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UCAS

**Qualification Information
Profiles (QIPs) for Access
to HE Diploma and Scottish
Wider Access Programme
(SWAP)**

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This guide presents Qualification Information Profiles (QIPs) for the Access to Higher Education Diploma and the Scottish Wider Access Programme. The information in this guide was updated in July 2015.

UCAS has developed these profiles in response to requests from its members.

The aim of these profiles is to provide objective information on the basis of which higher education providers (HEPs) can make informed decisions about the admission of students. The profiles use a common format to provide a detailed overview of qualifications, enabling HE admissions staff to compare these Access qualifications to a selection of other UK and international qualifications used widely within HE admissions.

With respect to the Access to HE Diploma, the Quality Assurance Authority (QAA) has verified that this profile provides an accurate reflection of these awards which operate throughout England and Wales. This profile is based on the new Access to HE Diploma introduced for first teaching from September 2014.

The Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) has similarly verified the accuracy of the profile covering their programmes.

QAA does not have any formal responsibility for Access in Northern Ireland. A variety of access courses are available in FE colleges across Northern Ireland, often in conjunction with the University of Ulster or Queen's University Belfast. For more details, please contact the respective FE colleges.

Please note the inclusion of qualifications within this guide does not imply recognition or endorsement on the part of UCAS or HEPs for the purpose of entry to HE programmes.

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information supplied herein, UCAS cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions.

For more information or to comment on these Qualification Information Profiles (QIPs) email qualsinfo@ucas.ac.uk

In 2012, the UCAS Qualifications Information Review (QIR) made a number of recommendations about the need to provide better access to improved information about qualifications to support more informed admissions decision making and facilitate fair and transparent admissions.

The review found that

- HE admissions staff require more comprehensive and comparable information about Level 3 qualifications than is currently provided by the UCAS Tariff
- HE admissions staff often undertake time-consuming and difficult research into new or unfamiliar qualifications, due to the number of sources of information and inconsistent presentation formats.
- HEPs identified international qualifications and apprenticeships as priority areas for improved information

In response to these findings, UCAS has delivered online information in the form of qualification information profiles (QIPs) for Access to HE qualifications, a number of international qualifications and advanced level apprenticeships. This document contains QIPs for UK benchmark qualifications for comparison purposes. In this context, UK benchmark qualifications are Level 3 qualifications that HEPs are likely to be familiar with and use to compare other, less-familiar qualifications presented by applicants to HE. Additional qualification profiles will be added in future as the QIPs guides grow and expand.

Until 2014, UCAS published annual qualifications guides providing information about UK and international qualifications. Over the next four years the information in the qualifications guides will be integrated with the QIPs, resulting in information about qualifications being available in a single, consistent format which is digital and searchable. This will facilitate easier side-by-side comparison of qualifications. The 2014 qualifications guides remain available on ucas.com, however these will no longer be updated whilst the information in them is transferred to QIPs. For more information about the proposal to integrate qualifications guides and QIPs please visit

https://www.ucas.com/system/files/ucas_qips_a4_handout_proposal_to_integrate_qualifications_guides_june_15.pdf

QIPs for EU and international qualifications, apprenticeships and Access to HE qualifications, as well as the qualifications guides last updated in 2014, can be found here:

<https://www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources>

UCAS has introduced a new Tariff for use from the 2017 entry cycle onwards. For more information about the new Tariff please visit <https://www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/tariff-2017>

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The background of the slide is a solid red color. A white, angular shape, resembling a stylized 'A' or a folded piece of paper, is positioned on the right side. This white shape contains the text 'Access to HE Diploma' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The text is centered within the white shape.

Access to HE Diploma

Field	Field name	Information
1.	Qualification family	Access to HE Diploma
2.	Country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • England and Wales • For details of access arrangements in Scotland see profile of Scottish Wider Access Programme. • QAA does not have any formal responsibility for Access in Northern Ireland. A variety of access courses are available in FE colleges across Northern Ireland, often in conjunction with the University of Ulster or Queen's University Belfast. For more details, please contact the respective FE colleges.
3.	Purpose	The Access to HE Diploma is a qualification designed to prepare adults with few prior qualifications for study at university.
4.	Education context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Access to HE Diploma is designed for adults who have been identified as having the potential to achieve at HE-entry standard. • Most will have significant experience outside formal education before they join the Access to HE course. • Diploma titles reflect the intended progression route or main area of study e.g. Access to HE Diploma (Nursing), Access to HE Diploma (Humanities). • Please note the common titling format for QAA-regulated Diploma titles in England and Wales forms part of its regulation. Other access courses with different names are not regulated by QAA.
5.	Awarding organisation(s)	<p>There are 13 awarding bodies for Access to HE Diplomas, known as Access Validating Agencies (AVAs). AVAs work in partnership with HE and FE and are regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ascentis • Open Awards • Open College Network Yorkshire and Humber Region trading as Certa • ONE Awards (previously known as Open College Network North East Region) • Agored Cymru • Open College Network West Midlands Region • AIM Awards • Open College Network Eastern Region trading as Gateway Qualifications • Cambridge Access Validating Agency • AptEd (previously known as Apt Awards) • Open College Network Credit4Learning • LASER Learning Awards • OCN London (previously known as Open College Network London Region) <p>For more details see https://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/HowCourses/AVA-profiles/Pages/Default.aspx</p>
6.	Code numbers	Not applicable
7.	Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Access to HE Diploma has a unitised structure. • All Diplomas comprise a number of units of 3, 6 or 9 credits which in all cases provide a common total of 60 credits. • 45 credits must come from graded Level 3 units concerned with academic subject content. • 15 credits come from ungraded Level 3 or Level 2 units.

