modifications; makes clear where authority lies for making different kinds modification or amendment; and gives an appropriate level of scrutiny to each (including full revalidation where modifications are substantial).
- 4.38 When minor modifications are considered (including modifications to units included in more than one Diploma), the AVA confirms that affected Diplomas will continue to comply with AVA's validation criteria before approving the modification.
- 4.39 If modifications are made to a unit or Diploma which is delivered by more than one provider/centre, all providers/centres involved in the delivery of the unit or Diploma are informed of the amendments.

- 4.40 The designated body maintains oversight of the approval of unit and Diploma modifications.

Revalidation and confirmation of provider/centre approval

- 4.41 The AVA has a standard validation period for Diplomas, which is no more than five years from the date of initial approval, and it maintains a forward schedule of revalidation for Diplomas. Where exceptional circumstances require an extension to the standard period, the validation period will be endorsed/approved by the designated body and will not normally be extended by more than one year.
- 4.42 Periodic Diploma revalidation and confirmation of provider/centre approval are requirements of continued course recognition. If Diploma validation is withdrawn before the end of the validation period; or the AVA withdraws provider/centre approval for the delivery of any Diplomas by a provider/centre, amendments are made to course records on the Access courses database.
- 4.43 It operates a rigorous process for the periodic revalidation of Diplomas, which:
- a takes account of the outcomes of moderation and course reviews (see Precept 5)
 - b ensures that the Diploma meets the AVA's current validation requirements
 - c confirms the continuing currency and appropriateness of units which are to be retained in the revalidated Diploma.
- 4.44 The constitution of revalidation panels is the same as for validation panels, and outcomes are confirmed by the same designated body as for Diploma approvals.
- 4.45 If a Diploma is to be discontinued at or before the end of its validation period, providers are informed of the final date on which new starters may be enrolled, allowing reasonable time for registered students to complete the course or transfer to another appropriate course, and arrangements are made for transfer of credit, if necessary.
- 4.46 When a Diploma has been revalidated, the Access courses database is updated promptly with the necessary details.

Precept 5: Moderation, monitoring and certification

The organisation maintains the quality and standards of recognised Access to HE courses, and it makes Access to HE awards to students who have met the specified requirements for achievement and performance.

These criteria relate to the ways in which AVAs maintain consistency and sufficiency of demand of recognised Access to HE courses, the quality of the provision and the academic standards that are required for the award of Access to HE Diplomas. The criteria also require AVAs to operate a regulated and secure process for making awards and issuing Access to HE Diplomas, credits and grades.

Managing moderation and course monitoring

Systems of moderation and course monitoring, and the divisions between them, vary according to AVAs' different quality assurance systems and different models of organisation of Access to HE provision.

Moderation is principally concerned with ensuring that academic standards on recognised Access to HE courses are maintained, in terms of a) the specific requirements of approved Diplomas, b) the academic challenge and demand made by the curriculum, delivery and assessment of courses, and c) the achievement and performance demonstrated by the students who are recommended for the award of specific Diplomas, credits and grades.

Course monitoring is principally concerned with confirming that the delivery of Access to HE Diplomas a) provides a positive and appropriate student experience and outcomes, and b) is consistent with the criteria for provider/centre approval, including requirements relating to internal course self-evaluation and review.

Alternative routes to moderation and monitoring

Moderation systems are often used to support the AVA's systems for course monitoring, and moderators may be asked to provide information about the quality of provision and the student experience. As a result, some of the requirements of course monitoring are sometimes met through the moderation process.

Criteria

The organisation can demonstrate that it meets the following criteria. (All parts and sub-parts of the criteria apply, unless otherwise indicated.)

Moderation processes

Moderation involves the appointment of moderators by the AVA. Systems and organisation of moderation differ, however, and different models may involve, for example:

- i teams of moderators considering assessment and achievement on **individual Access to HE courses**, each moderator looking at one or more particular area(s) of the course
- ii teams of moderators considering assessment and achievement on all of a **particular provider's/centre's Access to HE courses**, individual moderators looking at related areas on several courses, with a single lead moderator coordinating the moderation
- iii teams of moderators considering assessment and achievement on **particular Diplomas** delivered by more than one provider/centre
- iv teams of moderators who consider assessment and/or achievement in relation to **certain subject areas (or sets of units)** across a number of courses or Diplomas
- v teams of moderators who determine all aspects of **assessment** on a set of courses or Diplomas (and who may have no direct relationship with any particular provider/centre), and separate (or the same) teams who consider **achievement** on those courses or Diplomas, with visits to provider/centres being conducted as a separate process.

