

Access to HE Diploma Specification & Assessment Framework

Diploma Title:

Nursing

Learning Aim:	40015713
Approved:	16 May 2024
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Purpose and aim of the Access to HE Diploma

The Access to HE Diploma is intended to prepare people without traditional entry qualifications for degree level study at university. It may also be used by people wishing to make a career change or who have been out of formal education for a significant time to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence required for direct progression to employment or further study. The Access to HE Diploma is regulated by QAA and widely recognised as a progression route by universities across the UK.

Target Group

The Access Diploma is open to all learners but is designed to be accessible for individuals who, because of their socio-economic or personal circumstances, may not have been able to consider progression to degree level study. The Access Diploma therefore provides a second chance for individuals who, for whatever reason, were not able to take full advantage of their formal secondary education.

About the qualification

The Diploma Specification for Access to HE Diploma (Nursing)¹ is a protected title and must comply to the QAA approved subject descriptor². The aim, and purpose of the subject descriptor is detailed in Section 1 of the QAA guidance document which is appended at the end of this document ([HERE](#)). The LASER Access to HE Diploma (Nursing) has been mapped to and conforms with the subject descriptor.

¹ If centres wish to offer a more flexibly designed progression into nursing and healthcare profession, please see the LASER Access to HE Diploma (Healthcare Professions) as this title is not subject to adherence to the QAA Subject Descriptor.

² <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/access-to-he/access-to-he-resources/access-to-he-subject-descriptors> - the full descriptor is included at the end of this document (page 11 onwards).

The progression routes³ from this Diploma could include, but are not limited to, degrees in nursing (adult, child, mental health), midwifery, health studies, paramedic practice, occupational therapy, radiography, physiotherapy, healthcare science, podiatry, public health practice, operating department practice, etc.

Specification Rules

All LASER Diplomas are made up of 45 graded credits (sections A, B, C below) and 15 ungraded credits (section D). The policy for the LASER Access to HE Diploma Specification & Assessment Framework is available at [Validated Diploma Specifications](#) or by contacting the Access Office.

Section	Minimum Credits	Graded/Ungraded	Modules	Notes
A	MANDATORY 15	Graded	Biology	QAA required content units are noted in section A below
A	15	Graded	Professional Studies Applied Social Sciences	LASER require a minimum of 6 credits to be taken in each of these modules
B	9 or 15	Graded	Additional units from group A or selected maths, counselling, law, physics, chemistry and other	Number of credits dependent on choice of graded or ungraded IAS
C	MANDATORY 6	Graded or Ungraded	IAS Professional Studies	
D	MANDATORY 3	Ungraded	Numeracy in a Health Context	QAA approved unit, level 2 or equivalent
D	MANDATORY 3	Ungraded	Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions	QAA approved unit, level 3
D	9	Ungraded	Study Skills units or selected ungraded options from sections A and/or B	Study Skills units can be at level 2 or 3

³ Suggested progression routes have been taken from provider feedback and HE consultation, they may be subject to change and further review and do not indicate any guarantee of progression in these fields. LASER would always recommend students ensure the diploma they wish to enrol on is appropriate for their future progression.

Unit Choices: SUBJECT GROUP A

30 graded credits to be selected from the modules listed below, these units are chosen as specific to the subject of the named Diploma and are all at level 3. Where appropriate minimum numbers of credits are identified for specific modules.

Biology (minimum 15 credits)				
To ensure compliance with the QAA required content the following units are mandatory (9 credits)				
Credits	Title			
3	Cells, tissues and organs for healthcare	or	3	Cell biology
3	Digestion and the liver for healthcare	or	3	Nutrition and digestion
3	Homeostasis for healthcare	or	3	Mammalian control systems
To ensure compliance with the QAA required content, centres must choose at least 2 of the following units (minimum 6 credits)				
3	Blood, circulation and gaseous exchange for healthcare	or	3	Cardiopulmonary system
3	The musculoskeletal system for healthcare	or	3	Musculoskeletal system
3	Reproductive biology for healthcare	or	3	Reproduction and inheritance*
3	Mendelian and applied genetics for healthcare			

*Reproduction and inheritance cannot be taken with either Reproductive biology for healthcare or Mendelian and applied genetics due to content overlap.

In addition to the above centres can choose one or more of the following units – ensuring the biology module totals at least 15 credits				
Credits	Title			
3	Disease and body defence	or	3	Microbiology and immunity
3	Biochemistry for Healthcare			
3	Energy for healthcare			
3	Medical Biochemistry			
3	Applications of Biology for Midwives			

Professional Studies

Health

Credits	Title
3	Advising on Travel Health
3	Developing Clinical Skills
3	Diagnosis, Treatment and Support for Patients with Cancer
3	Health and Health Services
3	Nutrition for Health and Well-being
3	Pain Management
3	The Environment and Health
3	Understanding Adolescent Health
3	Understanding Epidemiology
3	Understanding Ethics in Healthcare

3	Understanding Health and Well-being
3	Understanding Health Informatics
3	Understanding Health Promotion and Health Education
3	Understanding Human Health and Disease
3	Understanding Quality Improvement in Healthcare
3	Understanding Sexual Health
3	Understanding the Patient Journey

