



DistanceLearningCentre.com

Guidelines for DistanceLearningCentre.com Learners

Calculating Grades for the Award

of the Access to HE Diploma

Updated 27/04/20



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Introduction

All DistanceLearningCentre.com's student body work flexibly on a roll-on roll-off basis which means that each individual learner has their own specific circumstances, deadlines and target completion dates to complete each assessment and certification point. Therefore, although we fully acknowledge that the current Coronavirus crisis maybe affecting many of your ability to study and progress as normal we cannot put together a one set fits all set of rules which will be fair and equitable to all our learners, as some of you will have nearly finished your studies whereas others may be still quite a long way off.

Current QAA guidelines state that,

'it is important that all students are as well prepared as they can be for their transition into higher education, so making use of the resources prepared by Access to HE tutors and participating in continuing virtual teaching and tutorials, where possible, is key to ensure you have covered all the subject knowledge required for your Diploma. Continuing with learning will help all Access to HE students feel more confident that they are ready to take the next step in their education or career pathway. We expect Access to HE course tutors to continue to deliver teaching and support. Therefore, we encourage you to continue your learning wherever you can'.¹

In our case, because everything is done by distance learning, we can continue to provide learning opportunities and assessments in the same way as we always do. In many ways, this puts you at an advantage over traditional learners because you are still in the position to carry on working. Yes, any assessments may be classed as formative (see point 5), but they will be very useful to your tutors and Ascentis moderators as then calculated grades will more accurately reflect your performance.

This guidance in line with all national qualifications aims to ensure that learners studying during the Coronavirus crisis are neither advantaged or disadvantaged in comparison to learners studying under ordinary circumstances. However, it is important to note that the current situation does not provide a 'free pass' to a cut-price qualification or an opportunity to complete qualifications without having the evidence of knowledge and achievement to back this up.

Thus to ensure that the all guidance works correctly and fairly; and that the integrity of academic achievement and university entry is maintained, teaching professionals (such as ourselves) are being required to make independent professional judgements in terms of learner achievement and any potential calculated grades and in order to do this, criteria need to be established for making these judgements.

¹ QAA Update on next steps for Access to HE students Access to HE students (segmented into completing before and after August 2020) Friday 3rd April 2020



1. What QAA means by the term students completing their studies by the 31st of July 2020

In the QAA document 'Calculating grades for the award of the Access Diploma issued on the 9th April 2020 they refer to the 31st of July, by this they mean those students who would be receiving their certificates by this date and have a university offer for September 2020. This is because QAA are explaining the rules for certification for those students who were on a one year course starting in September 2019, as DistanceLearningCentre.com students can start and finish at any time this document is therefore focusing on those of you who would in an ordinary year be expecting to have completed their studies by the 31st of May for University entry in September 2020. This is because all calculated grades have to be with the awarding body by the **5th of June** so that the new processes will be in place for you to have your results for September University entrance.

2. Students who are Not Expecting to Complete for July Certification

If you **are** scheduled to continue your studies **after** the 31st May 2020 for university entrance either in January or September 2021, you will continue to be supported to complete your studies.

We know that the current environment is a really challenging one, and we want all students to be supported as effectively as possible during this time. We have procedures in place to allow you to request extensions to deadlines and to identify where extenuating circumstances may affect your academic performance, should the current situation make studying difficult.

If you do find that your circumstances have changed and you are no longer able to keep to your ILP because of extenuating circumstances, we advise you fill in the evidence based form as soon as you can and send it to z.khan@distancelearningcentre.com

If you do not feel your case has been addressed by this guidance you should fill in an extenuating circumstances form and send to it to z.khan@distancelearningcentre.com

3. Students who were expecting to Complete for July 2020 Certification using the QAA's Extraordinary Regulatory Framework

3.1 Am I eligible to be classed as a July 2020 Certificated learner?

To be eligible to have your grades calculated:

1. The total cost of the course must be paid by the 31st of May 2020
2. You must be an active student and not have withdrawn from the course



3. By the 20th of March 2020 you must have submitted the work for **half an Access Diploma**. Your tutors have a spreadsheet which calculated half a diploma on the year you started the course and the option you took.
4. You do not need to apply to have your grades calculated, all learners who are eligible will have their grades calculated
5. You cannot opt out of grade calculation, but you can appeal against them, this will be discussed later.
6. If you did not submit enough of the diploma by the 20th of March 2020 then you are **not** eligible to have your grades calculated.