- 5.1 It maintains a system of regular external moderation, conducted by moderators appointed by the AVA, which applies to all recognised Access to HE courses.
- 5.2 It provides information about the operation of its moderation processes (including details about alternative processes that may be operated by the AVA), in guidance to moderators and to providers/centres.
- 5.3 Its guidance includes clear information about:
 - a the structural **organisation** of the AVA's moderation processes, including the different stages and parts of its processes and how they are related
 - b moderators' roles and **responsibilities** (including information about the roles of different types of moderator)
 - c the basis, extent and limits of moderators' **authority**
 - d the purpose of visits and/or meetings and **activities** undertaken by moderators at visits and/or meetings (including information about different purposes/activities for visits/meetings which take place at different stages)
 - e the **frequency** of moderator visits and/or meetings
 - f requirements for **monitoring and verifying** student achievement, including criteria for the sampling of evidence of student achievement
 - g moderation **outcomes** relating to student achievement, and how these are taken forward to final awards boards
 - h requirements for **moderator reports**, including information about the nature, structure, content and frequency of reporting
 - i how, and to whom, any **concerns** or problems identified should be referred
 - j the submission of reports to the AVA and associated **follow-up** activity.

5.4 It routinely reviews and updates its guidance to ensure its continuing currency.

Moderation responsibilities

- 5.5 Its moderation (and/or course monitoring) system(s) and processes ensure that:
- a the **curriculum** delivered on a recognised Access to HE course is consistent with the requirements of its definitive Diploma documentation and is appropriate for its purpose in providing a preparation for study in HE for its target student groups
 - b **course organisation** allows all students to meet the rules of combination and any other completion requirements for the Diploma on which they are registered
 - c approved providers/centres continue to meet the **terms of provider/centre approval**
 - d providers/centres monitor and enhance the quality of the **student experience**, including taking action to elicit and respond to student evaluation and feedback
 - e **assessment practices** on Access to HE courses are consistent with *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications* and grading requirements
 - f the **conduct of assessment** and application of assessment regulations by providers/centres is thorough, rigorous and fair
 - g details of **assignment requirements** and means by which they are assessed:
 - support the needs of target groups
 - provide an appropriate level of academic challenge and demand
 - provide opportunities for differentiation of performance
 - support the development of academic skills and the promotion of learning
 - allow students to demonstrate their learning
 - allow the assessor to identify whether the specified learning outcomes have been achieved
 - ensure rigorous assessment of student achievement
 - h **minimum standards** required for threshold achievement and performance are consistent with requirements for achievement of the relevant learning outcomes and grade descriptors
 - i **consistent standards** are applied in assessment, so that equivalent student achievement and performance is reflected in consistent recommendations for credits and grades
 - j **students awarded the Access to HE Diploma** have successfully completed the required learning at the required standard, and their performance is reflected in grades awarded
 - k providers/centres operate rigorous **internal moderation/verification** procedures which meet the AVA's requirements, and which ensure that consistent standards are applied to assessment and achievement on recognised Access to HE courses
 - l **public information** about Access to HE courses is current and accurate.

Moderator recruitment, selection and appointments

- 5.6 It operates standard procedures, using clear and transparent criteria, for the selection and appointment of moderators, which ensure that moderators:
- a have relevant experience in adult, further or higher education
 - b have relevant and current subject knowledge for their area(s) of moderating responsibility.