Mental Health

3	Health Promotion and Health Education in Mental Health
3	The Context of Mental Health Within Society
3	Understanding Mental Health
3	Understanding Mental Ill Health

Applied Social Sciences

Psychology

Credits	Title
3	Applied Stress Management
3	Bio-Psychology
3	Child Development
3	Cognitive Psychology
3	Introduction to Psychology
3	Neuro-Psychology
3	Psychology and Mental Health
3	Psychology and Therapy
3	Psychology of Early Socialisation
3	Psychology of Health
3	Research Methods in Psychology
3	Social Psychology
3	The Effects of Stress

Sociology

Credits	Title
3	Introduction to Sociology
3	Social Divisions
3	Social Research Methods
3	Social Stratification
3	The Sociology of Education
3	The Sociology of Family
3	The Sociology of Health
3	The Sociology of Poverty

Unit Choices: SUBJECT GROUP B

9 or 15 graded credits (depending on choice of graded or ungraded IAS unit from Group C) to be selected from either the modules listed in Group A and/or from the additional modules offered in below, these units are related to the subject of the named Diploma or will complement learning. These units are all at level 3.

Chemistry	
Credits	Title
3	Body Chemistry
3	Chemistry for Healthcare
3	Drugs and Food Additives
3	Organic Chemistry
3	Organic Reaction Mechanisms
3	Pharmacology for Healthcare
Counselling	
Credits	Title
3	Approaches to Counselling
3	Difference and Diversity in Counselling
3	Introduction to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
3	Introduction to Person-Centred Therapy
3	Introduction to Psychodynamic Counselling
3	Listening Skills in the Helping Professions
6	Loss and Bereavement Counselling
3	Professional Practice and Ethics in Counselling
Law	
Credits	Title
3	Health and Social Care Legislation within the UK
3	Tort Law
Maths	
Credits	Title
3	Arithmetic
3	Calculus
3	General Mathematics
3	Statistics
3	Trigonometry
3	The Nature and Applications of Statistics
3	Collecting, Presenting and Using Statistics

Physics	
Credits	Title
3	Physics for Radiography: Radiation
3	Physics for Radiography: Diagnostic Nuclear Medicine
3	Physics for Radiography: Therapeutic Nuclear Medicine
Other Units	
Credits	Title
3	Sexuality and Gender
3	Safeguarding Children from Possible Abuse
3	Safeguarding Adults from Possible Abuse
3	Safeguarding in the UK
3	Development of Social Welfare
3	Anti-Discriminatory Practice
3	Social Welfare in the 21 st Century
3	Criminological Psychology
3	Cyberpsychology
3	Forensic Psychology
3	The Sociology of Crime and Deviance
3	The Sociology of Religion
3	The Sociology of the Mass Media

Independent Academic Study: IAS GROUP C

6 credits are achieved from the appropriate Independent Academic Study unit (IAS) for the Diploma title. This unit is at level 3 and can be offered as graded or ungraded (but not both) within a centre's Rules of Combination.

Independent Academic Study	
Credits	Title
6	Independent Academic Study (Professional Studies)

Ungraded Units: SUBJECT GROUP D

6 ungraded credits have been identified as mandatory within the QAA Subject Descriptor for Nursing; these are noted below. In addition, a further 9 or 6 ungraded credits (depending on choice of graded or ungraded IAS unit from Group C) are selected from the modules listed in Group D. These units are generally at level 3 but some study skills units may be available at level 2.

Mandatory Ungraded Units (6 credits)		
Level	Credits	Title
2	3	Numeracy in a Health Context
3	3	Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions
In addition to the above centres must choose between one and three of the following units (dependent on choice of graded/ungraded IAS) to ensure ungraded units total 15 credits		
Applied Study Skills		
Level	Credits	Title
3	3	Academic Communication Skills
3	3	Critical Thinking
3	3	Data Analysis using IT
3	3	Essential Digital Skills for Students
3	3	Giving a Presentation to an Audience
3	3	Note Taking and Note Making
3	3	Practical Science Skills
3	3	Preparing for and Taking Written Exams
2 or 3	3	Skills for Study: Essay Writing
2 or 3	3	Skills for Study: Research
2 or 3	3	Skills for Study: Writing
2 or 3	3	Using ICT for Study
Personal Reflection & Development		
Level	Credits	Title
3	3	Citizenship: Rights and Responsibilities for UK Professions
3	3	Cultural Diversity and Professional Practice
3	3	Mental Health and Self-Care Whilst Studying
3	3	Personal Organisation and Time Management
3	3	Reviewing and Planning for the Future
General English		
Level	Credits	Title
2	3	English Language Skills
3	3	Studying Literature
3	3	Communication – Reading and Writing
3	3	Communication – Speaking and Listening

