

The Access to Higher Education Grading Scheme

Section C: Using the Grading Standards in Assessment

Published: July 2023

Revised: July 2025

Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
2	Planning for assessment with grading.....	1
a	Grading standards and units	1
b	Unit assessment plans	2
c	Using grading standard components and sub-components.....	3
d	Numerical marking	3
e	Planning for the integrated assessment of learning outcomes from more than one unit through one assignment.....	3
3	Providing advance information to students.....	4
4	Managing student submissions	4
a	Formal submissions	4
b	Draft submissions	5
c	Late submissions and extensions	5
d	Successful and unsuccessful submission	6
e	Resubmissions	6
f	Referrals	6
5	Assessing student work.....	6
a	Creating a unit grade profile	7
b	Determining the final grade for a unit.....	7
6	Providing feedback on grading to students.....	8
7	Changes to grades and grade indicators	9
a	Administrative errors	9
b	Representations.....	9
8	Maintaining records	9
9	Further information	10
	AppendixC1: Regulations relating to reassessment (resubmissions, representations and referrals).....	11
	Appendix C2: Unit grade profiles and unit grades	17
	Appendix C3: Flow chart of the submission process.....	18
	Appendix C4: Flow chart of the resubmission process.....	19
	Appendix C5: Flow chart of the representation process	20
	Version control.....	21

1 Introduction

The three grading standards detailed in Section B are to be applied equally to every graded unit and across every assignment within a graded unit. Grading Standard 1 (Knowledge and Understanding) and Grading Standard 2 (Subject-specific Skills) each have two components (a and b), both of which must be applied to every unit and assignment. Grading Standard 3 (Transferable Skills) has three components (a, b and c) of which at least two must be applied to every graded unit and across every assignment, **plus** all three components (a, b and c) must be used at least once across the assessment of each Diploma awarded to a student.

The components and sub-components of the grading standards selected for a unit create a framework within which tutors can capture and reward the standard of a student's work in those aspects of performance which are significant for the subject. Access Validating Agencies (AVAs) must give clear direction to providers through providing written information, training and support (including through moderation and standardisation processes) about how tutors should use the components and sub-components of the grading standards selected for a unit and how to ensure all three components (a, b and c) of Grading Standard 3 (Transferable Skills) are used at least once across the assessment of each Diploma awarded.

In particular, AVAs should make sure that tutors are made aware of, and have access to, the full requirements of the grading scheme that are specified in this document, and the associated guidance and the documents to which they refer. In setting their requirements for assessments, AVAs should also have regard to Section E of *The Access to HE Conditions*.

2 Planning for assessment with grading

The three grading standards (see Section B) provide the essential reference point for the grading scheme. The full and current edition is published by QAA on the [Access to HE website](#). This version must be used for all purposes.

a Grading standards and units

All three grading standards are used with every graded unit and across every assignment within a graded unit.

In units with more than one assignment, it is not permissible to award a grade to each assignment; grading takes place at the level of the unit only.

In units with more than one assignment, it is not permissible to use individual assignments to grade individual grading standards (for example, assignment one cannot be used to grade only Knowledge and Understanding with assignment two used to grade both Subject-specific Skills and Transferable Skills).

The choice of sub-components at unit level is normally made during the construction of the unit assessment plan and should be appropriate to cover the range of individual assignments. Therefore, the sub-components are not assigned when a unit is validated.

Only when all assignments for an individual unit are assessed and the tutor has determined that the student has met all the learning outcomes and assessment criteria for all unit assignments (and therefore has passed the unit) will grading of the unit take place. Individual assignments must not be assigned grades.

A grade indicator for each grading standard is assigned at pass, merit or distinction. The tutor will review all assignments associated with the individual unit and determine if the student has demonstrated the standard for the grades of merit or distinction, or whether the outcome remains as a pass.

The tutor must record in writing their justification for the grade indicator assigned for each grading standard.

The tutor reviews the three grade indicators that have been assigned for the unit and determines the overall grade for the unit, using a standard method which is detailed in Appendix C2, Table 1. The overall grade is a recommendation to the Awards Board, where it will be considered and confirmed by the Board. (Condition F1.1)

b Unit assessment plans

Units can be assessed through one, or more than one, assignment. Each assignment can consist of one, or more than one, task. Tutors must develop plans which show how they intend to assess the unit, and these plans must be internally moderated.

If just one assignment is to be used to assess a unit, all of the learning outcomes for the unit will be assessed through that single assignment.

If more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, the unit assessment plan will show how the learning outcomes, and the components and sub-components of the grading standards are allocated across the assignments. It is important to note that:

- the learning outcomes for a unit should be formally assessed only once, so different assignments will be used to assess different learning outcomes or groups of learning outcomes
- the term 'assignment' includes examinations, which, if used as part of a unit assessment plan, should be the only formal assessment of the learning outcomes covered by the examination
- sub-components of the grading standards may be used more than once within the unit assessment plan, as appropriate for assessing each assignment.

Planning for grading can become unnecessarily complicated if units are assessed through a large number of small, separate assignments. In developing a unit assessment plan, tutors should plan an assignment programme that meets the developmental needs of students and the demands of the unit in as few assignments as possible.

For units that are assessed through more than one assignment, tutors, or course teams, may choose which of the unit's selected grading standard sub-components to use for each assignment. However, for Grading Standard 3 (Transferable Skills), the choice of **components** - (a), (b) and (c) - must be used consistently across all assignments within the unit, but a choice of the selected sub-components is permissible. In making their choices, the following rules apply:

- all three grading standards must be used across all assignments
- all of the selected components and sub-components for the unit must be used in the assessment of the unit.

The relative significance of the grading standard sub-components used with a unit can be reflected in the extent to which each sub-component is used. For example, for a unit assessed through three assignments, one of the sub-components for that unit may be used with all three assignments while another may be used with only one of the assignments.

