

Access to Higher Education

2026/2027

Provider Handbook

Contents

Contents	2
Welcome and Introduction	6
Working with Open Awards	7
Your Dedicated Team	8
The Access to HE Diploma	9
Overview	9
The Structure of an Access to HE Diploma	9
Provider Validation	11
Becoming an Approved Open Awards Access to HE Provider	11
Pricing	11
Provider staffing	12
Resources	14
Blended and Distance Learning	14
Building your Access to HE Diploma Programme	14
How to Build Your Access to HE Diploma Programme with Open Awards	15
Selecting a Diploma Title	16
Rules of Combination	16
Using Alternative Modules	17
Submitting Your Programme for Review	17
Programme Revalidation	17
Making Changes to your Approved Programmes	18
Making Minor Changes	18
Making Major Changes	19
Requesting Changes to Modules and units	19
Requesting New units, Modules, Pathways, and Diploma Titles	19
Recruiting and Registering Learners	20
Registering Learners	20
Fair Processing and Extended Privacy Notices	21
Checking Learner and Course Registrations	22
Late or Incorrect Course Registrations	22

Learners on Two-Year Courses	22
'Roll on-roll off' Provision	22
Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer	23
Credit Transfer	24
Requesting RPL or Credit Transfer.....	24
Withdrawing Learners	25
Delivering Access to HE Diplomas	26
Provider responsibilities	26
Open Awards responsibilities	26
Teaching arrangements	27
Support arrangements	27
Extensions to assignment deadlines.....	27
Additional study support where there are extenuating circumstances	27
Counselling support.....	27
Breaks in learning or extensions to learning	28
Continuing into the next academic year.....	28
Learner registration and achievement data reporting	28
Training for providers.....	29
Learner awards.....	29
Assessing Access to HE Diplomas	30
Access to HE Diploma achievement requirements	30
Diploma Assessment Plan	31
Unit assessment reviews.....	32
Learning outcomes and assessment criteria	32
Grading Scheme.....	33
Preparing your assignments.....	34
Assessment arrangements	36
Assessment submission requirements	36
Draft submissions	36
Formal submissions	36
Resubmissions	37
Late submissions	37

Extensions	38
Referrals	38
Representations.....	39
Agreeing unit grades.....	39
Feedback to the learner	40
Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)	41
What is internal quality assurance?	41
IQA of the Diploma Assessment Plan.....	42
IQA of Assignment Briefs.....	42
IQA of learners' assessed work	43
Internal standardisation	44
End of course checks	45
External Quality Assurance.....	46
Your external quality assurance team.....	46
Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA).....	46
Subject Specialist Moderators (SSM)	47
External quality assurance activities	48
Moderation cycle.....	48
Compliance review	49
Review of Diploma Assessment Plans	50
Subject specialist moderation	52
Review of unit assignment briefs	53
Sampling learner work	54
Additional Monitoring	55
Open Awards Standardisation.....	56
Awarding.....	57
What does the Final Awards Board do?	59
What happens after the FAB?	61
Results and Certification	63
Recording Results.....	63
Amending Results on the Markbook.....	64
Processing Results Learner Checking	64

Submitting Your Results.....	64
Processing of Results by Open Awards	65
Certification.....	65
Certificate Reissues.....	66
Appeals	67
Ongoing Support.....	67
Provider Withdrawal/ Closure	68

Welcome and Introduction

Welcome to the Open Awards Access to Higher Education Provider Handbook.

The Access to Higher Education (HE) Diploma is a widely recognised qualification that prepares adults for entry to HE. The Access to HE Diploma is available to learners aged 16+. Access to HE provision is regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

This handbook aims to give a comprehensive overview of the processes required to deliver Open Awards' Access to HE Diplomas. The handbook is the primary reference for all those involved in the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the Access to HE Diploma.

Following the guidance within this handbook will ensure that all stakeholders meet the requirements of the QAA Licensing Criteria for Access Validating Agencies, including the requirements of the QAA Grading Scheme.

QAA may amend or add criteria within the academic year, aiming to continually improve the quality of Access to HE. This will result in Open Awards needing to amend our processes. On these occasions, Open Awards will ensure to notify you of the changes as soon as possible and provide support on implementing any changes.

Open Awards hold all information about your provider, key contacts, and your learners securely on our database and will only use it for the purposes provided. You will find full details on how we use and protect your information at Open Awards in our [Privacy Notice](#). The Privacy Notice gives you details on:

- Your rights in relation to the information we hold;
- How we keep it secure;
- The type of information we collect and how we use it;
- Who we share information with;
- How long we hold information for.

We hope that you find this handbook useful and informative. If you have any questions about the information provided here, please contact us on 0151 494 2072 or customerservices@openawards.org.uk.

Working with Open Awards



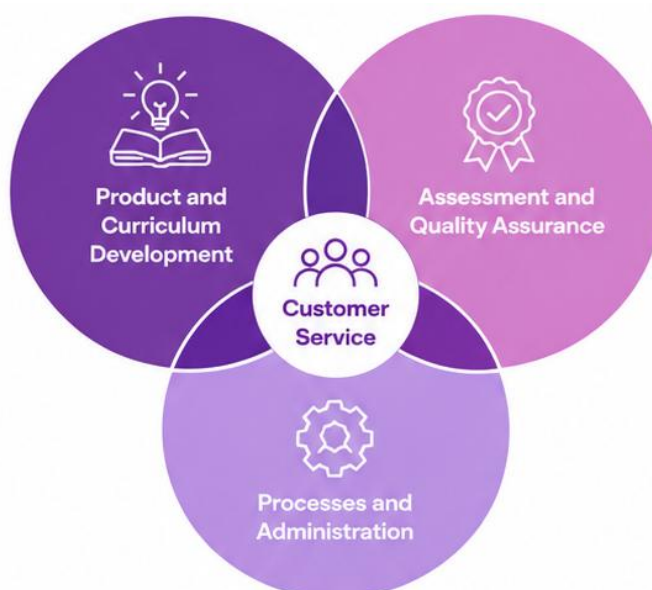
As a not-for-profit organisation and a registered charity, we are passionate about our vision to change lives through learning and this manifests in our flexibility and creativity when it comes to working with our providers and learners.

We know that Access to HE Diplomas require commitment and dedication from both staff and learners. We believe that it is our duty to ensure that all Access to HE providers feel supported and confident to work effectively with their learners. It is vital, therefore, that we work collaboratively with providers to ensure that everything we do is learner-focused and to the highest possible standards. Together we can provide learners with the best possible opportunity to progress onto Higher Education.

Our values underpin our way of working; we will remain in ongoing dialogue with you throughout the academic year (and much prefer talking through any shared problems) so that you have the support needed to provide the best possible Access to HE experiences to your learners.

Your Dedicated Team

Our specialist teams work together to support you at every stage of your journey with Open Awards.



 Product and Curriculum Development	>	Supporting you to create your courses and provide ongoing curriculum and development support.
 Assessment and Quality Assurance	>	Supporting you to feel confident that you and your learners are meeting the highest standards of delivery and assessment quality.
 Processes and Administration	>	Supporting you through registration and award processes and offering ongoing support on our systems and processes.

Customer Services – Here to Help

Our Customer Services team is your first point of contact and will direct your enquiry to the appropriate specialist team where required.



Telephone
0151 494 2072



Email
customerservices@openawards.org.uk



Opening Hours
Mon – Thurs: 08:00 – 18:00
Fri: 08:00 – 17:00
Sat: 09:00 – 12:30
Sun: Closed

The Access to HE Diploma

Overview

The Access to HE Diploma is regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency for HE (QAA). It is a qualification preparing people that generally do not have traditional qualifications for study at degree level. This is the significance of the Access to HE Diploma, providing an opportunity to support and change lives and is why Open Awards supports it. Most Access to HE Diplomas can be completed in one academic year, however, you can also study part-time over two or more years.

The Access to HE Diploma is widely recognised by most UK universities, many of whom actively encourage applications from Access to HE learners. Each year, around 20,000 Access to HE learners apply for a degree course at a UK university to study in a wide range of subjects. The Access to HE Diploma is included on the UCAS Tariff with points ranging from 48 to 144 Tariff points depending on the grades achieved by individual learners.

The Structure of an Access to HE Diploma

All Open Awards Access to HE Diplomas are divided into a set of units which are combined to produce a coherent programme of learning. Diploma titles reflect the intended progression route or main area of study, e.g. Access to HE Diploma (Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Professions), or Access to HE Diploma (Humanities).

Each unit has set learning outcomes and assessment criteria which describe what a learner will be able to do, know or understand upon completion.

Each unit is allocated a credit value, with each credit designed to determine what a learner might reasonably expect to achieve in ten hours of learning – including directed/ supervised learning and independent or private learning.

Open Awards units are either 3, 6 or 9 credits. To achieve an Access to HE Diploma, learners complete a programme of learning which includes units in relevant subject areas to prepare them for their intended Higher Education progression route.

In total, learners will complete 60 credits. For each unit successfully completed, learners are awarded credits which build towards the required 60 credits.

The Access to HE Diploma is comprised of 45 credits from level 3 graded academic units related to the academic subject of the Diploma and 15 credits from ungraded academic/ developmental level 2 or 3 units.

In addition, each Diploma or associated programme must have at least one 6 or 9 credit unit, with no more than 30 credits made up of 6 or 9 credit units.

Diploma titles are approved by our validation panels with a specific rule of combination of units. Details can be found in the Qualification Guides.

The specific combination of units delivered within a programme to meet the rules of combination will be approved by Open Awards in advance of delivery.

A grade of pass, merit or distinction is awarded for each level 3 graded unit.

There is not an overall, single grade for the Access to HE Diploma.

For graded Level 3 units, the standard of performance required for a pass grade is the minimum required to meet the specified assessment criteria for the learning outcomes of the unit. Learners who do not achieve the specified learning outcomes for a unit cannot be awarded credit for that unit. The unit is therefore not eligible for grading.

The grade awarded for each unit is shown on the achievement transcript that is issued with Access to HE Diplomas. The transcript also shows how many credits were awarded for each successfully completed graded or ungraded unit.

Providers recommend grades for each graded academic unit following assessment and internal verification. These recommendations are subject to external moderation by Open Awards and not finalised until after the Final Awards Board (FAB).

Learners must be made aware that any grades recorded by the tutor/ assessor are subject to change until they are agreed by Open Awards at the Final Awards Board.

Provider Validation

Becoming an Approved Open Awards Access to HE Provider

If you would like to offer an Access to HE Diploma with us, the first thing you need to do is to become an approved Open Awards provider. The approval process includes an application, review of your quality assurance arrangements and completion of a Provider Agreement.

If your organisation has not yet been approved, please refer to the Becoming an Approved Provider guidance, available on our [website](#), which explains the approval process and the requirements for new providers.

All information requested is mandatory and required to ensure that we comply with our regulatory obligations with QAA. The process will review the information provided, along with relevant policies and procedures, against Open Awards' policies and procedures, and QAA Licensing Criteria. The approval process is robust, whilst aiming to minimise the administrative burden on you as a provider.

Your status as an 'approved provider' for Access to HE will be reviewed each year through our external quality assurance and compliance processes to ensure that you continue to meet the high standards that all stakeholders are committed to.

Throughout the provider approval process, we discuss your chosen areas of provision. Once you are approved, we can work with you to finalise Access to HE Diploma(s) for the subject(s) and progression route(s) you are planning. See 'How to Build Your Access to HE Diploma Programme with Open Awards' for more information.

Pricing

Open Awards publishes pricing information annually from 1st August. This can be found on our [website](#). A hard copy of all pricing information is also available on request from Open Awards.

Please refer to our [Invoicing Policy](#) for details of how and when you will be invoiced.

Provider staffing

All Access to HE providers must comply with our Provider Agreement which includes a commitment to have sufficient financial, administrative and human resources to deliver the Access to HE provision.

Access to HE providers need to nominate appropriate contacts for the following roles so that we can ensure that all information is communicated to the correct person:

Access to HE Coordinator	The role of the Access to HE Coordinator is key to the development and delivery of Access programmes. This is usually a senior manager with responsibility for all Access to HE provision at your provider. This person will be the first port of call for curriculum or quality assurance information or queries and will be expected to cascade information to colleagues as necessary. Some administration queries will also be directed to this person. The Access to HE Coordinator should be allowed an appropriate amount of time and support to ensure that the following duties relating to the Access to HE Diploma are carried out: • acting as the main point of contact for Open Awards • cascading Open Awards guidance to appropriate staff at the provider • providing information, advice and guidance to current and potential learners • attending Open Awards activities (e.g. training and briefings) • ensuring colleagues attend appropriate Open Awards events • supplying relevant, timely information to Open Awards • ensuring that grades are added to the Markbook in a timely manner • appointing and training tutors and internal verification staff • ensuring compliance with Open Awards policies and procedures • overseeing moderation and compliance reviews carried out by Open Awards • ensuring that actions are completed in a timely manner • publicity and promotion of the Access to HE Diploma • organising the Final Awards Board The Access to HE Coordinator need not personally carry out all of these duties but must take responsibility for ensuring they are undertaken.
Senior Manager	Providers need to identify a senior manager with overall responsibility for Access to HE provision, including strategic management of Access to HE provision.

