ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION DIPLOMA

Student Handbook

2016-17
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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

This student handbook covers all Access to HE Diploma structures offered by DLC and further information is available on our website at http://www.distancelearningcentre.com/courses.php

To make this handbook easier to use and up to date we have now included relevant links to the web pages within the handbook and all you have to do is click on these links.

1.1 What is the Distance Learning Centre?

http://www.distancelearningcentre.com/about_DLC.php

1.2 What is an Access to Higher Education Diploma?

http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/home/publications/caseStudies/studentguide.pdf

The Access to HE Diploma is a nationally recognised qualification which is accredited by Ascentis awarding organisation (http://www.ascentis.co.uk/), registered in England and Wales No. 6799564. Ascentis is our awarding body and is regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Ascentis was formerly the Open College of the North West (OCNW) and was founded in 1975. Ascentis was the first Open College to develop in the UK and operates a wide range of provision for post-16 students and has been recognised as an Access Validating Agency (AVA) by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) since 1990 and as a National Awarding Body since 2001.

The Access to HE Diploma is a nationally recognised level 3 qualification with common requirements relating to the description of student achievement. The Diploma is a credit-based, graded qualification and requirements relate to both the award of credit and to the award of grades. Details of the credit framework and requirements relating to the award of credit, along with the general specifications for the qualification, can be found in the QAA Publication: The Access to Higher Education Diploma Specification 2013.

Individual named Diplomas are identified by separate titles and are validated at local level by Access Validating Agencies (AVAs). Each Access to HE Diploma has its own approved set of Units of assessment, governed by rules of combination which are appropriate to the subject of the particular Diploma. The common grading requirements apply to all individual Access to HE Diplomas.

All Access to HE Diplomas have the following features:

- Consist of 60 credits (you cannot be registered on more than 60 credits)
- Include 15 ungraded credits and 45 graded credits (only Level 3 Units can be graded)
- Can include up to 6 credits at Level 2, all of which are ungraded
- 45 credits must be derived from Level 3 Units which are graded and concerned with academic subject content
- 15 credits are derived from ungraded Units at Level 2 or Level 3.

If you do not wish to study a full Access to HE Diploma or do not complete a full Access to HE Diploma course you can still be accredited for the Units of study you do complete and pass. You will receive an official transcript of results for the Units you complete and pass from Ascentis. The Access to HE Diploma would need to be completed within a maximum period of five years owing to its period of validation. The DLC Access to HE programme offers flexibility within this five year time frame and you can choose a range of delivery modes from fast track...
(less than one academic year) to part time (more than one academic year and up to five years).

Access to HE Diplomas validated by Ascentis provides you with a Level 3 qualification that is recognised by a number of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) throughout the country. The Access to HE Diplomas, Subject Sets and Units are designed to offer non-traditional students a good grounding in academic knowledge and study skills to prepare them for Higher Education study.

This handbook provides details of the Access to HE Diplomas and Units offered by the Distance Learning Centre (DLC).

The Access to HE Diplomas offered by the DLC are for individuals who require a Level 3 qualification in order to apply to Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to study social sciences, law, childhood studies, business, sport, social work, health and social care, science, public services, health related courses including midwifery or nursing degrees, or enter teacher training*. The Access to HE Diplomas available are shown on the DLC website on the left hand side, under titles such as Biomedical Science, Nursing, Midwifery, Health Professions, Law and Teaching etc. This means that on successful completion of 60 credits you will receive an Access to HE Diploma with the title Access to Higher Education Diploma (your pathway).

It is recommended that before you register for an Access to HE Diploma you should check the entry requirements of your chosen HEI and degree programme.

*You are required to have GCSEs at grade C or above in English, Maths and a Science, as well as an Access to HE Diploma course and a DBS check to gain entry onto a primary teaching degree.

1.3 How are the courses organised?

a. Course structure

The Access to HE Diploma courses are comprised of Subject Sets and Units that are relevant to the degree you are aiming for. Each Access to HE Diploma is split into a number of Units that are taught through a series of learning materials (course material topics). The course material topics include Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) and activities. Each Unit is then formally assessed by the completion of the Tutor Assessed Questions (TAQs) which form a formal assessment.

Ascentis Access to HE Diplomas consist of mandatory Level 3 Subject Sets. The Subject Sets that can be included in any Diploma are given in the Rules of Combination. Students must complete a minimum of 2 Subject Sets and up to a maximum of 4.

Mandatory Elements

A Subject Set has three mandatory elements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Introductory Unit</th>
<th>Research Unit focused on the planning process (3 credits)</th>
<th>Research Unit focused on the execution process (3 credits)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 credits (ungraded)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 credits (graded)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In any Access to HE Diploma students are required to do both research Units in at least one subject. In the other subjects just one research Unit can be selected.

