

This bulletin is the main way in which we update Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) about current developments. Please contact us at access@qaa.ac.uk for more information about any of the items mentioned here.

Grading 2010-11

The results of the grading evaluation undertaken by AVAs with tutors and students will be reported to QAA as part of each AVA's annual self-evaluation report in December 2010. We will consider these, together with the outcomes of our own survey of higher education institutions (to be undertaken this autumn), at the beginning of 2011. We will then consider any changes or additions to the grading model itself or the operational guidance for 2011-12.

In 2010-11, the model described in the grading implementation handbook (www.accesstohe.ac.uk/avas) - as implemented in 2009-10 - will apply. However, this bulletin includes a supplement to the handbook, with more detailed explanations in areas which generated most questions to QAA during 2009-10.

Regulatory note for AVAs: please read

Erroneous issue of Access to HE Diplomas

The AVA licensing criteria require AVAs to have secure procedures for the award and issue of Access to HE Diplomas to ensure that Diplomas are issued only to those who have met the requirements for the award. The procedures for final awards boards in the assessment regulations issued by QAA in summer 2009 gave a further measure of security to AVAs' certification mechanisms. The reputations of all AVAs, of QAA, and of the Access to HE Diploma itself, are placed at risk if Diplomas are issued in error.

If an AVA discovers that an Access to HE Diploma has been issued in error, it must:

1 take such steps as are necessary to procure the return of the Diploma. As an initial step, this may involve the AVA itself writing to the individual(s) concerned. (The manner in which an AVA pursues the return of a Diploma should be subject to its own independent legal advice.) **It is the AVA's direct responsibility as an awarding body to take action** in these circumstances: this responsibility cannot be devolved to a provider or other third party

2 notify QAA immediately that it has issued a Diploma erroneously and the action that has been taken to retrieve the Diploma. QAA should be notified of the incident, even if the AVA has been able to retrieve the Diploma immediately.

Access headlines...Access headlines..

This year's 20-year special edition of *Access Key statistics* and the *Joint agency statistical report 2010*, published in June, show increases in the following areas between 2007-08 and 2008-09.

Going up...

FE and HE providers delivering Access to HE (from 295 to 299)

Number of Access to HE courses running (from 1,211 to 1,376)

Total learner registrations (from 35,275 to 36,230)

Proportion of learners from minority ethnic groups (from 23% to 27%)

Proportion of men on Access to HE courses (from 26% to 28%)

Proportion of learners aged 20-29 studying on Access to HE courses (from 51% to 52%)

Access to HE qualifications awarded (from 18,840 to 19,960)

Proportion of those completing the course who were awarded the Access to HE qualification (from 80% to 85%)

Proportion of learners registered to complete who achieved the Access to HE qualification (from 61% to 64%)

Entrants to HE institutions from Access to HE courses (from 12,080 to 12,305)

Find more details on the Access to HE website:

www.accesstohe.ac.uk/partners/statistics/2010

Access to HE conference 2010: Building on success

This year's Access to HE conference, held at BMA House in London on 17 June, marked 20 years of the Access Recognition Scheme. A report on the conference is featured in QAA's latest news bulletin *higher quality 33* (www.qaa.ac.uk/news/higherquality), and films of the presentations and panel sessions are available on our website (www.accesstohe.ac.uk/news).

Conference delegates shared and discussed examples of good practice, reflecting the range of thoughtful and creative ways in which AVAs and practitioners work together, and with partners in higher education, to address students' needs in the changing context for Access to HE.

AVAs

Discussion forums and meetings organised and facilitated by AVAs (including web-based and online groups) were frequently highlighted. Activities particularly valued by delegates included:

- subject or pathway-based communities of practice, allowing practitioners to share information, ideas and teaching resources, and providing support for subject tutors in small centres
- opportunities for groups of higher education subject specialist staff to meet Access to HE staff in the same discipline areas to identify areas for development in curriculum design and assessment, and to resolve areas of concern
- the bringing together of student representatives from each of an AVA's different providers - including representation on an AVA's Board or other committees
- inter-college discussion groups which are brought together to consider information derived from the AVA's data, focusing on different success rates and what's working well in different places.

