



LASER LEARNING AWARDS

Access Assessment Handbook

ABSTRACT

Guidance on Assessment Practice for Assessors
and External Quality Assurers

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Assessment for Access to HE Diploma Courses

These guidelines have been written to inform Access tutors, Internal Quality Assurers (IQAs) and Managers, as well as External Quality Assurers (EQAs), about current principles, expectations and regulations regarding assessment of Access to HE Diploma courses. They will also be of assistance in preparing Access to HE Diploma validation documents.

Please do not hesitate to contact LASER on 01227 949817 or email accessenquiries@laser-awards.org.uk if you need further assistance.

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1. ASSESSMENT PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR BEST PRACTICE

1.1 The Purpose of Assessment

Assessment is the process by which an Access learner's skills and knowledge are reviewed to enable a judgment to be informed about what they have learned.

Assessment will:

- provide evidence of progress and achievement to enable accreditation and progression to take place.
- allow learners to understand the learning process in which they are involved and monitor their progress.
- enable tutors to review the effectiveness of their learning programmes in achieving their intended objectives.

1.2 Principles of Assessment

All assessment in LASER approved Access Diploma titles will follow the seven principles below:

Principle 1: Authenticity:

All assessment activity which provides evidence of achievement for the award of credit on an Access diploma must have in place processes to ensure that the achievement is authentic, i.e. the learner's own work. Centres are expected to operate checks and procedures to ensure that the work being assessed is indeed that of the student submitting the work. **These should be made explicit in the course assessment regulations, which should be accessible to all learners.** Centres should be able to provide evidence of this for internal and external moderation. Examples of such procedures would include a requirement for learners to sign a statement of authenticity when submitting any work for formal assessment.

Centres must provide clear guidelines to learners on plagiarism and what constitutes 'malpractice' in relation to the submission of assessments. These guidelines should also include clear directions on the accepted use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) software platforms to support learning and the conditions upon which the use of this software is deemed to constitute misuse / plagiarism. A general policy statement on 'Preventing and Deterring Malpractice' on LASER validated Access to HE Diploma titles is available here.

[Academic Malpractice Policy.pdf](#)

LASER operates a devolved system of quality assurance and enforcement for issues such as plagiarism and malpractice. However, we expect all centres to have in place a strategy for preventing and deterring plagiarism and malpractice in order to comply with their obligations as an Access Provider. A suggested set of guidelines regarding penalties / sanctions is contained in LASER's policy statement on plagiarism and malpractice. Centres should also take all reasonable precautions to prevent plagiarism / malpractice (for instance by regular supervision of coursework, by refreshing assignments year on year and by setting new tasks for assessment activities such as examinations or other closed assessment opportunities where a student is absent). *Centres are required to provide evidence for the Awards Board should any actions of plagiarism lead to refusal by the centre to award credit.*

Principle 2: Validity:

The method of assessment and the evidence provided must be appropriate and capable of demonstrating achievement of the Learning Outcomes and related Assessment Criteria and of indicating relevant graded achievement. It must also be appropriate to the credit value and to the required level of attainment. Access validation panels will scrutinise methods of assessment, and EQAs will ensure that validity is maintained in assessment practice by evaluating assessment planning and assignment briefs against the approved unit as a routine aspect of external quality assurance. All Centres are expected to maintain an up to date Diploma Assessment Schedule indicating planned assessment across the scope of the diploma and also the timely internal quality assurance / verification of all planned assessments prior to distribution to students.

Principle 3: Reliability and Consistency:

The assessment result (including the grade awarded) should be standardized and capable of being replicable and consistent, either under different circumstances, (e.g. with a different assessor), or over time in. Policies and practices in moderation and standardisation should all be devised to ensure reliability and consistency in the award of credit and grades. Providers are expected to retain samples of assessed work to monitor standards over time and to participate in standardisation opportunities provided by LASER.

Principle 4: Accessibility:

The assessment strategy and methods must be clearly appropriate for the target group(s) of learners in the context in which the learning takes place. Assessment should not raise barriers to demonstration of achievement and must allow all learners to demonstrate their achievement, regardless of individual, social or economic circumstances. Assignment tasks should be free from ambiguity and written in plain language. It is expected that an Equal Opportunities / Diversity Policy is available and this will have formed a part of the LASER Centre Recognition process for Access providers. All assessment must enable education providers to comply with current equality and diversity legislation.

Principle 5: Transparency:

It must be clear to the learner and therefore all involved within the quality assurance process what is to be assessed, how this will happen, under what conditions and to what standard. Well written assignment briefs will be important in ensuring that learners can clearly understand what is required of them. As a minimum requirement all assignment briefs should include a clear description of the task or tasks set (preferably mapped to the individual LOs and ACs for the unit), the LOs and ACs which will be assessed and the components from grading metrics which will be applied to grade the work. Good practice would also suggest that said grading metrics are contextualized to allow the student to understand the grading expectations in the context of the specific assessment model used.

Principle 6: Fairness:

Assessment regulations need to reflect the QAA's and therefore LASER's requirements with regard to submission of drafts, late submissions, re-

submissions and referrals. Cases of extension to deadlines through extenuating circumstances must be clearly and consistently documented at Centre level and where appropriate will be subject to EQA agreement / approval (when they extend beyond the end of the academic year). In year extensions will remain in the remit of the Centre, although clear records should be maintained to allow for external audit as routine aspect of the external quality assurance and also the potential that a student may raise a complaint or appeal.

Principle 7: Accuracy.

Learners have a right to expect that assessment decisions have been made according to assessment and grading criteria and that these decisions have been recorded appropriately and securely. A student may, within the remit of the QAA Grade Scheme, apply for a 'representation' which challenges the grade profile of a given unit. Where a student challenges the accuracy of an assessment decision there remains a clear process which must be followed (outlined within the Grade Scheme Handbook Section C) which must be approved by the EQA prior to any final decision being reached.

1.3 Assessment Strategy

- a) Every Access course will have an overall Diploma Assessment Plan which clearly sets out how assessment will be overseen and implemented within the provision. The five-year course validation documentation must include a summary of the course assessment strategy. However, this document will need to be routinely updated across the validated period and will be the subject of on-going EQA scrutiny across the validated period. The Diploma Assessment Plan will also need to demonstrate compliance with LASER Examination Policy and the relevant Diploma Assessment Framework, which identifies a framework of required and recommended assessment models for use in relation to given diploma titles. In addition, Centres will be expected to confirm the following as an aspect of validation:
- the person specification(s) and expertise of tutor assessors and internal moderators,
 - the arrangements for recording and tracking assessment evidence including grades awarded.