General Maths		
Level	Credits	Title
2	3	Understanding Maths
3	3	Application of Number - Calculation
3	3	Application of Number – Data Interpretation
3	6	Introductory Mathematics for HE
3	3	Practical Mathematics for Healthcare
Ungraded Academic Subject Content (all at level 3)		
<p><i>Units cannot be included within a centre's Rules of Combination as both graded and ungraded, but centres can choose to offer some academic subject units as ungraded versions. These must be identified as part of the course approval and will apply to all cohorts on this diploma title within a centre. If a centre wishes to include other units in Groups A or B as ungraded content, this will need to be requested for consideration by the AVA, giving valid reasons for inclusion, as part of course approval.</i></p>		
Credits	Title	
Ungraded Biology		
3	Biochemistry for Healthcare	
3	Applications of Biology for Midwives	
Ungraded Health (Professional Studies)		
3	Developing Clinical Skills	
3	Pain Management	
3	Understanding Ethics in Healthcare	
3	Understanding Health and Well-being	
3	Understanding Health Promotion and Health Education	
Ungraded Psychology		
3	Cognitive Psychology	
3	Introduction to Psychology	
3	Psychology of Early Socialisation	
3	Research Methods in Psychology	
Ungraded Sociology		
3	Introduction to Sociology	
3	Social Research Methods	
Ungraded Chemistry		
3	Body Chemistry	
3	Chemistry for Healthcare	
3	Organic Chemistry	
3	Organic Reaction Mechanisms	
Ungraded Counselling		
3	Listening Skills in the Helping Professions	
Ungraded Maths		
3	Arithmetic	
3	General Mathematics	
3	Statistics	
Ungraded Other Units		
3	Safeguarding Children from Possible Abuse	
3	Safeguarding Adults from Possible Abuse	
3	Anti-Discriminatory Practice	

Diploma Assessment Framework

All LASER validated Access to HE programmes must include a **Diploma Assessment Plan** as a part of their validation/revalidation process and the plans will be required to be updated and available for review as part of the yearly External Quality Assurance cycle. In identifying assessment models, practitioners should also give due consideration to the requirements of the LASER [Guidance on the Use of AI](#) to ensure the veracity of assessments as measures of student achievement.

The policy for the LASER Access to HE Diploma Specification & Assessment Framework is available via [Validated Diploma Specifications](#) or by contacting the Access Office.

Required Assessment Models:

Assessment Model ⁴	Suggested Weighted Frequency of Use	Comments
Examination	High / Moderate / Low	<i>Required by LASER Examination Policy and identified as a commonly used assessment model within HE.</i> The LASER Examination Policy requires all LASER validated Diploma Titles to contain at least three opportunities for students to experience appropriate forms of 'summative' examination which contribute to the final assessment and grade of the unit. Unless there is a compelling reason, no diploma should contain more than six examinations . The full policy can be viewed here: Access Policies .
Essay (Include as necessary)	High / Moderate / Low	<i>Together with Examinations this constitutes one of the most predominant assessment methodology for HE.</i>
Report ⁵	High / Moderate / Low	<i>A frequently used model of assessment required as many progression routes will employ this model and students should have some experience of it.</i>
Presentation	High / Moderate / Low	<i>Very high frequency of use in HE but not always as a summative assessment tool. Students should have moderate but not substantive experience of this form of assessment.</i>
Case Study	High / Moderate / Low	<i>May be appropriate to units where there is a requirement for application of knowledge.</i>
Reflective Log	High / Moderate / Low	<i>A model of assessment which enables the student to reflect upon their skills acquisition and to identify their strengths and weaknesses for suture development. Whilst this is a 'required assessment model', the focus of assessment need not necessarily be reliant on a 'placement' type setting. The emphasis must though be on encouraging students to engage with the cycle of 'reflective learning' which is a core aspect of training within the Healthcare sector.</i>

⁴ Definitions of the meanings of given **Assessment Models** are contained within Annex One of the LASER Access to HE Diploma Specification & Assessment Framework.

⁵ This could be evidenced by the IAS or could be evidenced via an alternative graded unit of assessment.

Recommended Assessment Models:

Recommended Assessment Model	Possible Weighting	Comments
Workbook	Strongly Recommended / Recommended / Suggested	<i>May be used in relation to any unit.</i>
Project	Strongly Recommended / Recommended / Suggested	<i>May be used as a means of assessing independent learning in a subject area.</i>
Experiment	Strongly Recommended / Recommended / Suggested	<i>May be employed where a unit requires the testing of a hypothesis e.g. Psychology.</i>
Laboratory Practical	Strongly Recommended / Recommended / Suggested	<i>May be used in association with 'experiment' within the Science based areas of study within Healthcare.</i>
Information Leaflet	Strongly Recommended / Recommended / Suggested	<i>May be used for example in terms of a 'health promotion leaflet' on a given issue or disease.</i>

Access to Higher Education Diploma

Subject Descriptor for Nursing and Health Professions

October 2023

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Section 1: Introduction and context

The Access to HE Diploma

- 1 The Access to HE Diploma is a qualification regulated by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). It is a Level 3 qualification (the same level as A-levels and T-levels) and is primarily focused on adult learners who wish to enter higher education but do not have the necessary qualifications in the subject area they wish to follow. When taken as a full-time course, it can be completed in one year. On completion of an Access to HE Diploma, students may go on to study at a higher level, which could be a degree, or other higher-level qualification at Level 4 or above.
- 2 It is an academic, credit-based qualification, comprising units of assessment expressed as learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The credit requirement for the achievement of any Access to HE Diploma is 60 credits, with 45 of these credits coming from units which are concerned with academic subject content at Level 3 and graded; the remaining 15 credits come from ungraded Level 2 or Level 3 units.¹
- 3 While all Diplomas must comply with the overall structural requirements of the Diploma specification, there is flexibility within these requirements for AVAs to approve Diplomas with a variety of structures and with a different range of content. From 1 August 2024, an updated Diploma Specification puts in place requirements relating to the minimum and maximum of 6 and/or 9-credit units to be included within an Access to HE Diploma; this will retain flexibility within subject content while introducing greater uniformity across all QAA-recognised Access to HE provision, thereby offering more parity of experience for students.²