- 5.7 Where moderators are involved in moderation at subject level, they are qualified and/or experienced in teaching in the area(s) that they are responsible for moderating, at a level at or beyond that at which the subject has been taught and assessed (that is, moderation of level 3 units is undertaken by those with a qualification and/or teaching experience in a related discipline at level 3 or above).
- 5.8 Moderators are appointed by, and are directly responsible to, the AVA and not a providing or receiving institution or any other body.
- 5.9 Contractual agreements between the moderator and the AVA set out the moderator's specific duties and term of service (see paragraph 5.10), and the criteria and process for termination of a moderator's employment.
- 5.10 Moderators are external to the provider/centre and do not hold a position in any receiving institution, the nature of which could create a conflict of interest or limit students' progression opportunities (for example, through direct involvement in admissions decisions for students progressing from the Access to HE course).
- 5.11 Where the moderator's role involves a direct relationship with individual Access to HE courses, the moderator's period of office for work with the individual course(s) is, in normal circumstances, no longer than four years.
- 5.12 The moderators involved in the moderation of any individual Access to HE course jointly provide sufficient expert moderation at the subject level for the number and range of subject areas included in the course.

Moderator induction and training

- 5.13 Moderators receive a planned programme of mandatory induction and training, supplemented by written guidance (see paragraph 5.4), that enables them to carry out their role effectively.
- 5.14 The AVA routinely updates moderators on any changes in the AVA's requirements, or changes which relate to the Access to HE Diploma.
- 5.15 There are mechanisms to enable moderators to compare standards and judgements across the AVA's Access to HE courses.
- 5.16 It monitors moderators' performance, and takes appropriate action if performance is deemed to be unsatisfactory.

Moderation reports

- 5.17 It operates standard procedures to ensure that action is taken in response to matters requiring action raised in moderation reports, including procedures for:
- a receiving and responding promptly to individual moderation reports
 - b providing copies of moderators' reports to appropriate provider/centre staff
 - c ensuring that matters raised in reports which require specific action by providers/centres are brought to providers'/centres' attention, a clear timescale for action is given, and implementation of actions is confirmed

- d taking action if providers/centres fail to address issues raised in reports, including procedures for the ultimate sanction of withdrawal of course recognition
- e ensuring that matters raised in reports proposing modifications to Diplomas are formally considered, and any necessary modifications are made (in accordance with the AVA's Diploma modification procedures, see paragraphs 4.35 - 4.39) before the next run of the Diploma
- f taking action in the event that moderators do not meet the AVA's requirements in the execution of their duties
- g analysing the overall outcomes of the moderation (and course monitoring) system(s) across all of the AVA's recognised Access to HE courses on a regular (normally annual) basis (see paragraph 5.24).

5.18 It provides opportunities for providers/centres to provide feedback to the AVA on the moderation process.

Course monitoring and review

5.19 It monitors and reviews Access to HE courses on a regular (normally annual) basis, collecting information which will allow it to confirm the impact, quality and standards of its recognised Access to HE courses and to assess the effectiveness of its own quality assurance procedures.

5.20 It collects statistical data about Access to HE courses and students according to a standard set of categories, including those required for reports to QAA.

5.21 The process for course reviews, and the format for reports required by the AVA, takes account of providers'/centres' own self-assessment processes and those that they undertake to report to other bodies and draws on relevant material from the outcomes of those processes. The information may be provided in a single course report, or through other mechanisms which are appropriate to the AVA's quality assurance systems and the organisation of provision.

5.22 While course reviews may allow providers/centres to report on all Access to HE provision at the same time, they differentiate between outcomes and distinctive features of different Diplomas that they deliver.

5.23 Providers'/centres' course reviews provide information and comment to the AVA about:

- a student recruitment, retention, achievement and success
- b student progression and destinations
- c standards of student performance
- d student feedback received about the course and the quality of their learning experience, and the provider's/centre's response to issues raised
- e examples of innovation and good practice.

5.24 It seeks feedback from its partner HE institutions about the performance of Access to HE students and the appropriateness of the preparation provided by its recognised Access to HE courses.

5.25 It analyses and formally considers the information and feedback (including statistical information) that it gathers from providers/centres and HE partners, and, in response:

- a identifies concerns about the quality of provision or standards of student achievement on individual Access to HE courses or Diplomas which had not been raised by the moderation process
- b takes effective action to address issues identified, including systematic follow-up when issues have been notified to the provider/centre
- c disseminates examples of good practice among providers/centres
- d identifies lessons for the effectiveness of its own quality assurance procedures, and ensures that, where required, appropriate changes are made to procedures.

