



# Access to Higher Education: Diploma Courses and Students 2014-15

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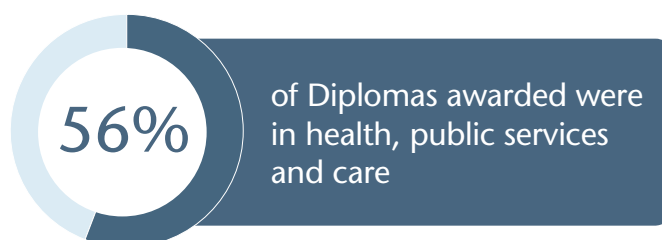
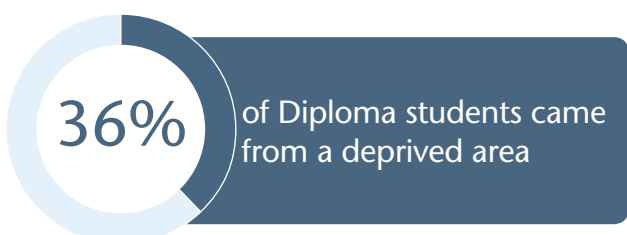
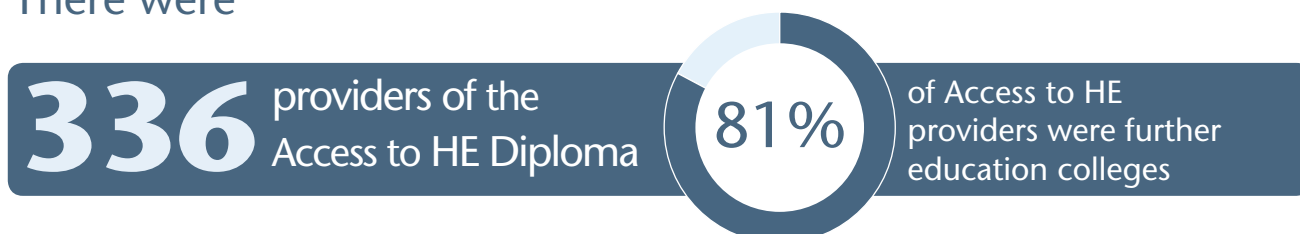
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# Executive summary

There were 336 providers of the Access to HE Diploma. Key findings from the year's report concerning Diploma courses and students are as follows.

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There were





## Access to HE statistics summary (2014-15)

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### Introduction

This report by QAA summarises data about Access to Higher Education (Access to HE) Diploma courses and students who were registered on those courses in the academic year 2014-15. Key information about the data is as follows.

- Statistics about Access to HE providers and courses are derived from data received by QAA from the 13 Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) in England and Wales - QAA licenses AVAs to approve providers to offer Access to HE courses.
- Statistics about Access to HE students in England are collected by the course providers - providers submit data about publicly and privately funded students to the Skills Funding Agency, which then provides this data to QAA.
- Statistics about Access to HE students in Wales are collected by course providers, who submit data to Agored Cymru, the sole AVA in Wales - Agored Cymru then submits data to QAA.

Data about students is provided for 2014-15, 2013-14, 2012-13, 2011-12 and 2010-11. Data about students before 2010-11 can be accessed from the previous year's reports. Changes to the way in which data in England is collected and reported to QAA from 2010-11 onwards mean that comparisons with previous years' totals may be misleading.

Data collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency and UCAS concerning Access to HE students in higher education, and those applying to higher education providers, is published in two separate reports.<sup>1</sup>

The data presented in this report provides an overview of Access to HE courses and students in 2014-15. It is not intended for use by organisations in setting internal targets or for benchmarking purposes.

All figures relating to students have been rounded to the nearest five. Due to rounding, totals may not equal 100 per cent

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: [www.accesstohe.ac.uk/AboutUs/Publications/Pages/Default.aspx](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/AboutUs/Publications/Pages/Default.aspx).

# 1 Providers offering Access to HE Diploma courses

In 2014-15:

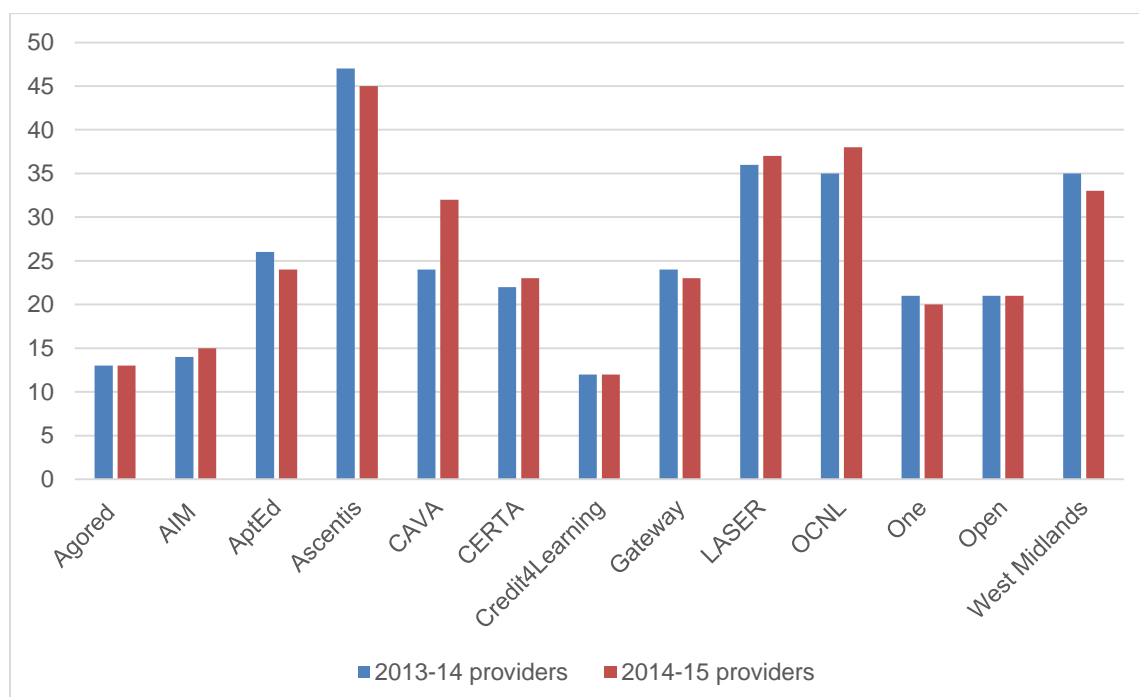
- there were 336 providers of Access to HE Diploma courses (323 in England, 13 in Wales)
- 81 per cent of Access to HE providers were further education colleges.