In most Access to HE Diplomas students are required to be assessed in at least two examined Units by formal examination, however, there is the option to use an alternative type of assessment for a third or fourth Subject Set. The alternative assessment task is provided by Ascentis to ensure consistency of challenge with the examination.

In addition to the mandatory elements an Access to HE Diploma can be made up of a combination of the following (always ensuring rules of combination are met and that consideration is given to any requirement for a learner to have prior knowledge and skills in order to successfully study an optional Unit):

- Any Level 3 introductory Unit can be included in any Diploma
- Any Level 2 Unit can be included in any Diploma
- Any ungraded Level 3 Unit can be included in any Diploma
- Any optional Unit within a Diploma can be included even if the mandatory Subject Set has not been taken

b. What choice is available?

Whichever pathway you choose there are two essential Units:

(1) Study Skills
(2) Research

The Study Skills and Research Units are assessed at Level 3. Some pathways include English and Mathematics that are assessed at Level 2. This is the same level as a GCSE grade C. However, the English and Mathematics are not recognised as GCSE equivalences.

Therefore, if your university requires you to achieve GCSEs you will need to study a separate course (GCSEs). The fees page explains the costs if you would like to study a GCSE through the DLC.

c. Tutors

Each learner enrolling with the DLC is allocated a personal tutor who can be contacted by telephone, Skype and email. Times for telephoning are mutually arranged between both you and your tutor, and can be either weekly or at longer intervals depending upon the support you require. Your tutor is a professional teacher and an expert in their subject who will be very happy to offer you whatever support you need.

You will be allocated your tutor once you have completed the application and enrolment processes. Your tutor will personally contact you when your first course fee payment has been received by the DLC on your Course Start Date.

Your personal tutor is there to be a pastoral and academic support during your Access to HE Diploma, and it is their responsibility to help you with any course related issues that you may encounter. You
d. Course Materials

The course materials are prepared by the DLC and are designed to enable you to study at a Level 3 standard, although some specialist Units may require you to purchase a specific text book such as a simple statistics book. We would recommend that you also consider investing in one of the general text books in the subjects you have chosen, these are available at most good book shops or online. Suggested titles will be given to you in the Unit’s essential and recommended reading, and by your tutor.

In the course materials there are SAQs (Self-Assessment Questions) so you can check your knowledge and understanding. The answers are at the back of the topics (please see the example of a Unit). Once you have worked through the course materials and answered your SAQs you will need to:

1. Download the **SAQ answer sheet** from the materials page  
2. Answer your SAQs in own words for each topic and mark your answers using the Answers to SAQs at the end of the topic  
3. Log into your Learner Account and upload into ‘my ILPs and SAQs’  
4. E-mail your tutor when you have done this.  
5. Your tutor will check your answers and sends you the password for the assessments.

Finally, there are **TAQs** (Tutor Assessed Questions – which is the Unit assessment) these can be downloaded when your tutor gives you the assessment password. The answers to the TAQ’s should be uploaded on to **my account hub** for your tutor to mark and comment upon. You will also need to email your tutor to inform them that you have uploaded your assessment; and in some instances you may also be required to post your completed assessment. The hard copy of your submitted assessment will be retained by the DLC for external moderation so always keep a copy of your assessment/work.

e. Course Assessments

You are required to complete both Tutor-Assessed Questions (TAQs) and Tutor-Observed Assessments (TOAs) as evidence of learning. These are used by the DLC and the External Moderators to assess that you, and only you, have completed the Unit at a level of understanding that is compatible with the assessment criteria laid out by Ascentis at Level 2 or Level 3. If your work is of an acceptable standard you will be recommended to be awarded the credits for that Unit.

**All recommendations have to be verified by the External Moderator who is employed by Ascentis.**

All assessments and course materials are available by logging on to your Learner Account. Learner Account also keeps track of your payments and is a repository for all your learner information.

f. Progressing from one subject specialist tutor to another

Once you have completed the Units associated with a specific tutor and s/he has received your final assessment, being satisfied that there is a strong likelihood that you will pass it, you will then be allocated a new tutor. Your present tutor will give you the contact details of your next tutor.

g. What happens if there are changes in my circumstances and I cannot complete the course, but still want accreditation for what I have achieved?

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Updated: 13/05/15; 05/06/15 14/09/15 29/06/16 18/01/17
If you are unable to complete your Access to HE Diploma course then you will still receive an official transcript of results from Ascentis for the Units and credits you have completed and passed. Please do note that you will still be required to pay the moderation fees for the official transcript from Ascentis. Alternatively, you can request a DLC certificate for the Units and credits you have completed and passed. A DLC certificate is free of charge.
2. THE COURSES

Please follow the link to see all our courses

http://www.distancelearningcentre.com/courses.php

3. ASSESSMENT ON THE COURSE

Each Unit will be assessed either by Tutor-Assessed Questions (TAQs) or Tutor-Observed Assessments (TOAs).