	Depending on the range of provision offered, there may be more than one manager at the provider. You must ensure that arrangements for delivery, assessment and quality assurance are equitable across the provider.
Tutors/ Assessors	Teaching staff must have the professional competence and skills to teach and assess Access to HE Diplomas, particularly in relation to the models of delivery being used. They must have expertise in the subject matter of the Access to HE Diploma being delivered. Teaching staff must also have expertise in providing pre- and post-course guidance, including the criteria and selection process for progression to HE.
Access to HE Administrator	Open Awards will direct all administration and course-related queries and information to this contact. They will also be included in some of the curriculum correspondence. You may choose to have more than one administrator (usually for additional portal accounts) but you must identify a lead contact. The Access to HE Administrator has overall responsibility for the registration on Access to HE learners and any queries will be direct to them. Certificates are always sent to this person and the site where the Access to HE Administrator is based as recorded with Open Awards as the correspondence address. Occasionally, the Access to HE Coordinator and Administrator roles are carried out by the same person. A portal account is allocated to the Access to HE Administrator at your provider. Additional portal accounts can be provided although care should be taken to ensure that control of learner and course information is monitored centrally. Please note that by logging onto the secure portal, you are accepting the terms and conditions of use. These terms and conditions can be found on the log in screen when you input your credentials.
Access to HE Inputter	A role to provide a generic log in for the entry of Access to HE results. All results for a course run and ideally one pathway should be entered into the Secure Portal by one Portal account. The Access to HE inputter account allows multiple tutors to enter grades via the same log in.

Please see our [Privacy Notice](#) for details on how we use, store and protect all personal information collected by Open Awards for our legitimate business interests.

Resources

Open Awards expect that classroom-based Access to HE delivery is suitably resourced including well-equipped classroom areas with adequate ICT facilities. Learners who need to complete practical work as part of their Diploma must have access to suitably equipped workshop areas relevant to the subject matter.

Where providers adopt blended or distance learning models of delivery and assessment, the Diploma must be validated for delivery to take place in this way. This information can be found in the Qualification Guides available via Open Awards' website.

You will need to ensure that all learners have access to high quality learning resources that enable them to meet the requirements of the Diploma. The management, storage and distribution of assignments, support materials and learner work must be secure and effective. The resources available for delivering the Access to HE Diploma will be reviewed through our programme recognition and external quality assurance processes.

Blended and Distance Learning

We are happy to support you to innovate and use technologies to deliver Access to HE Diplomas. However, we will require some extra information from you to make sure that your programme complies with QAA regulations. Your individual programmes must be validated for blended or distance learning before you start delivering via this mode of delivery.

Existing providers must note that if the Diploma you are offering is not approved for blended or distance learning, you will need to contact us if you want to change delivery methods. This will be subject to approval from our validation panel and must be approved before you start delivery.

We classify Diplomas where at least 75% of the learning hours are delivered remotely as distance learning. Diplomas with up to 75% of learning hours taking place remotely are classified as blended delivery. Learners must also have access to high quality learning resources.

Open Awards also make blended learning materials available via our own Learning Management System for which there is a nominal charge (please refer to our [pricing information](#) for 2026/2027 prices). Learners must be registered for use of this platform and brief training is provided for tutors to support delivery. To get set up, please contact us on customerservices@openawards.org.uk or 0151 494 2072.

Building your Access to HE Diploma Programme

In addition to the information provided in this handbook, please refer to Access to HE Programme Validation Guidance document available via the Portal. This gives you detailed information on the validation process that Open Awards follows for approving provider programmes.

How to Build Your Access to HE Diploma Programme with Open Awards

Building your Access to HE Diploma is as easy as 1, 2, 3...



Selecting a Diploma Title: Firstly, consider what degree course(s) and career pathway(s) you would like to prepare your learners for and select a Diploma title that reflects this from the list of Open Awards Access to HE Diploma titles (available on the Open Awards website)



Choosing Content to Meet the Rules of Combination: Secondly, build your Diploma by choosing modules and units according to the Rules of Combination set out below (and refined with the Qualification Guides). When deciding upon the content you are going to deliver, you need to consider the requirements of the specific Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to which your learners are most likely to progress.



Submitting your Programme:

Thirdly, submit your planned programme to us for review. This will be reviewed by our Access to HE Development Manager and Quality and Standards Advisor to ensure that content meets the Diploma specification; rules of combination; and delivery and assessment requirements.

Where you are planning on delivering a Diploma title for the first time, your programme application will be subject to approval from a Validation Panel.

Let's look at these stages in a bit more detail.

Selecting a Diploma Title

Open Awards set the titles for Access to HE Diplomas through the development process. Titles of Access to HE Diplomas are important as the title must reflect the intended, HE destination for those learners undertaking the Diploma. The titles must conform to a QAA-prescribed format:

Access to HE Diploma (name of subject/area of study/progression route) Examples:

- Access to HE Diploma (Engineering)
- Access to HE Diploma (Humanities)
- Access to HE Diploma (Health Professions)

If you are unable to find a suitable title from our existing titles, new developments can be considered. Contact the team on 0151 494 2072 who will be able to advise on how to do this.

Each Diploma title has a published Qualification Guide. These are available to download via the Open Awards website. The Qualification Guides include all the information you need to know in preparing your programmes for your chosen title, including the rules of combination; units available for selection; delivery methods; and assessment requirements.

Rules of Combination

These are the rules which govern the combination of modules and units you are required to use to build your Access to HE Diploma. Specific rules of combination for each Diploma title will be detailed in the relevant Qualification Guide. Some Diplomas will have specific rules of combination in addition to these requirements, including mandatory units or modules.

Our supportive team will help guide you through the process and make sure you follow the correct Rules of Combination. The overarching rules are:

- The units in your Diploma must total 60 credits from units which form a coherent course of study
- 45 of these credits must be from graded Level 3 units that have academic content
- At least one 6 or 9 credit unit must be included in the diploma (to a maximum of 30 credits made up of 6 or 9 credit units)
- 15 of these credits must be from ungraded units at Level 2 or Level 3. These units may have academic content or be developmental units.

The three different types of units mentioned can easily be identified from their unit codes outlined below:

unit Type	Coding Prefix
Graded Academic	GA
Ungraded Academic	UA
Ungraded Developmental	UD

You can also go to the Open Awards website and view all the Access to HE units available using the 'Search' tool.

Using Alternative Modules

You may include a choice of module combinations in your Diploma course where appropriate. For example, for Social Science, you may choose to have both of the following combinations:

- Social Work, Psychology and **Sociology**
- Social Work, Psychology and **Education**

To do this, you should submit your Diploma programme with interchangeable modules of the same credit value.

Please note: If you build your Diploma programme in this way, Assessors, Internal Quality Assurers and anyone involved in the registration of learners must be aware of the alternative combinations of units.

Submitting Your Programme for Review

When you have successfully created your Diploma programme you will need to submit it for approval via the Portal. This will be reviewed by the Open Awards team. All programmes will be reported to the Access to HE Committee and Board of Trustees. You will be formally notified of the approval outcome including a date for commencement of delivery. This will normally be the date you requested when you submitted your programme.

Important: Once a programme has been approved, any changes will need to be made using the Minor Change Request process, conducted via the Open Awards portal. Please refer to 'Making changes to your approved programmes' section of this handbook for details.

Requests to add new modules, units or Diploma titles should be made to the Open Awards Access to HE Development Manager. Please refer to Requesting New Modules, Pathways, and Diploma Titles section of this handbook for details.

It is the provider's responsibility to ensure that learners are taught and assessed on the correct units. If a learner has been taught and assessed for different units to those approved in the course, they may not achieve the Diploma qualification.

Programme Revalidation

Your programme will need to be revalidated at least every five years, and in line with the review date of the Diploma you are delivering. Revalidation of Diplomas, and associated programmes, follows a similar process as initial development and ensures

that the content remains relevant and appropriate to the intended progression route.

Making Changes to your Approved Programmes

Once your Access to HE Diploma programme has been validated it can only be amended through a formal change process. Changes must be requested **before** learners are registered on the programme.

Should you need to make a change to your programme please use the 'Minor Change Request' process, submitted via the Open Awards secure portal.

Any other changes will require a new programme in line with the validation process.

Change Type	Change Description	Action Required
Minor Change	A change of up to 15 credits selected from an existing module within a validated Diploma as long as Open Awards consider that the change will not detract from the coherence of the Diploma, its suitability for the stated progression route, and the rules of combination are still met.	Minor Change Request to be completed and submitted through the Secure Portal.
Minor Change	Addition of an alternative module to an existing validated Diploma, as long as this has the same credit value as the original module, and the alternative module is comparable in demand to its alternative. It must also align to the content and rationale of the Diploma.	
Major Change	Change to Diploma title using an existing Open Awards' QAA approved title that aligns to the content and rationale of the Diploma.	To be classed as a new Diploma course. Programme Approval request to be submitted through the Secure Portal.
Major Change	A change to an existing approved Diploma course involving 16 credits or more.	
Major Change	A replacement of one or more modules by another from the same pathway.	
Major Change	A change to the mode(s) of delivery.	

Other requested changes may also be considered, and we will use our discretion as to the process to be followed to approve any change, whilst remaining compliant with QAA requirements.

Making Minor Changes

You should submit minor change requests through the Secure Portal using the Minor Change Request process. Guidance for this process can be found on the Open Awards Secure Portal.

The request will be assessed against the original course request. Where all criteria are

met, the change will be approved for all future registrations on the Diploma. Minor changes will be processed, and notification will be sent to the Access to HE Development Manager via the Portal who will be asked to check and confirm the changes.

For changes to be processed in time for the next academic year, minor change requests must be received by 30th June at the latest.

Making Major Changes

If you wish to make a major change, you will need to request and submit a new programme request through the Portal using the 'Programme Approval – A2HE Revalidation' event. These changes will be processed in the same way as new Diploma courses.

For changes to be processed in time for the next academic year, major change requests must be received by 31st May at the latest.

Requesting Changes to Modules and units

Open Awards processes are designed to ensure that all qualifications are valid and fit for purpose. We welcome suggestions from any stakeholders for any proposed changes to the structure and content of Pathways, Modules and units.

You can make suggestions for improvements to the Product Development team by emailing enquiries@openawards.org.uk or call 0151 494 2072. Please be aware that any changes are subject to validation and approval by formal validation panel and reported to the Access to HE Committee.

Each unit has a review date (a maximum of five years after its validation date). Depending on the context of the changes proposed, we may take immediate action to amend the unit or wait until the next scheduled review of the unit.

As changes may impact on some or all users of the Diploma, we will ensure that all relevant stakeholders are involved in the consultation process before any change is agreed and implemented.

Any amendments made to modules or units cannot be implemented into a provider programme until you have received written confirmation from Open Awards. Once the module/ unit changes have been approved, you will then need to make a minor change request to have the module/ unit changes approved for inclusion in your programme.

Requesting New units, Modules, Pathways, and Diploma Titles

We welcome business cases for the proposal of new Diplomas, units and modules. Please email the Product Development team on enquiries@openawards.org.uk or call 0151 494 2072.

Recruiting and Registering Learners

Registering Learners

Access to HE learners must be registered within **6 weeks** of the **learner's individual start date** via the Open Awards Portal. Please make sure that learners are registered with the correct details and on the correct Diploma. If learners are registered incorrectly, there will be an administration charge to rectify errors.

Registrations are submitted via the 'Registration Submissions' tab of the Open Awards Portal.

All fields within the Access to HE learner registration form (LRF) are mandatory. Failure to complete these fields will result in learners not being able to be registered and the LRF being returned to you for full completion, prior to processing.

Please note the course run start date must always be the same date or earlier than each learner's individual start date.

Below is an overview of the information required when submitting an LRF. The data type expected for each field is shown in the table. Failure to provide accurate information will result in registrations being delayed.