The total number of Access to HE providers increased from 330 in 2013-14 to 336 in 2014-15. There was a small decrease in the number of further education colleges, sixth form colleges and adult/community education providers offering courses, and an increase in the number of higher education institutions (HEIs) and other providers.

**Table 1a: Providers offering Access to HE Diploma courses by provider type (2010-15)**

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
FE colleges	289 (84%)	286 (83%)	271 (83%)	275 (83%)	273 (81%)
HEIs	13 (4%)	12 (3%)	12 (4%)	11 (3%)	14 (4%)
Sixth form colleges	12 (3%)	16 (5%)	15 (4%)	18 (5%)	16 (5%)
Adult/ community education	19 (5%)	18 (5%)	19 (6%)	18 (5%)	15 (4%)
Other	13 (4%)	11 (3%)	10 (3%)	8 (2%)	18 (5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>336</b>

**Figure 1a: Number of providers by AVA (2013-15)**



## 2 Access to HE Diploma courses available and running

In 2014-15:

- there were 1,275 Access to HE Diploma courses running (1,197 in England, 78 in Wales), an increase of 14 per cent from 2013-14
- Access to HE Diploma courses ran in 13 different subject sector areas, with nearly 400 courses running in health, public services and care.

Following the introduction of the new specification in 2013, many existing courses were revalidated. Subsequently, in 2014-15 a large number of new courses were recognised.

**Table 2a: Access to HE Diploma courses, 2010-15**

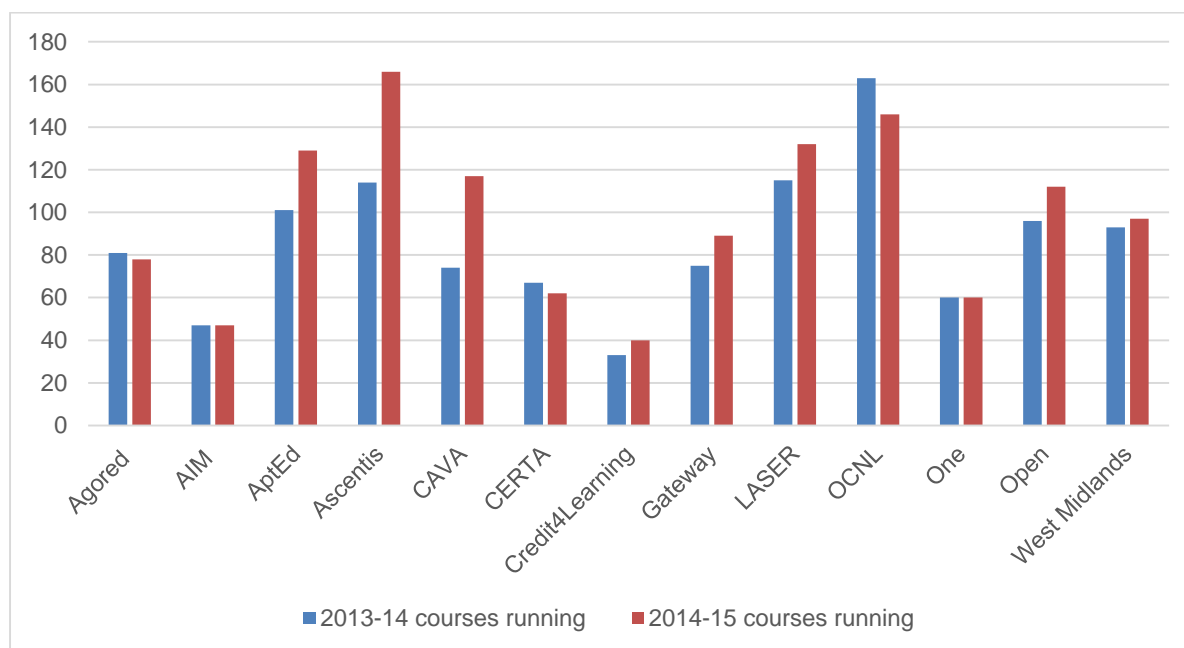
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
<b>Courses available</b>	1,597	1,512	1,499	1,594	1,449
<b>Courses running</b>	1,289	1,140	1,124	1,119	1,275
<b>New courses recognised</b>	160	160	131	162	1,018

There are considerable differences between AVAs in terms of the total number of courses running. As with the number of providers, these differences between individual AVAs in part reflect differences in area of coverage and density of population.

