

This bulletin is our principal means of updating Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) about current developments. Please contact us directly (access@qaa.ac.uk) for more information about any of the items mentioned here.

UCAS applications

The UCAS Apply system, through which most students make their higher education (HE) applications, now provides a drop-down menu for students with Access qualifications. The menu has three options: Access to HE certificate, Access to HE Diploma and Access other. Please make sure that providers are aware of this so they can advise students appropriately. It would also be useful to remind providers that students' applications should refer to their qualification by the approved title of the specific Diploma (given in the standard format), and that unit information should be provided. Inaccurate or incomplete information provided at this stage can lead to inappropriate or unachievable offers being made to students by HE institutions (HEIs).

In the past, providers have not necessarily highlighted the fact that the Access to HE qualification is recognised by QAA. Over the last few years, QAA recognition has become an increasingly common feature in the standard entry requirements of HEIs. Therefore, it is important that students are made aware of the status of their qualification, by the time they make their applications to HE, to ensure that they have access to the full range of progression opportunities.

Qualification development update

Grading trials continue this year and participating AVAs and centres have already received briefings. Further details will be provided to AVAs and others through the mechanisms described in the communications plan circulated in September. If you haven't already received a copy and would like to do so, please contact us directly. Details of the next meeting for AVA officers will be circulated shortly.

Access to HE courses database

We were able to launch the database ahead of schedule - at the end of July - and lists of confirmed courses were provided to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) on 31 July, 13 August and 6 October. Courses confirmed by AVAs in the future will be picked up in regular reports to the LSC. The LSC is currently allocating new learning aims database codes to courses.

Recent developments to the database include:

- more advanced search options added to the course search
- a new feature for exporting search results to a spreadsheet
- additional information fields added to course detail pages, including the QAA course code. You can now provide direct links to the course details held in the database by

Access headlines...Access headlines..

For AVA action

AVAs need to consider a number of items in this bulletin:

- Remind providers about UCAS applications.
- Check whether the link you provided for the QAA database is going to help someone looking for course details or further information (for example, does it give telephone numbers for relevant staff at the AVA and/or provide direct links to centres?)
- Check addendum to AVA administration user guide for changes to log-in procedures.
- Consider contributions to the Access to HE website.
- Make a note of the 2009 conference date.

Free promotional material

Copies of *A student guide to the ...Access to Higher Education Diploma* (www.accesstohe.ac.uk/home/publications/casestudies/studentguide.pdf) are still available on request. This is the most accessed document on the Access to HE website. AVAs, further education colleges and HEIs may order up to 50 hard copies free of charge, with a small charge being made for any additional copies. Please remind any of your members who have not yet taken advantage of this offer that they still can by emailing qaa@linneydirect.com.

New ARLC member

Dr Philip Cardew, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students and Quality) at London South Bank University, has been appointed to the Access Recognition and Licensing Committee (ARLC). Full details of the ARLC's current membership are at: www.accesstohe.ac.uk/aboutus/arl/default.asp

using the export feature to combine the QAA course code into a web address. (See the addendum to the AVA administration user guide for full details of this facility and other enhancements to the database.)

We know from enquiries received by QAA that the database is being used by potential students looking for courses, as well as for reference by HEIs and others. It would therefore be helpful if you could review whether the link you have provided to the Access to HE courses database takes users to a place on your website which is a useful 'next step' for those who need more detailed information.

Statistics submission 2008

Please note that there are new log-in arrangements for the submission of statistics in 2008. These are detailed in the addendum to the AVA administration user guide.

Access to HE website

Use of the Access to HE website (www.accesstohe.ac.uk) has steadily increased since its launch in June 2007. For many people, our home page is the first contact they have with Access to HE and so we are keen to ensure that they get clear, direct messages about the qualification and Access to HE experience. To this end, we would like to receive your ideas regarding the kinds of messages we might include on the website to support the work that you and providers do to promote Access to HE.

Ideas received so far include: 'Opening doors, transforming lives'; 'Unlock the door to a brighter future'; 'It's never too late'; 'Live to learn, learn to live'; and 'Open up a world of opportunities'. How would you sum up Access to HE in just a few words? Send your ideas to access@qaa.ac.uk

We also hope to develop the website so that it features information about local good practice initiatives and innovative developments. A few short sentences (or pictures) often attract as much interest and attention as lengthier articles. If you are involved in activities for which you think there might be a wider audience, please also get in touch.

Feedback from your own or others' experience of using the Access to HE website or the new courses database is also very much welcomed. Please email any comments to access@qaa.ac.uk

Data survey

Thank you for your cooperation in forwarding the data questionnaire to providers. We have received 220 responses, which gives us a very substantial and rich data source for analysis. This is currently underway and individual data reports will be sent to AVAs at the end of October.

Access to HE conference - 18 June 2009

Next year's annual conference will be held on 18 June 2009. It will be an AVA and practitioner-focused event, with the main focus being on questions relating to the implementation of grading. In response to the positive feedback we received about the venue for last year's conference, we will be returning to the Lakeside Conference Centre at Aston Business School.

Published since the last bulletin

The following documents are now available on the Access to HE website:

- *Guidelines for use of the Access to HE logo*
(www.accesstohe.ac.uk/home/publications/logoguidelines)
- *Key statistics and Joint agency statistical report*
(www.accesstohe.ac.uk/partners/statistics/2008)
- *Grading the Access to Higher Education Diploma: progress towards implementation* (revised June 2008) (www.accesstohe.ac.uk/home/publications/grading/progressimplementation08)
- *Annual report guidelines* (2007-08)
(www.accesstohe.ac.uk/avas/statisticssubmission/AVAguidancenotes0708.asp)
- *AVA data submission guidance* (2007-08)
(www.accesstohe.ac.uk/avas/statisticssubmission/AVAdatasub0708.asp)