- 5.26 The designated body within the organisation's governance structure that has responsibility for quality and standards on Access to HE courses (for example, an Access to HE Committee or other body which includes representation from HE) maintains oversight of the moderation and course monitoring processes and it:
- a ensures the robustness of the processes and consistency of their operation
 - b considers and confirms any decisions that relate to potential withdrawal of course recognition
 - c receives the AVA's analysis of the overall outcomes of the moderation and course monitoring processes
 - d ensures that the outcomes of the moderation and monitoring processes are disseminated and used to improve and enhance recognised Access to HE provision within the AVA.

Standardisation

- 5.27 It takes steps to ensure that equivalent standards and requirements for achievement apply on different Access to HE courses which lead to Diplomas, within the AVA and across different student cohorts, with reference to *The Access to Higher Education Diploma qualification and credit specifications* and grading requirements, and:
- a where Access to HE Diplomas or common units are available on more than one course, it operates mechanisms to ensure that consistent standards are applied across providers/centres, in relation to assessment requirements and judgements about achievement (including graded achievement), and its moderation systems take account of the outcomes of this process
 - b where Access to HE Diplomas or units are available in cognate subject areas on different courses, it provides opportunities for those involved in Access to HE assessment and moderation to define and compare specific standards of required achievement for the award of credits and grades, and its moderation systems take account of the outcomes of this process.

Award of Access to HE Diplomas

- 5.28 It operates standard specified procedures for the award of Access to HE Diplomas to students that are consistent with *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications*, grading requirements and assessment regulations and, in particular:
- a makes clear that decisions about the award of Access to HE Diplomas, credits and grades are made by final awards boards
 - b provides explicit guidance about the function, process, and appropriate membership of final awards boards, consistent with the requirements of QAA's assessment regulations for Access to HE

- c operates effective procedures to confirm that all students recommended for the award of an Access to HE Diploma have achieved the requirements of its specific rules of combination
- d ensures that evidence of achievement (including evidence relating to the accreditation of prior learning) has been verified, and the moderation process has been completed, before recommendations for the award of credits, grades or Diplomas are made to the AVA
- e decisions made by the final awards board about the award of credit, grades and Diplomas are forwarded to the AVA in a standard format and are transmitted securely
- f ensures that all students on Access to HE courses who complete the required learning achievement are awarded an Access to HE Diploma, including the award of credits and grades for relevant units
- g ensures that all students who do not complete the learning required for the award of a Diploma are awarded credits for all units successfully completed.

5.29 It operates secure data systems which maintain records of all Access to HE awards made by the AVA (see paragraph 3.9, f and g).

Issue and dispatch of Access to HE Diplomas

- 5.30 All students who have been awarded the Access to HE Diploma are issued the AVA's Access to HE Diploma which has a standard format and which includes:
- a the specific title of the Diploma (in the standard format for Access to HE Diploma titles, as stipulated in *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications*) and no other title
 - b the name and logo of the AVA
 - c the authorised Access to HE logo (including the words 'recognised by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education')
 - d no name or logo of any other organisation
 - e the signature of the chair and/or chief executive and no other signature
 - f the unique issue number.
- 5.31 All students who have been awarded the Access to HE Diploma (or who have successfully completed units but have not achieved the requirements for the full Diploma) are issued with an achievement transcript, which has a standard format and which includes details of their achievement on the units successfully completed.
- 5.32 It has a regulated process for the issue and dispatch of Access to HE Diplomas and achievement transcripts to students and, in particular:
- a there are robust and secure procedures, including administrative checks, for the issue (and reissue) of Diplomas and achievement transcripts
 - b the date of issue of Diplomas is recorded
 - c its procedures are designed to ensure that Access to HE students receive Diplomas and achievement transcripts promptly
 - d it ensures that providers/centres are made aware of the AVA's process for the dispatch of Diplomas and are clear about any actions they or students may be required to take
 - e if it sends Diplomas to providers/centres for onward transmission, it confirms the providers'/centres' own processes are secure and reliable, and it subsequently

- confirms that Diplomas have been received and sent on to students or collected by them
- f it informs QAA immediately if it discovers that an Access to HE Diploma has been issued in error and takes such steps as are necessary (at its own cost) to procure the return of the Diploma, as a matter of urgency.



QAA

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