Field	Data type
Unique Learner Number (ULN)	10-digit code
Surname	Open text
Forename	Open text
Learner's Individual Start Date	Dd/mm/yyyy format required
Date of Birth	Dropdown options
Gender	Dropdown options
Ethnicity	Dropdown options
Ability Status	Dropdown options
Learner's Home Postcode	Open text
Learner's Email Address	Open text
Learner's Phone Number	Open text
Prior Achievement	Dropdown options
Employment Status	Dropdown options
Funding Arrangements	Dropdown options
Disadvantage Uplift	Dropdown options

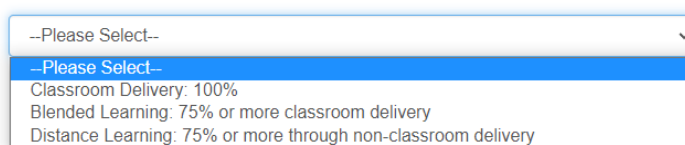
At the point of registration, providers must select the units the learners are going to be taught. Where alternative modules/ units are available within an approved diploma, the specific 60 credits must be selected at the point of registration. **At least one 6 credit unit must be selected, up to maximum, of 30 credits.**

You will select a "tutor" on the Portal registration screen at the point of registration. This should align with the "A2HE Inputter" account that will be used for results entry.

Please note that when the registrations are submitted the system will perform an automatic Rules of Combination (RoC) check to alert you to any issues that may be present with unit registration. Please check that all your learners have a tick that confirms the unit selection is correct. Should you receive an error message, please contact the Customer Service Team for support on customerservices@openawards.org.uk or 0151 494 2072.

The specific mode of delivery for that cohort of learners must be selected at the point of registration. The mode of delivery selected must match what was approved at the point of Programme Validation. You will be prompted to select the mode of delivery from the below list during the registration process.

Mode of Delivery



--Please Select--

--Please Select--

Classroom Delivery: 100%

Blended Learning: 75% or more classroom delivery

Distance Learning: 75% or more through non-classroom delivery

Once learners are registered to a course, and the unit combination and mode of delivery has been selected, changes cannot be made unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Amendments or late registrations may be requested up to 26 weeks from the learner's start date but are only considered in extenuating circumstances and on an individual basis. These requests may result in further investigations by Open Awards and control measures may be applied. Please see section on Late or Incorrect Course Registrations below.

Wherever possible learners who commence their learning at the same time on a Diploma should be registered to one course run, rather than having numerous course runs for the same Diploma with the same start and end dates.

Fair Processing and Extended Privacy Notices

We have a responsibility under the Data Protection Act to ensure that learners are informed of how their information is processed and shared. Please ensure you make learners aware that their information will be passed to Open Awards for registration purposes. You should also provide a copy of the [Privacy Notice – Learner Information](#) to your learners so that they understand what data we hold about them, why we hold it and how their data is used.

We strongly recommend that you encourage learners to visit the Learning Record Service [website](#) to view the Extended Text Privacy Notice which will explain how their data may be shared.

Providers must also make learners aware that upon achievement of qualifications and/or units, Open Awards will pass achievement details to the Learning Records Service for the purpose of updating their Personal Learning Record.

Checking Learner and Course Registrations

You must ensure that learners are registered with their **correct legal** name on the correct Diploma.

Once you have registered your learners, you can use the 'Course Run Confirmation' report via the Portal to check that all information is correct.

We recommend that you use this report whilst registering your learners and throughout the 6-week registering period.

Late or Incorrect Course Registrations

Learners may be registered late or transferred to another unit or course run between 6 and 26 weeks from the start date but only in exceptional circumstances. The following forms are available on the Secure Portal:

- Request for Late Registration Form
- Request for an Amendment to a Learner Registration

Completed request forms must be submitted via the Secure Portal and will be considered on an individual basis. Requests may be subject to investigation by Open Awards. Repeated errors with registrations may be considered to be malpractice and sanctions will be placed on the provider in line with Open Awards Sanctions Policy.

The Access to HE Late Registration Fee will be applied for late registrations, and the Administration Fee will be applied for transfers. See [Pricing Information on our website](#).

Learners on Two-Year Courses

These learners should be registered on course runs that span the 2-year period rather than as two separate 1-year course runs.

'Roll on-roll off' Provision

Where you offer a 'roll on-roll off' provision, learners should be registered to course runs reflecting **an agreed** period of time, e.g., learners who start their course between September and January. Our Customer Service team will work with you to set this up to best align to your delivery requirements.

Recognition of Prior Learning and Credit Transfer

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is the generic term for processes used to recognise learning achieved outside the formal course of learning. It includes recognition of both experiential and certificated learning.

Level 2 units

Where an Access to HE Diploma includes Level 2 units in maths and English, providers can request blanket exemptions for learners who have previously achieved maths and English GCSE at grade 4 (equivalent to grade C) or above. Similar exemptions may apply for other subject areas.

Blanket exemptions must be requested when the Diploma is initially submitted for approval via the Portal. Upon approval, the blanket exemption means that learners with the relevant Level 2 achievement do not need to complete the relevant units. Approval for Level 2 exemptions covers all future learners on the Diploma, although the provider remains responsible for checking and retaining evidence of each learner's achievements where exemptions are claimed.

A maximum of 6 credits may be exempted against any single GCSE. A maximum of 9 credits at Level 2 can be claimed through exemptions.

Where a learner does not have prior achievement to exempt them from a Level 2 unit, the provider is responsible for ensuring that the learner is taught and assessed against the content of the unit.

Evidence of prior learning (e.g. copies of named learners' GCSE certificates) must be obtained by the provider and be made available to Open Awards moderators on request.

Please be aware that exemptions are not allowed on certain Diplomas (please check the Qualification Guide).

Should a provider wish to claim RPL for a learner that has evidence of prior learning at Level 2 that does not align with the exemptions policy outline above, the guidance for Level 3 below must be followed.

Level 3 units

Providers wishing to request Recognition of Prior Learning for level 3 achievements must submit a completed Recognition of Prior Learning Request (RPL) Form, via the Secure Portal.

RPL requests for Access to HE learners cannot be submitted for parts of units. If a learner cannot evidence prior achievement of all assessment criteria for a unit, we cannot accept RPL requests. No more than 50% of the credits required for an Access to HE Diploma can be awarded through RPL.

Please be aware that any units achieved through RPL do not attract grades (and therefore do not have UCAS Tariff points attached to them).

Credit Transfer

Learners who have achieved Access to HE Diploma credits (either from Open Awards or another AVA) may wish to claim credit towards an Open Awards Diploma.

Credit transfer can only be granted where the content of the unit/s from which those credits matches the content of the unit/s they wish to claim. If a learner transfers from one named Diploma to another (either within or between AVAs), credits already achieved may be transferred if:

- The credits are derived from units that are equivalent to an Open Awards unit which is acceptable within the rules of combination for the named Diploma to which the learner is transferring.
- There is no more than a maximum of 50% of the units of any Diploma being achieved in this way.
- The learner achieved the equivalent unit(s) within the last 5 years.

Requesting RPL or Credit Transfer

Requests must be submitted via the Portal, using the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) request form for each learner as soon as they have started the course but no later than 6 weeks after the learner's individual start date. Forms will be reviewed by the Quality Team along with supporting evidence in line with the Open Awards Recognition of Prior Learning Policy (available via the Portal).

Open Awards will provide a decision for each RPL/ Credit Transfer request within a set timescale. Providers must continue to deliver the unit(s) to the learner until they receive formal confirmation that the RPL request has been approved.

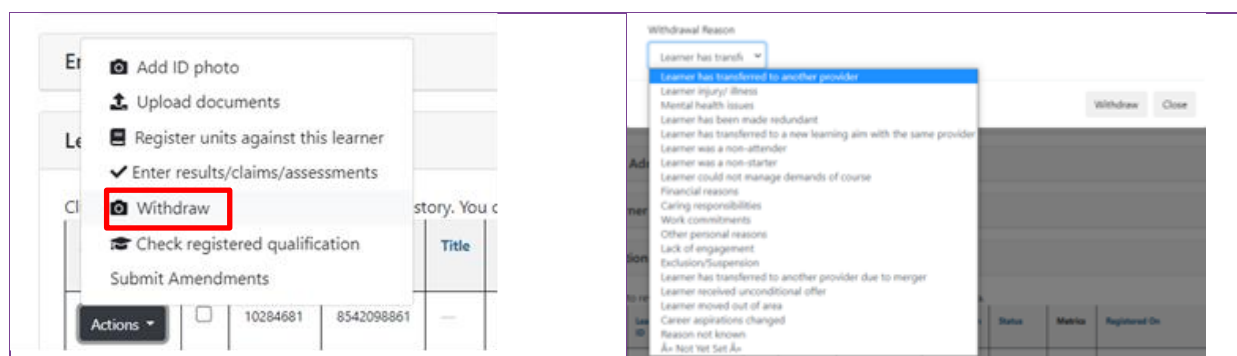
Where units have been achieved on a previous Open Awards Access to HE Diploma these credits will automatically transfer.

Withdrawing Learners

Learners who choose to leave their course of study prior to completion are known as 'withdrawn learners'. Learners should be withdrawn via the Portal. Learners should be withdrawn as soon as this becomes known, rather than waiting for the Final Awards Board. All registered learners must be accounted for at the FAB, e.g. awarded, withdrawn or continuing. Any learners that have completed units before withdrawing from the course will be considered as partial achievers and unit transcripts will be generated at the FAB. It is the provider's responsibility to send these documents onto learners in line with their stated processes.

Withdrawing learners can be completed under the learner record on the **'Your Course Runs'** Screen.

Click the **'Actions'** tab beside the relevant learner. Click 'withdraw' and then select the relevant reason.



Delivering Access to HE Diplomas

Provider responsibilities

Providers delivering Access to HE Diplomas must adhere to the requirements of the Open Awards Provider Agreement and the requirements outlined within this handbook at all times. We review your compliance with the relevant terms and conditions in line with QAA requirements through compliance review activities (see [Compliance Review](#)) and may seek additional clarification throughout the year.

Please note that the provider staffing and resources requirements outlined in the provider validation section of this handbook continue to apply to all providers delivering Access to HE Diplomas at all times.

If you become aware at any point that you are not meeting the requirements of the Provider Agreement or the requirements of this handbook you must contact us immediately.

Open Awards responsibilities

- We will allocate a named Quality and Standards Advisor ([QASA](#)) to work with you.
- We will respond to all enquiries promptly and supportively.
- We will publish clear and accurate information and guidance regarding our requirements, in a timely manner.
- We will work with providers to ensure the currency and validity of their Access to HE Diplomas.
- We support provider staff delivering Access to HE provision through briefings, training and standardisation opportunities.
- We will communicate any changes to QAA and Open Awards systems and requirements promptly and clearly, giving further support as necessary.
- We will strive to raise the profile of the Access to HE Diploma nationally and to work collaboratively with QAA, higher education institutions and provider partners to secure progression routes for learners.
- We will strive to keep bureaucracy to an absolute minimum, whilst still meeting QAA regulatory requirements and ensuring the integrity of the Access to HE Diploma.
- We will protect the interests of learners and ensure they are at the heart of what we do.

Teaching arrangements

Staff teaching on the Access to HE Diploma must have the professional competence and skills to teach and assess necessary for the mode(s) of delivery to be used, and the level of subject expertise necessary to teach and assess the units available on the Diploma(s) it is approved to offer.

The Diploma must cover the units that have been validated by Open Awards and delivered in line with the agreed delivery methods (i.e., classroom, blended or distance). Learners must be assessed in accordance with the information provided to them upon enrolment

Support arrangements

Extensions to assignment deadlines

Providers can approve extensions to assignment deadlines in line with QAA requirements and provider policies and the requirements outlined within this document. Extensions can be agreed for a whole group or individual learners; for single or multiple assignments depending on the circumstances. All agreed extensions must be formally recorded and subject to external quality assurance review.

Providers should be mindful of the potential implications for learners when offering multiple extensions across their Diploma, to avoid placing unnecessary pressure on learners at the end of their course. You 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 your QASA to discuss what options may be available.

Additional study support where there are extenuating circumstances

You 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 by SSMs 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 learners and / or providers that impact the learner's academic performance (or ability to complete the Diploma) should be recorded and made available for review by SSMs.

Counselling support

Many providers will be able to provide counselling support and other forms of additional support for learners with mental health issues in the current circumstances, where the need is identified. This may help the learner 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 learners, which allow for a gap of up to six months without affecting funding or loan restrictions. This can enable a learner 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 with your QASA.