Correctly applied, this mechanism helps to create an assessment plan which reflects the relative significance of different types of performance in the achievement of the unit. Equally, however, tutors should be careful in making their selections to ensure that the assessment plan for a unit is not likely to lead to disproportionate value being given to minor considerations in the assessment of performance.

c Using grading standard components and sub-components

Each grading standard contains a number of components and sub-components (see Section B). These components and sub-components reflect the different types of performance which are important for different subjects, so the full version includes items which are only relevant to certain subjects. Tutors or course teams must consider all the components and sub-components that are available for each of the three grading standards, and then select and use the components (GS3 only) and sub-components (GS1, GS2 and GS3) that are appropriate for their subject and the focus and demands of each assignment.

The rules about how components and sub-components can be used and combined, including maximum and minimum numbers, are given with each grading standard provided in Section B, and are listed at the top of each standard.

Tutors' decisions about which sub-components to use with an assignment must also ensure that:

- students can be rewarded for performance which exceeds the standard required for pass in all aspects of the work to be graded, and
- considerations which are relevant to an assessment about the standard of the student work are identified in the sub-components selected for the assignment.

If more than one assignment is used to assess the unit, tutors may select different sub-components from the list identified in the unit assessment plan, as appropriate, for different assignments. This ensures the relevance of the sub-components to the nature of each assignment. All of the sub-components listed in the unit assessment plan must be used at least once across the assignments for that unit.

For Grading Standard 3 (Transferable Skills), the choice of **components** - (a), (b) and (c) - as identified in the unit assessment plan, must be used consistently across all assignments within the unit, but a choice of the selected sub-components is permissible.

For each of the three grading standards, matching components and sub-components at merit and distinction must always be selected; using one set of components and sub-components from the merit statements and a different (or additional) set of components and sub-components from the distinction statements is not permitted.

d Numerical marking

Use of numerical marking as part of the Access to HE Diploma Grading Scheme is not permitted.

e Planning for the integrated assessment of learning outcomes from more than one unit through one assignment

Whatever the extent or form of the integration of assessment being used, the general principles of assessment planning and grading must be applied, but careful mapping and tracking of the relationship between assessment tasks and the learning outcomes that they relate to, and how the components and sub-components of the grading standards are then

used across the whole assignment, will be needed to ensure clarity about what is being assessed and where it is graded.

3 Providing advance information to students

Providers/Centres must provide students with information about the regulations relating to the submission of student work - such as draft and formal submissions, resubmissions, late submissions and extensions (see section 4 - Managing student submissions).

Tutors must provide students with an assignment brief for each assignment, which explains how the work will be assessed, including details about the grading standards and the components and sub-components of the standards that are to be used in assessing the assignment (as part of the overall unit assessment).

Tutors may provide further information about the expected links between the selected components and sub-components and the requirements of the assignment, clarifying for students what the standards, components and sub-components mean for the particular subject or expectations of the kind of performance that relate to the individual assignment. In providing grading information, tutors **must not**:

- embed the language of the grading standard components or sub-components within the task details of assignments
- change the grading standards in any way (other than through the selection or omission of individual components or sub-components for the assignment), nor attempt to rewrite them as grading criteria
- reword or change the punctuation of the components or sub-components from that of the current version provided by QAA
- provide step-by-step directions which may reduce the level of challenge of the assignment or expectations of autonomous working that are appropriate for study at pre-higher education level.

In addition to providing the above required information, many providers/centres also ensure that students are provided with a copy of the full set of grading standards, perhaps in a student handbook, placed within a virtual learning environment or provided with the web link to the full guidance on grading on the Access to HE website for reference.

4 Managing student submissions

(See Appendix C3 for an illustration of the submission process.)

AVAs are responsible for publishing their own assessment regulations, including regulations about the submission of student work. AVAs' regulations are based on requirements made by QAA, the key elements of which are listed below.

a Formal submissions

Providers/Centres must operate a formal approach to the submission of student work for assessment. The approach must be operated consistently across a provider's/centre's Access to HE course(s) and the provider/centre must ensure that individual tutors act in accordance with its approach and the AVA's regulations.

Providers/Centres must specify their approach to the submission of student work in standard course documentation (for example, in a course handbook).

Providers/Centres must detail in writing any particular requirements which relate to the

submission of individual assignments (for example, on assignment briefing sheets).

Providers/Centres must set deadlines for all work to be submitted for formal assessment and notify these to students in writing before the assignment is undertaken (for example, on assignment briefing sheets).

Providers/Centres must state their formal procedures for application for an extension to a deadline, and grounds for approval of an extension, in the standard course documentation. The implications for grading if an assignment is submitted late without an extension being granted (see section 4c - Late submissions and extensions) must also be stated in the standard course documentation (for example, in a course handbook).

Once a formal submission has been made, neither the student nor tutor may later declare it to be a draft (see below).

b Draft submissions

Opportunities to submit assignments (or parts of assignments) in draft for comment and feedback by tutors before the formal submission date are permitted only for the particular assignments where the tutor has decided that this is appropriate and has specified this in advance. Such opportunities will not be the norm.

Where the opportunity for the submission of drafts exists, this is specified to all students in writing (for example, on assignment briefing sheets) before they begin work on the assignment.

Tutors may provide written feedback on drafts and engage in dialogue of a general kind which allows students to see how they might develop their response to the assignment brief. In responding to draft submissions, tutors are **not permitted** to:

- make detailed corrections to a draft submission
- provide information about predicted grade indicators, or other detailed information about possible grading judgements.

c Late submissions and extensions

The provider's standard written procedures for approval of extensions (see section 4e - Resubmissions) must be applied on all occasions when a student requests an extension to the deadline given on the assignment briefing sheet.

If work is submitted after the formal deadline has passed, and no extension has been granted (and there are no exceptional extenuating circumstances which explain the failure to request an extension), all grade indicators (see below) relating to that unit must be capped at pass - that is, where a unit is assessed using more than one assignment; if just one of the assignments is submitted late, the grade indicators for the unit are capped at a pass.

