



**QAA**



## **Grading the Access to HE Diploma: consultation response form**

This response form can be accessed and downloaded from the QAA website:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/news/consultation](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/news/consultation)

Please complete pages 23-33 to ensure all sections are completed in full.

Responses may be completed and returned by email attachment to:  
**[access@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:access@qaa.ac.uk)**

or by post to:

**Access to HE consultation  
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education  
Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB**

Please return all responses by **Monday 2 July 2007**.

# Responding to the consultation

## The response form

The response form reflects the sections and order of the proposals and provides the opportunity to comment on the individual features of each of the proposals. The form also provides a section for any general comments. Respondents are invited to comment on areas which they consider need further clarification or development; the extent and nature of any specific difficulties that they perceive in implementing the proposals, and ways they would suggest of overcoming those difficulties. In particular, where respondents identify a need for further detail to be prescribed, it will be helpful to QAA to receive views about whether such details should be a matter of regulation or of guidance, and whether this should be provided centrally (by QAA) or locally, by AVAs or providers.

Finally, respondents are invited to express a view about which model they consider to be preferable as the basis for the common grading system for the Access to HE Diploma. While QAA expects to develop further whichever of the models is ultimately adopted, developments will have to be considered with reference to the coherence of the model as a whole. A hybrid version, which attempts simply to pick the 'best bits' of each model, is unlikely to be workable because, although there are some common proposals, the two models are based on different approaches to the process of differentiation.

As well as considering the proposals themselves, respondents may also wish to refer to the Introduction to the proposals (see pages 1-7, above) which include the factors that led QAA to recommend the introduction of grading and the Principles for a system of grading the Access to HE Diploma agreed at the beginning of the development process.

## Responses

- i Please provide responses to the proposals under the headings given. These headings are used to summarise the main features of each of the proposals within each section of the consultation document.
- ii For each of these main features, please indicate one of four responses:
  - a **agree** with proposal
  - b **some reservations** about the proposal
  - c **substantial reservations** about the proposal
  - d **disagree** with the proposal.
- iii Please provide comments in the relevant comments box to explain your response, particularly if you have reservations about, or disagree with, the proposal.
- iv Comments about matters covered in the text of the consultation document, which are not explicitly mentioned in the summary of points which follow, may also be included in the appropriate 'Comments' box. This might include observations about whether additional requirements should be made centrally (by QAA) or by individual AVAs at regional or local level.

## Section A: proposals which are common to both models

1	A common grading system	a*	b*	c*	d*
1.1	A common grading scale will be used on all Access to HE courses and awarded for all Access to HE Diplomas.	√			
1.2	Details of the grading system will be published by QAA, as part of the Recognition Scheme.	√			
<p><b>*Comments</b> (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b>, <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)</p>					

2	The grading scale	a*	b*	c*	d*
2.1	The grading scale will use three grades: 'pass', 'merit' and 'distinction'.				✓
2.2	Only those three grades can be awarded.				✓
2.3	The grades have no numerical equivalents.				✓
<p><b>*Comments</b> (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b>, <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)</p> <p>For students applying for the most competitive courses where all applicants are likely to be achieving distinctions, further differentiation is required. An understanding of this is evident in the recent discussions surrounding the proposed A* at A' level</p> <p>Furthermore, numeric grading allows students who consistently perform within one grade band to identify more subtle levels of progression.</p>					

<b>3 Academic standards</b>	<b>a*</b>	<b>b*</b>	<b>c*</b>	<b>d*</b>
3.1 The grades relate to differentiated achievement within Level 3.	✓			
3.2 The standard of performance required for a 'pass' grade on the Access to HE Diploma is the same as the minimum required for the Access to HE certificate.		✓		
*Comments (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b> , <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)				

<b>4 Grade descriptors</b>	<b>a*</b>	<b>b*</b>	<b>c*</b>	<b>d*</b>
4.1 A common set of generic grade descriptors is used as the key reference point for all grading decisions.	✓			
4.2 Each grade descriptor comprises a series of statements to describe typical performance at the grade. Grades are awarded on the basis of a 'best fit' evaluation of the standard of performance demonstrated in the evidence of achievement.	✓			
4.3 Grade descriptors would be derived from the Level 3 descriptor.	✓			
*Comments (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b> , <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)				

<b>5</b>	<b>Student achievement to be graded</b>	<b>a*</b>	<b>b*</b>	<b>c*</b>	<b>d*</b>
5.1	Grades are awarded for achievement on Level 3 units which are specified in the rules of combination for the achievement of any Access to HE Diploma.	✓			
5.2	Formally recorded grades relate only to this material. Achievement which leads to the award of credit through APL is not graded.	✓			
*Comments (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b> , <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)					