You will receive recommendations of grades for each Unit when the submitted assessment work has met the assessment criteria. Each Unit is not complete until you have submitted and passed your assessment/coursework and you cannot be moved on to a new subject tutor until you have submitted your completed assessment/coursework. You and your tutor will individually negotiate the length of time allocated to each Unit with reference to your course pathway and your tutor will assign you assessment deadlines. The deadlines to work from is generally: 2 weeks for a three credit unit and 4 weeks for a 6 credit unit.

3.1 Submitting your assessments

On completion of each Unit assessment (TAQs) you must complete the assessment’s front sheet. No assessment will be accepted for final marking without a completed front sheet.

You should save your completed assessment (TAQs) as one document with a file name that is the same as the Unit you have completed e.g. Study Skills assessment. The front sheet can be uploaded separately to the rest of your assessment (TAQs) and should be similarly labelled e.g. Study Skills front sheet.

You should both upload a completed assessment, along with your completed front sheet, to your Learner Account and email them to your tutor for marking.

A very small number of assessments may have to be completed by hand, such as Level 2 Mathematics. In this case you will be required to send your work to your tutor by post in a folder or plastic wallet. Please do not use a plastic wallet for each piece of paper as it is time consuming for both you and your tutor.

a) Help with your work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Level 2</strong> (ungraded)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diploma:</strong> English, Mathematics (6 credits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Progression Awards:</strong> English, Mathematics, Science (min 3 credits, max 45 credits)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is expected that at this stage of the course learners may need a considerable amount of help from their tutor. It is therefore acceptable that each assessment may need to be worked on with tutorial help. There are no strict limits on the number of submissions for assessments at Level 2.

Level 2s in Maths, English and the Progression Awards will be assessed as **achieved** only.

Achieved will be awarded as long as learners have fulfilled all of the assessment criteria as shown on the front sheet that accompanies the assessment.
### Level 3 (ungraded)

Study Skills and Subject Introductory Units (min 9 credits, max 15 credits)

These are all assessed at Level 3 but are graded as **achieved** only. However, you will be given detailed feedback that will help you to achieve Merit and Distinction grades in your graded Level 3 Units.

### Level 3 (graded)

Subject Graded Units, including Research and Examined Units (45 credits)

When a learner submits an assessment to his/her tutor the assessment will be marked according to the assessment criteria for a Pass.

**If it achieves a Pass it will also be graded. The grades awarded are Pass, Merit and Distinction.**

If the work does not meet all of the assessment criteria you will be asked to resubmit. The work will not be graded at this point.

Learners will then have 1 further chance to resubmit their assessment to achieve a grade for the Unit.

**Once the assessment has been graded learners cannot resubmit their work in order to achieve a higher grade.**

If the re-submission still does not meet the assessment criteria for a Pass grade, then it is possible for your tutor to recommend that you should be permitted a second resubmission opportunity.

The Curriculum Leader along with the Quality Manager will review the evidence submitted by your tutor and, if in agreement, the evidence will then be forwarded to Ascentis's Quality Manager and Lead External Moderator who will decide whether you will be allowed a second resubmission. On the second re-submission the grade of the assessment will be **capped at a Pass grade only**. If the external moderator decides that you are not allowed to complete a further resubmission it means that you have failed the Unit and the Access to HE Diploma. However, you will of course be able to be certificated for any other Units you have achieved.

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### Important point:

The grading criteria for a Merit or a Distinction expects you to show independent learning.

Using the ‘Stretch and Challenge’ and ‘Recommended Further Reading’ in the learning materials, as well as some of your own research, will help you to achieve this.

Asking your tutor for some help, support and guidance during your assessment will not mean that you cannot achieve Merits and Distinctions.

If your tutor feels you are asking for extensive help, they will warn you that this may impact on your grading before giving it. Therefore you should always ask for help, support and guidance if and when you need it.
Grades are important when providing feedback to you about your performance and progress during the course, and for providing information to others at the end of the course (e.g. as an indicator of your standard of achievement). However, grading is one aspect of the assessment process and grades are part of the feedback we give to you.

We do provide you with much more detailed feedback and comments on your strengths and the progress you have made throughout the course as well as indicating specific areas for improvement. This detailed feedback will allow you to focus on the areas of improvement and you should try to use it to improve your grades in future assessments.

b) Using quotations in your work

Although we cannot put a rule in place that says how much of an essay should be made up of quotes, the general rules are that the quotation should:

1. Aid the argument
2. Support a theory
3. Be something that could not be paraphrased, or would lose its emphasis if it was paraphrased

A quotation should fit into the argument and not be a separate entity, and as a result short quotations should be used more often than larger ones (those over 35 words).