In 2014-15, eight AVAs saw an increase in the number of courses running; three AVAs saw a decrease; and two AVAs had the same number of courses running. The greatest increase in the number of courses was 52 and the sharpest decrease was 17.

The new specification has paved the way for many AVAs to introduce AVA-devised Diplomas in a limited range of named subjects, with more than one provider offering the same Diploma. This means that, although each course offered by a provider is listed on our database separately, there is now greater consistency across the providers approved by the AVA, as many offer the same AVA-devised Diploma.

**Figure 2a: Number of Access to HE Diploma courses running by AVA (2013-15)**



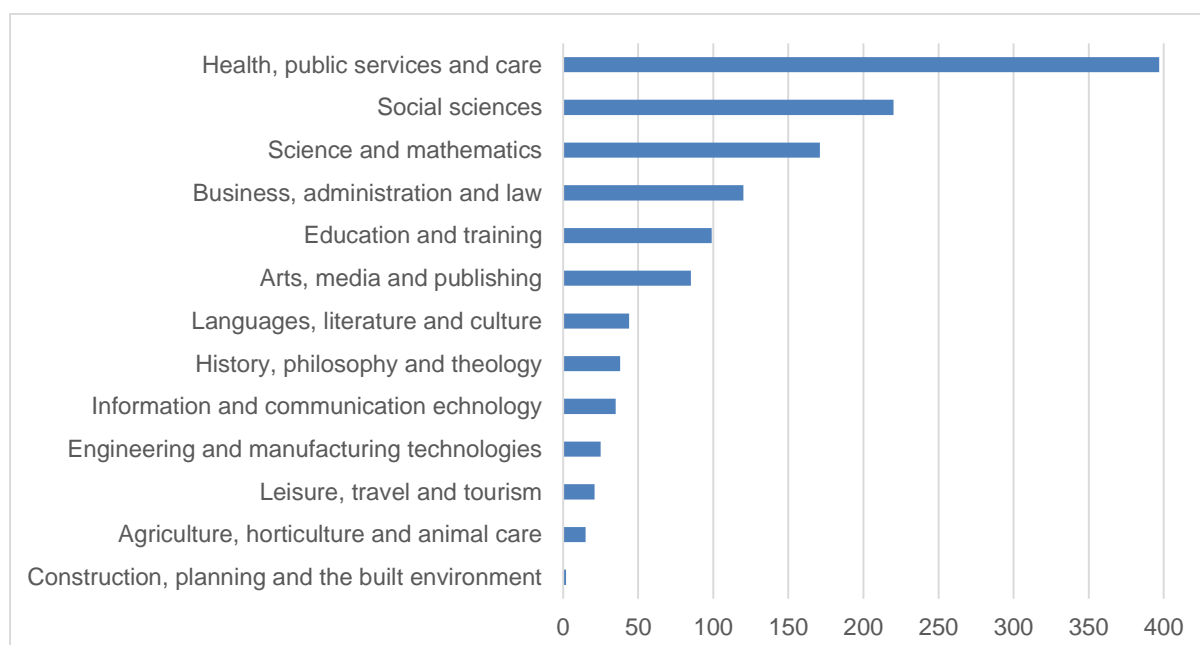
**Table 2b: Number of Access to HE Diploma courses running by AVA, 2012-15**

<b>AVA</b>	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>
Agored	78	81	78
AIM	42	47	47
AptEd	95	101	129
Ascentis	113	114	166
CAVA	65	74	117
CERTA	64	67	62
Credit4Learning	33	33	40
Gateway	87	75	89
LASER	121	115	132
OCNL	171	163	146
One	37	60	60
OPEN	101	96	112
West Midlands	117	93	97
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,124</b>	<b>1,119</b>	<b>1,275</b>

Courses are classified using the subject sector area codes used in the further education sector.

From 2014-15 AVAs were required to categorise all their Access to HE Diploma courses under a single subject sector area code. This means that it was no longer possible to have courses categorised under various combined studies codes, although a small number of Access to HE courses that combine one or more subject areas are still available and running at some providers. This change in approach to categorising courses will have contributed in part to the increase in the number of courses in other subject sector area codes.

**Figure 2b: Number of Access to HE Diploma courses running by subject category (2014-15)**



In 2014-15 the subject category with the highest number of Access to HE Diploma courses was health, public services and care, for which there were 397 courses running (31 per cent of all courses running). Of these 397 courses, 198 were in nursing and subjects and vocations allied to medicine, and 172 were in health and social care. The subject area with the second highest number of Access to HE Diploma courses was social sciences, for which there were 220 courses running (17 per cent of all courses running). This includes 129 courses in sociology and social policy.