If an assignment is submitted after the deadline without an extension having been granted and the work does not meet the learning outcomes, there is no opportunity for resubmission except via the referrals process (See Section E).

d Successful and unsuccessful submission

If a submission is not successful at the first attempt (that is, one or more of the learning outcomes for the assignment has not been achieved), the assignment is regarded as an unsuccessful submission. In these circumstances, the student should be offered the possibility of resubmission (see Appendix C1).

e Resubmissions

Resubmissions must be managed in accordance with the detailed regulations for resubmissions (see Appendix C1). In particular:

- the original submission must be returned to the student, with written feedback which explains which learning outcome(s) has/have not been achieved
- no feedback about the standard of the work (that is, grades) may be given at this stage
- the specific requirements of a resubmission opportunity must be made clear to the student
- successful resubmissions must be graded following the same process as used for successful submissions and unit grades are given accordingly
- only one resubmission opportunity may be provided for any individual assignment (unless mitigating circumstances have been accepted).

If the resubmission is unsuccessful (that is, the resubmitted work still does not meet the learning outcome(s) in full), the only means by which a further opportunity for resubmission can be provided within the same registration period is through referral.

f Referrals

Normally, a student is permitted only one opportunity to resubmit work which fails to meet all requirements of the associated learning outcomes. The referral process allows the course team to recommend that a student should be permitted a second resubmission opportunity. Referral may also be requested for students who have submitted work after a deadline without an agreed extension, and this work has failed to meet the requirements of one or more of the associated learning outcomes. If this occurs within the duration of a course, the recommendation is referred to the lead / external moderator through the process described in Appendix C1.

If the need for referral occurs at the end of the course (for example, as the consequence of assessments that have been taken in the last weeks of a course), the recommendation is taken to the Awards Board, as referrals at this stage of a course have implications for staffing, resources and results that need to be fully considered and carefully managed (see Section E - Appendix E1).

5 Assessing student work

The use of a universal set of grading standards and the application of a common method of arriving at final grades provides the evidence for, and comparability of, grading judgements on all Access to HE courses. At the same time, the choice available within the grading standards and the recognition that professional judgement has a legitimate role to play in arriving at grades, avoids a purely mechanistic approach that presumes that assessment is a precise science governed by computation which is divorced from judgement.

In assessment for Access to HE, professional judgement is exercised by tutors who use the grading standards in ways that are meaningful and appropriate for their subject, just as they use their professional subject knowledge and expertise in deciding how to teach and assess particular units and in judging whether the learning outcomes have been achieved or not. Tutors' professional judgements in assessment are confirmed, and may be challenged, by the professional judgements of those involved in the quality assurance procedures of AVAs, including processes for moderation and standardisation.

When assessing student work, tutors must first consider whether the assignment submitted by the student has achieved all the learning outcomes that were specified for the assignment. If all the learning outcomes have been achieved, the assignment is regarded as a successful submission. If this is the unit's only assignment, grading can take place. If there are other assignments for the unit, grading can only take place once all assignments have been submitted successfully and all the learning outcomes for the unit have been met. No grading, or grading feedback, is provided to the student until all learning outcomes for the unit have been met.

An unsuccessful submission is not eligible to be considered for grading of the unit and the resubmission process outlined above applies.

Tutors may not use numerical marking on QAA-recognised Access to HE Diplomas.

a Creating a unit grade profile

No grade is given for individual assignments (although if the unit is assessed through only one assignment, the unit grade will, in effect, be the same as an assignment grade).

Tutors must consider a student's work in relation to the grading standard components and sub-components chosen for the unit. The tutor must decide, for each of the grading standards (in relation to the particular components and sub-components selected), whether the standard of a student's performance is better described by the distinction (D) or merit (M) statements, or whether the work does not reach the standard described by the statement for either distinction (D) or merit (M) and therefore is at pass (P) standard.

A grade indicator (P, M or D) is given for each of the three grading standards. Grade indicators can only be P, M or D; no intermediate or modified grade indicators can be given.

Whether a unit has been assessed by means of a single assignment or by multiple assignments, tutors must record the decisions made for each unit as a set of grade indicators (P, M or D) for each of the three grading standards. Together, these indicators create the unit grade profile.

b Determining the final grade for a unit

AVAs are responsible for ensuring that every final unit grade awarded by them has been determined correctly. The regulations governing the process for this are detailed below, and moderators must ensure that providers/centres are complying with both the process and the rules associated with them. Whether units are assessed through one or more than one assignment, the principles and process for determining a final grade are the same.

The grade for a unit is based on the grade indicators (P, M or D) for each of the three grading standards. All of the grade indicators have equal value in the unit grade profile and all are considered in determining the unit grade.

The final grade for the unit is arrived at by establishing the midpoint of grades in the unit grade profile. This midpoint is apparent when all grade indicators recorded in the unit grade

profile are recorded in sequence from lowest to highest (for example, PPM indicates a pass grade for the unit; PMM indicates a merit; MDD indicates a distinction). Appendix C2, Table 1, gives the final unit grades to be assigned for all permutations of unit grade profile.

The tutor reviews the evidence for judgements made about the standard of performance against different grading standards, to confirm grade indicators and in order to be able to explain the grade to the student and record the unit grade. The tutor should be confident that the evidence for the judgement about the unit grade is also clear and transparent for moderation processes.

6 Providing feedback on grading to students

Tutors must provide feedback about graded performance.

Feedback must be relevant to, and consistent with, the requirements of the learning outcomes, and the components and sub-components of the grading standards used for the unit.

Tutors must use their professional judgement to decide whether the language of the grade statements for merit and distinction are sufficient in themselves to indicate how the grade has been achieved, or whether additional comment or explanation is needed or might be helpful for the student. If tutors provide additional comments, they must ensure that they are neither inconsistent with the standard represented by the statements for merit and distinction, nor refer to aspects of performance which are not in some way addressed by either the learning outcomes covered by the assignment(s) or the components and sub-components of the grading standards that were applied.

