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# Access to Higher Education Diploma Guide for learners



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## About the Access to Higher Education Diploma

The Access to Higher Education Diploma is a qualification designed for people who want to apply to university or other higher education courses but don't have the entry qualifications such as A levels or BTECs. It is similar to a university foundation year as both are designed to get people up to the right standard in order to continue on to a higher level course.

Every year tens of thousands of people study for an Access to HE Diploma and then progress on to university or other higher education institutions. OCN London has over 40 different Access to HE Diploma titles. Eighty-five per cent of learners with OCN London Access to HE Diplomas have progressed on to higher education and others into further study or work.



# Why should I study for an Access to HE Diploma?

- **The qualification is well established and widely accepted by universities.**
- **It is flexible and designed for people returning to learning. You will find many of your fellow students are in similar circumstances to yourself.**
- **You can gain the qualification in just one year.**
- **You won't have to pay up front for the course if you take out an Advanced Learner Loan, which will be written off if you then complete a higher level course. (See next page for more information about this.)**
- **You will be inspired by becoming part of a community with a love of lifelong learning.**

## Who is the Access to HE Diploma for?

It is designed for adults (aged 19 and over) who may have been out of full-time education for some time, want to apply to university, but don't have the required qualifications. Some may be considering a career change.

If that sounds like you, the Access to HE Diploma would be a sensible choice.

## What Diploma titles are available?

OCN London, one of the leading Access Validating Agencies, offers over 40 Diploma titles. Some have a specific focus on a graduate career in areas such as Law, Nursing, Forensic Science, Computing, Fashion or Teacher Training. Others are more general subjects such as Social Science or Business Studies.

## Where can I study?

Most further education and adult colleges in the UK offer Access courses, along with a number of other organisations. You can find a list of our providers on the OCN London website. [www.ocnlondon.org.uk](http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk).

## Is the Access to HE Diploma recognised by universities?

Yes. Access to HE courses have been designed and developed with the support of universities. The Diploma qualifies for UCAS tariff points that are comparable to the tariff points for three A levels.

Some Access courses have links with specific higher education institutions. Learners who successfully complete these Access courses are guaranteed interviews on the linked HE course. For example, OCN London has a partnership agreement with London South Bank University which means that all learners studying for our Access to HE Diploma who apply to LSBU are given conditional offers with lower entry requirements to many of the university's higher education courses.



Students at London South Bank University, which has a partnership arrangement with OCN London

## What entry qualifications do I need?

There are no standard entry qualifications for Access courses as each provider will have their own requirements which may vary from course to course. However, you will need to convince the tutors that you can cope with the demands of the course and show them that you are really motivated. You should also check what entry requirements are needed by the universities you are planning to apply to. Please check with your local Access provider as to what their requirements are. They may include GCSEs for some courses. If you're not quite ready to start an Access course, ask whether the provider offers a Pre-Access course that will get you to the right standard.

## How can I apply for an Access course?

You can apply for a course at your chosen provider (such as an FE college) directly by filling in an application form on their website or by visiting them. For the majority of courses you should be able to apply online. Most courses start in September and October and it is advisable to apply early, up to a year before the course starts. It may, however, be worth applying closer to the start time as there are often places available. It's a good idea to attend an open day/evening first so you can take a look around the college and talk to tutors teaching on the course.

## How are courses structured? What kind of things will I learn?

Most courses are closely linked to the subjects that you intend to study in higher education. The Diplomas are made up of units of assessment that add up to 60 credits. The majority of units will be in subjects linked to the title of your Diploma. So if you're studying Nursing, then you'll study units in nursing studies, biology, psychology and sociology. If you're studying Art and Design, then these credits will be in subjects like drawing, painting and photography. There are also units in study skills, designed to help you succeed on the course and prepare you for studying in higher education.



OCN London Access to HE Michael Sargent Bursary Award winners 2016-17

## I need to be able to fit studying around family commitments or working part time – or both. Will I be able to do that?

Access to HE Diplomas are designed for adults with busy lives, so there are plenty of people who have the same concerns as you. Many learners find ways to balance studying with family life and work. Most courses are flexible, many of them running over two or three days a week. If you attend an open day then you'll be able to discuss your own situation with a tutor.

## How will I pay for the course?

If you are aged 19–23 and don't already have a full level 3 qualification your Access course will be fully funded. Otherwise, if you are aged 19 and over you can apply for an Advanced Learner Loan to cover the cost of your Access to HE Diploma course. The loan will be paid directly to your college (or whoever is running the course) on your behalf.