Access to HE courses

Examples of good practice on courses fell into three areas.

1 Improving retention and achievement:

- enhanced course admissions processes, including screening to identify applicants' learning support needs and their readiness for Access to HE
- close monitoring of individual students' attendance and performance across the course to identify students at risk (for example, using 'traffic light' systems), with follow-up and early interventions by designated staff to minimise withdrawals
- on-course support through personal tutoring arrangements, and dedicated points of contact for Access to HE students within providers' central support services
- pre-Access provision to prepare those without any recent study experience and with very few qualifications
- careful planning of the induction process and the early weeks of the course to include, for example, work experience on vocational courses; career planning; UCAS application advice; and full information about the pattern of assignments across the course, stressing the academic demands of the course and the need for careful time management and organisation.

Many similar practices were reflected in our March 2010 report *Access to HE courses: retention, selection and demand* (www.accesstohe.ac.uk/news).

2 Strengthening and enhancing the holistic nature of Access to HE:

- particular emphasis given to developing specific study skills for academic progress
- mechanisms to provide in-depth and individual support for learning and achievement (such as 'learning coaching' and a 'surgery' approach to tutorial support)
- developing and maintaining a sense of group cohesion to foster peer support (for example, through 'buddy' systems and encouraging students to get to know each other on social networking sites before the start of the course)
- emphasising the integrity of the Access to HE course as a complete experience for students, with as much as possible delivered as a defined course, with dedicated staff and focal point within the college.

3 Innovations in delivery models:

- several individual examples were reported which suggested that the increased use of colleges' virtual learning environments (VLEs), on which course information and materials were made available, coupled with an increase in online support was, in some places, resulting in less distinction between distance and classroom-based learning, with learning opportunities being provided and supported in a variety of ways. There was also some recognition that the characteristics of some target groups may have changed, and while the need for peer support and frequent contact with tutors remained essential for most Access to HE students, others - such as those in full-time employment and younger students - were looking for, and may benefit from, alternative ways of studying. In response, some providers have developed courses for such target groups that are based on blended learning models, with reduced time spent in college and independent study supported by online resources.

Access to HE practitioners

The value of team cohesion ran through ideas about successful ways of working for practitioners. Particular themes raised by groups were:

- the value of dedicated staff and team working, recognising the common context of a team which relied on part-time or other staff who taught mainly in other areas. Examples were given of communications channels being developed that would fully include all staff and ensure that newcomers to the Access to HE team would receive a full induction to the course
- the need for close communication between the Access to HE team and those providing centrally organised support and advisory services for students, to ensure that students' needs could be expertly assessed and fully addressed
- the key role of an Access to HE coordinator at course or pathway level and the value of dedicated administrative support.

UCAS applications for 2011: information for providers

Qualification title

Please note that *The Access to Higher Education Diploma and credit specifications* (www.accesstohe.ac.uk/home/publications) includes a standard format for Access to HE Diplomas titles: 'Individual award titles have a common format: Access to Higher Education Diploma (subject/area of study)'. It goes on to explain that 'Award titles are approved through AVAs' validation processes' and that 'This format for the title of the award is also used in any information provided to receiving institutions (including in Universities and Colleges Admissions Service applications) about students' target achievement on individual programmes'.

Students should therefore give the formal title of the particular Diploma for which they are studying, as approved through the AVA's validation procedure, as the title of their intended qualification on UCAS applications, irrespective of whether this or an alternative title is used for the Access to HE course for colleges' marketing or other purposes. It is this formal title for the Diploma which, together with the provider's name, is registered with QAA as the course title and recorded on QAA's Access courses database (and which provides the basis of our advice to the Skills Funding Agency about courses recognised for funding). If the formal title of the specific Diploma is not used on UCAS applications, higher education institutions using the Access courses database may not be able to identify whether a particular Diploma has been recognised by QAA.

