

Access News from OCNSER Spring 2007



OCNSER awarded new licence by QAA

OCNSER has been awarded a provisional licence by the QAA to become an Authorised Validating Agency (AVA) for Access in its own right from September 2007. This means that from this date the former AVAs of OCN Hampshire, Isle of Wight & Sussex and OCN Kent & Medway will cease to exist.



We will be issuing a new strategic vision for Access in the South East Region which will include plans to develop a common core for elements of the Access curriculum. We are the only genuinely regional AVA operating in the south east and we are aiming to provide a first class service for all of our centres and students. Further details of our strategy and plans will be available from our website after Easter.

Access Practitioner Forums

The AVA is committed to supporting its Access centres and as part of this strategy we are organising Practitioner Forums on a localised basis across the South East Region. These forums are free and are aimed at Access tutors & staff and those who have an active involvement in the planning and delivery of Access provision. We are also inviting representatives from local higher education institutions to offer an opportunity for dialogue between Access providers and HEIs around progression issues.

Please see our website for dates of upcoming meetings

To register to attend please contact Sue Martin on 01227 827823
s.martin@ocnser.org.uk

The New QAA 'Access Diploma'

The Access Diploma will replace the 'Access Certificate' over the next 18 months as the new name for a revised QAA national Access qualification. OCNSER will be phasing its use in from 2007-08. The information below is intended to address some of the more obvious questions that have arisen in discussion with Access tutors.

What precisely is it?

- It is the name for the new version of the Access qualification which has a consistent credit target and rules of combination across the country. The details of the specification can be found at www.qaa.ac.uk/access. Nearly all Access courses running in the South East region which were accredited by OCN Hampshire Isle of Wight & Sussex or OCN Kent & Medway already meet many of the criteria for the new Diploma.

Access News from OCN SER Spring 2007



Will our courses have to be revalidated?

- If your Access course has been re-validated within the last 2 years then it is likely that you will be asked to re-submit some additional information but will not be required to undergo a full revalidation panel process. You will receive details of this process during the summer term of 2007.
- For Access courses over halfway through their 5 year validation life it is likely that you will need to go to a revalidation panel. In most cases this will already be scheduled for either 2006-07 or 2007-08.

Your OCN Development Manager will be able to guide you through this process. Please contact her/him for further details.

Will the existing Access Certificates still be awarded alongside the new Diplomas?

- Yes, Access Certificates will be awarded to students enrolled on existing courses which have not yet been re-validated as Diplomas. Diplomas will be awarded to those on courses that have been revalidated/approved as Diplomas. The only noticeable difference to the students will be the wording on the final certificate paper.

Will Universities accept both Certificates and Diplomas?

- Yes, HEIs will accept both and they have been briefed about the changes. All Access provision will be expressed in a Diploma format by the start of the academic year 2008-09.

Grading of Access

The QAA has moved into the development stage of a proposed grading system for Access provision. A member of the OCN SER Development Team attended a QAA consultation event earlier this year and several options are under discussion. It is probable that the final version will be based upon a pass, merit and distinction model and that grading will either be applied to individual units or to an overall assessment of the student achievement on the course.

Access News from OCNSER Spring 2007



Age Limit for Access Provision

The QAA have removed the age limit of 19 years upon entry to an Access course in light of recent age discrimination legislation. Further advice will be issued by the QAA but centres should be mindful that LSC funding for students under the age of 19 is not guaranteed. The OCN has issued a separate bulletin on the age limit¹

Funding for Access Courses

Access remains a clearly fundable type of provision by the LSC. It is technically classified as 'other provision' in funding terms because it is not a QCA qualification. Expansion of Access provision is most likely to be allowed when it meets vocational targets, for example Health Care related courses. Other regional priorities include, construction, travel & tourism for more information about LSC strategic priorities see the LSC South East web site at www.lsc.gov.uk/regions/SouthEast/

Please note that for 2006-07 your Access provision will be listed on the Learning Aims Database under OCNKM using the awarding body code KAC and OCNHIS using the awarding body code OCNHIWS. Centres that have transferred to OCNSER during 2006-07 should contact the OCN for further information.