<b>6</b>	<b>Assessment and moderation</b>	<b>a*</b>	<b>b*</b>	<b>c*</b>	<b>d*</b>
6.1	Students are informed about grading requirements at the start of the course.	✓			
6.2	Common assessment regulations will be developed and will apply to all courses.	✓			
6.3	The award of grades is subject to internal and external moderation.	✓			
6.4	Moderation of grades takes place at the same time as other moderation.	✓			
6.5	Standardisation procedures will be necessary.	✓			
*Comments (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b> , <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)					

## Section B: proposals for unit grading (grade profile)

7	Grades and credits	a*	b*	c*	d*
7.1	The award of grades is additional to the award of credit.	✓			
7.2	Achievement on units is graded: credits are not graded.	✓			
7.3	The number of grades awarded depends on the number of units.	✓			
<p><b>*Comments</b> (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b>, <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)</p> <p>Guidance on maximum recommended credits per unit will be required to ensure consistency.</p>					

8	Grades for units	a*	b*	c*	d*
8.1	Achievement on Level 3 units is graded: Level 2 units are not graded.				✓
8.2	One grade is awarded for each Level 3 unit.			✓	
8.3	Formative feedback for units including more than one piece of assessed evidence may use the same grades, but formative grades have no formal status.		✓		
8.4	The general principle to be applied for units with several constituent parts is that grades should indicate performance on the majority of assessed evidence of achievement for the unit.		✓		
<p><b>*Comments</b> (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b>, <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)</p> <p>All Levels should be graded, for the learners benefit.</p>					

9 Recording grades	a*	b*	c*	d*
9.1 Grades are shown on a grade profile, which is presented on the credit transcript.	✓			
9.2 No overall grade is provided.				✓
*Comments (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b> , <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)				

10 Uses of grade profiles	a*	b*	c*	d*
10.1 Grades on grade profiles reflect the pattern of study (which may include grades for units of different sizes), and may indicate a student's pattern of achievement or development.	✓			
10.2 Provisional grades on completed units may be included in applications, but, in most cases, confirmed grades are not likely to be available.	✓			
*Comments (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b> , <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)				

## Section C: proposals for portfolio grading

11	Portfolios and holistic assessment	a*	b*	c*	d*
11.1	A single grade is awarded for the portfolio, representing a summation of the standard of performance across the course as a whole.				✓
11.2	The single portfolio grade is included as a separate item on the credit transcript.				✓
<p><b>*Comments</b> (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b>, <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)</p> <p>Whilst a portfolio may be a useful piece of evidence for the moderation of an overall grade for the course – it should not be an individually assessed piece of work.</p>					

12	The content of the portfolio	a*	b*	c*	d*
12.1	The portfolio includes evidence of achievement from all Level 3 units, as specified in the rules of combination for the award of 45 credits at Level 3.	✓			
12.2	The portfolio includes evidence of achievement in a range of subject areas and assessed by a range of modes of assessment.	✓			
<p><b>*Comments</b> (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b>, <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)</p>					

13 The assessment of portfolios	a*	b*	c*	d*
13.1 Assessment relating to the standard of performance is undertaken at the same time as assessment for the award of credit, and qualitative feedback is provided, but no grades are awarded for individual pieces of work or units.				✓
13.2 A nominated member of staff makes a provisional grade recommendation for the complete portfolio, based on a review of the portfolio, including sampling of assessed evidence of achievement and consideration of course tutors' commentaries.				✓
13.3 The course team consider provisional recommendations and confirm a team recommendation for the award of a single grade for each portfolio at a formal meeting.				✓
13.4 Portfolios which do not meet the credit requirements for the award of the Diploma are not considered for grades.				✓
<p><b>Comments</b> (In particular, please indicate reasons for <b>b</b>, <b>c</b> and <b>d</b> responses.)</p> <p>See previous answer</p>				

**14 Having considered both models and the implications for the implementation of each, which do you consider the preferable model for grading the Access to HE Diploma?**

Unit grading  or Portfolio grading

**15 Any further comments**

**Please leave this page blank.**

**Please complete Section A or B or C.**

**Section A**

I submit this response **on behalf of** (please insert name of organisation below)

	please indicate (eg ✓)
<b>AVA</b>	
<b>FE college</b>	
<b>HE institution</b>	
<b>Other type of organisation (please specify)</b> -----	

**Section B**

I submit this response **as an individual**, with a professional role within

	please indicate (eg ✓)	role and organisation
<b>AVA</b>		
<b>FE college</b>		
<b>HE institution</b>		
<b>Other (please specify role and type of organisation)</b>		

**Section C**

I submit this response as

	please indicate (eg ✓)
<b>a current Access to HE student</b>	
<b>a former Access to HE student</b>	

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_ (Please return to QAA by **Monday 2 July 2007**)