Credit achievement

If a student lists on their UCAS application a set of units from the Access to HE programme which, in total, would provide more than 60 credits, the tutor reference should explain how this relates to the requirement of the Access to HE Diploma specification that students be awarded the Diploma on the basis on 60 credits achieved for completion of a coherent programme of study. This may involve clarification about how the particular Diploma's rules of combination are applied, including, for example, the extent to which units are alternatives, or where some units are available as options selected at a later stage of the course, or other similar information that may not be evident from the information provided by the student.

Grading the Access to HE Diploma: supplementary guidance for AVAs

Please note: the grading implementation handbook (www.accesstohe.ac.uk/avas) is the authoritative source of information and guidance about the Access to HE grading model and how it should be applied. Feedback over the last year suggests that there is no need to make immediate changes or additions to the main guidance published in 2009, but there is evidence that some of the key information has not yet been fully understood or implemented by all providers.

This supplementary guidance focuses on issues that have been raised during 2009-10, which AVAs might need to highlight with their own provider networks.

Grade descriptors and units

1 A unit has been assigned insufficient grade descriptors to capture the full range of the significant characteristics of the work being assessed

The seven grade descriptors were derived from an analysis of the characteristics of student work on which tutors based their professional judgements about the overall and comparative standard of the work. Some subjects, though, require students to demonstrate a wider set of skills and attributes (as defined by the descriptors) than others, so it is to be expected that units in some subjects will routinely make use of a larger number of descriptors than others. As an example, a pure mathematics unit is unlikely to need to use more than GD3 and GD7 (see paragraph 3), whereas a large humanities unit might well need GD1, GD2, GD4, GD5 and GD7.

Feedback from tutors indicates that too few grade descriptors have been assigned to some units to be able to capture all the aspects of the work that are significant to their judgement about a student's performance in the unit. This becomes problematic if a student's performance in an aspect of the work regarded as important by the tutor but not covered by the assigned descriptors, is of a lower standard than their performance in the aspects of the work that are covered. Where this is the case, tutors may have resolved the problem by including their judgements about the aspect of the work not catered for within their overall judgement about quality (GD7). As a result, the grade for GD7 is reduced to reflect the lower standard of the work in relation to the characteristic not covered elsewhere, and is lower than the other grade indicators.

This practice might lead eventually to the same final unit grade being awarded as would be awarded with the additional grade descriptor included, but it cannot ensure that different tutors assessing the same unit will all use GD7 in this way. It could also lead to a situation where GD7 is increasingly used as a 'catch-all' for significant aspects of an assignment which should be captured more accurately, discretely and helpfully to the student by one of the more specific descriptors.

In such cases, there may be a noticeable mismatch between the grades awarded for GD7 and the grades for other grade descriptors for a particular unit (or units). That is not to say that the grades given for GD7 will always be equivalent to the grade indicators given for the other descriptors, but if the explanation for any such mismatch is in terms of performance in an area that is included in one of the descriptors not assigned to the unit, that descriptor may need to be added to the unit. For this reason, instances of significant or widespread mismatch should be considered through the moderation process so that, if appropriate, the need for unit review can be drawn to the AVA's attention.

If, through moderation or other mechanisms for monitoring grading practice, it is agreed that there are too few grade descriptors assigned to a unit, AVAs should agree and formally approve a revised set of descriptors, ensuring that changes can be implemented as quickly as possible.