**Table 2c: Access to HE Diploma courses running by subject (2012-15)**

Subject	Courses running					
	2012-13		2013-14		2014-15	
Health, public services and care	348	(31%)	355	(32%)	397	(31%)
Social sciences	105	(9%)	107	(10%)	220	(17%)
Science and mathematics	75	(7%)	73	(7%)	171	(13%)
Business, administration and law	85	(8%)	89	(8%)	120	(9%)
Education and training	97	(9%)	93	(8%)	99	(8%)
Arts, media and publishing	66	(6%)	74	(7%)	85	(7%)
Languages, literature and culture	4	(0%)	4	(0%)	44	(3%)
History, philosophy and theology	4	(0%)	3	(0%)	38	(3%)
Information and communication technology	34	(3%)	31	(3%)	35	(3%)
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	12	(1%)	9	(1%)	25	(2%)
Leisure, travel and tourism	12	(1%)	13	(1%)	21	(2%)
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	3	(0%)	5	(0%)	15	(1%)
Construction, planning and the built environment	1	(0%)	1	(0%)	2	(0%)
Preparation for life and work	1	(0%)	1	(0%)	0	(0%)
Combined studies (various codes)	277	(25%)	262	(23%)	0	(0%)



### 3 Student registrations on Access to HE Diploma courses

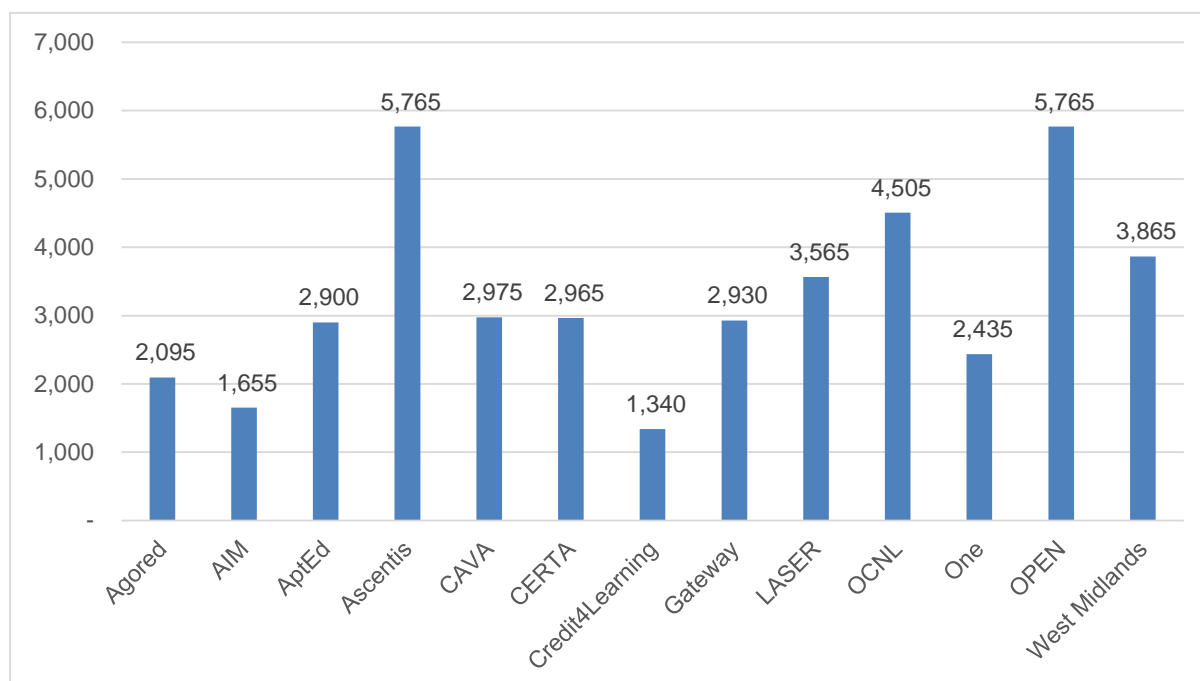
In 2014-15:

- there were 42,755 students registered on Access to HE Diploma courses, of which 40,665 were in England and 2,095 were in Wales
- 38,995 (91 per cent) of students registered in 2014-15 were intending to complete their courses within the same year (37,195 in England and 1,800 in Wales) - this figure is used as an approximation for the number of full-time students
- the other 9 per cent (3,760) were students studying over a longer period of time, who usually studied fewer hours per week than other registered students (3,465 in England, 295 in Wales) - this figure is used as an approximation for the number of part-time students.

**Table 3a: Student registrations on Access to HE Diploma courses by end date**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
New students (full-time) with expected end date before 1 August	37,110 (87%)	42,500 (95%)	38,995 (91%)
All other students	5,615 (13%)	2,185 (5%)	3,760 (9%)
<b>Total student registrations</b>	<b>42,725</b>	<b>44,685</b>	<b>42,755</b>

**Figure 3a: Student registrations by AVA**



Nine AVAs saw a fall in the number of student registrations in 2014-15 compared to 2013-14, with four AVAs reporting a rise in registrations. This partly reflects the decision by some providers to move to a different AVA.