The optional LASER Internal Quality Assurance Spreadsheet provides a single documentary solution to record keeping in relation to all aspects of Internal Quality Assurance (record keeping / internal verification and internal moderation) which is available for Centres 'off the shelf' if they wish to use it.

- b) The assessment strategy must operate within the principles of assessment outlined in 1.2 above. It will be scrutinised as part of the Access validation panel and will be reviewed annually by internal and external quality assurers. The assessment strategy must be appropriate to the aims of Access to HE (i.e. should adequately prepare students for the HE environment); the needs of the target group; the credit value of units and the required level of attainment.
- c) The assessment strategy will empower learners by:
- using open and transparent methods
 - including constructive feedback on the process and results of assessment

- allowing all learners opportunities to demonstrate learning and to achieve outcomes for graded as well as ungraded Level 3 units
 - allowing learners opportunities to resubmit work, under appropriate and agreed assessment regulations, in accordance with QAA regulations
 - being relevant and integrated into the learning process
 - offering the right to appeal (via representations) against assessment decisions in accordance with QAA regulations (see section C of Grading Handbook) [QAA Grading Handbook](#)
- d) The assessment strategy will take account of the difficulty of different assessment methods in terms of time, volume of assessment, level of independent learning required and the overall level of the Access qualification. While different methods may be used, there should always be parity in level of difficulty at the same level of attainment (e.g. Level 3).

1.4 Forms of Assessment

- a) Types of assessment will relate to the target group, the curriculum and the timing within the assessment process. They will include:
- **Initial/Diagnostic** assessment usually takes place at the start of an Access course and is used to identify current learning strengths in order to determine potential needs for development.
 - **Formative** assessment is developmental and ongoing throughout the course. It is used during teaching to give feedback and support to the learner on progress towards outcomes and to inform the tutor of possible action which may be necessary to consolidate learning. It should be a supportive and encouraging process even if the learner is not completely successful in meeting all the requirements. It can contribute to the final overall achievement of learning outcomes in a unit, but is not always required to do so. If it is employed in relation to graded provision it must be clearly evidenced that the product of the assessment has not been subject to any form of 'grade polishing' and that its use does not conflict with the requirements of the QAA Grade Scheme in this respect. Feedback given on formative work should not indicate any potential grade where it may be resubmitted as a part of any 'summative assignment' for the unit. For further information on the use of formative assessments and drafts please see the LASER Policy on Drafts and Formative Assessments here. [Policy Drafts Formative Assessment.pdf](#)
 - **Summative** assessment takes place at the end of a section of learning and counts towards final assessment. It is used to summarise the extent of learning that has taken place by the end of a course. It is the act of making a judgement on whether the learner has achieved all or some of the learning outcomes within a unit and for graded units the standards of achievement that have been demonstrated.
 - **Formal** assessment is structured and usually takes place in clearly stated conditions, e.g. a set time to make a presentation or complete a practical task or test, undertaken by the whole group. This is usually summative in nature.
 - **Informal** assessment is ongoing, integrated and flexible. It is varied in nature and can be recorded by the tutor and the learner. It can include self-assessment, peer group assessment or verbal feedback from the tutor. It can be either formative or summative (or both). If it contributes to the summative assessment process it must be recorded.

- b) The skills, knowledge and understanding to be assessed in an Access course are defined by the units of assessment. Units contain explicit Learning Outcomes, which define what the learner will know, understand or do, and Assessment Criteria, which define the achievement of the learners at Level Two and Level Three
- c) Formal, summative assessment of Access to HE Diplomas is ***critterion-referenced***. For a learner to achieve the award of credit in a unit, the Learning Outcomes must be observed, achieved and assessed using the stated Assessment Criteria. Judgments must be made on the achievement or non-achievement of the Learning Outcomes as specified in the unit(s). Once an assignment is assessed as having met all of the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria for the unit / assessment (and therefore passed) it may then be assessed as to what level of graded achievement is indicated. Once all of the assignments for a unit are completed, then the grade for that unit may be calculated. Appropriate combinations of grading components are assigned to all level 3 units when they are validated. Details of how to use the grading metrics in assessment are to be found in the QAA Grading scheme handbook Section C Parts 1-3 [QAA Grading Handbook](#)
- d) Learners cannot be awarded credit for partial achievement of a unit. However, where a unit is partially achieved the learner will be allowed a further opportunity to resubmit work to evidence the remaining Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria. Where appropriate, the work may still be graded. If a resubmission still does not meet the relevant Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria a final opportunity may be allowed via referral to the Award Board. This decision is not an automatic right and must be approved by the EQA prior to any opportunity being allowed. If the student is successful, the unit will be achieved but will be 'capped at Pass' irrespective of the quality. If the student is still unable to evidence all the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria at referral stage, the unit will be deemed to have been failed and therefore the student will not be able to achieve a full diploma (although they may receive credit for other units achieved across provision). The regulations governing resubmission and referral are contained within the Grade Scheme Handbook Section C.

1.5 Assessment Activities

- a) Any assessment strategy should include a variety of assessment activities or methods, formal and informal. Assessment activities/methods may include:
- Observation of activities such as role-plays, simulations, practical activities etc.
 - Discussion, ranging from unstructured and informal conversations to guided discussions with a clear and agreed structure. Discussion can be used for assessment in a group or one-to one situation, but where group discussion is used, there needs to be a clear set of conditions for recording individual achievement.
 - Question and answer sessions, oral or written, formally or informally structured e.g. quiz, worksheet etc.
 - Structured tasks such as a research project, experiment, essay or case study
 - Examinations and tests, either seen or unseen, with a formal structure and time constraints

Assessors should pay particular attention to the requirements of the relevant Diploma Assessment Framework when deciding the nature and frequency of different assessment models across the scope of the Diploma Assessment Schedule for the programme.

- b) When providing information on the assessment activities/tasks for each unit, the intended volume should be included (word length, time limit etc.). The assessment activities/tasks must be mapped to the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria in the unit. This should be carried through to individual questions on worksheets or closed tests. This will greatly assist in the accuracy of assessment as to whether or not the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria have been met and therefore the assignment has been passed.