Where more than one assignment is used to assess a unit, tutors should provide feedback in relation to the individual assignments so that students can identify strengths and weaknesses in different areas and improve their performance, but no grade is either applied, or implied, in relation to individual assignments.

Feedback on work which has not met the requirements of one or more learning outcomes, and therefore has not achieved the standard for pass, must only confirm which aspect of a learning outcome has not been achieved. It must not provide information which relates to grading. (See also section 4e - Resubmission.)

Feedback in the context of large, developmental units needs special consideration. Feedback should enable the student to understand what has been achieved well and what may be improved in future work (feedforward). Some large credit units focus on development of skills and critical abilities which may be completed over a term or more and may involve significant amounts of discussion between tutors and students as part of the teaching and learning process. (Such units are often found in art and design or creative arts programmes, or to support extended projects.) This may or may not result in a record of the outcomes of the discussions and the subsequent changes a student makes to their work. Whatever the subject or method of assessment, tutors must not provide feedback during the development of student work which is so detailed that it becomes, in effect, coaching. Feedback which provides specific information about how to modify work already in progress or change performance in order to achieve particular learning outcomes or match requirements of grading standards, is not permitted. (See also section 4b - Draft submissions.)

7 Changes to grades and grade indicators

Once an assignment has been assessed, the student is not permitted to resubmit all or part of the assessed work in order to improve the final unit grade. (The tutor is not permitted to provide opportunities for 'grade polishing'.) This applies to successful first submissions and to resubmissions.

The only circumstances in which grade indicators may be amended are:

- if an **administrative error** has been made (see section 7a)
- as a result of the **representation process** (see section 7b and Appendix C1).

In both cases, a written record of changes must be kept as set out in the regulations.

a Administrative errors

If a student identifies an error after graded work has been returned, they are expected to draw attention to the error within one week of receiving the assessed work.

If an administrative error comes to light (for example, in the completion of a unit grade profile, or the calculation of the unit grade), the tutor will correct the error on the student's record (for example, assignment feedback sheet), indicating the nature of the error. The course leader (or equivalent) will provide formal authorisation for the change before the amended record is returned to the student. The correction of an administrative error and authorisation for any change will be included in the formal record of assessment outcomes.

Once a formal submission of work has been assessed and the assessment decisions notified to the student, there are no circumstances in which a tutor may make any change to grade indicators or unit grades without the course leader (or equivalent) being involved and without a formal record being made.

b Representations

The procedure of representations applies when a student requests a review of the unconfirmed grade indicators identified for a unit of study after the unit has been graded but before it has been through the process of moderation.

Students may sometimes ask for grades to be reviewed. This situation should be managed through the formal representations process, as set out in Appendix C1.

Under no circumstances may a tutor make any changes to grade indicators or unit grades which have been notified to a student, without the involvement of the internal moderator and without a formal record being made.

8 Maintaining records

All grading decisions must be recorded both on the written feedback provided to students and in the tutor's own record. Providers/Centres must maintain auditable records of unit grade profiles and final unit grades, which can be used for internal and external moderation, and for the award of Diploma grade profiles. Records of grading decisions and grades should be available for AVAs for monitoring purposes.

Tutors' professional judgements in assessment are confirmed, and may be challenged, by the professional judgements of those involved in the AVA's quality assurance procedures for moderation and standardisation. (See Section D.)

9 Further information

Full details of *The Access to HE Grading Scheme*, and all associated guidance documents for AVAs, course providers/centres and HE admissions staff, are available on the [Access to HE website](#).

Appendix C1: Regulations relating to reassessment (resubmissions, representations and referrals)

Each AVA publishes, and is responsible for the management of, a set of assessment regulations which apply to all its validated Access to HE courses. AVAs' assessment regulations must include, in full, the detailed specifications set out below. If AVAs provide any additional regulations, such regulations will neither provide greater advantages, nor limit opportunities for students' achievement on a particular course or group of courses, or between one AVA and another.

Principles

The principles which inform the regulations that relate to reassessment are that:

- the number and type of opportunities for reassessment are limited and clearly defined
- the opportunity to be reassessed does not confer an undue advantage on those who achieve only after reassessment or diminish the achievements of those who achieve at the first attempt
- reassessment opportunities do not undermine confidence in the standard of the Access to HE Diploma
- account is taken of any extenuating circumstances affecting the student
- course tutors play a central role in making decisions about reassessment and tutor decisions about reassessment are confirmed through moderation
- opportunities for reassessment do not place unreasonable or unmanageable burdens on tutors or moderators
- assessment regulations are consistent with the broader principles and procedures for the award of credits and grades on the Access to HE Diploma.

Resubmissions

The process for resubmission applies when an assignment has been submitted which does not meet the learning outcomes specified for that assignment; in which case it cannot contribute towards the award of credit or be eligible for unit grading (see section 4e - Resubmissions).

Resubmission requirements must:

a be proportionate to the degree of non-achievement

Normally, this will mean:

a matter of minor detail has been omitted, so a single learning outcome has not been achieved; the resubmission requirements may ask for the submission of additional material

a particular skill has not been fully demonstrated, so a single learning outcome has not been achieved; the resubmission requirements may address that one learning outcome and assess it in isolation; (individual assessment criteria cannot be considered in isolation of the learning outcome to which they relate)

a number of learning outcomes have not been achieved, or the non-achievement is deemed substantial in some other way (for example, where the evidence for a single learning outcome is derived from the whole piece of work); the resubmission requirements are likely to

involve a full reconsideration and reworking of the assignment as a whole.

b be consistent with the way in which the learning outcome(s) were originally assessed