Learners in England

Information about breaks in learning in relation to advanced learner loans: [Advanced learner loans: Break in learning – Customer help centre](#)[ner-loans](#)

Learners in Wales

Follow this link to guidance on breaks (suspension) in learning
<https://www.learnerfinancewales.co.uk>

Non-publicly funded courses

For non-publicly funded courses, providers can agree breaks with learners 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 learners the option of continuing into the next academic year. Learners have up to five years to complete their Diploma. This should be discussed with Open Awards and any agreed continuing learners recorded at the Final Awards Board along with a revised completion date. Learners who are continuing should only have achievement presented to the FAB at which they are planned to be finally awarded.

Learners registered on Open Awards Access to HE Diplomas can take up to three years before they need to be re-registered. Please contact your QASA for more information.

Learner registration and achievement data reporting

The Department for Education and QAA work with Open Awards and other Access Validating Agencies to review registration and achievement data each year, so we are required to undertake extensive data analysis. Whilst this data is normally reviewed through compliance reviews, we may contact you from time to time to request information or updates.

Please ensure that learner data is accurate and complete and that we have the correct contact details for the most appropriate person for us to liaise with over data.

To ensure grades are fair, equitable and robust, once sufficient unit grades have been added to the Markbook to allow for meaningful analysis, Open Awards will undertake a periodic review of grading data in-year to identify any potential issues. Where a provider has delivered the same Diploma in previous years, the emerging grade profile will be reviewed against data from the last few academic years.

Training for providers

In addition to 1-2-1 support through our team, we offer training and support throughout the year for staff delivering Access to HE Diplomas including:

- Administration, registration and certification
- Access to HE Forum
- Access to HE Standardisation Events
- Access to HE Diploma Development Groups
- Preparing for Compliance and Final Awards Boards
- Overview of the moderation cycle
- Award through extenuation
- Assessment planning
- Assignment writing
- Grading and Feedback
- Bespoke sessions for providers on particular themes (fees may apply)

Events will take place online unless otherwise stated. Details of upcoming events can be viewed on our website [here](#).

Learner awards

As we have done for many years, this year Open Awards will be supporting the Keith Fletcher Access to HE Memorial Prizes for learners on courses during the last academic year.

The ceremony is a prestigious event and usually takes place at the Palace of Westminster. All Access Award winners and runners up also receive acknowledgement from QAA at their national conference each year.

Our providers have done us proud in recent years: a learner from Bury College won the award for 'Outstanding Commitment to Study' in 2021-22 (with learners from Tameside College and Wirral Met College runners up in 2020-21 and a learner from Bury College winning the award for achievement in 2019-20).

We encourage nominations for the prize from all our Access to HE providers. This is a great opportunity for you to get the work of your exceptional learners recognised on a national platform. We will contact Access to HE Coordinators directly. All nominations should be sent to us by late October.

Assessing Access to HE Diplomas

Access to HE Diploma achievement requirements

To achieve the Diploma, a learner must successfully achieve a course of units in a relevant subject area to prepare them for their intended Higher Education progression route.

Each unit is allocated 3, 6 or 9 credits, achievement of which counts towards the 60 credits required for the Access to HE Diploma.

Graded units (level 3)	Ungraded (level 2 or level 3)	Total credits
45	15	60

At least one 6 or 9 credit unit must be included in the Diploma specification with a maximum of 30 credits coming from 6 or 9 credit units.

The content of the academic units must be directly related to the title of the Diploma and the intended progression route. The ungraded units are designed to develop skills and knowledge that supports the graded units.

Each unit details what the learner should know, understand or be able to do after a specific period of learning. To achieve the unit, learners must provide evidence for each of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria. There is no award of credit for partial achievement of a unit.

A learner's work must reach the standard needed to pass (that is, all the learning outcomes of a unit must be achieved) in order for credit to be awarded and before it can be considered for grading.

More details on the QAA Grading Scheme for Access to HE Diplomas can be found via the following links. Providers are strongly encouraged to ensure their staff are aware of these regulations and how they relate to their role.

The Access to HE Grading Scheme Handbook

[Section A: Introduction and Summary](#)

[Section B: The Grading Standards](#)

[Section C: Using the Grading Standards in Assessment](#)

[Section D: Moderation and Standardisation](#)

[Section E: Student Results and Awards Boards](#)

[Section E - Addendum: Award Through Extenuation](#)

Diploma Assessment Plan

Assessment is the consideration of evidence in order to make a judgement about what learning has taken place and the standard of learner achievement.

Each Access to HE Diploma must be supported by an assessment and delivery plan which details the principles underpinning how the assessment will be undertaken for each Diploma in a fair and equitable manner. Roll on roll off Providers may be exempt from completing a diploma assessment plan for each diploma due to the nature of their delivery; however, the criteria covered in the diploma assessment plans will be monitored through monthly meetings with the Provider.

By developing an assessment plan at the outset, the provider can ensure that a range of appropriate assessment methods are selected to allow learners to demonstrate achievement. Consideration must be given to the needs of all learners whilst also making sure that they can develop and evidence the skills, knowledge and confidence that will prepare them for the rigorous assessment regimes in higher education.

The demands of assessment should be increased incrementally, as learners develop new skills and become more familiar with the assessment process.

The plan should cover the whole Diploma and include:

- number of assignments
- type and range of assessments
- how tasks will allow for differentiation
- a schedule of delivery and assessment/ scheme of work
- consideration as to whether the plan prepares learners for HE
- identification of how all three components of Grading Standard 3 (Transferable Skills) are used across the assessment of the Diploma.

The assessment plan for each Diploma must be carefully planned and fully explained so that all learners are aware of what is expected of them to achieve the qualification and units for which they are registered. It should ensure that assessment methods are:

- appropriate for the units being delivered
- consistent with the skills required for study in HE
- manageable and offer comparable demand to units of the same size within this Diploma, and across other Diplomas

Open Awards will review assessment plans for each Diploma being delivered, including IQA arrangements, at the beginning of each academic year.

Unit assessment reviews

Assessments for each unit should be planned by the tutor responsible for teaching and assessing the unit. Tutors must develop plans which show how they intend to assess the unit, and these plans must be internally quality assured before the unit is delivered.

The completion of unit assessment plans will enable the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and grading standard components to be identified for each assignment, in addition to a brief description of the assessment methods and tasks.

Assignment briefs must include the grading standards and grade components you have applied and, as appropriate, what they mean for learner work in relation to the particular assignment. The assessment tasks and the evidence to be produced by a learner should be determined by the level and subject of the unit.

If more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, you must show how the learning outcomes and grading standards are allocated across the assignments and clearly state how you will apply a single grade for the unit.

Learning outcomes and assessment criteria

Tutors must provide learners with an assignment brief for each assignment, which explains what they have to do to achieve the learning outcomes and assessment criteria and how the work will be assessed.

Within each unit, there must be only one formal opportunity for the assessment of each learning outcome, irrespective of the number of assessment pieces. In other words, each learning outcome must only be assessed once within a unit, irrespective of how many pieces of assessment there are

When more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, each assignment must be used to assess different learning outcomes or groups of learning outcomes.

When writing the tasks for the assignment brief, each task should be linked to the relevant learning outcome(s) and assessment criteria. It should always be clear to the learner what they are aiming to achieve in any task.

Grading Scheme

The QAA Access to HE Grading Scheme was updated for learners registered on or after 1st August 2024. Providers are strongly encouraged to ensure their staff are aware of these regulations and how they relate to their role. A useful starting point is the QAA's [Tutors Quick Guide to Grading](#).

All grading standards assigned to a unit must be used in the grading of the unit whenever it is delivered.

Each grading standard includes a list of components that can be selected by the tutor for making grading judgements. The selection of grading standard components is crucial to effective grading, ensuring that the resulting grades reflect the standard of work expected at Merit and Distinction in relation to the assessment criteria and the requirements of the assignment.

1	Knowledge and Understanding	
2	Subject Specific Skills	
3	Transferable Skills	3a Communication and/or presentation skills
		3b Autonomy and/or independence
		3c Academic and/or professional conventions in use of technical/ specialist language and/or format in responding to the instructions set out in the assignment brief

- Each unit has three grading standards attached.
- All three grading standards must be used in the grading of each unit.
- Assigned sub-components may be used more than once in a unit, but you do not have to use all of them in all assignments.
- Where more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, assigned sub-components of each of the grading standards must be used appropriately across the assignments.
- Tutors must ensure that the number of grading standards components is fair and appropriate. For example, in Grading Standard 1, tutors must utilise both components and select a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 sub-components in component (b).
- This increases to a maximum of 6 sub-components for 6 and 9 credit units.
- For Grading Standard 3 (Transferable Skills), you must use a minimum of two out of the three components for each unit.
- For Grading Standard 3 (Transferable Skills), whichever components you use for the unit, must be applied across all the assignments for that unit, however, sub-components can change between assignments (to reflect the nature of the task).
- For grading standard 3, all three components must be used at least once across the diploma. Where a unit is assessed by more than one assignment the components from grading standard 3 must be the same for each assignment

Furthermore, where a unit is assessed by more than one assignment learners should not be graded against each individual grading standard per assignment but should be given a grade per grading standard over the 2 assignments.

Preparing your assignments

One of the many benefits of an Open Awards Access to HE Diploma is that you design the assignments yourself to suit the context of delivery and to make the most of the variety of assessments methods available to you. Here are a few principles to consider when designing your assignments:

1 Transparency

- The Learning Outcomes and associated Assessment Criteria for a unit should be made available to the learner
- The requirements of the assessment should be expressed clearly in relation to the Assessment Criteria
- The specific grading standards components used to grade learners' work must be published together with the assignment brief

2 Fairness

- Assignments must be written in a style and using language that makes them as accessible as possible to all learners
- The skills required to complete an assessment must relate to the subject and topics being assessed

3 Reliability

- An assessment strategy may be considered to be reliable if, when used with different groups of learners, it produces similar outcomes in terms of successful completion as well as in terms of the range of grades achieved

4 Validity

- The outcomes of assessment may be considered to be valid if:
 - the evidence of assessment can be attributed to a specific learner
 - the assessor is able to justify achievement and recommended grades against the specific criteria for the unit

5 Sufficiency

- The evidence of assessment should be sufficient to allow an assessor to make a judgement that a learner has achieved all the learning outcomes for a unit and
- The evidence of assessment should be sufficient to allow an assessor to justify any recommended grades
- There must be evidence that the learner has fully met all of the assessment criteria and the evidence should be balanced and reflect the demands of the criteria.

6 Authenticity

- Ensure that you collect learner statements and signatures (Assignment Brief)
- Encourage the use of referencing and bibliographies
- Discourage “passive recycling of sources”
- Ensure that all learners follow clear and appropriate guidelines for the use of generative AI.

7 Delivery and Assessment

- Operate a formal approach to the submission of learner work
- Set deadlines must be notified to learners in writing (Assignment Brief)
- Work is assessed against the specific assessment criteria for the unit
- A learner’s submission is successful if they have achieved all the Learning Outcomes attached to an assignment by meeting all the associated assessment criteria
- Each assessment criteria can/should be formally assessed only once
- Grades are assigned by reference to common grading standards components
- Only the components published by the QAA may be used
- Draft submissions are allowed; however, no indication of grade can be discussed with the learner. You can discuss whether or not assessment criteria have been met

8 Identify Areas of Improvement Through Evaluation and Standardisation

- Assessments and units should be reviewed taking account of achievement data, suitability and learner and tutor feedback.
- Consider Moderator feedback
- Ensure that you have an internal standardisation policy
- Ensure that your internal standardisation schedule is appropriate and aligns with the policy
- Take part in Open Awards subject development groups
- Contribute to Open Awards unit reviews

Further information and guidance on unit assessments can be found in the Grading Scheme Handbook on the QAA Access to HE [website](#).

Assessment arrangements

Staff teaching on the Access to HE Diploma must have the professional competence and skills to teach and assess, necessary for the mode(s) of delivery to be used, and the level of subject expertise necessary to teach and assess the units available on the Diploma(s) it is approved to offer.

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. This means that insofar as possible learners should be assessed in accordance with the information provided to them upon enrolment.

Assessment submission requirements

It is a requirement that you publish procedures for the formal submission of work for assessment in your course handbook. This must be communicated to learners. These procedures must be the same for all the Access Diplomas that you are approved to deliver.

Your procedures must conform to QAA requirements set out in the relevant [Grading Scheme Handbooks](#)

Draft submissions

Opportunities to submit assignments in draft for comment and feedback by tutors before the formal submission date are permitted only when this has been specified in advance by the tutor. Such opportunities should not be the norm. Assignment briefs must clearly state whether draft submissions are allowed and where they are, the arrangements that must be followed.

Tutors can discuss whether or not assessment criteria have been met but cannot give an indication of grade or make detailed corrections to a draft submission.

Providers are expected to follow an internal policy for managing draft assignments which must be consistently applied by all tutors and ensure fairness for learners.