1.6 Good Practice in Assessment

- Assessment strategies support and enable the teaching and learning process rather than driving it.
- Formative assessment is used to measure progress, build self-confidence, and review the success of the Access course, rather than used exclusively for accreditation purposes.
- Assessment is appropriate to the learning needs and styles of individuals and target groups.
- Assessment procedures, including Assessment Criteria, are explicit and clearly available to students.
- Methods of assessment are creative, innovative and varied, whilst reflecting the likely assessment models used within HE provision within the intended progression area.
- Assessment procedures allow learners to work at and be assessed at the correct level.
- Assessment builds the self-esteem of the learner.
- Assessment encourages self-assessment by learners to promote independence.
- Learners are encouraged to evaluate the assessment procedures to ensure continued relevance and effectiveness.
- All assessment tasks are internally verified before use to ensure that the assignment brief is sufficiently detailed to allow learners to understand:
 - What they are to do to meet the Learning Outcomes?
 - How this should meet the Assessment Criteria?
 - Which grading metrics have been assigned to the task?
 - What their work should show in order to indicate achievement of the applied grading metrics?
- Assessment documentation
 - Includes the requirement that learners state the authenticity of their own work.
 - Records the assessor's decisions on both the Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and the grading metrics as applied clearly and without ambiguity.
 - Indicates the status of the submission by recording compliance/non-compliance with deadlines, approval for an extension, submitted as a re-submission.

2. ASSESSMENT EXPECTATIONS, RESPONSIBILITIES AND STANDARDS

2.1 Responsibility for Assessment Judgements.

The assessment strategy should identify who will be responsible for making and recording judgements.

a) **Tutors:** The tutor is responsible for:

- Planning assessment, ensuring that this complies with the Access Diploma Validation Document and the QAA grading regulations. It is expected that outline planning for unit assessment is completed prior to the delivery of a course (see Section C2 of the QAA Grading Scheme Handbook) [QAA Grading Handbook](#) and that this planning is approved by the Internal Quality Assurer. The Diploma Assessment Schedule template should be completed to evidence planning and blank assignment brief templates are available for use by centres (as well as 'off the shelf' assessments for many units from the LASER resources). Any assessment strategy for Access to HE should include a variety of assessment methods, adapted as necessary to the needs of the target group as expressed within the Diploma Assessment Framework for the said diploma. There must be provision for learners to take invigilated examinations and therefore be assessed under closed, controlled conditions in line with the expectations of the LASER Examination Policy.
- Giving guidance to the learner when there are choices regarding assessment. This process should be monitored and evaluated by the Internal Quality Assurer.
- Notifying learners of the task(s), Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria via an assignment brief. A detailed Assessment / Assignment brief should be used to demonstrate how the assignment judgements contribute to the final judgement on the unit evidence. Graded Assessments should clearly identify the relevant grading metrics to be applied and also, good practice would require that they provide contextualized information to help Students to understand what the language of the grading metrics mean in relation to the specific tasks they will undertake.
- Using the Assessment Criteria and grading metrics explicitly and equitably.
- Recording assessment and grade indicator/final unit grades (LASER templates are available for recording grades). It is the tutor's responsibility to record assessed achievement and to track this against the Learning Outcomes (and Assessment Criteria). Tutors are advised that mapping of tasks (such as worksheet questions) to the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria ensures clarity and transparency of assessment decisions. This aids the learner, the assessor and those involved in quality assurance in confirming that the Learning Outcomes have been met. Learners must be advised fully of the unit specification(s) and any assessment regulations, including the opportunities to resubmit and of the appeals procedure. Evidence may be recorded in a number of ways but must the LASER Results tab of the IQA spreadsheet must be completed in all instances. This ensures that results are:

- Tracked against the individual learner and the achievement of the relevant unit specifications.
 - Clearly structured
 - Available for internal and external moderators and the final awards board.
- Providing constructive feedback which allows the student to understand what has been achieved and also how they might improve future work. The LASER Assessment / Assignment Brief template includes a list of areas for improvement and also space for 'free-hand' feedback.
 - Ensuring that all learners have equal opportunities for their achievement to be assessed (see regulations in Section C of the Grading Scheme Handbook) [OAA Grading Handbook](#)
- b) **Learners:** Self-assessment involves the learner in identifying his/her own learning in relation to the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria as well as in relation to grading metrics. It encourages the development of learners' own judgement and evaluation skills, allows reflection on learning and involves learners in the whole learning process. However, learner judgments should not determine the *actual* outcomes in relation to formal / summative assessments. However, individual self-reflection on performance remains an important aspect of meta-cognitive development for Students.
- c) **Peers:** Peer assessment involves learners in formal or informal situations, either as a group or individuals, giving feedback in assessment. Assessment by other learners in the group can encourage evaluative skills and increase group cohesion. Peer and self-assessment should **always** be augmented by tutor assessment and evidence and must not constitute the determinant assessment methodology leading to the award of credit.
- d) **External assessors:** Assessment for an Access course where work-based learning forms a part may involve supervisors, workplace mentors and others who contribute to the assessment. It is essential that these additional assessors have full access to the unit specifications and assessment strategy. Once again, any judgments taken by external assessors, should be verified by assessment practitioners who are fully conversant with the assessment rules and regulations on Access to HE Diploma titles.
- e) **Course leaders/Access Coordinators** are responsible for:
- Planning, disseminating and quality assuring the overall coherence of the assessment strategy for each Access Diploma. This should include taking responsibility for an overall Diploma Assessment Schedule which identifies (and quality assures) individual Assessment / Assignment briefs across the content of the diploma.
 - Compiling the final results across the Diploma. Assessment records form a vital component of evidence for the following purposes:
 - Evaluating learner progress (for the learner and the tutor).
 - Presentation to quality assurers as evidence of achievement of the learning which has taken place.
 - Presentation to the Final Awards Board for confirmation of the award of the Diploma and/or the award of credit.

