

ACCESS TO HE DIPLOMA

GUIDANCE ON EXAMINATIONS BOARDS and FINAL AWARDS BOARDS

Introduction

All Gateway Qualifications Access to HE Diploma programmes are required to hold an Examinations Board and a Final Awards Board for each run of the programme.

Within an AVA, formal authority for the award of Access to HE Diplomas is delegated to an Awards Board. The Access Centre Moderator and one other person appointed by Gateway Qualifications will act as the AVA's representative at the Final Awards Board.

The following guidance relates to all Diplomas which commenced in September 2014 or later. Students who have followed a part-time programme which began prior to this date, should be processed using earlier guidance (Version 8 dated August 2014), and should have achievements recorded on paper-based RACs. Updated or amplified guidance is marked with a bold line in the left-hand margin.

Examinations Boards from June 2015

The Examinations Board is an **internal meeting** held by the Access provider. The Exams Board is the forum where detailed discussion of all assessment decisions concerning the achievement of individual learners by the Access programme team takes place. It is not attended by the Access Centre Moderator.

The Exams Board is a separate meeting from the Final Awards Board. **It takes place at least one day ahead of the final moderation and Final Awards Board (FAB)** so that all student results can be produced and entered into electronic RACs. This provides time for the Access Centre Moderator to select final samples for moderation and the opportunity to make an informed decision on NR extension requests, where required, at the FAB.

The Exams Board will result in completed electronic RACs for all students who are claiming completed Diplomas or certificates of completion for units achieved. These electronic RACs must be checked carefully before uploading to ensure that the information is accurate and matches the evidence on the students' portfolios. Documentation produced at the Exam Board must include formal minutes, a final set of results for every student, any borderline decisions, referrals, instances of extenuating circumstances and completed NR forms, aegrotat or posthumous awards and incidences of academic misconduct. These will need to be presented at the FAB for a final decision to be made by the Access Centre Moderator.

There may be a series of meetings to complete these activities, one for each course / subject, or there may be one meeting which includes the results for all learners from all Access Diploma courses.

NR forms and extensions to the learning agreement: Only in the most exceptional circumstances, to be agreed in advance with the Access Centre Moderator, will learners be allowed to complete assessed work required for the award of credit or the award of an Access Diploma after the Exams Board. **Any extension must be agreed formally with Gateway**

Qualifications using the NR Form, which should detail the anticipated completion date for each piece of outstanding work and should be supported by appropriate evidence to support an extension to the deadline.

Outcomes of the Examinations Board from June 2015

- **Completed electronic RACs** for all students' achievements should be uploaded to Gateway Qualifications at least 24 hours prior to the Final Awards Board. Students who are granted extensions and who are listed on an NR form will have an additional separate RAC generated when their extension unit work is completed and the final claim is to be made.
- **A final set of results** to be presented to the FAB for a final decision to be made by the Access Centre Moderator. These must not include destination information for individual students.
- **Proposals for the FAB** relating to resubmissions, extensions for learners with extenuating circumstances (an NR form for each student affected), incidences of academic misconduct, proposed aegrotat or posthumous awards.
- **Minutes** of the Exams Board. A template is attached for use by Access providers.
- **Recommendations for the Award of the Access to HE Diploma**
- **Recommendations for the Award of Credit** (where the full Access Diploma has not been achieved)
- **Course data.** MIS information must be obtained and evaluated as part of the Course Review within the FAB. Recruitment, retention and success data should be prepared for individual courses and for the overall course, so that relative performance levels can be analysed, and equality, diversity and inclusion statistics should also be considered within the review.

The Final Awards Board (FAB) and the Final Visit from June 2015

For efficiency and practicality, the FAB sometimes takes place on the same day as the Final Moderation visit by the Access Centre Moderator. Providers with a large number of students are advised to schedule the FAB at least one day after a Final Moderation visit, to allow sufficient time for all moderation evidence to be properly reviewed. All FABs for Access to HE courses should normally take place before 15th July for September cohorts and 30th January for January cohorts.

The date of a FAB should be agreed in advance with the Centre Moderator at the Initial visit. Gateway Qualifications should be notified of the date so that an AVA representative can attend.

Any final examinations required for certification should be held at least three weeks before a FAB to allow time for assessment and collation of results to be completed.