Normally, this will mean the assessment method used for the resubmission is the same as that used for the original submission, except:

if it is not possible or practicable for resubmission requirements to replicate the original assignment or assessment task (for example, some types of group work, or practical research), the (unmet) learning outcome(s) should be assessed through an assignment which makes comparable demands to those of the original assignment

if undue advantage could be gained by resubmission of the same assignment or assessment task, an equivalent assignment should be devised to assess the learning outcome(s) not yet achieved and the return of other students' work should be delayed until the resubmission has been made

if the learning outcomes for a unit are distributed across more than one assignment, the resubmission applies to the assignment for which learning outcomes have not been met; when the results of the resubmission are known, if all the learning outcomes for the unit have been achieved, the full unit grade profile can be created, and the unit grade determined

if the assessment of learning outcomes for a unit is integrated in an assignment which is also used for the assessment of learning outcomes for another unit, the focus of reassessment should be the particular unit for which learning outcomes were unmet at first submission; where learning outcomes that relate to a different unit have been achieved in the assignment, grades for that different unit are derived from the original assignment.

c be subject to a clear deadline for resubmission

Normally, this will be:

as soon as possible after the feedback on the formal submission has been given

practicable and reasonable for the specific resubmission requirements (including specifying a very limited time frame, if appropriate)

agreed and confirmed with the student

appropriate for the stage reached in the course (wherever possible allowing reassessment to be completed before the Awards Board (see Section E).

d be applied consistently in equivalent assessment situations

so that all students have equivalent opportunities for resubmission and reassessment.

e ensure that the additional or revised work being resubmitted is clearly distinguishable from the work for the unsuccessful submission

by, for example, the student returning the original as well as the resubmitted work.

f be subject to moderation

Moderation procedures relating to resubmission will:

confirm that resubmission practices at course level are consistent with this guidance and the AVA's assessment regulations

confirm the consistent application of resubmission practices across the provision for which the moderator has responsibility

consider examples of resubmissions, accompanied by original submissions, and confirm consistency in tutors' assessment decisions relating to resubmission.

Representations

The procedure of representations applies when a student requests a review of the unconfirmed grade indicators identified for a unit of study after the unit has been graded but before it has been through the process of moderation.

If a student wishes to ask for reconsideration of one or more of the grade indicators given by a tutor for any individual unit, he/she must do so at the earliest opportunity. This will normally be within one week of receiving the graded work.

In the first instance, the tutor will discuss the assessed work with the student to explain the grading decisions made.

If the student is not satisfied with the explanation and wishes to pursue a representation, the relevant student work will be considered by the internal moderator or considered through such other alternative mechanisms as have been approved for the purpose by the AVA. A formal record of the student's representation will be made.

If, as a result of this process, it is concluded that there is no case for regrading (that is, the tutor's original decision is confirmed), the student is informed of the decision, and the outcome is recorded on the formal record of the representation. Any appeal against this decision will be made through the appeals procedures that apply (see Section E). The formal record of the representation and its outcome will be available in any subsequent appeal.

If the internal consideration concludes that an error of judgement has been made, the relevant assignment(s) is/are reassessed and new feedback, relating to any revised unit grade indicators, is provided. A copy of both the original and the revised feedback, with the revised grade indicators, must be retained. The outcome is recorded on the formal record of the representation.

The formal representation record will include:

- the date the representation is made
- the nature of the representation
- the nature of any change made
- the reason for the change or decision not to change
- the date the change is approved
- the name of the tutor responsible for the initial assessment and of the internal moderator (or other authorised person) who approved the change.

The formal records of all representations will be considered by the external moderator, who will a) confirm that the representations process has been properly operated and b) may sample and review individual cases.

Under no circumstances may a tutor make any change to grade indicators or unit grades without the involvement of the internal moderator and without a formal record being made.

Referrals (for second resubmission)

(See Section E - Appendix E1 for an illustration of this process.)

When a student has not achieved one or more of the learning outcomes of an assessment on first resubmission, or when work has been submitted late without an agreed extension, the student may be referred for permission to make a second resubmission. When this occurs within the duration of the course, the process described below must be used. Where this occurs at the end of the course (for example, in final assessments), the process described in Section E must be followed.

Before referral

The tutor concerned raises the possibility of a referral with the internal moderator (IM). The IM ensures that the following requirements are complied with:

- the student completed the resubmission process and failed to achieve all the learning outcomes for the work being referred
- tutors have discussed with the student the best way for the student to progress
- the student has been informed that referral does not automatically result in approval for a second resubmission
- the student has been informed that the decision to allow a further opportunity to submit one or more assignments at this stage of the course is made by the lead / external moderator (L/EM) on the basis of evidence presented.

Evidence

Evidence to support the case for referrals must make reference to:

- any special circumstances affecting the individual student
- the particular assignment in which it is recommended to the L/EM that a student is referred
- details of the achievement in the original submissions and resubmissions for the unit(s) in question (including any other assignments that contribute to the assessment of the unit which have been achieved)
- the student's total achievement profile up to the point on the Access to HE course that the referral is requested (including the title of units, credit value and indicative grades, and whether or not they were achieved on the basis of a second resubmission of work as a consequence of referral). Requests for referrals will not normally be considered where the total credit value of the units which have already been achieved through referral, or might be achieved as an outcome of a further referral, is more than 15.

The records of this process and the request for a referral are forwarded to the L/EM (by whatever means the AVA directs) for a decision.

Decisions

Decisions about referrals made by the L/EM must include:

- whether a second resubmission opportunity should be offered
- the nature and extent of the requirements for resubmission; this must comply with the relevant requirements for first resubmissions (see Resubmissions section above - paragraphs a, b, d and f)
- the deadline for the second resubmission; for referrals during the year, the deadline will take into account:
- the need to inform the student of the decisions, which should be at the earliest opportunity following the request for referral being sent to the EM
- the need to allow a limited but reasonable time for the student to complete the resubmission
- the need to assess the resubmitted assignment(s)
- the L/EM informs the IM of the decisions made and details of the resubmission requirements where a referral has been granted, who then informs the tutor.