2 The use of GD5, Communication and presentation, has been restricted because a) it is thought that it relates primarily to literacy skills and/or b) there is a concern that its use will disadvantage students with special learning needs

It is a mistake to see GD5 as being essentially about the assessment of literacy skills. The introduction to GD5 explains that it is about 'a student's ability to structure and present their work in ways that aid the effective communication of their thinking and the reader's and viewer's ability to understand it. It includes all forms of presentation: written, visual and oral'. So while GD5 includes components that relate to literacy, such as 'syntax', 'spelling' and 'punctuation', equally important are the

components which have no necessary relationship to the written word, such as 'format', 'structure' and 'use of images'. It is therefore likely that GD5 will be used widely across all subject areas, although the components which are selected most frequently in different subjects and for different kinds of assignment are likely to vary.

Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that literacy and general communication skills are essential to the success of undergraduates in most areas of higher education, and this was emphasised by those who contributed to the development of the grade descriptors. GD5 is included within the set of descriptors to provide the opportunity to give formal recognition of these skills in the demonstration of Access to HE students' readiness for higher education level study. It may be an area which receives attention in the teaching given to all students and/or through learning support which is available to individuals or groups on the course.

Students with special learning needs, including dyslexia, are likely to have difficulties which impact upon, and need to be addressed within, more aspects of their learning and assessment programme than communication skills, and the support they need is separate and additional to the support provided to all Access to HE students in developing their general communication and literacy skills. Providers should have clear policies and procedures for identifying students with special learning needs and providing appropriate support. This support will include special arrangements for such students to provide fair access to assessment for any qualification and assessment regime, including the Access to HE Diploma, and allow GD5 to be applied fairly to all students, so that its value in providing a framework and standard for the development of the communication skills of all Access to HE students is not lost or undermined. Tutors should not attempt to make informal judgements about which students have special learning needs and attempt to make adjustments through the grading system.

3 Tutors are concerned about the limited options for grading in certain types of units

Some Access to HE units have a very tight focus on a specific set of knowledge and skills. This can be the case in some mathematics units, for example, where there is a focus on developing a particular mathematical skill and assessing students to ensure that they have mastered that skill, and it may also occur in other subjects. In these instances, it may be appropriate for only two grade descriptors to be used (such as GD3, Application of skills, perhaps using numerical marking, and GD7), and both may focus on the same aspects of the student's work.

4 Tutors are unsure about the relationship between learning outcomes, grade descriptors and assignments

The Access to HE grading scheme is not based on an assumed one-to-one relationship between the grade descriptors and learning outcomes. Judgements about student work in relation to grading apply across the work for assignments and units, generally in a matrix relationship. However, it is possible that in some units, because of the way the learning outcomes have been structured, something close to a one-to-one relationship emerges, but this is coincidental, and tutors should not expect to find such a relationship when they are planning the use of the descriptors across a unit.

There are also some inconsistencies in the language used about assessment between the QAA guidance, AVAs and centres. For example, centres may have different understandings of the terms 'assignments', 'assessments' and 'tasks'. In the grading implementation handbook, 'assignments' refers to the output of student work, both as described in terms of the expectations and requirements given in the assignment brief and the major pieces of assessed work students produce in response to the brief. 'Tasks' refers to individual items or stages of work within assignments.

AVAs should also note that the guidance consistently uses the term 'grade descriptors', as the descriptors describe the characteristics of 'grades' not of the process of 'grading'. Neither AVAs nor centres should refer to 'grading criteria' as the correct use of the grading model does not lead to the generation of specific 'grading criteria'. The items within descriptors are also now consistently referred to as 'components' rather than 'elements' or 'indicative content'.

Applying the grade descriptors

5 Tutors are trying to use all or most of the content of a grade descriptor (that is, all the components) in an assessment

Tutors may not be clear that the components of the grade descriptors have been designed to accommodate all different subjects for which there are Access to HE units and, therefore, to include the full range of different skills and attributes of work valued within that wide range of subjects. To derive the greatest benefit from the grading scheme, tutors need to consider all the components that are available, but then select and use only those that are appropriate for their subject and the nature of the assessed work that students are being asked to complete.

