

E-Bulletin

Access to Higher Education
Spring 2008



Welcome to the OCN Eastern Region Access e-Bulletin, an email publication designed to update all Access tutors, Access coordinators, Moderators and Quality Managers on matters related to Access and the OCN's role as an Access Validating Agency (AVA).

If you have any suggestions for things you would like to see included in this Bulletin, please do let me know.

Wishing you a very happy Easter,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Wendy Davis'.

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Contents of the Spring 2008 bulletin:

1. Outcomes from the QAA Review
2. Latest LSC Funding news
 - 2.1 Level 2 to Level 3 'jumpers'
 - 2.2 Learners under 19
 - 2.3 GCSE Equivalences
 - 2.4 Pre-Access
3. Latest QAA Access to HE newsletter for AVAs
4. Moderation and standardisation news
5. Access tutor forum – Wednesday 25th June 2008
6. Access Approval / Validation Panels 2008
7. Updates to Access Quality Manual available
8. OCN Access Conference – 23 April 2008, London
9. Staffing update



1. AVA Licence Review

OCN Eastern Region is proud to announce that it received an outstanding outcome to the recent review of its Access Validating Agency (AVA) licence by the Quality Assurance Agency with a total of nine commendations. Areas of particular strength identified by the review team included:

- the effectiveness of management team and staff;
- the importance placed on Access to HE by the OCN and the clearly defined responsibilities for Access to HE within the organisation;
- a useful, comprehensive and accessible Quality Manual and website;
- the quality of systems and processes for external moderation;
- the effectiveness of communication with stakeholders;
- promotion and development of Access to HE and the OCN's engagement in local, regional and national initiatives;
- clear leadership demonstrated in the implementation of the Access to HE Diploma.

The outcome of the QAA review confirms that the OCN is well placed to drive forward its plans for the continued development of Access provision that is focused on the needs of learners and employers in the region.

If you are an existing Access provider working with us, we hope that the excellent outcome of the review will assure you that your Access provision is in good hands and give you the confidence to further develop your Access provision with the OCN.

For a more detailed summary of the outcomes please [click here](#).

The full report from the QAA Reviews Group can be found on the [QAA website](#).

2. LSC Funding News

2.1 LSC first full level 3 Funding Entitlement for 19-25s – level 2 to level 3 ‘jumpers’

The OCN would like to clarify the position of Access learners over the age of 25 who do not currently hold a full Level 2 qualification, in respect of the LSC funding entitlement. Please note that these learners qualify for free tuition on the Access programme through the LSC Level 2 entitlement.

LSC FE Funding Guidance 2007-08 (Annex M: page 100-103, paras 10-11) states:

The entitlement provides free tuition for adults aged 19 but under 25 to pursue their first full Level 3 qualification...The entitlement applies until the qualification is achieved and is not affected by the mode of study, so study can be full- or part time.



It is worth noting that an eligible adult learner who is over 25 and who does not already have a full Level 2 qualification and who commits to a full Level 3 course would qualify for the entitlement to free tuition through the Level 2 entitlement.

Should a learner who is under 25 and who has not already achieved a full Level 2 be commencing a full Level 3 programme, they will do so under this entitlement not the Level 2 entitlement.

To download the full LSC funding guidance, go to:

<http://readingroom.lsc.gov.uk/lsc/National/FEFundingGuidance0708.pdf>

2.2 Access learners under 19

Please be aware that, despite new Age Discrimination legislation which makes it an offence to discriminate against applicants to Access courses on the basis of their age, LSC funding arrangements in respect of Access learners have not changed. Therefore providers will not automatically gain LSC funding for any Access learners admitted to the course who are under the age of 19.

If any Access provider does wish to admit learners under the age of 19 onto their courses, they should first check their funding status with their local LSC contact.

2.3 Funding of GCSE Equivalent qualifications and the Access Diploma

In the LSC's [Addendum to Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2007/08](#) the LSC revised the guidance on the funding of units delivered as additionality as follows:

285 The LSC will cease to fund additional or optional units beyond the minimum required to achieve a qualification (as set by the awarding body).