2.2 Assessment Evidence

- a) Credit may only be awarded credit for a unit when there is evidence that all the Learning Outcomes have been achieved to the standard described by the Assessment Criteria. Proposed assessment evidence will be scrutinised as part of the Access Diploma approval process and specified in the Access Diploma validation document. The evidence must be linked to assessment methods: e.g.: if the method is 'tutor observation', the evidence may be a 'tutor observation checklist'.
- b) Evidence should comply with the principles of assessment and must always be:
 - Sufficient, *i.e.* there must be enough evidence to enable a reliable judgement on achievement
 - Current, *i.e.* up to date with the demands of the curriculum and able demonstrate that the learner is competent at the time
 - Valid, *i.e.* directly related to the learning outcome and assessment criteria
 - Authentic, *i.e.* the result of the learner's own work.
- c) Evidence will be generated by the learner throughout the course, and may be either paper-based or digitally held via some form of on-line 'repository'. Such evidence may include marked copies of notes, reports, learning journals, essays, examinations etc. Other sources of evidence may include role-plays, videos, computer programs, performance, oral questions and answers, etc. Evidence of these activities must always be documented. There must be a transparent process of recording evidence, which clearly records the assessment judgement made.
- d) Evidence should always be flexible, varied and appropriate. The volume of assessment must always be stated, wherever possible (e.g., 1,500-2,000 word essay, 10 minute presentation, 10 short answer questions, 2 hour exam)
- e) A portfolio is a collection of assessed evidence used to demonstrate a learner's achievement. On completion of the course this should be arranged in such a way as to facilitate final moderation. Where on-line repositories are employed, evidence must be filed in such a format that it allows EQAs to access assessment evidence and feedback easily and effectively for the purposes of sampling. LASER provides guidance on how to structure on-line evidence available here: [Folder Architecture for Remote Moderation.pdf](#) A template for a portfolio cover sheet is also available for use within paper based final portfolios.

2.3 Standards in assessment

- a) Assessment is expected to conform to the standards articulated in the QAA Access to Higher Education Diploma specification [QAA Access Diploma Spec 20.pdf](#) and the QAA Grade Scheme Handbook. [QAA Grading Handbook](#) In particular, "Achievement at level 3 reflects the ability to identify and use relevant understanding, methods and skills to complete tasks and address problems that, while well defined, have a measure of complexity. It includes taking responsibility for initiating and completing tasks and procedures as well as exercising autonomy and judgement within limited parameters. It also reflects awareness of different perspectives or approaches within an area of study or work¹." These general principles inform the core expectations of Level 3 and should be used to interpret the more specific requirements as expressed by the individual Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria for given units.

¹ QAA Access to Higher Education Diploma specification – P17

b) Good practice in assessment feedback.

- Assessment feedback should always be constructive, giving the learner clear information on what they have done well, how they have met the Assessment Criteria and why grade indicators were awarded as appropriate, and, also how they can improve next time.
- Formal assessment should be completed in neatly either electronically or in pen, not pencil. The assessor and those involved in quality assurance must be able to be confident that the feedback has not been altered in any way, so this may require work electronic work to be presented as a pdf format document.
- Summative feedback should be typed where possible so that there is no confusion as to the assessment judgement.
- Assessment judgements should be clear and auditable with regard to: Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and grade metrics applied (if appropriate).
- Students' work should be annotated, identifying where Learning Outcomes have been achieved, grades have been indicated and errors made. Errors should include technical accuracy (spelling, punctuation, grammar, referencing) as well as mis-learning.

3. ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

3.1 Assessment regulations

- 3.1.1 Centres are expected to develop their own assessment policy and regulations², which should conform to the QAA's regulations covering assessment of Access to HE courses. This policy should be available to students (preferably in their handbook). The regulations may be found in the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA's) *Grading Scheme Handbook*, notably Sections C and E. [QAA Grading Handbook](#) Regulations covering all of the following are to be found there. A useful summary is to be found in the *Tutor's Quick Guide to Grading (p6)* but the following guidance may assist.
- 3.1.2 **Draft submissions.** These are at the discretion and policy of the centre, with the following provisos:
- Only outline feedback is to be given, and only on Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria. It is especially important that NO feedback in relation to potential grade achievement be given to students.
 - The policy must be consistent for all students, i.e. if one student receives feedback on a draft then ALL students must be afforded the same opportunity.
 - LASER provides detailed guidance on the use of drafts and how they may be contrasted with formative assessment within the *LASER Policy on Drafts and Formative Assessment* available here. [Policy Drafts Formative Assessment.pdf](#)
- 3.1.3 **Resubmissions.** If an assignment does not meet, at first attempt, one or more of the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria at the required Level, then a student may have one opportunity for resubmission. The tutor may give feedback concerning the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria which have not been met, but not on potential graded performance. **Resubmitted work is eligible for grading if such work demonstrates that the missing Learning Outcomes and Assessment**

² For example, in relation to deadlines, extensions etc.

Criteria are achieved. Any resubmission should only consider work resubmitted in relation to the missed Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria and should not allow for the resubmission of any evidence for Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria met within the initial submission (as this may lead to the possibility of grade polishing). It is the decision of the assessor as to the nature of the required resubmission, which may form additional questions (written under timed conditions or indeed via a recorded *viva voce*) or indeed via a further focussed written submission to supplement the first assessment which allows for evidence of all the remaining Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria for the unit to be provided. In framing these judgments, assessors should give due consideration to the nature of the original assessment model. Therefore, where an examination was originally used, it would be preferable for the resubmission to be undertaken using similar format questions (only pertaining to the missed Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria) completed under examination conditions. Resubmissions should only be employed where a Student has made a genuine 'valid' attempt at completion of a given assessment. Where work is substantively incomplete upon initial submission and does not constitute a valid attempt at responding to the set task (or tasks), unless there is clear and auditable evidence of mitigation, then this work should not be deemed as a valid 'initial submission'. Therefore, a resubmission would not be available as the initial submission was not valid. It would be patently inequitable if Students were able to part-complete assignments and then gained more time to improve their work (and grades) via resubmission when others had to complete in due course. In these instances, where the initial submission is not deemed valid, the work should be treated as a 'late submission', which, when the unit is graded, would be capped to Pass. Where an initial submission is not accepted, the decision should be subject to formal confirmation via the Internal Quality Assurance processes.

3.1.4 **Referrals.** If a resubmitted piece of work does not meet the outstanding Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria, then the only recourse is to the Awards Board, which may consider it appropriate to offer a further opportunity. Referrals can be made 'in year' using the appropriate LASER Application for Referral Form, or an appropriate alternate means of recording the decision in line with the QAA regulations or at the final awards Board. (Please refer to Annex E1 and Annex C2 of the QAA Grading Scheme Handbook).