We do not expect to see large quotations being used more than 2 or 3 times in a 1500 word essay. Therefore you should cut out information that is not relevant in the quotation. Do this by editing it using an ellipsis (...). This allows you to demonstrate the logical development of your essay, the application of your knowledge and your ability to structure work appropriately.

It is important that you understand that tutors do count quotations as part of the word count, but will not award any credit for the content unless you have demonstrated, through analysis of the quotation, that you understand it.

Important point:

You should use quotes as a springboard or a backup for your own evaluation and analysis. It is this that should make up the large proportion of your work – not the quotes themselves. Using quotes in this way shows that you have understood them and are demonstrating that knowledge effectively.

c) Examined units

The examined units are assessed both by an half an hour unseen examination on at least one of the assessment criterion for the unit and, by an internally marked assessment. The examination will be invigilated by your tutor using Skype. When you are given the assessment codes for the examined unit you will also have access to the examination guide for this unit which explains how to revise for your examination, the assessment criteria you will be examined on and how the exam is set up. The exam is made up of at least one short answer question and is graded along with the rest of the assessment for the examined unit.
d) Extenuating circumstances, examinations and tutor observed assessments

- If you are unable to meet your initial deadline or your Level 3 assessment does not meet the assessment criteria and your work is referred then your tutor will give you a date for the re/submission of your work.
- If you are unable to comply with this date you must ask your tutor for an extension.
- If you do not ask for an extension and your work is late then you will need to complete an extenuating circumstances form. A copy of this is found on the policies page.
- If you do not ask for an extension, or you have not filled out an extenuating circumstances form, then the highest grade you can achieve at this point is a Pass.

Up to date information on the rules for extenuating circumstances and information on the examinations is shown in the link above.

e) Grading and grade descriptors

There are seven grade descriptors that are the basis of grading decisions on Access to HE Diplomas.

In order to meet the purposes of a common grading system, grades awarded on all Access to HE Diploma are:

- Fair and equitable
- Clear and transparent
- Reliable and valid
- Consistent

The Unit grades have no numerical equivalents. They are not converted from or translated into numerical marks.

Not all of the grade descriptors are used for every Unit. Appropriate selections of grade descriptors are assigned to the Unit when it is validated. The DLC has therefore not decided which grade descriptors to attach to each Unit. All colleges who work with Ascentis use the same grade descriptors.

The decision about which grade descriptors should be assigned to the Unit takes into account the aspects of performance that are relevant to the individual Unit. In this way, the rules of combination that identify the particular set of Units, which comprises each Access to HE Diploma, will also through the overall balance of grade descriptors assigned to the specific Units, reflect the broad types of performance that may be particularly valued or emphasised in the subject which is the focus of the Access to HE Diploma.
4. SUBMISSION OF LEARNER’S WORK FOR FORMAL ASSESSMENT

1. As a provider of Access to HE Diplomas the DLC must, according to the QAA guidelines, operate a formal approach to the submission of learner’s work for assessment.

2. The DLC approach will be consistent across all its Access HE Diplomas and all DLC tutors will be implementing and acting in accordance with this approach and the AVA’s regulations.

3. All tutors will provide details in writing to all learners of any particular requirements that relate to the submission of individual Unit assessments. These details will be found on the Unit assessment brief.

4. All tutors will set deadlines for all Unit assessments to be submitted for formal assessment based on a learner’s Individual Learning Plan (ILP).

5. The dates of issuance and deadline for each Unit assessment will be recorded on the learner’s DLC account.

6. When the learner submits a Unit assessment to his/her tutor, the tutor will note the date the assessment was issued and the deadline date for the Unit assessment on the Unit assessment mark sheet from the notes section of the learner’s DLC account.

7. All students must submit a “Turnitin” report along with their formal submissions

8. There is a formal procedure for the application of an extension to a Unit assessment deadline this is: the day before (excluding weekends) the submission of a Unit assessment is due, if the learner determines that he/she cannot meet the set deadline the learner must contact their tutor via email requesting a formal extension for a Unit assessment and the reasons for the extension.

9. The tutor will consider the reasons for the extension request and will if he/she deems appropriate negotiate a new deadline date with the learner for the Unit assessment.

10. If the learner does not ask for an extension because extenuating circumstances have made it difficult to do so, then the learner must complete and submit an extenuating circumstances form.

11. Failure of the learner to submit an extenuating circumstances form will result in the learner attaining a pass grade as the highest possible grade for all grade descriptors assigned to the Unit assessment, and hence the learner will only attain an overall pass grade for the Unit assessment.

12. Once a learner has formally submitted his/her completed assessment neither the learner nor the tutor may at any later date declare it to be a draft assessment.

13. If the deadline date for a Unit assessment falls within a holiday period (whether this is an official DLC closure or tutor annual leave) the learner is still expected to adhere to the issued Unit assessment deadline by uploading his/her completed work to their DLC account on the agreed deadline date as well as emailing his/her tutor to inform them that they have uploaded the assessment and posting a hard copy of the assessment if this is required.