Assessment of referrals

In most cases, it will be clear whether or not assessed work resubmitted for a second time (that is, as a result of a referral) demonstrates that a student has achieved the standard required. If, however, the assessor is uncertain about the sufficiency of the evidence to justify an assessment decision that the standard is adequate to meet the requirements of the associated learning outcome(s) (that is, to pass) and wants to have this raised for consideration, the following process must be used:

The tutor must request a review with the internal moderator (IM). In this review, the focus is on a professional judgement as to whether or not the relevant learning outcomes have been achieved.

The IM then refers the assessed work and the judgement (with a commentary) to the L/EM for a moderation of the decision as to whether or not the assessment standard for pass (and, therefore, the unit) has been achieved. The L/EM informs the IM of this decision and keeps a record to bring to the Awards Board and thereby to the AVA. The IM informs the assessor, and the judgement is recorded in the student's record.

Every use of this mechanism, with the grounds for the judgement, is recorded in course records and by the L/EM to report to the Awards Board and thereby the AVA. The AVA should take action if this information suggests that there are features of the way a unit is written or an assessment is designed that lead to ambiguities or other unreasonable difficulties for students in providing appropriate work for the assessment.

The implementation of this approach to the assessment of referrals must be supported by AVAs with appropriate training for assessors, internal moderators and external moderators.

Possible outcomes from a referred resubmission

If a referred resubmission is unsuccessful (that is, the work resubmitted after referral does not demonstrate that the student has achieved the learning outcome(s)), no credits or grades for the unit can be awarded. A partially-completed unit grade profile has no formal status.

If a referred resubmission made within the duration of a course is successful (that is, the work resubmitted after referral demonstrates the achievement of the learning outcomes) this result is recorded in the student record, to be taken forward to the Awards Board at the end of the course. Successful referred resubmissions at the end of the course must be dealt with in the way described in Section E.

Both the IM and the L/EM keep their own records of requests for referrals as they occur. These records should include: the frequency of the use of this mechanism; the nature of the inadequacies in student performance that led to the non-achievement of one or more learning outcomes; the frequency with which requests for referrals are approved; and the final assessment outcome. The AVA should take action if this information suggests that there are features of the way a unit is written or an assessment designed, that lead to ambiguities or unreasonable difficulties for students in providing appropriate work for the assessment.

A complete record of all requests for referrals and their outcomes is provided for the Awards Board and thereby to the AVA for information and review.

Referrals that can only be pursued at the end of the year because they are the consequence of an assignment attempted at a late stage in a course, must be referred to the Awards Board, as referrals at this time require opportunities for students to undertake assessments after the end of the course, and have implications for staffing, resources and results that need to be fully considered and carefully managed (see Section E).

Appendix C2: Unit grade profiles and unit grades

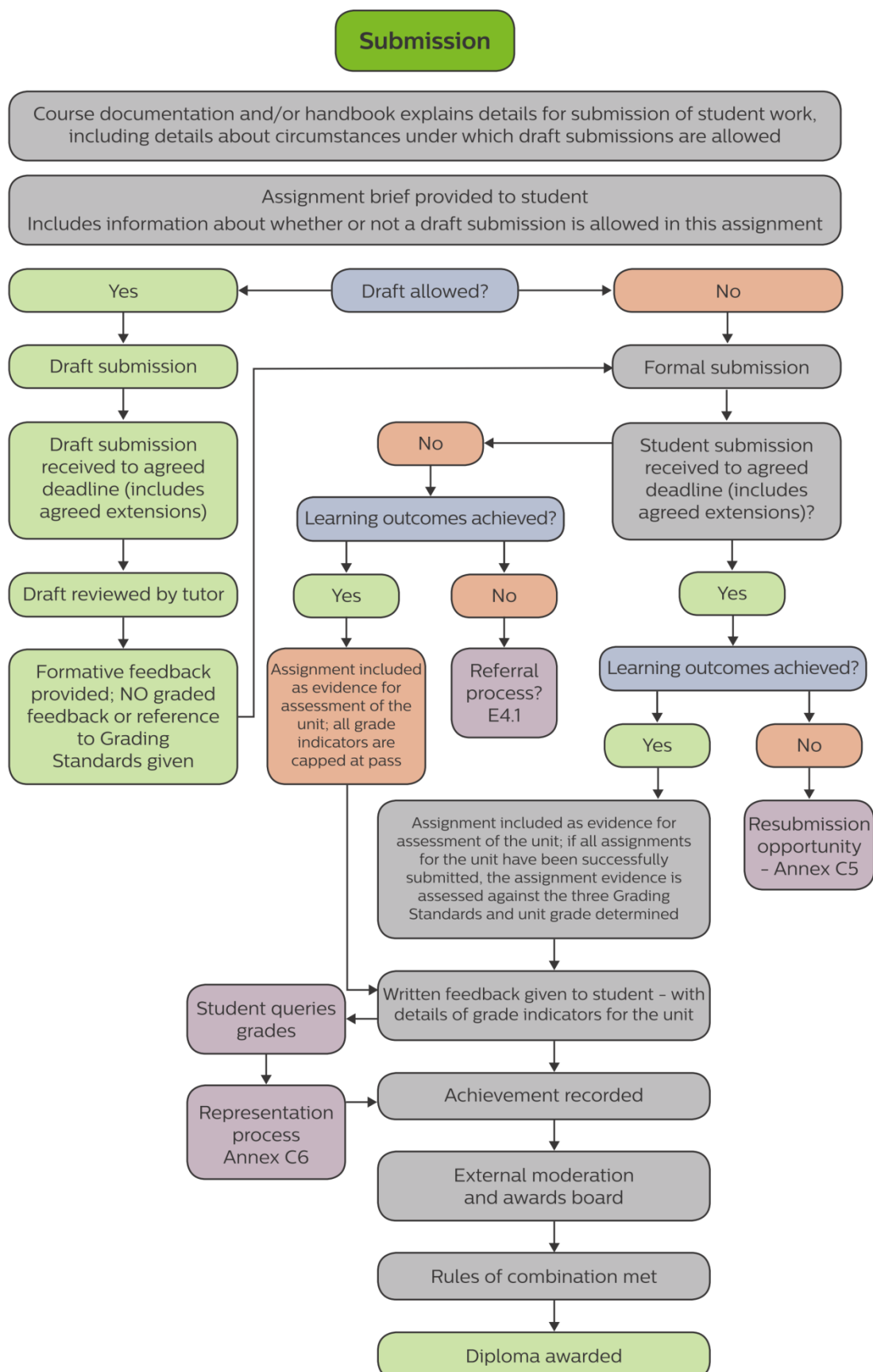
Once the unit grade profile has been determined using each of the three Grading Standards, the overall unit grade can be determined using Table 1 below. The grades in the table are placed in order, from lowest to highest. The three columns are not associated with any specific grading standard (column one, for example, is not indicative of GS1).