3.1.5 **Late submissions.** Centres are expected to articulate their rules for in-year extension requests in their assessment policy and formalise any such requests in relation to that policy. Grading is permitted if a deferred date has been agreed with the assessor or, where this has not been possible, if there are mitigating circumstances which are approved in line with the Centres policy. If work is handed in late outside these circumstances, then the work should not be graded. Where work does not meet the relevant Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria, then it will not be subject to resubmission but rather will need to move to 'referral status' which will require Award Board agreement (see 3.1.4 above).

3.2 Reasonable adjustments

- 3.2.1 The AVA's policy on assessment is to give all learners equal access and opportunity to demonstrate their achievements. This is to ensure that arrangements are made to take account of the particular disability or learning difficulty.
- 3.2.2 The AVA aims to ensure that learner achievement is properly represented to other relevant bodies, such as employers and higher education institutions, and that providers are able to comply with current disability legislation. The states that the needs of disabled learners must be anticipated by the Centre and any reasonable adjustments made to ensure that assessment methods do not unfairly discriminate against disabled learners.
- 3.2.3 The Equality and Human Rights Commission provides detailed guidance on the legal requirements in relation to ability, alongside case studies which may be helpful to practitioners here:
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/back-to-the-classroom-the-equality-act-2010-and-education-bodies.pdf>
- 3.2.4 Reasonable adjustments must be made for disabled learners with particular requirements. The nature of any reasonable adjustments depends on the particular requirements of the individual Student, as well as on the programme of learning and extant assessment methods employed therein. The implementation of any adjustments must be appropriate at all levels of achievement.
- 3.2.5 Centre responsibilities for reasonable adjustments:
- The Centre is responsible for choosing an appropriate course for the learner whose skills can be independently demonstrated by that course.
 - The arrangements proposed must reflect the learner's normal way of working. The learner should therefore have experience of and practice in the use of any arrangement proposed for the special arrangement for assessment, unless the need arises from a temporary injury or condition.
 - The Centre must ensure that the special arrangements will assist the learner to demonstrate attainment without affecting or circumventing the assessment requirements for the unit or course. Learners cannot be given credit for skills or knowledge they are unable to demonstrate.
 - The Centre is asked to record the details of all reasonable adjustments that are used at the discretion of the centre. This record must be brought to the attention of the EQA for the Diploma and a representative sample presented for external moderation.
- 3.2.6 Types of reasonable adjustment: these may be used at the discretion of the Centre
- Low vision aids, overlays
 - Assessment material modified into braille
 - Amplification, taped questions and responses
 - Supervised rest breaks

- Use of a reader*
- Use of an amanuensis*
- Use of a practical assistant*
- Use of a communicator*
- Bilingual dictionaries with an allowance of additional time
- Transcription of a learner's written responses
- Word processor
- Use of a prompter
- Other modification of assessment papers such as change of font, paper colour

The list above is not exhaustive. The Centre must record the details of all special arrangements that are used at the discretion of the Centre and said details should be made available to EQA and the Final Award Board..

(* A description of the activities allowed by each type of helper is described in Annex A below.)

- 3.2.7 A Reasonable Adjustment Assessment Form [Access-Reasonable-Adjustment-Form-Final.doc](#) must be used when changes to assessment methods are deemed significant³ this **must** be made available to the EQA at least **10 working days prior to the proposed use of the reasonable adjustment to assessment methods.**

For arrangements that require a significant alteration to assessment methods such as allowing additional time in examinations for Students with stated or formally recognised dyslexia, the centre must put in writing the needs of the learner and the proposed arrangements. The form should be signed by the EQA, and should be included in the student's portfolio of work. The adjustment should be formally recorded as a part of the formal record of individual student progress kept by the course team.

3.3 Special Consideration for extenuating / mitigating circumstances relating to the award of an Access to HE Diploma

3.3.1 Principles

The overall principles of the LASER assessment policy are that the Special Considerations claimed:

- Do not give learners an unfair advantage over other learners.
- Do not mislead stakeholders about the level and extent of attainment.
- Do not compromise the integrity or credibility of the qualification, for the learner concerned, or other learners.
- Are clearly tracked for audit, with supporting documentation where appropriate.

3.3.2 Conditions for eligibility

³ Professional judgement of tutors should be drawn on to make a reasonable interpretation of 'significant' in this context. Centres should keep records of deadline extensions given to individual students in response to personal circumstances etc. but this would not normally be regarded as a 'significant' alteration to the method of assessment. However, the substitution of one type of assessment for another, or the allowance of extra time in an examination, which results in one or more students having a different assessment method or adjusted method, applied to him/her should be treated as significant, since this could be challenged by other students on the grounds of equity and consistency with regard to assessment policy on the course.

Learners, who are fully aware of the requirements for assessment and have been affected at or near the time of assessment (e.g. examination) by circumstances beyond their control, may be eligible for Special Considerations leading to the granting of an extension beyond the Final Award Board or, where appropriate, an adjusted assessment method in line with the provisions of the QAA *Extenuation / Mitigation Policy* (See Annex to Section E of the *Grade Scheme Handbook*).

Circumstances may include:

- Illness or indisposition at the time of assessment, for example, severe asthma attack, severe migraine or broken limb.
- Emotional distress, for example, recent bereavement of close family member or severe domestic crisis at time of assessment.
- Severe disturbance during the assessment, for example, fire or accidental event.

Learners should not apply for Special Consideration for minor illness or minor disturbance. In referring a case for Special Consideration, Award Boards must be satisfied that the rationale for acceptance of mitigation / extenuation is based upon adequate evidence of significant disruption to Student learning which was in no way controllable or attributable to the Student's own conduct.

Learners should not be entered for the assessment if they are not in a fit state to take it or if they cannot meet the minimum requirements for assessment.