Field	Field name	Information
8.	Subject areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are over 450 Access to HE Diplomas covering a diverse range of subjects, from nursing and social work to engineering and law. Where Diplomas have vocational titles, such as nursing, this indicates the intended progression route; the content covers the academic subjects (such as biology) needed to prepare for vocationally related courses in higher education
9.	Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Level 3 and /or Scottish Level 6 /7 qualifications. Regarded as similar level to the following UK qualification benchmark: GCE AS/A levels.
10.	Grading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A standard system of grading is used for all Access to HE Diplomas. Each graded Level 3 unit is graded at Pass, Merit or Distinction. Grading decisions are based on the application of a standard method and a common set of grade descriptors. Results are given as a grade profile, recorded on students' achievement transcripts (issued with the certificate of achievement of the Access to HE Diploma).
11.	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are assessed to determine the achievement of the learning outcomes of units. Units may be assessed individually or in groups within one integrated assessment. Modes of assessment must be appropriate to the academic discipline and the progression route. The details of assignments are locally determined. Student work is internally assessed and moderated according to systems monitored by AVAs. Student work is also externally moderated by moderators who act on behalf of AVAs to ensure that academic standards are secure and maintained, in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the academic demand of assignments b. consistency and sufficiency in the performance of students who are recommended for the award of specific credits, grades and Diplomas, Assessment regulations for the award of the Access to HE Diploma (including regulations relating to matters such as extenuating circumstances, resubmissions and referrals) are specified by QAA and must be applied by all providers.
12.	Contribution of assessment components to overall grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students are registered for units to the value of 60 credits. Students are required to achieve all 60 credits in order to attain their Diploma. Grades are applied to specified academic Level 3 units to the value of 45 credits only. A further 15 non-graded credits are required at either Level 3 or 2. (Level 2 units are only included within a Diploma if they address a clearly articulated need in relation to the subject of the Diploma.) The student's grade profile is recorded on their achievement transcript which is issued with the certificate of achievement of their Access to HE Diploma.

Field	Field name	Information
13.	Resit arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is one opportunity for resubmission of a unit which a student does not achieve at first attempt. • A second (and final) resubmission opportunity may be granted for that unit in certain circumstances, following a process of referral. • If a unit has been achieved, the grade given cannot be altered. 'Grade polishing' (i.e. the resubmission of work for a unit to achieve a higher grade where a grade has already been given) is not permitted.
14.	Qualification size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning time associated with the Access to HE Diplomas is not standardised and varies depending on students' prior learning and experience. • Course duration depends on mode of delivery: students may complete a course through full- or part-time study (usually over one or two years). But they may take up to a maximum of five years through credit accumulation if, for example, they are studying by distance learning. Typically, however, students complete the Diploma through a one-year programme of study.
15.	UCAS size bands	Not available. Tariff points for the Access to HE Diploma have been allocated under the exception process. For more information, please see the Qualifications List on the UCAS website: https://www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/tariff-2017
16.	UCAS grade bands	Not available. Tariff points for the Access to HE Diploma have been allocated under the exception process. For more information, please see the Qualifications List on the UCAS website: https://www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/tariff-2017
17.	UCAS Tariff points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This qualification does not currently attract UCAS Tariff points. • Access to HE Diploma will be included on the UCAS Tariff for first use in the 2017 entry cycle.
18.	Key issues for UK HE admissions	Access to HE Diplomas are widely accepted by UK HEPs for admissions purposes.
19.	Timing of assessments / results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Access to HE Diploma is a unitised qualification, and its component units are assessed throughout the course. • However, unit achievement and grades are only confirmed after external moderation. Certificates of achievement and transcripts are usually issued by early August. • Results are made available via UCAS' Awarding Body Linkage.
20.	Current or legacy	Current award
21.	Certification information	Approximately 20,000 students holding the Access to HE Diploma are accepted onto HE programmes each year.