At the Final Moderation visit the Access Centre Moderator will:

- Check the provider's response to Gateway Qualifications Quality procedures. All IV evidence, including the IV schedule, tracker, assignment IV folder, assessment IV feedback and action sheets must be available for the Centre Moderator to review.
- Scrutinise course management, delivery and assessment, learner achievement and progression, learner feedback on the programme(s) and subject moderation outcomes and actions.
- Sample learners' work from the results listed on the electronic RACs completed by the provider. **All portfolios of student work for students listed on the electronic RACs and NR forms must be available for sampling at the Final visit.** Students with no portfolio evidence available will have results removed from the RAC. It is desirable for the Centre moderator to have reviewed any borderline work ahead of the Final Awards Board discussions.
- Record actions, recommendations and examples of good practice to be reported to the FAB.

What must be presented to the Access Centre Moderator at the visit?

- **A laptop or PC with an internet connection so that the Centre Moderator can log in to electronically confirm the electronic RACs**
- Criteria for successful completion of the Access Diploma (validated as part of the formal Access Diploma submission)
- Rules of Combination (ROC) for each Access to HE Diploma course.
- An agreed results profile for **each learner**. This should directly address the programme's Assessment Regulations and assessment strategy. As good practice, many centres attach a results profile to the front of each portfolio, and ensure that students arrange their portfolio evidence in that same order.
- Records of any representations (by learners to challenge grades) and the outcomes of this process
- Records and documentation related to any requests for referral being brought to the Final Awards Board
- Minutes of the Exams Board.
- Completion and achievement data. Data must be obtained from MIS to show individual course and overall course statistics. Equality, diversity and inclusion data should also be presented. Progression information for students should be presented after the formal end of the Final Awards Board
- Any claims for award of credit based on credit exemption, credit transfer or accreditation of prior learning (APL). It must be noted that these claims are presented for ratification, and not for approval. Any RPL claims must be addressed by Access teams at the beginning of the course to ensure that the student has completed evidence to cover all of a unit's assessment criteria.

Business of the Final Awards Board

The business of the Final Awards Board covers the following activities:

- Approval of the award of credits, grades and Access to HE Diplomas.
- Confirmation that, for each student for whom the award of the Access to HE Diploma is approved, the rules of combination for the named Access to HE Diploma have been met and the credit and grade profiles are accurate and complete.
- Final decisions about referrals, special cases, including extenuating circumstances, aegrotat and posthumous awards, and cases of academic misconduct.

- The Centre Moderator electronically confirms the Recommendation for Award of Credit (RACs) to confirm the Awards Board's approval of all Awards and any other decisions made by the Awards Board. *Awards for part-time students who commenced courses prior to September 2014 will be confirmed by the Centre Moderator's signature on a paper copy of the RACs.*
- The Centre confirms that its arrangements for the **checking, processing and issue of certificates to learners are compliant with AVA requirements** and that signed documentation will be returned to the AVA, by the specified deadline and in accordance with any other AVA reporting requirements.

The Final Awards Board's decisions must be formally recorded by a set of minutes which relate to the Agenda drawn up by Gateway Qualifications. A copy of the minutes must be sent to Gateway Qualifications after the end of the meeting. Where any alterations or additions to the recommendations are agreed by the Awards Board, these are normally recorded as amendments on the minutes.

The Final Awards Board **must not receive any information about HEI offers for progression** which may have been made to any student, and such information must not play any part in its considerations. (The meeting of the Awards Board will be formally closed before any such information is shared.)¹

Notes on the issue of Diplomas and transcripts

- The AVA checks the documentation received from the Awards Board and issues Access to HE Diplomas and transcripts of achievement to Centres
- Centres are asked to confirm that Diplomas and transcripts have been received from the AVA and sent on to students (or collected by them). On receipt and checking of the certificates by the Centre, the Access Certificate Receipt Form must be completed and returned to Gateway Qualifications within 5 working days
- Centres should keep records of the receipt and onward transmission of students' Access certificates and transcripts for a minimum period of 3 years
- Centres must have a secure and reliable process for the receipt, recording and onward transmission of Access Diplomas and achievement transcripts
- Centres must ensure that all Diplomas and transcripts are received by students within 30 days of receipt from the AVA. **Any certificates not received or collected by students at this time must be returned to the AVA by secure means.**

¹ QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education. *Grading scheme handbook Section E: Student Results and Awards Boards* September 2013

Membership of the Final Awards Board

Final Awards Boards may need to differ in size and composition to reflect the size, range and organisation of all the course(s) being considered.