3.3.3 Extenuating circumstances. Timely completion of the award may be affected by unusual and exceptional personal circumstances. Such extenuating circumstances may include serious illness of the learner or a close family member; a close family bereavement; any other unforeseen circumstance beyond the learner's control, which prevented them from successfully completing the Access programme in accordance with the expectations of their personal tutor and the Access Co-ordinator. Consideration may be given as to whether it is possible and appropriate to grant an extension or even adopt an alternative assessment model which would allow the student to provide evidence of Learning Outcomes to enable completion of remaining content, and when this is possible, the AVA expects one of these options to be followed. In all instances, an Extenuating Circumstances form must be completed and (where possible) submitted to the EQA prior to the Preliminary Awards Board, which outlines the reasons for extenuation / mitigation and the proposed remedy (extension or adjustment to assessment). Any changes to the planned programme of assessment will only occur when there is agreement from the assessor, the Internal Quality Assurer and the EQA, who will jointly be required to approve any such changes to planned assessment. It is acknowledged that in exceptional circumstances such measures may be required in the wake of the Preliminary Award Board and in these instances it remains possible for Centres to seek approval of Extenuation in the wake of the Preliminary Award Board.

3.3.4 Aegrotat / Posthumous awards: In accordance with Section E6 of the QAA Grading Scheme Handbook an Aegrotat or Posthumous award may be made in very exceptional circumstances. Aegrotat awards may be approved by the

awards board, where a) there are exceptional **extenuating certified medical circumstances** which have resulted in the student being unable to complete the course requirements; and b) the student has achieved **at least 30 of the credits** required for the Access to HE Diploma. In such cases, the Access to HE Diploma can be awarded without full credits and the unit and grade profile will be incomplete. The Diploma awarded will state that it is an Aegrotat award. A Posthumous award may be made where a Student has died whilst they were on their Access Course and said awards are made at the discretion of the Award Board. An Aegrotat / Posthumous Award Form is available from LASER (here [Aegrotat Award Form Guidance.doc](#)) to enable these awards to follow due process.

4. Appeals

4.1 To the final awards board

Appeals that can be made to the final awards board are restricted to:

- Evidence of administrative or procedural error
- Extenuating circumstances that, for good reason, could not be notified prior to the awards board.

4.2 Appeals against the decision of a final awards board

If a student wishes to appeal against the decision of an awards board or wishes to make a complaint about any other aspect of the delivery of a LASER validated Access to HE Diploma offered by a LASER approved centre, the following will apply.

- Students must exhaust the internal appeals procedures provided by a centre before using the LASER complaints and appeals process.
- Appeals are accepted only the basis that the procedures applied by the college/provider were unfair or were not properly applied in relation to the appellant/complainant.

Further information on the process for Appeal / Complaint can be found in the LASER Appeal / Complaint Guidance, along with relevant forms for the submission of any Appeal or Complaint.

For the avoidance of doubt, Appeals relate to specific decisions taken by an Award Board and will focus on an explicit decision, which the appellant will argue was made in error (either because regulations were not followed or because of information not available to the Award Board at the time of the decision). A Complaint relates to more general concerns in relation to the provision and may not be directly linked to a specific award board decision. Where a student wishes to appeal or complain it is of the utmost importance that they provide a clear chronology and narrative account of the nature of the Appeal / Complaint which is supported by all available evidence.

4.3 Representations (see QAA Grading Scheme Handbook Section C, Annex C2)

If a student wishes to ask for reconsideration of a grade indicator given by a tutor for any individual assignment, then s/he must do so normally within 1 week of receiving the graded work. If the issue is not resolved between the tutor and student, Section C Annex1 of the QAA Grade Scheme Handbook requires that the Internal Quality Assurer (or other authorised person) review the case and make a decision. The EQA must be informed of the outcome of the representation and also be provided with the assessment

in question to allow for sampling prior to the student being informed of the result. LASER provides a form which can be used for this purpose (Access Representation Form) [Access Student Representation Form.docx](#) which ensures that all aspects of the representation process are followed appropriately. If the student remains dissatisfied with the result of this process, the student may further an Appeal and the case should be referred to the Final Award Board for a final decision. Any Appeal though can only be forwarded on the basis that due process was not followed or mitigation was applicable which assessors were not aware of at the time of assessment and representation (see Section 4.2 above).

5. Policy Statements

5.1 Preventing & deterring academic malpractice

LASER has produced detailed guidelines and policy to support Access centres in dealing with academic malpractice including:

- Policy Document: Preventing & deterring academic malpractice on Access to HE Diplomas
- Malpractice Report Form [Access Student Malpractice Report.docx](#)

5.2 Ethical Guidelines for Access to HE students undertaking social science primary research involving individuals

All centres must either, use the LASER Ethical guidelines policy [Ethical Guidelines for Access to HE Primary Research.pdf](#) or provide LASER with a copy of their own ethical guidelines related to the undertaking of primary research involving individuals.

5.3 Special consideration and mitigating circumstances for students

LASER provides a range of advice to centres for supporting students with additional needs.

See Annex A below for guidance related to the use of 'Readers, Amanuenses, Communicators and Practical Assistants'.

6. Supporting documentation and exemplars:

The table below provides details of current LASER documents which are available for use by Centres and EQAs. Unless stated, the documents are not mandatory, but where alternatives are used, they should clearly evidence compliance with the QAA Regulatory Framework. All these documents are available from the link here:

Title	Description
Merged Assignment Brief and Feedback Template	<i>This is the recommended assessment brief / feedback model and is designed to ensure compliance with all QAA regulations as well as good practice in provision of graded feedback. LASER uses this template for all preprepared 'off-the-shelf' assessments for units..</i>
Assignment Brief Template	<i>A separate assignment brief which remains fully compliant with QAA requirements.</i>