QAA has now advised all AVAs that from 2008-09, the LSC will no longer fund stand-alone GCSE equivalent qualifications which sit outside the requirements for an Access to HE Diploma, in addition to the 60 credit target, including those leading to initial teacher training. QAA has revised the guidance on the use of GCSE equivalence (notably paragraph 15): <http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/>

Access providers should therefore be aware that, where additional LSC funding is being claimed for GCSE Equivalence units which sit outside the 60 credit target for the Access Diploma, that this funding may be subject to change from 2008-09.

Providers should note that:

- Access courses will continue to include the OCN GCSE Equivalence units
- The OCN will continue to approve Access programmes with GCSE Equivalence units which sit outside the credit target for the Diploma, or are in addition to the rules of combination, where appropriate
- The OCN can approve Access courses which offer students the opportunity to study for required GCSEs alongside their Access qualification.
- There is no change to the OCN approval guidance for Access to HE (Teaching) programmes
- There is no change to the QAA requirement that 'where an Access to HE programme is intended to lead to further study for a professional qualification,



students are made aware of, and given the opportunity to meet, the entry requirements of the professional body concerned'.

If you are aware that there may be funding implications for your Access to HE courses you should check this with your local LSC. You may also discuss this with your OCN Development Manager or the Director of Access.

2.4 Pre-Access courses

Please note the LSC guidance below on the funding of Pre-Access courses.

All Access providers are advised to transfer any locally-accredited pre-Access provision to the NOCN Progression Qualifications, which are on the LSC Learning Aims Database, in order to gain security of funding for these courses.

These qualifications are already being used by a large number of Access providers and are available as an award, a certificate or a full Level 2 Diploma. For more details please contact your OCN Development Manager.

LSC [Addendum to Funding Guidance for Further Education in 2007/08](#) states:

Pre-Access to HE programmes are not recognised within the QAA Access Recognition Scheme. The LSC does not normally expect to fund such programmes separately where the provision is wholly or substantially the same as that which is available on a provider's Access to HE Diploma programme.

3. QAA Newsletter for Access to HE

The latest QAA newsletter for AVAs is now available on the QAA website, which includes information on the funding for GCSE Equivalences, progress of the model for grading the Access qualification and changes to the UCAS courses database.

To download the newsletter in PDF, go to:
<http://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/avas/newsletter.asp>

4. Moderation and Standardisation news

Subject moderation

Thanks to all those who provided their subject moderation samples to the OCN in good time. All samples received were thoroughly checked, collated and sent off to the moderators by the deadline of 14th March.

Subject moderator reports should be received at the OCN by 11 April 2008 and these reports will be copied to Centres and Centre moderators by 25 April 2008.

Standardisation meetings will be held on 6th & 7th May 2008, please make sure these dates are in your diary. (Venues will be confirmed shortly – moderators need only attend one meeting).

Access Centre moderation



Thanks to all moderators who submitted their initial visit reports (ACM03) to OCN by the deadline of 25 January 2008. You are reminded that your interim visit reports (ACM04) are due at the OCN by 9 May 2008. All Access Final Assessment Meetings should be held before 18 July 2008 – please email the date/s of the meetings to Lara if you have not already done so.

Please make sure you have the dates for the Access Quality Forums in your diary – 21st & 22nd May 2008. All moderators are required to attend on one of the two dates.
Venues will be confirmed shortly.

Revised Guidance for Moderators

The latest version of the Guidance for Access Moderators will shortly be available to download from the OCN website (see 'Updates to Quality Manual' below). This has been revised to include the formal line of reporting which has been established between Access Centre Moderators and OCN Quality Reviewers who are responsible for Centres where there is Access provision.

The circulation of final reports (ACM05) to the Quality Reviewers and Quality Monitoring reports to Access Centre Moderators will be undertaken by OCN staff. Centre moderators should note that the QM reports are completed at points throughout the year and will therefore be sent to you as and when they arrive. We hope that this arrangement will help to give a more complete picture of Access provision to all those responsible for undertaking quality assurance in those Centres.