14. If the deadline date for a Unit assessment falls within a holiday period (whether this is an official DLC closure or tutor annual leave) and the learner requires an extension to a Unit assessment deadline the learner is still expected to follow the procedure for requesting an official extension as described above in point 7. The only difference being that the tutor will respond to the Unit assessment extension request on the first day of their return from holiday if it is a DLC closure, or if it is during tutor annual leave or illness, then the cover tutor will agree any extensions.
5. DRAFTS OF LEARNER WORK, TAQS AND ASSESSMENTS

If you struggle with any of the TAQs when completing your Unit assessments then you must contact your tutor to seek guidance. Guidance is provided by tutors in a number of ways:

- Detailed explanations via email
- Conversations via arranged telephone contact
- Tutorials via Skype

The focus of these conversations will be on what the TAQs mean and how you should tackle them. Your tutor cannot tell you what to write or make detailed corrections to your work to help you improve your grades.

If, however, you still struggle with the completion of assessment tasks/assessments then you can send your tutor via email a sample of an answer for a TAQ or assessment criterion so that your tutor can provide you with further guidance and help you get back onto the right track.

Your tutor is not allowed to give you information on how your assessment might have done if your tutor was marking it at this point or how to improve your work to gain a better grade. This is because helping you in this way is against the rules set out by QAA as it is seen to be ‘grade polishing’ and would give you an unfair advantage over fellow learners.

Please note, you CANNOT send to your tutor:

1. A draft of a complete Unit assessment.
2. Answers to a complete assessment criterion or TAQ.

If you do send more than the above amount of assessed work to your tutor (as highlighted in numbers 1 and 2 above) to check then he/she will return the work to you and request the allowable amount.

6. WHAT HAPPENS IF MY WORK NEEDS FURTHER WORK TO MEET THE ASSESSMENT CRITERIA AND THEREFORE WORK NEEDS TO BE RESUBMITTED.

As already mentioned if your work does not fully meet all the assessment criteria then you can be asked to do further work to enable you to meet the assessment criteria not met in your first attempt. To explain how the system for resubmissions works and to identify what happens if any first resubmissions are also referred, we have put together a flow diagram below to explain the processes involved.

It is important to understand that as a matter of course you can only be allowed to resubmit your work once. If on the first resubmission your work meets all the assessment criteria then your work will be graded normally and you can still achieve either a pass, merit or distinction grades.

It is therefore imperative that before you attempt a first resubmission that you and your tutor have a tutorial where you can discuss the areas you need to improve on.

The rules that QAA have put in place for resubmission of learner work are very clear, and state that although your tutor can discuss with you and look at a draft with you of any parts of
the assessment that has not yet achieved a pass grade, the resubmission process is not a mechanism to allow you to discuss the whole of the assessment and therefore with the aid of that advice to resubmit the whole assessment, thus achieving a better grade.

If after the first resubmission the work still does not meet all the assessment criteria and it therefore needs to be resubmitted again then the DistanceLearningCentre.com has to ask the awarding body’s permission to allow you a second resubmission. This is called the **referrals process** and is a formal process where we have to ask the awarding body if you will be allowed a second resubmission, the awarding body can refuse this permission and will only grant permission if there are robust documentable and provable reasons to allow a second resubmission.

The awarding body will want to know:

* any special/extenuating circumstances affecting the individual Learner with evidence
* the particular unit/s concerned
* details of the achievement in the original submissions and resubmissions for the unit/s (if applicable)
* the Learner's total achievement profile to date
* the recorded view of the centre internal moderator

Please be aware that the majority of applications to the awarding body for a second resubmission are rejected and referrals will not normally be considered where the total credit value of the units for which referrals have already been granted for that Learner is 15 or greater.

The types of reasons the awarding body take into consideration are:

* physical or mental illness
* sudden homelessness
* death of family member
* serious accidents
* on active service with the armed forces

The awarding body will also need to see any supporting documented evidence to prove your application.

They will not grant a second resubmission if you were:

* moving house,
* missed the deadline because of family issues,
* going on holiday
* missing a deadline because you did not ask for an extension
* English as a second language

If the awarding body denies your request, then you will be unable to complete the full access diploma but can be accredited for any units you have already passed.

If the awarding body grants your request then you will be able to resubmit your work for a second time, however it the highest grade you will be able to gain for the unit will be a pass.

