Access to Higher Education Unit

This unit forms part of an Access to HE Diploma. If delivering the graded version of this unit, please refer to the Provider Handbook for details on grading descriptors and the application of these across units within your programme.

Unit Title: Academic Research Project

Graded Unit Reference Number: GA36REA01

Ungraded Unit Reference Number: N/A

Module: All mandatory modules per Diploma qualification

Level: Three [3]

Credit Value: Six [6]

Minimum Guided Learning Hours: 60

Units barred for selection against this unit:

- **Study Skills: Access Research Project (UD36DEV38)**

Learning Outcome (The Learner will):	Assessment Criterion (The Learner can):
1. Understand how to select, plan and structure research activity	1.1 Select a research topic
	1.2 Devise a rationale for the choice of research project
	1.3 Construct a research question or hypothesis
	1.4 Prepare and use an action plan to time manage the project
2. Understand how to collect research data or sources	2.1 Justify the chosen research method used for the project
	2.2 Explain the ethical considerations when undertaking a project
	2.3 Collect or select quantitative and/or qualitative data or sources, as appropriate, to the chosen research project with consideration to ethical and data protection laws

Learning Outcome (The Learner will):		Assessment Criterion (The Learner can):	
3.	Be able to analyse data or sources to produce an academic report or extended essay	3.1	Write an analytical report or extended essay using language and style consistent with academic criteria
		3.2	Draw conclusions from analysis of data or sources
		3.3	Use a recognised referencing system to write a reference list/bibliography and reference the text
4.	Be able to evaluate a research project	4.1	Reflect on the research process undertaken
		4.2	Evaluate the final project and its conclusions

Indicative Content

Learners could cover the following:

(The information below is provided for guidance only and is not mandatory)

LO1

AC1.1

Select a research topic

- Characteristics of an appropriate research topic (scope, feasibility, relevance to Diploma pathway).
- Aligning topic choice with progression aims (e.g., health, science, social sciences, humanities).
- Identifying gaps or areas of personal/ academic interest.
- Avoiding topics that are too broad, vague, or ethically problematic.
- Techniques for narrowing the focus of a topic.
- Initial exploratory reading to determine viability.

AC1.2

Devise a rationale for the choice of research project

- Purpose of a rationale: explaining relevance, feasibility, and academic value.
- Justifying topic choice using background reading or contextual information.
- Linking the topic to personal, academic or professional aims.
- Demonstrating relevance to current debates, theories or real-world issues.
- Considering limitations or challenges at the proposal stage.

AC1.3

Construct a research question or hypothesis

- Differences between research questions and hypotheses (qualitative vs quantitative focus).
- Characteristics of effective research questions (clarity, specificity, focus, complexity).
- Operationalising concepts: turning themes into measurable or investigable components.
- Ensuring alignment between the question/ hypothesis and intended methods.
- Using preliminary research to refine or adjust questions.

AC1.4

	Prepare and use an action plan to time manage the project • Purpose and role of action planning in research. Components of effective research action plans (tasks, timescales, milestones, resources). • Methods of planning (Gantt charts, timelines, digital tools, working logs). • Identifying risks and contingency planning. • Reviewing and updating plans during the research process.
LO2	AC2.1 **Justify the chosen research method used for the project** • Overview of research methodology (qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods). • Key methods: literature review, surveys, interviews, observations, textual/secondary data analysis. • Strengths and limitations of different methods. • Choosing methods that directly address the research question or hypothesis. • Feasibility within Level 3 constraints (ethics, time, scope). • Demonstrating methodological alignment with subject area conventions. AC2.2 **Explain the ethical considerations when undertaking a project** • Principles of research ethics (informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, respect). • Responsibilities of the researcher working with human participants. • Avoiding harm, coercion, deception. • Ethical issues relevant to secondary research (copyright, permission, sensitive material). • Data protection principles (e.g., UK GDPR basics) at an appropriate Level 3 standard. • Safe storage and disposal of data. • Institutional/ organisational ethical guidelines. AC2.3 **Collect or select quantitative and/or qualitative data or sources, as appropriate** • Identifying and accessing relevant primary or secondary sources. • Approaches to gathering qualitative data (interviews, thematic documents, observational notes). • Approaches to gathering quantitative data (surveys, structured data sets, numerical indicators). • Using academic sources (peer-reviewed articles, textbooks, reports). • Evaluating the credibility of sources (authorship, reliability, currency, bias). • Practical data-collection skills: designing tools, recording data, organising information. • Ethical and legal compliance during data collection.
LO3	AC3.1 **Write an analytical report or extended essay using language and style consistent with academic criteria** • Structure of academic reports or extended essays (introduction, methodology, analysis, conclusion). • Academic writing conventions: clarity, formality, objectivity, precision. • Using evidence effectively (quotations, paraphrasing, synthesis). • Paragraph structure (topic sentences, development, linking). • Integrating data within discussion (tables, graphs, thematic extracts). • Effective use of academic voice, avoiding informal or descriptive writing.

	• Drafting, editing and proofreading to improve accuracy and coherence. AC3.2 **Draw conclusions from analysis of data or sources** • Distinguishing between findings, analysis and conclusions. • Summarising key insights clearly and logically. • Linking conclusions directly to research questions/ hypotheses. • Recognising limitations of findings. • Considering implications for theory, practice or further study. • Avoiding overgeneralisation. AC3.3 **Use a recognised referencing system to write a reference list/ bibliography and reference the text** • Purpose of referencing in academic work. • In-text citation and reference list conventions. • How to cite different types of sources (books, journals, websites, reports, legislation). • Paraphrasing and quoting responsibly to avoid plagiarism. • Use of reference management or digital tools. • Checking referencing accuracy and consistency.
LO4	AC4.1 **Reflect on the research process undertaken** • Role of reflection in academic and professional development. • Reflective models (e.g., Gibbs, Schön) appropriate to Level 3. • Strengths and weaknesses of the research approach used. • Reflection on methodological choices, time management, ethical decisions and personal development. • Challenges faced and how they were addressed. • Skills gained and areas for improvement for future study. AC4.2 **Evaluate the final project and its conclusions** • Assessing the quality, validity and reliability of findings (appropriate to Level 3). • Evaluating the effectiveness of the research question/ hypothesis. • Identifying limitations (sample size, method constraints, bias). • Considering alternative methods or interpretations. • Demonstrating how well evidence supports conclusions. • Impact and relevance of the project outcomes for academic or professional contexts.