Moderation for January 'starters'

The OCN is aware that the current report forms are geared towards the standard September – July courses and that moderator work profiles did not specify additional visits / final assessment meetings needed for any January cohorts. Although Lara has now addressed the issue of separate work profiles for the January cohorts this year, please be aware that the OCN is currently working to address all the issues related to January cohorts, including subject moderation, in order that clear guidelines are in place for next year. The moderation of January cohorts will be discussed in greater detail at the Access Quality Forums in May.

5. Access Tutor Forum

Wednesday 25 June 2008, 10am-4pm
OCN Eastern Region, Wivenhoe House, University of Essex, Colchester

This event is aimed at all Access tutors, Access coordinators and moderators – please make every effort to attend as the OCN will be seeking your opinion on a number of important issues.

As well as the opportunity to network with Access colleagues across the region, topics for discussion at this event will include:

- Progress on grading and updates from the QAA
- GCSE Equivalence Scheme
- Access unit databank and unit rationalisation project
- Processes for unit approval
- Sharing best practice from subject moderation
- Moderation arrangements for January 'starters'



6. Access Approval / Validation Panels

There are still some vacancies on Access Panels, which the OCN need to fill urgently.

If you or a colleague is able to attend one of the events to be held at the Centres listed below, please let Lara Edwards know as soon as possible: Tel. 01206 872514 Email: lara.edwards@ocner.org.uk

The OCN is required by QAA licensing criteria to ensure the contribution of HEIs which receive Access students, FE colleges and other Access providers to the process of Access programme approval or revalidation. If you are not sure whether you would be eligible to attend a validation panel, please speak to Lara Edwards on the number above.

Attendance by external members at a validation panel is a condition of programme approval.

| Access Centre | Date of Panel: | Panel member vacancies: |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Adult & Community Learning Essex | 20th June | 1 HE representative required |
| Barking College | 2nd May | Full |
| Barnfield College | 13th May | 1 FE representative |
| Braintree College | 16th May | Full |
| Chelmsford College | 5th June | 2 HE representatives |
| Colchester Institute | 3rd June | 2 HE 1 FE |
| Epping Forest College | 10 th June | 1 HE |
| Harlow College | 27th June | Full |
| Newham College | 18th June | 1 HE 1 FE |
| Redbridge College | 24 th June | All members needed |
| West Herts College | 23rd May | Full |

7. Updates to Access Quality Manual

The following updates to your Quality Manuals will be available to download from the OCN website: <http://www.ocner.org.uk/public/downloads.asp>

(Scroll down to Access to Higher Education, 'Latest updates to Quality Manual')

- Guidance for moderators
- revised to include new reporting lines between Centre moderators and OCN Quality Reviewers (available soon)
- Access Quality Standards version 4, Jan 2008



- Guidance on completing the Access Submission Document version 3, Jan 2008
- NR form (for notification of referrals, extensions, deferrals)
- Mitigating circumstances form

8. OCN Access Conference - “Taking Access into the future”

Wednesday April 23rd 2008, 10.00 –16.00

Bankside House (LSE), 24 Sumner Street, London SE1 9JA (just behind the Tate Modern)

This Access to HE Conference organised by OCN South East Region will explore the following issues:

- *Where will Access to HE sit in the emerging qualification landscape being created by the implementation of the QCF?*
- *How will Access be changed by grading, regionalisation and the Diploma specifications?*

OCN Access centres will be charged the member rate of £90 for the first delegate and 10% off for each subsequent delegate. A Conference flyer and delegate booking forms are available from: <http://www.ocnkm.ac.uk/access/index.html>

9. Staffing Update

Claire Pannell, Marketing and Communications Officer, gave birth to a baby boy, Rowan Andrew Liam, on 10th January 2008. To cover Claire’s maternity leave the OCN is very happy to welcome Julie Hewitt as Marketing Campaigns Manager.

It is with regret that we inform you that Sarina Bailey, Development Support Officer, will be leaving the OCN to pursue a career in Law. I know that many of you will be very sad to see her go and will wish her the best for the future. Sarina’s last day with the OCN will be Thursday 20th March.

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