Formal submissions

Providers must set deadlines for all work to be submitted for formal assessment and notify these to learners in writing before the assignment is undertaken. The course handbook should clearly state your expectations of the format in which submissions should be made. Once a formal submission has been made, this cannot later be declared to be a draft.

Resubmissions

If learner hands work in on time, but has not demonstrated achievement of all assessment criteria, the provider can set a second deadline to allow the learner to cover the missing criteria only. The first submission should not be graded, and no indication of grade must be given but returned to the learner with guidance as to what needs to be resubmitted.

Resubmissions must:

- be proportionate to the degree of non-achievement
- be consistent with the way the learning outcome(s) were originally assessed
- be subject to a clear deadline
- be applied consistently in equivalent assessment situations, so that all learners have equivalent opportunities for resubmission and reassessment
- ensure that the additional or revised work being resubmitted is clearly distinguishable from the work originally submitted
- be subject to moderation

Completed resubmissions can be awarded a grade if handed in by the set resubmission deadline.

A learner with a legitimate extension may also resubmit work, although resubmission dates may need to be extended as a result of the initial authorised late submission.

Late submissions

If learner hands work in late without a good reason, it can be marked against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria but will **be capped at a pass**. If the unit has several assignments, any assignment handed in late will result in the unit being capped at a pass.

Late submissions include:

- Work handed in later than the first submission deadline without an agreed extension
- Work handed in after an agreed extension date
- Work handed in later than a resubmission deadline

If a late submission does not meet the learning outcomes there is no opportunity for resubmission except via the [referrals process](#).

Extensions

Requests for extensions can only be made due to extenuating circumstances and must be made in writing. Providers need to submit these requests to Open Awards for consideration as soon as possible with a deadline of the day before the final moderation. Requests for extensions must be accompanied by supporting evidence. Decisions will be confirmed either in writing or on the date of the Final Awards Board.

Any requests that are not approved by the deadline should be discussed with the Subject Specialist Moderator at the final pathway quality review meeting.

Please note, any units that the learners managed to achieve will be reviewed by the Subject Specialist Moderator as normal. Learners with approved extensions will not have any awards certificated until the provider has submitted the final results.

Referrals

When a learner has not achieved all the assessment criteria for a unit following either of the scenarios below and due to special circumstances, a referral may be possible:

- if the first submission was late and failed to address all assessment criteria,
- If resubmitted work failed to address all the assessment criteria

Referrals are not an automatic right and cannot be granted by the provider.

The Access to HE Coordinator must submit a Learner Referral Request Form (On Course) to Open Awards requesting that a learner be permitted a second resubmission during the course. The application must be made via the Secure Portal along with supporting information. Open Awards' decision is final in referral cases.

If there is insufficient time before the end of a course run for a learner to complete unit(s) and for them to be assessed and quality assured in time for the FAB, a referral request may be made to the Final Awards Board via a Learner Referral Request to FAB. The FAB will review all evidence presented to decide whether a further opportunity for resubmission should be allowed. Where agreed, the FAB will outline specific requirements of the resubmission.

The deadline date for a referred resubmission will be agreed between Open Awards and the provider. Additional work must be internally quality assured and made available for external Subject Specialist Moderation.

If the referred resubmission is successful, credit can be awarded for the unit. If the referral followed an unsuccessful first resubmission and there was no late-submission issue, the work can be used in the normal grading process, so the unit grade is not automatically capped.

If the referral followed a late first submission without an extension, and then an unsuccessful resubmission, a successful referred resubmission may still lead to credit, but the unit grade is capped at Pass.

If the referred resubmission is unsuccessful, no credit or grade can be awarded for that unit. If the student then does not meet the rules of combination for the Diploma, they cannot be awarded the Access to HE Diploma, though they will still receive credit and grades for any units they have achieved.

Representations

Representations apply when a learner is not satisfied with a tutor's explanation for unconfirmed grade indicators awarded and asks for them to be formally reconsidered. The learner must make a formal application for the representation, giving reasons. These are reviewed in turn by the assessor and then the internal quality assurer before a decision is made.

Agreeing unit grades

When assessing learner work, tutors must first consider whether the assignment submitted by the learner has achieved all the learning outcomes that were specified for the assignment. If all the learning outcomes have been achieved, the assignment is regarded as a successful submission and is graded.

Tutors must then consider a learner's work in relation to the grading standard components chosen for the assignment. The tutor must decide, for each of the standards that have been identified for the assessment of the assignment whether the standard of a learner's performance is better described by the chosen distinction (D) or merit (M) components, or whether the work does not reach the standard described by the chosen merit component(s) and is at pass (P) standard.

A grade indicator is given for each grade standard used to assess that assignment. Grade indicators can only be P, M or D: no intermediate or modified grade indicators can be given.

The grade for a unit is based on the overall profile of grades achieved across the unit. All of the grade indicators have equal value in the unit grade profile, and all are considered in determining the unit grade.

Final grades must not be determined by giving grades for individual assignments and then calculating an overall grade from assignment grades.

The final grade for the unit is arrived at by establishing the midpoint of grades in the unit grade profile. This midpoint is the median grade and can be calculated using the following table.

Unit Grade Profile			Unit Grade
P	P	P	Pass
P	P	M	Pass
P	P	D	Pass
P	M	M	Merit
P	M	D	Merit
M	M	M	Merit
M	M	D	Merit
P	D	D	Distinction
M	D	D	Distinction
D	D	D	Distinction

Feedback to the learner

Tutors must provide feedback to learners for each submitted assignment in a timely manner. Ideally the assignment brief should provide the learner with an indication of when they can expect to receive this feedback. All feedback provided should be sufficient, focused and developmental. It must provide justification for the grade(s) recommended.

For **ungraded units**, feedback should be made against the assessment criteria relating to the assignment. No reference should be made to grading standards as they do not apply.

For **graded units**, feedback must be relevant to, and consistent with, the requirements of the learning outcomes, grading standards and components used for the assignment.

Tutors must ensure that feedback is consistent with the standard represented by the chosen grading standards and only refer to aspects of performance covered by the assignment or the grading standards and components that were applied.

Where more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, tutors must provide feedback in relation to the individual assignments so that learners can identify strengths and weaknesses in different areas and improve their performance.

Feedback on work which has not met the requirements of one or more learning outcomes, and therefore has not achieved the standard for Pass, must only confirm which aspect of a learning outcome has not been achieved. It must not provide information which relates to grading.

Feedback should follow the guidance provided on the Assignment Brief and Feedback sheet and tutors should include specific examples where the learner's work provides evidence for the recommended grade.

Feedback should be developmental and constructive – allowing learners to understand how to achieve a higher grade in subsequent assignments. Care must be taken to avoid providing feedback that is so detailed that it could be deemed to be coaching.

Open Awards may also contact learners directly in the form of a survey link sent to email addresses provided at registration in order to gain feedback on their experience of undertaking an Access to HE Diploma, in order to shape and inform our future provision. Where such surveys are undertaken relevant anonymised data will be shared with you.

Internal Quality Assurance (IQA)

Access to HE providers must have a clear policy and procedure for the internal quality assurance of assessment practice. Internal quality assurance is a process by which the provider systematically samples and evaluates its assessment practices and decisions and acts on the findings to ensure consistency and fairness. The main purpose is to improve and standardise practice in the assessment of learners.

What is internal quality assurance?

Internal quality assurance is comprised of:

- IQA of diploma assessment plans
- IQA of assignment briefs
- IQA of learners' assessed work
- Internal standardisation
- End of course checks

The process must demonstrate, through tracking and record keeping, that learners have achieved the correct combination of units and any additional requirements in order to achieve the Access to HE Diploma. The IQA plan must be made available to Open Awards for external moderation purposes.

Internal Quality Assurers cannot review their own assessment plans, briefs or work of their own learners. The Access to HE Coordinator must take responsibility for internal quality assurance of all Access to HE Diplomas at your organisation, and we will expect that you have the appropriate levels of resources to implement these processes.

As well as the relevant knowledge to understand the Access to HE specification and the QAA grading scheme, Internal Quality Assurers will also be expected to have relevant subject expertise at an appropriate level.

Through their programme of IQA activities, they will recognise and promote best practice and identify where there are concerns that require action. Feedback to assessors is important to help improve and standardise assessment practices. Action plans can include reference to the sharing of best practice which should be shared through the scheduled meetings of the course team and internal standardisation, or areas for improvement.

IQA of the Diploma Assessment Plan

Diploma assessment plans developed by course leaders must be reviewed before delivery begins to ensure that:

- planned delivery meets the required rules of combination and the unit specifications
- assessments are scheduled across the delivery period to ensure a reasonable spread of hand in dates for learners and assessors
- the volume and demand of assessments is equitable across units (taking account of relevant credit values)
- a suitable variety of assessment methods have been selected
- learner feedback from previous cohorts has been considered where appropriate

The IQA must take responsibility to ensure that actions are discussed with assessors and the course leader and implemented in a timely manner. Appropriate changes must be signed off by the IQA.

All IV and standardisation activities should be planned and documented. It is important that you schedule all activities in advance so that this becomes an ongoing activity which allows for changes to be made to assessment practices in year if required. The plan should also outline the systems that are in place for to elicit and respond to learner evaluation and feedback on the assessment process. Feedback should be used to bring about continuous improvement.

IQA of Assignment Briefs

Alongside the review of the unit assessment plan, the IQA must also review the assignment briefs before they are issued to learners to ensure that each brief contains:

- Correct unit title and code
- The learning outcomes and assessment criteria covered by the assignment
- Valid assessment methods and tasks to meet the learning outcomes and assessment criteria
- Assessment tasks that are fit for purpose for the level of the unit
- Sufficient information for learners to understand the assessment tasks
- Word counts or range (clearly explained) if appropriate
- Referencing and bibliography requirements if appropriate
- Draft guidance if drafts are allowed for the assignment
- Dates for circulation to learners and deadlines for submission
- Accurate information about the grading standards for the assignment
- Choices of grading standards components which are suitable for the nature of the assessment tasks
- The same grading standards components for merit and distinction grades
- Sufficient information on how to achieve Merit or Distinction grades for each grading standard.

Internal quality assurers must identify, and record actions required for each assignment brief. The IQA must sign off these actions as complete before the assignment brief can be shared with learners.

IQA of learners' assessed work

Evidence presented by learners to demonstrate unit achievement must be assessed (and graded where appropriate) in accordance with QAA regulations.

A plan for the IQA of learners' work must be developed in conjunction with the overall assessment plan for the Diploma and indicate what will happen, when and with whom. IQA should be ongoing throughout the year to ensure that the evidence for each unit is reviewed as soon as is practicable after assessment has taken place.

This will ensure that any problems involving the practice of a particular assessor are highlighted as soon as possible in order to give sufficient time to take any remedial action before the assessor formally assesses other subsequent units.

It is not necessary to review the work of every learner for every unit so the IQA should devise an appropriate sampling plan that aligns with your organisation's IQA policies.

The sample selected must:

- Be a fair reflection of the number and size of groups assessed
- Be a fair reflection of the range of grades awarded
- Include units where there is no clear mid-point grade, where appropriate
- Include 'borderline cases'
- Be a fair reflection of the demographic features of learners (e.g. gender, ethnic background, age and disability status)
- Include various modes of delivery, where appropriate
- Take account of each assessor's experience and track record
- Include units being assessed for the first time or through new assignments
- Allow the IQA to review process on actions identified in previous reports
- Take account of the need to ensure that every unit be sampled over the delivery cycle of a Diploma
- Be selected by the IQA – not the tutor.

For each sample the IQA will require the following documentation:

- The unit assessment plan
- The assignment brief
- The selected learners' completed work – including the assessor's annotations
- Feedback from the assessor to the learner
- Indicative grades (for graded units)
- For resubmissions - both pieces of work and evidence supporting the resubmission
- Draft submissions (where allowed)

It is the IQA's responsibility to consider all available evidence and make judgements about:

- Accuracy of paperwork completion
- Achievement of learning outcomes and assessment criteria at the correct level
- Indicative grades awarded (for graded units)
- The type and quality of feedback given to the learner which may include:
 - clarity of explanation about the relevance of the work
 - suitability of language used
 - relationship to assessment criteria
 - relationship to grading standards components (for graded units)
 - guidance on future development of work

The IQA will record their findings which must include clear, accurate, supportive and developmental advice and feedback to the assessor, setting actions accordingly. IQA feedback should not be a simple agreement or second marking.

Where necessary, the IQA may change the assessors' decision – following discussion. If the decision is taken to alter assessment decisions or indicative grades, the feedback form for the learner should be clearly updated and signed. The relevant tracking records, including IQA records, must also be updated.