The Final Awards Board comprises:

- The Chair
- The Access Centre Moderator (or equivalent)
- One other representative from Gateway Qualifications (the AVA)
- A provider representative for example, the Quality Manager
- Access Coordinator or Access Programme Manager
- Course representatives for each course

Please note: Neither the Access Centre Moderator nor any member of the Access team (including the Access Coordinator) should chair the meeting.

Responsibilities

Access Centre Moderator

Responsibilities include:

- Confirmation of assessment judgements
- Ratification of results, including the achievement of the correct combination of credits (detailed in the rules of combination).
- Final decisions on borderline cases, referrals, instances of extenuating circumstances, aegrotat or posthumous awards, incidences of academic misconduct
- Electronic confirmation of the Recommendation of Award of Credit (RACs) if all prescribed requirements have been met.
- Presentation of a Final Moderation report (ACM5) based upon actions identified in previous moderation reports and the outcomes of the Final Moderation visit.

It is not expected that the Moderator will be involved in detailed discussion of individual learners' cases, as this will have been decided at the Exams Board.

Moderators will only confirm the recommendation for the award of credit (RAC) if they are satisfied that adequate evidence and summative information has been provided on a learner's achievement.

The AVA representative will ensure that the Final Awards Board is conducted in accordance with Gateway Qualifications' requirements. The moderator should only confirm the Recommendation of Award of Credit (RAC) if the prescribed requirements have been followed.

It is the responsibility of Gateway Qualifications to ensure that confirmation of the RACs is gained before certificates are produced.

Chair of the Final Awards Board

- Ensures due process is followed and the agenda is followed in an effective and timely manner.
- **The Chair of the Final Awards Board must be appointed by the provider.** It is recommended that the Chair is a member of senior management team from the provider, with sufficient authority and distance from the Access programme to act with objectivity.

AVA Representative (this person can be a second Moderator)

- Ensures due process is followed
- Notes that the RACs have been confirmed as accurate by the provider team and Centre Moderator
- Provides advice and guidance on matters relating to the AVA.
- Provides a written report to the AVA which details any queries which cannot be resolved by the Moderator at the Final Awards Board

Provider Representative/ Access Coordinator

- Ensures due process is followed.
- Takes minutes of the Final Awards Board and provides copies to the provider and Gateway Qualifications

Course Representative/s

- Presents results and the outcomes of the Examinations Board for the course/s to the Final Awards Board.
- Provides and talks to a written or PowerPoint presented report (template is provided) which comprises:
 - Success and retention information (indicative), including information on equality, diversity and inclusion
 - A summary of strengths and areas for improvement
 - Responses to this year's external moderation (actions going forward)
 - Changes and developments to the course in the future

Records of Final Awards Boards

The Final Awards Board must be formally minuted. Minutes should be full and should demonstrate transparency and clarity in case an appeal is made. It is recommended that minutes should note the full names of any students granted extensions or mitigation, and any deadline dates set for the completion of outstanding work.

An authorised copy of the minutes should be sent to Gateway Qualifications within 10 working days of the Board.

Access to HE Diploma Agenda for the Final Awards Board

Name of Centre		
Date Time Venue		
Access to HE Diplomas included in FAB		
Chair		
Role in organisation		
Access Coordinator		
Access Centre Moderator(s)		
Attendees		
No.	Item	Name
1	<p>Welcome and introductions <i>Check that all delegates have copies of documentation</i></p> <p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline of the function and purpose of the Final Awards Board • Identify documents to be presented to the Final Awards Board <p>Confidentiality statement <i>All discussions concerning learner performance must be regarded as confidential.</i></p>	Chair
2	<p>Declarations of interest <i>Anyone who has a potential conflict of interest, such as being a relative of one of the learners or an interest which may potentially affect impartiality, and/or the outcome of the Board must declare it here.</i></p>	All
3	Minutes of the previous Final Awards Board (date) and progress of actions	Chair Course Representative(s)
4	Minutes of the Examinations Board (date), outcomes and actions	Course Representative(s)
5	<p>Report by the Course Representative(s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A summary of strengths and areas for improvement • Success and Retention information (indicative) • Responses to this year's external moderation (actions going forward) • Changes and developments to the course in the future <p><i>See reporting template</i></p>	Course Representative(s)