**Table 3b: Student registrations by AVA (2013-15)**

<b>AVA</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>% change</b>
Agored Cymru	2,240	2,095	-6%
Aim Awards	2,035	1,655	-19%
AptEd	3,465	2,900	-16%
Ascentis	3,855	5,765	50%
CAVA	2,530	2,975	18%
CERTA	2,950	2,965	1%
Credit4Learning	1,555	1,340	-14%
Gateway	2,695	2,930	9%
LASER	3,585	3,565	-1%
OCN London	6,275	4,505	-28%
One Awards	2,685	2,435	-9%
Open Awards	6,255	5,765	-8%
West Midlands	4,565	3,865	-15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>44,685</b>	<b>42,755</b>	<b>-4%</b>

## 4 Student profile: Gender and age

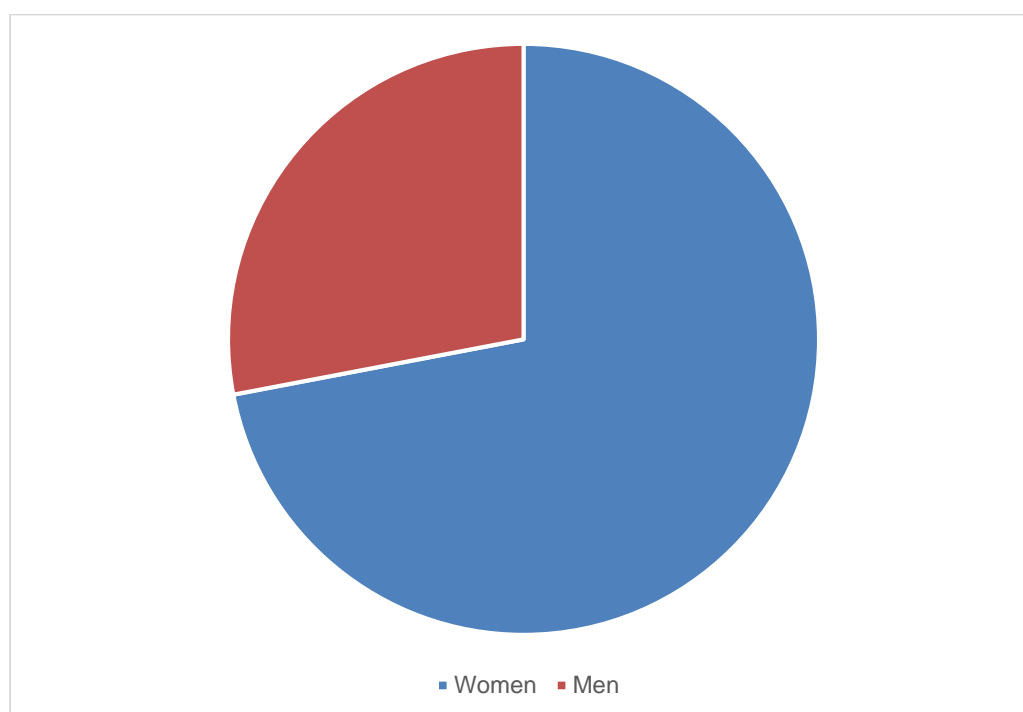
In 2014-15:

- 72 per cent of Access to HE students were women
- 28 per cent of Access to HE students were men.

**Table 4a: Student profile by gender (2012-15)**

	2012-13 all students (% of total)	2013-14 all students (% of total)	2014-15 all students (% of total)
Women	31,275 (73%)	32,970 (74%)	30,810 (72%)
Men	11,450 (27%)	11,715 (26%)	11,945 (28%)
Total	42,725	44,685	42,755

**Figure 4a: Student profile by gender (2014-15)**



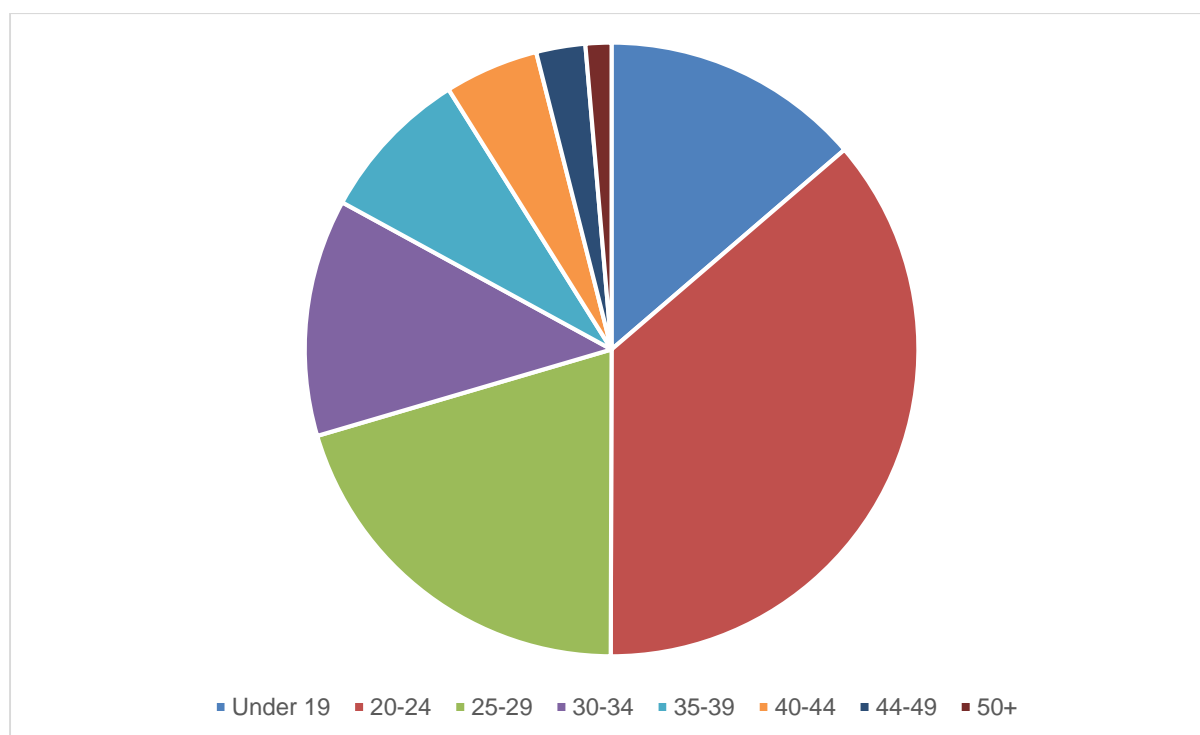
**Table 4b: Student profile by age and gender (2014-15)**