Internal standardisation

Standardisation is a vital component of any robust quality assurance system and as a condition of provider approval all Open Awards Access to HE providers agree to participate in standardisation activities.

Where more than one tutor/assessor makes assessment decisions and recommendations for the award of credit to learners on the same Diploma or similar courses it is essential that internal verification processes include the standardisation of their practice.

Open Awards expect providers to plan and undertake standardisation of internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment **at least twice a year**. This allows you to:

- Ensure the consistency of the award of credit to learners across different assessors/moderators/modes of delivery/provider and to agree the standards to be achieved.
- Compare the assessment plan and planned assessment tasks used across a unit/s to ensure that they:
 - allow for the generation of sufficient/appropriate/authentic evidence to be produced
 - give fair access to assessment
 - prevent any barriers to achievement
 - respect equality and diversity issues
- Ensure that the assessment tasks are written in language that is appropriate to the level and are free from bias
- Ensure consistency in the assessment judgements made by assessors on the available evidence
- Ensure that adequate constructive feedback is given learners
- Ensure that adequate constructive feedback is given to assessors which

demonstrates the robustness of the internal moderation of the assessment judgements and identify and share best practices.

The IQA has the responsibility for arranging and facilitating standardisation events.

Please note, as well as running internal standardisation activities, Access to HE providers are expected to:

- Contribute evidence for Open Awards standardisation activities upon request.
- Allow subject specialist staff to participate in Open Awards standardisation

Further information about Open Awards national standardisation events can be found in 'Open Awards Standardisation' section.

End of course checks

As the course comes towards the end, the IQA has key responsibilities to ensure results can be processed and learners certificated. IQAs must:

- Monitor progress against previous action points to make sure any outstanding actions are resolved to avoid result and certification issues
- Ensure assessment records are complete and accurate
- Ensure evidence of achievement is appropriate, standardised and mapped to the assessment criteria
- Ensure that the Markbook for each Diploma is complete and accurate
- Ensure that all IQA activities and findings are recorded clearly and effectively
- Make plans to ensure that their feedback is taken into account for next year's delivery and unit assessment plans
- Ensure that all preparations are in order for the Final Awards Board – including any requests for Referral at FAB, Learner Extension, Aegrotat or Posthumous Awards. This is likely to require a pre-FAB meeting with internal colleagues and Open Awards staff as required.

External Quality Assurance

Each provider is allocated a team of external quality assurance experts to verify the achievement of learners and confirm the award of the QAA Access to HE Diploma, units, credits and grades.

Details of our external quality assurance arrangements, including the moderation cycle, can be found in the Access to HE Provider Guide to Moderation which can be found on the Secure Portal.

Your external quality assurance team

Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA)

Each Access to HE provider is allocated a Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA) whose role is to:

- ensure that your Access course operates according to the submission and rules of combinations agreed through the approval process
- monitor your ongoing compliance against the Open Awards Provider Agreement and QAA regulatory requirements
- monitor timely progress of your delivery, including grade population on the Markbook
- act as the first point of contact for all delivery, assessment or IQA queries
- provide ad hoc guidance as required
- support Subject Specialist Moderators to complete their work accurately and efficiently
- collate Diploma Assessment Plans and assignment briefs for all Diplomas you deliver
- monitor the timely assessment, moderation and awarding of your Access to HE Diploma learners
- represent Open Awards at the Final Awards Board meeting
- take overall responsibility for the secure award of credit
- support the overall consistency in the award of credit to learners across providers delivering Open Awards Access to HE Diplomas.

Open Awards allocates one Quality and Standards Advisor to each provider at the beginning of the academic year. A Quality and Standards Advisor will normally only be allocated to a specific provider for a maximum of four years.

Subject Specialist Moderators (SSM)

Our team of Subject Specialist Moderators (SSMs) externally moderate the achievement of learners and confirm the award of the QAA Access to HE Diploma, units, credits and grades. Each SSM is appointed to moderate units for which they possess the knowledge, skills and experience of the content of the unit. The role of the SSM is to:

- Ensure that learners being recommended for the award of credit have achieved the specified learning outcomes for the unit.
- Ensure that evidence of achievement is fit for purpose both in terms of level and sufficiency.
- Ensure that assessment and grading judgements are consistent and reliable with due regard to equity, fairness and national requirements.
- Review assignment briefs, providing feedback to Providers and setting actions as required.
- Ensure assessment and grading decisions across different tutors, delivery modes and Providers are consistent and in accordance with the QAA Grading Scheme.
- Contribute to subject specialist standardisation events for relevant units.

External quality assurance activities

Moderation cycle

Timings for the moderation cycle* are as follows:

Activity	Detail	Date(s)
Compliance reviews	Template documents sent to Provider	July - September 2026
	Provider completes templates and uploads supporting evidence	August – October 2026
	Compliance review meeting takes place	August – October 2026
Monthly progress reviews	Progress meetings for roll-on/roll-off providers only	First week of each calendar month
Review of Diploma Assessment Plans	Providers upload assessment plans for each Diploma	July - September 2026
	QASAs undertake assessments of Diploma Assessment Plans and identify units in scope for moderation.	July – October 2026
	QASAs feedback to Providers	July – October 2026
Review of unit assessment arrangements	Provider uploads assignments briefs in scope for moderation	July – September 2026
	SSMs undertake unit assessment review	July – October 2026
	SSMs feedback to Providers	July – October 2026
Subject specialist moderation	Window 1	January 2027
	Window 2	March 2027
	Window 3	June 2027
	Window 4 (for roll-on/roll-off providers only)	December 2027
Annual survey to learners	Link to online survey emailed to all Access to HE learners	February 2027
	Analysis of survey results	March 2027
	Feedback to providers	March 2027
Final Awards Board	Date for next compliance review confirmed (based on Provider risk rating)	1 June 2027 to 09 July 2027
	For roll-on/roll-off providers only, additional FAB dates will be scheduled 12 months in advance in agreement between Open Awards and Provider.	TBC

* Similar principles will be followed for courses not following an academic year timetable and providers offering roll-on/roll-off provision, but the dates will be varied as required.

Compliance review

The Access to HE Compliance Review is a detailed monitoring review of a provider to check all procedures ensure that all Access to HE provision is being organised, managed, delivered and quality assured according to Open Awards requirements.

The Provider's performance in the previous cycle is reviewed, identifying good practice and key strengths and setting actions for improvement as appropriate. The QASA also undertakes a review of planned Access to HE delivery, assessment and IQA for the coming year.

The frequency of compliance reviews is determined by the Access to HE Risk Rating of the provider.

- For low-risk providers, compliance reviews will take place at least once every 3 years.
- For medium-risk providers, compliance reviews will take place at least once every two years, with the date for the compliance review set at the Final Awards Board in advance of the review being due.
- For high-risk providers, compliance reviews will take place annually, with the date set at the previous year's Final Awards Board.
- For newly approved providers, a compliance review will be scheduled within 12 months of the provider starting to deliver Access to HE Diplomas. Upon completion of the first compliance review, a substantive risk rating will be confirmed as high, medium or low.

Providers need to send supporting documentation to Open Awards to help with this process as well as partially completing (where indicated) the Compliance Review document in advance of the meeting by specified dates.

The QASA will review the partly completed annual compliance review document and associated documentation before the annual compliance review is due to take place. This is to ensure that they are suitably prepared to initiate discussions and to challenge statements made by the provider that is not supported by evidence.

If the provider does not upload all necessary documentation and/or pre-populate the compliance review document to meet requirements, the annual compliance meeting will be rescheduled if there is insufficient time for the provider to make the missing information available before the meeting.

There may be a cost incurred where reviews need to be rescheduled. This will adversely affect the provider's risk rating.

Review meetings will take place between August and October although this depends on the provider's delivery arrangements and the seriousness of any outstanding issues.

The date will be agreed between the QASA and the provider at the most recent Final Awards Board. Meetings will focus on changes since the previous year, provider planning and quality systems development. The meeting will take normally place remotely via MS Teams with the following aims:

- To confirm provider contacts
- To review the performance of the previous year's Access to HE provision
- To review progress against actions previously set
- To monitor compliance against provider validation criteria
- To review delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance plans for the coming year
- To agree the date, time and location of Final Awards Boards
- To set actions for the coming year
- To identify areas of good practice and key strengths
- To determine the provider's Risk Rating for Access to HE.

The agenda for the meeting will follow the format of the Compliance Monitoring Report.

Review of Diploma Assessment Plans

Each Provider must provide Diploma Assessment Plans between July and October for all Access to HE courses being delivered in the upcoming year.

The QASA will check that the provider is delivering all the mandatory units attached to each Diploma, and likewise, that they are only delivering the units validated for the Diploma using the delivery method they are validated for. Failing to deliver all units/delivering incorrect units will adversely affect the learners and will result in them not achieving the full Diploma.

The review of Diploma Assessment Plans will ensure that:

- planned delivery meets the required rules of combination and the unit specifications
- assessments are scheduled across the delivery period to ensure a reasonable spread of hand in dates for learners and assessors
- the volume and demand of assessments is equitable across units (taking account of relevant credit values)
- a suitable variety of assessment methods have been selected
- learner feedback from previous cohorts has been considered where appropriate
- Diploma Assessment Plans have been subject to a process of internal quality assurance, with evidence of the plan being amended where actions were set by the IQA
- content, structure and delivery, in as far as it is responsible, of a Diploma complies with relevant provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

The Diploma Assessment Plan review will result in an agreed schedule of subject specialist moderation of learner work throughout the delivery period. This will be agreed with reference to the provider's assessment delivery and IQA plan for each Diploma.

Open Awards adopts a risk-based approach to sampling.

The number of graded units selected for sampling will be based on the risk presented by the Diploma and the provider risk rating. Attention is focused towards higher areas of risk, whilst also ensuring that sampling is sufficient to effectively monitor the provider's performance.

The following table outlines how the provider's risk rating affects the proportion of Diplomas to be sampled.

Provider Risk Rating	% of Diplomas sampled	Commentary
Low risk	33%	Must include high and medium risk Diplomas. Where the provider has fewer than three Diplomas, at least one will be sampled.
Medium risk	50%	Must include high and medium risk Diplomas. Where the provider has an odd number of Diplomas, the number of diplomas sampled will be rounded up e.g. Five Diplomas would mean three Diplomas would be sampled.
High risk	100%	All Diplomas.
New Provider	100%	All Diplomas.

Once the Diplomas to be moderated have been identified, minimum the number of graded units reviewed in each Diploma is agreed – based on a combination of Provider and Diploma risks. This is portrayed in the following table:

Provider Risk	Diploma risk			
	Low	Medium	High	New
Low	1	2	3	3
Medium	2	3	4	4
High	3	4	5	5
New	3	4	5	5

For low-risk Diplomas being delivered at low-risk Providers, one graded unit will be sampled. If the same Diploma is delivered at a provider which is medium risk, a minimum of 2 graded units would be sampled, whilst at a new or high-risk Provider, a minimum of 3 graded units would be sampled.

In addition, Open Awards will moderate one ungraded unit where the provider has fewer than four diplomas. Where the provider has four or more diplomas they will be required to provide two ungraded units for moderation.

The specific units selected for moderation are based on a range of criteria including:

- risk rating of the Diploma
- risk rating of the provider
- units being delivered for the first time by this provider
- units being offered by the provider in more than one Diploma
- units which are delivered in high volume across Open Awards providers
- units with grade profiles that require further investigation to maintain standards
- units for which there are outstanding actions from previous delivery
- at least one unit from each module within all Diplomas being delivered
- other units selected at random by the QASA.

Where moderation outcomes identify issues with delivery, assessment or IQA judgements, the number of units moderated may be increased.

Subject specialist moderation

Subject Specialist Moderators (SSMs) will be allocated to providers and units in October based on the knowledge, skills and experience of the SSM mapped against the units to be sampled. Open Awards adopts the principle of allocating units to the fewest number of SSMs per provider. Wherever practicable, units common to multiple providers are moderated by the same SSM for consistency and standardisation.

SSMs contribute to standardisation activities later in the delivery cycle, building on their experiences from the assessment plan review and moderation of learner work.

Review of unit assignment briefs

Providers will be expected to upload the following documentation:

- Assignment briefs with activities/tasks addressing all learning outcomes and assessment criteria for the unit.
- Evidence of internal quality assurance of all assignment briefs for the unit.
- Any supporting documentation to support learner achievement e.g. workbooks, templates, question papers, exams etc.