Purpose of the subject descriptor

- 4 The purpose of this subject descriptor is to offer guidance and provide a reference point for the design, delivery, validation and review of programmes across the range of Access to HE Diplomas designed for progression to higher level study in health professions, including those regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) (see Annex 1) and all fields of nursing.³ In order for a Diploma to be described as compliant with the subject descriptor, it must meet the essential requirements set out in Section 2. Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) and the providers with which they work, still have scope for flexibility and innovation in course design.
- 5 This subject descriptor is being piloted for provision from 1 August 2024. It will apply fully from 1 August 2025.

Relationships with other subject descriptors

- 6 Each subject descriptor is constructed to facilitate continued flexibility in curriculum design, but within specified parameters, appropriate to the subject area. These parameters will detail essential subject content areas that must be included in order that a Diploma is considered

¹ For full details of Diploma structures and how Diplomas are graded, see the Access to HE Diploma Specification 2024 and Grading Scheme Handbook: www.qaa.ac.uk/access-to-he/access-to-he-resources

² Within each Diploma there will be:

- a minimum of one unit of either 6 credits or 9 credits (offered as ungraded or graded credits)
- a maximum of 30 credits that can be made up of 6 or 9-credit units; these units can be offered as ungraded and/or graded credits.

³ All fields of nursing including adult, children's, learning disability, mental health

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subject descriptor compliant. The degree of flexibility afforded through the subject descriptor framework is to a large extent determined by the anticipated progression destination in higher level study.⁴ This subject descriptor offers high levels of flexibility to allow AVAs to approve Diplomas that meet the needs of providers, and, in turn, local and regional contexts.

Status of the subject descriptor

- 7 Access to HE Diplomas with the specific titles of **Access to HE Diploma (Nursing)** or **Access to HE Diploma (Health Professions)** must meet the essential requirements of the subject descriptor in order to use those titles. Compliance will be determined through the validation of the Diploma by the AVA.
- 8 Access to HE Diplomas, with other titles that meet the essential requirements of the subject descriptor, may also be approved as compliant with the descriptor. This will be determined through the validation of the Diploma by the AVA.
- 9 Through the process of validation of an Access to HE Diploma, AVAs will confirm that Diplomas meet the requirements of the subject descriptor and these can be identified as subject descriptor compliant on QAA's course database and visually signalled for students and higher education admissions staff on the course search on [QAA's website](#).⁵ Course providers and AVAs should also be encouraged to include a visual signal in their course and marketing materials.
- 10 Access to HE Diplomas that meet the requirements of an Access to HE subject descriptor provide opportunities for students that support specific progression routes into undergraduate study and within a specific progression route. While minimum requirements have been included, completion of a subject descriptor compliant Diploma does not guarantee entry to higher education. Other requirements for entry to undergraduate courses may be imposed by higher education providers; this may include factors such as additional subject content above the minimum levels required within the subject descriptor, work experience, or Disclosure and Barring Service checks.
- 11 Compliance with the subject descriptor provides:
 - clarity to prospective students and their advisers about the minimum requirements for Access to HE Diplomas to support informed decision making and provide reassurance that a Diploma will meet minimum entry requirements for progression to nursing and health professions⁶
 - clarity and reassurance for higher education admissions staff that all Access to HE Diploma students studying a subject descriptor compliant Diploma will have covered the same minimum level of subject content.

How to use this descriptor

- 12 The Diploma Specification and subject descriptor together define and describe Access to HE Diplomas that are designed for named progression routes.

⁴ Higher level study may include technical study, including higher level and degree apprenticeships

⁵ www.accesstohe.ac.uk/course-search

⁶ Individual higher education provider entry requirements vary and students must ensure their Diploma will meet the entry requirements for their chosen higher level study programme.

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13 This subject descriptor outlines:

- a the minimum credit requirements and essential curriculum content in areas that are expected to be included for progression to higher level study in health professions and all fields of nursing
- b the recommended maximum credit requirements and content in other subjects to support progression to higher level study in health professions and all fields of nursing.

14 In this subject descriptor, we use the term 'essential' to define content that needs to be included, in its entirety, in a Diploma in order to be subject descriptor compliant, and to a minimum number of credits and a minimum level of unit. We use the term 'recommended' where it is not necessary to follow the subject descriptor, but through the development of the subject descriptor we have determined that it would be useful to consider those areas in Diploma development. The subject descriptors provide a framework to develop Diplomas for specific progression routes that are structured in ways that are consistent with the Diploma Specification while maintaining the capacity for individual approaches in terms of unit credit values and programme design and delivery.