A third resubmission is not allowed.
The Resubmission Process

1. **Learner via email is issued with assessment password and deadline**

2. **Learner submits assessment – assessment does not meet 1 or more assessment criterion/ia**

   - **Assessment requires further work to be re-submitted with a deadline**
   - **Assessment advice and guidance provided**

3. **Learner submits assessment – assessment still does not meet all assessment criteria**

   - **Telephone/Skype call organised to take place within a few days of assessment requiring further work. Further advice and guidance provided to learner**

4. **Learner submits assessment and passes – assessment is graded, mark sheet is completed and uploaded and grades recorded**

5. **If Ascentis does not agree to a second resubmission, then no full Access Diploma can be awarded**

   - **If Ascentis agrees that the learner’s work can be resubmitted then the learner will be informed, deadlines set and work resubmitted. At this point the highest grade that can be achieved is a pass**

   - **If there are no valid extenuating circumstances then no full Access Diploma can be awarded**

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6. INTERNAL VERIFICATION, EXTERNAL MODERATION AND STANDARDISATION

For up to date information of moderation dates please see moderation and exam dates you will need to be logged on to your account to see this

- Grading decisions are subject to the quality assurance processes of internal verification and external moderation

6.1 Internal Verification

Internal verification is a quality assurance process by which the DLC regularly samples and evaluates consistency and fairness. An effective internal verification system ensures that assessment practices and decisions are regularly reviewed and evaluated to ensure the validity of the award of credit. The DLC has robust quality assurance systems in place to underpin the delivery of its provision.

Internal verification involves two key processes – verification and standardisation and these are facilitated by Curriculum Leaders and involve all tutors. To maintain the integrity of the assessment process internal verification must scrutinise the assessment practices and assessment decisions of tutors.

6.2 External Moderation

Ascentis employs a team of external quality assurance staff, External Moderators, to undertake external moderation. External Moderators, through regular visits, work with the DLC on quality enhancement.

During these visits External Moderators will:

- Monitor the DLC’s compliance with the centre recognition agreement by reviewing course documentation, meeting managers, tutors, internal verifiers and administration staff
- Identify any staff development needs
- Ensure that all procedures are being complied with
- That the award of credit/qualifications is secure
- Report to Ascentis on all visits/meetings

In addition:

- There are common moderation procedures and assessment regulations, and a standard definition of the External Moderator’s role which apply to all Access to HE Diplomas.
- Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) operate procedures for the standardisation of the award of grades. In our case it is Ascentis.
- Requirements relating to the selection, appointment and training of External Moderators are included in the AVA licensing criteria.

6.3 The award of grades

- The final grades for Units which are recommended by the AVA are confirmed after the final moderation conducted for each pathway.
- The grades achieved by a learner are formally reported in grade profiles.
- The total number of grades reported in a learner’s grade profile depends on the number of Units that make up a particular Access to HE Diploma.
- The individual grades awarded to a learner indicate the standard performance on a
range of Units of different sizes, involving different types of learning achieved at different stages, as appropriate to the particular course. No overall or aggregate grade is awarded.

- Grade profiles are awarded by the AVAs at the same time as the Access to HE Diploma and credit transcripts are awarded.
- Grades are not awarded for achievement that does not contribute to the Access to HE Diploma. Any such additional achievement and its assessment does not form part of the qualification specifications for the Diploma, detailed in the QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to HE.

**Important point:**

You cannot undertake and complete more than 60 credits for an Access to HE Diploma.

### 6.4 Further information

Full details of the Access to HE grading scheme, all associated guidance documents for AVAs, course providers and HE admissions staff are available on the Access to HE Website (www.accesstohe.ac.uk).

Each Level 3 (graded) Unit is graded as a Distinction, Merit, Pass or a Referral. Each Level 2 and Level 3 (ungraded) Unit is graded as an Achieved or Referral.

If your work is referred you will be asked to resubmit further work after you have received help and guidance from your tutor.

To give you more idea of how things are assessed; every assessment you complete will include the assessment criteria your tutor and Ascentis will use to assess you. This is in the form of a Student Assessment Criteria Front Sheet so that you can mark off when you have covered the criteria. All your work is internally standardised and cross-marked before going to the External Moderator. The External Moderator is employed by Ascentis and is independent of the DLC.

**Please make sure that you return your Student Assessment Criteria Front Sheet with your assessment (TAQs) and mark on where you have achieved the criteria you are going to be assessed on.**

This is used by both the Internal Verifier (IV) and the External Moderator (EM).

### 6.5 Cycle of internal and external verification activities

To help you understand the process of internal and external verification that happens throughout the year we have put together two flow charts for you to use which will explain both what we and Ascentis does throughout the year and also what you should do.