6 A tutor has selected additional components from the Distinction section of a grade descriptor. For example, 'analysis' has been included at Distinction but not at Merit

Tutors may not understand the underlying structure of the grading model. Some grading systems work on the basis that the demonstration of 'higher level' skills, such as analysis and synthesis, is the type of performance that is needed to attract a high grade. However, Access to HE courses are based on a large number of existing units which provide students with the opportunity to demonstrate the full range of skills associated with level 3, including skills such as analysis or synthesis. The grade descriptors in the Access to HE grading scheme are therefore based on the principle that if a certain type of performance, such as analysis, is required by a unit, then all students must demonstrate some level of ability in this skill to achieve Pass, but that some students will also be more advanced or capable than others in the use of this skill. The descriptors therefore provide a framework within which this range of performance can be recognised: a very skilful student might achieve a Distinction grade indicator for their analysis, while a student who demonstrates slightly less skill in analysis may achieve a Merit.

7 A tutor selects entirely different grade components from the same grade descriptor at Merit and Distinction

This may be happening for similar reasons to those discussed in the previous point. Tutors must be clear that, because of the underlying logic of the model, whatever components are selected for a particular assignment must be consistently applied across Merit and Distinction.

8 Tutors are making changes to the wording of the grade descriptors

Although choice and flexibility is an important principle of the grading scheme, it's vitally important for quality that the integrity of the grade descriptors is safeguarded, and that tutors work with the descriptors as given, without changing them in any way, either in their own records or in the information provided to students. If tutors feel the language of the descriptors needs explaining to students, they have the opportunity to do this through the information they provide that shows how the chosen components relate to the set work. Tutors should not:

- embed the language of the grade components within the task details of assignments
- reword or change the punctuation of the components (for example, if analysis/synthesis/creativity are presented with slashes, the student may assume that there is a choice between the three, whereas if they are given as separate bullet points, the student may assume that evidence of all the types of performance included is required).

9 Tutors are unclear about the opportunities available to them to incorporate numerical marking within grading

An opportunity to use numerical marking for fixed response assessment, and how this should be used, is explained within the guidance and referred to within the *Tutor's quick guide to grading* (www.accesstohe.ac.uk/feStaff). The reference to 'fixed response' means that numerical marking can potentially be used in any subject where discrete testing of knowledge is required by the unit. Tutors are responsible (in discussion and agreement with moderators) for constructing assignments that ensure that when using numerical marking, the standard for Pass (that is, all the assessment criteria) can be met, and for determining and justifying the grade boundaries for Merit and Distinction in relation to their numerical marking scheme.

10 Tutors are not using the most up-to-date version of the grade descriptors

Some minor amendments were made to the presentation of the grade descriptors in October 2009 (www.accesstohe.ac.uk/feStaff). These changes clarify the options for tutors in selecting and combining grade components, and some of the terms and labels in relation to the structure of the descriptors were changed. For example, the term 'indicative content' was removed as it did not accurately describe the nature and purpose of grade components. AVAs should ensure that centres are working with the current version of the descriptors.

11 Tutors are not sure how to apply grading when a learning outcome requires several pieces of work to be completed (for example, in a study skills or art and design unit)

In some units, such as those found in creative subjects, or in study skills, it may be necessary to assess a learning outcome more than once, in as much as the learning outcome requires a student to produce more than one item of assessed work (for example, several products to show the development of a creative skill, four pieces of writing). AVAs and their moderators need to be clear how this practice is operated to comply with the assessment regulations. For example, if more than one piece of work is required, this has to be clearly shown to be developmental activity that it is all required for the achievement of the learning outcome.

However, in this scenario, all of the work should be submitted before any grading decisions are made, which may mean that there will be no formal assessment of the student's work for this learning outcome until towards the end of the unit. If in this situation it becomes difficult to disentangle general discussion and feedback about the work from feedback about potential grade outcomes, it may be appropriate to specify that each piece of work constitutes a separate assignment (and therefore can result in separate grade indicators) as the learning outcome requires more than one piece of work. This practice would also make it possible for formal assessment points to be created earlier on in the student's progress through the unit.