Feedback Template⁴	<i>A separate feedback template for practitioners who prefer to provide feedback separately to the assignment brief.</i>
Internal Quality Assurance Spreadsheet (Diploma)	<p><i>A comprehensive spreadsheet which is set up at Diploma level and includes a tab for recording all student results for the diploma and all aspects of Internal Quality Assurance (Internal Verification and Internal Moderation). The Spreadsheet also forms a record of all 'additional' activities pertaining to extensions, representations, resubmissions and referrals etc. This document is fully compliant with the QAA regulatory requirements.</i></p> <p><i>This spreadsheet is the recommended Quality Assurance document and allows all activities in relation to record keeping and quality assurance to be held in a single electronic file (enabling easy electronic access for quality assurance purposes).</i></p> <p><i>The Diploma Results Tab within this spreadsheet is MANDATORY as a result of QAA requirements for results to be provided at individual grade profile level.</i></p>
Diploma Assessment Schedule (Mandatory within Validation)	<i>A separate copy of the Diploma Assessment Schedule (required within the validation process) which provides evidence of Internal Verification planning (used in addition to separate Internal Verification (Unit) forms for each unit assessment.</i>
Internal Verification (Unit)	<i>A form which allows for internal scrutiny of a single unit. Therefore, one form would be required for each unit assessment across a diploma. EQAs would require access to IV documentation for all units assessed</i>
Internal Moderation Sampling Frame	<i>A spreadsheet based on the 'chevron' model which provides evidence of planning for Internal Moderation sampling.</i>
Internal Moderation (Unit)	<i>A form which allows for internal moderation of an assessment (or assessments) at unit level. One form would need to be completed per moderation activity.⁵</i>
Student Representation Form (Mandatory)	<i>This form is used to present an auditable record when a student appeals one (or more) Grade Descriptors awarded for a unit. The form is built around a 'process' model and ensures that all QAA Requirements are clearly met. The form will not need to be passed to LASER as evidence of Representations and their outcomes are included within both the EQA Report and the Combined PAB-FAB Minutes.</i>
Student Referral Form (Mandatory)	<i>This form can be used when a student is granted a Referral under the QAA Grade Scheme Section C provisions. Referrals are not an automatic right and can only be awarded with the agreement of both the Centre and the EQA. The form provides a record of the process required before a Referral can be granted. Once again the form does not need to be shared with LASER as outcomes are recorded both within the EQA Report and the Combined PAB-FAB Minutes</i>

⁴ Forms highlighted in Green may be used as an alternative to the aforementioned Merged Assessment / Brief and Feedback Template. A Centre may use their own alternative documentation for setting and feeding back on assessments / assignments but any alternatives must remain clearly compliant with the QAA Regulatory Framework.

⁵ Forms noted in purple may be used as an alternative to the IQA Spreadsheet model. Centres may also employ alternative documentation to evidence Internal Quality Assurance requirements. However, any alternative must be clearly compliant with the QAA Regulatory requirements for internal quality assurance of diploma titles.

<p>Student Malpractice Form (Mandatory)</p>	<p><i>This form presents an auditable record at each stage of the LASER Malpractice Policy. It is important that evidence is provided as contravention of the policy may lead to disbarring of a unit and therefore the completion of the qualification (as the student will not be able to complete 60 credits). QAA Regulations require EQA assent and the form provides a record of this and guards against any potential student appeal on the grounds that due process was not followed. There is no requirement to share the form with LASER as the outcomes will be noted both within the EQA Report and the Combined PAB-FAB Minutes. However, the form should be retained at the Centre for a period of six months beyond the end date of the programme as a safeguard against appeal.</i></p>
<p>Extension Form (Mandatory)</p>	<p><i>To be completed when a student wishes to apply for an extension beyond the FAB date. The form should be completed by the student and endorsed by the Centre prior to agreement by the EQA. The form and any supporting evidence, once agreed by the EQA should be destroyed and should not be passed to LASER. Evidence of the extension will be recorded within both the EQA Report and the PAB-FAB Minutes.</i></p>
<p>Extenuation / Mitigation Form (Mandatory)</p>	<p><i>To be used in circumstances where a student wishes to apply for extenuation / mitigation under Section E of the QAA Grade Scheme. This may lead to an 'adapted' extension to allow for the completion of all remaining Learning Outcomes from incomplete units via alternate assessment models. The form and any evidence should be shared with the EQA but should not be passed to LASER as the outcomes will be recorded in both the EQA Report and the Combined PAB-FAB Minutes.</i></p>
<p>Aegrotat / Posthumous Award Application (Mandatory)</p>	<p><i>This form should be completed on occasions where Centres wish to make an Aegrotat or Posthumous Award. It formally recognizes the circumstances of the award and EQA assent to said award. The form and any evidence should not be retained once agreed by the EQA and should not be passed to LASER as both the EQA Report and the Combined PAB-FAB Minutes provide a formal record of the outcomes.</i></p>
<p>Student Appeal / Complaint Form (Mandatory)</p>	<p><i>This form allows students to formally lodge an appeal / complaint with the Awards Board (and / or LASER). It should only be used where all Centre level provisions for appeal / complaint have been exhausted and will only be considered by LASER on that basis.</i></p>
<p>Combined PAB-FAB Minutes (Mandatory)</p>	<p><i>A formal agenda for the Preliminary and Final Awards Boards. This document provides a formal record of decision made at the PAB and provides for their final confirmation via the FAB meeting.</i></p>
<p>External Quality Assurance (EQA) Report (Mandatory)</p>	<p><i>A template for the completion of External Quality Assurance scrutiny at Diploma / Centre level across a given academic year. The document uses Excel as a base format and is built around three Census Points. There is a separate tab for completion by those EQAs who act as CSLOs for their Centres</i></p>
<p>Subject Specialist Review (SSR) Report (Mandatory)</p>	<p><i>A template which should be completed and associated with each SSR exercise which details the key findings of the process. There are separate sections for the CSLO and the SSR to complete alongside provision for Centre and CSLO feedback on the exercise (once it is complete).</i></p>

7. ASSURING STANDARDS and QUALITY ASSURANCE OF ASSESSMENT

LASER operates a system of quality assurance based upon a combination of:

- Retention of assessment evidence by centres
- Internal Quality Assurance (including internal verification of Assignment Briefs and Moderation of samples of student work)
- External Quality Assurance (including external verification of Assignment Briefs and Moderation of samples of student work)
- External standardisation across LASER centres

The Access Quality Assurance Handbook provides detailed guidance on all aspects of Internal and External Quality Assurance on LASER validated Access to HE provision and can be found here [Quality Assurance Resources](#)

In September 2024, grading on Access to HE Diploma titles will move from using various combinations of grading components from the seven Grade Descriptor metrics to all employing three Grading Standards (although different components and sub-components may be employed). LASER has published an Addenda to the Quality Assurance Handbook which sets out the updated requirements for retention of samples in the academic year 2023-24 as well as future retention of sampling in relation to the Grading Standards. This additional guidance is included herein at Annexe B (below).

Annex A

Readers, Amanuenses, Communicators and Practical Assistants

When a learner is assisted by a reader, an amanuensis, or a communicator, help must not be given with the subject matter being assessed. This support must not give the learner an unfair advantage or disadvantage. It must not invalidate the assessment. Additional time may also be available and a separate room will be necessary if the learner is to dictate responses. The centre should ensure that readers, amanuenses and communicators and practical assistants are acceptable and responsible adults, familiar with the subject matter being tested and have worked with the learner before the examination. A relative or friend of the learner may not act as a reader, amanuensis or communicator.