As you continue throughout the course and submit your assessments the marks you tutor awards the work is continually uploaded onto 'my grades and mark sheets'. These grades and mark sheets are used throughout the year by both internal and external verifiers to check the quality of the marking of your work. Throughout the year we report your grades to Ascentis and when an external moderation process is complete those grades are set and cannot be changed.
August
Results reported to universities via UCAS

July

June
External Moderation Activity and Ascentis Exam Board

May
Internal Verification

April
Standardisation

March
External Moderation Activity
All learner grades awarded so far are reported to Ascentis, these grades are then set

February
Internal Verification

January
Ascentis Exam Board and Standardisation

December

November
External Moderation Activity and Ascentis Exam Board:
EM's check the internal verification systems plus a sample of learner work that has not been internally verified

October
Internal Verification: Tutors cross mark each other's work to make sure that the correct grading decisions have been made

September
Standardisation:
EM's and IV's make sure that all the tutors are marking at the same level using a different sample of units

All learner grades awarded so far are reported to Ascentis, these grades are then set.

Any learners who have completed their full diploma at this point are certificated via the Ascentis exam board.

External moderation also means that all learner grades awarded so far are reported to Ascentis, these grades are then set and cannot be changed.

Any learners who have completed their full diploma at this point are certificated via the Ascentis exam board.

Figure 1 Times of internal and external verification for Ascentis students
Students need to check if going for August certification that their names and addresses are correct on their learner accounts.

June
- External moderation Activity and Ascentis Examinations Board where grades are verified and certification process starts.

July
- Learners contacted when certificates have arrived.

August
- Certificates checked and sent to learners by registered post at the beginning of August.
- Learners to have 45 credits to be put in for January certification.

September
- Learners need to check if going for January certification that their names and addresses are correct on their learner accounts.

October
- Learners to have 45 credits to be put in for February certification.

November
- External moderation activity and Ascentis Examinations Board where grades are verified and certification process starts.

December
- Learners contacted when certificates have arrived.

January
- Certificates checked and sent to learners by registered post.

February
- Learners contacted when certificates have arrived.

March
- Ascentis Examinations Board where grades are verified and certification process ends.

April
- Learners to have 45 credits to be put in for August certification.

May
- All work must be completed for those being certificated in August.

Legend:
- Red = January certification process
- Brown = February certification process
- Green = August certification process

Figure 2: The learner certification process.
7. PLAGIARISM

Information on plagiarism is available when you log onto your learner account and access your toolkit. The link takes you to the page.
http://www.distancelearningcentre.com/user/plagiarism.php

Important point:

To make sure that you are clear on how to quote, reference and paraphrase see:

- The referencing advice at the end of the Student Handbook, and
- The Study Skills Guides:
  - How to Plan an Essay
  - How to Write an Essay
  - How to Write up your Research Project
  - How to Write up your Practical Investigation

If you follow the advice and guidance in the Study Skills Guides you will not plagiarise.
8. PROVISION OF A QUALITY PROGRAMME OF STUDY

The DLC aims to provide a quality service which promotes equal access for all groups of learners throughout their contact with the Centre. Learners should therefore expect a quality service from both their tutor and the administration staff. In return the DLC expects that all learners will abide by the conditions set down by the Centre.

8.1 Student entitlement policy

WHAT TO DO IF YOU HAVE ANY PROBLEMS

a. The marking of assessments

If you have any problems understanding the way your assessment has been marked, you should in the first instance contact your tutor (within one week of receiving the assessed work) who will be pleased to explain the marking scheme to you. All DLC tutors work from a common marking scheme so that the standard of marking will be consistent across markers and tutors. However, if an administrative error has been made (for example, in the completion or calculation of the Unit grade profile), the error will be corrected.

If after discussions you are not satisfied with your negotiations then you should ask the Internal Verifier (IV) who in the first instance is the Curriculum Leader from the DLC to arbitrate for you. S/he will look at the work to decide whether the material meets the criteria set down for that level. If the internal verifier concludes there is no case for re-grading (that is, the tutor's original decision is confirmed), the grade indicators are included in the Unit grade profile, and the decision will be recorded.

If the Internal Verifier concludes that there may be a case for re-grading, the work will be reassessed. The making of any such changes will be formally recorded and given to the External Moderator. No adjustment to tutor grades can be made without the involvement of the Internal Verifier. The Internal Verifier's judgement is final.

b. Concerns, complaints and comments

Please see policies in the Toolkit from your learner account on our website for information on how to access these procedures and other policies of interest.
9. REFERENCING ADVICE

At the DLC we expect all students to use the Harvard Referencing System. To help you learn how to do this please follow the link:

http://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm

This advice comes from Anglia Ruskin University Library who has kindly agreed to let us use this resource.

Further help and guidance on referencing, paraphrasing, quoting and academic writing are given in the Study Skills Guides, which you will get access to when you are ready to start either the English Level 2 assessment or begin your Level 3 work.
10. STUDENT HANDBOOK SAQS (SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS)

Things to do:

There's lots of information in the Student Handbook, so answer these questions to see how well you've understood and remembered what you've read. The answers are at the end so you can check.