The review of assignment briefs will be undertaken remotely by allocated SSMs. SSMs will review assignment briefs for sampled units to ensure that each brief:

- states all learning outcomes and assessment criteria for each unit are covered
- assesses each learning outcome and assessment criterion only once
- has been through a process of internal quality assurance in a timely manner, with actions signed off as complete before the assignment brief has been shared with learners
- includes tasks that are well-planned and clearly communicated to the learners
- includes tasks that allow learners to evidence achievement of the required Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria
- includes tasks that allow for consistency of decisions for all learners, and from multiple assessors
- provides sufficient opportunity to differentiate between fail, pass, merit and distinction for graded units
- enables authenticity of learner work to be evidenced
- includes tasks that support the development of academic skills
- ensures inclusivity with respect to relevant provisions in the Equality Act 2010
- ensures the grading standard components selected met the requirements outlined in the Access to HE Grading Scheme (Section B)
- ensures that the grading standard components selected appropriate to the demands of the task(s)
- assesses whether the assignment brief fit for purpose.

SSMs will review all evidence provided and arrange a feedback session with relevant staff at the provider to discuss any areas of concern and proposed actions. The provider will be given sufficient opportunity to provide clarification and additional evidence in response to the SSMs comments and actions.

A written report will be made available within ten working days of the moderation activity. Actions will be allocated to appropriate provider staff via the Portal in the same timescale.

Sampling learner work

The units for which learner work is to be sampled is the same as those for which assignment briefs have been reviewed. The external moderation of learner work will take place in three windows*:

January – units that have been delivered, assessed and IQAd in the autumn term.

March – units delivered, assessed and IQAd in the spring term **PLUS** any units identified in the first moderation window needing an additional sample.

June – units delivered, assessed and IQAd in the spring term **PLUS** any units needing an additional sample.

* Alternative arrangements will be negotiated for providers with roll-on/roll-off provision to allow additional windows between June and January.

During each moderation window, the Open Awards quality team will identify a sample of learners for moderation and request evidence be uploaded to SharePoint. The provider must upload all evidence in the format requested by the SSM, ensuring that files are uploaded to the correct folder(s).

Sampling activity can only take place where grades have been added to the Markbook for the relevant unit. If grades have not been added within four weeks of the units being completed (delivered, assessed and IQAd), or the provider does not provide information in the correct format in a timely manner, this may be deemed to be provider malpractice. In such instances we will apply our Sanctions Policy which can be found via the Portal. This may result in approval being withdrawn for one or more Diploma.

Providers must upload the following evidence:

- assessed work for the selected learners
- assessor feedback
- learner feedback
- completed IQA documentation
- clear records of learner achievement against assessment criteria and grading standards, including overall grade for the unit
- proof of evidence of qualification achievement for all learners for which RPL is being claimed (for Level 2 and Level 3 units)
- IDs of learners with approved reasonable adjustments
- IDs of learners with borderline achievement.

If providers are unable to provide evidence via SharePoint, alternative arrangements must be agreed in advance between the provider and the QASA.

Once all documentation has been made available, the relevant SSM(s) will be given access to the documentation to externally moderate the work.

As part of the moderation process, the SSM will:

- sample assessed work to confirm that the learner has achieved against specific learning outcomes and assessment criteria and to help mitigate against malpractice
- assure the appropriateness, consistency, fairness and transparency across assessment and grading decisions
- assure that grade indicator and grade decisions are appropriate, consistent and fair
- ensure that all actions have been completed in a timely manner
- ensure that the providers' internal quality assurance processes and procedures have been effectively applied

SSMs will review all evidence provided and may support the QASA during a feedback session with relevant staff at the provider to discuss any areas of concern and proposed actions. The provider will be given sufficient opportunity to provide clarification and additional evidence in response to the SSMs comments and actions.

Outcomes from sampling activity will initially be sent to the QASA who will collate feedback across all provision, follow up with the provider as required and add SMART actions to the provider Improvement Action Plan.

All sampling activity must be completed at least 5 working days before the scheduled Final Awards Board for the relevant Diploma(s).

Additional Monitoring

If you do not meet the obligations of your validation as a provider and/or fail to address areas of concern highlighted by the moderation team within their Action Plans and Reports, we reserve the right to request additional visits to monitor your activities. As part of such monitoring activities your risk rating can be reviewed within year.

Please note, you may be charged for additional monitoring and moderation activities in line with our standard pricing information which can be found on the Open Awards [website](#).

Open Awards Standardisation

Open Awards standardisation activities will take place throughout the year to cover:

- assessment planning & assignment writing
- the roles of assessors and IQA
- grading of work
- tracking and marking

Standardisation is a vital component of any robust quality assurance system and it is a condition of approval that all Open Awards Access to HE providers participate in standardisation activities each year, both internally and externally.

As a minimum requirement each provider **must**:

- plan and undertake standardisation of internally set tasks and the outcomes of internal assessment (at least twice a year). Please see [Internal Standardisation](#).
- contribute assessed material to Open Awards standardisation activities and events upon request. this should include:
 - copies of assignment briefs
 - samples of completed graded assignments
 - samples of completed ungraded assignments
- allow subject specialist staff to participate in, and attend, standardisation activities organised by Open Awards

Open Awards runs a series of standardisation activities that are accessible to all Access to HE providers. The purpose of Open Awards standardisation is to:

- promote and achieve consistency of assessment and moderation practice
- ensure consistency in the application of level and credit across Open Awards Access provision
- ensure that standards are comparable
 - across providers (and satellite sites)
 - across different types of providers (colleges / private providers)
 - across different subject areas
 - across modes of delivery (blended / distance learning)
 - over time.
- identify and develop agreed points of reference by which standards can be referenced and agree processes for them to be applied and reviewed
- ensure that a full range of assessment activities allow for the generation of appropriate assessment evidence
- inform the quality improvement cycle by identifying training and development issues
- share and disseminate best practices.

Sessions will be led by Open Awards quality team and may take place online or in person. Delegates will be given access to an online repository of activities, training and opportunities to share best practices. Any assignments used for standardisation will be anonymised. The events are designed to be professional development opportunities opportunity to network with peers.

Awarding

Once all delivery, assessment, internal and external quality assurance processes have been completed, recommendations for the award of credits, grades and Access to HE Diplomas are considered by a Final Awards Board (FAB). The role of the FAB is to make sure that learner awards and results are properly managed.

FABs will normally take place in June and July once all moderation has been completed and grades have been submitted by the provider. For providers offering roll-on-roll-off provision and those not operating to academic years, the FAB will take place at specified points throughout the year, agreed in advance.

For the FAB to run smoothly, it is important that the provider completes the following actions in advance of the scheduled meeting:

Management and administration

- Review and complete all actions placed by Open Awards in a timely manner.
- Ensure that Provider staff attending the FAB are aware of their roles and responsibilities in advance of the meeting taking place.
- Larger Providers, medium and high-risk Providers **MUST** conduct a pre-FAB in advance of the scheduled FAB to identify and address any anomalies or issues in advance. Open Awards reserves the right to attend pre-FAB committees where they deem this to be necessary and holding a pre-FAB is advised as good practice for all Providers.

Accurate registrations and withdrawals

- Register all units in a timely manner, ensuring that every learner meets the rules of combination for the Diploma
- Withdraw learners from the course run where they have no unit achievement. This must be recorded in the FAB along with reasons for withdrawal.

Unit grades

- Upload unit grades for each learner to the Markbook within 4 weeks of each unit being IQAd. This will be in line with the assessment and delivery plans submitted to Open Awards. Open Awards will remind you on a monthly basis of grades that should be submitted.
- Make available all requested evidence for Subject Specialist Moderation upon request throughout the course.
- Ensure that all learner grades have been uploaded to the Markbook for every unit they have completed. Any gaps in unit grades may result in a delay in completing the Final Awards Board's business and, subsequently, the timely certification of learners.
- Ensure that grades are submitted via the Portal for all learners whose unit grades are being presented to the FAB at least 48 hours before the scheduled start time.
- Unit grades for continuing learners **MUST NOT** be submitted to Open Awards prior to the FAB – grades must remain in the Markbook/ Basket until they have completed the Diploma or withdrawn as a partial achiever.

Referrals

Normally, a learner is permitted only one opportunity to resubmit work which fails to meet all requirements of the associated learning outcomes. The referral process allows the course team to recommend that a learner must be permitted a second resubmission opportunity.

- Ensure that all on-course referral requests received by the provider - both approved and refused – are uploaded via the Open Awards Portal at least 5 working days before the FAB. This includes forms submitted by learners and evidence of the provider's decision-making process for each request.
- Where a referral cannot be submitted as an on-course request (for example in final assessments), the provider must submit a Referral to FAB request via the Portal at least 5 working days before the FAB.

Aegrotat Awards

- The Provider may request an Aegrotat Award for a learner who, due to extenuating circumstances (typically illness related), has been unable to complete their Diploma course but would have done so otherwise. All Aegrotat requests must be submitted via the Portal along with supporting evidence no less than 5 working days before the FAB.

Posthumous Awards

- A posthumous award may be made at the discretion of the Final Awards Board provided that the request is supported by the next of kin of the learner. Written confirmation must be made available.
- There is no formal application, but appropriate information must be provided **at least 5 working days** prior to the FAB to allow the Committee to make an appropriate decision.

Awards through Extenuation

- Where extenuating circumstances have affected a learner's performance that falls outside the provider's normal processes, the provider must apply for an award through extenuation. The application and supporting information must be submitted via the Portal **at least 10 working days** before the FAB.

No later than 24 hours before the FAB date, Open Awards will send to the provider:

- Provider Overview
- and grading data summary
- Proposed risk rating indicators which will form part of Part I in the minutes. Please be aware that these proposals are subject to change (either increase or decrease) depending on the contents of FAB discussions and any representation received by the provider before the FAB.

What does the Final Awards Board do?

The Final Awards Board (FAB) is a formal meeting which must take place at the end of the Diploma course following all external moderation activity and is designed to:

- Approve the Award of Credit, grades and Access to HE Diplomas
- Consider cases of academic misconduct, extenuating circumstances and appeals.
- Ensure the provider's ongoing adherence to the QAA licensing criteria
- Confirm the provider's approval status with Open Awards for the next academic year.

The roles and responsibilities of the FAB Committee are outlined below:

Role	From	Summary of Key Responsibilities
Chair A senior member of the provider staff such as Access Coordinator, Curriculum or Quality Manager.	Provider	To chair the meeting in accordance with the Open Awards template agenda. To ensure that all relevant paperwork is available to the QASA, as required. To confirm the provider's ongoing adherence to the QAA licensing criteria. To sign the minutes as a true and accurate record.
Quality and Standards Advisor (QASA) The individual allocated to the provider by Open Awards for the delivery period.	Open Awards	To confirm approval of all awards of the Access to HE Diploma. To confirm the award of credit for any learners who do not fully meet the rules of combination for the award of the Diploma. To agree appropriate deadlines for referrals submitted to FAB. To lead discussions on the provider's profile held by Open Awards To confirm (or otherwise) the provider's status as an Open Awards Access to HE Diploma Provider for the next academic year. To sign the minutes as a true and accurate record.
AVA Representative A named member of Open Awards staff trained in the constitution and conduct of the FAB.	Open Awards	To ensure that providers are suitably prepared in advance of the FAB. To attend provider's pre-FABs as necessary. To confirm the meeting followed due process and was conducted fairly. To ensure that the minutes are a clear, complete and accurate representation of the FAB. To document decisions taken about particular learners and report internally immediately following the meeting. To sign the minutes as a true and accurate record.
Customer Services Representative A member of Open Awards staff with permissions to release and return DER submissions.	Open Awards	To check that all unit grades (DER submissions) have been submitted to Open Awards prior to the FAB. To ensure that all learners registered with Open Awards on course runs in scope (Section A2) are recorded in minutes. To release DER submissions back to the provider for them to amend any grades submitted inaccurately.

		To sign the minutes as a true and accurate record.
Scribe Possibly the examinations officer with responsibility for submitting the results via Markbook.	Provider	To take accurate minutes of the meeting on the Open Awards template in an electronic format. To ensure that all learners are accurately reported in the correct section of the minutes. To ensure that the minutes include a full and accurate record of all decisions agreed. To sign the minutes as a true and accurate record. To make the minutes available to Open Awards within 24 hours of the meeting.
Subject area Representative(s) Subject leader or internal quality assurer for the subject area. In some cases, it may be appropriate for both to attend. For smaller providers, this role may be undertaken by the Chair or Scribe.	Provider	To present fully completed documentation to support all awards and credits for which approval is being requested. To present fully completed documentation regarding extenuating circumstances. To answer any questions relating to the achievement of individual learners on the subject area To be present for the whole time that their subject area is under consideration. To resubmit amended grades where they have been submitted inaccurately.

