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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.

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 Widening Access Project (SWAP) has similarly verified the accuracy of the profile covering their Scottish Wider Access 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 quals@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

Initial plans for the development of a comprehensive online qualification database (fed from qualification regulator databases) have been postponed until the outcomes of the Ofqual review of its Register of Qualifications are known.

In the interim, the New Qualification Information Services (NQIS) project has delivered online information in the form of Qualification Information Profiles (QIPs) for a number of international qualifications and advanced level apprenticeships. This document contains QIPs for Access to HE qualifications for comparison purposes. These have been identified as priority areas for development. Additional qualification profiles will be added in future as the QIPs guides grow and expand.

<u>Access to HE Diploma</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP)</u>	<u>6</u>

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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 • Open College Network North East Region • Agored Cymru • Open College Network West Midlands Region • AIM Awards • Open College Network Eastern Region • Cambridge Access Validating Agency • Apt Awards • Open College Network Credit4Learning • LASER Learning Awards • Open College Network London Region <p>For more details see 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 1,400 Access to HE Diplomas covering a diverse range of subjects, from vocational areas such as social work to broader subject areas such as biological sciences.
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 Access to HE Diploma).
11.	Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are assessed on the completion of individual units. • Modes of assessment must be appropriate to the academic discipline and the progression route. Particular assignment details are locally determined. • Student work is internally assessed and moderated according to systems monitored by AVAs. • Student work is also externally moderated by moderators, which act on behalf of AVAs to ensure that academic standards are maintained, in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. the academic challenge and demand made by assignments b. consistency and sufficiency in the achievement and performance of students who are recommended for the award of specific Diplomas, credits and grades. • 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, of which 45 are at Level 3 and are subject to grading. • Students are required to achieve all 60 credits in order to attain their Diploma. • Grades apply to Level 3 units to the value of 45 credits only. • A further 15 non-graded credits are required at either Level 2 or 3. • The student's grade profile is recorded on their achievement transcript which is issued with the Access to HE Diploma.
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 considerably 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.

Field	Field name	Information
15.	UCAS size bands	To be confirmed in 2015 with QAA. ¹
16.	UCAS grade bands	To be confirmed in 2015 with QAA. ¹
17.	UCAS Tariff points	To be confirmed in 2015 with QAA. ¹
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 is only confirmed after external moderation. Diplomas and achievement 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.
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. www.accesstohe.ac.uk/Pages/Default.aspx. • Further information about the grading scheme for Access to HE Diplomas is available at: www.accesstohe.ac.uk/AboutUs/Publications/Pages/Grading-scheme-index.aspx.

UCAS has developed these profiles in response to requests from its members. 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. The Scottish Widening Access Project (SWAP) has similarly verified the accuracy of the profile covering their access 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.

¹QAA would like to see the HE response to the new Access to HE Diploma in 2015 before new UCAS Tariff points are allocated.

A large, red, geometric shape that resembles a stylized arrow or a folded piece of paper, pointing towards the top right. It is set against a white background.

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.
5.	Awarding organisation(s)	<p>SWAP has the following HE partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heriot-Watt University • Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh • The University of Abertay, Dundee • The University of Dundee • The University of Edinburgh (including Edinburgh College of Art) • Edinburgh Napier University • University of Glasgow • Glasgow Caledonian University • The University of St Andrews • Scotland's Rural University College • 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 • Clyde College Glasgow • Dumfries & Galloway College • New College Lanarkshire • Glasgow Kelvin College • South Lanarkshire College • West College Scotland College

Field	Field name	Information
6.	Code numbers	Not applicable
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 – Humanities / Primary education – Humanities / Languages – Humanities / Social work – Medical studies – Nursing – Science / Biological / Biomedical / Health and life sciences – Science / Science, technology, engineering and mathematics. • SWAP course titles share a common format which reflects the intended progression route e.g. Access to Nursing, Access to Social work.
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, although in science subjects these include subject specific skills and knowledge. • Partnership colleges submit the grade profile to SWAP at the end of the programme and these are provided by SWAP to UCAS.
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.

Field	Field name	Information
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.
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. • Broadly speaking, the academic content of the SWAP course is regarded as equivalent in size to three to four Scottish Highers. In addition to this SWAP students undertake other mandatory units. • Each SQA unit equates to six SCQF credit points and each credit point is equivalent to 10 hours of learning, hence 60 hours per unit. An access course of 18 units therefore equates to 1,080 notional hours of learning. • Please note that the above is a general position regarding access programmes. Programmes of a more specialist nature (for example, access to STEM and medical studies) have additional units included within the programme.
15.	UCAS size bands	To be confirmed with SWAP in 2015
16.	UCAS grade bands	To be confirmed with SWAP in 2015
17.	UCAS Tariff points	To be confirmed with SWAP in 2015
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). e: swapeast@ed.ac.uk • SWAPWest: 0141 553 2471 (Glasgow and the West of Scotland) e: swapwest@gmail.com

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