Using the table below, a student who has been awarded, for example, two pass grade indicators and one distinction indicator, irrespective of which grading standard each of these indicators is attached to, will be awarded a unit grade of pass; a student who has been awarded, for example, two distinction grade indicators and one pass indicator, irrespective of which grading standard each of these indicators is attached to, will be awarded a unit grade of distinction.

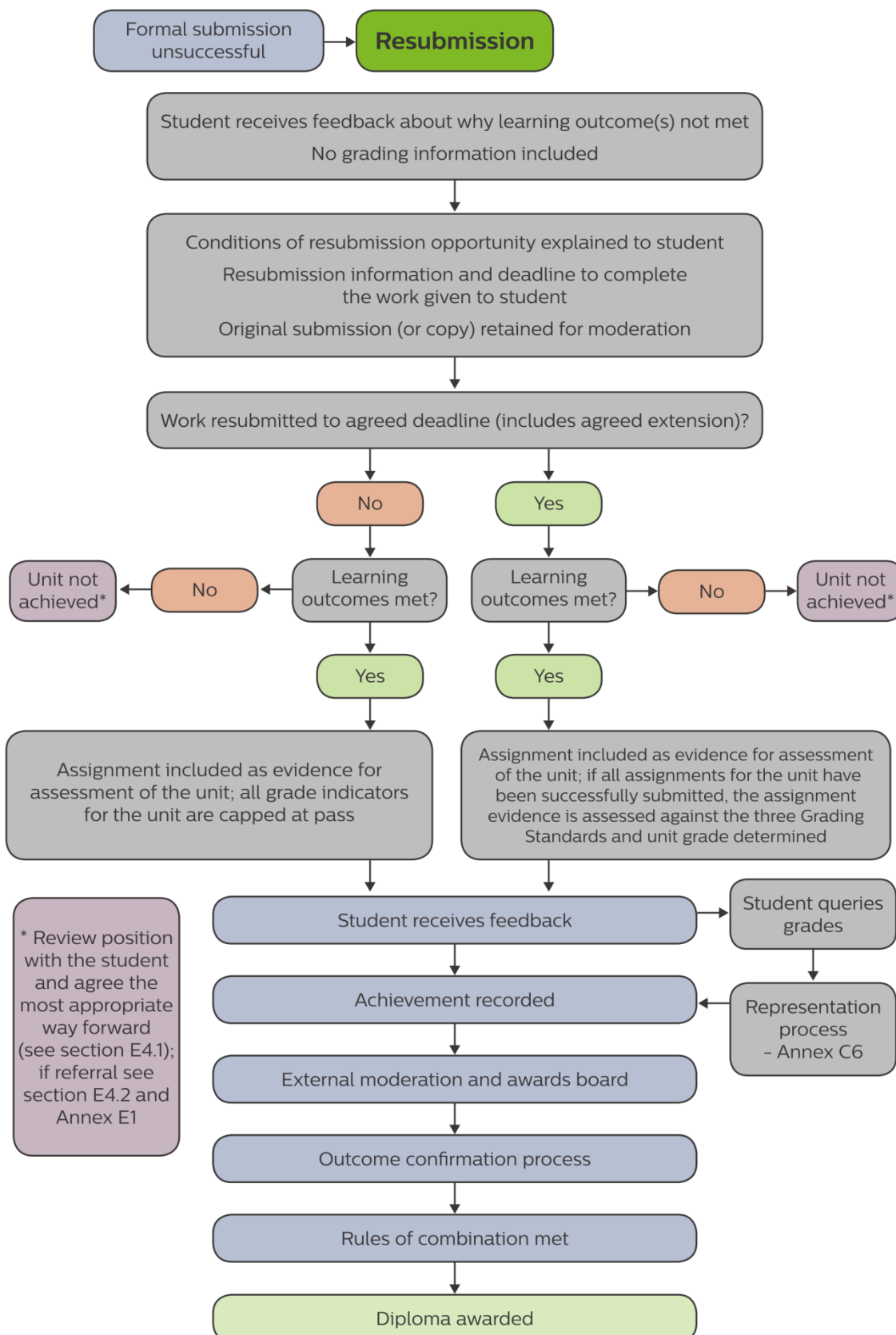
Table 1: Calculating unit grades from unit grade profiles

Unit grade profiles			Unit grade
P	P	P	P
P	P	M	P
P	P	D	P
P	M	M	M
P	M	D	M
M	M	M	M
M	M	D	M
P	D	D	D
M	D	D	D
D	D	D	D