The FAB follows a set agenda as outlined below:

Part A: Scope

- A1 Welcome, introductions, attendees and roles
- A2 Agree scope of the meeting
- A3 Declarations of any conflicts of Interest

Part B: On Course Referrals and Changes to Grades

- B1 On-Course Referrals
- B2 Confirmation of any learners whose grade has been amended through the external moderation process

Part C: Withdrawn Learners

- C1 Withdrawn with no credit
- C2 Learners withdrawn with partial achievement

Part D: Ongoing Learners

- D1 Referrals submitted to the FAB
- D2 Short Term Extensions
- D3 Continuing learners

Part E: Learners with Extenuating Circumstances

- E1 Aegrotat Awards
- E2 Posthumous Awards
- E3 Award Through Extenuation

Part F: Recommendations for the Award of Credit

- F1 Learners completing using approved Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Credit Transfer
- F2 Learners fully meeting the rules of combination

Part G: Misconduct and Appeals

- G1 Cases involving academic misconduct
- G2 Appeals

Part H: Confirmation of Awards

Part I: Ongoing Provider Status

Part J: Next Access to HE Compliance Review

Part K: Formal declaration

It is the scribe's responsibility to return a signed copy of the minutes to Open Awards **within 24 hours** of the Final Awards Board. Results cannot be processed until signed minutes have been received by Open Awards.

What happens after the FAB?

Signed minutes must be returned to Open Awards within 24 hours of the FAB taking place. Once signed minutes have been received by Open Awards, results agreed at FAB are processed. Where any issues arise, we will liaise with the individual named in Part J of the minutes. It is essential that the person named in Part J remains readily contactable until awarding is complete.

Progress towards the timely completion of actions agreed at the meeting will be monitored by Open Awards.

Where conditions have been placed on ongoing approval for Access to HE, Open Awards will work closely with the provider to ensure that they are completed in a timely manner.

Following completion of the Final Awards Board and submission of the minutes within 24 hours of the FAB, the results will be processed by the Open Awards Operations Team. Results will be processed initially within 48 hours. The named individual identified in Part J will be sent an email which will confirm the number of full and partial achievers following the FAB for all learner presented at the FAB and will also confirm details of each unit grade awarded.

As outlined in the email, the named individual will have 24 hours to review the reports and confirm they are correct. Where issues are identified we will work with the provider to resolve these in a timely manner.

Where issues or queries are identified in relation to particular learners or individual course runs, only these will be held, the remainder will be processed to avoid any delays to other learners.

Where confirmation is not received within 24 hours, results will be released and be prepared for submission to UCAS. Where issues are subsequently identified, these will be managed via the Amendment to Award of Credit process.

Results and Certification

Confirmed results will be released to providers no later than the deadline for results to be uploaded to UCAS (in 2025 this was on 22nd July). Providers should check with Open Awards when confirmed results will be released to them. Access to HE Administration contacts will receive an automated email when e-certificates are available to download.

Open Awards commitment

- We will release confirmed results to providers no later than the deadline for results to be uploaded to UCAS.
- We will confirm with each provider the exact date that confirmed results will be released to them.
- We will continue to issue results to roll-on/roll-off provision and other provision as usual.
- We will make available information about results (learner outcomes and grading data information) to QAA, upon request.
- We will ensure that information and communications are made available to our stakeholders on the arrangements associated with 'Results'

Provider commitments

- You must notify learners when confirmed results will be released by Open Awards.
- You must continue to collect grading data information and store such data in an accessible way.
- Presentation of results (learner outcomes and grading data information) should be made available to AVAs, or QAA, upon request.

Recording Results

Once a learner's assignment(s) for a unit has been assessed and an overall grade given for the unit, the grade should be recorded on the Open Awards Markbook via the Secure Portal, using the Direct Entry of Results system. Open Awards will remind you via a monthly email during the delivery period of results to be uploaded.

Results must be entered by a single portal account holder, per course run, to avoid duplication of grades. This is done via a single "Access to HE Inputter" account on the Open Awards Secure Portal. If you require any support with this, please contact the Customer Service Team.

Please note, once a portal account holder has begun entering results on a course run, only that named user/account should continue to enter results for that course run. All other portal users must not enter or amend results for that course run.

All Access to HE results as they are entered generate the Access to HE Markbook which provide an overview for the provider and for Open Awards of learner progress and performance so far. The Quality Team also use this Markbook information for compliance and moderation of grades. Results should not be fully and finally submitted until all relevant achievement for that learner is known. This is usually 2-5 days prior to the Final Awards Board and must be submitted 48 hours in advance of the Final Awards Board.

Results added to the Markbook can be amended for individual learners at any time prior to submission at the end of the year, for example if they have been entered incorrectly. Results will be added to a basket for the course until grades have been entered for all learners and for each unit they have achieved.

At the initial compliance review, Open Awards will obtain a copy of the scheme of work/delivery schedule for each Diploma being delivered. This will help us to know when to expect unit grades to be added to the Markbook for your courses.

Failure to upload grades to the Markbook in a timely manner will delay the timing of subject specialist moderation, increase your risk rating and may incur additional costs.

Amending Results on the Markbook

Results on the Markbook should be checked regularly for accuracy and can be corrected at any time throughout the duration of the course before submission. Changes to the award of credit post certification will incur a fee.

Processing Results Learner Checking

We recommend that you ask your learners to check their final results before submission using the 'Access to HE Results Confirmation' report found on the portal. This can be found with the reports section on the course run. You do not need to send copies of this signed confirmation to us, but you should store them for future reference should the learner contest their grades once certificated.

Submitting Your Results

Once all moderation has taken place and any required changes to results have been made via the portal, the person who has added results to the basket should immediately submit them in readiness for the Final Awards Board (FAB). This should be completed at least 48 hours prior to the Final Awards Board (FAB).

If you discover errors to the submitted results, you should contact the Open Awards customer service team immediately. You must also make the Subject Specialist Moderator aware of the error. See the [Secure Portal Guide](#) for information on submitting results.

The submitted results will be approved by the Quality and Standards Advisor at the Final Awards Board, or immediately after it has taken place. Once results have been approved, Open Awards will process the certificates within 10 working days of the FAB date, or sooner, as required by UCAS.

Processing of Results by Open Awards

Your results will be processed and certificates dispatched within 10 working days of the Final Awards Board. To ensure this service standard can be met, results must have been submitted before the Final Awards Board and minutes of the FAB must be received within 24 hours of the FAB.

Please ensure that there is someone available to deal with results queries from us during this time as you may be asked to resubmit results. This named person will be reflected on the Confirmation of Due Process completed by Open Awards during the FAB and they should have appropriate Portal, email and phone access.

The results processing stage includes the following steps:

1. Submitted results will be verified by the Quality and Standards Advisor
2. Results will be initially assessed. Completed and signed minutes must be received for this stage to begin.
3. Any queries will be raised regarding results with the Access to HE Coordinator, Administrator or nominated contact.
4. Any learners who cannot be processed due to outstanding queries will be held back. It is essential that this is avoided, and queries are resolved quickly with the provider.
5. Results will be processed for learners and awards reports generated
6. Award reports will be sent to and checked by providers who must confirm that results are correct. Please make sure that the contact (named at the FAB) is available to confirm these reports otherwise there may be a delay in your learner receiving their certificates. If confirmation is not received within 24 hours of the award reports being sent, the results will be taken as a true and accurate record and processed, including submission to UCAS
7. Open Awards will generate certificates. E certificates will be available immediately for providers to download and make available to learners via electronic means. Access to HE Administrators will receive an email when e-certificates are available to download. Hard copies (paper) certificates will be posted to the Access to HE Administrator or nominated contact by recorded delivery.
8. Results and achievement data submitted to UCAS by their required deadline
9. Access to HE Administrator or nominated contact confirms receipt of certificates using guidance provided on letter accompanying certificates.

Certification

Learner certificates will only be issued to you once:

- The Markbook has been fully completed, submitted and verified.
- Signed copies of the FAB minutes have been received.
- Award reports have been checked and verified by a named contact.
- Certificates have been checked by Open Awards.

Learners who have achieved the full Diploma will receive a Diploma qualification certificate and the unit transcript which may cover 2 pages. Learners who have not achieved the Diploma but have been awarded units will receive a unit transcript only. All your certificates will be issued to you together, except in cases of learners with outstanding queries i.e. extensions, referrals etc.

Certificates will be sent by post (Royal Mail Recorded - First Class), or APC Courier where large numbers of certificates are involved for delivery to the Access to HE Administrator unless we have been notified of alternative arrangements. They should be checked immediately and distributed securely to learners as soon as possible to avoid any issues with their university application.

E certificates will also be available to view and download for all learners. E-Certificates are not designed to be printed.

Providers must confirm receipt of printed certificates within 5 working days.

Open Awards will upload learner results to the UCAS portal prior to the deadline date provided by UCAS.

All Access to HE certificates (e-certificates and hard copies) have a unique Authentiqua (QR) codes embedded, scanning the QR code provides secure authentication of the certificate.

Certificate Reissues

Learners can request a copy of their certificate directly through [Open Awards website](#) or via their place of study. There is a certificate reissue details of which can be found in our pricing information. Universities and overseas validation agencies usually request an original certificate. A replacement certificate will be issued within 10 working days of receipt of all authenticated claims and payment. A charge will be made for each replacement certificate. Where possible the original certificate(s) must be returned to Open Awards before replacement can be issued.

Providers can request reissues via the Actions and Tracking screen of the Open Awards Secure Portal, selecting the “Request a Replacement Certificate” event.

Appeals

Procedures for appeals the standard procedures detailed in the QAA Grading Scheme Handbook Section C: Using the Grade Descriptors in Assessment and outlined in the Open Awards Enquiries and Appeals Policy and Procedures which is available via the Secure Portal. The grounds for appeal about the Award of Credits or grades on the Access to HE Diploma are restricted to cases where:

- There is evidence of administrative or procedural error
- There are extenuating circumstances that, for good reason, could not be notified prior to the Final Awards Board

Providers must ensure that all learners have information on and access to their appeal process. Learners are advised to follow the colleges internal appeals procedure to ensure that the provider has had opportunity to investigate the matter internally. Once a formal outcome has been communicated to the learner, and if they wish to continue the appeal, the learner is advised to formally write to Open Awards with their concerns. The matter will then be investigated in line with the Enquiries and Appeals Policy and Procedures.

Please note, suggested learner grades must be subjected to external moderation and are therefore not confirmed until Final Awards Board has taken place.

Ongoing Support

We have a dedicated Access to HE Support team here at Open Awards who are on hand to answer any questions you may have and point you in the right direction. We run termly support sessions with our Access to HE providers which includes support from your QASA and the Open Awards Customer Service team with the aim of checking in and supporting you on your Open Awards Access to HE journey. We also run bespoke sessions at relevant times of the academic year to focus on specific areas, such as registrations and destination data in September preparing for your Final Awards Board in May. You will also be invited to attend curriculum development sessions with the Open Awards' Access to HE Support team. A full timetable of training and booking links can be found on the [Open Awards website](#).

Provider Withdrawal/ Closure

If you wish to withdraw from Open Awards recognised provider status or have ceased trading, Open Awards must be notified. This must be done via the Open Awards Secure Portal, and the “Actions” and “Tracking screen selecting the “Withdraw as an Open Awards Provider” event.

A full guide on how to complete this can be found under the “Documents and Forms” section of the Open Awards Secure Portal in “Provider Guidance - Withdrawing as an Open Awards Provider”

You may be required to participate in a closing visit to ensure that quality assurance requirements have been met.

You will be asked to ensure that:

- Any outstanding claims for learners with unit/qualification achievement are submitted and externally quality assured by your Quality and Standards Adviser/External Quality Assurer
- Your provider’s recognition certificate is returned to Open Awards
- Any Open Awards certificates you have been unable to issue to learners are destroyed or returned to Open Awards
- All outstanding invoices are paid
- Our logos and/or references to being an Open Awards provider are removed from your website, social media platforms and all resources.

Open Awards reserves the right to close a provider if:

- A provider fails to pay monies owing to Open Awards within the standard payment period outlined in our Invoicing Policy
- The provider does not adhere to clauses in the Provider Agreement and/ or associated guidance.

© Copyright Open Awards 2026.

All rights reserved. Permission is granted to reproduce for personal and educational use only. Commercial copying, hiring or lending is prohibited.

Open Awards

17 De Havilland Drive,
Estuary Commerce Park
Speke
Liverpool
L24 8N

0151 494 2072

enquiries@openawards.org.uk

www.openawards.org.uk

@openawards