	Female (% of female students)	Male (% of male students)	Total (% of total)
Under 19	3,915 (13%)	1,950 (16%)	5,865 (14%)
20-24	10,770 (35%)	4,760 (40%)	15,530 (36%)
Total under 25	14,690 (48%)	6,710 (56%)	21,395 (50%)
25-29	6,505 (21%)	2,220 (19%)	8,725 (20%)
30-34	4,110 (13%)	1,235 (10%)	5,345 (13%)
35-39	2,710 (9%)	770 (6%)	3,475 (8%)
40-44	1,560 (5%)	560 (5%)	2,120 (5%)
44-49	850 (3%)	260 (2%)	1,105 (3%)
50+	390 (1%)	195 (2%)	585 (1%)

In 2014-15:

- 50 per cent of all Access to HE students were under 25 years old (56 per cent of male students and 48 per cent of female students)
- 70 per cent of all Access to HE students were under 30
- female students aged between 20 and 24 accounted for 25 per cent of all Access to HE students.

**Figure 4b: Student profile by age (2014-15)**



**Table 4c: Student profile by age (2012-15)**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Under 19	5,540 (13%)	5,900 (13%)	5,865 (14%)
20-24	16,065 (38%)	16,315 (37%)	15,530 (36%)
Total under 25	21,605 (51%)	22,220 (50%)	21,395 (50%)
25-29	8,090 (19%)	8,850 (20%)	8,725 (20%)
30-34	5,520 (13%)	5,735 (13%)	5,345 (13%)
35-39	3,540 (8%)	3,790 (8%)	3,475 (8%)
40-44	2,305 (5%)	2,360 (5%)	2,120 (5%)
44-49	1,105 (3%)	1,125 (3%)	1,105 (3%)
50+	535 (1%)	605 (1%)	585 (1%)
Unknown	25 (<1%)	0	0

## 5 Student profile: Ethnicity, disadvantage and disability

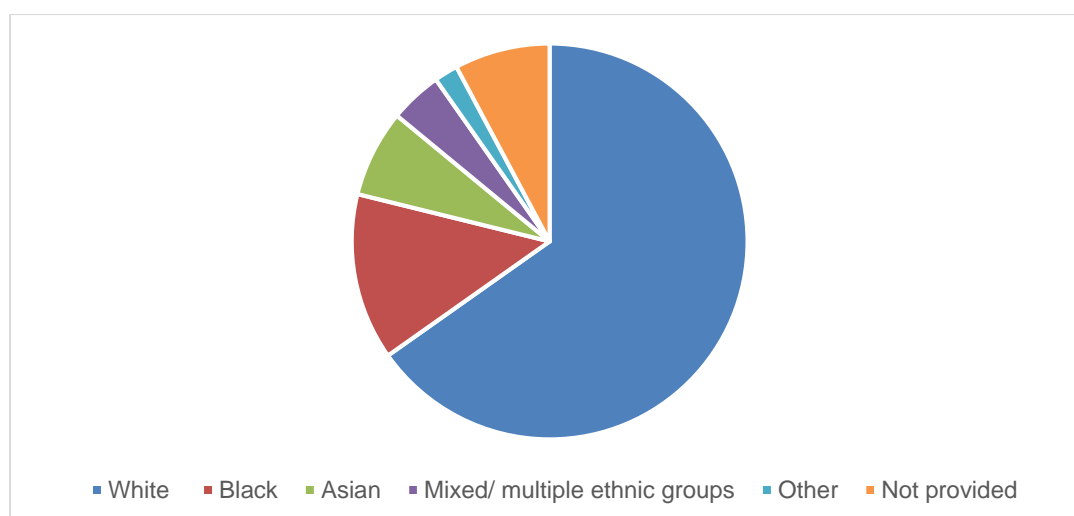
In 2014-15:

- 27 per cent of Access to HE students were from minority ethnic groups
- 65 per cent of Access to HE students were white
- 14 per cent were African, Caribbean or any other black background
- 7 per cent were Asian
- 4 per cent were of mixed or multiple ethnic backgrounds.