Field	Field name	Information
22.	Further information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QAA's Access to HE website includes further information and advice for HE admissions staff about making offers to Access to HE students. http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/AboutUs/Publications/Pages/AHE-Toolkit-admissions-2014.aspx • Further information about the grading scheme for Access to HE Diplomas is available at: http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/AboutUs/Publications/Pages/grading-scheme-section-a-2013.aspx

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Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP)

Field	Field name	Information
1.	Qualification family	Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP)
2.	Country	Scotland
3.	Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Scottish Wider Access Programme is a course of study which prepares adults with few or no formal qualifications for study at university.
4.	Education context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWAP is a partnership organisation between higher and further education (FE) institutions in Scotland. There are two regional offices. SWAP East is based in Edinburgh and SWAP West is based in Glasgow. SWAP access courses represent the majority of access to higher education courses in Scotland. There are other access courses, including university access courses which are validated by individual HEPs (including Stirling, Strathclyde, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Glasgow and St Andrews). SWAP courses are delivered and validated by FE colleges and overseen by the SWAP partnership. To be SWAP approved, access courses must follow certain criteria.

Field	Field name	Information
5.	Awarding organisation(s)	<p>SWAP has the following HE partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University of Abertay, Dundee • The University of Dundee • Edinburgh Napier University • The University of Edinburgh • Glasgow Caledonian University • Glasgow School of Art • Heriot-Watt University • University of the Highlands and Islands • University of Glasgow • The Open University Scotland • Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh • Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly RSAMD) • Scottish Agricultural College • Scotland's Rural University College • The University of St Andrews • University of Stirling • University of Strathclyde • University of West of Scotland <p>SWAP East has the following FE partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Borders College • Dundee and Angus College • Edinburgh College • Fife College • Forth Valley College • Newbattle Abbey College • Perth College • West Lothian College <p>SWAP West has the following FE partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ayrshire College • City of Glasgow College • Dumfries & Galloway College • Forth Valley College • Glasgow Clyde College • Glasgow Kelvin College • New College Lanarkshire • South Lanarkshire College • West College Scotland
6.	Code numbers	Not applicable

Field	Field name	Information
7.	Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a Scottish qualification, units are a different size to English access courses. All SWAP access courses have a minimum of 18 units (but may be up to 20 units), of which nine or more must be at Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Level 6. Each course includes at least five mandatory units in Communication (three units), IT and Maths validated by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). Courses also include two mandatory 'Preparation for HE' units (these are SCQF Level 6 and are developed by SWAP partnerships). Other optional modules, from a variety of subjects (not necessarily from the area of specialisation) are then selected from an approved list and agreed on a yearly basis by the SWAP partnership to reach the minimum of 18 – 20 units of the programme. The content of a SWAP access programme is determined by the subject focus of the title, so that students acquire knowledge and develop academic skills which are relevant to the intended progression route. The curriculum detail of the SWAP is determined at partnership level. HE representatives with expertise in appropriate subject areas are involved in the development and validation of all programmes.
8.	Subject areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWAP offers courses in the following broad subject areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Engineering – Humanities / Arts and social sciences – Humanities / Business – Humanities / Community education
9.	Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCQF Level 6 (equivalent to Level 3 in England, Northern Ireland and Wales). SWAP courses are regarded as comparable with the achievement of Scottish Highers grades A to C.
10.	Grading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All units are assessed on a pass / fail basis in accordance with SQA processes. Students need to pass 18 units to achieve the qualification. In addition access students are graded on a scale AAA – CCC by partnership colleges against an agreed set of grade descriptors. These criteria relate to learning skills highly valued for HE progression,
11.	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Units are assessed by the appropriate SQA processes and procedures. Students are assessed during and on the completion of individual units. Access students often take units from SQA Highers but are not required to undertake the external assessment. Modes of assessment must be appropriate to the academic discipline and the progression route, but particular assignment details are locally determined.
12.	Contribution of assessment components to overall grade	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students have to meet SQA assessment requirements in order to pass units. However, grading is based on performance across the course and is based on criteria agreed by SWAP partners and assessments undertaken by delivery colleges. The student's grade profile is sent by FE partners where they have studied and recorded by SWAP.

Field	Field name	Information
13.	Resit arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where students have not passed SQA Higher units, these can be resubmitted in accordance with SQA regulations.
14.	Qualification size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWAPs are one year full-time. As a Scottish qualification, credits / units are sized differently from England.
15.	UCAS size bands	Information about size bands will be provided from 2016 for qualifications on the Tariff.
16.	UCAS grade bands	Information about grade bands will be provided from 2016 for qualifications on the Tariff.
17.	UCAS Tariff points	This qualification does not currently attract UCAS Tariff points.
18.	Key issues for UK HE admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWAP courses are widely accepted for progression to higher education across Scotland.
19.	Timing of assessments / results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher examinations are taken from late April to mid-June. SQA results are published in early August. SWAP Grade Profile results are sent to UCAS in July.
20.	Current or legacy	Current award
21.	Certification information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are around 1,400 SWAP learners in Scotland in any one cohort. Since the launch of SWAP in 1987/8 more than 30,000 adults have taken the SWAP route to return to study. For more information on certification, please contact SWAP offices.
22.	Further information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SWAP website includes further information and advice for HE admissions staff about making offers to Access students. www.scottishwideraccess.org SWAPEast: 0131 650 6861 (Edinburgh and the East of Scotland) email: swapeast@scottishwideraccess.org SWAPWest: 0141 564 7206 (Glasgow and the West of Scotland) email: swapwest@scottishwideraccess.org

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