15 Through processes of Diploma development and validation, AVAs ensure that:

- a named Diploma meets the essential requirements set out in the subject descriptor
- the required content can be delivered and assessed
- students have the opportunity to successfully complete the learning outcomes for each unit of study on the named Diploma and can be awarded credits for each unit.

16 Ungraded Level 3 units may be used to introduce students to new subject content or to increase the volume of subject content in essential subject areas to meet local and individual needs.

Principles

17 The content of the subject descriptor was determined with reference to the following principles:

- a It should specify the minimum content requirements for the adequate preparation of Access to HE students for progression to and success in undergraduate courses in nursing and health professions.
- b The requirements should establish consistency across all Access to HE Diplomas that are designed to support progression to undergraduate nursing and health profession courses, while allowing sufficient flexibility for AVAs and providers to determine how the content should be structured and delivered, and what additional content is included.
- c The preparation needed for this progression route resides in a sound understanding and knowledge in key subjects, the development of skills in academic study, and an introduction to the higher education learning and assessment context. It should not seek to directly address the skills and competencies of a practising nurse.

Professional body requirements considered in the development of this subject descriptor

18 In developing this subject descriptor, consideration has been given to the standards published by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) and Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC).

19 The NMC specifies the following requirements in relation to the numeracy and literacy, including digital literacy, needed for an individual to undertake undergraduate training and education in nursing.⁷

Part 3: Standards for pre-registration nursing programmes (1.1.4-1.1.7 and 1.7) Part 3:

Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes (1.5.5-1.5.7 and 1.6)

Part 3: Standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes (1.1.4-1.1.7 and 1.6)

Standard 1: Selection, admission and progression states

Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- confirm on entry to the programme that students:
 - have capability to develop numeracy skills required to meet programme outcomes (1.1.4, 1.5.5, 1.1.4)
 - can demonstrate proficiency in English language (1.1.5, 1.5.6, 1.1.5)
 - have capability in literacy to meet programme outcomes (1.1.6, 1.5.7, 1.1.6)
 - have capability for digital and technological literacy to meet programme outcomes (1.1.7, 1.5.8, 1.1.7)
- support students throughout the programme in continuously developing their abilities in numeracy, literacy, and digital and technological literacy to meet programme outcomes (1.7, 1.6, 1.6)

20 GCSE achievement in English and Maths is not a requirement of the NMC. However, higher education providers (HEPs) determine their own admissions policies and their own requirements with regard to GCSE achievement. Access to HE students and providers should check the policy of particular HEPs.

21 The HCPC regulates 15 professions and maintains a register of professionals; this subject descriptor applies to those regulated professions noted at Annex 1. HCPC also sets the Standards of Education and Training (SETs), professional skills, conduct, performance and ethics of those on the register. Programmes of study, at undergraduate and/or postgraduate level, that meet the requirements of the SETs support students to successfully complete their studies to meet the standards of proficiency that are needed for safe and effective practice in each of the regulated professions.

22 HCPC SETs require that 'The admissions process must ensure that applicants have a good command of English.'⁸

23 NMC and HCPC standards for selection, admission and progression for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes of study also require approved education institutions for graduate programmes to have in place processes to permit the recognition of prior learning, and consider the health and character of applicants.

24 It is recommended that AVAs consider both the admission requirements of HEPs and the relevant regulatory body (NMC or HCPC) when devising Access to HE Diplomas in Nursing or Health Professions.

⁷ www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/standards/2023-pre-reg-standards/new-vi/standards-for-pre-registration-nursing-programmes.pdf

QAA Subject Descriptor

Section 2: Content of the descriptor

Summary of essential requirements for this descriptor

Essential subject content	Minimum credit requirement at Level 3		Minimum credit requirement at Level 2
	Graded	Ungraded	Ungraded
Biology	15		
Numeracy in Health Context			3
Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions		3	

	Level 3	Level 2 or 3	Total
Total minimum credits for essential subject content	18	3	21
Credits remaining for recommended or other subject content	27	12	39

Essential requirements

Biology

Subject	Biology	Level	3	Minimum credit value	15
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About this subject

25 A firm grounding in the key principles and processes of biology is essential for pursuing a career in nursing and health professions. While undergraduate courses will also include the study of biology, the inclusion of the minimum content defined here will ensure that Access to HE students are well prepared to gain maximum benefit from their degree studies.

Required content:

- cell structure
- cell function
- transport - for example, osmosis
- homeostasis
- human anatomy and physiology to include a minimum of THREE systems from the following: cardiovascular; respiratory; digestion and nutrition; muscular-skeletal; excretion; endocrine; nervous system; genetics
- additional content may include immunity/defence against disease, reproduction, thermoregulation.

Numeracy in a Health Context

Subject	Numeracy in a Health Context	Level	2, ungraded ⁹	Minimum credit value	3
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About this subject

26 The NMC specifies the levels of numeracy and literacy required at entry for students of undergraduate programmes in nursing (see also paragraph 19). In this context, it is **both** context of the delivery and the subject content that are essential in preparing Access to HE students for assessments in their higher level studies.