1. How many credits is an Access to HE Diploma?

2. How many credits are ungraded, and how many are graded?

3. How and when will your tutor get in contact with you?

4. Why is it essential to keep your ILP up to date?

5. What do you do with your SAQ answers?

6. How do you submit your assessments (TAQs)?

7. What's best to use in a piece of written work – a long quote, a short quote, or paraphrasing?
8. What do you need to do to Pass a Unit?

9. How can you try to get Merits and Distinctions?

10. How can your tutor support you when you're completing an assessment?

11. What help can't you ask your tutor for when you're completing an assessment?

12. Does it matter if you have to resubmit a piece of work?

13. What do you do if you disagree with a grading decision?
14. What is plagiarism?

15. How will you make sure that you won’t plagiarise?
Answers to SAQs

1. How many credits is an Access to HE Diploma?

Answer: An Access to HE Diploma is 60 credits

2. How many credits are ungraded, and how many are graded?

Answer: 15 credits are ungraded, 45 credits are graded

3. How and when will your tutor get in contact with you?

Answer: My tutor will get in contact with me via email around my start date and we will arrange my first tutorial. This will probably be over the phone or Skype.

I will continue to have weekly phone or Skype tutorials for as long as I want them. When I start my graded Level 3 Units my tutor will ask me if I would like to move to less frequent, but more in depth tutorials – whether or not I do this will be up to me, and I can change my mind at any time.

4. Why is it essential to keep your ILP up to date?

Answer: It is essential to keep my ILP up to date because:

- this is my timetable for my Diploma
- it will help me to structure and plan my time
- it gives me my deadlines for each assessment
- I will be able to see what I have left to do and how much time I have left to do it: this means I’ll be less likely to miss my target completion date and moderation deadlines.

5. What do you do with your SAQ answers?

Answer: I write them on the SAQ answer sheet and then upload them to my Learner Account.

I then email my tutor to say they are complete and to request the Unit assessment password.

I should also check my ILP to see when my deadline is, and adjust it if I will need more time.

6. How do you submit your assessments (TAQs)?

Answer: To submit my assessments I first need to make sure that all TAQs are on one document, and that it is titled the same as the
assessment Unit (e.g. Study Skills assessment). I also need to complete the front sheet and title it appropriately (e.g. Study Skills front sheet).

I then need to upload both my assessment and my front sheet to my Learner Account and also email them to my tutor for marking.

If my assessment needed to be handwritten, like Maths, then I’ll photocopy/scan/photograph it (incase it gets lost in the mail) and post the assessment. Finally, I’ll let my tutor know when I’ve done it.

I mustn’t forget to ask for the next code if I haven’t already got it so I can get on with the next Unit!

7. What’s best to use in a piece of written work – a long quote, a short quote, or paraphrasing?

**Answer:** All can be used in written work, but I should use paraphrasing and short quotes more frequently than long quotes (over 35 words). This is because paraphrasing shows good understanding, and short quotes can be used to spark my own ideas and arguments. Whereas long quotes rarely do this, and should therefore be used only when absolutely necessary.

I must not forget that quotes are included in the word limit!

8. What do you need to do to Pass a Unit?

**Answer:** To Pass a Unit I must have met all of the assessment criteria that are on the assessment’s front sheet.

9. How can you try to get Merits and Distinctions?

**Answer:** I will be more likely to get Merits and Distinctions if I show I can work independently. In the learning materials I need to take advantage of all the extra help given for learners aiming for higher grades, such as ‘Stretch and Challenge’ and ‘Further Recommended Reading’. I also need to make sure that I do some of my own research.

10. How can your tutor support you when you’re completing an assessment?

**Answer:** My tutor can give me help, support and guidance by giving email support or having a tutorial on the TAQs. If I am still stuck, I can send my tutor a draft of part of a TAQ.

11. What help can’t you ask you tutor for when you’re completing an assessment?

**Answer:** I can’t send my tutor a plan for a whole assessment, drafts
of whole TAQs, or ask my tutor to give me an indication of the grading I could achieve. My tutor also can’t rewrite (or write!) any of my work.

12. Does it matter if you have to resubmit a piece of work?

**Answer:** No! A resubmission is not a problem: my tutor will give me some guidance on how to achieve the criteria I have missed. It’s just having another go and is nothing to worry about.

13. What do you do if you disagree with a grading decision?

**Answer:** If I disagree with a grading decision I can talk to my tutor about it. If I want the work to be marked by somebody else then that is fine, but any grading decision is then final.

14. What is plagiarism?

**Answer:** Plagiarism is when you take somebody else’s work or ideas and pass it off as your own. As long as I reference any paraphrasing/theories/quotes etc, and don’t copy somebody else’s work, then I won’t have plagiarised.

15. How will you make sure that you won’t plagiarise?

**Answer:** I will make sure that I won’t plagiarise by following the guidance on referencing, paraphrasing and quoting in the Study Skills Guides. If I don’t understand something I will get help from my tutor rather than resorting to plagiarism.