Managing assessment

12 Tutors who use a large number of assignments for a unit report that they feel they are 'over-assessing' a unit

It appears that some assessment plans for units contain numerous assignments and now that all assignments generate grade indicators, this has created a significant assessment load for students and associated workload for tutors. Tutors in this situation may wish to review their assessment plan and explore the benefit of reducing the number of discrete assignments, perhaps by combining assignments from the original plan into a smaller number of assignments.

13 Tutors use all of the grade descriptors assigned to a unit for all assignments, and feel this creates over-assessment or gives too much significance to a 'small' assignment

Tutors may not have understood the flexibility they have in creating an assessment and grading plan for a unit. Where there is more than one assignment in an assessment plan, they have choice both in terms of which of the assigned grade descriptors to use for each assignment, and which of the components to apply from those descriptors. They can also choose to use a different combination of the assigned descriptors for the different assignments. Where the same grade descriptor is used for more than one assignment, different components may be used (as is appropriate) for the different assignments, thus ensuring the relevance of the descriptor to the nature of the work, and providing greater overall coverage of the descriptor.

Integrated assessment and grading

14 Tutors are not sure how to prepare assignment briefs for integrated assignments that include grading information

Access to HE courses often provide opportunities for the creation of assessment opportunities where significant pieces of assessed work cover some or all of the learning outcomes of more than one unit. This integrated approach covers a range of practices, from the integration of the assessment of whole units (as is often the case, for example, with study skills units) to the identification of assignment structures that address one or more learning outcomes from more than one unit (as can be the case in art and design, when some aspects of a techniques unit may be integrated with a project unit).

Integrated approaches such as these provide some useful opportunities for tutor and students, but need careful planning to ensure that grade descriptors are applied appropriately, and that students have clear information about how grading will work for each of the assignments.

15 Planning integrated assessment

Whatever the extent or form of the integration, some general principles apply. The guidance in the grading implementation handbook about the allocation of grade descriptors to units emphasises the need to refer to the learning outcomes of the unit under consideration rather than how that unit generally is, or could be, assessed. This is particularly important where the assessment of study skills units is integrated with the assessment of subject units, as there is a danger that the content and requirements of the two units become merged when planning the assessment.

In planning integrated assessment, it is important to ensure that clear assignment briefs are prepared for students for study skills units, even if the work for the study skill will be drawn from other units, be that one unit that has been predetermined for use in this way, or whether students can choose work from any of a number of other units to submit for the study skills unit (see paragraph 16). These briefs should contain all of the information recommended for any assignment brief, so that it is clear to the student how the work will be assessed, and how the grade descriptors for the study skills unit will be applied to their work. This should be clearly distinct from the requirements of the subject unit from which the work may be drawn.

For example, if an integrated study skills unit includes GD1, Understanding of the subject, the grading indicator given applies to how well the student has demonstrated their understanding of the study skill(s) itself (such as why essays should be structured in certain ways; what factors might influence the way in which images are used within a presentation). It does not apply to how well the student demonstrates understanding of the subject content of the unit with which the study skills unit has been integrated, as this is assessed separately. If demonstration of an understanding of the knowledge base is not a requirement of the study skills unit, then it is not appropriate to assign GD1 to such a unit. Furthermore, if knowledge of the subject covered by the assignment is assessed twice, it may lead to 'double counting', with credit being awarded twice for the same achievement.