6	Report by Access Centre Moderator <i>Feedback on Final Moderation and Course performance</i> <i>See reporting template</i>	ACM
7	Confirmation of learner achievement for the award of the Access Diploma/award of credit To confirm the achievement for each named learner who has successfully achieved the Access Diploma/award of credit. To be announced formally to the meeting so that each achievement can be checked and confirmed as correct. Confirmation of decisions on referrals, extenuating circumstances etc. To confirm decisions with actions and deadlines for each named learner.	ACM All
8	Formal confirmation of the agreement of student results To confirm action taken by the ACM in either accepting or rejecting electronic RACs for each course presented at the FAB	ACM/2 nd AVA rep
9	Date of Next Board <i>Provisional date</i>	Chair All
10	AOB	Chair All
Meeting Close		
Celebration of cohorts' achievements with a report by Course Representative(s) on cohorts' progression to HE		

Document checklist

- Minutes of the Examinations Board
- Minutes of the previous Final Awards Board
- Gateway Qualifications Guidance on Examinations Boards and Final Awards Boards
- Recommendations for the Award of Credit (summary sheets)
- Supporting documentation for requests for referrals
- Records of representations (to contest grades) and outcomes
- Results profile for each learner (completed RACs and matching records for each portfolio presented)

Access to HE Diploma Minutes of the Final Awards Board

Name of Centre				
Date time venue				
Access to HE Diploma pathways included in FAB				
Chair				
Role in Organisation				
Access Coordinator				
Access Centre Moderator(s)				
Attendees				
No.	Item	Discussion and Action	By Whom	By When
1	Welcome and introductions Apologies Confidentiality statement			
2	Declarations of Interest			
3	Minutes of the previous Final Awards Board and implementation of action points			
4	Minutes of the Examinations Board			
5	Report by the Course Representative(s)			
6	Report by Access Centre Moderator			
7	Confirmation of the Rules of Combination Confirmation of Achievement Confirmation of decisions on referrals, extenuating circumstances etc.			
8	Date of Next Board			
9	AOB			

Report by Course Representative Template

Item	Content
Summary of strengths and areas for improvement	A summary of strengths and areas for improvement Course details Start and end dates Ethnicity/gender profile
Success and Retention	Success and Retention information and analysis, using MIS data, with consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion implications. <i>This may only be indicative at this stage.</i> Student numbers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enrolments, transfers, completers. - Comparative success rates for course over last 3 years - Withdrawals with reasons
Actions going forward	Responses to this year's external moderation (Initial visit and Subject Moderation feedback)
The Future	Changes and developments to the course in the future
After the meeting close	
Indicative progression information. Course representatives may wish to highlight specific instances of progression to prestigious or highly competitive HEI courses, evaluation of progression rates over last 3 years etc.	

Course Report note:

Course Representatives may find that the information above may be easily presented to the assembled meeting within a short PowerPoint presentation.

A PowerPoint delivery is entirely acceptable as an alternative format, as long as the required content is covered, the FAB delegates all have handout copies of the slides and that the progression information is not shown or distributed to delegates until the meeting has formally closed.

Report by Access Centre Moderator Template

This can be a verbal report to the Board based on notes taken during the Final Visit. The content will be summarised in the ACM5 report which is sent to providers following the completion of the Final Moderation and FAB.

Item	Content
Overview of the programme	Summary of key findings from the current year
Sampling Outcomes	Outcomes of sampling to include sampling strategies used during the year
Main report	<p>Actions and recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Centre Management • For Tutors/Access Co-ordinator • For the Gateway Qualifications
Good practice	<p>Examples of Good Practice seen in (for example):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • course management • delivery and assessment • support for learners • areas demonstrating positive action in addressing equality, diversity and inclusion • learner achievement and progression • learner feedback on the programme(s) • internal moderation and subject moderation
Final Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resubmissions and referrals • extenuating circumstances • aegrotat and posthumous awards • cases of academic misconduct.