27 The below content should be delivered in a way that clearly shows the link with the health context, for example: related to nutrition, fluid rates, use of 24-hour clock, use of centigrade, converting units of mass between imperial and metric systems. **For this reason, there is no exemption allowed for this content for students who have already achieved the GCSE in maths as the focus here is on numeracy in a health context, rather than purely mathematical skills.**

Required learning outcomes

- Understand and use the four rules of number including in relation to units of measure.
- Understand and use decimals, fractions and percentages, including in relation to units of measure.
- Know how to use a calculator to solve problems and use appropriate tools to check their answers.

28 In order to support AVAs and providers, QAA has produced a specification for a unit that meets these essential elements. AVAs can choose to either use:

- a QAA's Numeracy in a Health Context unit or
- b devise their own units that incorporate the essential elements (the content and the context of delivery).

29 If choosing the latter, in order to describe the Diploma as subject descriptor compliant, the AVA should ensure its unit(s) cover all of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria set out in QAA's Numeracy and Health Context Unit (See Annex 2).

30 Where AVAs incorporate the learning outcomes and assessment criteria in another unit, this may be as part of a graded or ungraded Level 3 unit.

⁹ When delivered through QAA's Numeracy in a Health Context Unit

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Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions

Subject	Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions	Level	3, ungraded ¹⁰	Minimum credit value	3
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About this subject

- 31 Students wishing to progress to higher level study in nursing or health care professions need to be able to communicate effectively and work as part of a team; in doing so they need to reflect on their personal and professional practice. They also need to be able to identify and manage risks in preparation for their careers.
- 32 In order to support AVAs and providers, QAA has produced a specification for a unit that meets these essential elements. AVAs can choose to either use QAA's Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions unit, or devise their own units that incorporate these essential elements. If choosing the latter, in order to describe the Diploma as subject descriptor compliant, the AVA should ensure its unit(s) is Level 3, and cover all of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria set out in QAA's Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions unit (See Annex 2).

Required learning outcomes

- Understand the characteristics required to be a health professional, making reference to the relevant professional and regulatory body's (the NMC or HCPC) and the Professional Standards Authority standards for registration in relation to patient-centred care and concepts of professionalism as they apply, to conduct, performance and ethics of those on the relevant professional and regulatory body register.
- Understand effective communication and teamworking skills.
- Know how to manage risk and deal effectively with problems.
- Reflect on own personal and professional practice and develop a personal and professional development **plan**.

Recommended additional subjects

- 33 The subjects which are required as essential within this subject descriptor make use of a minimum of 15 credits from graded units at Level 3 for biology content, and, if utilising QAA's units in Numeracy in a Health Context, and the Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions unit - 3 credits from ungraded units at Level 3, and 3 credits from ungraded units at Level 2.
- 34 While AVAs and providers may decide to use some of the remaining Level 3 credits (of the 60 required for a Diploma) for additional units in the essential subjects, they may also choose to include units in other subjects. The additional subjects recommended for use are psychology, health studies and sociology. **Where these subjects, or other subjects not considered in this subject descriptor, are included, they must be clearly relevant to the intended progression route.**

¹⁰ When delivered through QAA's Professional Behaviours Unit: Nursing and Health Professions

For example, in a Diploma that is intended for students to progress into Podiatry, it may be less relevant to include study in psychology.

Recommended additional subjects	Recommended maximum credit
Psychology	15
Context of health	6
Sociology	6
TOTAL	27

Psychology

Subject	Psychology	Level	3	Maximum recommended credit value	15
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Recommended content:

- perspectives - grounding in theoretical approaches in psychology (behavioural, humanistic, neurobiological)
- abnormal psychology - for example, approaches to mental disorders, dementia
- cognitive psychology - for example, cognitive function in later adulthood, memory
- developmental psychology - across the human lifespan - for example, early cognitive and emotional development.

Context of Health

Subject	Context of Health	Level	3	Maximum recommended credit value	6
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Recommended content:

- the role of the health professional
- professional standards and regulation: the code of conduct; the role and purpose
- of professional bodies (for example, Nursing and Midwifery Council, Health and Care Professions Council, and the World Health Organisation); the role of representative bodies (for example, trade unions and other bodies that represent staff working in residential care, community health, and so on)
- definitions of professional practice related to public health (that is, health improvement and protection), evidence-based practice, interprofessional working
- the origins of public health; social concepts of health and public health (UK, four country perspective, and global); difference between personal and community health

- awareness of the role of government in creating the policy context within which public health services operate, develop and are funded
- significance of demography
- epidemiology; prevention and control of Infectious diseases.

Sociology

Subject	Sociology	Level	3	Maximum recommended credit value	6
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Recommended content:

- sociological perspectives, and their significance for topics such as inequalities in health
- social definitions of health and illness, especially mental illness.

Recommended assessment methods

35 To be well prepared to study successfully in higher education courses in nursing and health professions, where they are likely to encounter similar assessment methods, it is recommended that Access to HE students should experience the following methods as part of the assessment of their work for their Diploma:

- at least one 1,500-2,000 word essay prepared using relevant academic conventions
- a practical laboratory-based¹¹ report (using research, mathematical, statistical and writing skills)
- at least one electronically-submitted assignment
- an invigilated, time-constrained assessment or examination
- at least one instance of oral presentation to include visual aids and appropriate resources.