Readers

A reader is required to read, on request, all or part of the assessment or any part of the learner's response. The reader must read accurately and at a reasonable rate. The reader may repeat as necessary any instructions given on an assessment, as well as the questions and answers already recorded. The reader may assist a visually impaired learner using tactile diagrams, graphs and tables to obtain the information, which the printed-paper would give to a sighted learner. The reader must, if required, spell out any word, which occurs in the assessment. The reader must be prepared for periods of inactivity. In English, Welsh, Irish and Modern Languages, the reader must not be used for any reading test.

Amanuenses

An amanuensis is required to write out answers given by the learner. The amanuensis must be able to write legibly or type, at a reasonable speed and should have a working knowledge of the subject. The amanuensis must write down the answers exactly as they are dictated. The amanuensis must draw or add to diagrams strictly in accordance with the learner's instructions. The learner will not be expected to indicate spellings. The amanuensis should work at the learner's pace. In English, Welsh, Irish and Modern Languages, the amanuensis must not be used for any Writing Test.

Communicators

A communicator is required to communicate questions to the learner upon request. A communicator should use a means of communication which is appropriate to the needs of the learner and may include saying a word or phrase; rephrasing orally; use of the appropriate signing mode; writing. The communicator should give the essence of the learner's signed response in the assessment without inferring any meaning that was not clear in the signed response. Learners who are signing their responses must not be in a position to see other learners' signed responses. The communicator should work at the learner's pace. In English, Welsh, and Irish Speaking and Listening Tests and Modern Languages Speaking Tests, the Communicator must not be used.

Practical Assistants

A practical assistant is required to help a learner in practical assessments, to carry out tasks at the learner's instruction and ensure the safety of the learner. This support must not give the learner an unfair advantage. The practical assistant must work strictly in accordance with the learner's instructions and should not perform tasks independently of the learner.

Annexe B

Retention of Student Work for Standardization Purposes

Introduction:

The QAA Grade Scheme Section D sets out the QAA requirements in relation to the promotion of 'consistency' in the application of standards pertaining to graded achievement.⁶ The introduction of the new QAA Grading Standards in September 2024 further increases consistency in the application of the three Grading Standards (which are now applied only once across all assignments regardless of the number and nature of assessment tasks). Therefore, all grades will be calculated based on an aggregate of the three Grading Standards rather than a varied aggregate dependent on the number of Grade Descriptors applied to a given unit and the frequency of their use across assessment tasks.

At Section D(4)⁷ QAA note the importance that assessed grades remain both 'valid' when compared to external 'benchmarks' or points of reference (Learning Outcomes, Assessment Criteria and the language of external grading metrics); and, 'reliable' across the different situations where units are used within different Access to HE Diploma settings. The requirement for 'reliability' in the application of grading metrics is specifically noted as existing 'over time'. Therefore, consistent standards of application of the requirements of Learning Outcomes and Assessment Criteria must exist both across provision⁸ within a given academic year as well as across different academic years. The goal here is to ensure consistency of provision in terms, the application of metrics within a given year and also across different academic years to maintain the stability and therefore reliability of graded achievement on Access.

In order to achieve this outcome prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, LASER guidance required the retention of a single folder per diploma area each academic year as a benchmark for comparison to unit grading practice in the following years. The guidance suggested that over a three-year period, the folder retained should vary from a predominantly Pass profile, to Merit profile, and Distinction profile allowing for the graded range against each unit to be benchmarked easily. With the advent of Covid-19 and an inevitable shift to non-paper-based submission and retention of work, this requirement became less clear as many storage methodologies did not capture student work within one folder but held work at unit level (with all students being held within a folder for the unit). Therefore, the relatively simply requirement of folder retention became more complicated. However, the goals of the Grade Scheme Handbook Section D remain as overarching policy goals and remain especially important as provision transfers across to the new Grading Standards.

Laser Requirements for Standardization Retention 2023-24 Academic year:

All providers are required to retain a single sample of each graded unit across provision. Where possible, samples within each subject / module area should be representative of the range of grades allocated. For the avoidance of doubt, if Sociology were the subject area for consideration, different units within this subject module should represent Pass, Merit and Distinction judgments. Where this is not possible, for administrative / organizational reasons, Centres should do their best to ensure that retained samples represent all grade boundaries across provision to provide benchmarks for future sampling exercises comparing Grading Standards with Grade Descriptor level achievement.

LASER Requirement for Standardization Retention September 2024 onwards:

All providers will retain an anonymized sample of each graded unit assessed on each diploma each year. This may be achieved via the retention of a whole single student's folder / e-portfolio, or it may be achieved via the retention of samples of multiple student's assignments with a single sample from different student's work held for each unit. In line with previous practice, over a three-year period, a target to retain samples across all graded allocations for each unit should inform retention sampling.

Retention of Samples (GDPR implications):

To conform with the requirements of the GDPR in relation to the potential retention of 'Special Category Data' contained within samples, that any samples should have any reference to the identity of the student removed where any assessment references either a protected characteristic or refers to any other prohibited information (see table below).

⁶ QAA Grade Scheme Handbook Section D ((2) p.1))

⁷ QAA Grade Scheme Handbook Section D ((4) p.2))

⁸ This statement applies both within Centres operating different diploma titles where common standards must be applied in relation to achievement and grading and also across all Centres offering validated provision.

What is 'Special Category Data'?

- personal data revealing racial or ethnic origin;
- personal data revealing political opinions;
- personal data revealing religious or philosophical beliefs;
- personal data revealing trade union membership;
- genetic data;
- biometric data (where used for identification purposes);
- data concerning health;
- data concerning a person's sex life; and
- data concerning a person's sexual orientation.

Source: ICO (<https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/lawful-basis/a-guide-to-lawful-basis/lawful-basis-for-processing/special-category-data/>)

Centres should give due consideration to the fact that reflective logs may make reference to multiple factors noted above in recording the planning of a research project and how barriers were managed. Moreover, even more anodyne essays may make reference to 'political opinions' in framing arguments. LASER would suggest that retention of samples should not extend beyond six years regardless of the above.⁹

⁹ Further guidance on the implications of the GDPR for Access to HE provision is available within the AVA document: GDPR Guidance on the potential implications of data handling.