If you had extenuating circumstances before the 20th March 2020 please follow the process for:

[4. Students who were expecting to Complete for July Certification who had extenuating circumstances before the 20th of March 2020.](#)

3.2 I did not have half an Access Diploma by the 20th of March is there going to be a moderation in June?

The simple answer since the meeting with Ascentis and QAA on the 24th of April is Yes. Your grades will be awarded normally and your results will be available to you once the final awards board is complete in July. Your results will be uploaded to UCAS as normal on the 27th of July, so after this date your universities will know your grades.

However, to be eligible for July certification please make sure that you follow the process below. This is also on our website:

- a) Although you are **not eligible** to have your grades calculated for those of you who carry on working and complete according to the guidelines below there **will be the usual June moderation**.
- b) **17th April 2020** - all students wishing to be put forward for August certification must have completed and submitted Assessments to the value of **at least 45 credits**. **All these must have already been marked with recommended grades of Pass or above.**
- c) **31st May 2020** - deadline for final submission of assessments. You are advised to submit your work well in advance of this date as there will be insufficient time remaining for re-marking should your work not be up to standard.

If your situation changes then you will need to put in an extenuating circumstances form and follow the procedure below even if you **did not** have extenuating circumstances before the 20th of March 2020.

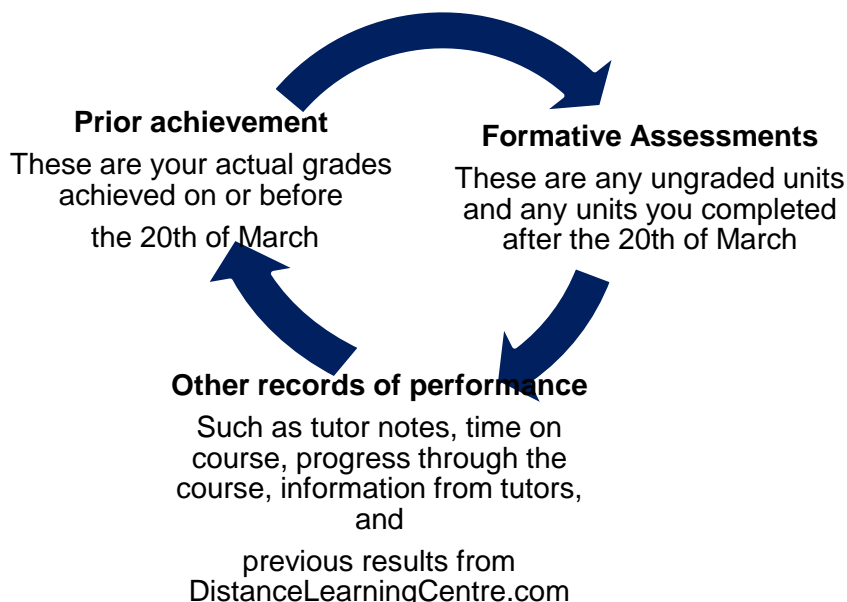


4. Students who were expecting to Complete for July Certification who had extenuating circumstances before the 20th of March 2020

1. You must complete an extenuating circumstances form and provide the appropriate evidence and we will contact you individually about your specific circumstances. Please send the completed form to: z.khan@distancelearningcentre.com
2. An extenuating circumstances request (i.e. special consideration), can only be made in the event that you were unable to take an assessment or because you suffered a traumatic event that may have affected your performance pre the 20th of March 2020, These will not apply after 20 March 2020; as after this date our judgments on your performance will reflect how you would have performed under ordinary circumstances using the QAA's Extraordinary Regulatory Framework.
3. If you do not believe the correct process has been followed in your case, you will be able to appeal.