Academic/study skills

36 All Access to HE Diplomas provide opportunities for students to develop and apply academic skills (generally referred to as 'study skills') relevant to their area of study. These may be accredited through ungraded units at Level 2 or 3. While no particular study skills have been identified as being of greater value than others for students wishing to progress to undergraduate courses in nursing and health professions, it is recommended that Diplomas that comply with this descriptor should include the development of study skills which would support student success in the forms of assessment recommended in paragraph 35 and professional behaviour requirements appropriate to the subject.

¹¹ While it would be advantageous to students to have experience of working in a science laboratory, preparation of a practical laboratory-based report (using research mathematical statistical and writing skills) could be completed by other means, for example by using information provided to the students.

QAA Subject Descriptor

Annex 1: Health professions regulated by Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) to which this subject descriptor applies¹²

Biomedical Scientists

Chiropodists / Podiatrists

Dietitians

Occupational Therapists

Orthoptists

Paramedics Physiotherapists

Prosthetists / Orthotists

Radiographers

Speech and Language Therapists

¹² www.hcpc-uk.org/

QAA Subject Descriptor

Annex 2: QAA units in 'Numeracy in a Health Context' and 'Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions'

Numeracy in a Health Context

Unit title	Numeracy in a Health Context
Level	2
Credit value (3, 6 or 9)	3
Unit code:	Please refer to AVA
Graded/ungraded	Ungraded
Type: Academic subject content/other	Essential

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The student should be able to:	The student can:
1 Understand and use the four rules of number including in relation to units of measure	1.1 apply the four rules of number (add, subtract, multiply and divide) manually to positive and negative whole numbers, and to fractions and decimals
	1.2 apply the four rules of number (add, subtract, multiply and divide) in the correct order to solve problems manually to positive and negative whole numbers, and to fractions and decimals
	1.3 apply the four rules of number appropriately to solve basic problems in a health context
	1.4 make accurate mental estimations in order to assess the validity of calculations
2 Understand and use decimals, fractions and percentages, including in relation to units of measure	2.1 identify equivalent fractions, and simplify any fraction by cancelling common factors.
	2.2 identify fractions corresponding to the decimal part of a number, or percentage, and vice versa (including recurring decimals)
	2.3 convert between fractions, decimals and percentages

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
	2.4 solve problems using fractions, decimals and percentages, to include converting units of measure and within a health context
	2.5 make accurate mental estimations in order to assess the validity of calculations
3 Know how to use a calculator to solve problems and use appropriate tools to check their answers	3.1 use a calculator to apply the four rules of number (add, subtract, multiply and divide) to positive and negative whole numbers, and to fractions and decimals
	3.2 use a calculator to convert between fractions, decimals and percentages
	3.3 solve problems using fractions, decimals and percentages, to include converting units of measure and within a health context, making appropriate use of a calculator

QAA Subject Descriptor

Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions

Unit title	Professional Behaviours: Nursing and Health Professions
Level	3
Credit value (3, 6 or 9)	3
Unit code:	Please refer to AVA
Graded/ungraded	Ungraded
Type: Academic subject content/other	Other - Essential

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The student should be able to:	The student can:
<p>1 Understand the characteristics required to be a health professional making reference to the relevant professional and regulatory body's and the Professional Standards Authority standards for registration in relation to, patient-centred care and concepts of professionalism as they apply to conduct, performance and ethics of those on the relevant professional and regulatory body's register</p> <p>2 Understand effective communication and teamworking skills</p>	<p>1.1 Analyse the characteristics required to be a health professional with reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) professional values, behaviours and accountability (b) patient-centred care (c) concepts of professionalism as they apply to conduct, performance and ethics of those on the relevant professional and regulatory body's register <p>2.1 Distinguish between effective and ineffective skills with reference to a relevant model for each of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) communication (b) teamwork <p>2.2 Evaluate the effectiveness of own communication skills, with reference to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) verbal (b) non-verbal skills <p>2.3 Evaluate own team working skills</p>

Learning outcomes	Assessment criteria
The student should be able to:	The student can:
<p>3 Know how to manage risk and deal effectively with problems</p> <p>4 Reflect on own personal and professional practice and develop a personal and professional development plan</p>	<p>3.1 Summarise the principles of risk management and problem- solving</p> <p>3.2 Explain how to solve a problem and manage any associated risk, using an actual or hypothetical problem relevant to a healthcare setting</p> <p>4.1 Evaluate their own personal and professional practice skills against those expected of a health professional, using a chosen model of reflective practice</p> <p>4.2 Identify own continuing personal and professional development (CPD) needs based on evaluations in 4.1.</p> <p>4.3 Produce a plan to meet personal and professional development objectives based on an evaluation of different options</p> <p>4.4 Reflect on own performance against the plan, identifying learning needs for the future throughout the duration of the Access to HE Diploma</p>

Assessment type
<p>Portfolio of reflective learning (All AC)</p> <p>Assessors may wish to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concise reflective account on each learning outcome (with agreed submission points) • submissions to be timed to fit across the delivery of the unit and across the student's course of study • the unit should be assessed across the student's programme of study. <p>NB: Assessment must be proportionate and not place excessive burden on students or staff (both in volume and timing of submissions).</p>

Indicative content

1. Understand the characteristics required to be a health professional

1.1 *Professional practice in healthcare:* Students can learn about the characteristics of a healthcare professional - for example: education/training requirements; licence to practice; performance standards and professional regulation (eg General Medical Council (GMC)/HCPC/NMC standards); public trust; and the concept of patient-centred care and NHS values (eg best possible care for patients through working together for patients, respect and dignity, commitment to quality of care, compassion, improving lives and everyone counts).