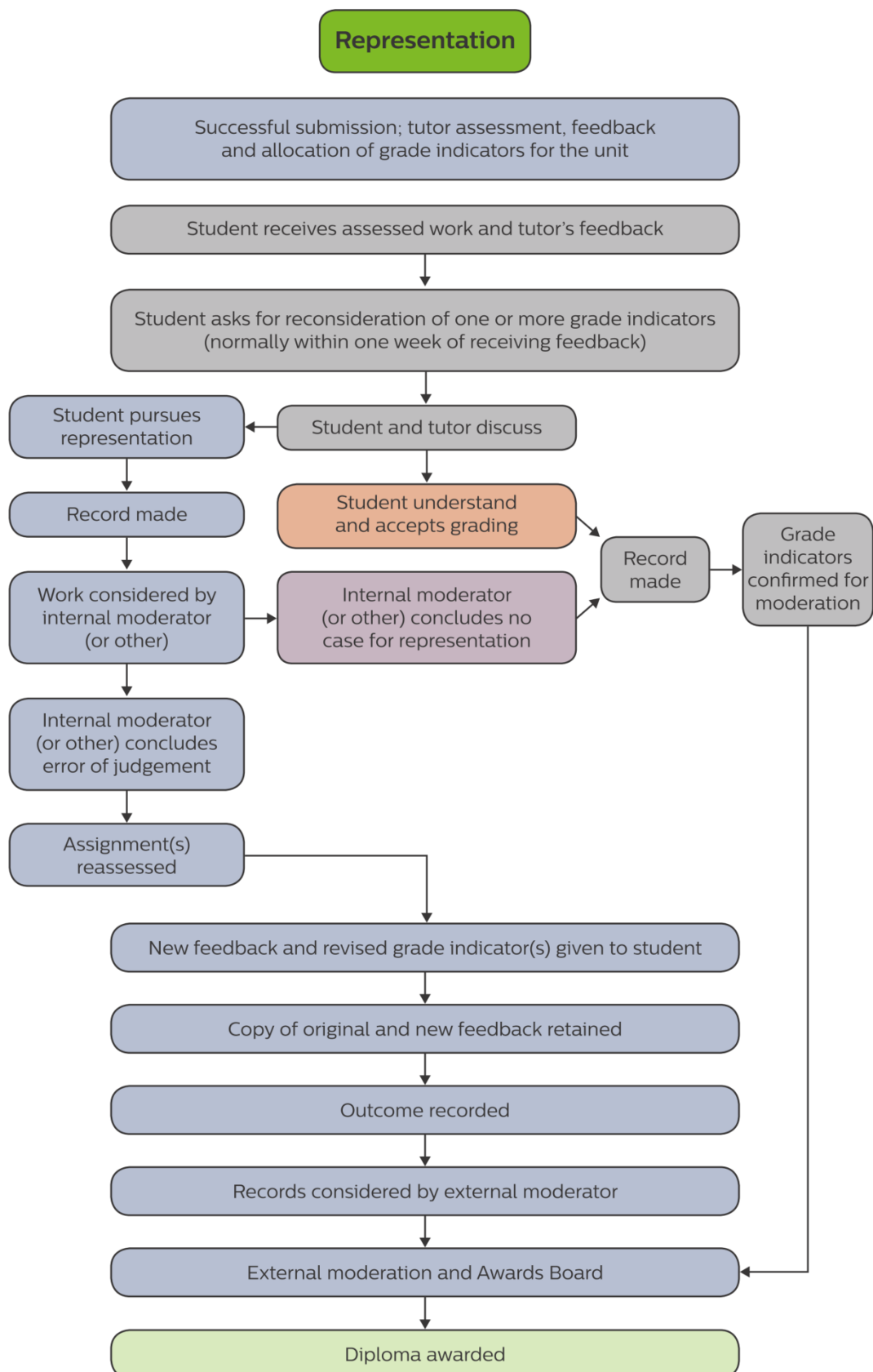
Appendix C3: Flow chart of the submission process



Appendix C4: Flow chart of the resubmission process



Appendix C5: Flow chart of the representation process



Version control		
Document title The Access to Higher Education Grading Scheme - Section C: Using the Grading Standards in Assessment		
Document description This document is Section C of the Grading Scheme for Access to Higher Education Diplomas and details assessment regulations for the Grading Scheme. This is a regulatory document which forms part of the Recognition Scheme published by The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).		
Document owner	Access to HE Diploma Manager	
Approved by QAA’s Board	Date: March 2025	
Published location	https://www.qaa.ac.uk/access-to-he/access-to-he-resources/access-to-he-grading-scheme	
Link to other Regulatory documentation the Standard Terms for the Licensing of Access Validating Agencies the Access to HE Conditions the Access to HE Grading Scheme Sections B - E the Access to HE Diploma Specification Please refer to: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/access-to-he/		
Next review		Date: July 2028
Version	Date issued	Update information
V1.0	July 2024	First published version
V2.0	March 2025	Updating references of Annex to Appendix to reflect a change in house style Addition of “In setting their requirements for assessments, AVAs should also have regard to Section E of The Access to HE Conditions.” Replaced ‘award’ with ‘assign/ed’ in 'Planning for assessment with grading', under 2a relating to actions of the tutor in grading assessments Addition of 'Condition F1.1' at the end of section 2a Addition of “The procedure of representations applies when a student requests a review of the unconfirmed grade indicators identified for a unit of study after the unit has been graded but before it has been through the process of moderation.” as the first bullet under 7b and repeated in Appendix C1: Regulations relating to reassessment (resubmissions, representations and referrals) at ‘Representations’ Addition of “This document was first published in July 2023 and has been updated to incorporate the introduction of the Access to Higher Education Conditions in July 2025.” to replace “This section of the Grading Scheme replaces the equivalent section in The Access to Higher Education Diploma Grading Scheme, September 2020. It applies to all new students registering on

		Diplomas from 1 August 2024. The Access to HE Diploma Specification has also been updated to apply to all new students registering on Diplomas from 1 August 2024.” Version control section updated
--	--	---

This document was first published in July 2023 and has been updated to incorporate the introduction of the Access to Higher Education Conditions in July 2025.

For students registered before 1 August 2024, please visit www.qaa.ac.uk/access-to-he for details of The Access to Higher Education Diploma Specification, January 2020 and The Grading Scheme, September 2020

Updated July 2025

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2025
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786
www.qaa.ac.uk/access-to-he