**When you complete a higher education course you will not have to repay the Advanced Learner Loan for your Access to HE Diploma course. This doesn't have to be a full bachelor's degree; it could be a foundation degree or a Higher National Diploma (HND) studied at a university or at a local college that offers HE courses.**

**The Access to HE Diploma is the only qualification that offers this loan waiver.**

# What do learners say?



Bradley Moon

“ THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN LIFE-CHANGING. I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD AS MUCH DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED IF I HADN'T DONE IT THE WAY I HAD. IF YOU PUT IN TIME AND DEDICATION THEN YOU CAN SUCCEED. I'M NOW IN MY SECOND YEAR AT UNIVERSITY. THE COURSE IS GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH AND LAST YEAR I FINISHED WITHIN THE TOP EIGHT PERCENT OF STUDENTS. ”

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*Bradley Moon, Gained an Access to HE Diploma in Medicine and Medical Biosciences. Now studying Biomedical Sciences at the University of Westminster.*

“ BEING BACK IN A CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT AND RECEIVING POSITIVE FEEDBACK FROM MY TEACHERS AND PEERS GAVE ME BACK THE SELF-ESTEEM I HAD LOST OVER THE YEARS. WHILE THE JOURNEY WAS AN ARDUOUS ONE WITH MANY DEEP VALLEYS TO NAVIGATE, I CAN HONESTLY SAY THAT COMPLETING THE COURSE WAS ONE OF THE MOST EXULTANT MOMENTS OF MY LIFE. ”

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*Florence Nakimuli-Mayambal, Gained an Access to HE Diploma in Humanities and Social Science. Now studying English at Queen Mary University of London.*



Florence Nakimuli-Mayambal

“ THE ACCESS COURSE DEFINITELY HELPED ME TO OPEN MY MIND, SEE OPPORTUNITIES AND BUILD MY SELF-ESTEEM. THIS GAVE ME THE CONFIDENCE TO DEVELOP MY BUSINESS AND TALK TO CUSTOMERS. LIKE ME, MANY OF MY ACCESS COURSE CLASSMATES HAVE IMPROVED THEIR LIVES AS A RESULT AND FOUND THAT THE COURSE HAS OPENED UP SO MANY OPPORTUNITIES. ”

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*Cecilia Reinoso, Gained an Access to HE Diploma in Business. Achieved a degree in Business at the University of Westminster. Now runs two businesses.*

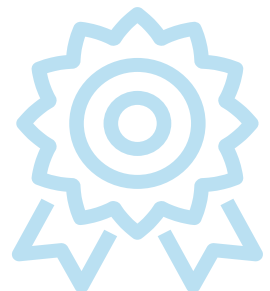
“ THE ACCESS TO HE DIPLOMA BECAME QUITE LITERALLY MY TICKET TO THE FUTURE. IT OPENED A WAY TO A NEW CAREER AND ALLOWED ME TO ENTER INTO THE SOFTWARE ENGINEERING INDUSTRY. THE PROGRAMME IS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR PEOPLE TO CHANGE THEIR CAREER PATHS. ”

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*Pawel Huszcza, Gained an Access to HE Diploma in Computing, then a BSc in Computing and a Masters degree in Computer Science at King's College London. Now employed as a software engineer.*

# What next?

- Decide which Access to HE Diploma you would like to enrol on and check which colleges offer the Diploma. You can do this by visiting the [OCN London Online Access Course Directory](#).
- Take a look at the [Access to HE Learner page](#) on the OCN London website.
- Find out more about [Advanced Learner Loans](#). Visit the government website about Advanced Learner Loans or the [Money Advice Service](#).
- Find out about open days at your nearest college.
- Contact universities running the courses that you are interested in and see what the entry requirements are.
- Talk to people who have done an Access course. Take a look at what some of them have said on page 4.





**Our mission is to help create a fairer society where everyone, whatever their educational background, has an opportunity to benefit from learning and realise their potential.**

## **Who we are**

OCN London is a national not-for-profit organisation that creates and awards qualifications. We are one of the UK's leading Access Validating Agencies. This means we are licensed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to develop and award Access to HE Diplomas.

We work in partnership with universities, colleges, training providers, charities, employers and many other organisations to help transform people's lives through learning. Our focus is on providing opportunities for people - many of them 'second chance' learners who have missed out on traditional education - to progress and achieve their potential. This is at the heart of our mission.



## **Find out more**

To find out more about the Access to HE Diploma visit the OCN London website  
<http://www.ocnlondon.org.uk/access-to-he/access-learners.aspx>.

You can also speak to an adviser at your local college.



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