2. Understand effective communication and teamworking skills

2.1 *Communication:* Students can learn about effective and ineffective communication with reference to a model (eg transactional model); they should learn about the barriers to effective communication in a healthcare context (eg ambiguity/complexity of message, 'noise'); fields of experience of senders/receivers (eg differences between professionals and patients in use of language). Coverage should include different modes of communication - written, verbal and non-verbal.

2.2 *Teamworking:* Students need to learn about what constitutes a team and the benefits of effective teamworking in a healthcare context - for example: reduction in errors; improved patient care; greater job satisfaction; increased efficiency and better regulatory compliance; and shared skill sets. They can also learn about ways to improve teamworking - for example: improving communication skills; providing and accepting feedback; training; and role clarification.

2.3 *Evaluating communication and teamworking skills:* Students can learn about and utilise a model of reflective practice - for example, Gibbs to benchmark their communication and teamworking skills against role models in their area of practice and identify ways of improving their skills (see LO4).

3. Know how to manage risk and deal effectively with problems

3.1 *Risk management:* Students can learn about the principles and practice of risk management and different models. Students can also learn about the common features of problem-solving models - for example: identifying and analysing the problem and root cause(s); identifying solution options; selecting and implementing a solution; and evaluating results.

3.2 *Problem-solving:* Students could learn about rationalist and phenomenological approaches to problem-solving and when and how to use these models for different types of problem - for example, when a more flexible and dynamic approach to decision-making is required, such as when dealing with an acutely ill patient, a phenomenological approach may be better suited. Students can look at actual or hypothetical problems/common risks in healthcare, consider their likely probability and impact, and how to mitigate these risks. Examples such as nosocomial infections/healthcare associated infections could be used to learn about the common features of problem-solving models - for example: identifying and analysing the problem and root cause(s); identifying solution options; selecting and implementing a solution; and evaluating results.

4. Reflect on own personal and professional practice and develop a personal and professional development plan (PDP)

4.1 *Self-assessment and CPD:* Students need to cover the concept and importance of CPD; they can be introduced to tools for undertaking self-assessment/reflective

Indicative content

practice (eg for knowledge, skills and competencies, employability) and undertake exercises in using the tools.

4.2 *PDP development*: Students need to understand the features and steps - for example: identifying area(s) for development; specifying meaningful, achievable yet stretching development goals and objectives; identifying the types of activity to achieve objectives (linked to own learning-style preferences); justifying selection of activities.

4.3 *Reflection on performance*: Students can learn how to document achievement against the plan and setting revised objectives, time frames and further development activities as appropriate.

QAA Subject Descriptor

Indicative reading

1. www.professions.org.au/what-is-a-professional/
Explains what a profession is and provides links to related material
2. **Professional standards**

www.professionalstandards.org.uk/
Link to the Professional Standards Authority

www.hcpc-uk.org/resources/standards/standards-of-education-and-training/ Link to Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) standards

www.gmc-uk.org/about/how-we-work/governance/council/code-of-conduct
www.gmc-uk.org/ethical-guidance/ethical-guidance-for-doctors/good-medical-practice Links to General Medical Council (GMC) Codes

www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/standards/2023-pre-reg-standards/new-vi/standards-for-pre-registration-nursing-programmes.pdf
Link to Nursery and Midwifery Council (NMC) standards
3. www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/team-working.html
Link to teamworking models and skills
4. <https://tinyurl.com/vem5cv3>
Link to a number of problem-solving models in healthcare
5. <https://oro.open.ac.uk/68945/1/Finlay-%282008%29-Reflecting-on-reflective-practice-PBPL-paper-52.pdf>
An excellent scholarly paper on reflective practice
6. <http://skillsforlearning.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/preview/content/models/03.shtml>
Shows the stages of Gibbs' model of reflective practice
7. www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/managing-your-career/1318/what-is-continuing-professional-development-cpd
Explains what is continuing professional development (CPD)

<https://career-advice.jobs.ac.uk/resources/interactive-cpd-toolkit/> Explains the meaning and components of CPD
8. www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Learning-and-development/Care-Certificate/The-Care-Certificate-Self-Assessment-Tool.pdf
Provides an excellent framework for self-assessment which can be adapted for personal use
9. **CPD**

www.gmc-uk.org/education/standards-guidance-and-curricula/guidance/continuing-professional-development
Link to the GMC's information about continuing professional development

www.hcpc-uk.org/cpd/
Link to the HCPC's information about continuing professional development

Indicative reading

www.nmc.org.uk/revalidation/requirements/cpd/

Link to the NMC's information about continuing professional development

10. <https://uk.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/how-to-write-smart-goals> A useful guide with hints and tips for writing SMART objectives