**Table 5a: Student profile by ethnicity and gender (2014-15)**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Female (% of female students)</b>	<b>Male (% of male students)</b>	<b>Total (% of total)</b>
African	2,480 (8%)	1,335 (11%)	3,820 (9%)
Any other Asian background	630 (2%)	410 (3%)	1,045 (2%)
Any other black background	610 (2%)	315 (3%)	920 (2%)
Any other ethnic group	390 (1%)	215 (2%)	610 (1%)
Any other mixed/multiple ethnic background	385 (1%)	165 (1%)	550 (1%)
Any other white background	1,055 (3%)	445 (4%)	1,500 (4%)
Arab	100 (>1%)	120 (1%)	220 (1%)
Bangladeshi	185 (1%)	170 (1%)	355 (1%)
Caribbean	870 (3%)	215 (2%)	1,090 (3%)
Chinese	160 (1%)	80 (1%)	245 (1%)
English/Welsh/Scottish/ Northern Irish/British	20,010 (65%)	6,230 (52%)	26,240 (61%)
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	5 (>1%)	0 (>1%)	5 (>1%)
Indian	285 (1%)	175 (1%)	460 (1%)
Irish	90 (>1%)	45 (>1%)	140 (>1%)
Pakistani	525 (2%)	420 (4%)	945 (2%)
White and Asian	165 (1%)	90 (1%)	255 (1%)
White and black African	180 (1%)	100 (1%)	280 (1%)
White and black Caribbean	605 (2%)	140 (1%)	745 (2%)
Not provided	2,075 (7%)	1,265 (11%)	3,335 (8%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>30,810</b>	<b>11,945</b>	<b>42,755</b>

**Figure 5a: Student profile by ethnicity (2014-15)**



**Table 5b: Student profile by ethnicity (2012-15)**

Ethnicity	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
White	29,015 (68%)	30,140 (67%)	27,885 (65%)
Black	6,820 (16%)	6,420 (14%)	5,830 (14%)
Asian	3,115 (7%)	2,970 (7%)	3,045 (7%)
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	1,865 (4%)	1,885 (4%)	1,835 (4%)
Other	800 (2%)	820 (2%)	830 (2%)
Not provided	1,110 (3%)	2,450 (5%)	3,335 (8%)

In 2014-15:

- 36 per cent of Access to HE students came from a deprived area.

The Skills Funding Agency provides uplift funding for learners living in the most disadvantaged areas of the country. It is based on the English Indices of Deprivation 2010 and relates to the learner's postcode. Further information on uplift factors can be found on the Skills Funding Agency [website](#).<sup>2</sup>

**Table 5c: Student profile by disadvantage (2012-15)**

	2012-13 total students in category (% of total)	2013-14 total students in category (% of total)	2014-15 total students in category (% of total)
From a deprived area	16,195 (38%)	16,960 (38%)	15,365 (36%)
Not from a deprived area	26,530 (62%)	27,725 (62%)	27,390 (64%)

<sup>2</sup> Uplift factors and postcode files, available on the Skills Funding Agency website at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/uplift-factors-and-postcode-files](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uplift-factors-and-postcode-files).

In 2014-15:

- 11 per cent of Access to HE students had a disability and/or learning difficulty.

**Table 5d: Student profile by disability/ies and learning difficulty/ies (2013-15)**

	<b>2012-13</b>	<b>2013-14</b>	<b>2014-15</b>
Disability/ies	2,045 (5%)	2,205 (5%)	2,210 (5%)
Learning difficulty/ies	2,190 (5%)	2,305 (5%)	1,855 (4%)
Disability/ies and learning difficulty/ies	850 (2%)	845 (2%)	840 (2%)
No disability/ies or learning difficulty/ies	33,730 (79%)	35,435 (79%)	32,500 (76%)
No information provided	3,910 (9%)	3,895 (9%)	5,355 (13%)

## 6 Student completion and achievement

In 2014-15:

- of the 39,010 students registered to complete the Access to HE Diploma within 2014-15 (new and continuing students), 75 per cent completed it within that year
- a further 8 per cent of all registered students were expected to continue their Access to HE studies in 2014-15
- 22 per cent of all registered Access to HE students withdrew or transferred from their course.

**Table 6a: Student completion (all registrations) (2014-15)**

	Access to HE Diploma awarded	Continuing	No achievement	Partial achievement	Result not yet known	Total students (% all students)
Completed	27,195		1,520	575	15	29,305 (69%)
Continuing		3,685	200	0	0	3,885 (9%)
Transferred /withdrawn			9,250	315		9,565 (22%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,195</b>	<b>3,685</b>	<b>10,970</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>42,755</b>

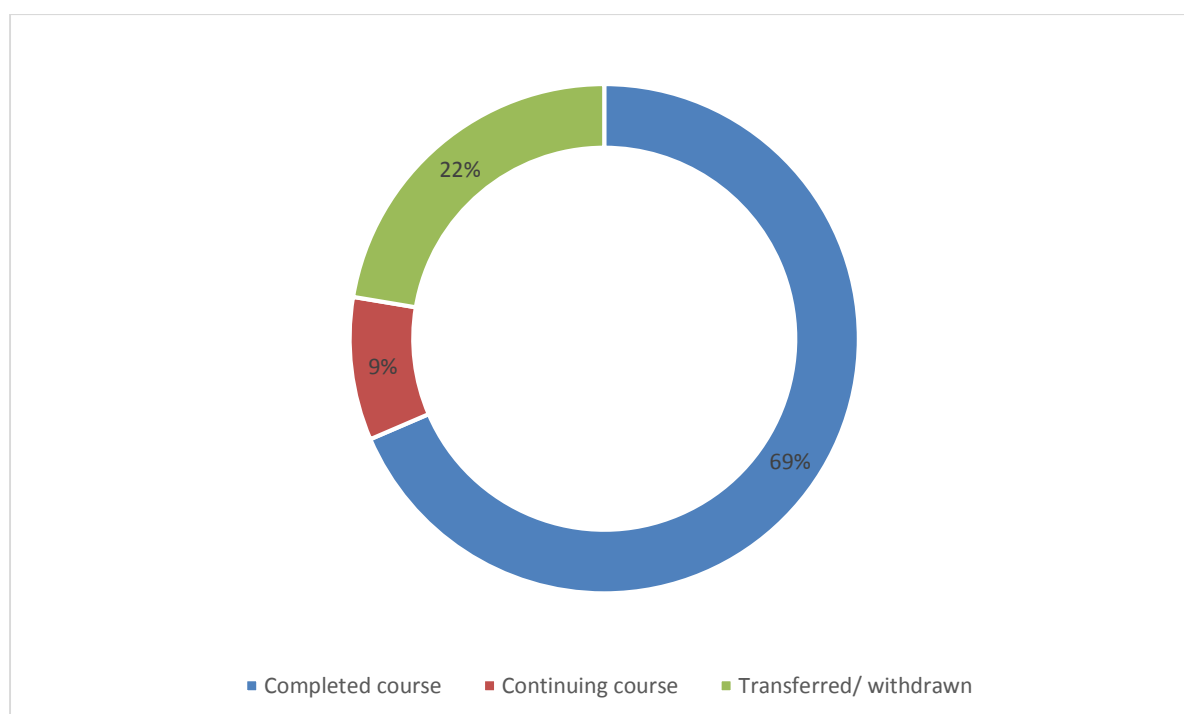
**Figure 6b: Student withdrawals by AVA (2014-15)**