16 Assessment practice for integrated assessment

Students' submission of their work for integrated assessments must be managed in a way that ensures that the process of assessment (and possibly reassessment) complies with the assessment regulations. Two different approaches are commonly used:

a the student, knowing that aspects of two units are going to be assessed through one piece of work, submits the same piece of work to the two tutors at the same time (for example, the study skills tutor and the subject specialist tutor). In this scenario, if the work submitted for assessment is judged not to be satisfactory to meet the standard required for one or both of the units, a further opportunity should be provided within the regulations for resubmissions

b an alternative approach to this situation is one where the student, knowing that to meet the requirements of the study skills unit they will have to submit an essay, is invited to select an essay that they judge to meet the standard required from pieces of work already assessed by a subject tutor (that is, the student 'claims' the learning outcome(s) of the study skills unit (see paragraph 16) by submitting when they judge they have a piece of work that meets the requirements). If the study skills unit includes a requirement that the student demonstrates understanding of the theory of essay writing, as well as evidence that they can write an effective essay, they could also briefly annotate, or provide a commentary on, their own work to show how the practice reflects the theory. If this submission is judged by the study skills tutor not to meet the required standard, then the assessment regulations for resubmissions should be applied.

As already discussed, integrated assessments can occur in other contexts, such as the assessment of learning outcomes from two different but related units. Whatever the precise details of the integration, the same considerations apply. Tutors should:

- develop clear unit assessment plans for the relevant units
- provide clear assignment briefs to students showing how the assignment requirements relate to the different learning outcomes, and how the grade descriptors for the associated units are being

applied to this particular piece of work. For study skills units that will be assessed through various opportunities during the course of a programme, these briefs should be provided at the beginning of the programme. Where the integration is an assignment that integrates the assessment of learning outcomes from more than one unit in a pre-planned way, the information can be provided to students in one assignment brief, but must be clearly mapped to each set of learning outcomes and descriptors as appropriate

- ensure that students are clear about what constitutes the formal submission of the work
- be clear about how they will provide feedback to students about the work that relates it back clearly to the two sets of learning outcomes and descriptors
- record the resulting grade indicators in the relevant unit grade profile.

Providing information and feedback to students in the context of grading

17 Tutors are not sure how best to share assessment planning and information with students

Many AVAs have responded to requests from centres for a more consistent approach to assessment and assignment planning, and to providing information to students about how they will be assessed. The *Tutor's quick guide to grading* lists the minimum information that good practice indicates students need. In providing grading information, tutors should ensure that they do not change the grade descriptors in any way, nor attempt to rewrite them as grading criteria (see paragraphs 4 and 8). Many centres now also ensure that students are provided with a copy of the full set of descriptors, perhaps in a student handbook, placed within a VLE or provided with the web link to the full guidance on grading on the Access to HE website for reference.

18 Tutors find they are repeating themselves when giving feedback to students about grading

If tutors are providing information to students when an assignment is set that makes it clear both which grade components will apply to their work, and, if appropriate, which aspects of the work will provide the best opportunities for achieving the standards required by the grade descriptors, it may well be that there is little more for a tutor to say about a student's work if this standard is achieved. Tutors must use their professional judgement about the opportunities to provide useful feedback and guidance to students, and the occasions when the language of the grade components is sufficient in itself to indicate how the grade standard has been achieved.

19 Tutors are not sure about the status of their discussions with students in large credit, developmental units

Large credit units, focusing on development of skills and critical abilities (such as are often found in art and design or creative arts programmes, or to support extended projects), may involve significant amounts of discussion between tutors and students as part of the teaching and learning process. AVAs need to be clear about the status of this discussion, how it relates to the concept of 'draft submissions' and, if and when it becomes formal feedback to students about their achievement or non-achievement, how this relates to the assessment regulations which apply to resubmission.

Resubmissions

20 Tutors are concerned that students can abuse the resubmissions rules

The assessment regulations allow tutors to manage the process of resubmission so that the opportunities given to students are commensurate with the amount and type of work that is still to be completed or improved. Resubmission opportunities can only be given to students to enable them to meet the requirements of Pass. No feedback about the standard of the work in relation to grades should be given at this stage. It is within the tutor's control to provide a student with a very limited period of time in which to address an omission if they judge this to be appropriate.