5. If you are Eligible for Calculated Grades: How will my grades be calculated?

Grades will be calculated using the following evidence-based criterion:



Once your grades have been calculated by your tutors using the evidence available, we will internally standardise over the whole of DistancelearningCentre.com and confirm to Ascentis the estimated assessment grades are a true representation of your performance. Your grades will then be uploaded to Ascentis.

Please remember that we will be making a realistic judgement of the assessment grades you would have been most likely to get if you had taken the assessment(s). **This could**



include an outcome of 'not achieved' the full diploma as we can only make judgements on available evidence which will include the above.

The Ascentis external moderators will then moderate this evidence to make sure that our grades reflect your predicted attainment.

Ascentis will then internally standardise the results of all the centres they quality assure and then send these results to QAA.

QAA will nationally standardise the results from all the awarding bodies, and national results will be released via UCAS to both you and the universities.

In addition to estimating grades, we will produce a reference for each student to further support applications to higher education or employment during these exceptional times, now and in the future. You will receive the tutor reference no later than 27 July 2020, to align with the upload of results to UCAS. Tutor references will not be included in the range of evidence to inform estimated assessment grades.

6. Will I know what my grades will be before the Universities?

The short answer to this is no.

Because the system this year is very different from how grades are ordinarily awarded QAA has instructed all providers **not** to give you access to your grades before the universities. We have therefore taken off the grades tab for your account for any units you have completed after the 20th of March, although you will be sent mark sheets via e-mail for any work you continue to complete, these will not contain grades.

Your tutors have also been instructed by QAA that they must not give you any information on the calculated grades submitted to Ascentis. This is because this is a national process where all results will be standardised using a statistical formula and therefore all submitted grades both from us and Ascentis may be changed either up or down depending on results of the national standardisation exercise.

Furthermore, although students are able to request their personal data under Article 15 of the General Data Protection Regulation. However, in respect of personal data such as marks or other information processed by a Data Controller for the purposes of determining results, an exemption from disclosure exists under paragraph 25(2) of the Data Protection Act 2018. This allows Data Controllers (in this case DistanceLearningCentre.com) to delay disclosure of such information until after results have been confirmed.

7. Should I continue to study and to complete assessments if I am expecting to have my grades calculated?

QAA have been very clear on this, there is **no requirement** for learners to complete any more assessments, **though we encourage you to do so if you can**. This is because the more actual evidence we have the more robust the process of calculating grades will be.



However, we will take into account the circumstances and context in which you did the work if there was an adverse effect on your performance.

We advise that, if possible, you should complete at least an introductory unit and the first graded unit of any subject you not already studied as this will mean that your tutors will have more information to go on when calculating grades. However, this is no way compulsory and you will not be penalised if you do not do this. We will continue to give feedback on any assessment you complete but this will not include the grading element of the feedback.

However, there is a requirement from QAA, that learners where ever possible should continue to study the learning materials we provide and work with your tutors until you finish the course to eliminate any gaps in your knowledge before you start university. You will therefore still be required to upload the answer to your SAQ's before moving on to the next unit.

If you are not able to do this because of your individual circumstances please contact your tutor to discuss.

8. What is the Appeal process?

QAA recognises that some of you may feel disappointed that you were not able to complete all your assessments. However, they have focused on making sure students are not disadvantaged or advantaged by these unprecedented circumstances including to allow for an appeal where appropriate.

Therefore, under the circumstances, the normal arrangements for appeals will not apply. They are considering what arrangements might be put in place to allow an effective and fair appeal and will consult on proposals.

However they say that:

'If a student does not feel their calculated grades reflect their expected performance, they will have the opportunity to appeal or they may choose to sit their assessments at the earliest reasonable opportunity (when all providers are operating normally).²

If you do not want to have a calculated grade you can ask to sit any assessment or examination where you have not been awarded grades after the process is finished but **this may mean that your results will not be available to you in time for university entry this year.** Though QAA has spoken to UCAS and was reassured to hear that institutions intend to be flexible wherever possible and will do all they can to support students to progress.

If you do decide to follow this route your actual grades will be the ones which stand.

² QAA Calculating grades for the award of the Access to HE Diploma Information for Access to HE course tutors and senior course managers 09/04/2020 p11