Course Fees for Access

The funding regulations for adult learning has been progressively increasing the assumed income generated by students paying their own fees for studying. This means that colleges either charge more for courses or try to absorb the drop in income and run courses like Access with less of a margin of 'surplus'. However this has become increasingly difficult as the assumed fee element to be passed onto students has risen.

There have been varying responses to this issue by colleges across the region. Some have retained 'free' courses for students, others have introduced a relatively small charge of between £60 and £150, whilst others have passed on nearly the whole amount by charging over £300 per student.

The impact of these varying fee levels has so far been difficult to gauge but surprisingly anecdotal feedback suggest that the higher fees have not led to a significant reduction in provision. Work needs to be undertaken in analysing the impact on the profile of students paying fees and the OCN will be contacting centres later this academic year.

If you have any comments or examples of how Access fee levels have affected recruitment and /or retention please let us know by emailing:

s.martin@ocnser.org.uk or d.gittins@ocnser.org.uk

¹ Bulletin 1 2007 – available from our web site www.ocnser.org.uk follow Access link

Access News from OCNSER Spring 2007



OCNSER Contacts for Access

Role	Name	Email	Tel	Office	Serving ²
Director of Access & Business Development	David Gittins	d.gittins@ocnser.org.uk	01227 824018	Canterbury	SE Region
Lead Development Manager for Access (Until end of April 2007 – see below ³)	Ruth Keynes	r.keynes@ocnser.org.uk from 4 th May 2007 Jan Mulreany will take over this role (see below)	07900 265803	Brighton	SE Region
Access Development Administrator	Sue Martin	s.martin@ocnser.org.uk	01227 827823	Canterbury	SE Region
Development Manager	Sue Benn	s.benn@ocnser.org.uk	07867 501663	Brighton	Sussex, Hants, Isle of Wight
Development Manager	Gill Carter	g.carter@ocnser.org.uk	01932 569894	Addlestone	Surrey, Berks, N Hants
Development Manager	Peter James	peterjamesocn@yahoo.com	07771 667797	Addlestone & Home	Buck & Oxon
Development Manager	Jon Miles	j.miles@ocnser.org.uk	01932 569894	Addlestone	Surrey, Berks & W Sussex & IoW
Development Manager	Jan Mulreany	j.mulreany@ocnser.org.uk	07900 265802	Brighton	Sussex, E Hants
Development Manager	Jo Oliphant	j.oliphant@ocnser.org.uk	01932 569894	Addlestone	Surrey, Berks, N Hants
Development Manager	Jos Thomas	j.thomas@ocnser.org.uk	01227 823458	Canterbury	Kent, Medway, E Sussex
Development Manager	Jelena Timotijevic	j.timotijevic@ocnser.org.uk	07917 156802	Brighton	Sussex, E Hants
Development Manager	Juliet Ward	j.ward@ocnser.org.uk	01227 827371	Canterbury	Kent, Medway, E Sussex

Outline of OCNSER Staff Roles	
Development Administrators (DA)	Our support staff based in the OCN offices. They will field any questions you may have about learner registrations, RAC Forms, certificates etc. They can also deal with other enquiries or refer you on to a development manager
Access Development Administrator	This role is dedicated to supporting Access across the region and will deal with central issues such as validation panels, practitioner forums, marketing, moderation reports and Access Annual reports from Centres
Development Managers (DM)	Our curriculum development staff with extensive experience of working with and in the field of Access. They will support centres in the preparation of Access submission documents as well as offering detailed advice on the design of Access courses
Director of Access & Business Development	Overall responsibility for Access and its strategic direction

² Indicative guide only to geographical coverage

³ Ruth will be leaving the OCN in early May 2007 – a replacement Lead Development Manager for Access will be announced shortly.

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