AVA	Total withdrawn	% withdrawn
Agored	570	27%
AIM	370	22%
AptEd	735	25%
Ascentis	1230	21%
CAVA	735	25%
CERTA	585	20%
Credit4Learning	215	16%
Gateway	705	24%
LASER	685	19%
OCNL	1185	26%
One	605	25%
OPEN	870	15%
West Midlands	915	24%
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,400</b>	<b>22%</b>

Although the average withdrawal rate is 22 per cent, the percentage of students transferring or withdrawing varies across AVAs from 15 per cent (OPEN Awards) to 27 per cent (Agored Cymru).



**Figure 6a: Student completion (all registrations)**



In 2014-15:

- 27,195 Access to HE Diplomas were awarded
  - 26,090 Access to HE Diplomas were awarded to students in England
  - 1,180 Access to HE Diplomas were awarded to students in Wales
  - results for an additional 15 students in England were unknown
- of the 29,305 students who completed the course, 93 per cent were awarded the Access to HE Diploma
- of the 39,010 students registered to complete the course within 2014-15, 70 per cent were awarded the Access to HE Diploma.

**Table 6c: Access to HE Diplomas awarded**

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Access to HE Diplomas awarded	27,220	28,745	27,195
Access to HE Diplomas awarded as a proportion of those who completed the course	92%	93%	93%
Access to HE Diplomas awarded as a proportion of those registered and expected to complete within the academic year (new and continuing)	69%	65%	70%

In 2014-15:

- Access to HE students were registered on courses in 13 broad subject areas
- there were seven subject areas in which more than 1,000 students were registered
- there were four subject areas in which between 100 and 1,000 students were registered
- there were two subject areas in which less than 100 students were registered.

**Table 6d: Student registrations and awards by subject**

	<b>All student registrations (% of all student registrations)</b>	<b>Access to HE Diplomas awarded (% of all diplomas awarded)</b>
Health, public services and care	24,215 (57%)	15,210 (56%)
Social sciences	5,375 (13%)	3,460 (13%)
Science and mathematics	4,630 (11%)	3,090 (11%)
Business, administration and law	2,490 (6%)	1,490 (5%)
History, philosophy and theology	1,765 (4%)	1,145 (4%)
Arts, media and publishing	1,385 (3%)	925 (3%)
Education and training	1,150 (3%)	800 (3%)
Information and communication technology	650 (2%)	405 (1%)
Engineering and manufacturing technologies	635 (1%)	400 (1%)
Leisure, travel and tourism	285 (1%)	165 (1%)
Agriculture, horticulture and animal care	105 (>1%)	55 (>1%)
Retail and commercial enterprise	40 (>1%)	20 (>1%)
Construction, planning and the built environment	35 (>1%)	20 (>1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>42,755</b>	<b>27,195</b>

## Appendix - Access Validating Agencies (AVAs)

In 2014-15 QAA licensed 13 AVAs to offer the Access to HE Diploma in England and Wales.

**Table A: AVA abbreviated and full names**

<b>Abbreviated AVA name</b>	<b>Full AVA name</b>
Agored	Agored Cymru
AIM	AIM Awards
AptEd	AptEd <sup>3</sup>
Ascentis	Ascentis
CAVA	Cambridge Access Validating Agency
CERTA	CERTA
Credit4Learning	OCN Credit4Learning <sup>4</sup>
Gateway	Gateway Qualifications
LASER	LASER Learning Awards
OCNL	OCN London
One	One Awards
OPEN	Open Awards
West Midlands	Open College Network West Midlands

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<sup>3</sup> AptEd was acquired by Ascentis in November 2015. All of its approved courses continued to run in 2015-16 under the management of Ascentis.

<sup>4</sup> OCN Credit4Learning ceased operations as an AVA in November 2015. All providers have now moved to other AVAs.

QAA1587 - May 16

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557050  
Web: [www.accesstohe.ac.uk](http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk)

QAA manages the national framework for the recognition and regulation of Access to HE Diplomas. [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)